

Annual Town Meeting

Held at The Birchmeadow Centre, Birchmeadow Road, Broseley on Tuesday 26th April 2022 at 6.00pm

Present:

Chairman Cllr Mark Garbett, Deputy Chairman Cllr. Ian West,

Chairs of committees: Cllr. Roy Childs, Cllr, Cllr. Michael Burton, Cllr. Charlie Garratt,

Shropshire County Cllr Caroline Bagnall

Also present: Shirley Reynolds Town Clerk, Jenna Munday Deputy Town Clerk
14 Members of the public

1. The Mayor Cllr Mark Garbett welcomed everyone to the Annual Town meeting.
The Mayor read out the notice on the recording of meetings to all present.
2. Council APPROVED the Minutes of the last Annual Town Meeting held on 28th May 2021.
3. Report from the Mayor, Councillor Mark Garbett.

Mayor Councillor Garbett welcomed everyone and said what an honour and privilege it had been to be Mayor of his home town during the last twelve months. The Mayor discussed the work of the council and councillors over the previous twelve months and also congratulated office staff for the £70,000 grant funding they had sourced.

The Mayor said that he hoped that the council continue to pull together whilst expressing it had been difficult for him personally since December. The Mayor thanked Councillors for their hard work bringing together a range of skills, he thanked the Deputy Town Clerk for her dedication keeping the council on an even keel in a difficult period, and also Cllr Charlie Garratt for his work on Finances and Cllr Roy Childs for his community work.

The Mayor then highlighted many of the funding opportunities that Broseley had benefited from during the previous twelve months such as Welcome Back Fund, Jubilee Funding, shop front refurbishments and also the continued maintenance of the Birchmeadow Park, Guest Road and the cemetery improving green spaces for residents. He also reminded residents of some of the investments of Broseley Town Council such as the solar lighting in Whitehall Gardens, the installation of sculpture boards across the town, the redesigning of the Broseley maps and the newly installed bus shelter.

The Mayor thanked the Town's volunteer groups for all their hard work and said he hoped that the very successful Mayors Community Awards continued as a great way to recognise the wonderful volunteers in the town. He reminded residents that all Broseley Town Councillors were also volunteers and all councillors try their best and work hard for Broseley.

4. Report from Town Council Committees

Reports were received from the Chair of the committees for the Estates, Finance, and Planning Committees during 2020/21

Cllr Roy Childs stated that the Estates Committee has responsibility for the Council's assets and facilities, and relations with Shropshire Council and community groups where there are shared interests. These facilities include:

- Birchmeadow Centre
- Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)
- Public Toilets
- Bus shelters
- Cemetery and chapel
- Library and BTC offices building
- Car parks
- Street lighting
- Memorial Garden

There are specific working relationships with Birchmeadow Park Management Committee, Birchmeadow Centre Management Committee, MUGA Committee, and Broseley in Bloom.

There has been a lot of development over the last year, building on the work of previous years, and thanks need to go to the councillors, staff and members of the public who have contributed to this. Apart from continuing the maintenance and improvement of existing facilities, the following developments are worthy of note:

- New sculpture information boards around the town
- Installation of a bus shelter in the town centre
- Installation of solar-powered streetlighting in Whitehall Gardens
- Opening of a telephone-box mini-library in Broseley Wood
- Production and distribution of tourist information leaflets
- Purchase and distribution of dog waste-bag dispensers.

Cllr Charlie Garratt explained that the Council's Finance Committee was only set up a little over a year ago and so spent the first part of the year putting systems in place to ensure the Council's finances are properly scrutinised. These processes remain under constant review as the relationship between Finance Committee, other committees with devolved spending powers, and Full Council develop.

As with other parts of the Council, this committee has been limited in what it can achieve by staff turnover, particularly in respect of changes in Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) part way through the year, and a part-time locum in place for much of the rest of the year.

Despite these difficulties, the Finance Committee has:

- a) Monitored spending against budgets.
- b) Overseen tenders for Council services.
- c) Scrutinised salary, NI, VAT and pension payments.
- d) Reviewed the Council's Financial Regulations.
- e) Drafted the Council's annual budget, limiting the increase in the precept to 2.7%.
- f) Drafted the Council's next Three-Year Plan.

The Chair of Finance went on to explain that there had been many changes of staff and different RFO's during the year which had made it more difficult to set the budget without consistent background

knowledge. The Council had still only increased the precept by a small amount which was less than inflation and below most other councils in the area.

Cllr Ian West as Chair of the Planning Committee said that in the past year, Broseley Town Council's Planning Committee has met 11 times. It considered a total of 44 applications for development and a further 14 applications for work on trees in the Conservation Area; comments were provided on these to Shropshire Council as appropriate. In addition, members of the Planning Committee have monitored issues relating to highways and footpaths within the town and liaised with Shropshire Council officers on these where necessary.

Work is progressing to complete Broseley's Neighbourhood Plan, with former councillor Phil Revell continuing to provide invaluable support to this process. Work on this was delayed by Covid but the plan has recently been subject to scrutiny by the External Examiner, which is a legal requirement. Once his comments have been incorporated, there will be a referendum later this year when all residents will have a chance to vote on whether to adopt the Plan. Further communication about the Plan will take place before then. The Town Council strongly believes that adoption of this Plan is essential to ensure that future development in Broseley over the next 25 years meets the aspirations of its residents. Cllr West then explained the process the Neighbourhood Plan would follow and that a referendum was likely to be held in September.

The Chair of the town's Planning Committee is a member of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Steering Group and ensures that Broseley needs are reflected in the work of that group.

5. Report from Shropshire Councillor, Caroline Bagnall

Cllr Caroline Bagnall said that she could hardly believe that it is now almost a year since the voters of Broseley put their trust in me to be the Shropshire Councillor representing Broseley. It has been a steep learning curve, but one that I have very much enjoyed. I am still learning something new almost every day - and there is always more to learn.

My first year as Shropshire Councillor began with a huge list of online training courses, introducing me to the different aspects of the Council. Within a few weeks of being elected, as I pledged in my election campaign, I started a monthly surgery at the Victoria Hall. This allows members of the public to drop in for a chat and to discuss issues of concern to them. Of course, I am always available by phone or email, but often people prefer to have a face to face conversation and the surgeries allow for this. The Town Council soon decided to combine their surgeries with mine, meaning that a wider range of issues can be dealt with at the same surgery. It is important that we make ourselves available to our constituents in this way, allowing people the opportunity to talk in private, or with a small group of councillors, to share information or to help to resolve issues.

I was made a member of the Southern Planning Committee, responsible for making decisions on planning applications in the south of the county. One of the first applications I was faced with was that of the old power station site in Buildwas - something of a baptism by fire! I voted against approval as I believe strongly that the number of affordable homes proposed was not adequate. It was disappointing that the plan was eventually approved, even though it did not meet the Shropshire Council policy of requiring developers to provide 20% affordable homes. We have dealt with a wide range of applications - everything from private house extensions to huge poultry farms. Each application is accompanied by a large number of documents which have to be studied and in recent months we have also been able to make site visits to help inform our decisions. It is really interesting and I am very much enjoying this part of my work.

The Labour group on the Council has given each of its members responsibility for a particular aspect of the Council's work. I am spokesperson for Culture, Leisure and Tourism and I share responsibility as spokesperson for Transport with Councillor Rosemary Dartnell. I was able to table a question to Shropshire Cabinet recently regarding the proposed savings to be made to the Libraries budget. I asked for assurances that there would be no redundancies or reductions to services as a result of the proposed cuts.

More locally, I have had the pleasure of speaking to many residents during the past year, doing what I can to help them with the issues that concern them. The ongoing issue of the need to improve the condition of our highways has been a major concern. It was wonderful to see the Highways team arriving to mend some of the potholes on the High Street but there is still a great deal to be done before we can be satisfied with the situation. It took a great many emails and phone calls and complaints before I managed to get the huge and dangerous pothole on the Coalport Bridge repaired and I hope I can be forgiven for giving a cheer every time I drive that way now! The appalling condition of the Bridgnorth Road cul de sac has been the subject of many emails and telephone conversations with the Highways Department and I will not rest until this work has been completed. Myself and the Town Council office have been pressing for a meeting with Highways officers for many months and I have now involved the Chief Executive. If no suitable response is received very soon I will be raising a formal complaint. We pay our council tax just as people in other areas do and we should be able to expect the same level of service. The repairs to the land slip on the Ironbridge Road are now scheduled for October. As this will involve a road closure, discussions are ongoing regarding diversion routes. The work will inevitably involve inconvenience to Broseley citizens, but I am hopeful that this will be kept to a minimum. There has been a consultation period for the parking restrictions proposed for Barber Street and Cape Street and I will be meeting with officers soon to discuss the way forward. It is essential that we keep our bus routes, which is why these proposals were needed. However, we also have a responsibility to support our local businesses and I very much hope that we can find a solution that addresses both needs.

I have continued to take an active role in many local voluntary groups. Not only do I very much enjoy this, but it also helps to keep me informed of what is going on in the town and the future plans for events and celebrations. I have recently been meeting with members of the Churches Together group to help coordinate a response to the crisis in Ukraine. I also represent Shropshire Council on the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Steering Committee and I take the opportunity to remind the group of the historic importance of Broseley to the area and the need for it to be included in future plans. I also represent Shropshire Council on the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust.

I have been very fortunate in having the support of fellow councillors, both in Broseley and in Shropshire. They have given me encouragement and advice and I am sincerely grateful to them for that. By working together, we can be far more effective in getting things done. I have enjoyed working with Cllr Dan Thomas who represents the adjoining ward, proving that councillors really do work well together across party lines. My priority is to support all my constituents, regardless of politics.

My main allegiance is, and always will be, to the people of Broseley. Thank you once again for putting your trust in me.

Cllr Dan Thomas thanked the council for the opportunity to introduce himself explaining that he was also a Shropshire Councillor with the responsibility for the Broseley Wood area of the town. He said

that he had worked well with Cllr Bagnall and Cllr Ian West on Planning matters. He gave thanks to Broseley Town Council for welcoming him since he had been elected last year.

The Mayor Cllr Mark Garbett wished the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor well for the coming year and hoped they would continue to make things better for the community.

Opportunity to raise general town matters.

Residents were able to ask questions regarding the town council business during 2021/22.

A resident asked about legal costs and was informed that this was covered by an NDA and the council were unable to provide this information. Information was shared regarding the inspection of the accounts which will be in July.

A resident raised the continued issue of the road and temporary lights on Ironbridge Road. Cllr Bagnall explained that she was following this issue up with Shropshire Council, and she said that the delay on these repairs was unacceptable, the work was currently planned to be carried out in October 2022.

A resident raised concerns over the poor state off the pavements and roads with many potholes in the town, Cllr Bagnall informed residents that she had contacted Shropshire Council again that day and had informed them that the level of service being received in Broseley was not good enough.

A resident asked when Broseley was getting a leisure centre, the mayor explained that this was very unlikely, the cost of building and more importantly maintaining and running a leisure centre would be too costly and that they were also 2 leisure centres within 8 miles of the town.

A resident asked questions about a member of staff and was informed that this was not something for discussion at an annual town meeting.

A resident thanked Broseley Town Councillors for keeping within budget and for the many things that they had achieved for residents, he said that they had done well. He further added, the police had not kept in budget and wanted to thank the town council.

The meeting closed at 6.50pm

Signed: _____

Town Mayor of Broseley