



"Not for self"

Oswestry Rural Parish Council

Minutes

of the Ordinary Meeting

held at 7.00 pm on Thursday 27 February 2025 at Trefonen Village Hall

Present:

Cllr Peter Richardson, Cllr Martin Bennett, Cllr Bob Kimber, Cllr Martin Jones, Cllr William Jones, Cllr Iain Campbell, Cllr Steve Watts, Cllr Richard Fowler, Cllr Peter Davies, Cllr Jas Singh

Clerk to the Council:

Kathryn Lloyd

In attendance:

Six members of the public

2150 Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman extended a warm welcome.

2151 Apologies

Apologies were received from the following:

Cllr Mike Weston

Cllr Paul Milner

Cllr Joyce Barrow

2152 Police Report

The Chairman read the following Police report:

Community priorities:

1. Speeding
2. Anti-Social behaviour
3. Drugs

Priority 1.

"From the list of incidents that have been reported over the December period, I'm glad to say that there have been none for speeding.

There have however been 4 reported incidents of RTC's (road traffic collisions) in the Oswestry rural area. Most of these have been on the fast A roads.

These involve a motorcyclist who had come off his motorbike but luckily had no major injuries. Police took him to the RSH rather than wait for the ambulance. The next resulted in a broken arm and took place at the Maesbury Rd traffic lights.

Another involved a pregnant lady after a 2-car incident just outside Morda. One driver blew over the prescribed level and was arrested and taken to custody.

The next was at the new round about set up at mile End. No injuries reported, but the road was blocked for a short time.

We have also had reports of fallen trees over the period of the storms that hit us quite heavily. Luckily, no damage was caused to travelling vehicles.

We have also received a report of a stolen car, which had actually been lent to a "friend" who then refused to return the car as they hadn't got a replacement for their own car !

A report was made of a drunk driver. The car was not found on our area, so reports were sent out to other local forces for observations.

We've had one report of a car left in a dangerous position in Trefonen. The car had gone by the next morning.

As usual we have a couple of reports of sheep on the roads. As usual they have either made their way back into the field or been removed by the owner.

Priority 2.

We have sadly had one report of ASB which had racial undertones on the area. This will not be tolerated.

Another report was received where a group of males had arrived in a local public house and began upsetting locals. They were removed from the establishment and the owner is looking at banning orders for those involved.

A homeowner / business operator has been using unlicensed and uninsured vehicles on the road and causing problems for neighbours by parking them on public roads. We have currently removed 5 vehicles from him either for no road tax or being uninsured and on the public highway.

Priority 3.

No drugs issues reported

Emerging trends - Requests for information – other."

Members **NOTED** the report

Cllr Martin Jones advised members of a person driving around the village acting suspiciously. Any unusual incidents should be reported to the Police.

2153 Shropshire Council Report

In Cllr Joyce Barrow's absence, The Chairman read the following report:

"The Shropshire leadership team is reducing by a third to deliver a one million savings boost.

A project which will allow environmental experts to monitor bacteria at a bathing spot in the river Severn catchment on a daily basis has won funds from the River Severn Partnership Advanced Wireless Innovation Region. They have also approved an application from the Environment Agency to lease new sensors which will be fitted at a popular swimming spot in Ludlow to monitor bacteria including E. coli. The £25,000 trial will mean the Environment agency can gather readings remotely.

Earlier this month the authority applied to the government for what is called a 'capitalisation direction'. The move allows the council to sell assets, such as buildings, and use the money for revenue costs.

The request to fund our transformation programme has been approved in principle. This creates a clear and safe route through to year end and prepares the ground for further work in the coming financial year, based on outlined in the budget papers."

Cllr Martin Bennett raised concerns with the removal of a layer of senior management and the redistribution of responsibility to the next level of management. He commented that the reduction of salary costs may not be as much as the planned saving. Shropshire Council has announced that to balance the budget it is to receive loans and sell assets. Another Councillor commented this was a short term solution creating a future debt burden.

Members **NOTED** the report.

2154 Public Participation

None

2155 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 30 January 2025 were considered for approval.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the minutes be APPROVED and ADOPTED as a true record. There was one abstention.

2156 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests

In accordance with Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 Members were informed they are personally responsible for deciding whether they should disclose an interest at this meeting. Members were also reminded they should not make decisions with a closed mind and must declare a bias and not vote on matters where their decision could be pre-determined.

Cllr Peter Davies declared an interest in a planning application 25/00536/FUL.

2157 Dispensations

None received

2158 Declarations of Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality

None declared

2159 Planning Matters

Members **NOTED** the following applications.

Planning Application Details	Planning Proposals
24/02960/FUL Pentre Coed Farm, Maesbury Road, Maesbury, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 8HB	Conversion of barns and erection of link extension Decision: Grant Permission

b Planning Applications

To CONSIDER and APPROVE a response to the following December planning applications:

Planning Application Details	Planning Proposals
25/00536/FUL Sheron, Llanforda, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 7HJ.	Construction of agricultural building to house farm machinery with lambing area It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to SUPPORT this application. There was one abstention

***NOTE:** Planning applications not listed above that are received after the issue of this agenda and included on Shropshire Council's website will also be considered to meet response timeframes*

Planning Application Details	Planning Proposals
25/00727/CPL Pennell Cottage, Maesbury Marsh, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 8JB.	Lawful development for proposed Change of use from residential dwelling to holiday let Members AGREED not to comment.

2160 Parish Councils' Collaboration

Cllr Martin Jones advised members many of the local councils were busy with elections. There is more pressing matters including Green Gen. He requested this be progressed after the May election and for the item to be removed from the agenda. Members **AGREED** to this.

2161 Clerk's Report

Members **NOTED** a written report from the Clerk on action taken following decisions made at previous council meetings. Members **NOTED** a significant number of completed actions. The Clerk asked for a volunteer to take over the action outstanding for minute item 1805.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to accept the report.

The Chairman read the following email relating to

1. How many other Councils are in a similar position with the Local Plan not being fit for purpose ?

"Whilst the Council is unable to offer a comprehensive response to this question, we are aware of a number of areas in a similar situation to Shropshire as part of their Local Plan Examination process, with these Councils being required by their Examining Inspectors to undertake further work over a defined period in order to make their Plan sound. We are aware of similar situations currently with Sheffield City Council, Erewash Borough Council and Horsham District Council. We are also aware that in 2024 Solihull Council were required to withdraw their Plan from their Examination due to soundness issues raised by their examining Inspector. Please note, the circumstances in each case will be individual to the area and the issues raised through their Examination process."

2. How much has Shropshire Council spent on office moves (Shire Hall, Riverside, WFH, Guild Hall)

- Current spend on the Shirehall / Guildhall (incurred so far) is £215,822.12
- Current spend on other Office moves is £11,187.47

3. Consultation on waste collection three weekly cycle and the recycling booking system. How much is this expected to save ?

A move to three-weekly collections of general waste could help save the council up to £2m a year and increase the amount of waste that is recycled – helping to meet the Government target of 65% of household waste being recycling by 2035. It would also cut emissions from collection vehicles, helping to reduce carbon.

However, after considering the feedback from the consultation – and with all councils legally required to introduce weekly food waste collections from 2026 – Cabinet has agreed not to consider changes to general waste collections until weekly food waste collections are introduced – sometime in 2026/27.

The expected savings from the Household Waste Recycling Centre booking system operating over a full year were shown in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 at £200k. The amended system now requires bookings for vans and trailers only and is therefore likely to see this figure slightly reduced.

4. Why was the Parish Council was not notified of Cllr Mark Barrow's departure and only became aware of this through a bulletin.

There have been a number of changes to senior management positions across the council effectively reducing the number of director/ assistant director posts from 20 to 12.5, saving over £1m pa. We have tried to communicate these changes as they occur and will endeavour to communicate future changes to responsibilities as appropriate and will make public, key officer names when these have been confirmed. As described in answering the question below, this forms part of our wider Medium Term Financial Strategy (being discussed publicly at council today) and is an essential element of managing services within reduced council finances. I apologise changes to this particular post were not communicated with you directly.

5. What is happening with the Planning Department as a whole.

Response "We are currently implementing a wide restructuring programme of key areas of the council to ensure that we can continue to deliver essential services. Any changes to the Planning Department will be communicated publicly as appropriate. The new operating model and an outline, high level structure of departments within the council will be discussed at full council today, as will the Medium-Term Financial Strategy outlining how services will be delivered within the budget available for the financial year 25/26.

Cllr Iain Campbell requested question 4 be asked again with Cllr Martin Jones stating it contradicted the update provided by Cllr Joyce Barrow.

The Clerk advised a response had been received from the Legal Department at Shropshire Council following a letter seeking clarity on the context of the legal advice given to a former Councillor. Cllr Martin Bennett will provide further information to the Clerk. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

2162 Financial Matters

a) Members considered approval income and expenditure to 28 February 2025, I & E Balances and forecasted outturn to 31 March 2025.

The Clerk advised there had been a couple of amendments and noted the revised invoice and credit note from Scottish Power

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the income and expenditure to 28 February 2025 and the balance of income received to date of £58,672.83 and gross expenditure to date of £67,523.69 be APPROVED. Members NOTED and APPROVED the forecasted outturn position for 2024/25.

b) Bank Reconciliation

Members considered for approval the bank reconciliation at 31 January 2025.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the bank reconciliation statement to the end of January 2025 totalling £230,976.49 be APPROVED.

c) Provisional Payment February 2025

Members considered the following provisional Payments for February 2025:

Supplier	Details	Gross £
Shropshire Council	Coed y Go Speed reduction scheme - final payment	9,825.21
Scottish Power	Reversal of electricity charges 30/09/2024 - 31/12/2024	-947.27
Scottish Power	Revised Electricity charges 30/09/2024 - 01/12/2025	638.51
EE	Mobile charges 11/01/2025 - 10/02/2025	14.81
HSBC	Bank charges - 30/12/2024 - 29/01/2025	8.00
Mark Evans	Bus shelter Cleaning February 2025	60.00
Colin Turner	Bus shelter Cleaning February 2025	25.00
K Lloyd - The Clerk	Clerk's pay and allowances February 2025	1,594.86
HMRC	PAYE / NI Clerk Pay February 2025	309.90
K Lloyd - The Clerk	Reimbursement - Postage for agendas and associated papers February 2025.	26.65
Cllr Martin Bennett	Reimbursement - Land registry documentation (Post Office)	14.00
Printerland co UK	Xerox High Capacity 2 Black cartridges	173.45
K Lloyd - The Clerk	Reimbursement - A4 Copy paper x 2	7.98
K Lloyd - The Clerk	10 First Class Stamps	16.50
		11,767.60

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the provisional payments for February 2025 be approved.

2163 Earmarked Reserves

Councillor Iain Campbell advised members that prior to Trefarclawdd Farm applications, the Parish Council had set aside funding for potential judicial reviews / legal advice. This funding has since been unallocated and he requested members considered making a provision of £30k to act as a deterrent. He noted that should circumstances change, this funding could be drawn down from for other purposes.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to allocated £30k from the general reserve for specialist advice and potential Judicial Review cases with a caveat to draw down from these funds when necessary.

2164 Annual Parish and Annual General Meeting Date

a) Members considered a new date for the Annual Parish Meeting (APM). The Clerk advised this should take place between the 1 March and 1 June. Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC) had recommended not holding this meeting during Purdah.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to set the 28 May 2025 for the APM.

b) The Clerk advised members the date of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Parish Council has to be rearranged due to the forthcoming election. The meeting must take place within 14 days of the election and by 21 May 2025.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED for the AGM to take place on Thursday 15 May 2025.

2165 Resignations and Vacancy

a) Members **NOTED** the resignation of Cllr Chris Woods.

b) The Chairman advised members the Council was not required to advertise the vacancy for Trefonen with Treflach due to an election being held within six months of the resignation.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED not to advertise the vacancy.

c) Members considered the appointment of a Councillor to the Cemetery Working Group to replace Cllr Chris Woods.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED not to appointment until after the AGM.

2166 Purdah and Election

a) Members **NOTED** Purdah commences 10 March 2025 until The Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council

b) The Clerk advised slides from recent election training and details of Key election dates have been circulated. The Clerk is waiting to receive nomination packs from Shropshire Council. The Chairman provided a short update on completing the nomination forms including referees. The Clerk reiterated completed nomination forms must be received by 3 April 2025 at 4.00pm. The Clerk will send further information out as and when it is received.

2167 Road Safety Group

Cllr Martin Bennett advised members he had circulated a report. An enquiry has been made in relation to Stoney Road and some information received from Shropshire Council. A site inspection is required which Cllr Martin Bennett will conduct. A Councillor advised the Llansilin Road is unclassified.

Members **NOTED** a request from a resident proposing a 30mph speed limit from Oswestry to Maesbury. This is very unlikely to happen. There is space for a pavement but based on the current Financial situation at Shropshire Council this is unlikely to happen.

b) The Road Working Group will meet via zoom to discuss road safety issues on Llansylin Road. A report will be provided at the next meeting for members to consider.

2168 Cemetery Working Group

No further update.

2169 Environment Working Group

Cllr Martin Jones advised members no water testing has been conducted this month. He has spoken to local schools and colleges regarding computer design with test results. This cannot be considered currently due to forthcoming examinations. However this could be a project for consideration next year.

b. Trefarclawdd Farm

Cllr Martin Bennett provided an update to members advising he had been reviewing the documentation on the Planning Portal and National Planning Polices. He has circulated an update on the Manure Management Plan. He stated his disappointed in National Bodies who have shown little or no thoughts to a response to this application. He is equally disappointed on the responses from Shropshire Council and the lack of engagement with residents by the North Shropshire MP despite a number of invitations. The Chairman confirmed the application is not going to the North Planning Committee on 18 March 2025 although it should be called in given the material considerations raised by the Parish Council. Cllr Martin Bennett has drafted a response to the application which has been circulated to members. He asked members for approval for this to be submitted. There was a brief discussion on the lack of a business plan. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED for the proposed response to be submitted. There was one objection.** Cllr Martin Bennett asked for a notice of motion in his name. Members **AGREED** to this.

2170 Possible closure of Oswestry Post Office

Cllr Martin Bennett advised members there was no further update and is awaiting the announcement by the Post Office in March 2025. He has asked Helen Morgan MP than Councillors are notified in advance.

2171 Future Oswestry Group Meeting

Cllr Martin Bennett advised members of the Future Oswestry Group Meeting details of which have been circulated to members. He felt local parish may wish to be invited to this and advised he will take this forward through the Oswestry Area Committee (OAC). Cllr Martin Jones commented on item 3 Railway Station building advising it was originally intended for this to be given to Cambrian Railway Trust. He noted Shropshire Council have £200k spent on scaffolding and works to make the building safe. Members **AGREED** to leave questions for the OAC.

2172 Social Media

Cllr Richard Fowler provided an update. He requested members provide any useful information which can be shared via the various social media. He requested members follow ORPC on Facebook.

2173 Website

Cllr Richard Fowler provided an update to members. He has received responses from four providers regarding the migration of the existing website. He requested permission to progress this forward. Members **AGREED** to this and **NOTED** it may take some time to review all options.

2174 Newsletter

Members **AGREED** to postpone the Parish newsletter until after the Annual General Meeting. It will depend on makeup of the Council after the election and what its priorities will be.

2175 Correspondence

- a) The Chairman advised members Rebecca Greenham had sent a card of thanks after receiving The Tonys' Community Service Award glass trophy. Members **NOTED** this.
- b) The Chairman advised members an invitation from The Montgomery Canal Trust for a representative to attend the tree planting event being held on 22nd March 2025 had been received. An additional invitation has also been received to attend an event on 4 April 2025. Members **AGREED** for Cllr Martin Bennett to attend both events on behalf of the Parish Council.
- c) Members **NOTED** a grant application from Rhydycroesau Village Hall for defibrillator pads.
- d) The Chairman advised members an email from a resident in Morda had been received advising of his wife's litter picking efforts. The Clerk advised the original email had been sent to the Town Council. The Clerk has advised the resident of the Tonys' Community Service Award and suggested a nomination is submitted when the award is advertised in 2025. Members **AGREED** for a letter of thanks to be sent.
- e) Members **NOTED** a nominations request to attend the Buckingham Palace Garden Party on 7 May 2025.

2176 Consultations

- a) Cllr Iain Campbell advised members he attended a meeting his evening regarding the Vyrnwy Frankton Project. Representatives from Bute Energy and Green Gen were in present. He established only 5% of the proposals will be underground in Wales. This is at the beginning point and by a wind farm so necessity as part of the groundworks. He stated the Council should ask pointed questions and would like a letter to Helen Morgan MP regarding concerns, lack of underground cabling and to request she raises concerns with. Cllr Martin Jones suggested whilst engaging with the MP, the Council asks for engagement with The Minister for Energy. The Clerk confirmed this was already done last year. There was a suggestion for a Zoom meeting / one of the Town Hall meeting where this can be discussed further.
- b) Members **NOTED** the SALC / SLCC Parish & Town Council Survey. The Clerk advised the survey have been circulated to members and asked for input in completing this.

2177 Date for Next Meeting

Member **NOTED** the next meeting will place on Thursday 27 March 2025 at Trefonen Village Hall

PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the above Act and due to the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted it will be PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the public and press should not be present

2178 Planning Enforcement

Cllr Martin Bennett provided an update and read out an email received earlier from an Enforcement Officer at Shropshire Council.

He advised he had reviewed the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 106 and has raised a question about whether a condition can be attached whereby a sum of money is given to the Parish Council to cover the cost of monitoring the effects from the development.

Members **NOTED** hard data is required as evidence and that time and dates of activity are reported.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.25 pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____

The Chairman