



WEM TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Report

2009/2010



2009/10

Mayor-Cllr Douglas Cooley
Deputy Mayor-Cllr Mandy Meakin

2010/11

Mayor-Cllr Mandy Meakin
Deputy Mayor-Cllr Edward Towers

ANOTHER civic year, 2009 to 2010, and another set of problems, but also much for Wem Town Council to be optimistic about in lots of spheres.

Issues for the Town Council were as numerous and wide-ranging as ever.

For instance, take **April** early in the municipal year. Attention was quite suddenly focussed on the Whitchurch Road cemetery/burial ground, mainly because of the formation of a Friends' group committed to improving the cemetery's appearance while acknowledging the valuable work previously done by volunteers. A works' programme and the desired improvements gradually emerged during the year, with the Town Council playing a part when asked.

The council's own responsibilities towards public open spaces and play areas were also to the fore as members decided on ways of tackling litter and broken glass—and tree maintenance. It was minuted how a Chartered Forester had been impressed with the condition of trees in the Town Council's ownership.

Installation of a comprehensive CCTV system was into its stride, the Mayor at the time (Councillor Pauline Dee) pointing out how the scheme would be welcomed by residents "as the fear of crime is an important issue locally."

And councillors were trying to find a resolution to the continuing

closure of the public lavatories on the Recreation Ground (come the end of the financial year and they were still shut!).

Plans were made for an Armed Forces' Day to be marked with the flying of flags on the front of the Town Hall and this duly took place on June 22, 2009.

Also in a busy April the Town Council discussed moving its monthly meetings from the Senior Club in Chapel Street to Edinburgh House, a satellite of the new Shropshire Council. However, members agreed that ceremonial oak furniture should remain in the clerk's office in Maypole Court.

What was to become one of the year's most contentious issues first reared its head. News broke of how Network Rail planned to control the local railway level crossing remotely—from a distant Cardiff! Yet it was accepted that the Wem crossing was, in terms of road layout, one of the most complicated in the area.

Efforts to get Network Rail to re-think the whole idea dragged on throughout the year and into a new municipal year.

A multitude of planning issues occupied members' time. How diverse can be judged from discussions in **May** about trees overhanging and obscuring a street light in Cinder Lane between the Recreation Ground and Shrubbery Gardens, about wheelchair users' difficulties negotiating local pavements, about rainwater

"ponding" in Station Road and about the difficulty large vehicles were said to have in negotiating Maund's corner in High Street.

The annual parish meeting this month heard about the new Transition Town Initiative with its main aims of raising awareness of global warming and to reduce the carbon footprint.

May also saw the hand-over between retiring and incoming Town Mayors. The outgoing Cllr Pauline Dee said a great deal had been achieved due to the "cohesiveness" of the Town Council, while new Mayor Councillor Douglas Cooley pledged to do his best for Wem.

In **June** the Shropshire Council's new community regeneration officer for Wem and its surrounds was introduced to members. His role: to liaise effectively with and to listen to the views of local committees.

Not for the first time safety concerns were raised about the relatively new traffic roundabout and adjoining pedestrian crossing in Aston Street. It was a topic that simply refused to go away...

It was resolved to invite Mr Alan Denison and Mr Larry Jenkins to become Honorary Townsmen in recognition of their dedicated service as officers of Wem Sports and Social Association. The duo went on to accept and to receive their certificates at special functions.

THE YEAR CONTINUES INSIDE

2009 to 2010? AN "OK YEAR" continued...

The council cemented relations with the Friends of Whitchurch Road Cemetery in **July** by making a £500 contribution to the group—although at the same time it warned **all** local groups that requests for funding of this nature should be submitted in time for the Town Council's rate estimates meeting in January.

In **August** anxious councillors began discussions over the apparently uncertain future of Royal Mail's local sorting office and it was felt that the presence of a representative of Royal Mail at a future meeting would be helpful.

Closer links between the Town Council and the local Chamber of Commerce were being forged in **September**, when the traders' chairman, Mrs Connie Granger, accepted an invitation to that month's meeting to spark a discussion about needing to promote Wem and to encourage shopkeepers to open their premises for longer periods and special events. Perhaps significantly, Mrs Granger was subsequently co-opted onto the Town Council (see elsewhere in this report).

One of the more controversial planning applications was put before members for their views and comment. It was for the building of 12 houses to form a mini-estate in Church Lane. Councillors decided on lodging with Shropshire Council a strong objection to the proposed scheme—and eventually the application was withdrawn.

Shropshire Council proposals for a 20mph restriction in Wem town centre streets emerged and gradually took shape over subsequent months.

In **October** town councillors took a careful item-by-item look at the Shropshire Council's Local Devel-

opment Framework Consultation document, a blueprint—it used to be called the Local Plan—for development across the county, including Wem. And they responded with a whole raft of reactions to the document's wide-ranging options.

The Town Council decided on a move away from the Senior Club for its monthly meetings, opting instead for the former NSDC Council Chamber in Edinburgh House as its base for meetings. However, before leaving, members were warm in their appreciation of the Senior Club's assistance over recent years.

The question of what to do to curb damage from passing heavy vehicles to the Parish Church wall on the junction of Mill Street/High Street reared its head once more. The Town Council heard how the Parochial Church Council had agreed to gift some land to Shropshire Council to enable some highway works to be done. Even the installation of traffic lights on the junction was discussed, but there were concerns about the congestion that might be caused.

The future of the local Royal Mail Sorting Office was again on the agenda in **November**, when councillors continued to press for a face-to-face with a Royal Mail rep, while pointing out that "the Sorting Office ought not to be closed before any public consultation has been undertaken."

An unusual item came up for consideration. It was a factory blaze at Aston Park Industrial Estate—not strictly a Town Council issue, more to do with the Rural Parish Council—but the widespread effects of drifting fumes and smoke made it an item of worry. Town Council responses involved inclusion of the Environ-

ment Agency. After a relatively quiet **December**, it was all systems go in **January**.

The eyesore that was the boarded up White Horse Hotel greeting townspeople and visitors alike on the High Street/Mill Street junction was discussed because of a planning application to convert at least part of the premises into three residential units and considerable alterations to the property. Councillors agreed on qualified support for the plans.

The Better Welcome Project entered councillors' thoughts as proposals were submitted for a virtual trail of mosaic murals. One site suggested for one of the pieces of artwork just happened to be the wall of the closed public toilet block on the Recreation Ground—timely because this month the Town Council decided to press Shropshire Council for action over this and other public loos in the town.

In a report by local members of Shropshire Council it was said that action was being taken to try and improve the town centre's appearance, particularly a couple of empty High Street properties—notably the former Martin's Newsagents and The White Horse Hotel.

The concept of the lorry parking area with its adjoining recycling facilities being transformed into a market square began to take more shape, with public consultation processes at the forefront.

A meeting was at last obtained with Network Rail representatives for a full discussion about controversial proposals for a remote control system for the railway level crossing set to happen in November 2011.

Continued opposite

Councillors made their feelings plain on the basis of "a great deal of local concern" about plans to control the dropping and lifting of the crossing barriers from so far away (Cardiff!).

With, by now, the refurbished Town Hall up and running once more, councillors welcomed in February two of the hall's administrators for a progress report.

Wem Civic Society's plan to commemorate the names of two

late office holders by installing a central handrail at the War Memorial steps off High Street was endorsed.

There was an indication that Shropshire Council might scrap the local community skip service, despite its extensive use and value to townspeople, and a letter of objection was agreed.

In March withdrawal of the skip service was indeed confirmed, prompting more letters of protest to, among others, MP Mr Owen

Paterson and Shropshire Council's chief executive.

However, the civic year still ended on a high note with a report on how the town's CCTV scheme had been successfully completed through "excellent partnership working between the Town Council, local police and the contractor." The work had ensured "a very satisfactory completion and was proving very worthwhile for community safety issues," councillors were told. □

IN OUTLINE—BELOW, A LOOK AT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S FINANCES

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT YEAR END II 2009/2010

Year Ending 31.3.09	INCOME	Year Ending 31.3.10
183,931.00	Precept	200,670.00
7,321.80	Bank Interest	217.70
4,050.00	Cemetery Fees	4,600.00
816.00	Allotment rents	866.50
62,381.00	Grants (Play Equip, CCTV)	0.00
2,745.09	Recycling Credits	2,174.22
115.95	Story of Wem	115.95
59,975.00	PWLB Loan (Public Ltd)	0.00
<u>3,995.82</u>	Miscellaneous	<u>4,135.94</u>
325,331.66	TOTAL INCOME	212,780.31
	EXPENDITURE	
69,287.50	Public Lighting Schemes	0.00
12,687.29	Public Lighting	16,268.76
2,748.71	Allotments & Burial Grounds	7,823.49
17,200.00	Recreation Grounds -WSSA	17,650.00
67,068.10	Recreation Grounds -Other	19,565.86
61,414.95	Salaries and Wages	73,852.32
16,827.45	Administration	20,221.53
0.00	Election Expenses	0.00
1,500.00	Mayor's Allowance	1,500.00
475.00	Hospitality Allowance	450.00
8,501.50	S137 Contributions	11,461.50
2,144.41	Floral Planters	2,429.12
2,529.19	Wem Town Hall - Loan Charges	2,373.44
15,000.00	Wem Town Hall - Cont.	20,000.00
550.83	Petty Cash	559.79
1,237.85	Recycling Charges	1,186.78
23,168.17	Wem Swimming Pool	30,300.95
93.00	Story of Wem	88.00
18,074.40	CCTV Scheme (part)	17,713.20
<u>6,422.85</u>	Miscellaneous	<u>231.60</u>
326,931.20	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	243,676.34
369,096.93	Balance 1.4.2009	367,497.39
<u>325,331.66</u>	Add income	<u>212,780.31</u>
694,428.59		580,277.70
<u>326,931.20</u>	Less Expenditure	<u>243,676.34</u>
367,497.39		336,601.36

WEM TOWN COUNCIL meets on the last Thursday of every month—except in December— **at Edinburgh House, New Street**, at 7.15pm. The council always welcomes electors' comments and suggestions and has time designated at the start of each monthly meeting for questions from any members of the public caring to attend.

THE PRESENT (2010/2011) TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP IS:

EAST WARD:

		Tel	E-mail
Douglas Cooley	Charleston, The Plantation, SY4 5TL	236654	d.d.cooley@btinternet.com
Pauline Dee	17, Chapel Street, SY4 5ER	233037	pauline.dee@shropshire.gov.uk
Mandy Meakin	5, Station Road, SY4 5BJ	234834	
Chris Mellings	37, Kynaston Drive, SY4 5DE	234877	chris.mellings@shropshire.gov.uk
Clive Shingler	Lower Lacon Caravan Park, SY4 5RP	232376	clive@llcp.co.uk
Edward Towers	8, Fismes Way, SY4 5YD	235283	edwardtowers@btinternet.com
Nancy Wilson	7, Cordwell Park, SY4 5BD	233563	

WEST WARD:

Thelma Broom	27 Isherwood Way	234962	
Peter Broomhall	Sunnyside, 3 Swain Close SY4 5NZ	232573	peterbroomhall@fsmail.net
Peggy Carson	70, Station Road, SY4 5BL	233581	
Philip Glover	Foxley Villa, Love Lane SY4 5QP	02030911410	
*Connie Granger	1 Barnfield Avenue SY4 5HT	236460	constancegranger123@btinternet.com
John Murray	6, Marlcroft, SY4 5AN	232007	wemtreactle@mypostoffice.co.uk
Les Phillips	Samwyn, Moreton St, Prees, SY13 2EQ	01948-840882	

***Co-opted in a casual vacancy in the new civic year, 2010/2011, following the resignation on health grounds of Councillor Chris Keane**

SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLORS

Chris Mellings	37 Kynaston Drive, SY4 5DE	234877	chris.mellings@shropshire.gov.uk
Pauline Dee	17 Chapel Street, SY4 5ER	233037	pauline.dee@shropshire.gov.uk

CLERK AND TREASURER: Jane Drummond, Town Council Office, 8, Maypole Court, High Street, SY4 5AA—tel 232733. **E-mail: info@wem.gov**



NEW FACES

WEM Town Council regretted the loss of two members, but went on to warmly welcome two new councillors as successors in the town's West Ward in 2009/2010.

First of all, Mrs Maureen Herring stepped down after six years as a town councillor. An election was called for by the requisite 10 electors and the subsequent poll in December saw Mr Peter Broomhall, a local man for over 40 years and a member of the former North Shropshire District Council for nine years, win the voting ahead of four other candidates.

Then in January Mr Philip Glover, with his own business as a local High Street shopkeeper from 1999, joined the Town Council when a casual vacancy was caused by the resignation of Councillor Mrs Pam Highmore, a member since about 1993 and a former Town Mayor.

Mr Glover was co-opted after a secret ballot when four applicants made up the list of people wishing to be considered for the seat.

Mrs Herring and Mrs Highmore both stepped down for personal and family reasons. □



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