



# WEM TOWN COUNCIL

## Annual Report

### 2008/09



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Mayor-Cllr Pauline Dee  
Deputy Mayor-Cllr Douglas Cooley

2009/10

Mayor-Cllr Douglas Cooley  
Deputy Mayor-Cllr Mandy Meakin

RECESSION or not, local democracy still has to function, rather like the old axiom, "The show must go on."

Not that there was much of a dramatic nature in Wem Town Council's year, April 2008 to April 2009. If the previous 12 months were rightly described as "nearer the norm" than the past year was, indeed, "normal." The long-running saga of the Town Hall and the seemingly ever-present question, "When is it re-opening?" was even still occupying councillors' thoughts, if not their discussions.

More mundane planning issues were in mind when in April 2008 councillors were urging strong opposition to proposals for more housing on land directly opposite the former Wem Mill. During public question time it was made clear how townspeople generally shared councillors' views that there were worries about building on a flood plain and the extra traffic the development would create. In the face of such opposition the application was eventually refused permission by North Shropshire District Council.

At the same time the redevelopment of the former mill itself as apartments with extensions to the side and rear was going on apace—until, that is, late in the council's year when work came to an abrupt halt. A victim of the recession? It appeared so.

Councillors continued looking at ways of improving the town's CCTV coverage and at the considerable costs involved.

Traffic speeds were in sharp focus in May when the then Shropshire County Council submitted proposals for a 20mph limit in the town centre and while there were some regrets that the scheme wasn't spread wide enough members awaited progress with interest.

When Mayor Councillor Nancy Wilson stepped down she reflected on her pride in Wem and how, in her year of office, townspeople had helped her raise £1,605 for three local youth groups.

The Town Council's reference to an old tithe map for names for new housing estates came into play again for the extension to Harris Croft, members deciding on Bridgfields and Lower Meadow for two of the new roads.

Like so many other towns, Wem has suffered through the closure of licensed premises and this prompted a council discussion and fears of an adverse impact on employment and social activity before a decision to write to public house operators warning them of the consequences.

A new group, Friends of the Whitchurch Road Cemetery (or Churchyard), emerged in June and the Town Council was happy to enter into discussions about two main issues—the cemetery's short-term maintenance and a longer term plan.

Back to the more mundane and councillors were warned about NSDC's possible removal of a public seat on the car park in Mill Street because of alleged anti-social behaviour by some young people.

Local councillors were generally opposed to the potential loss of a community facility through the activities of a minority. They advised NSDC that they preferred the seat to be retained—a view which eventually prevailed.

Public question time ahead of the July council meeting turned the spotlight on the contentious mini-roundabout in Aston Street on the junction with the new housing development on the ex-Isherwood site and the railway station car park opposite The Albion pub. It was claimed the roundabout would cause difficulties, especially for larger vehicles and for drivers using the station car park. However, engineers remained confident the new roundabout would work, given time and if drivers were willing to educate themselves in the correct use of this new traffic control.

The Town Council's close links with Wem Sports and Social Association have been well documented over the years, so it was with some concern when councillors and association members had to think about the group's future when it was faced with difficulties trying to find replacements for ageing officers. For the rest of the municipal year the council and association worked towards a mutually acceptable solution, which included the Town Council clerk (Mrs Jane Drummond) taking on the key duties of the association's financial management.

*Inside:*

*More of the council's year.....*

This Annual Report can only be a “taster” of Wem Town Council’s myriad of items and topics discussed month in, month out. However, council minutes are available for perusal at the council office, 8 Maypole Court, off High Street, and a public question session precedes business of meetings held in Wem Senior Club, Chapel Street, at 7.15pm on the last Thursday of every month—except in December.

The issue of street cleaning is never far off the agenda and it was no surprise when councillors got to talking about “hotspots” – i.e., areas needing special attention when it came to dirt and litter. The council complained particularly about Station Road and its junction with Shrubbery Gardens, Drawwell Walk and the Cinder Lane footpath from the Recreation Ground to Shrubbery Gardens.

Damage from passing heavy vehicles to the Parish Church wall on the Mill Street/High Street junction continued to exercise minds and it was generally agreed that one measure—the laying of special kerbstones—wasn’t resolving the problem. Councillors could only accept assurances that the then County Council would “investigate other solutions.”

In **August** councillors received a RoSPA report on play equipment on the Recreation Ground and the local play areas, which they agreed was thorough and impressive, leading to thanks to the clerk (Mrs Jane Drummond) and groundsman (Mr John Ralphs) for “all their hard work and commitment in maintaining such high standards for these areas.”

A visitor wrote questioning the level of maintenance accorded the grave and memorial in the Whitchurch Road cemetery of sweet pea pioneer Henry Eckford. It surprised town councillors too well aware of the care and attention given to the plot by one of the Honorary Townsmen, especially at times of the Eckford Sweet Pea Show. For good measure the council agreed to write with the visitor’s observations to the new group, the

Friends of Whitchurch Road Cemetery, the Eckford Sweet Pea Society and the Parochial Church Council.

Of course, the Town Council has allotments in Love Lane next to the cemetery, but are they sufficient to meet demand? Almost certainly not, so it was decided to tell NSDC of what local councillors considered was a pressing need for more Wem allotment land

In **September** much talk and discussion began to reap rewards when local police told councillors that work had started on improving and extending the town’s CCTV coverage. It was hoped that the scheme would be completed by the end of the year—and, indeed, it was.

The hard work of the Friends’ group at the swimming centre was once more noted in **October**. At the same time the Friends thanked the Town Council for its continued financial support and showed members a national award the centre had just won.

The council looked into the possibility of it holding a formal street licence to give it more control over street vendors selling what might be considered as “unsuitable goods” on the likes of Carnival Day. However, it was felt the issue needed thorough investigation because of issues like enforcement, so it was deferred until the new financial year.

The post of school crossing patrol officer in New Street was reluctantly deleted as a County Council duty. This followed failure of a final appeal to a volunteer to fill the post. Coincidentally, it seemed townspeople had expressed no complaints about the lack of a

school crossing patrol at what was generally recognised as a busy junction en route to and from the Primary School.

It was pointed out that a formal inspection of trees on Town Council-owned land had never been undertaken, so it was agreed that a comprehensive survey should be conducted by tree specialists.

The need for a plan for future refurbishment of seats and the Station Road boundary fencing on the Recreation Ground was highlighted. But accepted as “a large and probably expensive project,” it was decided that it should be only considered during the 2009/10 financial year with a view to implementation in 2010/11.

New parking restrictions in Noble Street—following its resurfacing work—were debated in November, when it was accepted that proposals had divided the residents in their views. The possibility of “residents only” parking was considered—and discarded.

Re that damage to the Parish Church wall in Mill Street caused by passing HGVs which was on the July agenda: it was reported in **November** that the County Council was to try setting the wall back slightly from the roadway.

And the new road layout in Aston Street on the junction with the new housing estate on the former Isherwood’s land continued to be debated without any firm conclusions.

On the basis—taking one councillor’s view—that “a quality council should have a quality meeting room,” it was suggested in **December** that the Town Council should use the council chamber in

**WEM TOWN COUNCIL**

**INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT YEAR ENDIN 2008/2009**

Year Ending 31.3.08	INCOME	Year Ending 31.3.09
180,060.00	Precept	183,931.00
11,997.59	Bank Interest	7,321.80
5,240.00	Cemetery Fees	4,050.00
834.50	Allotment rents	816.00
9,000.00	Grants (Play Equip, CCTV)	62,381.00
2,411.59	Recycling Credits	2,745.09
115.95	Story of Wem	115.95
0.00	PWLB Loan (Public Ltg)	59,975.00
4,408.50	Miscellaneous	<u>3,995.82</u>
214,068.13	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>325,331.66</b>
 <b>EXPENDITURE</b> 		
0.00	Public Lighting Schemes	69,287.50
10,643.37	Public Lighting	12,687.29
9,774.87	Allotments & Burial Grounds	2,748.71
16,000.00	Recreation Grounds -WSSA	17,200.00
29,730.28	Recreation Grounds -Other	67,068.10
57,874.44	Salaries and Wages	61,414.95
20,731.75	Administration	16,827.45
156.80	Election Expenses	0.00
1,500.00	Mayor's Allowance	1,500.00
470.00	Hospitality Allowance	475.00
9,426.50	S137 Contributions	8,501.50
1,916.68	Floral Planters	2,144.41
2,684.94	Wem Town Hall - Loan Charges	2,529.19
5,000.00	Wem Town Hall - Cont.	15,000.00
629.99	Petty Cash	550.83
1,449.17	Recycling Charges	1,237.85
33,437.12	Wem Swimming Pool	23,168.17
93.00	Story of Wem	93.00
0.00	CCTV Scheme (part)	18,074.40
1,627.35	Miscellaneous (inc Refund)	<u>6,422.85</u>
203,146.26	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>326,931.20</b>
358,175.06	Balance 1.4.2009	369,096.93
<u>214,068.13</u>	Add income	<u>325,331.66</u>
572,243.19		694,428.59
<u>203,146.26</u>	Less Expenditure	<u>326,931.20</u>
369,096.93		<b>367,497.39</b>

Edinburgh House for future meetings following NSDC's absorption into the new Shropshire Council. Members agreed to express the Town Council's interest to the new council in hiring the council chamber, to ask about charges and also about the chances of the Town Council being able to store and use its own furniture at Edinburgh House.

The cost of the town's improved CCTV system emerged in *January*, when quotations totalling £32,144

from a contractor specialising in microwave systems and recommended by West Mercia Police were accepted.

In *February*, town square proposals re-emerged from the distant past with explanations from a consultant about possibilities for such an area, using the existing lorry park on the main car park and available funding of £120k to £170k.

Months of preparation for an extra member of staff came to fruition and in *March* the successful applicant for

the new post of part-time administrative assistant, Mrs Sue Thornhill, was welcomed and introduced to councillors.

Recognition of previous Town Mayors with a lapel badge similar to that given to Honorary Townspeople was discussed. It was accepted that past Mayors' names were listed on the chain of office and the Honours Board, but while the idea was agreed in principle it was felt it needed more discussion.

## The present Wem Town Council membership is:

EAST WARD:		TEL
Douglas Cooley	Charleston, The Plantation, SY4 5TL d.dcooley@btinternet.com	236654
Pauline Dee	17, Chapel Street, SY4 5ER paulinedee@btinternet.com	233037
Mandy Meakin	5, Station Road, SY4 5BQ	234834
Chris Mellings	37, Kynaston Drive, SY4 5DE chris.mellings@shropshire.gov.uk	234877
Clive Shingler	Lower Lacon Caravan Park, SY4 5JD clive@llcp.co.uk	232376
Edward Towers	8, Fismes Way, SY4 5YD edwardtowers@btinternet.com	235283
Nancy Wilson	7, Cordwell Park, SY4 5BD	233563
WEST WARD:		
Thelma Broom	27, Isherwood Way, SY4 5FA	234962
Peggy Carson	70, Station Road, SY4 5BL	233581
Maureen Herring	97, Pym's Road, SY4 5UU	233796
Pam Highmore	118, High Street, SY4 5TT hghwem@supanet.com	234430
Chris Keane	5, Market Street, SY4 5EA ckeaneuk@aol.com	234714
John Murray	6, Marlcroft, SY4 5AN jon.murray@.uk	232007
Les Phillips	Samwyn, Moreton St, Prees, SY13 2EQ	01948-840882

## THE RESHAPED WEM DIVISION'S REPRESENTATIVES ON THE NEW SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL (ELECTED JUNE 2009) ARE:

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

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



8 Maypole Court