



WEM TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Report

2010/2011



<p>2010/2011 Mayor-Cllr Mandy Meakin Deputy Mayor-Cllr Edward Towers</p>	<p>2011/2012 Mayor-Cllr Edward Towers Deputy Mayor-Cllr Peter Broomhall</p>
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THE municipal year 2010/2011 might have gone down in history for its worst winter in living memory, but this did not mean Wem Town Council's work went into cold storage (although there was plenty of ice about for this to happen!).

Far from it. The year was one of the most testing, including as it did the need to face up to Shropshire Council's imposition of charges on local car parks against the background of a continued recession affecting the local economy and townspeople in general.

In recent years Wem Swimming Pool has rarely been far off the council's agenda and it made an early appearance in *April* after the facility's operating firm decided to quit. It was revealed that talks had opened with a possible successor to run the pool—the not-for-profit trust, Teme Leisure. Were they successful? See later in this "diary" for the answer.

Relatively close to the pool, so-called "boy racers" were causing complaints with their alleged behaviour on the Butler Centre car park. Meetings involving local residents and the youngsters were called for and arranged.

A discussion this month led to consideration by the Environment Committee of a sugges-

tion that an open-air gymnasium should be sited on the local Recreation Ground (in the long run the idea was dropped).

The idea of converting the lorry park and the area of the recycling banks into a town/market square continued to get an airing—although this too failed to materialise.

Irrespective of this eventual outcome, the town square proposals were fully explained on behalf of the Shropshire Council at the annual parish meeting in *May*. One significant fact to emerge: funding of £150,000 had been allocated for the project.

The annual council meeting also in May saw the installation of Cllr Mrs Mandy Meakin as Mayor. Saying that she had "a very serious commitment to Wem," she added an appeal to fellow councillors to act together as a team for the town's benefit.

Retiring Mayor Cllr Douglas Cooley reflected on the council's move to the Council Chamber in Edinburgh House for its monthly meetings and suggested this made it worthy of its Quality Council re-



COLD SNAP: A severe winter coincided with a continuing cold economic climate

accreditation.

Shropshire Council's Local Development Framework, or the Local Plan as it used to be known, came on to the agenda in *June* alongside further consideration of the town square proposals. The framework document set out a target of 500 to 1,000 new Wem homes over a 20-year period. Town councillors expressed their preference for the higher target, pressed for maximum employment land designation and construction of a Shawbury Road/Aston Road link as a priority. However, these were just a few of the reactions to the framework's far-reaching proposals.

As for the town square plan, town councillors favoured improvements to the lorry park area, but had strong reservations about many other aspects of the scheme.

CONTINUED INSIDE

CONTROVERSY NEVER FAR AWAY IN 2010/2011

It was an auspicious night—also in *June*—when at a special meeting councillors decided on a partnership with Teme Leisure in the running of the swimming pool.

The same month re-accreditation of the Town Council's Quality Status was confirmed—hence the continued use of the Q logo in the masthead of this report and other council documents.

During more consideration of the town square idea one member claimed that £40,000 had been unnecessarily spent on consultants' fees, but this figure was denied. It was said to be more like £2,000-£3,000.

Following closely on a fume-creating major fire in a tyre factory at Aston Park Industrial Estate, a public meeting for an explanation of what had happened and the idea that another time a mass evacuation of the town might be necessary was pressed for in July.

Ambitious proposals for what was described as Extra Care Housing on land off Wemsbrook came to the fore. The council's support in principle was subject to a considerable list of provisos and local residents were urged to make their own views known to Shropshire Council planners.

The controversial issue of introducing car parking charges on the town's three Shropshire Council-owned car parks raised its (ugly?) head in *July* in the guise of the county authority's Draft Parking

Strategy.

Almost immediately, the Town Council resolved to strongly object to the imposition of parking charges "as the town's economy is too fragile to sustain such charges." It also observed that the income would probably fall short of the scheme's actual costs and would only encourage shoppers and other people to park on the streets, or to travel to shops and businesses in Harlescott, Shrewsbury.

Some weeks later the Town Council found itself unable to fund an annual subsidy of £55,350 requested by Shropshire Council to avoid car parking charges.

The final scenario saw the emergence of coin machines, charges and regulations in time for the new financial year—starting All Fools' Day.

The quieter holiday month of *August* had the Town Council discussing lots of less controversial items, including a "great deal" of continuing public concern about the effects of the Aston Park factory blaze and the need for a public meeting to allay fears.

Also, the "deteriorating condition" of the former Morgan Library building in Aston Street prompted comment. It was explained the matter was with Shropshire Council Property Services after some confusion over who was responsible for the maintenance work.

And the Town Council approved the clerk (Mrs Jane Drummond) giving temporary secretarial assistance to one of its "partners," the Sports and Social Association, following the latter's loss of its long-serving secretary, Mrs Lyn Hinton, while the association was expected to review its long term arrangements.

Mrs Drummond herself was successfully nominated for a long

service award for her 25 years as council clerk and treasurer.

Following approaches from the Keep Wem Tidy Group and Wem and District Rotary Club, councillors agreed in *September* to the planting of crocuses on Town Council-owned sites in celebration of the virtual eradication of polio worldwide.

After worries expressed earlier in the year over drivers' abuse of the railway level crossing, the *October* meeting was addressed by a British Transport Police officer, who revealed that there had been over 100 prosecutions in the first six months after installation of a CCTV system covering the crossing—listed, apparently, as the sixth "most abused" crossing in the country.

Shropshire Council sought to switch responsibility for operation and maintenance of local public toilets to the Town Council, but local councillors saw difficulties when they were already committed to financial help for the Town Hall and swimming pool. A meeting with the responsible Shropshire Council officer was wanted.

The meeting duly happened in *November*, when the Town Council was told £10,500 would be needed from it to keep the loos open. But with this meaning a five percent increase in the local precept the Town Council reached no definite conclusion at this stage.

In the event, £12,000 was allocated at the Town Council's annual budget meeting for the public toilets to be kept open and maintained.

Earlier in the year, the Town Council had some issues with the Christmas Festival Committee, but in *December* it congratulated and thanked the committee on its very successful Late Night Shopping event.



CONTINUED OPPOSITE

AND FINALLY.....

Also at the *December* meeting members were told of proposed reductions to the free town bus service, leading to calls for a survey of users based on the idea that the service should be retained for four days, but with a finishing time of 1.30pm. Of wider concern was the planned withdrawal of concessionary fares before 9.30am. Members were worried about its impact especially on patients with early hospital appointments and suggested these people should be allowed concessions on production of proof of their hospital times.

A lot of issues were tidied up at the annual estimates' meet-

ing in *January*, but there were concerns at a perceived lack of public consultation about what services townspeople wanted the Town Council to actually support.

The outcome: a questionnaire designed as a flyer to be distributed with this Annual Report. Townspeople are simply asked to look out for it and hopefully respond with their views on the Town Council's spending priorities.

The ordinary council meeting also in *January* heard how the finishing touches were being applied to the new 20mph zone planned for the town centre.

Plus a brief financial statement

Councillors heard in *February* that Shropshire Council planned inviting tenders for the running of the traditional Thursday market and that the Town Hall management was interested in the idea. Members wanted a meeting with a county officer for an explanation.

The Town Council was generally in agreement with a draft multi-agency evacuation plan produced for a working party in *March* by Shropshire Council because of the major fire in a factory on Aston Park Industrial Estate. □

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT YEAR END 2010/2011

Year Ending	INCOME	Year Ending
31.3.10		31.3.11
200,670.00	Precept	207,308.00
217.70	Bank Interest	203.97
4,600.00	Cemetery Fees	8,475.00
866.50	Allotment rents	896.50
2,174.22	Recycling Credits	2,136.03
115.95	Story ofWem	60.45
4,135.94	Miscellaneous	316.39
<u>212,780.31</u>	TOTAL INCOME	<u>219,396.34</u>
	EXPENDITURE	
16,268.76	Public Lighting	14,871.89
7,823.49	Allotments & Burial Grounds	6,405.91
17,650.00	Recreation Grounds -WSSA	19,650.00
19,565.86	Recreation Grounds -Other	1,824.44
73,852.32	Salaries and Wages	75,931.74
20,221.53	Administration	18,467.79
0.00	Election Expenses	0.00
1,500.00	Mayor's Allowance	1,500.00
450.00	Hospitality Allowance	229.61
11,461.50	S137 Contributions	10,610.14
2,429.12	Floral Planters	2,054.10
2,373.44	Wem Town Hall- Loan Charges	2,217.69
20,000.00	Wem Town Hall- Cont.	20,000.00
559.79	Petty Cash	571.22
1,186.78	Recycling Charges	1,128.84
30,300.95	Wem Swimming Pool	36,619.63
88.00	Story ofWem	0.00
17,713.20	CCTV Scheme (part)	589.00
231.60	Miscellaneous	461.62
<u>243,676.34</u>	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>213,133.62</u>
367,497.39	Balance 1.4.2010	336,601.36
212,780.31	Add income	<u>219,396.34</u>
<u>580,277.70</u>		<u>555,997.70</u>
243,676.34	Less Expenditure	<u>213,133.62</u>
<u>336,601.36</u>		<u>342,864.08</u>



WEMTOWN 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 (2011/2012) 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	constancgranger123@btinternet.com
John Murray	6, Marlcroft, SY4 5AN	232007	
Les Phillips	Samwyn, Moreton St, Prees, SY13 2EQ	01948-840882	

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, Edinburgh House, New Street SY4 5DB—Tel 232733. **E-mail:** info@wem.gov

COST- SAVING MOVES AT THE DOUBLE

IN a matter of months Wem Town Council made two significant moves, both with the aim of greater efficiency and reduced costs on the local taxpayer.

First of all, early in the new financial year the council decided to switch its regular meeting place away from the Senior Club's Chapel Street facilities—excellent though they are—to the purpose-built Council Chamber at the former North Shropshire District Council's Edinburgh House.

Then in March 2011 the Town Council moved its office, lock, stock and barrel, from a former tea room in the Maypole so that it too was in Edinburgh House.

Both the Council Chamber transfer and the office relocation were made following five years of the former meeting venue and office arrangements. □



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