



WEM TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Report

2011/2012



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Mayor-Cllr Edward Towers

Deputy Mayor-Cllr Peter Broomhall

2012/2013

Mayor-Cllr Peter Broomhall

Deputy Mayor-Cllr Connie Granger

OF all the attributes needed by a councillor, patience and resilience are surely just two of them.

You might ask, why? It's simply that so many issues can be recurring and seem to become a permanent fixture in agendas for meetings.

The municipal year, April 1, 2011, to March 31, 2012, is a case in point.

Some issues emerged at the very outset and, like calls for creation of a youngsters' cycle track, were still being discussed at the end of the year.

Then there have been items on planning, the swimming pool and Town Hall that have never been far from agendas.

The controversial introduction of local car parking charges by Shropshire Council came right at the start of the year so that in **April** the Town Council warned of dire consequences for the town, its commerce and organisations, although councillors also pointed to the car park being under-used as drivers chose to avoid the charges by increased on-street parking. A letter of concern was immediately posted to Shropshire Council.

However, at least celebration flags were flown, if only as a trial on the front of the Town Hall, prepared by local schoolchildren as part of the Better Welcome scheme to improve appearances.

The bike track call was given a long airing in **May** by the Town Council's environment committee, with prime movers of the idea favouring a Recreation Ground spot for the facility. This was to prove a sticking point throughout the municipal year...

Main business of the month was the Annual Meeting, at which Cllr Edward Towers, new Town Mayor, coined the phrases, "WEM: Where Everyone

Matters" and "TEAM: Together Everyone Achieves More."

Retiring Mayor Cllr Mandy Meakin reported how £2,000 had been raised in her year of office for the charity, Help for Heroes. Cllr Peter Broomhall was elected Deputy Mayor.

The third up-coming Armed Forces' Day was discussed and councillors agreed on the spending of up to £150 on an official flag and some bunting for the occasion.

Perhaps inevitably, the swimming pool was on the agenda in **June**, when the Town Council increased its contribution towards running costs to £36,000. It was also agreed in principle to make a contribution towards the pool's refurbishment.

Disappointment at slow progress with the cycle track idea was expressed by its supporters.

A seemingly age-old subject—public loos on the Recreation Ground—was back on agendas, the idea being floated that the closed toilets could be re-opened if combined with football changing rooms. Nothing definite emerged.

Another aspect of the car parking charge issue arose. Shropshire Council proposed future residents' parking permits for off-street car parks should cost £110, but local councillors thought this to be "unreasonable" and that the existing £50 per year was "fair and appropriate."

The Town Council regretted the reported mothballing of the local Chamber of Commerce, although it was stressed that the group could be re-opened if and whenever the need arose.

More time was given in **July** to the call for a cycle track as councillors were reminded that the idea was first discussed four months earlier, so it

was suggested that there was need for progress. A feasibility study of various possible sites, including the Recreation Ground, was agreed.

The Mayor outlined his ideas for a series of awards recognising townspeople's various achievements, categories for awards and a possible Awards' Night presentation dinner.

Ideas were also mooted for the appointment of an official town crier and ways to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, leading eventually to the formation of two working parties to discuss arrangements.

The United Services Club complained about the "very loud and disruptive" activities of so-called boy racers on the car park at the rear of its Leek Street premises. The police were pressed to take urgent action to curb the problem.

Calls for the deletion of Shrewsbury from Wem's postal address continued throughout the year.

In a relatively quiet **August** the failed twinning link with Fismes in Northern France found its way on to agendas, as did the suggestion for an official "Best Wishes" card for use by the Town Council.

Support was given to calls for creation of a loading bay as part of the parking lay-by outside the NatWest Bank in High Street.

The Wem Town Transition Group unveiled its Wem Shopping Guide in **September** and councillors praised the new leaflet.

The former town twinning link with Fismes was fully discussed and councillors agreed that its restoration would be good for Wem. However, it was necessary to ask the Mayor of Fismes if his town wished to reinstate the link.

Continued inside

THE wished for deletion of Shrewsbury from Wem's postal address was taken a stage further with an invitation to Royal Mail to have a representative attend to discuss the whole contentious issue. **Local** air quality was an unlikely agenda item, when it was revealed how Shropshire Council had monitored this to discover that Mill Street had high readings of pollution. The Town Council was assured that monitoring would continue and "mitigation measures" taken, if necessary. **Future** operation of the local Thursday Market was fully discussed, with a tender process possibly in the offing, and councillors agreed that, in principle, they would consider accepting responsibility for the market rights. **The** official town "Best Wishes" card was given the go-ahead in **October**, when it was agreed to have 200 copies printed at a cost of £152. **Shropshire** County proposals for a charging policy for Blue Badge holders using local car parks were discussed. Of the varying options the Town Council decided to support free parking with no time limit for Blue Badge holders, in line with other towns across the country—as long as the badge was displayed and the vehicle was parked in the correct location. **On** parking charges in general, the Town Council heard of plans for a local meeting between representatives of various organisations, including the Town Council, local businesses and Shropshire Council to discuss the charges and to consider what changes might be made to reduce their impact. **The** vexed question of the future operation of the local railway level crossing—Network Rail planned to make it an unmanned, remote controlled crossing—made the **November** agenda. With controversy looming, the Town Council registered its worries over the scheme with Network Rail and invited a representative to a future meeting to discuss the issue. **A** red, white and blue theme (for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in the sum-

mer (of 2012) was pressed for when councillors discussed the annual planting up and maintenance of the street floral planters.

Another facet of the proposed railway level crossing operational change was raised in **December**, when the planning and transport committee expressed disappointment over the threatened demolition of the local signal box.

This was followed at the full council meeting with the suggestion that Network Rail might be persuaded not to demolish the box—described as being part of the Wem landscape—but to find an alternative use for it.

A delegation from the Town Hall Community Trust was well received as a representative gave a progress report on the very successful operation of the hall since its re-opening 18 months previous. Councillors praised the work of Trustees and Town Hall staff.

The various working parties—for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations, the Town Crier proposal and the Mayor's Awards—continued to make good progress. Indeed, a New Year date and the format were agreed for the awards' night.

Shropshire Council's controversial creation of a town square in the lorry park/recycling area of the car park was seen as an opportunity to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Town councillors pressed for the chance to give the square an appropriate Jubilee name, perhaps also with a suitable stone plaque.

Network Rail responded in **January** to the Town Council's earlier invitation by having no fewer than four representatives attend to give a full explanation of the future operation of the local railway level crossing. They also answered questions from members of the general public at the meeting before leaving with thanks for their assistance on "this very important issue."

The equally contentious car parking charges were referred to, with concern expressed at what was said to be "an empty car park." Fears were also voiced for the adverse impact that the

charges, plus maintenance work, must have had on local businesses.

It emerged that the Town Council might join Shropshire Council's energy (saving) scheme designed to have some street lights switched off between midnight and 5.30am—but not before 2014/2015. Town councillors sought a quotation from contractors for an inventory, essential if Wem was to join the energy scheme.

Enhancement of what is known locally as the Milldam footpath—off Mill Street, alongside the River Rodent—was called for in **February**. Indeed, it was suggested that it ought to be up-graded like the footpaths around Ellesmere Mere. However, it appeared ownership of the land was unknown and was therefore an obstacle, but tidying up had been done periodically by volunteers.

Councillors decided to spend £2,000-plus on 500 copies of an updated reprint of *The Story of Wem*, the last reprint having been in 1994. This one would again include an additional chapter covering the intervening period.

The matter of the called-for deletion of the name of Shrewsbury from Wem's postal address dragged on into **March** with the visit and an explanation of the purpose of the postal code direct from a Royal Mail manager. Again, little progress was made, despite local MP Mr Owen Paterson's support for Wem's case. "Constructive dialogue" was called for and a public campaign urged on townspeople.

The success of the Town Mayor's first Awards' Night, including the raising of about £300 towards local Jubilee celebrations, was reported.

Provision of a bike track remained high on the agenda. The latest move: to ask the Town Council's solicitor for advice on the lease covering the local Recreation Ground, favoured by the cyclists' group for a cycle track

Shropshire Council was pressed to further consider installing a pedestrian crossing in Mill Street near to Roden Lodge, the Anchor Housing Association's complex. □



**A COPY OF THIS ANNUAL REPORT CAN BE READ
ON-LINE ON THE WEBSITE www.wem.gov.uk**

WHAT IT COSTS.....

Income and Expenditure 2011/2012

Year Ending 31.3.11	INCOME	Year Ending 31.3.12
207,308.00	Precept	227,790.00
203.97	Bank Interest	208.38
8,475.00	Cemetery Fees	6,600.00
896.50	Allotment rents	937.25
2,136.03	Recycling Credits	8.92
60.45	Story of Wem	37.00
<u>316.39</u>	Miscellaneous	<u>2,077.94</u>
219,396.34	TOTAL INCOME	237,659.49
	EXPENDITURE	
14,871.89	Public Lighting	21,041.08
6,405.91	Allotments & Burial Grounds	5,004.55
19,650.00	Recreation Grounds -WSSA	19,650.00
1,824.44	Recreation Grounds -Other	1,346.09
75,931.74	Salaries and Wages	74,344.21
18,467.79	Administration	15,089.00
0.00	Election Expenses	0.00
1,500.00	Mayor's Allowance	1,500.00
229.61	Hospitality Allowance	500.00
10,610.14	S137 Contributions	10,322.00
2,054.10	Floral Planters	2,174.23
2,217.69	Wem Town Hall - Loan Charges	2,061.94
20,000.00	Wem Town Hall - Cont.	18,000.00
571.22	Petty Cash	499.98
1,128.84	Recycling Charges	42.49
36,619.63	Wem Swimming Pool	52,384.44
0.00	Story of Wem	0.00
0.00	Public Toilets	13,240.93
589.00	CCTV	5,027.10
<u>461.62</u>	Miscellaneous	<u>1,204.10</u>
213,133.62	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	243,432.14
336,601.36	Balance 1.4.2011	342,864.08
<u>219,396.34</u>	Add income	237,659.49
555,997.70		580,523.57
<u>213,133.62</u>	Less Expenditure	<u>243,432.14</u>
342,864.08		337,091.43



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 (2012/2013 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	mandymeakin@gmail.com
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	jmurray@hotmail.co.uk
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**



The Town Council (plus Cllr Phil Glover) of 2012 ahead of elections in May 2013—the first in six years because of local government reorganisation. Photo: Dave Granger