



WEM TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Report

2012/2013



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Mayor-Cllr Peter Broomhall

Deputy Mayor-Cllr Connie Granger

2013/2014

Mayor-Cllr Connie Granger

Deputy Mayor-Cllr Mandy Meakin

MEMBERS of Wem Town Council have faced their first Local Elections in six years and voters among townspeople might have been persuaded where to put their cross by some of the year's more newsworthy issues. Such as....

April

In this the first month of the new civic year, the full council welcomed an Ambulance Service spokesman for an explanation of how the new Make Ready scheme covering Shropshire's operation of its ambulances would work.

The saga of Wem's postal address and continued calls for deletion of its "near Shrewsbury" designation remained a matter of debate.

Amended plans for a proposed extension at Wem Medical Practice in New Street included an explanation for removal of an imposing beech tree on the site. It was reported to be suffering from a fungal disease and needed felling "for safety reasons."

Preparations for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012 were up and running and the council approved a £1,000 contribution from reserves towards the steering group's work.

The transfer of the local market rights from Shropshire Council to the Town Council became a hot topic. The Town Council accepted these rights, subject to a mutually agreed timescale for their transfer and that the market continued to operate in the interim.

May

The Co-Operative Society's amended plans for a single storey side extension to its store on the main car park was greeted with mixed feelings. However, one feature—the inclusion of public toilets in the scheme—was welcomed. Councillors also wanted retention of the existing delivery access off the

car park, rather than making deliveries off Isherwood Way, about which there was considerable concern.

Shropshire Council proposals for a pedestrian crossing in Mill Street were welcomed, although there were also calls for a similar crossing in Station Road.

Shropshire Council raised questions over the future of the building housing the former Morgan Library in Aston Street (more recently home of the Mythstories Museum).

Councillors agreed with a colleague that as this building had been left to the people of Wem they ought to consider taking responsibility for the property. A meeting with Shropshire Council representatives was called for.

June

Such a meeting was duly held and while townspeople might consider that they had been gifted the property at some time in the past, it was revealed how Trustees had, in fact, transferred the building to the council of the day way back in 1920—and without restrictions on its future use.

The abbreviation, SAMDev, standing for Site Allocations and Management of Development, entered councillors' language. It was the Shropshire Council's way of consulting on the search for, among other things, enough local land for the construction of 450 new homes by 2026.

About 40 people were in the Council Chamber for the debate and many voiced their worries about the projected sites and the scale of development. Meanwhile, the Town Council's own response was put back to a special meeting.

Use of one of the Love Lane allotments by a local nursery school began a controversy which dragged on throughout most of the year

without a satisfactory resolution.

July

Councillors heard from organisers about the North Salop Wheelers' community bus project and agreed to the Town Council joining the scheme at the modest annual fee of £15.

If the issue of a nursery school using an allotment was controversial, it was easily matched by the continuing calls for the laying of a bike track, with the Recreation Ground as the organisers' favoured site for the facility. The saga simply continued.

The Town Hall Community Trust sought a three-year funding agreement involving the Town Council. But councillors, while being "very supportive" of the Town Hall, were not prepared to enter into the requested partnership (with its terms of reference), nor to commit to a three-year funding arrangement. By now the imposition of car parking charges some months earlier had been fully absorbed and town councillors aired their worries about damage caused to the local economy by the charges. They agreed on a letter to Shropshire Council expressing concern at what they claimed was the charges' adverse impact on the town centre.

The new town square on the former lorry park/recycling centre on the main car park continued to divide local opinion, even more so when Shropshire Council proposed a hire charge for its use. The Town Council agreed on a letter of opposition.

August

The recognised holiday month was relatively quiet, but gave councillors time to consider a few minor issues.

Continued overleaf

The planned new chapter and updating of *The Story of Wem* had been approved and the book re-printed. Now was the time for putting it on sale and a formal launch at a council coffee morning in September was agreed.

A towns person questioned the future of the former Morgan Library building in Aston Street. Councillors were given a potted history of the property (home for the Mythstories Museum) and told of the desire to “try and secure the building for the community.” Public consultation was called for.

September

Members were told that the chains of office of the Town Mayor and Mayoress were full, so they needed to decide whether to refurbish or to buy new. A working party was formed. Another working party was chosen to consider organisation of a 2013 Mayor’s Awards Night following on the success of the inaugural event earlier in the year.

Councillors heard about moves towards provision of a pedestrian crossing near the Hawkstone Arms in New Street. They were also told it was possible a similar crossing might be installed in Mill Street.

Not for the first time in recent years, the local swimming pool’s future was up for discussion and the meeting agreed the Town Council was prepared to increase the funding required to ensure the facility’s future.

October

A local nursery school’s wish to have children use a Love Lane allotment as part of their activities raised arguments for and against the idea. The council’s firmest view through its environment committee was that it was against the nursery’s wish because it amounted to a commercial use of the ground. At this stage the matter was deferred awaiting extra information from the nursery school. The committee’s decision was supported at the subsequent full council meeting.

The full council also heard about the “excellent painting work” done by a team from Stoke Heath. Members approved a letter of thanks to the team and agreed that this same group should be used to repaint play

equipment where required. The current state of the town twinning link with Fismes in northern France was queried, especially as a letter on the topic had been sent to Fismes without a response. The matter was to be placed on a future agenda.

November

Advance information was given councillors on behalf of Severn Trent and Enterprise about water main renewal plans in the Souldon Road area. The subsequent work, given a February start, caused considerable disruption.

With the festive season looming, there came an offer from Shropshire Council of a period of free parking. Wem councillors considered the gesture was “not generous” and pressed for an explanation of the criteria behind parking charges. They also wanted free parking on the days of Wem Carnival and the Eckford Society’s annual sweet pea show. The future of the local swimming pool once again became a hot topic as the planned switch to new operators loomed.

The Town Council raised no objections to the proposed re-alignment of five metres of the Parish Church’s sandstone retaining wall in Mill Street to save it from frequent damage by heavy motor vehicles on this junction.

The town twinning link with Fismes in France was indeed an agenda item with little progress made. A second letter to the Mayor of Fismes to try and move the issue along was agreed and it was also decided to ask the Thomas Adams School if it was involved.

December

The need for refurbishment of the chains of office of the Town Mayor and Mayoress surfaced again and particularly welcome was a generous offer of £1,000 towards the cost from the local Barber Trust.

The controversial automation of the railway level crossing on the town’s busiest junction due for commissioning this month was reported to be on hold “due to a number of teething problems.” The Town Council discussed the issue of the future of the swimming pool issue *in camera*, giving councillors

the chance to express “concern” at the existing situation.

January

At a planning committee practically the whole of the evening was taken up with discussion of controversial plans for 22 terraced houses and apartments on land off Mill Street (opposite the refurbished Wem Mills). Unusually, Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of the public to take part in deliberations. The meeting ended with the committee maintaining its “very strong” opposition to the scheme on the basis of a long, wide ranging list of objections.

At a special meeting later in the month the full Town Council approved its annual council tax precept for 2013/2014—a sum of £227,426.

And the council heard that the proposed switch to new operators of the swimming pool would not after all be happening. On the contrary, members were told Teme Leisure would be staying “in situ.”

The ordinary council meeting this month began with the Barber Trust’s presentation of £1,000 towards the costs of refurbishment of the council’s civic/Mayoral regalia.

More controversial plans for new housing—this time, off Souldon Road—were referred to the planning and transport committee for consideration.

The little matter of a name for the new town square adjoining the main public car park was discussed following information from Shropshire Council. Jubilee Square and, simply, Town Square were suggested, but it was felt the naming should only follow public consultation.

The future of Edinburgh House—the council office complex for many years—was reported to be in the melting pot as negotiations went on over the proposed purchase of the property by the Meres and Mosses Housing Association.

February

The ongoing saga of a local children’s nursery wanting the Town Council’s OK for the use of a Love Lane allotment was again on the agenda.

Continued opposite

The council was urged to reconsider and drop its opposition to the idea. The outcome: a repeat recommendation that the nursery school's allotment use should not be permitted. The committee showed it had a weather eye open when it recommended the purchase of a snow spreader at a cost of £350 plus VAT for use in clearing paths on the Recreation Ground and selected public open spaces during prolonged icy conditions. The purchase was subsequently approved by the full council.

At the same full council there was

more intense discussion of plans for new houses on land in Soulton Road east of the busy railway level crossing. The site lay outside the town boundary and in the Wem Rural Parish, but the Town Council, as a close neighbour, had strong views and drew the Parish Council's attention to many concerns expressed at an earlier meeting.

A tender from outside contractors amounting to £9,950 plus VAT was accepted for cleaning and maintenance of the car park public toilets for a 12-month period.

The council again pressed the Shropshire Council for free car parking on

the days of local major events.

March

At the last council meeting before the new civic year, members were told of impending work to renew the gas main beneath High Street between Maund's Corner and the White Lion pub. It was explained that the project would take around 12 weeks from start to completion. However, it would be "managed sensitively" and councillors were also assured how contractors had been made aware of the date of the town's annual Carnival. Overall, the work was welcomed as investment in Wem's infrastructure. □

WEM TOWN COUNCIL meets on the last Thursday of every month—except in December—at ***Edinburgh House, New Street***, at 7pm. 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.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL DURING THE PERIOD OF THIS REPORT WAS:

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	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.



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

WHAT IT COSTS TO RUN LOCAL SERVICES

WEM TOWN COUNCIL

INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2012-2013

Year Ending 31.3.12	INCOME	Year Ending 31.3.13
227,790.00	Precept	241,502.00
208.38	Bank Interest	277.82
6,600.00	Cemetery Fees	12,120.00
937.25	Allotment rents	946.00
8.92	Recycling Credits	0.00
37.00	Story of Wem	450.00
	Developers Contributions	22,725.00
<u>£2,077.94</u>	Miscellaneous	<u>10,797.93</u>
<u>237,659.49</u>	TOTAL INCOME	288,818.75
	EXPENDITURE	
21,041.08	Public Lighting	21,040.95
5,004.55	Allotments & Burial Grounds	4,665.40
19,650.00	Recreation Grounds -WSSA	19,650.00
1,346.09	Recreation Grounds -Other	4,784.14
74,344.21	Salaries and Wages	76,231.16
15,089.00	Administration	14,856.92
0.00	Election Expenses	0
1,500.00	Mayor's Allowance	1,500.00
500.00	Hospitality Allowance	530
10,322.00	S137 Contributions	10,677.00
2,174.23	Floral Planters	2,475.00
2,061.94	Wem Town Hall - Loan Charges	1,906.19
18,000.00	Wem Town Hall - Cont.	18,000.00
499.98	Petty Cash	481.27
42.49	Recycling Charges	0.00
52,384.44	Wem Swimming Pool	54,433.21
0.00	Story of Wem	318.00
13,240.93	Public Toilets	17,083.36
5,027.10	CCTV	3,000.00
<u>1,204.10</u>	Miscellaneous	<u>£3,693.92</u>
<u>243,432.14</u>	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	255,326.52
342,864.08	Balance 1.4.2012	337,091.43
<u>237,659.49</u>	Add income	<u>288,818.75</u>
580,523.57		625,910.18
<u>243,432.14</u>	Less Expenditure	<u>255,326.52</u>
337,091.43		370,583.66