



WEM TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Report

2013/2014



2013/2014

Mayor-Cllr Connie Granger

Deputy Mayor-Cllr Mandy Meakin

2014/2015

Mayor-Cllr Mandy Meakin

Deputy Mayor-Cllr John Murray

The new municipal year 2013/14 opened in unusual fashion with the retirement of no fewer than five councillors.

Tribute was paid and a presentation made to each of them – Mrs Thelma Broom, Mrs Peggy Carson, Mr Douglas Cooley, Mr Les Phillips and Mrs Nancy Wilson – who were not standing again in the May local elections. They said how it had been a privilege serving the local community.

Also in April:

Town councillors heard how the air quality in Mill Street was permanently monitored in two spots and found to be close to the permitted limit. Testing was to continue and, if necessary, steps such as having a vehicle weight limit would be considered.

It was reported that income from local car parking charges had increased by £3,000 to £22,000 in the previous financial year.

The scheme of realignment and rebuilding of the Parish Church wall in Mill Street was praised as a great improvement on this approach to the town.

May

Four newly-elected councillors were welcomed in Mrs Kath Bailey, Mr David Boddy, Mr Paul Johnson and Mr Philip Moyse (a fifth newcomer, Mrs Rosemary Dodd, was co-opted later in the year). After choosing a new Town-Mayor and getting through the matters associated with the Annual Meeting, it was down to more mundane business on the rest of the agenda. Thoughts were centred on a developer's bid to build 23 affordable homes on land

west of Ash Grove, Soulton Road – just outside the urban boundary, but of enough importance to involve the Town Council. The meeting agreed on strong opposition to the plan, bearing in mind councillors' long standing worries – among other issues - about traffic congestion at the railway level crossing (about to become remote controlled from Cardiff).

A traffic issue of a different kind was aired when councillors heard of residents' calls for Noble Street to be made one-way for the sake of residents and pedestrians. It was referred to the council's planning and transport committee with the reminder that when High Street was blocked Noble Street became something of a relief road.

June

The item, "Bus shelter in Pym's Road," appeared on an agenda for the first time. Unfortunately, it wasn't the last occasion as the issue took many months to actually resolve satisfactorily.

The planning committee received amended plans from would-be developers to reignite the row over proposed 22 homes off Mill Street. The committee remained steadfast in its strong original opposition to the scheme. The idea of a one-way traffic system in Noble Street was also debated again, but councillors agreed the measure would not improve the traffic difficulties in Noble Street.

At the full monthly meeting, there was a declaration of concern about the number of mature trees being lost in recent years. This was when members were considering a request for the felling of a tree at Windmill Meadow.

There were reflections on the success of the local Jubilee celebrations – an occasion it was hoped would also be marked by a commemorative plaque in the Town Square, plus a beacon on the Recreation Ground.

It was reported that work on renewing the gas main in the town centre had been delayed (but did, in fact, start towards the end of the civic year).

July

The full council reiterated strong opposition to the proposed building of 23 affordable homes in Soulton Road, although the final decision lay with Wem Rural Parish Council and Shropshire Council planners (the latter saying "Yes" to the scheme later in the year).

It was claimed that a noise from the swimming pool at the Butler Sports Centre was proving a nuisance to homes in the area and further information was awaited.

Councillors decided that the Union Jack should be flown at the Town Hall for a week to honour the birth of Prince George.

August

The monthly meeting decided on a noise abatement measure at the swimming pool at a cost of £4,000-plus.

There was a request for a bus stop seat near the sheltered housing, Prince William Court in Aston Road, and the suggestion that all seats within the court were "badly in need of some attention." Members were told that both issues would be raised with the Meres and Mosses Housing Association.

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The local Jubilee Steering Committee sought permission for its proposed beacon on the Recreation Ground. The decision to approve the request in principle was subject to the approval of the leaseholders, the Sports and Social Association.

First steps were taken towards participating in the proposed commemoration of the centenary of World War One.

The council approved support of the Crewe and Shrewsbury (Rail) Passenger Association in its backing of a feasibility study into the running of a direct rail service Crewe to London via Shrewsbury, with the possibility of a stop at Wem.

September

The local railway line was an agenda item again, but this time because of the impending switch to an automated level crossing, Network Rail's intention being to make the controversial change in mid-October. At a subsequent meeting two councillors and the clerk were appointed to a joint working party to consider the whole automated crossing business.

Efforts to find a suitable Recreation Ground spot for the proposed Jubilee beacon continued.

A sign of the times? It was reported that Churches Together was opening a Whitchurch Food Bank, which would also supply Wem families. There was also the possibility of a Wem Food Bank once the Whitchurch scheme was up and running.

October

A structural inspection and report were called for when the council had more discussion about the proposed erection of a Diamond Jubilee beacon on the Recreation Ground.

Councillors heard from Network Rail how the company believed that the new remote control system for the local railway level crossing was working "as designed."

Traffic and pedestrian safety in Mill Street was discussed and the Shropshire Council was pressed to improve the situation.

There was thought about removing the Fimes twinning signs from town boundaries as it was believed the twinning had ended, but councillors welcomed how the link might be revived.

It was decided to press on with the planned refurbishment of the Mayoral chains of office, towards which there had been public support in the form of about £1,400 worth of donations.

November

A spokesman for Wales and West Utilities explained how the renewal of the gas main in the town centre would be tackled early in 2014.

A £1,000 contribution towards the costs of necessary market research at the swimming pool was agreed.

December

There was a sad start to the monthly council meeting, a minute's silence being observed following the death of Mrs Nancy Wilson, ex-Mayor and a former long standing councillor.

Congratulations were extended to the Christmas Festival Committee on the "excellent" local street decorations.

There were calls for the Town Council, as a substantial contributor to the hall's finances, to be given free use of the Town Hall for civic events.

Members discussed the reduction from two traffic lanes to only one on the Station Road approach to the railway level crossing and there were calls for reinstatement of the second lane, particularly as there had been no local consultation. At the same time the county highway authority was to raise the issue with Network Rail.

January

A considerable hike in taxpayers' bills was avoided at a special council meeting to consider the annual estimates. A figure of £238,662 to be met through precept was agreed with the help of £5,000 taken from reserves.

Town Council representatives were appointed to the Town Hall Trust, with the priority a discussion so that there could be a better understanding of the hall's budget for the coming year.

An application was received for the proposed demolition of the redundant signal box at the local level crossing, but discussion could be only limited because it was "for information only" as demolition was apparently permitted under national planning regulations.

Councillors heard an explanation as to why the Wem Twinning Association was inactive and it was agreed that twin town Fimes should be asked if it wished to revive the twinning link.

February

An unusual line of research was called for. It was into the town's infrastructure when it was claimed that the various utilities were in "a poor condition."

A potentially controversial outline planning application for housing adjacent to Moss Side, Bankhouse Lane, was opposed by councillors because the site was outside the local permitted development boundary and did not comply with current policy. Also, there was a high water table in the locality.

Wem branch Royal British Legion wrote with its plans for commemorating the 1914/18 First World War and councillors agreed on a £500 contribution towards the project's costs.

Threat of the axe for Whitchurch ambulance station – also serving Wem – prompted a letter of support to the town's county councillor, who was pressing for an ambulance to remain located in Whitchurch.

March

Members of the environment committee expressed concern for what they regarded as the poor condition of the former White Horse public house and hotel (prominent on the High Street/Mill Street junction). They agreed to see if any enforcement action might be undertaken by Shropshire Council.

An emergency committee agreed steps towards extending the entrance road and the cemetery itself in Love Lane at a cost of just over £10,000.

An application to build 25 homes on land adjacent to The Larches in Shawbury Road occupied time and thought, after which it was decided to oppose the plan because the site was a considerable way outside the development boundary and did not meet the sustainable development criteria.

Spending of more than £20,000 was agreed for replacement children's play equipment and on two other items of gym equipment (for wider public use) on the Recreation Ground.

Councillors heard how contractors for the on-going gas main renewal work in the town centre needed a time extension to complete the scheme (in the event it was all done and dusted in April/May once the final phase, Leek Street, was completed).



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. A copy of the agenda for meetings is displayed on the Town Council's official notice board at the front of the Town Hall in High Street and on the council's official website: www.wem.gov.uk.

Meanwhile, this Annual Report can only be a brief resume of Council business and the website as above is the source of more information (minutes, reports, etc).

THE TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

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SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLORS

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CLERK and TREASURER

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WEM TOWN COUNCIL

INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2013-2014

Year Ending 31.3.13	INCOME	Year Ending 31.3.14
241,502.00	Precept	227,426.00
277.82	Bank Interest	835.02
12,120.00	Cemetery Fees	8,575.00
946.00	Allotment rents	935.50
450.00	Story of Wem	322.00
22,725.00	Grants, refunds	33,163.27
<u>10,797.93</u>	Miscellaneous	<u>0.00</u>
288,818.75	TOTAL INCOME	271,256.79

EXPENDITURE

21,040.95	Public Lighting	21,493.84
4,665.40	Allotments & Burial Grounds	3,371.28
19,650.00	Recreation Grounds -WSSA	18,650.00
4,784.14	Recreation Grounds -Other	4,375.86
76,231.16	Salaries and Wages	77,190.04
14,856.92	Administration	17,333.21
0	Election Expenses	0.00
1,500.00	Mayor's Allowance	1,500.00
530	Hospitality Allowance	500.00
10,677.00	S137 Contributions	8,007.00
2,475.00	Floral Planters	2,475.00
1,906.19	Wem Town Hall - Loan Charges	1,750.44
18,000.00	Wem Town Hall - Cont.	18,000.00
481.27	Petty Cash	537.22
0.00	Recycling Charges	0.00
54,433.21	Wem Swimming Pool	68,439.84
318.00	Story of Wem	360.00
17,083.36	Public Toilets	13,883.03
3,000.00	CCTV	2,250.00
<u>£3,693.92</u>	Miscellaneous	<u>2,714.60</u>
255,326.52	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	262,831.36

337,091.43	Balance 1.4.2013	370,583.66
<u>288,818.75</u>	Add income	<u>271,256.79</u>
625,910.18		641,840.45
<u>255,326.52</u>	Less Expenditure	<u>262,831.36</u>
370,583.66		379,009.09