

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Wem Urban held on Thursday 21st April 2022 at 7 p.m in The Roden Suite, Edinburgh House, Wem.

Present:-Councillor P Broomhall (Town Mayor) and 29 members of the public present.
Mrs P O'Hagan (Town Clerk).
Apologies received from Cllr Johnson.

1 **Welcome**

The Mayor welcomed all present and outlined the purpose of the meeting.

2 **To receive a presentation from Amanda Jones, CEO of Shropshire Supports Refugees**

Amanda explained the background to the creation of the organisation, which started during the crisis in Syria when there was a desire to help refugees but a lack of knowledge on the best way to help. Initially the group worked with Shropshire Council to resettle refugee families and to support Refugee Action to provide support to families in Shrewsbury initially and this work later spread to the whole of Shropshire.

During this time a grant was provided to fund the work part time, the organisation is now a CIC and more volunteers have become involved.

The charity works closely with Shropshire Council and are now the main resettlement organisation in the County providing full resettlement support.

The Syrian refugees have now been living in the county for over 3 years and work has evolved to support families by running workshops, English language teaching and training courses.

During the Afghan crisis in September 2021 the charity received 1500 phone calls offering support from organisations in the first fortnight. Refugee families have been based in Telford and Wolverhampton so Shropshire based support has been limited.

The response received to date from the public and councils in relation to the crisis in Ukraine has been overwhelming. Two units have been given to the charity in Shrewsbury, one to store donations and a unit that will act as a support hub for refugees.

Amanda explained that it can take up to 4 weeks for a refugee visa to be processed so the process is very slow and distressing for applicants especially when they may be stuck in an unsafe area. The hub has been designed to provide a place of welcome for refugees when they arrive.

Currently there are 155 potential refugee hosts registered in the county and at the moment it is estimated that a minimum of 400 refugees made up predominantly of children and adults will arrive in the next few weeks. However this number has the potential to increase enormously as the situation develops. It has been recognised that hosts will also require training and support and the group is trying to create a host network for this purpose.

Due to the size of Shropshire it has been identified that there is a need for community refugee hubs to be located in other towns to provide a safe space for refugees to visit during the day and provide a base for organisations to offer outreach services without the need to travel to Shrewsbury.

During a question and answer session interest was expressed by Wem youth Club and Wem Baptist Church to help provide a safe space in Wem and they were keen to work with Shropshire Supports Refugees with this in mind.

3 **To hear presentations from Groups who have been awarded a Town Council General Grant in 2022.**

Wem Cricket Club Vice Chairman, Keith Higgins explained that the grant would be used to help improve the club's social facilities.

Wem Baptist Church Liz Dakin explained that the grant would go towards running the holiday bible club for ages 4-11 which has been running for 54 years. This year the grant will fund a hybrid scheme in the local public open spaces along with crafts in the Chapel.

North Shropshire Wheelers Terry Fry reported how the community bus service runs which provides a vital service to a wide range of people, fuel costs have risen by 40% which has had a huge impact on the running of the scheme.

Christmas Lights Festival Mandy Meakin spoke about the history of the festival and how the grant would go towards updating the electrical equipment.

Friends of Whitchurch Road Cemetery Secretary, Judy Crichton outlined that the grant would be spent on grasscutting of the cemetery.

Wem Army Cadets Treasurer, Roger Drummond reported that the grant would enable the cadets to continue to run.

Wem Youth Club Clare Glover and Kaz Plenty gave a brief report on the work of the club which is currently at capacity with a waiting list. The grant will help provide additional activities.

Vehicles of Interest Chairman, Shaun Clorely gave a brief history of the event and explained that the event would return on 17.7.22. Currently there are about 300 vehicles on display at the free event and the grant will help with running costs.

Wem Bowling Club Alan Walker explained that the bowling club grant would be used for.

Wem Guides, Rangers and Brownies Katie Carter reported that the grant would go towards running activities for the organisation.

Wem Millennium Green Chairman, Phil Moyse explained the work of the volunteers who look after the green and reported that the grant would go towards the upkeep of the green for the community.

4 **The Mayor to present 2021 with Honorary Townsman Awards**

Pauline Dee Edward Towers outlined the reasons for Pauline's award and explained the tremendous community service she has given to the town as both a Town, District and Unitary Councillor over the last 40 years. Pauline worked tirelessly to establish Wem Economic Forum which resulted in a huge injection of funds from Advantage West Midlands to improve the town's economy. In addition to this Pauline has been and continues to be an advocate of the provision of affordable homes for people who wish to stay in the town. As well as a Councillor Pauline has also been a member of the Fire Authority and is President of Shropshire Scouts.

5 **To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 22 April 2021.**

RESOLVED:- to approve the minutes of 22.4.21 and they were signed by the Mayor.

6 **Open Forum - To consider any Parish matter raised.** No matters raised.

Meeting ended 2020

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Town Mayor