

MINUTES
of a meeting of the Full Council
held at the George Watson Memorial Hall on 13th January 2025 at 6.00pm

Present: Cllrs P Jones (Chair), E Ash, H Bowman, P Brookes, C Cody, C Danter, A Hayes, K Moran, J Raywood, S Raywood, C Robertson, V Smith, M Sztymiak.

In attendance: D Hill (Town Clerk), J King (Deputy Town Clerk) and two members of the public.

24/25 - 111 To receive apologies for absence

None received.

24/25 - 112 To receive declarations of interest

Cllrs Bowman, Cody & Sztymiak – Tewkesbury Borough Councillors
Cllrs Cody & Smith – Gloucestershire County Councillors

24/25 - 113 To consider requests for dispensation

None received.

24/25 - 114 To receive written questions from members of the public

There were no written questions.

24/25 - 115 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

24/25 - 116 To note the Mayor's Announcements

Thank you to everyone who helped at the Christingle Service.

The Climate Change Working Group has been rearranged to 4th February at noon.

Cllr Danter joined the meeting.

24/25 - 117 To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 11th November 2024

Minor amendment to attendance record for Cllrs Cody & Smith, both had sent apologies. It was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2024. Proposed by Cllr J Raywood, seconded by Cllr Bowman.

24/25 - 118 To note the following Committee Minutes – Planning – 9th & 23rd October, 13th & 27th November 2024, Finance – 4th November 2024, Moorings – 22nd October & 19th November 2024, Environment & Amenities – 15th October 2024, Buildings – 8th October 2024

The above minutes were noted.

24/25 - 119 Matters arising from the minutes

21/22-147 Cycle storage – Cllr Cody advised storage units will be going in on Sun Street, Leisure Centre, Spring Gardens & Ashchurch Station – installation expected soon.

23/24-117 Civility & Respect Training – No funding for 2025 – closed.

24/25-81 Payments reports – Question regarding Octopus bills - Smart meter has been installed at the Watson Hall. Waiting on part for installation to happen at Town Hall.

24/25-105 Financial Regulations – draft ready to be circulated after this meeting.

24/25-106 School Contact - Principal at Tewkesbury School is keen to get more involved with the Town Council. Now with members of staff who run the Pupil Parliament.

24/25 - 120 To receive the summary finance report to 30th November 2024 and earmarked reserves

The finance reports were received. Town Clerk is happy with the position at month 8. Note that EMR 322 & 349 re: Moorings have been merged.

24/25 - 121 To receive the payments reports for October & November 2024

The reports were received.

24/25 - 122 To agree the budget for financial year 2025-26

Councillors discussed the budget and raised the following points:

There is a need to prioritise what the Town Council does, what is provided has increased. Need to prioritise getting the buildings off the at-risk register.

Historical issue remains that buildings were not maintained appropriately and issues like accessibility were ignored because it was difficult and expensive to resolve – this is not good enough. Being the custodian of old buildings comes at a price, and it is important to think about upgrades as well as maintenance. Spending earlier often saves in the long run. The benefit of having the Asset Manager will be to set the priority list and manage the work.

Moorings – there is a split of opinion on their value to the town given the income is £7,000 pa but the costs are £30,000 pa.

A provision of 3% has been made for salary increases, these are set nationally but are often not known until October.

National Insurance provision has been increased by circa £4,000 to allow for changes from April, at present the Council is expected to pick up the cost.

Councillors agreed to use reserves in the following areas to reduce the precept request by £37,832:

Asset Manager £9,932

Finance Professional £1,000

Legal £3,000

Website £900

Tourism & Marketing £1,000

Playpark Projects £3,000

Community Development Planning £1,000

Planning Consultancy £5,000

Bar equipment £3,000

Moorings Projects £10,000

It was RESOLVED to approve the budget for the financial year 2025-26.

Proposed by Cllr Brookes, seconded by Cllr J Raywood.

Cllr Sztymiak & Cllr Smith voted against the budget.

24/25 - 123 To agree the Council's precept request for financial year 2025-26

It was RESOLVED to request a precept of £531,567 for the financial year 2025-26.

Proposed by Cllr Brookes, seconded by Cllr S Raywood.
Cllr Sztymiak & Cllr Smith voted against the precept request.

24/25 - 124 To agree the retained contractors list

It was resolved to approve the updated retained contractors / suppliers list, subject to the addition of Security One.

Proposed by Cllr Cody, seconded by Cllr Brookes.

24/25 - 125 To consider and agree grant applications from outside bodies

There were no grant applications.

24/25 - 126 To note the reports from Tewkesbury Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council

A report from GCC was received from Cllr Smith.

Cllr Sztymiak provided an update from TBC.

The Government has published a white paper on devolution which will abolish borough and district councils and replace them with unitary authorities. This will happen, it is a 'when' rather than an 'if'. The paper indicates that a unitary authority should be based on 500,000+ residents, which Gloucestershire would be (if the boundaries stayed as per the current county council), another suggestion is an East / West split of the county, but this would create two authorities of 300,000+ residents. There are divisions among political parties and within borough and district councils as to which option would be best and Councillors discussed this at length.

All Councillors agreed that the Town Council preference would be that the current boundaries of Gloucestershire County Council transition to one unitary authority. This makes sense in terms of many big services are already structured in this way e.g. police, adult social care, children's care.

Councillors requested that a letter detailing our preference be sent to Jim McMahon (Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution) and copied to Cameron Thomas (MP for Tewkesbury) and the leaders of Gloucestershire County Council & Tewkesbury Borough Council. A copy will also be posted to the Town Council website.

Councillors agreed that it would be useful to have a vision of what this might look for the Town Council and how this would be achieved, as this places the council in a far more viable position than starting from scratch. The Town Clerk advised that some of this work had previously taken place when this was first mentioned four years or so ago. **Action:** Town Clerk to look at this work and review.

Cllr Smith advised that there was a briefing note that had been provided to the County Council. **Action:** Town Clerk to circulate the briefing note from Vernon.

Cllr Sztymiak also provided an update on changes to the grass cutting within the parish. GCC will no longer be using TBC (Ubico) as the contractor for cutting their grass in the parish. Cuts will be reduced from 6-8 times a year to 2. GCC has stated that this is to improve biodiversity. Land owned by TBC will continue to be cut on the current regime.

Action: Refer to Environment & Amenities Committee for discussion. Need to understand which land within the parish is affected. Deputy Town Clerk to speak to TBC and feed back to committee.

24/25 - 127 Correspondence
There was no correspondence.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.25pm

Signature of Chairman upon approval of the minutes 10th March 2025

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