DRAFT - MINUTES OF THE LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CLAREMOUNT HOUSE ON MEETING OF THE COUNCIL MONDAY 13TH JULY 2026

Start 7.00pm

Present: Cllr T Saunders (Chair)
Cllr J Gregory
Cllr C Harris
Cllr S Hillier
Cllr R Holmes
Cllr S Holmes
Cllr H Hutchison
Cllr M Jones
Cllr P Johns
Cllr T Lindsay
Cllr G Phelps
Cllr E Taylor
Cllr R Thomas (Co-opted member joined at 7.20pm)

Absent: Cllr C Evans

In attendance: C Lines (Town Clerk/RFO)
L Bendall (Deputy Clerk and Minute Taker)
L Gay Senior Administrator

Members of the Public: 3 members of the public and District Cllr A McDermid

Councillor Saunders welcomed all those present, gave the usual housekeeping announcements, and reminded councillors of the meeting protocol to be observed throughout the meeting.

Cllr Saunders welcomed new clerk, Catherine Lines.

Open Forum

No items raised

1.	**APOLOGIES**
	Apologies were received and noted from Cllr S Cave
2.	**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**
	To receive Declarations of Interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda, in accordance with Lydney Town Council's current Code of Conduct in respect of Members. No declarations of interests were declared

3.	**<u>CO-OPTION ONTO LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL</u>**
	To review and consider appointment of Councillor Co-option onto Lydney Town Council. Members noted that there is one vacancy on the Council and that four applications had been received. Three applicants attended the meeting, and each gave a brief verbal presentation outlining their reasons for wishing to become a Councillor. A ballot vote was subsequently held, with votes counted by the Clerk and verified by the Deputy Clerk. Following the ballot, Richard Thomas received the highest number of votes and was duly co-opted to the Council. Cllr Thomas (East Ward) was co-opted onto the Council. The Clerk witnessed the signing of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, and Cllr Thomas joined the meeting at 7.20pm. The Deputy Clerk provided a welcome pack to Cllr Thomas, including a Declaration of Interest form, which must be completed and returned to the Forest of Dean District Council (FoDDC) within 28 days of taking office.
4.	**<u>MINUTES</u>**
	To consider approving as a correct record the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Monday 15th June 2026. It was proposed (CH) and seconded (SHo) for the Town Council minutes held on Monday 15th June 2026 be accepted as read and correct. **Resolved: Majority Approved**
5.	**<u>REPORTS</u>**
	To receive *<u>urgent</u>* reports from Members of the Town, District and County Councils
	<u>County Council Reports</u> A report was received from County Councillor R. Donaghue, summarised as follows: • **Grassroots** – A grant scheme available through support from Gloucestershire County Council councillors. Cllr Donaghue is seeking advice on how this support can best be offered. • **Anti-social Behaviour** – Cllr Donaghue will be attending the Countywide Community Drugs Partnership meeting in September and welcomed information regarding any issues affecting Lydney. • **Highways** – Cllr Donaghue attended a meeting with the Local Highways Manager. Discussions included a joint campaign between Gloucestershire County Council and Lydney Town Council to help clean up the town. It was also noted that the budget for white lining had been reduced by approximately one third. The full report was sent to councillors <u>District Council Reports</u> Cllr Andrew McDermid, District Councillor for Lydney East Ward, provided a verbal report, summarised as follows: • **El Niño** – Cllr McDermid advised that the El Niño weather pattern off the coast of Chile can indirectly influence UK weather and that forecasts suggest the coming winter may be similar to that of 2024, when flooding was a significant issue.

- **Litter** – A resident had contacted Cllr McDermid regarding ongoing issues with litter behind the football club, accessed from Swan Road. It was suggested that consideration be given to installing an additional litter and/or recycling bin in the area.
- **River Charter** – The Wye Valley Consortium has adopted a River Charter to support greater stewardship of the River Wye. Cllr McDermid suggested that the Forest of Dean District consider adopting a similar charter and that Lydney Town Council should consider becoming involved.

Town Council Reports

- **Community Response Network Meeting** – Cllrs Saunders and Taylor attended this multi-agency meeting with representatives from a number of organisations, including Citizens Advice, Social Services, Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF), the Police and Child Welfare Officers, to discuss ongoing concerns and issues within Lydney. A further multi-agency meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 14th July, and further updates will be provided.
  Cllr Saunders is continuing to organise a meeting with local residents living in the areas most affected by current anti-social behaviour issues. It was commented that, whilst the Council has no direct enforcement powers, working in partnership with other organisations and exploring opportunities to improve youth provision is a positive way to help address these issues.

- **River Severn** – Cllr Lindsay updated the Council on recent incidents involving two youths swimming in the River Severn at the harbour. Members agreed this is extremely dangerous and that greater awareness of the risks should be promoted through additional signage and social media. The office will contact the Coastguard to obtain information that can be shared. It was noted that the Environment Agency is responsible for the harbour.

- **Biosphere Meeting** – Cllrs R Holmes, S Holmes and J Gregory met with Forest of Dean District Councillor Chris McFarling and Forest of Dean District Council Officer, Alastair Chapman, to discuss the proposed Biosphere status. Discussions included the public consultation, and councillors were advised that an information leaflet had been distributed to all residents with their Council Tax bills.
  Members expressed ongoing concerns regarding the proposal, particularly that existing highways issues could be exacerbated. It was explained that achieving UNESCO Biosphere status would provide international recognition for the Forest of Dean, supporting the protection of its natural environment while promoting sustainable development. Cllr McDermid commented that it would give the Forest of Dean a stronger identity and provide an additional tool to help safeguard the area from inappropriate development. He noted that, in the past, parts of the Forest had been considered in relation to fracking proposals and suggested that Biosphere status could strengthen the area's environmental credentials. Cllr McDermid also noted that areas of the Isle of Wight have been recognised as part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.
  Cllr Gregory encouraged councillors to complete the consultation survey that had been circulated. Cllr Lindsay commented that the topic would benefit from an easy-to-read summary to help both councillors and residents better understand the proposal and its implications.

6.	**FINANCIAL MATTERS / RFO REPORT**
6.1	**Payments** To approve accounts for payment as detailed by the RFO Chair proposed to approve payments totalling £22,819.58 be approved. **Resolved: Majority Approved** A query was raised regarding the Council's recent use of Amazon. It was clarified that, wherever possible, the Council seeks to support local businesses; however, in some instances, purchasing items online represents the most cost-effective option and provides better value for money. Cllr Gregory queried the invoice relating to the significant tree works undertaken within the closed churchyard at St Mary's. It was confirmed that the works involved reducing the Lime trees and that, whilst routine tree maintenance would continue as part of ongoing management, these particular works were a one-off requirement. Cllr Saunders provided a brief update on the Council's banking signatories and confirmed that the previous Clerk had been removed from the mandate. The new Clerk and the Deputy Clerk are currently in the process of being added as authorised signatories. The Chair proposed that an additional invoice of £462.00 to the SLCC for the Clerk's membership be approved. **Resolved: Unanimously Approved**
6.2	**Income and Expenditure Reports/ Earmarked Reserves/ Bank Reconciliations and Cashbook Statements for 30.06.2026** To receive and approve the above financial reports Chair proposed to approve the Income and Expenditure Reports, Earmarked Reserves, Bank Reconciliations and Cashbook Statements for 30.06.2026 **Resolved: Majority Approved** Cllr R Holmes confirmed that Bite Size training covering the financial reports would be given by the Finance Assistant, a suitable date to be organised.
6.3	**Direct Debit Card Report** To note the Direct Debit card report for June 2026 Noted
6.4	**Electronic Payment for VAT** To approve the electronic VAT payment of £7,013.77 to Bathurst Park & Recreation Trust & £6,594.01 to Lydney Recreation Trust. Chair proposed to approve electronic VAT transfers of £7,013.77 to Bathurst Park and £6,594.01 to Lydney Recreation Trusts **Resolved: Unanimously Approved**
6.5	**6.5 Earmarked Reserve – Skatepark** To receive and note the electronic accounting reallocation of £30,000 from General Reserves to establish a new Earmarked Reserve (EMR 353 – Skatepark) within the Rialtas accounting system. Chair proposed to approve the reallocation of £30,000 to establish a new Earmarked Reserve (EMR 353 – Skatepark) **Resolved: Unanimously Approved**

7.	**TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**
	To receive an update from the Town Clerk together with statistics for June regarding Lydney Town Council's Facebook and Website Received and noted
8.	**COMMITTEE BUSINESS REFERRED TO THE COUNCIL AND REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES, SUB COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES AND FROM LEAD COUNCILLORS**
	• **Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)** – Cllr Johns advised members that the examiner had approved the updated Neighbourhood Development Plan, subject to a factual accuracy check by the Council's consultants, Place Studio, and an update by FoDDC Officer. Once the factual check has been completed, the NDP will proceed to a local referendum. Members were also advised that, as Forest of Dean District Council has decided not to update its Local Plan at this time, the NDP will operate alongside the existing Local Plan, which remains in force. Feedback following the examination of the updated NDP had been very positive, and it was commented that the Council should be proud of what had been achieved. • **Big Health Debate** – Cllrs Hillier, Jones, Lindsay and Saunders attended a session to discuss the results of a recent Health Services questionnaire. It was noted with disappointment that only 500 responses had been received. The meeting considered a range of health-related issues affecting the Forest of Dean and opportunities for improvement. Members received an update on the new Coleford Health Centre, with works expected to commence this autumn. Discussions also continue regarding the redevelopment of the former Co-op building in Lydney, which has been identified as a potential location for a new medical centre. Concerns were raised regarding the condition of the former Co-op building. It was confirmed that the Council had written to Forest of Dean District Council requesting that consideration be given to serving a Section 215 Notice on the owner to require the site to be tidied and made safe. As no response had been received, it was agreed that a copy of the letter would be emailed to Cllr McDermid, who would follow this up on the Council's behalf. • **Handyperson/Maintenance Operative** – Members were advised that, unfortunately, the appointed candidate had withdrawn their acceptance of the position. The Council has contacted the second shortlisted candidate to offer them the post and is awaiting a response, which is expected by the close of business on Wednesday.

	• **New Medical Centre** – Cllr Saunders is coordinating discussions between the owners of the former Co-op building, Assura and GDoc regarding the proposed redevelopment of the site. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday.
9.	**<u>STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2030</u>**
	To review and note the Strategic Plan updates for 2023-2030 The Strategic Plan was reviewed and updated to include the new Clerk's details. The updated document was noted. It was agreed that consideration would be given to establishing a Strategic Working Party in September to help identify potential funding opportunities and support the delivery of the agreed actions within the Plan. Cllr Thomas requested a copy of the plan be emailed to him – office to action.
10.	**<u>BIODIVERSITY DUTY POLICY</u>**
	To review and note the updates for the Biodiversity Duty Policy The Biodiversity Duty Policy was reviewed, and no updates had been identified. As part of the Biodiversity Duty it was agreed the council would use a more sensitive and environmentally friendly herbicide; it was confirmed that the Head Grounds person was looking into suitable alternatives for weed management.
11.	**<u>REMIT OF COMMITTEES</u>**
	To receive the recommendations of amendment from the Personnel Committee and approve to re-adopt the Remit of Committees Members were advised that the Personnel Committee had reviewed their remit and recommended the following updates: • The Chair of Personnel Committee is to be elected by the committee members, with election taking place at the first meeting of the municipal year • Update to members: to remove the Deputy Mayor (who chairs the Committee) and removal of Town Clerk (it is recognised that a proper officer is usually in attendance to facilitate the meeting) • All committees over the coming year to review their remit to ensure it is up to date and relevant and any changes to be approved at next May's meeting. Chair proposed to approve the above recommendations and re-adopt the updated Remit of Committees **Resolved: Unanimously Approved**
12	**<u>COMPLAINTS POLICY</u>**
	To consider and approve the updated Complaints Policy Following review and an update from the clerk on the identified amendments, Chair proposed to approve and adopt the updated Complaints Policy. **Resolved: Unanimously Approved** The clerk advised that due to recent legislative changes, the office will be updating the council Data Protection and GDPR policies, and they will be bought to council in September for review and approval.
	  It is noted that Cllr Hutchison left the meeting at 8.45pm and rejoined at 8.47pm

13.	**MEMORIAL PLAQUE**
	To consider and approve purchasing a plaque to honour the late Bill Osbourne It was proposed (CH) and seconded (TL) to approve purchasing a memorial plaque to be installed at the garden in the Almshouses with funds being taken from the Civic budget account **Resolved: Unanimously Approved** Cllr S Holmes is attending a committee meeting at the Almshouses on Wednesday and will clarify the position of the plaque to identify the most suitable method of installation, ensuring it is protected from potential damage during ground maintenance works.
14.	**CYCLE STORAGE FACILITY**
	To consider supporting the installation of a secure cycle storage facility at Jubilee Corner, funded through an external grant in partnership with the Forest of Dean District Council Climate Team It was proposed (HH) and seconded (CH) to support the installation of a secure cycle storage at Jubilee Corner, with funding being obtained from FoDDC and subject to Highways approval. **Resolved: Unanimously Approved**
15.	**COMMUNITY PAYBACK MAINTENANCE WORKS**
	To consider and approve engaging the Probation Service's Community Payback scheme to undertake identified maintenance works within Lydney Chair proposed to approve engaging with the Community Probation Scheme to undertake appropriate identified works in and around Lydney, subject to all necessary risk assessments and insurances being in place. **Resolved: Unanimously Approved**
16.	**DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**
	• **Full Council** – Monday 14th September 2026, 7pm, in the Council Chamber, Claremont House, High Street. Lydney **Community Event** – Cllrs were reminded of the upcoming Community Event taking place at Bathurst Park on Saturday, 25th July. Members' support at the event would be greatly appreciated, and an email will be circulated requesting Councillor availability.

Meeting closed at 9.09pm