

WALLINGFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES

of the

Virtual TEAMS meeting of Full Council on the Monday 26th April 2021 at 7p.m

PRESENT

The Chairman, Councillor Rob McGregor

Councillors Beatty, Beauchamp, Cattermole, Harris, Holder, Holford, Hughes, Keats-Rohan, Kidley, Lester, Newcombe, and Sinkinson.

Town Clerk, Paula Lopez

Responsible Finance Officer: Michelle Taylor

Senior Officer in Attendance: Barbara Atkins (Minute Taker)

Administration Officer: Tracey Collins

Approximately 9 members of the public including Wallingford Radio and Herald and, County Councillor Pete Sudbury were present.

753. THE CHAIRMAN TO ADVISE THOSE IN ATTENDANCE OF THE PROTOCOL FOR THE MEETING

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. The protocol for the meeting had been sent out in advance and attendees were reminded to mute themselves when not speaking.

754. APOLOGIES

Councillors Newcombe, Whelan and Wilder sent their apologies.

755. ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC

It was Proposed by Councillor Lester, Seconded by Councillor Kidley and

RESOLVED: THAT in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items and that the papers relating to these items remain confidential on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public's interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted:-

- Agenda Items:
- 25 - Confidential Minutes
 - 26 - Neighbourhood Plan – Honorarium payments to steering group members
 - 27 - Fast Central
 - 28 - Aged Debtors
 - 29 - 10 St Martin’s Street
 - 30 - Update on the Recruitment of the Town Clerk
 - 21 ii) – The Regal Centre

756. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

A Councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in our Council’s Standing Orders Code of Conduct (Item 13) in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under code of conduct and his right to participate and vote on the matter (guidelines are available at the meeting and all Councillors have received a copy prior to the meeting) Information for each Member was available at the meeting.

757. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – NOTIFIED AND IMPROMPTU (Total 15 Minutes)

i) Colin Dolton – BunkFest – Mr Dolton gave an outline of the tentative plans that the Directors of BunkFest were putting in place regarding managing BunkFest this year. It is likely that due to the Coronavirus they would have to restrict numbers and the directors are looking at the options that are available to them. One option would be to close the Kinecroft and the footpaths on the Kinecroft to help restrict numbers but an application to County Council would have to be made and could be refused in which case it was unlikely that BunkFest would not go ahead. Mr Dolton asked that Wallingford Town Council support closure of the Kinecroft and their application to the County Council. Councillors had a few questions, were the number of people using the Coach and Horses outdoor space included in BunkFest’s numbers, Mr Dolton stated that this was an interesting question. The local pubs might have to have stand-alone attractions so as not form part of BunkFest’s numbers and BunkFest were looking at grants that could assist them. BunkFest to be discussed under the agenda item.

ii) Amy Smith – Winterbrook House (A Community Asset) – Miss Smith thanked the Chairman for allowing her to speak and reported that Winterbrook House where Agatha Christie and Max Mallowan lived for a number of years would be a great asset to the town of Wallingford. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to apply to have the house listed as a community asset and it could become a tourist attraction and the grounds could also be used for theatre productions, etc. The house had access to the river and a shuttle could be run to and from the site. It would not cost the council anything to make the request. Agatha Christie’s House is an agenda item.

The Chairman thanked the public for their contributions.

758. COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

The County and District Councillors had not submitted any reports but the Chairman allowed Pete Sudbury to speak.

Pete Sudbury stated that he had attended a planning meeting regarding the Grundon's site on the Bypass. He thanked Stu Darby for his help with his objections to the site which echoed the Town Council's concerns in particular the unsuitable access to the site and the 3 ton lorries which enter and exit the site. Pete Sudbury stated how much he had enjoyed working with the Town Council and that he would submit his report for the minutes.

The Chairman thanked Pete Sudbury.

759. VARIATION OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

There was no variation in the order of business.

760. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

(i) Barbara Atkins – Mrs Atkins was attending her last meeting as she was leaving the Town Council after nearly 18years of service. Much to her surprise she was presented with a bouquet of flowers (delivered via her husband) and asked to read out the message in the card. Mrs Atkins thanked everyone for the lovely flowers.

(ii) Councillor Steve Holder – The Chairman welcomed Councillor Holder to the Town Council and stated that they were looking forward to working with him.

(iii) Colin Dolton – The Chairman reported that the Town Council were sorry to lose Colin from the Council and thanked him for all his work. Wallingford Town Council will still be working on Mr Dolton on some projects.

761. MINUTES

It was Proposed by Councillor Harris, Seconded by Councillor Kidley and

RESOLVED: THAT the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held the 22nd March 2021 on pages 313-321, copies circulated previously to Councillors, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

762. TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING MINUTES

To adopt the minutes of the following committee meetings held in 2021, copies previously signed as a correct record and circulated to Councillors:

Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces	18/01/2021	Pages 250 - 255
Planning	15/03/2021	Pages 306 - 312

It was Proposed by Councillor Lester, Seconded by Councillor Kidley and

RESOLVED: THAT the minutes of the committee meetings listed above, copies previously signed as a correct record and circulated to Councillors, be adopted by Full Council.

763. RESIGNATION OF A TOWN COUNCILLOR

The Chairman stated Councillor Colin Dolton had resigned from Office on the 29th March 2021 creating a Casual Vacancy. The vacancy would be filled by Co-option and the Council hoped to attract more talent.

764. SUMMARY OF THE FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE COUNCIL (RESERVES-REGULAR ITEM)

The Town Clerk reported for the Responsible Finance Officer as she was having technical difficulties and stated that the report sent out in advance of the meeting was in order to keep Councillors fully informed. If any Councillors had any queries please contact the Responsible Finance Officer.

765. COUNCIL MEETINGS

Councillor had received a copy of the amended timetable.

(i) Councillors noted 2 additional Council meetings for 2021 in July and November – This had been proposed by Council Beauchamp to ensure that a Full Council meeting is held every Month. The 2022 Timetable will be reviewed in December 2021.

(ii) Councillors noted that Mayor Making/Annual Meeting will now take place virtually on Wednesday 5th May and Mayor’s Sunday is to take place on Sunday 15th August.

766. RETURN TO FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

i) To consider a response to the MHCLG local authority remote meetings: call for evidence. [Local authority remote meetings: call for evidence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Councillor Keats-Rohan asked if Councillors should respond individually or as a Town Council?

The Town Clerk said there was nothing to say that Councillors could not respond individually, Councillor Beauchamp suggested that the Communications Working Party prepare a collected broad response.

ii) To consider the way forward on face-to-face meetings. Report from OALC on considerations when holding face to face meetings and suggested alternative options when the current legislation that allows virtual meetings ends on 6th May 2021. This was sent out in advance of the meeting – Councillors discussed, the Town Clerk advised that to continue meeting virtually would be unlawful unless the current challenge in the High Court was successful and she must advise against continuing with virtual meetings beyond 6th May 2021. Any decisions that were made at such meetings could be challenged. Views were mixed but

the majority of Councillors believed that to meet virtually until all restrictions were lifted would be safer. It was also noted that attendance by the public had increased since virtual meetings had been introduced. Councillors felt it may prove difficult to accommodate people safely in the Town Hall and numbers would have to be limited. It was suggested that maybe committee meetings could be Face to Face while Full Council remained as TEAMS meetings.

It was Proposed by Councillor Lester, Seconded by Councillor Harris and

RESOLVED: THAT up to the 21st June 2021 meetings will remain virtual. However it was noted that the Town Clerk had advised against this. Council would revisit their decision if necessary.

767. ST NICHOLAS COLLEGE RUINS IN THE CASTLE GARDENS

Councillor Keats-Rohan reported on the grant application to Historic England for restoration of the St Nicholas ruins in the Castle Gardens. The grant award is likely to be 80% of the full cost of repair and Council would need to commit to raising 20% whether by grants or fund raising. The initial outlay would be around £10k (for project design) and Councillor Keats-Rohan suggested that this could be taken from reserves initially and then paid back once the funds had been raised externally. Councillors were concerned about using up more of the reserves and Councillor Harris suggested that perhaps initially the money could be allocated to the contingency property repair fund. Councillors were very concerned about the deterioration of the ruins and the vandalism that occurs to this important part of the town's heritage. If the Town Council did not manage to raise the full 20% of the project (grant approximately £425,000) then the project once started would have to be scaled back. Councillor Cattermole believed that the Town Council had been looking at this the wrong way as he had in fact cut the ivy from the surrounding window in part of the tower and therefore the Councillors could do likewise and form a working party to cut the ivy from the rest of the ruins. Councillor Keats-Rohan stated that it was an offence to touch the ruins themselves as the ruin could be severely damaged. Careful conservation of the ruins is required.

It was Proposed by Councillor Harris, Seconded by Councillor Beauchamp and

RESOLVED THAT: up to £10,000 may be taken from the contingency property fund initially to take the project to Stage 1. The Town Council are not committed to raise the rest of the 20% but should endeavour to raise the money.

Councillor Harris thanked Councillor Keats-Rohan for all the work she had put into this.

768. INCREASE IN ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN WALLINGFORD

Councillor Keats-Rohan reported on the anti-social behaviour in Wallingford which has resulted in damage to the ancient sites and stated that it had been suggested that Councillor Patrols could be undertaken for short periods at peak times. Crimes are being committed to the ancient monuments and Historic England could issue fines.

Councillors discussed and decided that from a safety aspect the PCSO's should deal with the offenders and that the public should report the crimes when they see them occurring

(as advised by the officer). The police would then know that crimes are being committed in Wallingford and hopefully a greater police presence via increased patrols will happen. Education is a key factor to some of the vandalism in that some children may be unaware that the banks of the Kincroft are scheduled monuments. CCTV cameras were also thought to be a good deterrent and this should be investigated.

It was Proposed by Councillor McGregor, Seconded by Councillor Cattermole and

RESOLVED THAT: Wallingford Town Council could not support Councillor Patrols but that CCTV cameras should be investigated.

769. BUNKFEST

Councillors discussed the plans for managing the forthcoming BunkFest as reported by Colin Dolton in Minutes 757(i) above. Councillors stated that they trusted the directors of BunkFest as they had worked with them for a long time and Councillors were very keen to see BunkFest go ahead.

It was Proposed by Councillor Harris, Seconded by Councillor Lester and

RESOLVED THAT: Wallingford Town Council support BunkFest and support the closure of the Kincroft and any necessary applications they need to make to allow this, including an application to Oxfordshire County Council to close the footpaths. (Public consultation to take place if required).

770. FLAG FLYING ON GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Councillor Beatty reported that recent Government guidance indicated that the Union Jack should be flown on all Government buildings providing a specific occasion flag was not being flown. Councillors were of mixed opinions as they would like to see the Town flag flown. The current flag pole would not allow 2 flags to be flown at once. The Town Clerk reported that the Town Hall may not be classed as a Government building. Councillors requested that the Town Clerk determines whether or not the Town Hall is a Government building.

771. CHOLSEY RAILWAY LEASE

Councillor McGregor and Councillor Holford updated Council on the approval by Council of the lease extension as agreed at Council, minute 719/03/2021 refers. Council considered removing the condition that the extension is granted subject to the return of the line back to the Town Council should it become a commuter line as the condition would make it difficult for the railway to obtain grant funding. Councillor Holford further explained that although the Town Council owns the track the Cholsey and Wallingford Preservation Society own the platform and station buildings and therefore she suggested that the condition to the lease is removed. Instead a 'Memorandum of Understanding' could be prepared stating that if a community line should happen then the Town Council and Cholsey and Wallingford

Preservation Society should share any profits. Councillors considered this to be a good solution to a hypothetical event.

It was Proposed by Councillor Holford, Seconded by Councillor Beatty and

RESOLVED THAT: Wallingford Town Council will remove the proposed condition/clause of returning the line to the Town Council in the event of a Community Line but instead a 'Memorandum of Understanding' should be prepared which includes if a Community Line should happen then Town Council and Cholsey and Wallingford Preservation Society should share any profits.

772. ADOPTED RED TELEPHONE BOXES

i) **Request from the museum to renovate the telephone box in St Georges Road and prepare for use as a pop-up museum and future library** – Councillors considered the request and thanked the museum and agreed to support it.

It was Proposed by Councillor McGregor, Seconded by Councillor Beatty and

RESOLVED THAT: Wallingford Town Council thank the museum and agree to the museum renovating the telephone box in St Georges Road and preparing it for use as a pop-up museum and future library.

ii) To consider the future use and renovation of the telephone box in St Johns Road.

The Town Clerk suggested that a notice on Town Council's Facebook page stating that there is a Red Telephone Box in St John's Road that needs renovating and is anyone interested, might help. Councillor Lester suggested that St John's School might be interested in the project and could use it as a lending library for the children to swap books.

The Town Council's Officer stated that the special paint for the renovation projects had been ordered.

The remaining telephone boxes at the bridge and the Town Hall, thought to be Grade II listed, were discussed. Councillor Holder offered to work with the Town Clerk to see if these boxes were likely to be decommissioned.

It was Proposed by Councillor Lester, Seconded by Councillor Holder and

RESOLVED THAT: Wallingford Town Council will contact St John's School to see if they are interested in renovating the Red Telephone Box in St John's Road and using it for a sharing library or another suitable project.

773. The REGAL CENTRE

- i) Update from the Regal Working Party following the resolution- Councillor Harris stated that there was no further update and would report back at the next Council meeting.
- ii) Councillor Harris very briefly stated that various documents were awaited. The Town Clerk advised that this agenda item would, as declared above in Minute 755 , be discussed under confidential items.

774. AGATHA CHRISTIE HOUSE

SODC link: [Assets of Community Value - South Oxfordshire District Council \(southoxon.gov.uk\)](https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/Assets_of_Community_Value_-_South_Oxfordshire_District_Council)

Councillor Cattermole stated that he would pick up from the Amy Smith's item under Public Participation in that he asks for the Town Council's approval to explore the possibility of registering the Agatha Christie house as an Asset of Community Value. (ACV). This request was so that Winterbrook House could be operated as an Agatha Christie Centre. District Councillor George Levy and District Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson (Cabinet Member for Planning) had been assisting Councillor Cattermole.

The Town Clerk believed the property to be exempt from the required criteria for nominating the property as an ACV as it was residential. The SODC website indicates this and it was confirmed by an officer from SODC. The Town Clerk stated that there was a lot of information on the SODC website on ACV's and it also advised the paperwork that would be required to make the nomination along with the various tests that the application needed to pass.

Councillors discussed and concluded that the Town Council should look at the process providing no costs were involved. However, the Town Council should not own or run it, a business plan would be required. Councillor Cattermole suggested that a Charitable Organisation should be formed and a public meeting should be called to see who was interested. There was a need to act quickly in case the property was sold.

It was Proposed by Cattermole, Seconded by Councillor Beatty and

RESOLVED THAT: Wallingford Town Council will support the possibility of registering the Agatha Christie house as an Asset of Community Value.

Councillor Cattermole to lead on the necessary paperwork and work with the Office if required.

775. ACTIVITIES ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

None

776. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Wallingford Preservation Trust

River Subsidence – Repair Work – Councillor Cattermole to investigate

9 St Martins – plans for the building

Impact of Didcot Garden Centre on Wallingford

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WERE ASKED TO LEAVE THE MEETING.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS ON PAGE 346