

WALLINGFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES

of the

Virtual TEAMS meeting of Full Council on the Monday 7th December 2020 at 7p.m

PRESENT

The Mayor, Councillor Lee Upcraft

Councillors Beatty, Beauchamp, Cattermole, Dolton, Harris, Holford, Keats-Rohan, Kidley, Lester, McGregor, Whelan and Wilder.

The Town Clerk, Mrs Paula Lopez

Responsible Finance Officer: Michelle Taylor

Senior Officer in Attendance: Barbara Atkins (Minute Taker)

Officer: Tracey Collins

Approximately 3 members of the public and County Councillor Peter Sudbury were present

457. THE MAYOR TO ADVISE THOSE IN ATTENDANCE OF THE PROTOCOL FOR THE MEETING

The Mayor Welcomed members of the public to the meeting. The protocol for the meeting had been sent out in advance.

458. APOLOGIES

District Councillor Levy had sent his apologies in advance of the meeting and Councillor Hughes and Sinkinson were not present.

459. ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC

It was Proposed by the Mayor, Seconded by Councillor Keats-Rohan 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 23 – Confidential Minutes

460. 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.

There were no declarations of interests.

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

Victoria Nemar - Home Services Advisor - Waterside Court Care Home – Ms Nemar explained that she was the new Home Services Advisor and that she wished to make Wallingford dementia friendly by offering Dementia Friends sessions to Councillors and others. The sessions are 45 to 60 minutes long and are in Covid safe surroundings for 4 people or individually if requested. She hopes to work with Council and to promote the sessions through local channels. Interest by the community has already been shown.

Councillors thanked Victoria Nemar.

462. COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

(i) County Councillor Pete Sudbury's report:

'Because of the County Council elections in May, and political "purdah" before that, the January CC meeting has been brought forward to December. Dealing with two CC meetings in 5 weeks has taken a significant part of my time.

I have been using the ability for Councillors to ask questions requiring written responses to push for three things: early on, I tried without success to push OCC to take direct control of Test and Trace in the County, because the national version is (and remains) shockingly poor. More recently, I've focused on traffic and on practical measures for mitigation and (especially) adaptation to the rapid advance of climate change.

A motion by Charles Matthew (Con) around the failure to deliver promised infrastructure where the A40 meets the Oxford Ring Road with my amendment asking for strong consideration of reopening the Railway out to Witney and beyond was passed unanimously. They will be helpful as plans advance for reopening the line from Wallingford to Cholsey for commuter traffic.

I have put in a motion at tomorrow's meeting (Seconded by Cllr Matthew) which will make it easier for local councils to put in place 20mph limits, or zones, and will make 20mph the default speed limit for all new developments. Both Lib Dems and Labour have said they will support it, and I have indications it will get support from at least one independent Conservative, so it has a good chance of getting through.

As a result of recent questions:

Tree cover. County has no plans for increasing tree cover in built up areas to 40%. Follow up responses from Yvonne Constance suggests she does not fully comprehend that this (or other methods of reducing maximum temperatures) is a public health necessity rather than just a "wish list" idea.

Traffic impacts of Local Plan and HIF (housing infrastructure (ie roads) Fund). The County clearly does not have adequate focus on the specific traffic impacts on South Oxfordshire of the schemes it forced through, nor any appreciation of the extent of "modal shift" needed to stop our highways jamming solid.

What we probably need to do is get a run through of the modelling done by Highways, and get a numerical picture of the scale of changes needed.

I have made strong objections to the application to extend the retail operations at the quarry on the ring road by importing gravel, plus topsoil and other builder's merchant-type materials. This is on the grounds that it will increase traffic on the ring (by a great deal more than the applicant pretends) and take away trade from local builders' merchants, with profits leaving the area rather than supporting the local economy.

Finally, Zac Etheridge and I (as part of FoWCGS) have put together a plan for an initial tranche of tree planting on County Council verges and other green spaces, using S106 "Green infrastructure" funds, which we hope will go in in spring. Feedback from passers-by when we asked about their views was very positive.'

County Councillor Sudbury also reported that although there was CIL money available for a Zebra Crossing by Lidl but that it was ^{not} nearly enough.

Correction

Councillor Lester thanked County Councillor Sudbury for his support of the Covid posters (£270) and he responded that he still had some money to spend by January if Council had any other needs to let him know.

(ii) District Councillor Levy had sent his apologies.

463. VARIATION OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

There was no variation in order of business.

464. MAYORS COMMUNICATIONS

i) **River Thames Champions Meeting** – The Mayor reported that he had attended the first meeting of this group and that it covered other rivers too. The group had been set up to support councils and the Mayor stated that it could only be a good thing and that Wallingford Town Council should support this. A Thames Water representative had been present and he had learnt that Cholsey Sewage Plant was due to be upgraded. As soon as the Mayor receives the notes/minutes of the meeting he will share them with Council.

465. COUNCILLOR RESIGNATION

Councillor Stewart Davies resigned from office on 28th October 2020 creating a Casual Vacancy. There has been no call for an election therefore Council can co-opt for this vacancy in the New Year.

466. MINUTES

i) To sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on the 26th October 2020 as set out on pages 171 – 180 of the Minute Book.

Councillors had no corrections

ii) To sign as a correct record the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting held on the 16th November as set out on pages 197 -198.

The Mayor advised that on Page 198 where Councillor Kidley had reported that Sainsbury (Didcot) had 5 hours free parking in fact it was only 2 hours of the 5 that were free.

It was Proposed by The Mayor, Seconded by Councillor McGregor and

RESOLVED:

THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on the 26th October 2020 as set out on pages 171 – 180 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

THAT following a correction on page 198 the minutes of the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting held on the 16th November as set out on pages 197 -198 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

467. TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING MINUTES

Planning	28/09/2020	Pages 143 - 151
Planning	12/10/2020	158 - 164
Planning	02/11/2020	183 - 192
Finance and Properties	20/05/2020	14 - 19
Finance and Properties	10/11/2020	193 - 196

It was Proposed by The Mayor, Seconded by Councillor Lester and

RESOLVED: THAT the minutes of committee meetings held in 2020 as listed above, copies previously signed as a correct record and circulated to Councillors, be adopted by Full Council.

468. COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillors considered the committees, working parties and outside bodies.

i) Changes need to be made:

Councillor Beatty resigned from the Finance and Properties Committee.

Councillor Cattermole to join the Tourism and Economic Development Committee.

Councillors Dolton and Keats-Rohan to join the Properties Working Party

Councillor Beauchamp to join the Communications Strategy Working Party.

ii) Councillor Harris to be adopted to Committees and Working Parties:

Councillor Harris to join the Finance and Properties Committee.

Councillor Harris to join the Regal Working Party.

iii) District Councillors to be invited to join the planning committee as non-voting Members.

iv) Outside Bodies Representatives to be adopted to Wallingford's Wigod Way Family Centre.

Councillor Keats-Rohan to be the Town Council's representative to Wallingford's Wigod Way Family Centre.

It was Proposed by the Mayor, Seconded by Councillor Lester and

RESOLVED: THAT the above changes be implemented to the committees, working parties and outside bodies of the Town Council.

469. 20 MILE PER HOUR SPEED LIMIT

The Mayor asked for support for a 20 mile per hour speed limit in whole or in part of town.

The Mayor thanked County Councillor Sudbury for supporting the speed surveys in town.

After a detailed discussion it was Proposed by The Mayor and Seconded by Councillor Cattermole and

RESOLVED: THAT the Town Council would look at the practicalities of a 20 mile an hour speed limit in town and that they would work with Oxfordshire County Council to understand the future steps necessary to implement this.

470. TOWN CLERK'S HOURS

Deferred from the Full Council meeting 26th October 2020, (Minute 381). Recommendation from the **Personnel Committee Meeting of the 4th August 2020 Minute 180/08/2020** refers.

Councillor Kidley reminded Councillors that the Town Clerk's extra hours of 5 per week were due to end in shortly and the recommendation from the Personnel Committee was to increase and extend these so that the Town Clerk would be working 7 extra hours a week.

It was Proposed by Councillor Kidley, Seconded by the Mayor and

RESOLVED THAT: The Town Clerk's hours increase by 7 hours with agreement that she would not attend the office on Fridays thereby working from home. The extra 7 hours to be on a temporary basis of one year.

471. COUNCIL OFFICE OPENING OVER THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD

Councillors noted that the office will be closed this year over the Christmas period from Tuesday 29th December 2020 through to Thursday 31st December 2020, returning to work on Monday 4th January 2021, (3 days holiday to be taken by staff).

472. HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY: CONSULTATION

Councillors had received the paperwork in advance of the meeting. The consultation was discussed and it was agreed that Council would respond that they wished to be kept informed and stay in the process and that once more details are know they will discuss further.

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

The Responsible Finance Officer had sent out the summary in advance of the meeting, she reported that the Capital Reserves had been updated to show the final invoice for RIBA 3 with regards to the Regal. The extra money previously agreed for the proposed demolition of the recreational rooms have been added in along with the money that had been paid out to ensure that the Bull Croft Lodge was compliant and ready for letting.

Noted by Councillors

474. BEACON PROJECT

Mr Lloyd-Jones from the Beacon Project presented at the Finance & Property Committee meeting on 30th November 2020 to ask for Council support for the project when the current support ends in September 2021. This was then considered as a separate agenda item - (Draft Finance and Properties Minutes 444 & 447 refer).

It was Proposed by The Mayor, Seconded by Councillor Whelan and

RECOMMENDED: THAT Wallingford Town Council continues to support the Beacon Project.

2020-2021 Budgeted £18,000. Paid to date £17,657 which includes a discount of £505.00.

2021-2022 Estimated in the Budget at £18,000 in total. The Beacon Project are asking for £20,005.56 (plus CPI increase year on year).

Councillors considered and discussed the recommendation and additional information.

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

RESOLVED: THAT Wallingford Town Council continues to support the Beacon Project at a cost of £20,005.56 (plus CPI increase year on year).

475. TO REVIEW THE TOWN COUNCIL'S CHARGES

The Responsible Financial Officer reported at the meeting of the Finance & Property Committee on 30th November 2020 that no increases in charges were proposed for the estimates/budget, however a new one-off charge of £20 per day for the use of electricity at events on the Market Place and water on the Kinecroft was suggested.

Members discussed and agreed to resolve the Finance and Properties Committee's recommendation.

It was clarified for Councillor Lester that this applied to events rather than the Charter Market.

It was Proposed by The Mayor, Seconded by Councillor Lester and

RESOLVED: THAT Wallingford Town Council does not increase charges this year but adds a charge for the use of electricity on the Market Place and water in the Kinecroft for each booked event and that this should be introduced at a rate of £20 per day, this charge to be monitored to make sure that it covers costs.

476. THE BOATHOUSE

The Responsible Finance Officer updated Council on the amount of rent arrears owed by Greene King for The Boathouse. The Council are seeking legal advice and considering options for the recovery of the debt. The amount owed is £67,500 which has accrued since March 2020 and a further invoice is due to be sent for the next quarter.

477. ESTIMATES FOR 2021/2022

Council received the draft estimates/budgets for 2021/2022 in advance of the meeting.

- i) Members of the Finance & Property Committee considered the draft estimates/budgets at the meeting on 30th November 2020. (Minute 451 refers – draft). The Mayor suggested some areas where savings could be made thus reducing the overall increase in the precept from 9.24% to 5.61%. The Town Clerk voiced her concern regarding the recovery of the substantial outstanding debt that was owed to the Council, it was her advice not to try to cut costs from the estimates/budget as inevitably this would put further pressure on the general reserves if expenses were not anticipated and accounted for in the estimates/budget. It had already eaten into the General Reserves this year leaving very little money for emergencies. (A list of the savings agreed at the meeting forwarded to Councillors in advance of this meeting).

Councillor Harris advised that if this bad debt was not recovered soon it could wipe out the town council's general reserves and therefore should a provision be made in the precept. Chasing the bad debt could take up to 2 years with Covid and cost in the region of £20,000 (legal fees). If an allocation is made in the precept it would put an individual's council tax up by £2.40 (Band D) per month. If the debt is recovered then this money could then go into reserves. Most of the Town Council's reserves are Capital which limits what they can be used for.

The Mayor advised that another option was redundancies, cutting staffing costs. Councillor Dolton suggested that the Town Council should not be considering new posts in the budget at the moment if it considered redundancies and a delay might be advisable. Councillor Lester stated that she had not realised that one of the jobs had been advertised and she supported Councillor Dolton's suggestion of a delay in appointments for 6 to 12 months. It was also suggested job evaluations for current posts should be undertaken as there is no assurance that redundancies would help. Councillor Whelan stated that she believed the recently advertised job for a Tourism, Business and Community Development Manager was to help generate income, The Mayor and Councillor McGregor were in agreement with this.

- ii) At the same meeting Members of the Finance & Property Committee were advised by Councillor Kidley of the cost and problems involved in restoring water to the Fountain in the Market Place. This was discussed and it was decided that this was not practical and therefore the cost should not be added into the precept.

Noted and not to be included in estimates.

- iii) Members further considered whether financial support should be given to Wallingford Radio. The Mayor spoke regarding support for Wallingford Radio and felt that the Council should be allocating some money in the estimates for this purpose. A

discussion took place, and it was suggested that Council pay a sum for advertising and promotion to the radio station and pay for this upfront then review whether to continue this support next year. The Mayor suggested that this should be £500.

It was Proposed by Councillor Dolton, Seconded by Councillor Whelan and

RECOMMENDED: THAT Wallingford Town Council's amended estimates be put before Council on the 7th December for approval. **THAT** there should be no additional amount for the water fountain but there should be an additional amount of £500 payable to Wallingford Radio for Town Council advertising and promotion throughout the financial year

Noted and agreed by Councillors to be included in estimates.

Councillors concluded that they wished to make 2 resolutions:

1. It was Proposed by Councillor Harris, Seconded by Councillor Keats-Rohan and

RESOLVED: THAT it would be prudent to allow a contingency to cover the bad debt and shore up finances to add £100,000 to the Budget for next year thereby increasing the Precept whilst also adding in the amounts for the Beacon Project and Wallingford Radio.

Votes recorded as 9 for the motion (Cllrs Whelan, Wilder, Harris, Keats-Rohan, Holford, Beauchamp, Dolton, Lester, McGregor). 4 against the motion (Cllrs Beatty, Cattermole, Kidley, Upcraft).

2. It was Proposed by Councillor Lester, Seconded by Councillor Dolton and

RESOLVED: THAT it would also be prudent to defer the employment of 2 extra members of staff for the next year and that the post of Tourism, Business and Community Development Manager be the first to be reconsidered when appropriate. The Precept would then reduce down.

Votes recorded as 8 for the motion (Cllrs Cattermole, Keats-Rohan, Lester, Kidley, Holford, Dolton, Beauchamp, Harris). 5 against the motion (Cllrs McGregor, Beatty, Wilder, Whelan, Upcraft).

The Town Clerk advised that as the resolution regarding the post of Tourism, Business and Community Development Manager had been within the last 6 months this would have to be overturned at the next full council meeting in January in accordance with standing orders.

Furthermore the Town Clerk offered to reduce her hours but Council thanked her and stated that this was not required.

478. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Investment Policy for adoption following amendment
Planning Pre-Application Protocol policy
Timetables of meetings for adoption
The External Audit/Annual Governance & Accountability Year End 31st March 2020
Site B Allotment

Members of the public were asked to leave the meeting for the confidential items