

WALLINGFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES

of the



Meeting of the Finance and Properties Committee on 6th December 2021 at 7pm, Wallingford Town Hall

Those present: The Mayor, Councillor Harris
The Chairman, Councillor Holford
Councillors Beatty, Cattermole, Kidley, and Whelan

In attendance: The Town Clerk/ RFO, Miss Michelle Taylor
Local Government Officer, Miss Emilie Perry
Part-Time Finance Assistant, Mr Elliot Wilson

Public attendance: Mrs Maureen Norton and Ms Kelsey Proctor from the Wigod Way
Wallingford Family Centre

The meeting commenced at 7.20pm; the Local Government Officer gave her apologies for her lateness due to being stuck in traffic

388/21. CHAIRMAN TO ADVISE ATTENDEES OF THE PROTOCOL OF THE MEETING

To advise attendees of meeting protocol

Attendees noted the meeting protocol

The Chairman, Councillor Holford introduced and welcomed the Part-Time Finance Assistant, Elliot Wilson

389/21. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Newcombe

Councillor Whelan passed on the Committee's best wishes for Councillor Newcombe

390/21. 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)

No interests were declared

391/21.MINUTES

To resolve that the minutes from the meeting of the Finance and Properties Committee held on the 25th October 2021 as set out on pages 110-115 in the minute book are a true and accurate record of that meeting, and authorise the Chairman to sign them:

It was proposed by Councillor Kidley, seconded by Councillor Whelan and **RESOLVED THAT** the minutes from the meeting of the Finance and Properties Committee held on the 25th October 2021 as set out on pages 110-115 in the minute book are a true and accurate record of that meeting, and that the Chairman is authorised to sign them

392/21.PUBLIC PARTICIPATION–NOTIFIED AND IMPROMPTU (Total 15 Minutes)

From Wallingford Town Council's Standing Orders:

E) Members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.

F) The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with standing order 3(E) above shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.

G) Subject to standing order 3(F) above, a member of the public shall not speak for more than 10 minutes.

Members of the public who wish to speak at this meeting please email the Senior Officer at: senioradmin@wallingfordtowncouncil.gov.uk

Mrs Maureen Norton and Ms Kelsey Proctor from the Wigod Way Wallingford Family Centre:

- Mrs Norton reiterated the Wigod Centre's request to increase the annual grant from £20,000 to £30,000. She reported that the costs at the Wigod Centre used to be covered by Oxfordshire County Council but funding has been cut; grant bids and efforts to fundraise had been made by Trustees with little success.

393/21.WIGOD WAY FAMILY CENTRE (WWFC)

Members to discuss increasing the award monies to the Wigod Way Family Centre (WWFC) from £20,000 per annum to £30,000 per annum; briefing paper previously circulated:

Councillor Kidley reported that he had visited the WWFC recently and was "amazed" by the work done there, stating that the Centre is money well spent.

Councillor Cattermole repeated his opinion expressed that Wallingford Town Council should not be supporting the WWFC at all as if County Council could not afford to support this project then Wallingford certainly cannot. Councillor Cattermole expressed the opinion that there are adequate social services in the Wallingford area which has a very low index of social deprivation; he suggested that in other towns similar initiatives were entirely volunteer run, and the Centre might try that approach to cut costs.

The Mayor, Councillor Harris asked how much of the WWFC's community is situated in Wallingford and how wide the catchment area was: Mrs Norton reported that 75-80% live within the Wallingford Catchment, 20% live in Crowmarsh, Cholsey, Brightwell and RAF Benson. The WWFC has approached RAF Benson for a grant but they were not able to formally award any monies.

Councillor Whelan enquired whether the WWFC had approached other Parishes such as Brightwell, Cholsey or other areas; Mrs Norton reported that Cholsey have their own Family Centre funded entirely by the Parish Council. The Crowmarsh Trust has awarded money, but the Parish Council had not. The situation was the same with Brightwell. Mrs Norton stressed that the awarded monies from the Trusts were hundreds of pounds at a time, however the WWFC require thousands.

Councillor Holford clarified that the running costs per annum are £33,500 and that if Wallingford Town Council awarded £30,000 of those monies then the other £3,500 would be raised through "subscriptions and fundraising"; she asked Mrs Norton to clarify this and give an indication of a plan to raise these funds. Mrs Norton clarified that "subscriptions" meant donations from families; currently the WWFC suggest a donation of £2 per session.

Mrs Norton elaborated on the work done at the WWFC with regards to food: a weekly collection of crates of food (ranging from 4 trays to 14) are shared across the Community Fridge, the WWFC's vulnerable families, playgroups and sometimes the day centre in Cholsey. Ms Proctor reported here that many families genuinely use that food service at the WWFC in order to have fresh food for their children, and emphasised that this issue is happening within the Wallingford Community.

Councillor Holford went on to specify the fundraising aspect; Mrs Norton reported that the Christmas Fayre was a fundraising effort, and that there will be another event at Easter; parent donations also will be a valuable source of income. Ms Proctor reported that parent donations were down in the last year as families were not really able to be seen at the Centre. Not all families can make the donations to the WWFC but some can, and do. Donations have increased already since families can attend the WWFC once again.

Councillor Holford enquired about NHS funding seeing as the midwives operate out of a room in the WWFC; Mrs Norton confirmed that the NHS does pay some for the use of the room. Health visitors will also pay a rate for use of the room in early 2022.

Councillor Beatty clarified with Mrs Norton and Ms Proctor that the NHS money was £200 per calendar month equalling £2,400 per annum – he stated that he had liaised with County Councillor Felix Bloomfield regarding this matter and that Councillor Bloomfield was endeavouring to find more funding for the WWFC through an NHS contact. Councillor Beatty reiterated that everyone is aware of the good work happening at the WWFC, the real question is whether Council has the money to give and at present the Council is not in a stable financial position. Councillor Holford concurred.

The Mayor, Councillor Harris stated that he felt this matter has been pushed down a line of local Councils to the smallest Council with the most distressed reserves; he restated that the Town Council is in a bad financial position. The Mayor acknowledged that there is a lot of poverty in Wallingford that perhaps isn't seen, however touched again upon the fact that the Council does not have the spare funds whilst tightening up on other costs. Ms Proctor explained that the options for the Family Centre are either to reduce the sessions and services offered to families, or alternatively to continue as they are which would mean the dissolution of the WWFC in 2.5 years, best-case scenario.

Councillor Beatty asked for a rough percentage of the families visiting the WWFC who Mrs Norton and Ms Proctor would class as "severely impoverished"; Mrs Norton estimated 65%-70%.

Councillor Cattermole requested that an inquiry be made into the Thame and Didcot equivalent Family Centre services.

Ms Proctor reported here that County Councillor Sudbury had in fact already awarded the WWFC £500 from his personal Councillor's budget.

This item was moved after suggestion from Councillor Beauchamp to be discussed further during item 8: Draft Estimates 2022-2023

394/21. CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU (CAB)

Members to approve the reinstatement of £2000 for the Citizen's Advice Bureau into the budget for 2022-2023; paper previously circulated:

Councillor Beatty argued here that the Committee had previously resolved to take the CAB out of the budget; the Town Clerk/RFO informed Councillor Beatty that as was stated in the document previously circulated to Members, the CAB was relocating back to Wallingford within the next 2 months.

This item was moved after suggestion from Councillor Holford to be discussed further during item 8: Draft Estimates 2022-2023

395/21. DRAFT ESTIMATES 2022-2023

Members to review the draft estimates/budget for 2021/2022; previously circulated to members:

Members discussed the Wigod Way Family Centre: the request for an increase to £30,000 was noted. Members then discussed the Citizens Advice Bureau and noted their request to reinstate the award of £2,000 annually. Councillor Beauchamp enquired after what the precept value is for a band D property and whether these have been factored in. The Town Clerk/ RFO confirmed that she had already received those figures and included them in her calculations.

The Town Clerk/RFO explained that Property Maintenance will be budgeted for going forward over the next five years by allocating £20,000 per year to cover ongoing repairs.

Councillor Cattermole questioned whether the item labelled Youth Worker on the budget overlapped the Wigod Centre; the Town Clerk and Chairman informed Councillor Cattermole that the Youth Worker was in fact for the Beacon Youth Project, and was entirely separate from the Wigod Centre.

The Town Clerk/RFO brought to Members' attention the provision for bad debt; at the budget discussion £40,000 was decided an acceptable provision for bad debt. Councillor Beauchamp pointed out that unfortunately, this generation of Council has inherited these issues and that it may not be necessary in the future, leaving room in future budgets for other projects: Councillor Beauchamp asked if there would be merit in not increasing the monies for the Wigod Centre now, but committing to coming back to next year in the hope that next year some of the bad debt provision could be reallocated to the Wigod Centre.

Councillor Beatty questioned the £10,000 within the budget allocated for a by-election. The Town Clerk/RFO explained that £10,000 was the figure advised to be kept in the budget by Council in case of such an event. Councillor Beauchamp reminded Councillor Beatty that two by-elections have been held in the last three years. The Town Clerk/RFO specifically advised Members to keep the £10,000 for by-elections in the budget.

It was proposed by Councillor Holford, Seconded by Councillor Beatty and **RECOMMENDED THAT** Wallingford Town Council's amended draft estimates be put before Council on the 13th December for approval THAT the Wigod Centre's award will be raised to £30,000 from £20,000, £2,000 will be re-established for the Citizens Advice Bureau subject to their relocation back to Wallingford, £20,000 will be budgeted for going forward over the next five years for property maintenance, and the bad debt provisions will be reduced from £40,000 to £30,000 to reallocate £10,000 to the Wigod Centre increased monies as requested

396/21. BILLS SCHEDULES

Bills schedule for October 2021; previously circulated to Members:

It was proposed by Councillor Beauchamp, seconded by Councillor Beatty and **RESOLVED THAT** the Bills Schedule for October 2021 is formally accepted

397/21. FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Members to review the Financial Risk Assessment and recommend to Full Council for adoption; previously circulated:

It was proposed by Councillor Holford, seconded by Councillor Kidley and **RESOLVED THAT** this Committee has reviewed and approved the Financial Risk Assessment and **RECOMMENDS** that it be put before Full Council for adoption

Action: the Town Clerk/RFO to finalise the Financial Risk Assessment

398/21.GRANT APPLICATIONS

Members to discuss the following Grant applications and to note that the total grant allocation for the 2021-2022 Municipal Year is £1,500:

(i) Oxfordshire Play Association (OPA); documents previously circulated:

This item is deferred until the next meeting of Finance and Properties Committee as Members felt they needed clarification of how this organisation benefits the residents of Wallingford

Action: Local Government Officer to ask OPA to come to the next Finance meeting

399/21.GOLDSMITHS LANE CAR PARK

Members to review the draft Heads of Terms from South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) regarding management of the Goldsmiths Lane Car Park (previously circulated):

Members reviewed the drafted Heads of Terms from SODC and puts forward the following response to the drafted Heads of Terms:

- Wallingford Town Council shall retain the same level of control and parking spaces as they currently have
- South Oxfordshire District Council shall consult Wallingford Town Council before making any changes within the Goldsmiths Lane Car Park
- The term shall not be for ten years; a one-year initial term shall be proposed
- The six-month notice clause within the Heads of Terms will be altered to work two ways, the same for both Councils
- Wallingford Town Council's percentage of car parking spaces will not be included in any variation carried out by SODC for example if any SODC spaces are taken out of action for any reason they shall not claim a Wallingford Town Council space
- Councillor Whelan requested specifics on the locations of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points with regards to access to charging points in disabled parking spaces
- Following on from the question regarding EV points, will there be an agreement between only Wallingford Town Council and SODC with regards to the pricing per kilowatt used, or will Beechcroft be included in such an agreement also?

Action: Estates Officer to feed this back to South Oxfordshire District Council

400/21.TENNIS NETS

Members to approve expenditure of £100+VAT for new tennis nets; email previously circulated:

It was proposed by Councillor Beauchamp, seconded by Councillor Holford and **RESOLVED THAT** the Committee approves of this expenditure of £100+VAT for new tennis nets

401/21. AGATHA CHRISTIE STATUE

Councillor Beatty to give an update:

Councillor Beatty mentioned a figure of £120,000 available from Section 106 funding for the Agatha Christie statue project. He gave an estimation that the project itself would cost all-in-all around £85,000, leaving some funds over for potential side projects. Councillor Beatty informed Members that the statue will be placed opposite the Wallingford Museum and would like to implement a murder mystery trail around Wallingford Town Centre; he stated that even after implementing infrastructure for the mystery trail, there would easily be £12,000 available to allocate to the Museum to be a hub for the trail and the distribution point for the clues.

It was proposed by Councillor Beatty, seconded by Councillor Beauchamp and **RESOLVED THAT** this Committee **RECOMMENDS** to approve the expenditure of the S106 monies on this project and that this project be put before Full Council on 13th December 2021 to approve starting the process of the Agatha Christie Project

402/21. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Members to consider any future agenda items

- Coopers Piece
- Invesco
- Winter mooring charges

The meeting ended at 9.05pm