



Wallingford Town Council

MINUTES
of a meeting of the
FULL COUNCIL
held on Monday, 26 June 2023 at 7.00 pm
in Wallingford Town Hall

Present

Members

Cllr Mike Acreman
Cllr Steve Beatty
Cllr Daniel Beauchamp (Mayor/Chairman)
Cllr Ailsa Charter
Cllr Mahmood Ebrahimjee
Cllr Paul Gibbon
Cllr Marcus Harris
Cllr Susan Hendrie
Cllr Stephen Holder
Cllr Claire Holford (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr Jacki Hoskins
Cllr Mark Hoskins
Cllr Nigel Hughes (excluding Minute 129/23)
Town & District Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan
Cllr Ros Lester
Cllr Diana Margarido

Officers:

Michelle Taylor, Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer
Luke Whitcomb, Meetings Officer (up to Minute 142/23)
Duncan Kent, Head of Parks and Estates (up to Minute 142/23)

Others:

County Councillor Pete Sudbury
District Councillor James Barlow
4 members of the public
1 member of the press

116/23

MEETING PROTOCOL

The Chairman outlined the protocols that needed to be followed in the conduct of the meeting.

116/23

APOLOGIES

All Town Councillors were present.

117/23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hughes declared an interest in respect of Minute 129/23 below and signed the register.

118/23

MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor reported on his recent engagements including a visit to Rush Court care home as part of their 75th anniversary, Wallingford School to meet with the head teacher (where the occasional use of the Walter Bigg car park had been discussed) and meeting counterparts in Crowmarsh Parish Council. He had also been involved in a debrief of the Town Council Elections, discussions about the forthcoming Curfew Bell public event, a discussion on youth provision in the town and a Crime Summit convened by local MP David Johnston.

He thanked former Councillor Mick Kidley for representing him at the recent RAF Air Cadets Muster and Councillor Holford for presenting the prizes at the Carnival. He thanked those who had organised the recent Annual Town Meeting and helped facilitate the event.

He shared a note of thanks from the Oxfordshire Play Association for the grant the Town Council had provided for a recent event on the Kinecroft that had coincided with the Carnival.

119/23

MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Gibbon, and seconded by Councillor Holford, and

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on 24 May 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

120/23

ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The Council reviewed progress on 'open' actions agreed by previous meetings of the Full Council.

The Chairman and Councillor Charter had chased David Johnston MP regarding progress on the banking hub. The MP was still waiting for information from a government department.

The idea of a 'Junior Council' had been discussed with Wallingford School and there was the potential of joining up existing youth councils. A conversation about this was continuing.

Councillor Holder reported that the sink hole had been repaired.

121/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No member of the public chose to speak.

122/23 COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

District Councillor Keats-Rohan reported that concerns had been raised about a recent Section 106 arts grant for the Highcroft housing development and whether the money could be used in a better way. A meeting of councillors and officers had been planned for 17 July 2023.

District Councillor Barlow looked forward to working with the Town Council, particularly on the climate and ecological emergency declaration of both councils, and had been enthused by the interactions so far. He congratulated the Town Council on the new format of the recent Annual Town Meeting which had encouraged greater resident participation, an approach which he favoured. He reported that the works to the splash pool at the Riverside were almost complete and represented a substantial investment by the District Council.

County Councillor Sudbury reported that he was looking into a road closure which had caused a significant build-up at recent apparently caused some local students to miss their exams. He also explained that the Shillingford road had been resurfaced because it had fallen below the required level for a skid test for a 60 mph limit.

123/23 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FROM THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING (ATM) AND ASSOCIATED SURVEY

The Chairman reported that the comments would be fed into the 'Vision for Wallingford' document, committees, and discussions with County and District Councillors and other bodies such as the Police.

See also Minute 124/23

Action:

Meetings Officer to engage as necessary with Committee Chairmen and others to ensure comment was channelled to the appropriate group of people

Reporting externally to residents on progress of action would be considered by the Communications Working Group (see Minute 139/23)

124/23 VISION FOR WALLINGFORD

Councillor Charter reported on the exercise to identify short, medium and long term objectives in the form of a coherent strategic plan. Various community

consultations had been held and the feedback from the ATM (and associated survey) (Minute 123/23) would be synthesised with the evolving document. There was a need to identify ownership and for a prioritisation exercise including consideration of viability, feasibility and timescale of ideas.

Action:

Councillors to feedback comments on the proposed themes and objectives to the Mayor and/or Councillor Charter

125/23

YOUTH PROVISION

The Chairman reported on a recent meeting convened by the OX10 Community Group to discuss youth provision in the towns. The meeting had been attended by a broad spectrum of people including Wallingford School, the Police, the Beacon Youth Project and local churches. Attention had concentrated on doing something now, given the imminence of the school summer holidays, and what was needed in the medium term.

The Chairman had also met with the leaders of the youth project TRAIN which had been operating in Didcot for nearly thirty years and who were now considering expanding their activities to include Wallingford. They had run a pop-up at Wallingford Riverside in 2022.

It was proposed by Councillor Beatty, and seconded by Councillor Lester, and

RESOLVED that TRAIN be allowed to use the old council office a 9 St Martin's Street for storage over the summer (2023) with the potential of them using the offices more broadly in the medium term being kept open, including the possibility of operating a drop-in centre

126/23

HOME-START

The Council considered a grant application.

It was proposed by Councillor Beatty, and seconded by Councillor Margarido, and

RESOLVED that a grant of £500 (representing the remaining balance in the annual grants budget for 2023-2024) be awarded to Home-Start

127/23

WALLINGFORD MUNICIPAL CHARITIES (WMC)

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Harris, and

RESOLVED that Ms Elinor Carter be nominated as a Trustee of Wallingford Municipal Charities to replace Ms Lynne McEwan

128/23

OX10 COMMUNITY GROUP

It was proposed by Councillor Hughes, and seconded by Councillor M. Hoskins, and

RESOLVED that Councillor Hughes be appointed as the Town Council's liaison person (meaning point of contact) for the OX10 Community Group

Councillor Hughes declared an interest in the following item and left the meeting.

129/23

INSURANCE FOR CARNIVAL

The Council considered a request by the organisers of the Carnival for the processional elements of the 2024 Carnival to be covered by the Town Council's insurance.

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Harris, and

RESOLVED that the request being granted, subject to the Town Clerk's satisfaction that the Town Council would not be duly exposed

Action:

Town Clerk to investigate exposure before agreeing

Councillor Hughes re-joined the meeting.

130/23

FLAG SCHEDULE

The Council reviewed the flag schedule for 2023 which had been agreed earlier in the year.

It was proposed by Councillor Beatty, and seconded by Councillor Harris, and

RESOLVED

- (a) the D-Day flag be flown on 6 June as part of the schedule for 2024;
- (b) that the Union flag be flown throughout November 2023 in memory of armed services personnel and civilians who had lost their lives in war in defence of their country

Action:

Office to ensure that the flag schedule is published on the Town Council noticeboard and website, and that explanation is given for the selections to further the understanding of the community

Office to consider engaging the public in nominating flags as part of the development of the following year's schedule

131/23

CRIME SUMMIT HOSTED BY DAVID JOHNSTON MP

The Chairman reported on a recent crime summit which had been hosted by local MP David Johnston at Waitrose and which had been attended by the Police and Crime Commissioner and other senior Police representatives.

The Police had explained that Wantage had needed to be a focus of attention but with those issues becoming less demanding, resources could be deployed elsewhere including in Wallingford. The importance of reporting anti-social behaviour was once again underlined.

Action:

Office to publicise guidance of what to do to report crime and anti-social behaviour

132/23

CONDITION OF WALLINGFORD'S ROADS

The Council discussed the condition of Wallingford's roads with County Councillor Sudbury present as the County Council were the Highways Authority.

County Councillor Sudbury explained the true cost of road maintenance far exceeded resource allocation by central government and that County Councils were restricted in how much they could raise their element of the annual Council Tax. He encouraged the Town Council to influence the County Council in prioritising certain roads.

He also explained that the County Council were in the process of retendering maintenance contracts and were taking inspection back in-house.

It was proposed by Councillor Holder, and seconded by Councillor Beatty, and

RESOLVED that a letter be sent to the County Council by the Mayor identifying that certain roads are in an unacceptable condition, especially Hithercroft.

Action:

Mayor to send letter to the County Council's Highways Maintenance Team.

133/22

PEDESTRIANISATION OF FRONT AREA OF THE TOWN HALL

The Chairman explained that the public consultation required by the County Council was shortly to begin and would involve leafletting and a display of

plans within the Town Hall, and direct discussions with bus companies, local shops and staff who worked from the Town Hall, including the Town Information Centre and the Events Manager. The consultation needed to be clear about the outcomes that the Town Council was seeking.

Action:

Schedule update for July or August meeting of Full Council

134/23

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEME

Councillor Mark Hoskins outlined a proposal for a community transport scheme for residents who were less mobile and who felt isolated, due for example the lack of bus services. He shared the findings of research he had undertaken, including discussions with Community First Oxfordshire, the Volunteer Drivers' Association, Co-Wheels and similar schemes elsewhere.

He believed there was scope for the development of a more detailed proposal by a Working Group. See Minute 139/23 below.

135/23

NEW CLEAN WATER BATHING APPLICATION

The Council – with input from District Councillor Barlow – considered a new application to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to designate Wallingford Beach with clean bathing water status. The benefit of this accreditation would be to put pressure on water companies regarding upstream releases of sewage and to provide river users with guidance of the quality of the bathing water at any one time. The new application would require significantly improved reporting of usage of this stretch of the Thames, including by rowing clubs. District Councillor Barlow confirmed that the Town Council had no liability for the quality of the water and that regular updates would be displayed during the testing period.

It was proposed by Councillor Holder, and seconded by Councillor Harries, and

RESOLVED that support be given to the development of a new application to DEFRA with the Town Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Thames21 working in partnership

136/23

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2023

The Council received and reviewed the Internal Auditor's report prepared by Audit Solutions Limited.

The Finance and Properties Committee had considered the documents in detail and had recommended approval by the Full Council.

The Town Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer took the meeting through each of the recommendations which had already been actioned.

It was proposed by Councillor Holford, and seconded by Councillor Gibbon, and

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Internal Audit be received;
- (ii) that the Internal Audit has been effective;
- (iii) that the action taken by the Town Clerk in response to all of the Audit's recommendations be noted and supported

It was proposed by Councillor Holford, and seconded by Councillor Gibbon, and

RESOLVED

- (iv) that the Annual Governance Statement for 2022-2023 be approved and the Mayor and Town Clerk be authorised to sign the document;
- (v) that the Accounting Statements for 2022-2023 be approved and the Mayor and Town Clerk be authorised to sign them

137/23

POLICIES

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Margarido, and

RESOLVED that the Complaints Policy be adopted, subject to a change of address and rewording concerning the treatment of anonymous complaints, explaining that they are addressed but because of their nature, the complainant cannot be responded to

It was proposed by Councillor Holder, and seconded by Councillor Harris, and

RESOLVED that the Information and Data Protection Policy be adopted

Action:

The Press/Media Policy and Freedom of Information Policy need further work and should be brought back to the Full Council meeting in July

138/23

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Council reviewed the membership of its committees (and their quorate levels) which had largely been determined at the previous meeting.

Councillor Margarido requested to come off the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee.

The Council noted that vacancies currently existed on the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee (3), Planning (3) and Tourism and Economic Development (1).

Following receipt of the required number of requests to review a decision taken in the last six months (Standing Order 7),

it was proposed by Councillor Holford, and seconded by Councillor Lester, and

RESOLVED that the quorum level for the Finance and Properties Committee be reduced from 6 to 5

Action:

Councillor J. Hoskins, who was shortly to attend an OALC ‘Fundamentals’ training course, to find out whether OALC guidance for odd numbers related to total committee membership and/or quorum numbers

Committee vacancies to be brought back to Full Council

139/23

WORKING GROUPS

Three new Working Groups were established:

- Communications – Cllrs Charter and Holder
- Community Transport Scheme – Cllrs M. and J. Hoskins
- Pancake Race – Cllrs J. Hoskins and Lester (Cllr Gibbon had also previously volunteered)

The sponsoring bodies of Working Groups were determined and additional members identified or confirmed, as follows:

- Heritage Assets (Council)
- Arts Grant (Finance and Properties)
- Twinning (Tourism and Economic Development)
- Bull Croft (Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces)
- The Regal (Finance and Properties) – Cllr Holford joined this group and Cllr Margarido confirmed her involvement
- Curfew Bell (Tourism and Economic Development) – Cllrs Harris and J. Hoskins confirmed their involvement
- Agatha Christie statue (Tourism and Economic Development)
- Britain in Bloom (Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces)
- Neighbourhood Plan (Council)
- Communications (Council)
- Community Transport Scheme (Council)

- Pancake Race (Tourism and Economic Development)

The Chairman emphasised that Working Groups were typically intended to be short-term.

Action:

Meetings Officer to update master list of approved Working Groups and circulate to all Members

140/23

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The following items were identified for future meetings:

- The Regal – awaiting response form South Oxfordshire District Council
- Legal matter (confidential) – awaiting update from solicitors
- Banking hub – awaiting feedback from David Johnston MP and through him, government departments
- Business continuity and emergency planning
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Britain in Bloom
- Community transport scheme
- Potential for the Community Transport Scheme Working Group to morph into a broader Local Transport Working Group
- Broader transport plan for the town
- Pedestrianisation of front area of Town Hall
- Committee vacancies

141/23

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Harris, and seconded by Councillor Charter, and

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

The meeting ended at 9.47 pm

Minutes of the meeting of the
Full Council held on
26 June 2023,
signed as a correct record

Chairman

2023-06-26 FC minutes DRAFT CONFIDENTIAL