



Wallingford Town Council

MINUTES
of a meeting of the
FULL COUNCIL
held on Monday, 24 July 2023 at 7.00 pm
in Wallingford Town Hall

Present

Members

Cllr Mike Acreman
Cllr Mahmood Ebrahimjee
Cllr Paul Gibbon
Cllr Marcus Harris
Cllr Susan Hendrie
Cllr Stephen Holder
Cllr Claire Holford (Deputy Mayor) (in the chair)
Cllr Jacki Hoskins (excluding 199/23)
Cllr Mark Hoskins (excluding 199/23)
Cllr Nigel Hughes
Town & District Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan

Officers:

Michelle Taylor, Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer
Luke Whitcomb, Meetings Officer

Others:

A representative of the Chilterns Conservation Board
3 members of the public
0 members of the press

180/23

MEETING PROTOCOL

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

181/23

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Beatty, Beauchamp, Charter, Lester and Margarido, County Councillor Sudbury and District Councillor Barlow.

182/23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors J. and M. Hoskins declared an interest for the item minuted as 199/23 below, Bill Schedule for May 2023, and left the meeting during that discussion.

183/23

MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

On behalf of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor reported that discussions about the youth initiative TRAIN establishing themselves in Wallingford were ongoing (Minute 125/23) and also with the local Inspector of Police about increasing the Police's presence in the town, including potentially using the office in St Martin's Street formerly occupied by the Town Clerk as a base. She also thanked everyone who had been involved in developing and running the recent Curfew Bell event which would be reviewed at a future meeting.

184/23

MINUTES

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on 26 June 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Mayor.

185/23

ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

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

Councillor J. Hoskins reported she had sought the advice of the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) at a recent training event as asked and confirmed that a committee's total membership should be an odd number including the Chairman of the Council.

See Minute 202/23 below

186/23

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A representative of the Chilterns Conservation Board addressed the concerns of some residents and also RAF Benson about the impact of increasing numbers of red kites in the area, including nuisance issues for those eating outdoors and damage to aircraft through bird strikes.

Red kites had been reintroduced 50 years ago and it had proved one of the most successful exercises of its kind in the UK. The birds, who had no natural predators, had grown significantly in number and become habituated and emboldened in areas of human presence. A number of nuisance issues were now being created including the disruption of picnics, sometimes causing distress due to the size of the bird.

As a result of these concerns, the Chilterns Conservation Board was convening a conference of experts, including from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Wildlife Trusts to discuss what actions should be taken in response to public unease.

He strongly supported the Town Council's discouragement of residents feeding the birds and had been helping with the design of a poster.

187/23

COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

County Councillor Sudbury and District Councillor Barlow were not present but had submitted written reports.

District Councillor Keats-Rohan reported on action that had been taken to improve the quality of, and community input to, public art that was being installed as part of the Highcroft (Site B) housing development. She also spoke about the rejection of the planned new service road (known as 'HIF-1') for the science area at Harwell and how this decision was increasing speculative approaches elsewhere by developers and impacting the South Oxfordshire Housing Land Supply. The County Council as the Highways Authority were working hard to turn the issue around, liaising with the District Council as Planning Authority.

188/23

WALLINGFORD SPORTS PARK – COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

The Council considered a community scheme funding bid for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies submitted by Wallingford Sports Park to assist the installation of solar panels. The bid was considered very thorough and to be an exemplar.

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

RESOLVED that funding of £12k be awarded to Wallingford Sports Park for the installation of solar panels.

189/23

EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Council considered again the need for a community emergency plan following the presentation by a County Council representative the previous year (Minute 230/22) and how best this could be achieved.

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

RESOLVED that a Working Group be formed to execute this work, on which Councillors Holder and J. Hoskins will serve but not lead

190/23

CONDITION OF WALLINGFORD'S ROADS

This item was deferred to the next meeting because neither Councillor Beatty, who had originally raised the issue, nor County Councillor Sudbury, were present.

191/23

BRITAIN IN BLOOM

Councillor Holder reported on the recent visit to the town by judges on 4 July 2023, a day when the weather had been particularly challenging including downpours. This was the first application by Wallingford since the late 1990s and had been submitted as a learning exercise. The judging criteria had changed and now comprised: 40% for floral display, 30% for community involvement and 30% for environment and sustainability.

An awards ceremony would be held on 27 September 2023 and the Parks and Estates Team were hoping to use that to benchmark the town's submissions in future years. The judges had already indicated that they had been impressed by the degree of community involvement in Wallingford.

192/23

BULL CROFT, PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Councillor Holder reported on the planning application which the Town Council had submitted some months ago. The initial consultation period had been January to March 2023. The District Council had then allowed an extension for the Town Council to adapt plans in response to feedback and a further 21-day consultation period would follow once the revised proposal had been submitted. As part of the response, the Town Council would be undertaking further ecological work and archaeological pits.

193/23

BULL CROFT, TENNIS COURTS

Councillor Holder reported that following the Town Council's rejection of a disruptive proposal by the selected contractor to gain access to the site, the Lawn Tennis Association were retendering as part of plans to resurface the courts and introduce a new operating model.

194/23

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY (RHS) CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Councillor Holder reported that a grant of £5k had recently been awarded by the RHS under their Connected Communities Scheme and how this would be spent in partnership with Wild About Wallingford using prescribed categories. The grant had been made possible by the Britain in Bloom submission (see Minute 191/23).

195/23

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Council considered the need to keep the Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in May 2021, up to date.

It was proposed by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and seconded by Councillor Hendrie, and

RESOLVED that a mid-term review and revision be undertaken of the Neighbourhood Plan by the Working Group

196/23

THE REGAL

Councillor Harris gave newly-elected Members a brief overview of the Town Council's prolonged attempts to create a new community space on the site of The Regal.

To achieve this work required two other landowners, including South Oxfordshire District Council, allowing vehicular access to the Town Council.

District Councillor Keats-Rohan reported on her attempts to expedite the processing of the matter by the Legal Department of the District Council. She explained that the department were significantly under-resourced and the Town Council should not expect a reply in the near future. She also confirmed that the District Council would be statutorily obliged to charge the Town Council for vehicular access.

The Council agreed that the Regal Working Group needed to meet as soon as possible (before the end of August) to prepare a public statement for residents explaining the vision, the delays, the current situation and likely timeframe going forwards.

Action:

The Regal Working Group to meet as soon as possible (by the end of August) to prepare public statement to be communicated across all platforms; the membership of the Working Group to be circulated on 25 July 2023.

197/23

REMEMBRANCE MONTH

This item was deferred to the next meeting because Councillor Beatty, whose idea it was, was not present.

198/23

BANKING HUB

The Deputy Mayor reported that our contact with Cash Access UK, the umbrella initiative for banking hubs, had revealed that Wallingford would not qualify whilst a branch of Nationwide Building Society and the current number of automated teller machines (ATMs) remained. Nationwide had committed to remain within the town until 2026.

Councillors J. and M. Hoskins declared an interest in the following item and temporarily left the meeting

199/23

BILL SCHEDULE – MAY 2023

It was proposed by Councillor Holford, and seconded by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and

RESOLVED that the bill schedule for May 2023 be approved

Councillors J. and M. Hoskins rejoined the meeting

200/23

PUBLIC WORKS LOAN

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

RESOLVED that the Town Clerk explore further the securing of a Public Works Loan of circa £1.5m for the conservation of the Town Hall and bring a proposal back to Full Council

201/23

POLICIES

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

RESOLVED that the Freedom of Information Policy be adopted

The consideration of the Media Relations and Social Media Policy was deferred to the next meeting.

202/23

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Council considered outstanding vacancies on Council Committees and the membership and quorum numbers for each.

Councillor Ebrahimjee offered to join the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee.

Councillor Acreman offered to join the Planning Committee on a trial basis.

With those changes made, the Council confirmed that its committee sizes complied with guidance of the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC), taking account of the Mayor's ex-officio membership of all committees.

Action:

Committee lists to be updated

203/23

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The following items were identified:

- A presentation by the Station Commander of RAF Benson (August 2023)
- A presentation by the Wallingford Food Bank (October 2023)
- A presentation by the Citizens' Advice Bureau
- Strategy 'Vision for Wallingford'
- The process for allocating Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds for Town Council projects
- Pedestrianisation of front area of Town Hall (on completion of public consultation)
- Red kites
- Curfew Bell event review
- Remembrance Month
- 20 mph speed limits within the town
- Condition of Wallingford's roads
- Policies: Media Relations and Social Media Policy
- Public Works Loan for Town Hall
- An individual, leased Council property [confidential]

204/23

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Harris and seconded by Councillor Holder, 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 8.28 pm

Minutes of the meeting of the
Full Council held on
24 July 2023,
signed as a correct record

Chairman

2023-07-24 FC minutes DRAFT PUBLIC