



Wallingford Town Council

**MINUTES
of a meeting of the
FULL COUNCIL**

**held on
Monday, 20 November 2023 at 7.00 pm
in Wallingford Town Hall**

Present

Members

Cllr Mike Acreman
Cllr Steve Beatty (up to Minute 422/23)
Cllr Dan Beauchamp (The Mayor/Chairman)
Cllr Ailsa Charter
Cllr Paul Gibbon (up to Minute 422/23)
Cllr Susan Hendrie
Cllr Stephen Holder (up to Minute 422/23)
Cllr Claire Holder (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr Jacki Hoskins
Cllr Mark Hoskins
Cllr Nigel Hughes
Town & District Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan
Cllr Ros Lester
Cllr Diana Margarido

Officers:

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

Others:

District Councillor James Barlow
8 members of the public
0 members of the press

403/23

MEETING PROTOCOL

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

404/23

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Ebrahimjee and Harris

405/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

406/23 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor reported on recent activities, particularly the well-attended Remembrance Sunday event on 12 November 2023. As a result of a conversation with the Station Commander of RAF Benson, an RAF representative had been appointed to work with the Town Council and the British Legion on activities to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day in 2024.

407/23 MINUTES

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on 23 October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

408/23 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

409/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A member of public spoke about his concern at the shortage of nursery school places and childcare provision in Wallingford.

Three members of the public later spoke (Minute 417/23) about the horse chestnut tree next to the Coach and Horses Pub on the Kinecroft. The Council's tree experts had indicated that the tree was in the last 5-10 years of its life and its proximity to the extended public building was causing structural damage.

410/23 COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

District Councillors Barlow and Keats-Rohan reported on their recent activities, including the imminent publication of the draft Local Plan (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse), a meeting to discuss the opening arrangements for the Riverside 'splash park' next year, the opportunity to apply for nature recovery grants from the District Council, the upgrading of CCTV in the town, the newly-completed paths on Radnor Road and the development of a county charter to achieve a more productive partnership between the County, District and Parish Councils (see Minute 425/23 below).

411/23

WALLINGFORD LIBRARY

The Manager of Wallingford Library updated the Council on the library's current activities which included a focus on digital inclusion, health and well-being, the environment and children. The summer reading challenge event had proved very popular and the Mayor had handed out certificates to the children participating.

She also drew the Council's attention to continuing anti-social behaviour immediately outside the library building in the evenings. This included the deposit of drug paraphernalia. The behaviour was proving intimidating to at least one member of the library staff who was employed in the evenings.

The Council responded by thanking the Library for being such a positive influence and resource within the community. The Mayor explained some of the partnership work that was being currently developed for young people.

412/23

WALLINGFORD MUNICIPAL CHARITIES

The Council had been asked to appoint a trustee for Wallingford Municipal Charities.

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

RESOLVED that Mrs Pay Hayton be appointed as a trustee of Wallingford Municipal Charities for a further four-year period.

413/23

WARM HUBS

The Council considered the 'warm hubs' (registered or otherwise) that would be available to residents over the winter months. Wallingford Library was one of these (Minute 411/23 above).

It was proposed by Councillor J Hoskins, and seconded by Councillor Charter, and

RESOLVED that a grant application by the OX10 Community Group and the Wigod Way Family Centre be endorsed by the Town Council

Action:

Letter of endorsement to be sent

414/23

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

The Council considered a proposed new approach to vegetation management, initially at the Castle site, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, through a partnership with the Earth Trust and using goats.

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

RESOLVED that the partnership with the Earth Trust for vegetation management be approved, at a cost of £12k in 2024-2025, and £5k from Earmarked Reserves in 2023-2024

415/23

CASTLE MOTTE

The Council considered a proposal to renew and improve public access and presentation of the historic elements of the Castle Gardens.

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

RESOLVED that the proposal be approved at a cost of £7k (for landscape design) (falling in 2023-2024), £6.5k (for engineering for steps and fixtures) (falling in 2023-2024) and £2k (for pre-application planning) (falling in 2024-2025)

416/23

ALLOTMENTS

The Council considered a recent review of usage of allotments on the existing Fir Tree site and a recommendation of the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee (Minute 393/23)

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

RESOLVED that half plots rather than full plots be allocated as the default position going forwards, unless a convincing case can be made for a full plot

417/23

HORSE CHESTNUT TREE, COACH AND HORSES PUB, KINECROFT

The Council arrived at a final decision on the horse chestnut tree next to the Coach and Horses Pub on the Kinicroft. Expert surveys commissioned by the Council dating back to 2022 had confirmed that this highly-valued heritage tree was in its final 5-10 years of life and was also causing structural damage to the pub building which had been extended after the tree had been originally

planted. A meeting had been held with Fullers Brewery to understand their position.

Three members of the public contributed to the discussion (Minute 409/23) offering their thoughts and expertise.

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

RESOLVED that the tree be retained to live out its natural life (5-10 years) , avoiding further costly works, and be monitored regularly for building damage and health decline, and that when the time is right, the Council will work closely with Fullers Brewery on the removal of the tree

Councillor Lester requested that her view that the Council should pay for the tarmac to be removed, be recorded in the minutes.

418/23

REVIEW OF MURDER MYSTERY EXTRAVAGANZA CELEBRATING AGATHA CHRISTIE

The Council discussed the weekend of public activities in September 2023 that had included the installation of the Agatha Christie bench on the Kinecroft. Everyone was in agreement with the beauty of the artwork and that the programme had been an outstanding success attracting an extraordinary level of national and international media coverage.

The Curator of Wallingford Museum, who had run Agatha Christie weekends and events since 2014, congratulated the Council, particularly Councillor Beatty, on taking the event to a new level. She asked for the level of collaboration to be maintained going forwards.

Although this event had not historically been ‘owned’ or led by the Tourism and Economic Development Committee (by request, the project had reported directly to Council), it was agreed that a detailed review of the 2023 event – including what had worked well and what could be improved – should now be undertaken by that committee and recommendations brought to a future meeting of the Full Council. (It had previously been identified and confirmed as a future agenda item for the Full Council, Minutes 247/23 and 342/23.) The Committee were also asked to consider and propose what the Council’s role in the event in 2024 should be, in the light of the experience of 2023, and who should ‘own’ the event including ‘ownership’ and oversight within the Council.

During the discussion, the Chairman reminded Members of meeting protocols, including the need for civility and respect, to avoid making remarks that appeared personal to others, to address comments through the Chair and that Members spoke at the discretion of the Chair. He also reminded Members that

the development and wording of an agenda necessarily involved the amalgamation of different interests and inputs.

Action:

Review of 2023 event and clarification of roles and responsibilities for 2024 be scheduled for the next meeting of the Tourism and Economic Development Committee on 27 November 2023

419/23

AGATHA CHRISTIE BENCH MAQUETTE

This item was deferred to a future meeting of the Full Council pending further research into what the maquette might fetch through public auction.

The Council had previously decided in September 2020 that the maquette should be given to the Museum on a permanent loan basis (Minute 290(ii)/20)

420/23

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2024

The Council considered the lessons from the 2023 event, which been a significant improvement in terms of levels of participation and attendance on previous years, and what these might mean for the 2024 event which was likely to be held in March.

The Chairman explained that there was a legal requirement to hold a physical meeting and that its purpose was to act as a meeting of residents not of the Council.

Action:

Meetings Officer to develop a more detailed proposal with Cllr Charter and the Engagement Manager, and together they investigate the possibility of streaming the event so that it reached larger numbers.

421/23

INTERNAL AUDIT

The Council considered the outcome and effectiveness of the Internal Audit for 2022-2023.

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

RESOLVED that the Internal Auditor's report be formally received and approved and that the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer be thanked and congratulated on the outcome

422/23

COMMITTEES

The Council NOTED Councillor Gibbon's earlier decision to step down from both the Finance and Properties Committee (of which he was Vice-Chair) and the Tourism and Economic Development Committee (of which he was Chair).

Cllr Gibbon however indicated that he would like to chair one further meeting of the Tourism and Economic Development Committee, the meeting scheduled for 27 November 2023

Councillor Holder left the meeting during this item

Councillors Beatty and Gibbon left after this item

423/23

PROPERTIES

The Council considered maintenance costs for Castle Lodge.

It was proposed by Councillor M Hoskins, and seconded by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and

RESOLVED that the quotation for the six-foot fence from M D Read Groundworks and the quotation of £11,140 (exc VAT) for roofing from Tom Savage, be approved

Quotations for the gate and pathway for the Highcroft allotments had not yet been received and therefore could not be discussed, but authority for approval was delegated to the Town Clerk subject to discretionary thresholds being met

424/23

HR

The Council considered the latest version of the Employee Handbook which included revised sections on timekeeping, social media usage, absence and annual leave

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

RESOLVED that the November 2023 edition of the Employee Handbook be approved and circulated to all staff

Action:

Circulate November 2023 edition of Employee Handbook to all staff

425/23

OXFORDSHIRE COUNCILS CHARTER

The Council NOTED that a charter was being developed – with Oxfordshire County Council taking the lead – to foster more effective partnership working between the County, District and Parish Councils.

The Chairman encouraged Members to complete the short survey before the deadline of 10 December 2023.

The Council would ultimately be asked to adopt the charter formally.

426/23

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Council identified the following items for future meetings:

- Pedestrianisation of front area of Town Hall (Action Log)
- Community Emergency Plan (included in the Action Log) (The Mayor leading)
- Legal matter [confidential] (potentially rolling item)
- Procurement (Cllr Charter leading)
- Policies (Cllr Charter leading)
- Governance cycle (Cllr Charter leading)
- Agatha Christie bench maquette
- Working Group review
- OCC consultation exercises (when County Councillor Sudbury can attend)
- Oxfordshire Councils Charter
- Neighbourhood Plan (December 2023)

427/23

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Margarido, 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 9.56 pm

Minutes of the meeting of the
Full Council held on
20 November 2023,
signed as a correct record

Chairman

