

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Oakwood Centre on
Tuesday 11 February 2014 at 8 pm**

Present: Councillors W. Soane (Chairman); K. Baker; T. Barker; A. Chadwick; P. Challis; J. Cheng; N. Cox; R. Duncan; B. Franklin; K. Gilder; K. Haines; L. Hayward; L. Higgs; M. Holmes; C. Lawley; D. Mills; S. Outen; S. Rahmouni; E. Rowland; D. Smith; M. Storry; M. Walker; M. Willson

Officers present: D. Mander, Town Clerk; L. Matthews, Committee Officer

Also present: Borough Councillor T. McCann
6 members of the public

Before the start of the meeting a maximum of 30 minutes was set aside for members of the public to pose questions to the Council in the Town Forum, as reported in Appendix A.

69. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors A. Downes and R. Neall.

70. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Councillor Gilder | Agenda item 4 Charges | Councillor Gilder runs two clubs and hires Bulmershe Leisure Centre pool |
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|------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Councillor Soane | Agenda item 4 Charges | Councillor Soane is a member of the Carnival Committee which hires the Oakwood Centre |
|------------------|--------------------------|---|

Councillors Gilder and Soane left the meeting during the discussion of and voting on the 2014/15 charges.

71. **MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING OF 10 DECEMBER 2013**

Minute 61b: Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee, 5 November 2013, Minute 26, Woodford Park

In reply to questions, the Town Clerk confirmed that there were sufficient reserves in the grounds maintenance budget to proceed with the removal of trees in Woodford Park and that a quote has been sought by the Service Support Manager, but not yet received. The Town Clerk also confirmed that when trees are removed, the logs are usually left for residents to collect, free of charge, although large logs are sometimes made into seats.

Minute 61c: Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee, 5 November 2013, Minute 45, Highways

In reply to a question the Town Clerk confirmed that a reply had been received from Wokingham Borough Council the previous day in response to the letter regarding traffic disruption in Woodley and this would be circulated to councillors.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 December 2013 and that they be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

72. a) **MINUTES OF THE PLANS COMMITTEE: 17 December 2013**

Councillor Cheng presented the Plans Committee minutes of the meeting of 17 December 2013.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Plans Committee meeting held on 17 December 2013.

b) **MINUTES OF THE LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE: 7 January 2014**

Councillor Franklin presented the Leisure Services Committee minutes of the meeting of 7 January 2014.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 7 January 2013.

c) **MINUTES OF THE PLANS COMMITTEE: 21 January 2013**

Councillor Cheng presented the Plans Committee minutes of the meeting of 21 January 2014.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Plans Committee meeting held on 21 January 2014.

d) **MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE: 28 January 2014**

Councillor Hayward presented the Community Services Committee minutes of the meeting of 28 January 2014.

Minute 65: Youth Working Party

It was noted that the minute was not correct. Councillor Hayward, as Chairman of the Community Services Committee, had not visited the Friday night youth club at Bulmershe, but she had attended the Youth Working Party meeting. Councillor Gilder clarified that, as Chairman of the Youth Working Party, she had visited the Friday night youth club at Bulmershe. The Town Clerk agreed to amend the minutes before they were presented to the Community Services Committee meeting.

Minute 70: Cycle Network

It was also noted that the minute relating to the comments on the cycle way on Wokingham Road would be amended to include the view that this expenditure was a waste of money.

Minute 72: Bus Shelter in Fairwater Drive

Councillor Rowland asked for a letter of complaint to be sent to Reading Buses regarding the delay in providing a replacement for the bus shelter on Fairwater Drive that had recently been removed as it was unsafe .

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Community Services Committee meeting held on 28 January 2014.

e) **MINUTES OF THE STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 4 February 2014**

Councillor Baker presented the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 4 February 2014.

Minute 64: Charges 2014/15**a) Oakwood Centre charges 2014/15**

Councillor Soane left the meeting at this point, having declared an interest, and Councillor Franklin took over as Chairman.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the 2014/15 charges at the Oakwood Centre, as set out in the Proposed Charges 2014/15 Appendix.

Voting: For: 12 Abstentions: 10

b) Leisure Services charges 2014/15

Councillor Gilder left the meeting at this point, having declared an interest.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the 2014/15 charges for Leisure Services, as set out in the Proposed Charges 2014/15 Appendix.

Voting: For: 11 Abstentions: 10

Councillors Soane and Gilder returned to the meeting and Councillor Soane resumed his role as Chairman.

Minute 66: Budget estimates 2014/15**b) Leisure Services and Community Services Committees**

Councillor Challis confirmed that last year's grant to the Citizen's Advice Bureau had been made in line with usage in Woodley.

c) Budget and Precept 2014/15

Councillor Baker presented the 2014/15 budget and the recommended precept level for 2014/15 to the Council.

Following lengthy discussions regarding the capital programme and earmarked reserves the Councillor Baker called for a named vote on the budget and the precept for 2014/15.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the budget for 2014/15, as presented in the Budget Appendix.

Voting:

| FOR | AGAINST | ABSENT |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| K. Baker | P. Challis | A. Downes |
| T. Barker | R. Duncan | R. Neall |
| A. Chadwick | K. Gilder | |
| J. Cheng | L. Higgs | |
| N. Cox | M. Holmes | |
| B. Franklin | C. Lawley | |
| K. Haines | S. Outen | |
| L. Hayward | S. Rahmouni | |
| D. Mills | E. Rowland | |
| D. Smith | M. Storry | |
| W. Soane | | |
| M. Walker | | |
| M. Willson | | |
| | | |
| For: 13 | Against: 10 | Absent: 2 |

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve a precept level of £1,030,349 for the 2014/15 financial year, as set out in the Budget Appendix.

Voting:

| FOR | AGAINST | ABSENT |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| K. Baker | P. Challis | A. Downes |
| T. Barker | R. Duncan | R. Neall |
| A. Chadwick | K. Gilder | |
| J. Cheng | L. Higgs | |
| N. Cox | M. Holmes | |
| B. Franklin | C. Lawley | |
| K. Haines | S. Outen | |
| L. Hayward | S. Rahmouni | |
| D. Mills | E. Rowland | |
| D. Smith | M. Storry | |
| W. Soane | | |
| M. Walker | | |
| M. Willson | | |
| | | |
| For: 13 | Against: 10 | Absent: 2 |

Minute 68: Investments Working Party**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2014/15.

Minute 69: Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Working Party

During the discussions under this item a vote was called to rule on whether councillors be allowed to read from political literature during the debate and it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That reference to political literature should not be made during the debate.

Voting: For: 12 Against: 6

Votes were then taken on the recommendations from the Standing Orders and Financial regulations Working Party.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To adopt the revised Standing Orders.

Voting: For: 13 Against: 9 Abstentions: 1

- ◆ To approve the revised protocol, attached to the Standing Orders, for attendance at meetings by Councillors who are not members of those bodies.

Minute 70: Catering Partnership Management Panel

Under this item Members noted the effectiveness of the profit sharing initiative.

Minute 72: War Memorial / Civic Space

The Town Clerk reported that Wokingham Town Council were applying for lottery funding to help create a trail linking war memorials in the borough and have asked parish and town councils to support the proposal and help with the production of a brochure. Councillors agreed to support the application and that the proposed trail should cover the memorial in St John's Church as well as the proposed new war memorial.

Minute 74: Bulmershe Leisure Centre

The discussion regarding the Bulmershe Leisure Centre which had taken place at the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 4 February continued at this meeting in some detail.

Councillor Challis asked for the minutes to be amended to show that the Chief Executive of Wokingham Borough Council, in discussions with the previous Leader and Deputy Leader, had given an undertaking to issue a joint briefing to all Town Council and Borough Council members before any actions were taken, not to all parties.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 4 February 2014.

73. **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL GREENSPACE RECREATION AND SPORTS STRATEGY**

Members noted the response to the Town Council's consultation comments and were pleased that Wokingham Borough Council had accepted the points that had been made.

74. **SITE OF URBAN LANDSCAPE VALUE JOINT WORKING PARTY**

Members noted that Earley Town Council's Plans Committee had resolved not to hold a meeting of the joint working party at that point and that it was understood that a question on the Bulmershe SULV may be put to the Wokingham Borough Council Executive at its meeting on 20 February.

Concerns were raised by Councillor Baker about the remit of this joint working party and whether it was for the working party to decide to explore options such as a local green space policy when the SULV had been recognised and approved in the Managing Development Delivery Plan.

Councillor Storry drew Members' attention to the four planning infringements on the SULV. Councillor Lawley explained that the resolution proposing the setting up of the joint working party with Earley Town Council had been agreed because the present designation hadn't protected the area from development.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk would provide all Members with the terms of reference of the joint working party for information.

75. **PETITIONS RECEIVED BY WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Members noted that Wokingham Borough Council's Constitution Working Party would be recommending that its petition protocol include a requirement that parish/town clerks be informed of any petitions relating to their parish that are received by the Borough Council. This matter would be considered by Wokingham Borough Council at its meeting on 20 February 2014.

76. **REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

a) **Wokingham Traffic+ Forum**

Members considered appointing a representative to attend meetings of this forum led by Shinfield Parish Council.

RESOLVED

- ◆ Councillor D. Mills be appointed as the Woodley Town Council representative on the Wokingham+ Traffic Forum.

b) Members noted the following written reports:

- ARC by Mrs Shelagh Flower
- Poors' Land Charity by Mrs Shelagh Flower
- Poors' Land charity by Councillor J. Cheng
- Robert Palmer's Almshouse Charity by Councillor S. Rahmouni

77. **LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader of the Council made the following statement to the Council:

"By the time I rise to make this statement this new initiative will now be enshrined in our Standing Orders. A classic example of what this forces on the leader is around the activity on Bulmershe Leisure Centre. It has emerged that prior to the changeover of control the then Leader of the Town Council had engaged in conversations on the future of the Leisure Centre but no-one knew about it. In contrast as part of my last Leader's Statement, on the 10 December 2013, I told Council that discussions were continuing and anyone could have asked any question on it. Clearly in both cases there are significant confidential elements but you can be transparent without compromising this.

This has been a historic year with control changing after 40 years of continuous control by one party. As a direct result the Conservatives, backed by the Independents, had to put together their very first budget. Fitting in with our values this administration has prepared a 5% reduction in Town Council Tax. This is the first reduction since before 2006 and results in putting the tax level back to the lowest figure since 2007. I am pleased that this approach prompted the opposition to make their first proposal for a tax reduction for many, many years albeit at less than half the rate of our proposals.

Again, on the transparency project, we have brought in another innovation where the opposition sees the proposed budget nearly a month ahead of any decisions on it at a private meeting. As with the Leader's statement any councillor or party can ask any question on the details. The opposition could also provide counter proposals, which could be debated thoroughly, which is not the case in the public committee meetings because of the lack of time. Councillors could then still have their proposals aired publicly at the relevant meeting. It was sad that the opposition decided to remain silent at that meeting. This is a huge improvement on the previous system run by the councillors opposite where the opposition only got a week's notice of the proposed budget.

Finally, looking to the future we have some exciting items of work under way. The War Memorial project is gathering pace and discussions are ongoing on providing S106 funds for the base area with a need to have it all ready for the 100th anniversary of World War 1.

Work is also accelerating around how to fund the 3G pitch which has total cross party support and I am working with the Town Clerk on the best way of funding

this and what approval mechanism we need within the council. This is an exciting project that is vital for the long term future of Woodford Park.”

Councillor Baker asked if there were any questions on his statement and Councillor Rowland stated that the opposition would not reply to the Leader’s statement, as they did not have advance notice of what was contained in the statement

78. **TOWN MAYOR’S ENGAGEMENTS**

The Town Mayor informed the Council of the 7 engagements he had attended since the last meeting.

He reported that the non-uniform day at Southlake Primary School on 7 February, which he had attended, raised £440 for the Woodley War Memorial Project.

The Deputy Mayor had attended 1 engagement since the last meeting.

79. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

An item allowing debate on the possible recording of future meetings was requested.

Meeting closed at 9:50pm

TOWN FORUM

11 February 2014

Four Woodley residents were present at the Town Forum.

Heather Neal and Pat Birt, representing the Woodley and Earley Arts Group, had come to the forum to ask if the arrangements for their exhibitions at the Oakwood Centre could be revised. Currently the exhibitions are held twice a year, in April and October, and are open to the public on a Friday afternoon and all day Saturday, after setting up on the Friday morning. Mrs Neal and Mrs Birt asked if the Town Council would support their request to set up on a Thursday evening and open the exhibition all day Friday and Saturday, and possibly also on Sunday. They said that they would be prepared to have just one longer exhibition each year, in April or May, or possibly one long and one short exhibition. Mrs Neal and Mrs Birt also suggested that it might be possible to link the exhibition with another event, for example the Woodley Festival, and asked if it would be possible for the café to be open during the exhibition.

Councillor Haines said that she would be happy to take this forward, as deputy leader of the Council, and would investigate how the proposed changes would fit in with other regular bookings at the Oakwood Centre.