

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Oakwood Centre on
Tuesday 27 September 2016 at 8 pm**

Present: Councillors J. Cheng (Chairman); K. Baker; T. Barker; S. Brindley;
A. Chadwick; P. Etherington; M. Forrer; D. Fradley; M. Green;
R. Horskins; J. MacNaught; D. Mills; S. Rahmouni; W. Soane;
D. Stares; J. Trick; M. Walker; P. Wicks; M. Willson

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

Also present: Andy Couldrick, Chief Executive, Wokingham Borough Council
1 member of the public

A maximum of 30 minutes was set aside for members of the public to pose questions to the Council in the Town Forum. As there were no members of the public wishing to address the Council the Town Forum did not take place.

*Before the start of the meeting Andy Couldrick, Chief Executive, Wokingham Borough Council, spoke to Members about Wokingham Borough Council's 21st Century Council Programme, as reported in **Appendix A**.*

36. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors C. Dixon, R. Dolinski, B. Franklin, K. Gilder, R. Lay and D. Smith.

37. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

38. **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28 JUNE 2016**

The Town Mayor presented the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 June 2016.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 June 2016 and that they be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

39. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

39.1 **Minutes of the Planning Committee: 5 July 2016**

Councillor Barker presented the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 5 July 2016.

Minute 46: Planning Decisions

In response to a query the Committee Officer agreed to investigate whether the planning database software could be altered so that the word "District" was changed to "Borough" on the decisions list.

[Note: The software provider advised that it was not possible to make the required amendment; however in future the Committee Officer would manually change each occurrence of the word on the pdf version of the decisions list.]

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 5 July 2016.

39.2 **Minutes of the Planning Committee: 26 July 2016**

Councillor Barker presented the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 26 July 2016.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 26 July 2016.

39.3 **Minutes of the Planning Committee: 23 August 2016**

Councillor Barker presented the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 23 August 2016.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 23 August 2016.

39.4 **Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee: 6 September 2016**

Councillor Soane presented the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 6 September 2016.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 6 September 2016.

39.5 **Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee: 13 September 2016**

Councillor Baker presented the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 13 September 2016.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee that the three bank accounts held with the Bank of Ireland be closed and that two of the signatories to those bank accounts be requested to sign the mandate to take this course of action.
- ◆ To approve the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee that £5,000 from the 2016/17 Capital Programme be allocated for costs associated with the application for Green Flag status at Woodford Park.
- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 13 September 2016.

39.6 **Minutes of the Planning Committee: 20 September 2016**

Councillor Barker presented the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 20 September 2016.

Minute 108: Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan Update – Issues and Options Consultation

Councillor Barker thanked Councillors Cheng and Walker for the work they had done in reviewing the consultation document and formulating the responses for discussion.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 20 September 2016.

40. **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

It was proposed by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Baker and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To appoint Councillor Fradley to the vacant position on the Planning Committee.

41. **AUDIT 2015/16**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the external auditor's opinion on the audit of the 2015/16 Annual Return
- ◆ To adopt the audited Annual Return for 2015/16.
- ◆ To note that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been displayed on public noticeboards at the Oakwood Centre and on the Council's website from 30 August 2016.

42. **LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader of the Council made the following statement:

"I want to welcome back all Members from the long break, after what has been a glorious summer full to the brim with British sporting success.

Second at the Olympics, second at the Paralympics – quite a contrast to the single gold medal won by Britain at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996!

Only a few weeks back, and we have already been busy. In my long time in local politics I cannot remember so many exciting projects under way and there are more in the wings waiting to be started. When the Conservatives took control several years ago we inherited a council which was led by politicians who had run out of ideas, were comfy in letting things drift, did not engage properly with the staff amongst many other things. It is no wonder that residents in 2015 gave the Conservatives such a huge mandate to change things.

When residents gave us that precious gift of control they had a set of expectations that things would change for the better. I think we have and will continue to deliver on those expectations. Let me highlight ten of them:

1. Reduce the town council tax by 8%.
2. Installed one of the best 3G all weather football pitches in the area.
3. Moving forward with major refurbishment of Woodford Park Lake.
4. Moving forward with a new Gym installation in Woodford Park Leisure Centre.
5. Working with the Borough and the TCMI to redevelop the north end of the Town Centre with a planning application already lodged.
6. Working with the Borough on a joint project to bring Loddon Mead back into use with a focus on some form of youth facility.
7. Moving forward with the new Public Toilet with a planning application lodged by the end of the year.
8. Helped the Carnival Committee reintroduce the evening event by sponsoring the fireworks.

9. Helping local businesses grow through sponsorship of the Festival of Business now in its 4th year which will be held on the 9th November and I encourage all councillors to pay it a visit.
10. Continue grants to local organisations and individuals.

Morale within our officers has never been better and I will continue to work with our Town Clerk to make sure this continues. My thanks to all councillors who have contributed to these efforts over the last few years."

43. **WOODLEY TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION PROJECT – FUNDING REQUEST**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. FC 4/16 and drew Members' attention to the plan of the scheme, which had been tabled at the meeting.

Members were informed that tenders for the project had been received and it was likely that the final cost of the project would be significantly higher than the existing funding of £240,000. Wokingham Borough Council had approached the Town Council to request that it consider making a £50,000 contribution to the project in order that the whole of the planned scheme could be achieved. Some of these funds would make up a contingency fund and if this was not required any unspent funds would be returned to the Town Council.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To agree to the request from Wokingham Borough Council to contribute £50,000 from the general reserve towards the town centre regeneration project.

44. **REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

- a) Members considered the current vacancies for representatives on outside bodies and during the discussion it was proposed that the number of Town Council representatives and deputies to some organisations could be reduced.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That officers review the number of Town Council representatives on outside bodies and report back to the next meeting of Council.

- b) Members noted the following written reports distributed with the agenda:

- ARC - Report by Mrs Shelagh Flower
- Robert Palmer Almshouse Charity - Report by Cllr Rahmouni
- Woodley Bowling Club Management Committee - Report by Cllr Stares
- Poor's Land Charity - Report by Cllr Cheng
- Woodley Volunteers - Report by Cllr MacNaught

45. **WOODLEY MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND CHARITY**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that the Charity Commission Annual Return for 2015/16 was submitted to the Charity Commission on 4 August 2016.

46. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING BILL**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the correspondence received from Gavin Barwell MP, Minister for Housing and Planning, regarding the new Neighbourhood Planning Bill.

47. **TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

- a) Councillor Cheng informed the Council of the 11 events she had attended as Town Mayor and particularly noted the reception hosted by the Borough Mayor for Woodley resident Charles Miller, in recognition of his award of the Legion d'Honneur by the French government for his services towards the liberation of France during the Second World War.
- b) Councillor Chadwick reported on the event she had attended as Deputy Town Mayor.

48. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

No suggestions were made for future agenda items.

Meeting closed at 9:30pm

APPENDIX A

Andy Couldrick, Chief Executive, Wokingham Borough Council, was welcomed to the meeting. He explained that the Borough Council needed to make changes in their working practices due to the ongoing financial pressures and was therefore talking to town and parish councils to improve working relationships and try to create a stronger platform to engage in joint endeavours.

Members were informed that since 2010 Wokingham Borough Council had made savings of £30-35 million, which was 32% of its previous net budget, but that a further £19 million of savings were required over the next 3 years.

Andy Couldrick reported that more than half of the Borough Council's budget was spent on adult social care, with the second highest portion of the budget being spent on child services. The borough was also responsible for looking after vulnerable families and unaccompanied child refugees. The demand for all of these services was expected to increase in future years leading to even greater budget pressures. As the provision of these services could not be reduced, savings would have to be made in other areas.

Wokingham Borough Council was therefore proposing a programme of activity called the 21st Century Council Programme, which comprised a series of themes relating to how the Council was organised. The aim was to create a Council that worked better for residents and was also cheaper to run. Andy Couldrick informed Members that as part of this programme the Borough Council would invest £6 million in an improved IT system, with the intention of producing a greater ability to resolve residents' problems online and reduce the number of visits and phone calls made to the Council offices. Increased use of the IT system within the Council itself would enable staff to work more effectively. The proposals were to be considered by Wokingham Borough Council that week and, if approved, the process would start immediately. It was anticipated that from a staff of approximately 1000, about 100 – 150 positions would be lost, saving £4 million a year.

Andy Couldrick explained that another aim was to enable highly qualified officers at the Borough Council, such as planning officers and social workers, to focus on their specialism with other staff taking on the task of engaging with the public. The Borough Council was also investigating possible new ways of delivering some services, for example local sponsorship of school crossing patrollers, and involving town and parish councils and the voluntary and community sectors in the provision of social care solutions. Income generation was also being investigated: for example, the use of advertising hoardings and the best ways to create income from Council owned land and property.

Members were informed by Andy Couldrick that all services provided by the Borough Council were being reviewed and that he was optimistic that it would be possible to save money and deliver better outcomes for residents with the co-operation of town and parish councils.

Members discussed a variety of suggested changes with Andy Couldrick and the importance of social media in keeping residents informed of changes and preventing miscommunication was stressed. The Mayor then thanked Andy Couldrick for coming to the meeting and said that it was good to hear that the Borough Council was working to improve communications and its relationship with town and parish councils.