

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Oakwood Centre on
Tuesday 6 February 2018 at 8 pm**

Present: Councillors J. Cheng (Chairman); K. Baker; T. Barker; S. Brindley;
A. Chadwick; C. Dixon; R. Dolinski; M. Forrer; D. Fradley; K. Gilder;
J. MacNaught; D. Mills; S. Rahmouni; D. Smith; D. Stares;
M. Walker

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

Also present: Bev Thompson, Darrell Gale & Arnab Mukherjee, Wokingham
Borough Council
2 members of the public

Before the start of the meeting:

- *Bev Thompson, Darrell Gale and Arnab Mukherjee, Wokingham Borough Council, gave a presentation on the plans for the redevelopment of Bulmershe Leisure Centre, as reported in **Appendix A**.*
- *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.*

54. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors P. Etherington, B. Franklin, M. Green, R. Horskins, R. Lay, W. Soane, J. Trick and P. Wicks.

55. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

56. **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2017**

The Town Mayor presented the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 December 2017.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 December 2017 and that they be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

57. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

57.1 **Minutes of the Planning Committee: 9 January 2018**

Councillor Barker presented the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 9 January 2018.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 9 January 2018.

57.2 **Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee: 16 January 2018**

Councillor Barker presented the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 16 January 2018.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 16 January 2018.

57.3 **Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee: 23 January 2018**

Councillor Baker presented the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 23 January 2018.

Minute No. 86: Investments Working Party

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2018/19.

Minute No. 87: Charges 2018/19

a) Oakwood Centre charges

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the 2018/19 charges at the Oakwood Centre, as set out in the Proposed Charges 2018/19 Appendix.

b) Leisure Services charges

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the charges for Leisure Services in 2018/19, as set out in the Proposed Charges 2018/19 Appendix.

Minute No. 89: Budget Estimates 2018/19

d) Budget and precept 2018/19

Councillor Baker presented the 2018/19 budget and the recommended precept level for 2018/19 to the Council.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the budget for 2018/19, as presented in the Budget Appendix.
- ◆ To approve a precept level of £1,101,119 for the 2018/19 financial year, as set out in the Budget Appendix.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 23 January 2018.

57.4 **Minutes of the Planning Committee: 30 January 2018**

Councillor Barker presented the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 30 January 2018.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 30 January 2018.

58. **LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader of the Council made the following statement:

"Here we are again at the meeting which sets the budget for the coming year, 2018/19. Once again, our Town Clerk, Deborah, has worked wonders and allowed us to set a budget which is appropriate for the coming year.

As we come to a close on this financial year of 2017/18 it looks like we are going to enhance our general reserves by nearly £56,000 which is a staggering achievement. This has come about by sound financial management by our Town Clerk and her team plus all our income generating activities increasing their contribution. Assuming this occurs, the General Reserves will just break the £500,000 barrier with another £250,000 in earmarked reserves. I think no other Town Council in Berkshire are in as good a financial position as we are.

So, what about next year? I can confirm that the cost pressures are rising quickly, far quicker than we can increase our income line. The main pressure in that bundle is staffing costs. Whilst the pay rise has yet to be agreed by the unions and the negotiation body, with a 2% overall increase turned down by the unions, it certainly will not be any lower and could be higher. National Insurance is also due to increase and the dreaded pensions deficiency increasing by 1.7% over the next two years. We have also added a new grounds maintenance post to continue the huge improvement in Woodford Park and all its facilities.

That is adding a whopping £42,000 or a 6.9% increase. That equates to a 3.8% increase in council tax just to stand still. This does not take into account the other operational cost increases either.

Back in 2013/14, before we took control, the precept for a band D property was £114.65. Last year, 2017/18, it was £106.71 - some 7% lower than under the previous administration. Reserves then were also much lower at £388,000 compared to just over £500,000. In fact, you would have to go all the way back to 2007/08 to find a lower council tax rate.

So, with all the cost pressures mentioned previously I am extremely proud and privileged to announce that we will be keeping the council tax at its current level. I believe we might be the only council in the Borough with a zero increase this year. This reflects the extremely hard work over the years of the Town Clerk and her team together with the financial prudence that is the very essence of being a Conservative Council."

59. **WOODFORD PARK LAKE PROJECT – PROGRESS AND FUNDING**

The Deputy Town Clerk tabled an amended Report No. FC 1/18, which set out the estimated costs of each element of the Woodford Park lake project and the grants and loans that had been applied for.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that an application for a grant of £50,000 towards the project costs would be made to the Suez Landfill Communities Trust, but that if the application was successful the Council would be required to make a 'Contributing Third Party' payment of £5,750 (11.5% of the grant) to the fund provider. This figure had therefore been added to the project costs, which totalled £142,750.

The balance of the total project cost, not funded by the loan and grant applications, was £57,750 and Members considered allocating £60,000 to the lake project earmarked reserve to cover these costs.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. FC 1/18.
- ◆ To allocate £60,000 from the General Reserve to the earmarked reserve for the Woodford Park lake regeneration project with effect from 1 April 2018.

60. **COUNCIL SEAL**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the use of the Council's seal on a lease with Reading Borough Council in respect of the Reading Road Allotment and Town Lane Fields site.

61. **WOODLEY PRE-SCHOOL**

Members noted that the lease granted by the Town Council to Woodley Pre-School had been completed on 30 January 2018.

62. **TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC TOILET**

Members noted that a purchase order had been submitted for the supply and installation of a public toilet in Woodley town centre, and that the lead-in time was estimated to be 10-12 weeks.

63. **OUTSIDE BODIES**

No written reports had been received from the Council's representatives on outside bodies.

Councillor Rahmouni gave a verbal report on matters at the Robert Palmer Almshouses.

Councillor Mills had attended the Borough/Parish Liaison meeting the previous evening and gave a verbal report on the meeting. The minutes of this meeting would be included in a future agenda, following receipt.

Under this item, Councillor Gilder reported that the Wokingham Borough Sports Council awards evening in November had shown that there were many really good athletes in the Woodley area and in the borough as a whole. Councillor Gilder had also attended the Sports Council's AGM and had again been elected to the committee.

Councillor Baker informed Members that as 1Life was no longer involved in the provision of the Borough Council's leisure services, the C-Salt Community Forum was no longer in existence.

64. **TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

a) Members noted that Councillor Cheng had been unable to undertake any engagements as Town Mayor since the last meeting as she had been recovering from an accident.

b) Councillor Rahmouni reported on the 2 events he had attended as Deputy Town Mayor.

65. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

No suggestions were made for future agenda items.

Meeting closed at 9:22pm

Meeting of the Town Council on 6 February 2018

The Town Mayor welcomed Bev Thompson, Darrell Gale and Arnab Mukherjee, Wokingham Borough Council, to the meeting to update Members on the plans for the redevelopment of Bulmershe Leisure Centre.

Darrell Gale informed Members that the scheme had been completely reassessed in the previous 8 months to ensure that it was affordable, as additional construction costs had been discovered. This had necessitated the reassessment of the specifications and he believed that the scheme had been improved during this process. Darrell Gale referred to the artists impression and sketch plan, which had been distributed to Members, and pointed out that the scheme now included a main pool, a learner pool with a moveable floor, a gym, a sports hall and a café, which had all been identified as important requirements during the public consultation. All the changing areas would provide fully accessible toilets and larger cubicles for disabled access.

Bev Thompson reported that they had worked closely with Bulmershe School with regard to safeguarding issues and there would probably be a separate entrance and changing facilities for the school. The school would need sole use of many of the facilities during the school day, but they had negotiated with the school to allow public swimming sessions to be provided during the day, as this had been requested during the public consultation.

In reply to questions, Arnab Mukherjee informed Members that they were hoping to provide an efficient building with low running costs and would provide adequate parking for the school and for the leisure centre, including coach parking. Darrell Gale said that the Traffic and Highways engineers were currently working on schemes for the design of access to the site and were aware of the issues that needed to be addressed. He assured Members that the safety of children using the site was of paramount importance when designing traffic access, even if this resulted in more problems on Woodlands Avenue.

Members were informed that the leisure centre would close at the end of April and internal demolition would start straight away. Formal planning permission would be required before construction could start, but it was hoped that the new leisure centre would open after a construction period of 18 months.

The Town Mayor thanked Bev Thompson, Darrell Gale and Arnab Mukherjee for their presentation and said that she looked forward to seeing the start of construction for the new building.