

Woodley Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Town Electors Meeting held at the Oakwood Centre on
Tuesday 3 March 2015 at 8 pm

Present: *Councillors B. Franklin (Chairman); A. Chadwick; J. Cheng; M. Holmes; C. Lawley; S. Outen; S. Rahmouni; D. Smith; W. Soane; D. Stares; M. Walker*

Also present: *5 residents*

WTC Officers: *D. Mander; L. Matthews; K. Murray*

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Baker, T. Barker, K. Gilder, D. Mills, R. Neall and M. Storry.
Apologies were also received from Mrs S. Flower.

2. **MINUTES OF THE TOWN ELECTORS MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2014**

It was proposed and agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4 March 2014 be agreed and signed as a true record.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Minute number 4: Annual Committee Reports – Leisure Services Committee: Parks and play areas – Memorial Ground

Councillor Smith thanked the Town Clerk and her team for all the work they had put into providing the new war memorial and the civic space in which it was situated, and especially the amazing new gates at the entrance to the Memorial Ground.

4. **ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Leisure Services Committee

Councillor Bill Soane, Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee, thanked the Leisure Services Manager and the Maintenance Team for all their hard work throughout the year. He then presented his report as follows:

Speakers at meetings

During the year speakers from Bulmershe Gym Club and One Woodley, later renamed as Woodley United, gave presentations to the Committee.

The following funding had been gained for activities:

- £2,750 from Rounders England to deliver rounders in Woodley and surrounding areas.
- £250 from the Football Association to continue with their get back into football initiative, Just Play.
- £1,958 from Public Health to run free swimming for under 16's during the Easter and summer holidays.
- £1,729 from the Wokingham Borough Social Inclusion Officer to help get the BME community more active.
- £1,000 from Public Health to train two members of staff to become qualified cardiac rehabilitation instructors.
- £6,000 from Badminton England to run and coordinate the Wokingham and Reading Community Badminton network.

Total funding £13,437

Bulmershe Leisure Centre

The lease on Bulmershe Leisure Centre had been surrendered on 30 November. While the leisure centre was managed by the Council the swim schools and weekend Swim for £1 were very popular and a grant from Public Health allowed free swimming to be offered over the holiday periods. Pool parties continued to be very popular.

Boxercise and Boot Camps had been well attended, as had the sports holiday camps for kids in football, trampolining, multiskills and preschool activities.

Councillor Soane thanked everyone who had been involved in the arrangements for handing over the management of Bulmershe Leisure Centre to 1Life. The hard work of all concerned had resulted in a smooth handover.

Activities at Woodford Park Leisure Centre

The following new courses had taken place at Woodford Park Leisure Centre:

For children:

- Football
- Trampolining
- Judo
- Cricket

For adults:

- An additional circuits class
- Chinese exercise
- Run club
- An additional No Strings Badminton session on Monday evenings
- Essential Badminton coaching

The centre provided Racquet Attack for £1 for 16s and under during school holidays and sports holiday camps included badminton, racquet sports, cheer leading, multi skills, football, trampolining and street dance. Rounders games were held in Woodford Park during the summer and coaching sessions took place in local schools.

During the year trampolining, judo and a diving club had transferred to Woodford Park Leisure Centre from Bulmershe Leisure Centre.

Healthy Habits Woodley

Healthy Habits member numbers continued to grow and reached 843 by 30 November, when Bulmershe Leisure Centre was transferred to 1Life. Healthy Habits numbers were expected to decline as Bulmershe users started to use 1Life's card.

Woodley Sports Week 2014

In partnership with The Bulmershe School, the Town Council put together a week-long event for eight local primary schools, with some activities for the town's secondary schools. Events included festivals for dance and multiskills, swimming galas and the kwik cricket tournament. In total 2,700 local children took part in these events.

Tournaments

The Cecil Trembath Kwik Cricket boys' tournament winners were Beechwood School and the girls' tournament winners were Willowbank School.

The Sid Hopkins football tournament winners were South Lake School, Year 3/4, for the boys' tournament. The girls' tournament winners were Earley St Peters, Beechwood School and Willowbank School.

Parkrun

Throughout the year Parkrun regularly attracted over 250 runners on Saturday mornings. Junior Parkrun on Sunday mornings was changed from a monthly to a weekly event and regularly attracted 120 runners.

Cricket

Works had been agreed to improve the cricket outfield and the football pitches and this would be an ongoing programme. Grants had been sought for a new artificial wicket and it was hoped that this work could be undertaken in the year 2015/16. Discussions had taken place regarding restarting the Woodley Cricket Academy.

3G pitch project

Work had continued throughout the year on the project to install a 3rd generation artificial grass pitch at the rear of the leisure centre, together with extra parking and the refurbishment of a tennis court. Planning approval had been received and an application had been made to the Football Foundation for 50% of the project costs. The Council had agreed to borrow the remaining 50% of the costs and had received borrowing approval from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Woodford Park Leisure Centre

The following maintenance works were carried out:

- Refurbishment of the office space for Optalis to use.
- New Function Room partitions installed.
- Replacement of windows and fire escape door in the Function Room.
- Repairs to the sports hall roof.
- Refurbishment of the dryside changing rooms.
- Resurfacing of the old play area.

Community Halls

The back committee room at Coronation Hall was redecorated.

The flooring throughout Chapel Hall was renewed and new chairs were provided.

A weekly, school term-time booking was transferred from Bulmershe Leisure Centre to Coronation Hall.

Parks and play areas

Memorial Ground

The new war memorial was installed in a specially designed civic space and the entrance area from Headley Road was greatly improved with the new gates, which were specially commissioned to reflect the history of the Memorial Ground, which was purchased by subscription in 1918 by local residents to provide an open space for all.

Woodford Park

Five trees were felled: two that were diseased and three whose size was causing a problem because they were too near to houses. These would be replaced by smaller trees, more suitable to the location.

Malone Park

New play equipment was installed and improvements to the play area made, following consultation with local residents.

Garden competition

The 2014 winner was Mrs Rosemary Wallis, who was presented with the Horticultural Society Memorial Cup at the Council meeting in September.

Following the report of the Leisure Services Committee, Councillor Lawley stated that, in his opinion, the planning application for the 3G pitch had not been considered by the Borough Council in a democratic manner as it had been determined by the case officer and not by the Planning Committee. Councillor Baker responded by explaining that there had been no grounds in respect of planning matters on which to refer the application to the committee. Councillor Lawley then tabled a sheet recording the concerns raised by residents of Farriers Close at the public meeting held by Woodley Town Council.

A resident of Farriers Close spoke of his concerns regarding the noise that would be generated by the use of the 3G pitch. He did not believe that the proposed acoustic mitigating fence, which would be installed as part of the project, was of sufficient quality and he was going to write to Wokingham Borough Council about this. The same resident was also concerned that young people would kick footballs against the acoustic fence and cause a nuisance.

The Chairman said that the Council had listened and noted the resident's concerns.

Community Services Committee

Councillor Darren Smith, Chairman of the Community Services Committee, said that he had enjoyed the year even though there had been some challenges along the way. He thanked all the committee members for their support over the year and thanked the Town Clerk and her staff for the excellent way they had supported the committee and managed the meetings.

Councillor Smith presented his report as follows:

Grants

Annual grants were again awarded to CAB, ARC, Readibus, Keep Mobile, Wokingham Job Support and the Lend and Play Toy Library. The committee had increased the grant awarded to the CAB to recognize the work and support they give to local residents.

Citizens Awards

The nominations for these awards were considered by the full committee, enabling all committee members to gain a valuable insight into the amazing residents working for the benefit of the local community. The chosen recipients would receive their awards from the Town Mayor at a reception on Thursday 2 April.

Highways

The committee requested that Wokingham Borough Council consider the resurfacing of Fairwater Drive, Wallace Close, Kingfisher Drive, Rickman Close and Larch Drive. The extent of Fairwater Drive scheduled for resurfacing in 2014/15 was reduced and an explanation for this had been sought from the Borough Council.

Following complaints from residents about speeding in Colemans Moor Road, the committee requested a traffic survey, which was carried out by Wokingham Borough Council. The survey showed that the speeds were within acceptable limits.

Bus shelters

The bus shelter in Fairwater Drive, which had been damaged and removed in 2013, was replaced.

Following a request from residents, the committee made representation to Wokingham BC to ask that the installation of a bus shelter in Lytham Road be considered, but on investigation there was found to be insufficient space on the footway.

Community refuse vehicle

The refuse vehicle that had been visiting the Airfield Centre site at the start of 2014 was discontinued by Wokingham Borough Council in April as they no longer had a vehicle available to visit this site. The refuse vehicle service in Drovers Way was suspended by Wokingham Borough Council from November 2014 due to safety and traffic issues. Following a review by the Borough Council the refuse vehicle service had subsequently ceased, with effect from 1 February 2015, to ensure that the Council and its contractors could meet current and upcoming Waste regulations, as the waste collected by these vehicles was unsorted and the entirety went to landfill.

Bus services in Woodley

In September representatives from Reading Buses and the Principal Transport Planner at Wokingham Borough Council, attended the Community Services Committee meeting to update Members on the recent changes to bus services in Woodley, in particular the No. 19 bus service, which no longer visited Fairwater Drive. Members of the public attended the meeting and had an opportunity to comment and ask questions. Following the meeting the committee made representation to Reading Buses and Wokingham Borough Council to request that the route of the No. 19 bus be reviewed, and both agreed that the situation would be reviewed in 2015.

Premises licence under the Gambling Act 2005: 143 Crockhamwell Road

Although not a statutory consultee, the Town Council sent an official objection to this application and put forward the Council's objections at the hearing held to determine the application. Despite this the licence was granted for a third betting office in the town centre.

Woodley Adopt A Street Project (WASP)

Woodley Adopt a Street Project (WASP) continued to be a success with 141 volunteers now signed up. Thanks were given to Mrs Shelagh Flower and her team of volunteers for keeping the streets of Woodley clean.

Allotments

The allotments continued to be popular. Additional areas had been cleared and the number of plots increased, allowing plots to be allocated to everyone on the waiting list. The Council had made improvements over the past year by installing a new entrance gate and cctv, and a new pest control regime was put in place. Repairs to the fence were also made.

Youth Working Party

The committee received reports from this working party where representatives from organisations working with young people meet with councillors and discuss youth activities in the town.

The Friday night youth club at Bulmershe Leisure Centre continued to be popular. There were two Streetz events held at Coronation Hall during the year, but the organiser decided not to continue with these because of problems with the behaviour of a minority of the attendees.

At the January meeting it was agreed that the name of the Youth Working Party would be changed to the Community Youth Partnership and new terms of reference were adopted to encourage wider participation from voluntary sector organisations working with young people.

Just Around the Corner Charity (JAC)

The Council has a service level agreement with JAC to provide outreach youth work in the town and Sam Milligan attends the Community Services Committee meetings to update Members on the work of JAC.

JAC's new equine centre, the Rehoboth Centre, was opened by Zara Tindall (nee Phillips) at a garden party in May 2014. The centre had been very successful and was already working at capacity. In the past year a member of the JAC team had trained in online protection for young people and a young mums' sewing group had been set up.

Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative (WTCMI)

The Council is a partner in the WTCMI. Events such as the farmers market and the car boot sales continued to be successful through the year. The Christmas tree and Christmas lights in the town centre were well received and once again the Extravaganza was a success.

A defibrillator had recently been provided for the town centre by the Woodley and Earley Lions.

WTCMI had been allocated £60,000 of Section 106 developers' contributions towards a project to improve the north end of the town centre.

Councillor Smith commented that the drive and dynamism shown by the WTCMI, and especially the Town Centre Manager, was a tremendous asset to Woodley.

Presentations

In November the committee received an interesting presentation from Erica Taylor, the Environmental Health Officer at Wokingham Borough Council, on air quality matters across the borough and in Woodley in particular.

Consultations

The committee had responded to consultations on:

Wokingham Borough Council – Parking on verges, footways and footpaths

Wokingham Borough Council – Draft Winter Service Plan 2014/15

Wokingham Borough Council – Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Draft Options

Wokingham Borough Council – Local Flood Risk Management draft document

Following the report of the Community Services Committee a resident asked if more cycle parks were to be provided along the cycle routes that were being introduced by Wokingham Borough Council. Councillor Smith replied that he was aware that the Borough Council had provided some cycle parking spaces and if residents contacted the Town Council with suggestions for cycle parking locations, these could be considered and a request made to the Borough Council.

Other residents commented that cyclists should be made aware that footpaths were for pedestrians, that the requirement for cycles to have a bell should be enforced, and that the amount of illegal cycling in the town centre was increasing. Councillor Smith thanked everyone for their comments and said that cyclists and pedestrians should respect each other. He reminded everyone that incidents of illegal cycling should be reported to the police so that the PCSOs would check this when patrolling in the town centre.

Plans Committee

The report was presented by Councillor Jenny Cheng, Chairman of the Plans Committee, as follows:

The Committee had considered a total of 215 planning applications since March 2014 with the number of applications varying from 12 to 21 a month. Members of the public either attended the Plans Committee meeting or wrote to the Town Council about 53 of the 215 plans.

The Committee also received information about planning decisions and appeals, enforcement matters, tree preservation orders and planning policy documents through the year.

Planning applications of particular concern

- Former Linpac site – Following a Public Inquiry an appeal was allowed against the refusal of permission for the erection of 34 dwellings on the part of the site that was originally to have been used for light industrial units. A later alternative application was made for the erection of 29 dwellings on this part of the site.
- Bulmershe Campus development – Permission was granted for the erection of 257 dwellings, a 60 x 1 and 2 bedroom extra care unit, a retail shop, public open space and a children's play area.
- 34 and land to the rear of 36-50 Pitts Lane, Earley – An application was made for the construction of an elderly care facility comprising 32 elderly nursing bedrooms, 25 dementia nursing bedrooms and 10 extra care units. A public footpath to Bulmershe Park was proposed. This application had recently been refused.
- Former Allied Bakeries site – Several applications were submitted for this site: an application for 73 dwellings was followed by an alternative application for 70 dwellings, which was then revised to 68 dwellings. For all of these applications the only access proposed for the site was from Loddon Bridge Road, which caused major concerns for local residents due to safety and congestion issues.
- Fosters Home for the Elderly – Permission was granted for the redevelopment of this site to provide 34 x 1 bed flats and communal facilities for the frail elderly and dementia extra care.
- 15 Ladbroke Close – Outline planning permission was granted by Wokingham Borough Council for 9 residential units.
- 7 – 10 The Parade, Brecon Road – A part retrospective planning application was submitted for this existing two storey block of 4 flats, which had not been built in accordance with the original planning permission. The planning application was refused and an appeal was dismissed by the Planning Inspector. The development was served with an enforcement notice and was subsequently demolished.

Street names

The Committee suggested [street names](#) for the first phase of the Linpac development, using names of aircraft built by the Miles Aircraft Company, and for the Bulmershe Campus Development, based on educational themes. The Committee agreed to suggest the name "Lilly-May" as a future street name, in memory of a pupil who died recently at Willowbank School.

Other items

- The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan was adopted by Wokingham Borough Council on 21 February 2014.
- Consultation documents were received, and comments returned, on the Department for Communities and Local Government Technical Consultation on Planning.
- Two Committee members attended a training session on planning and enforcement matters run by Wokingham Borough Council.

Strategy and Resources Committee

Councillor Anne Chadwick, vice Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, made the following statement:

"First of all I would like to thank all the staff who have been involved in the areas covered within the Strategy & Resources area. For those present who are not familiar with "council speak" the Strategy & Resources is often considered as the committee that not only sets the direction for the council but also holds the "purse strings" and therefore has key financial accountability.

The Strategic & Resources Committee has had quite a busy year concentrating on the areas of Budgets, how we work, agreement renewal and specific projects. The financial pressure, through things like increased energy costs are proving to be extremely difficult to manage. This has forced the council to move towards the principle of the user pays rather than a blanket subsidy paid by all residents. Even with these pressures, with the help of officers, we managed to reduce the Town Council Tax by 3%, making a total of 8% over the last two years. At the same time grants to deserving causes were maintained. Investments for the future repayment of the loans to build the Oakwood Centre are doing well.

Probably the biggest consumer of time this year has been the transfer of the Bulmershe Leisure Centre back to its owners, Wokingham Borough Council. This was a massive task for the Town Clerk and her fellow officers but they carried out this with a great level of professionalism and they deserve the thanks of all of us. Already residents are seeing the dividends of this transfer with a huge investment in the facility which was never possible under the Town Council control.

With this project now completed attention is now turning to the "jewel on our crown" Woodford Park. The War Memorial is now complete with the new gates getting rightly deserved praise by all who see them. Work has now started on the regeneration of Woodford Park Leisure Centre including the provision of a new 3G pitch and extra car parking spaces. A new vision for this facility is being worked on involving some major sports bodies which is part of an overall project to regenerate the whole park."

The detailed report on the activities of the Strategy and Resources Committee is as follows:

Working parties and sub committees:

Financial Regulations –

Revised regulations (including arrangements for BACS payments) are about to be presented to the committee for consideration and ratification then by Full Council.

Investments Working Party

Members met with the Council's investment manager in November to receive an annual report on the Council's portfolio – being built up to pay the principal of the loan to build the Oakwood Centre. Over the past year the fund has increased in value over the targets set in the investment plan.

The Treasury Management Strategy was considered by committee and approved at Full Council.

Public toilets

The Committee has appointed Danfo to provide a public toilet in the town centre. Progress has been slower than we would have wished because of a variety of issues affecting the suggested sites. We hope that we will be able to progress the project and put in a planning application in the coming weeks.

Catering Partnership Management Panel

The panel regularly reviews the ongoing arrangements at the Just in the Park Café. The profit share arrangements are working and the café in particular is doing well.

Risk Management Working Party

The working party reviewed the risk management register and strategy and these were approved following recommendation from the Committee.

Personnel Sub Committee

A fixed term 1 year Venues Assistant post has been funded and appointed to this year.

Licences/legal/charges:

Lease of offices at WPLC – The Council has agreed to lease the former offices at Woodford Park Leisure Centre to Optalis – who have moved from Bulmershe Leisure Centre.

Allotments – rents and charges

The Committee review allotment rents and agreed an increase of 2.3% (RPI increase as at September 2014) with effect from 1 January 2016. In addition discount on retired tenants charges will be reduced from 50% to 40% and a 40p per pole charge for water usage will also be introduced from the beginning of 2016.

Human Resources and Health and Safety support

The Committee appointed a new company, Ellis Whittam, to provide its HR and H & S support for the following 5 years.

Local Government Pension Scheme

Employers discretionary policies and injury allowances were considered and agreed.

Woodley Bowling Club

Committee agreed to allow a shed to be installed in the area next to the green.

Reporting at meetings

The Committee agreed a protocol for arrangements for the reporting of meetings in line with the Openness in Local Government Regulations 2014.

Bulmershe Leisure Centre

The Committee agreed the terms and arrangements for the early surrender of the lease on the centre and this took place on 1 December 2014 – with the staff based there transferring to 1Life, Wokingham Borough Council's leisure contractor.

Projects:

3rd Generation Artificial Grass Pitch

The Committee agreed to progress the project to create a 9 v 9 3rd Generation artificial grass pitch plus additional parking and refurbishment of a tennis court at Woodford Park – allocating further funds from the special projects reserve for the submission of a planning application and the required surveys.

The Council agreed to seek borrowing approval from the Government for the £255,000 the Council will need to contribute. This has been agreed and an application was submitted to the Football Foundation last month for funding to meet the remaining 50% of the project cost. Planning permission has been approved and we are awaiting the outcome of the grant application which we should receive in April.

Woodford Park Leisure Centre

The Committee has agreed to fund a feasibility study into potential developments at the centre to provide more and varied activities and sports, including looking at how it could work in partnership with Bulmershe Gym Club and Badminton England.

War Memorial

The Council worked with the Woodley War Memorial Project group, who were raising funds for a public memorial, to install a new public memorial at the Memorial Ground set into a designed civic space. In July the Duke of York unveiled the memorial in front of a large gathering of local residents.

Borough War Memorial Trail

The Committee agreed to take part in the project to provide information about the town's war memorials and the town and its people during WW1 – the display banners are on show in the Oakwood Centre and this council plans to update these with more information received from families and provide these as outdoor information boards, near the new memorial.

Consultations:

The Committee responded to consultations on:

The Local Government Finance Settlement – in particular the matter of parish councils being included in the referendum regulations.

Department of Communities and Local Government – Parish Polls consultation

Wokingham Borough Council – Shaping our new communities

Financial:

Internal Audit Plan

This year the Committee appointed new internal auditors following the retirement of Alan Harland. The 2014/15 Internal Audit Plan was approved. The report of this year's internal audit is due to be received at the next meeting of the committee.

External Auditor

Mazars Ltd are the Council's external auditor until 2016/17 – and gave an 'unqualified' report on the 2013/14 Annual Return and Financial Statements.

HMRC requirements regarding employment status and the treatment of taxable benefits were addressed in the year with sums underpaid in tax being paid, no penalties were imposed.

Section 106

The committee now regularly reviews projects that could be suitable for developer contributions funding and this year has added flagpoles at Woodford Park to the list.

The projects in the lists are to be reviewed by a small task group.

Section 106 funding of £68,000 was allocated for the civic space in which the new war memorial sits and £60,000 has been allocated for a project to refurbish the north end of the town centre, which will be overseen by the Town Council.

Grants - 13 grants totalling £2,800 were awarded during the year to community groups and organisations including 3 to young athletes.

Budget Monitoring, revised budget 2014/15 and 2015/16 budget

Each meeting receives a monitoring report on its budget (as do the other committees).

The budget for 2015/16 was proposed and agreed at the last meeting. The precept was set at the Council meeting on 10 February, with the Band D charge being £105.65 a year, 3% under the previous year's charge.

The Capital Programme for 2015/16 was agreed as part of the budget setting process.

The Council lobbied the Borough Council on the matter of the precept support grant which was retained at the same level as the previous year, and not reduced as had been intended.

5. **CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence had been received.

6. **GENERAL PARISH AFFAIRS**

A resident asked whether there had been any developments regarding the provision of a public toilet in Woodley town centre. Councillor Smith replied that, on investigation, the sites originally identified as possible locations for a public toilet had all been found to be unsuitable due to the presence of underground services. The Town Clerk had written to Wokingham Borough Council to seek permission to position the public toilet in the Crockhamwell Road car park and was awaiting a reply. When the location of the public toilet was finalised the Town Council would need to apply for planning permission. Councillor Smith agreed with the resident that this project was taking a long time, but he hoped that the end was in sight.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting closed at 9:00 pm
