

Woodley Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Town Electors Meeting held at the Oakwood Centre on
Tuesday 1 March 2016 at 8 pm

Present: *Councillors J. Cheng (Chairman); T. Barker; A. Chadwick; R. Dolinski; M. Forrer;
J. MacNaught; D. Smith; D. Stares; M. Walker*

Also present: *3 residents*

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

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Baker, S. Brindley, C. Dixon, B. Franklin, D. Mills, W. Soane, J. Trick and P. Wicks. Apologies were also received from Mrs S. Flower.

2. **MINUTES OF THE TOWN ELECTORS MEETING HELD ON 3 MARCH 2015**

It was proposed and agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3 March 2015 be agreed and signed as a true record.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

4. **ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Leisure Services Committee

Councillor Tom Barker, Vice-chairman of the Leisure Services Committee, thanked the Leisure Services Manager and his team and the Maintenance Team for their hard work and dedication to providing services and keeping the parks in good condition. He then presented the Leisure Services report as follows:

Woodford Park Leisure Centre: Sports development and activities

The following new courses started during the year:

- Boxercise
- Bootcamp
- Mini Movers (mixture of trampolining, dance and confidence based exercises for toddlers)
- Badminton (combination of badminton and fitness work)

The centre ran ten children's courses and twelve adult classes throughout the week, which was the highest number of classes/courses in ten years.

The centre provided Racquet Attack – play for £1 per person (tennis, table tennis and badminton) over the school holidays and ran a total of thirty-two children's holiday camps across the year, which was nearly double the number from the previous year. These included trampolining, cheerleading, badminton, football, dance and a Christmas themed drop and shop camp.

New bookings that came to Woodford Park Leisure Centre during the year were the U3A table tennis club and Thames Valley triathletes, and the centre had recently been working closely with Wokingham Borough Council's bike-ability group.

Funding achieved for activities

The following funding had been gained:

- £1,500 from Rounders England to deliver Rounders in Woodley and surrounding areas.
- £500 from Public Health to train up one member of staff to become a qualified Cardiac Rehabilitation Instructor.
- £700 from Badminton England to run an inclusive club for individuals with additional needs.
- £6,000 from Badminton England to run and coordinate the Wokingham Community Badminton network (ongoing from previous years).
- £4,350 for the setting up and operation of three badminton satellite clubs at Bulmershe, Waignels and Piggott secondary schools.
- £116 from Sportivate project for 16 weeks of badminton coaching provision for Addington school.

Total funding secured: £13,166

Woodley Sports Week: May 2015

In partnership with The Bulmershe School, the Town Council put together a week-long event for eight local primary schools, with some events for the town's secondary schools. Events included festivals for dance and multi-skills, Paralympics, swimming galas and the kwik cricket tournament. In total an estimated 2,750 local children took part in these events. This year's sport week will take place from 23rd until 27th May 2016.

Tournaments

The Cecil Trembath kwik cricket boys' tournament winners were Woodley C of E School and the girls' tournament winners were Willow Bank School.

The Sid Hopkins football tournament winners were Willow Bank School for the boys' tournament and Southlake School for the girls' tournament.

The winners of the first Wokingham schools badminton league were Robert Piggott School.

3G pitch project

The committee received updates throughout the year from the Strategy and Resources Committee on the progress of the 3G pitch project. Construction would commence on 7 March 2016.

Cricket

Funding for a new artificial cricket wicket was received from Wokingham Borough Council using Section 106 developers' contributions and the new wicket was installed in June 2015.

Woodley 10km Road Race and Junior 3km Race

These had been annual events in the town for 20 years, but were cancelled in 2015 due to safety concerns about the routes and the possible risk to runners and race marshals. The Town Council and Barnes Fitness had been working to bring the race back to Woodley and the event would be held again on Sunday 8 May 2016.

Parkrun

Parkrun continued to be a popular weekly event on Saturday mornings, with the 5km timed free runs open to all ages and abilities. Junior Parkrun took place weekly on Sunday mornings.

Tennis Courts

Members of the Over 50's Tennis Club attended a committee meeting to protest over the loss of one of the tennis courts due to the work associated with the 3G pitch project. The Leisure Services Manager investigated the availability of other courts within the town and passed this

information to the tennis players. The demand for tennis courts at the leisure centre would be monitored by the Town Council.

Healthy Habits and Healthy Habits Kids

These sessions continued to be well supported. New sessions added this year include yoga and a beginners running class for adults, and Toddler Trampolining for under 5s.

Paddling Pool

Following requests from regular users of this popular and well-used facility, smoking was banned from the paddling pool area.

Buildings

Woodford Park Leisure Centre

The following work was carried out at the leisure centre:

- Ladies and gents changing rooms refurbished.
- Windows replaced in the function room and the tea room.
- Heating boilers and associated pipework replaced and a whole building water softener installed.

The Inn on the Park closed for business on 24 October as reported by the Strategy and Resources Committee. The flat, which was used by the Inn on the Park manager, had been refurbished and a tenant was being sought.

Parks and play areas

Woodford Park

- Tree works included the removal of dead and diseased trees and maintenance work to other trees. Six significant new trees would be planted as part of the 3G pitch project.
- Road planings were used to provide a temporary repair to the surface of the track at the Western Avenue entrance. The ownership of this piece of land had been investigated but remained unknown.
- A ceremony was held to plant a memorial tree in the Rotary Garden to the rear of the Oakwood Centre in memory of Lilly-May Page, who tragically died at Willow Bank School the previous year.
- 4 residents made donations to sponsor memorial seats in the park.

A local resident, Mr David Provins, contacted the Council during the year to suggest that a group of volunteers could be set up to help with the upkeep of some areas of Woodford Park. The Council supported the suggestion and the Deputy Town Clerk and Mr Provins discussed ways of encouraging community involvement in the park. There had been a positive response to the call for volunteers and a meeting of volunteers had been arranged.

Bowling Green

The fir trees around the boundary of the bowling green and the main car park were removed as the roots were causing damage to the path, the green and the irrigation system. The old railings were replaced by a new fence.

Malone Park

Dead and diseased trees were removed and maintenance work carried out to other trees.

Garden competition

The 2015 winner was Mr Reginald Hayward and he was presented with the Horticultural Society Memorial Cup at the Council meeting on 22 September.

Community Services Committee

Councillor Darren Smith, Chairman of the Community Services Committee, said that he had enjoyed the year and was pleased that the committee had been able to award annual grants to local community organisations as this money made a significant difference to the services they were able to provide. He thanked all the committee members for the work they had put in over the year and thanked the Town Clerk and her staff for the support they had given to the committee.

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 and would continue to be given as part of the 2016/17 Budget.

Citizens Awards

Once again this year awards would be presented to citizens who have made a real difference in the community. This year's 6 award winners would receive their awards from the Town Mayor at a reception on Friday 22 April.

Allotments

The allotments continued to be popular with people wanting to grow their own fruit and vegetables. During the year sections of the perimeter fence were repaired by the Maintenance Team to improve site security and road plantings purchased by the Town Council were used by the tenants to repair the roadways around the site. The current systems and processes for allocating and inspecting plots had worked well over the past year and there was currently a short waiting list.

Community Youth Partnership

The committee received reports from this partnership, where representatives from voluntary sector organisations working with young people meet with councillors to discuss youth activities in the town.

The partnership had looked at the possibility of utilising an unused area of land at Loddon Mead, owned by the Town Council, and an area under the A3290, owned by Wokingham Borough Council, to site a project to benefit young people. The viability of the area had been investigated and a consultation with young people was being planned, to ask for suggestions for possible uses of the site.

Just Around the Corner Charity (JAC)

The Council had a service level agreement with JAC to provide outreach youth work in the town and Sam Milligan attended the Community Services Committee meetings to update Members on the work of JAC and he also provided regular reports.

JAC continued to run mentoring sessions in the community and at Rehoboth, their equine centre. Equine sessions were also held at Rehoboth. The young mums' sewing group run by JAC continued to be popular and Inside Out, run from the JAC van in Woodley Town Centre, provided a place for older people to meet.

Woodley Adopt A Street Project (WASP)

Woodley Adopt a Street Project (WASP) continued to be a success with 160 volunteers now signed up. The Town Council held a supply of special green bags and litter pickers that were collected by the waste collection teams.

Woodley Clean-Up Weekend

The borough-wide litter campaign would take place over the weekend of Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 March 2016. This event was organised by WASP with help from the Town Council. WASP were organising a second litter picking event, "Clean for the Queen", which would take place on 5 March and was being held to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday.

Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative (WTCMI)

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

WTCMI, the Town Council and the Borough Council were looking at proposals for the improvement and regeneration of the northern end of the town centre.

Highways

The Town Council continued to be represented at the Wokingham Borough Council major projects co-ordination meetings by Cllr Walker who reported to the committee after each meeting.

The committee sent representatives to attend the Wokingham Borough Council Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme Peer Review and the subsequent Action Planning Day.

Verge parking in Campbell Road

Following a request from residents for help in controlling irregular parking in the vicinity of Southlake School councillors met with residents to investigate the problem, which was subsequently being reviewed by Wokingham Borough Council and the local borough councillors.

Bus shelters

A new bus shelter was installed in Nightingale Road (to serve Livingstone Gardens).

Premises licence under the Licensing Act 2005: Martins, 141 Crockhamwell Road

The Town Council was consulted on this application and responded asking for the sale of alcohol to be restricted to between the hours of 10am and 9pm. The committee sent a representative to speak at the hearing into the application, but a licence was subsequently granted permitting the sale of alcohol between the hours of 6am and 11pm.

Proposal to introduce evening and weekend parking charges in the borough council's car parks

The Town Council objected to this proposal, as the town centre retailers, the Oakwood Centre and Woodley Theatre would all be adversely affected, but suggested that in the Woodley town centre car parks the necessary additional revenue could alternatively be raised by increasing the daytime 1 hour parking charge by 10p to 80p.

Other consultations

The committee responded to the following consultations:

Wokingham Borough Council – Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Draft Options document

Wokingham Borough Council – Renewal of the Statement of Principles, required under the Gambling Act 2005

Royal Mail – Proposed changes to Brecon Post Office, 4 The Parade.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service – Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Wokingham Borough Council also asked for the Town Council's comments on applications for Goods Vehicle Operators' Licences and proposed Prohibition of Waiting Orders for roads in Woodley.

Following the report of the Community Services Committee a resident commented that he was very concerned about the amount irresponsible parking on grass verges in many parts of Woodley, particularly by contractors' vehicles. He had contacted the Town Council and the police about this, but no action had been taken. Councillor Smith replied that the problem of verge parking was a concern for many residents and the Town Council had been asked for assistance in resolving the problem in some areas. Councillor Smith said that incidences of verge parking should continue to be reported to the police and the Borough Council in order for action to be taken. The Town Clerk explained that Wokingham Borough Council was currently undertaking the lengthy process of decriminalising parking offences in Wokingham Borough, as this would give authority to the Borough Council to employ traffic wardens to enforce parking restrictions.

The Chairman thanked the resident for his comments and said that they had been noted.

Plans Committee

Councillor Tom Barker, Chairman of the Plans Committee, presented his report as follows:

The Committee had considered 213 planning applications since March 2015 with the number of applications varying from 7 to 32 a month. Members of the public either attended the Plans Committee meeting or wrote to the Town Council about 52 of the 213 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 Allied Bakeries site – Permission was granted for the construction of 68 dwellings.
- Sandford Farm development – An application was made for the demolition of existing buildings and construction of 21 dwellings on the site of the courtyard offices.
- An application for the upgrade of the existing telecommunications base station at the St. John's Ambulance Centre, Church Road was opposed by local residents and by the Town Council, but planning permission was granted.
- 34 and land to the rear of 36–50 Pitts Lane, Earley – An application for the construction of an elderly care facility in this location was refused planning permission last year and had been taken to appeal. The appeal decision was awaited.

Street names

The Committee suggested [street names](#) on a baking theme to be used for the development at the former Allied Bakeries site. The Committee also requested that the name Lilly-May be used as a street name for this site in memory of a pupil who died at Willow Bank School, but as it was found not to comply with the street naming protocol issued by Royal Mail the name was used for the apartments on this site, which were named Lilly May Court.

The Committee also suggested street names for Phase 3 of the Sandford Farm development and for a new development off Mohawk Way, opposite Catalina Close.

Other items

- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Structure was adopted by Wokingham Borough Council with effect from 6 April 2015.

- Consultation documents were received, and comments returned, on the Wokingham Borough Council draft Local Planning Enforcement Plan and the Shinfield draft Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- Two Committee members attended a CIL training session run by Wokingham Borough Council.
- All Members were invited to attend a training session on planning matters given at the Oakwood Centre by Wokingham Borough Council.
- Since January 2016 the Plans Committee had adopted the practice of viewing plans electronically in its meetings, as Wokingham Borough Council no longer issued paper plans to the Town Council. This meant that paper plans were no longer held at the Town Council offices for members of the public to view.

Finally, Councillor Barker thanked the Committee Officer for the help given to him and the committee and for keeping all the documents in order.

Strategy and Resources Committee

Councillor Richard Dolinski, Deputy Leader of the Council, made the following statement:

"On behalf of the Strategy and Resources Committee I would like to thank the Town Clerk and her fellow officers for their hard work and the efficient manner with which they have carried out their duties in what has been a very busy and challenging year. Also, I personally want to thank my fellow councillors for their continued hard work in committee, in sub committees and in working parties. The Strategy and Resources Committee not only provides the strategic direction for the council but also holds financial accountability.

As in previous years, the Strategy & Resources Committee has concentrated on the areas of responsible budgeting, developing how we work, progressing renewal and of specific projects. The committee and officers have continued to effectively manage financial matters, including the increase in pension contribution, increases in National Insurance costs and other financial pressures. Despite the challenges the council has managed with prudent and responsible financial management to freeze the Town Council Tax, thus maintaining the total reduction of 8% over the past three years.

At the same time we have seen a number of key projects progress and develop including the 3rd Generation Artificial Grass Pitch, and the appointment of our new Catering Partnership. Also, grants to deserving causes have been maintained and investments for the future repayment of the loans to build the Oakwood Centre have exceeded targets."

Councillor Dolinski then gave the detailed report on the activities of the Strategy and Resources Committee, as follows:

Working parties and sub committees

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 had increased in value over the targets set in the investment plan. The committee agreed to change some of its equities investments from tracker funds to actively managed funds in order to reduce a perceived risk of the tracker funds being overly weighted towards oil and mining. The Council was monitoring the impact of this.

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

Catering Partnership Management Panel

The panel regularly reviewed the ongoing arrangements at the Oakwood Centre and recently appointed a new catering partner – Brown Bag – to take over the operation after the withdrawal of Just in the Park. The Town Council was looking forward to working together with Brown Bag to develop and enhance the services at the centre.

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

The sub committee reviewed some posts, creating a new post of Deputy Town Clerk, making the Venues Manager post full time, reorganising the management posts in Leisure Services and regrading a post in the Council offices.

Financial/Licences/legal

- Revised Financial Regulations (including arrangements for BACS payments) were considered by the committee and ratified by Full Council.
- The Council agreed to issue electronic agendas to Members, which had saved postage and printing costs.
- The committee reviewed allotment rents and agreed an increase of 3% on the Woodley resident rate and an increase of 53% on the non-Woodley residents' rate with effect from 1 January 2017. In addition, the discount on retired tenants' charges would be reduced from 40% to 30%.
- The committee agreed to make a charge of 50p for all credit card payments to the Council. Debit cards would not incur an additional charge.
- The committee agreed to make the Oakwood Centre available free of charge for Woodley Business Club's annual Festival of Business.
- The committee also agreed to opt into the Sector Led Body procurement arrangements for an external auditor with effect from 2017/18.

Projects

3rd Generation Artificial Grass Pitch

Planning permission for the 3G pitch was given in March 2015 and the Council received notice that its application to the FA Football Facilities Fund had been successful in May. With the £255,000 the Council had borrowed for the project and the £277,000 grant, a total sum of £532,000 was available. The project plans were developed with the Football Foundation, and Tigerturf was awarded the contract following a tendering process. There had been delays in obtaining final planning permissions but these had now been given and construction was due to start on 7 March.

The project included a 9v9 3rd Generation artificial grass pitch plus more than 50 new parking spaces, the refurbishment of a tennis and netball court, and the resurfacing of the access road and main car park at the centre.

Inn on the Park/Woodford Park Leisure Centre

Following the closure of the Inn on the Park, the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Regeneration Task and Finish Group and the committee would be considering potential plans for the use of the former pub space at the leisure centre later in the year.

The committee took the decision to close the pub in October 2015 after the management company informed the Council that it wished to withdraw from the site and not extend its agreement to manage the pub. This was not an easy decision but the committee considered the diminishing profits and the incompatibility between the pub and the leisure centre's objectives and agreed to take the opportunity to take the first step in the Council's plans to develop the centre and its activities.

Loddon Mead Open Space

The committee gave agreement in principle for the open space to be included in a potential project by young people – to include the area under the A3290 (owned by Wokingham Borough Council). A short video had been produced to invite young people to submit their ideas for the use of this space.

Public toilet in Town Centre

Following some discussions on social media about the planned public toilet in the town centre and the Local Loo scheme the Council agreed to seek residents' views on the project through its annual residents' survey and an online survey – both carried out by HMR, an independent company. The results of both types of survey showed that over 60% of respondents supported there being a new public toilet in the town centre. The Council would be proceeding with this project but there was some way to go in terms of confirming the site (in Crockhamwell car park) and applying for planning permission. Danfo had been selected following a tender process to supply and install the new toilet.

External funding project list

The committee reviewed its list of potential projects at each meeting.

Consultations

The committee responded to consultations on:

- Extending the remit of the Local Government Ombudsman to town and parish councils – Department of Communities and Local Government
- Local Government Pension Scheme - Department of Communities and Local Government

Financial

Internal Audit Plan

- The 2014/15 internal audit report was received by the committee with any items identified either already or in the process of being addressed.
- Internal Auditors, Lightatouch, were appointed for a period of 3 years to 2017/18.
- The report of the current year's internal audit was due to be received at the next meeting of the committee.

External Auditor

Mazars Ltd, the Council's external auditor until 2016/17, gave an 'unqualified' report on the 2014/15 Annual Return and Financial Statements.

Grants – 18 grants totalling £3,925 were awarded during the year to community groups and organisations, including 3 to young athletes.

Budget Monitoring, revised budget 2015/16 and 2016/17 budget and charges

Each meeting received a monitoring report on its budget (as did the other committees).

The 2016/17 Budget and precept charge was agreed at the Council meeting on 9 February. The Band D charge would remain at £105.65 a year – increases in National Insurance costs and other financial pressures meant that the Council had not been able to reduce the precept charge to households.

Councillor Dolinski concluded by reporting that the Council had agreed to rename the theatre in the Oakwood Centre as 'The Alan Cornish Theatre' in memory of Alan, a local resident and businessman who was part of the growth of amateur dramatics in the town and a founder member of Starmaker, a children's theatre company. The renaming ceremony would take place at the Mayor's Civic Reception in April.

5. **CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence had been received.

6. **GENERAL PARISH AFFAIRS**

A resident suggested that it would be a good idea to install basketball nets in areas where young people gather as he thought basketball was an activity that would be popular with young people and would keep them occupied. Councillor Barker responded that the Council would make a note of this suggestion and would discuss it at a future meeting.

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

The meeting closed at 9:00 pm
