

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Oakwood Centre on
Tuesday 28 September 2021 at 8 pm**

Present: *Councillors J. Sartorel (Chairman); J. Anderson; D. Bragg;
A. Chadwick, J. Cheng; M. Doyle; M. Forrer; K. Gilder; A. Heap;
R. Horskins; C. Jewell; V. Lewis; M. Nagra; B. Rowland;
R. Skegg; D. Smith; B. Soane; A. Swaddle; P. Wicks*

Officers present: *K. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk; M. Filmore, Committee Officer*

Also present: *3 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**.*

34. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors N. Al-Sanjari, K. Baker, S. Brindley, M. Green and S. Rahmouni.

35. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

36. **ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillor Vin Lewis has been duly elected to the Town Council and has signed the declaration of acceptance of office as required by law.

37. **COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL**

37.1 **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note that Councillors Al-Sanjari, Nagra and Doyle have formed a Labour and Independent Group.

37.2 **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the current composition of the Council is as follows:
17 Conservative Members, 5 Liberal Democrat Members, 3 Labour and Independent Members.

37.3 **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the new composition of the Council reduces the Liberal Democrat allocation on the Planning & Community Committee from 3 to 2 places.

37.4 It was proposed by Councillor Jewell, seconded by Councillor Bragg, and:

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To reduce the number of places on the Planning & Community Committee from 12 to 9, with the proportional split being:
 - Conservative – 6 places (reduced from 8)
 - Liberal Democrat – 2 places (reduced from 3)
 - Labour and Independent – 1 place

Voting: For: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

Councillor Bragg confirmed that the two Conservative Members to withdraw from the Committee would be Councillors Baker and Gilder.

Councillor Jewell confirmed that the Liberal Democrat Member to withdraw from the Committee would be Councillor Heap, although Councillor Heap would be keen to continue attending meetings. The Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Wicks, confirmed he would be happy for Councillor Heap to attend and contribute to discussions, albeit he would not be able to vote on any formal decisions.

38. **MEMBERSHIP OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

a) Leisure Services

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillors Horskins and Lewis have been appointed to the Leisure Services Committee in place of Councillors Baker and Soane.

b) Planning & Community Committee

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillor Soane has been appointed to the Planning & Community Committee to fill the vacant Conservative place on the Committee.

39. **VICE CHAIRMAN OF LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Standing Order 4(d) requires that members of the Leisure Services Committee appoint the Vice Chairmen of the standing committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Bragg, seconded by Councillor Swaddle, and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To appoint Councillor Smith Vice Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee for the rest of the municipal year.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2

40. **MEMBERSHIP OF THE 3G PITCH STEERING GROUP**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillor Lewis has been appointed to the 3G Pitch Steering Group in place of Councillor Baker.

41. **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2021**

The Town Mayor presented the minutes of the Council meeting held on 22 June 2021.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 22 June 2021 and that they be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

Voting: For: 17 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1

42. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

42.1 **Minutes of the Extraordinary Strategy and Resources Committee: 3 August 2021**

Councillor Chadwick presented the minutes of the Extraordinary Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 3 August 2021.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Extraordinary Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 3 August 2021.

Voting: For: 11 Against: 0 Abstentions: 6

42.2 Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee: 31 August 2021

Councillor Bragg presented the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 31 August 2021.

The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that neither an indicative cost for the replacement of electrical wiring, nor for the renewal or replacement of gym equipment at Woodford Park Leisure Centre had been received yet. Once received, a decision may need to be taken prior to the next scheduled Leisure Services Committee meeting.

In response to a query about the progress of the Town Centre Garden, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed there was currently a capacity issue within the Grounds team but that a significant update should be available soon.

Members noted a concern with the lack of progress regarding an updated Community Youth Partnership (CYP) strategy. The Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee, Councillor Bragg, expressed the Committee's sincere thanks to Just Around the Corner (JAC) for continuing to provide a service to residents of Woodley without funding from the Town Council. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that a further meeting of the wider CYP group would take place shortly to review an updated draft strategy, with the final document due to be considered by the Leisure Services Committee, the Strategy and Resources Committee, and Full Council in the next round of meetings taking place in November and December 2021.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 31 August 2021.

Voting: For: 13 Against: 0 Abstentions: 4

42.3 Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee: 14 September 2021

Councillor Chadwick presented the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 14 September 2021.

Councillor Jewell raised a point of accuracy regarding minute 13, which stated:

"It was also noted that there was no community engagement included in the action plan"

Councillor Jewell highlighted that an action plan presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee on 15 September 2020 included details of community engagement. The Committee Officer commented that this minute recorded comments made in relation to an Action Plan update document provided with the agenda which did not mention of community engagement. It was agreed that the accuracy of this minute would be considered at the next meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Councillor Nagra requested for it to be minuted that at the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee he had advised everyone that the reason he chose to sit with members of the public was due to the behaviour of the Chairman at previous meetings.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 14 September 2021.

Voting: For: 11 Against: 0 Abstentions: 6

At this point Councillor Rowland apologised to all Members of the Council and to the public of Woodley for the language and behaviour of a Member who had attended the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting. She stated that it was not behaviour expected of an elected Member and that she distanced herself from the Member, who was not a member of the Committee, and their behaviour.

43. **AUDIT 2020/21**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented the audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2020/21.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the external auditor's opinion on the audit of the 2020/21 Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2

- ◆ To adopt the audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2020/21.

Voting: For: 17 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

- ◆ 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 10 September 2021.

44. **LEADER'S STATEMENT**

No Leader's statement was provided at the meeting.

45. **CONTINUATION OF BRIEFING NOTES AND VIRTUAL BRIEFING MEETING**

Members discussed whether the Council should continue to be provided with briefing notes and run virtual briefing meetings in lieu of formal, in-person meetings where the relevant standing committee, sub committee or working party were not required to make any formal decision.

It was noted that virtual meetings had many benefits, including environmental benefits and convenience. However virtual briefing meetings had not been open to the public and this was noted as a significant concern. It was also noted that some Members had health concerns which made attending in person a risk.

Following a query the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that Officers were reviewing potential technological solutions which may enable the Council to hold hybrid meetings. However, any Member not physically present would not be permitted to vote so this would need to be considered.

The Deputy Town Clerk also confirmed that the 6 month attendance rule would still need to be adhered to. Any decision to continue holding virtual briefing meetings may reduce the opportunity for Members to meet the attendance requirement.

Following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To cease providing briefing notes and holding virtual briefing meetings, and return to holding in-person meetings for all meetings.

Voting: For: 10 Against: 6 Abstentions: 2

46. **EARLEY STATION BRIDGE**

Members discussed the summary notes, provided by Councillor Wicks, following the meeting held by Wokingham Borough Council on 6 September 2021, and highlighted a number of concerns regarding the replacement of the bridge.

It was noted that the bridge is a significant thoroughfare for residents of Woodley; not only for those accessing Earley Station but also those who access bus routes to Reading. Alternative crossing points, such as the nearby subway, were deemed to have safety concerns. There were also concerns about the need for the bridge to provide DDA compliant access to Earley Station for disabled residents.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the summary notes, provided by Councillor Wicks, following a meeting held by Wokingham Borough Council on 6 September 2021 regarding the replacement of the existing bridge from Kingfisher Drive, Woodley, to Earley Station.
- ◆ To include this matter as an item on the agenda for the next Planning and Community Committee meeting, due to be held on 5 October 2021.

47. **NOTICE OF MOTION (MOTION NO. 68)**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Jewell and seconded by Councillor Heap:

"The Town Council is requested to petition Wokingham Borough Council for further protection of Bulmershe Park as a local Town Green (Reference: The Commons Act 2006 and voluntary dedication of land as a town or village green, Defra March 2012). Significant adjoining unsympathetic development over the years has resulted in visual intrusion and damaged landscape adjoining Bulmershe Field. In the context of declared climate emergency and the run up to COP26, a programme of enhancement based upon a considered landscape strategy is now essential.

Woodley Town Council welcomed the re-designation of Bulmershe Field and Bulmershe Park as Local Green Space in the draft Borough Local Plan Update. The Field forms part of the wider SULV identified in the existing and emerging Local Plans for the area, where the landscape is not only to be protected from the impact of harmful development within and adjoining the land; but it is the Borough Council's intention to enhance *'this important area of informal open, green space, alongside recreational opportunities and valuable habitats.'* (Draft Plan para 10.57)

We are now seeking further protection through a strategy to adopt Bulmershe Park as a community asset in the form of a Town Green.

Our aim is to ensure the long-term protection of the Park; to maintain and improve it as a community asset; to create a wildlife corridor (that encompasses an

established bluebell wood, a community orchard and extends into Highwood); to introduce a policy for appropriate indigenous tree planting (as part of the Borough's plan to plant 250,00 trees) and proper long-term maintenance.

As owners of the land, WBC has the powers under section 15 (8) of the Commons Act 2006 to **voluntarily** dedicate the land as a Town Green by applying to have it included in the register of town or village greens. As such the area will continue to be used for recreational purposes (dog walking, picnicking, kite flying, informal fitness, playing games) and would have the statutory protection against damage, encroachment or inclosure*.

Application is by Form CA9: [FORM CA9: Application for the registration of a town or village green \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

In taking this forward, 'Friends of Bulmershe Open Space' would be happy to work with the Borough and Town Councils and other interested organisations to produce an 'Open Space Strategy and Management Plan' and to ensure the implementation of the Borough's landscape enhancement policy TB22.

* Town and village greens (T&VG) are protected by section 12 of the [Inclosure Act 1857](#) and section 29 of the [Commons Act 1876](#). Section 12 makes it a criminal offence to do anything which injures a green or interrupts its use as a place for exercise and recreation. Section 29 also makes it an offence to permanently encroach upon or enclose a green, or to build upon or disturb the soil of a green otherwise than with a view to its better enjoyment.

It is not possible to apply for consent under section 38 of the [Commons Act 2006](#) to carry out works on a T&VG unless it is subject to a scheme of management under the [Metropolitan Commons Act 1866](#) or [Commons Act 1899](#), or to a Provisional Order Confirmation under the [Commons Act 1876](#). Even where there is such a scheme or Act consent under section 38 does not authorise works which constitute an offence under sections 12 or 29."

Councillors Jewell, Smith, Rowland, Skegg and Heap spoke in favour of the motion. Councillors Wicks, Swaddle and Bragg spoke against the motion.

Following a vote, it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the motion be carried.

Voting: For: 10 Against: 5 Abstentions: 2

Councillor Swaddle left the meeting.

48. **NOTICE OF MOTION (MOTION NO. 69)**

48.1 **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To suspend Standing Orders 12 a) and 12 b) to allow consideration of this motion at this meeting despite it not being received by 12 midnight on the twelfth day before the day of the meeting.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

48.2 The following motion was proposed by Councillor Bragg and seconded by Councillor Chadwick:

“Woodley Town Council notes the Public Notice in the Wokingham Paper published on Thursday 9th September page 31 relating to car park charges. This Traffic Regulation Order or TRO has item 2.e which says:

- e. in the car parks listed in Schedule 1 to this Notice, extend the existing daily:*
 - i. charging hours to 'at all times';*
 - ii. opening hours to Mondays-Sundays (including bank holidays)*

and covers all four Woodley Car Parks.

Such a Public Notice is a legal requirement for any changes in Car Park charges and provides a legal obligation to consult residents on the proposals.

This Council notes that whilst there is currently no charges beyond 6pm and none at all on Sundays this section of the TRO allows such an introduction in the future without any consultation as a TRO will not be needed anymore.

The Executive Member in charge of Highways has publicly confirmed that such an action is required in order to take action on anti-social behaviour in these car parks which is in direct contradiction with reasons for installing CCTV in the car parks. It has been publicly stated that the CCTV will, as one of their functions, monitor for anti-social behaviour and make such recordings available to the police as evidence for any police action. If CCTV can already help the police to take action on anti-social behaviour then why is there any need for item 2.e.

Woodley Town Council strongly objects to this part of the proposal for the following reasons:

- It is not needed for action to be taken on anti-social behaviour as the CCTV already provides that facility
- It removes the requirement to publicise any potential change to car park charges ahead of implementation
- It removes the legal need for any residents consultation in the future which is anti-democratic

If agreed then we will ask the Deputy Town Clerk to take the following actions:

- Submit the objections listed above to Traffic Management Team, Place & Growth, PO Box 153, Shute End, Berkshire. RG40 1WL by the 7th October
- Arrange for a corresponding press release to be created and issued to reflect our objection
- Arrange for suitable posts reflecting our objections to be posted on the four Woodley Facebook groups

I urge you to support this motion.”

Councillors Bragg, Gilder, Skegg, Doyle, and Smith spoke in favour of the motion.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Jewell and seconded by Councillor Nagra:

“Woodley Town Council notes the Public Notice in the Wokingham Paper published on Thursday 9th September page 31 relating to car park charges. This Traffic Regulation Order or TRO has item 2.e which says:

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- Arrange for a corresponding press release to be created and agreed by all Group leaders and issued to reflect our objection
- Arrange for suitable posts as agreed by all Group leaders reflecting our objections to be posted on the four Woodley Facebook groups
- Encourage residents to make their objections known to the Traffic Management Team.

I urge you to support this motion.”

Following a vote, it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the amendment be agreed.

Voting: For: 17 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

48.3 A vote was then taken on the substantive motion.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the substantive motion, as follows, be agreed:

“Woodley Town Council notes the Public Notice in the Wokingham Paper published on Thursday 9th September page 31 relating to car park charges. This Traffic Regulation Order or TRO has item 2.e which says:

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- Arrange for suitable posts as agreed by all Group leaders reflecting our objections to be posted on the four Woodley Facebook groups
- Encourage residents to make their objections known to the Traffic Management Team.

I urge you to support this motion.”

Voting: For: 17 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

49. **OUTSIDE BODIES**

49.1 **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note that both the Sandford Farm (Loddon Park) Liaison Group, and the Woodley and North Earley Community Forum had disbanded.

- 49.2 **RESOLVED:**
◆ To note that Councillor Swaddle has stepped down as the Town Council representative to Readibus.

49.3 It was proposed by Councillor Jewell, seconded by Councillor Rowland, and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To appoint Councillor Heap as the Town Council representative to Readibus for the rest of the municipal year.

Voting: For: 17 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

49.4 It was proposed by Councillor Bragg, seconded by Councillor Wicks, and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To appoint Councillor Gilder as the Town Council representative to the Poor's Land Charity, to serve until 2022.

Voting: For: 12 Against: 0 Abstentions: 4

49.5 It was proposed by Councillor Bragg, seconded by Councillor Wicks, and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To appoint Councillor Gilder as the Town Council representative to the Woodley Bowling Club Management Committee for the rest of the municipal year.

Voting: For: 12 Against: 0 Abstentions: 4

49.6 Members noted the following written reports, which had been included with the agenda:

- Citizen's Advice Bureau report by Councillor Bragg
- Poor's Land Charity report by Councillor Cheng
- Robert Palmer Almshouses report by Councillor Rahmouni

50. **TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

The Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor provided Members with details of the events they had attended since the last Full Council meeting

51. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The following future agenda items were suggested:

- Full review of the Standing Orders
- Review of the Financial Regulations

Meeting closed at 9:59 pm

TOWN FORUM

28 September 2021

Three members of the public attended the Town Forum.

Mr Millard, a local resident, thanked the Council for allowing him to speak. He explained that he had been coming to meetings since 2014, and this was the first time he had spoken. Mr Millard stated, having witnessed meetings, he was very frustrated by the things he sees which need rectifying and are not.

Mr Millard asked for the Council to explain why a total of £5,670 had been spent on professional fees regarding a tender relating to Youth Provision. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Council had resolved to engage a specialist consultant to provide this service as there were no expertise in this area in house. He stated the level of input required demanded professional input.

Mr Millard exclaimed that the Council needed to get its act together and sort it out. Councillor Horskins asked whether a full written answer could be provided to Mr Millard from the Deputy Town Clerk to explain the spend on these fees in more detail, to which the Chairman agreed.

Councillor Nagra enquired as to why the Herald, the Woodley Town Council newsletter, is never sent to a Committee prior to publishing. The Chairman advised that Councillor Nagra should write to ask for this item to be added on the appropriate future agendas.