

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Oakwood Centre on
Tuesday 7 December 2021 at 8 pm**

Present: *Councillors J. Sartorel (Chairman); N. Al-Sanjari; J. Anderson; K. Baker; D. Bragg; A. Chadwick, J. Cheng; M. Doyle; M. Forrer; A. Heap; C. Jewell; V. Lewis; M. Nagra; S. Rahmouni; R. Skegg; D. Smith; B. Soane; A. Swaddle; P. Wicks*

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

Also present: *Robin Cops, Vice-Chair of Arts4Wokingham
1 member/s of the public*

Before the start of the meeting:

- *Robin Cops, Vice-Chair of Arts4Wokingham, gave a presentation to Members about the charity.*
- *A maximum of 30 minutes was set aside before the start of the meeting 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.*

52. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors S. Brindley, M. Green, K. Gilder, R. Horskins and B. Rowland.

53. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

54. **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2021**

The Town Mayor presented the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 September 2021.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 September 2021 and that they be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 3

55. **MEMBERSHIP OF STANDING COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

a) Strategy & Resources Committee

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillor Lewis has been appointed to the Strategy & Resources Committee in place of Councillor Gilder.

b) Risk Management Working Party

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillor Horskins has been appointed to the Risk Management Working Party to fill the vacant Conservative place on the Working Party.

c) Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Working Party

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillor Bragg has been appointed to the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Working Party to fill the vacant Conservative place on the Working Party.

d) 3G Pitch Steering Group

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillor Bragg has been appointed to the 3G Pitch Steering Group to fill the vacant Conservative place on the group.

e) Cycling in Woodley Working Party

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillor Horskins has been appointed to the Cycling in Woodley Working Party in place of Councillor Swaddle.

56. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

56.1 **Minutes of the Planning & Community Committee: 5 October 2021**

Councillor Wicks presented the minutes of the Planning & Community Committee meeting held on 5 October 2021.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning & Community Committee meeting held on 5 October 2021.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 3

56.2 **Minutes of the Extraordinary Leisure Services Committee: 7 October 2021**

Councillor Bragg presented the minutes of the Extraordinary Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 7 October 2021.

Following a query, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that a delivery of soil was due shortly, after which the Town Centre Walled Garden planting could commence. He also confirmed that there was no requirement to add breaks into the wall in order to undertake maintenance of the garden, and that any change to the wall would have to be undertaken by Wokingham Borough Council as they own the wall.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Extraordinary Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 7 October 2021.

Voting: For: 12 Against: 0 Abstentions: 6

56.3 Minutes of the Planning & Community Committee: 2 November 2021

Councillor Wicks presented the minutes of the Planning & Community Committee meeting held on 2 November 2021.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning & Community Committee meeting held on 2 November 2021.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 3

56.4 Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee: 16 November 2021

Councillor Bragg presented the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 16 November 2021.

After requesting that his question and the answer be recorded in the minutes, citing Standing Order 16 d), Councillor Doyle asked Councillor Bragg to clarify a comment made during the meeting held on the 16 November regarding the Woodley Town Council Youth Strategy (Minute 23). Councillor Bragg had noted that the Berkshire Youth Survey covered a wide variety of children across Berkshire and may not necessarily reflect the demographic of Woodley. Councillor Doyle asked Councillor Bragg to explain how the demographic of the Berkshire Youth Survey differed to the demographic of Woodley.

Councillor Bragg stated that he didn't say it differs but that we don't know, stating that the Berkshire Youth Survey covered a wider area, including some very rural areas. Councillor Doyle asked Councillor Bragg to explain how this disqualifies the Berkshire Youth Survey as irrelevant, and Councillor Bragg confirmed that it doesn't.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 16 November 2021.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 2 Abstentions: 0

56.5 Minutes of the Strategy & Resources Committee: 23 November 2021

Councillor Baker presented the minutes of the Strategy & Resources Committee meeting held on 23 November 2021.

In response to a query regarding the Community Grant provisionally awarded to Assisting Berkshire Children to Read (Minute 22), Councillor Baker confirmed that a response had been received from the Charity which had clarified that, whilst a number of volunteers live in Woodley, the service does not currently operate in Woodley. Following an email to Members of the Strategy and Resources Committee, it had been decided that the grant would not be awarded.

In response to a query, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that quarterly dates for meetings of the Climate Emergency Working Party had yet to be set for 2022.

Councillor Baker set out the recommendation recorded in Minute 20 regarding the sale of the Council's existing investment portfolio. Councillor Baker confirmed that, if approved, the loans would still be repaid at the end of their term in 2025 as it would not be financially beneficial for the Council to pay the loans back early.

Following a query the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that, should the Council decide to sell the existing portfolio but continue investing, any future investment would need to be managed under a new strategy as the scope of the investment, in terms of value and target, would differ to the existing strategy.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To sell the investment portfolio as soon as confirmation is received that the value has exceeded £2m, and that the funds be placed in cash, in an appropriate rated bank.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2

- ◆ To continue investing under a new strategy.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 1 Abstentions: 2

Councillor Baker set out the recommendation recorded in Minute 24 regarding the Council's proposed schedule of meetings for the 2022/23 municipal year.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the schedule of meetings for the 2022/23 municipal year, as attached at **Appendix A**.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 3

Councillor Baker set out the recommendation recorded in Minute 27 regarding the draft Woodley Town Council Youth Strategy.

A concern was highlighted with the lack of detail regarding the objectives and measures against which to measure success, and that as a public authority we have to justify the expense. A comment was also made that, following a recommendation by Councillor Doyle earlier in the year to run a Youth Café using a vacant room at Woodford Park Leisure Centre, estimated costs and revenues had not been calculated and provided to Members.

In response, Councillor Baker stated that we don't currently know what potential suppliers could provide. The Youth Strategy is a high level document. The tender document will have more precise detail, and Councillors will have the opportunity to comment and review this before it is approved. Councillor Baker stated that costing out the potential running of a Youth Café prejudices what we want when the Strategy does not specify exactly what will be provided.

A Member highlighted that they had been advised by experts on youth provision that the recommendations were an abject mistake, and that outreach work without place was a mistake. Councillor Baker responded to state that the Youth Strategy had been recommended by three separate committees; the Community Youth Partnership, Leisure Services, and Strategy and Resources. He also highlighted that the Community Youth Partnership membership was also weighted against Councillors, and that the Strategy was unanimously approved by them.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To adopt the draft Strategy for Youth Services 2022-2027.

Voting: For: 12 Against: 3 Abstentions: 3

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Strategy & Resources Committee meeting held on 23 November 2021.

Voting: For: 12 Against: 0 Abstentions: 6

56.6 **Minutes of the Planning & Community Committee: 30 November 2021**

Councillor Wicks presented the minutes of the Planning & Community Committee meeting held on 30 November 2021.

In relation to the current proposals to replace the Earley Station Footbridge, Members noted that Members of the Planning and Community Committee were intending to attend a site visit to view the proposed options, but that a date had not yet been agreed with Wokingham Borough Council for this.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning & Community Committee meeting held on 30 November 2021.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 3

57. **STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS WORKING PARTY MEMBERSHIP**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillor Heap has been appointed to the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Working Party in place of Councillor Rowland.

58. **LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Baker, advised members that there had been complaints that the Council had not arranged an event at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. Councillor Baker noted that, as has happened for the past 40 years, Councillors had attended an event on Remembrance Sunday at St John's Church. Some of those who had complained were unaware of this service, however it was also noted that some members of the public may not wish to attend a service in a church.

Members noted that in the past the Council had provided audio equipment at the Memorial for those who had wanted to meet there on Remembrance Sunday, however the member of the public who had organised this passed away two years ago and this task had not been taken on.

Councillor Baker informed Members that a member of the public had now set up a residents committee with a view to organising a remembrance event at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. Councillor Baker would be meeting up with the residents along with the Deputy Town Clerk to help set this up.

Councillor Baker advised Members that, in relation to the two motions due for consideration later in the agenda, the Conservative group would be supporting the motions.

Councillor Baker informed Members that there had been a successful first meeting of the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Working Party to review a new draft set of Standing Orders. There had been a lot of good comments and suggestions, and Councillor Baker thanked those who had attended. He advised that all Councillors will have the opportunity to comment on the Standing Orders, and that the aim is to have these approved and in place for the new 2022/23 municipal year.

Councillor Baker noted that it was very sad that the Town Clerk was still on long term sickness absence.

Councillor Baker finished by wishing everyone a happy new year and a merry Christmas.

59. **WOODLEY MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND CHARITY**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that the Annual Return of the Woodley Memorial Recreation Ground Charity was submitted on 30 November 2021.

60. **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL TOWN & PARISH CHARTER**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented the updated Wokingham Borough Council Town and Parish Charter.

Members noted that the document contained positive words and aspirations with regards to a framework for improved joint working, but there was less information on what exactly will happen. It was highlighted that future changes at Wokingham Borough Council, for example bringing Public Protection back in house, would likely effect the working relationship with Towns and Parishes, meaning this charter would be important.

Whilst a number of members felt there was no harm in signing up to the Charter, Councillor Baker proposed that Members should have more time to review the document and make a decision. Councillor Jewell seconded the proposal and, following a vote, it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ Not to sign up to the Wokingham Borough Council Town and Parish Charter at this time, and for the Charter to be brought back to a future Full Council meeting for consideration.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

61. **MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE DATA PUBLICATION**

Members considered the matter of publicising attendance data.

Members noted that the data should not include any previous Councillors, for example those who had died, and requested that it reflect those absent from meetings as having either sent their apologies or not.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To publicise Members' attendance data online on the Town Council website, and for this to be updated following each meeting.

Voting: For: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

62. **HYBRID MEETING EQUIPMENT**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. FC 2/21.

Members noted that legislation does not currently permit meetings from being fully virtual. Temporary legislation which permitted to holding of Council meetings virtually due to the Coronavirus pandemic lapsed in May 2021.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the benefit of approving the holding of hybrid meetings would be that the Council would have the ability to broadcast meetings as they take place. This would provide the opportunity for the public to view meetings online, aiding transparency, as well as allowing people to participate should they be unable to attend. However the Deputy Town Clerk highlighted that, under current legislation, anybody attending virtually would not be able to vote on decisions, nor would their attendance count towards the official six month attendance requirement. There would also need to be an in-person quorum and for the Chair to physically attend for the meeting to take place. Members noted that this legislation may change in future.

The Deputy Town Clerk also advised that, if approved, the Council would need to formulate an agreed process regarding how meetings are recorded and broadcast. This information could be included in the new Standing Orders. A policy regarding the filming and recording of individuals participating in the meeting, including members of the public, would also need to be considered.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that only one quote for the provision of this equipment had been received so far, and the £7,500 funds requested would be at the upper end of the amount required. Further quotes would be sought if approved.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the contents of Report No. FC 2/21
- ◆ To approve the holding of hybrid Council and Committee meetings going forwards.
- ◆ To approve the allocation of £7,500 from the General Reserves or available CIL funding to purchase appropriate audio-visual equipment to enable hybrid meetings.

Voting: For: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

63. **PERSONNEL MATTER**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. FC 3/21.

It was proposed by Councillor Baker, seconded by Councillor Smith, and following a vote:

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the contents of Report No. FC 3/21
- ◆ To appoint a panel of 4 Members in line with the Standing Orders proportionality rules to investigate the personnel matter as set out the report

Voting: For: 13 Against: 4 Abstentions: 1

- ◆ To note that Councillors Anderson, Brindley, Rowland and Soane have been appointed to the panel.

64. It was proposed by the Chairman and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That as the business was unlikely to be completed by 10pm, the meeting continue until 10:30pm in order to complete the business set out in the agenda.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

65. Councillor Baker highlighted that there were two confidential items at the end of the agenda that had to be discussed and could not afford to wait for a future meeting.

Under Standing Order 13 a) v), Councillor Baker proposed that the order of business set out in the agenda be altered to move onto the confidential items.

Councillor Doyle objected to this proposal, stating it was a deliberate attempt to stop him from presenting his motion.

Councillor Baker proposed, seconded by Councillor Swaddle, and following a vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the order of business be altered in line with Standing Order 13 a) v), for reasons of urgency, to bring forward agenda items 19 and 20 for immediate discussion.

Voting: For: 12 Against: 3 Abstentions: 3

66. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted in relation to a contractual matter and a personnel matter, it was advisable in the public interest that the public and press were temporarily excluded and asked to withdraw for the following agenda items.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 3 Abstentions: 0

At this point the member of the public attending the meeting left.

67. **WOODFORD PARK DESTINATION PLAY AREA**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. FC 4/21.

Members noted an email from a concerned resident regarding the chimney vent to the East of the proposed play area and the potential for fumes and sawdust. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the chimney had been next to the existing playground for many years and there had never been any concerns expressed, but that he was happy to look into any issues and would happily speak to the resident.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the contents of Report No. FC 4/21.
- ◆ To approve the appointment of the contractor, the play area design and footprint, and the allocation of £67,117 from General Reserves or available CIL funds to deliver the project set out in the report.

Voting: For: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

68. **DELEGATED POWERS IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PROPER OFFICER**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. FC 5/21.

Due to the nature of the report, the Deputy Town Clerk temporarily withdrew from the meeting at this point and took no part in any further discussion.

Members agreed that any approved changes would need to be reflected in the Deputy Town Clerk's job description.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the contents of Report No. FC 5/21.
- ◆ To amend the Financial Regulations to specifically state that the Deputy Town Clerk will act as the Proper Officer in relation to financial duties in the absence of the Town Clerk.
- ◆ To authorise the Deputy Town Clerk to deal with administrative matters and give instructions to Rathbones on behalf of the Council, in respect of the Council's investment portfolio.
- ◆ To remunerate the Deputy Town Clerk for the additional responsibilities being placed on them.

Voting: For: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

[Committee Officer Note: As the exact level of remuneration was not agreed as part of the recommendation, this matter will be referred to the Personnel Sub Committee]

At this point the Deputy Town Clerk returned to the meeting.

69. **NOTICE OF MOTION (MOTION NO. 70)**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Doyle and seconded by Councillor Nagra:

"In August 2014 government altered its rules concerning the recording of public meetings of Town and Parish Councils. These changes extended the rules that already applied to primary councils to Town and Parish councils in that the public or press were free to record and broadcast the proceedings as they took place.

Standing Order 1. f. presently states "Photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is not permitted without the Council's prior (written) consent".

This directly contradicts the rules established in August 2014 which do not require any prior permission.

The Labour and Independent Group resolve that:

The Standing Order 1. f. is corrected to meet the rules applying to the recording of proceedings as laid down in the 'Open and Accountable Local Government 2014 Guide'.

Councillors Doyle and Nagra spoke in favour of the motion.

Following a vote, it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the motion be carried.

Voting: For: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

70. **NOTICE OF MOTION (MOTION NO. 71)**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Doyle and seconded by Councillor Nagra:

"The Labour and Independent Group resolve that:

All future public meetings of the council are recorded by the council using either electronic audio or filming equipment. These recordings will be available to all councillors and the public on request. This information will be posted on the council website alongside the written minutes.

Two versions of the recorded meetings will be retained, one available to councillors and one available to the public. The difference will be that elements deemed confidential will be edited from the public version.

The rules and guidance that apply to recording and broadcasting by the public or press will apply to the recording made and provided by the council."

Councillors Doyle and Nagra spoke in favour of the motion.

Following a vote, it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the motion be carried.

Voting: For: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

71. **OUTSIDE BODIES**

71.1 **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note that Councillor Nagra has stepped down as the Town Council representative to the Wokingham Borough / Parish Working Group.

71.2 It was proposed by Councillor Heap, seconded by Councillor Baker, and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To appoint Councillor Jewell as the Town Council representative to the Wokingham Borough / Parish Working Group for the rest of the municipal year.

Voting: For: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

72. Councillor Jewell proposed, seconded by Councillor Baker, and it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That Members read and note both the Outside Body reports and the Town Mayor's engagement list, as provided in the agenda, in their own time.

Voting: For: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

73. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no suggestions for future agenda items.

Meeting closed at 10:29 pm

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS - 2022/23

All Council and Committee meetings are held on Tuesdays. Planning Committee meetings start at 7:45pm. All other Council and Committee meetings start at 8:00pm (unless otherwise notified). Members of the public are welcome to attend all meetings.

PLANNING & COMMUNITY	LEISURE SERVICES	STRATEGY & RESOURCES	FULL COUNCIL
<u>2022</u> 17 May 14 June	<u>2022</u> 31 May (SH)	<u>2022</u> 7 June	<u>2022</u> Annual Meeting: 10 May 21 June
12 July 9 August (SH) 6 September	30 August (SH)	13 September	27 September
4 October 1 November 29 November	15 November	22 November	6 December
<u>2023</u> 3 January (SH) 31 January	<u>2023</u> 17 January	<u>2023</u> 24 January	<u>2023</u> 7 February
28 February 28 March 25 April	11 April (SH)	18 April	Town Electors: 21 March Annual Meeting: 16 May

(SH = School Holidays)

SCHOOL TERM DATES

2022 Monday 25 April to Wednesday 20 July
Friday 2 September to Tuesday 20 December
Half Term: 30 May - 3 June
Half Term: 24 October - 28 October
Good Friday: 15 April 2022

2023 Wednesday 4 January to Friday 31 March
Monday 17 April to Friday 21 July
Half Term: 13 - 17 February
Half Term: 29 May - 2 June
Good Friday: 7 April 2023
Elections: 4 May 2023