

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Oakwood Centre on
Tuesday 4 February 2020 at 8 pm**

Present: Councillors K. Gilder (Chairman); N. Al-Sanjari; J. Anderson; K. Baker; D. Bragg; S. Brindley; A. Chadwick; J. Cheng; M. Doyle; M. Forrer; A. Heap; C. Jewell; J. MacNaught; T. McCann; D. Mills; M. Nagra; S. Rahmouni; B. Rowland; J. Sartorel; R. Skegg; B. Soane; A. Swaddle

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

Also present: Matthew Barber, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley
1 member of the press
2 members of the public

Before the start of the meeting:

- Matthew Barber, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley spoke about his role and answered questions from Councillors, as reported in **Appendix A**.
- A maximum of 30 minutes was set aside for members of the public to pose questions to the Council in the Town Forum. As there were no members of the public wishing to address the Council the Town Forum did not take place.

Before opening the meeting, the Town Mayor asked for a minute's silence in memory of Colin Lott, a local resident who had been a leading member of the Woodley War Memorial Committee, which raised funds for the war memorial installed in 2014 on the Memorial Ground.

63. It was noted that the member of the press present was recording proceedings without having first obtained the Council's written consent, as required by Standing Order 1f. It was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To suspend Standing Order 1f for this meeting to allow the member of the press to record the meeting without having first obtained the written permission of the Council

64. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Apologies were received from Councillors M. Green and P. Wicks.

65. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

66. **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2019**
The Town Mayor presented the minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 December 2019.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 December 2019 and that they be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

67. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

67.1 **Minutes of the Planning and Community Committee: 7 January 2020**

Councillor Cheng presented the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 7 January 2020.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 7 January 2020.

67.2 **Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee: 14 January 2020**

Councillor Bragg presented the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 14 January 2020.

Minute No. 51: Future agenda items

It was noted that a typographical error had been made and that the Council's aim was to become carbon neutral by 2030, and not 2010. The minutes would be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 14 January 2020.

67.3 **Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee: 21 January 2020**

Councillor Baker presented the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 21 January 2020.

Minute No. 66: Risk Management Working Party

Councillor Baker presented the Risk Register to Council. In reply to a question, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that First Aid training had been undertaken by staff in 2019 and the Risk Register would be amended to show this.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To adopt the Risk Management Strategy 2020/21.
- ◆ To receive the Risk Register.

Minute No. 68: Charges 2020/21

a) Oakwood Centre charges

It was suggested that the Council allow free use of rooms in the Oakwood Centre for youth organisations based in Woodley, if the rooms had not been booked by paying clients. Councillor Baker suggested that this could be reviewed by the Community Youth Partnership and their findings reported back to the Leisure Services and Strategy and Resources Committees.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the 2020/21 charges at the Oakwood Centre, as set out in the Proposed Charges 2020/21 Appendix.

b) Leisure Services charges 2020/21

Councillor Baker commended the Leisure Services Manager for all the work he had carried out to determine comparable proposed charges at other facilities, as in these were generally not published and were not readily available.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the charges for Leisure Services for 2020/21, as set out in the Proposed Charges 2020/21 Appendix.

Minute No. 70: Budget Estimates 2020/21

c) Budget and precept 2020/21

Councillor Baker presented the 2020/21 budget and the recommended precept level for 2020/21 to the Council.

In reply to a question, Councillor Baker informed Members that the Council had not allocated a specific budget for measures aimed at reducing the Council's carbon footprint, but that money would be made available across all budget headings to enable the necessary measures to be taken as they were identified. Councillor Baker confirmed that the steps being taken by the Council would be publicised.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the budget for 2020/21, as presented in the Budget Appendix.
- ◆ To approve a precept level of £1,203,188 for the 2020/21 financial year, as set out in the Budget Appendix.

Minute No. 81: Youth Services Service Level Agreement

In reply to a question about whether an equality assessment had been carried out on the Just Around the Corner charity (JAC), the Town Clerk said that it was not appropriate for the Council to carry out an assessment on JAC, but that JAC could be asked to carry out an assessment themselves. There was a lengthy discussion about the decision taken by the Strategy and Resources Committee to delay the tendering of the contract for the provision of detached youth work and associated support and activities for young people in Woodley and to extend the existing Service Level Agreement provided by JAC for a period of one year. The Town Clerk emphasised that this decision had been taken to enable a survey of young people to be carried out to determine what their needs were. The survey was being designed by Councillor Al-Sanjari and the results of the survey would be used to focus the youth services to be provided under a new Service Level Agreement. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Service Level Agreement would go out to tender before the agreed extension of the current agreement came to an end, in order to prevent a break in the service. Councillors stressed the importance of auditing the work carried out under any Service Level Agreement and members of the Leisure Services Committee pointed out that Sam Milligan from JAC attended every meeting of the Leisure Services Committee to report on the work carried out by JAC and a written report was included with every agenda. A suggestion was made that a pro forma could be devised by the Leisure Services Committee to be completed by JAC as a method of ensuring that the service provided was being duly scrutinised by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 21 January 2020.

- 67.4 **Minutes of the Planning and Community Committee: 28 January 2020**
Councillor Cheng presented the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 28 January 2020.

Minute No. 169: Current planning applications

A question was asked regarding the possibility of requesting Wokingham Borough Council to increase the consultation period for some planning applications so that the consultation end date would always be several days after the Town Council Planning meetings, as this would ensure sufficient time for Borough Councillors to list an application for consideration by the Borough Council Planning Committee if requested by the Town Council. This was not felt to be feasible due to the large number of applications that would be affected. Councillor Baker pointed out that members of the public could ask for a planning application to be listed without waiting for the Town Council to consider the application.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 28 January 2020.

68. **COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL**

a) **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note that Councillor Nagra had resigned from the Conservative Group and was now an independent councillor.

b) **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the current composition of the Council:
Conservative: 16
Liberal Democrat: 6
Labour: 1
Independent: 1
Vacant: 1

c) **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note that a by-election in Coronation East ward had been called for 27 February 2020 to fill the vacant position on the Council.

69. **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Members noted that, following Councillor Nagra's resignation from the Conservative Group, there was a vacant position on the Planning and Community Committee.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That an appointment to the vacant position on the Planning and Community Committee be deferred until a future meeting.

70. **LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader of the Council made the following statement:

"First of all may I wish you a belated Happy New Year to everyone. New Years Eve seems to be a decade ago with months whizzing by. Before we know it we will be holding our Annual Meeting.

I know several of you here were heavily involved with the General Election and I hope you have now recovered from all your efforts. The outcome of that election

was quite emphatic and we now need to move on. We must find those things which we can agree on and use that as a basis for bringing everyone closer together.

Being a Town Council, we are relatively immune from some of the shenanigans of the Borough and above and long may it continue. Unfortunately, there are small signs of this creeping into this council and I urge all of us to try and remember who we are here to serve, our residents.

I have sat in on every committee's debates on their respective budget and I was pleased how everyone, regardless of political persuasion, reacted. The discussions were forthright with some extremely well thought out questions asked. I am pleased that all budget decisions were unanimous on all committees bar one where the opposition abstained "because it was not their budget". Never the less the scrutiny, especially from the opposition, was first class asking very probing questions.

So now we have our precept set with a slight increase of 12p per week or 51p per month. However, it still is the lowest since financial year 2008/09. My ward has been running its annual survey and for this year included a question on how acceptable a town council tax rise was. The vast majority opted for a slightly higher rise than we have agreed which suggests we have got it right.

Turning to projects, we now have three important projects which are underway.

1. To provide better accommodation for grounds staff.
2. To invest in a new play area just behind this building. It is interesting to note that it is likely to be a bigger play area than that at Sol Joel Park in Earley, which has been a huge success.
3. To renovate area around the trees in the precinct. All will be revealed later this month."

71. **BULMERSHE SULV JOINT WORKING PARTY**

Councillor Baker presented Report No. FC 1/20 of the Bulmershe SULV Joint Working Party meeting held on 19 December 2019. He informed Members that Wokingham Borough Council had confirmed that an application could be made for the land to be classified as a Local Green Space (LGS) while retaining the Site of Urban Landscape Value (SULV) designation. Therefore the SULV designation would not be lost if the LGS application was unsuccessful.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. FC 1/20.

72. **NOTICE OF MOTION (MOTION NO. 67)**

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

"This Council notes the recent decision to dissolve the agreement in respect of the Woodley Airfield Youth and Community Centre and resolves that capital receipt funds to be paid by Wokingham Borough Council under the terms of the agreement are ringfenced for capital spending on the acquisition of new, or significant enhancement of existing, fixed assets. This Council resolves that any new, or enhanced existing, assets acquired using these funds are to be specifically to provide a youth centre for the use of young people in Woodley."

Councillor Doyle spoke in favour of the motion. Councillor Rowland reserved the right to speak later in the debate.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Baker and seconded by Councillor Bragg:

"This Council notes the recent decision to dissolve the agreement in respect of the Woodley Airfield Youth and Community Centre and resolves that capital receipt funds to be paid by Wokingham Borough Council under the terms of the agreement are ringfenced for capital spending on the acquisition of new, or significant enhancement of existing, fixed assets. This Council resolves that any new, or enhanced existing, assets acquired using these funds will give full regard to their appropriate use by the youth of Woodley."

Councillor Baker spoke in favour of the motion.

At this point in the meeting Councillor Swaddle noted the lateness of the hour and asked for a vote to be called on the amendment.

73. It was then proposed by the Chairman that as business had not been completed by 10pm, the meeting continue until 10:30pm in order to complete the business set out in the agenda.

Following a vote, the proposal to continue the meeting until 10:30pm was not carried.

Meeting closed at 10:00 pm

Presentation by Matthew Barber, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley

The Town Mayor welcomed Matthew Barber to the meeting.

Matthew Barber began by saying that the role of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had only been in existence for 8 years and in many ways the role was not fully understood by members of the public. The role was non-political and its main functions were to set the priorities for policing, holding the Chief Constable to delivering these priorities and setting Council tax.

Matthew Barber explained that, with regard to reducing crime, the PCC's priorities were:

- Prevention
- Early intervention – carrying out school visits to make contact with every child, working with other agencies to identify families that need support
- Rehabilitation – making sure that there are programs in place to help people coming out of prison, finding them somewhere to live etc.

The Deputy PCC chairs the Justice Board for the Thames Valley, which oversees the criminal justice system – the police, the probation system and the courts. The aim of the Justice Board is to try to overcome the administrative hurdles that may prevent justice being served. Examples of some of the initiatives being introduced are the introduction of more video links in courts, so that witnesses do not necessarily have to attend in person, and a pilot scheme to get domestic abuse cases to court within 48 – 72 hours.

In reply to a question about whether this pilot scheme would eventually be used for other crimes, Matthews Barber said that it was hoped that this would be the case, but that domestic abuse cases were being prioritised as this was a particular area where victims were less likely to give evidence as time went by. He explained that it was not more expensive to get cases to court quickly, but it did take more effort. The use of a digital evidence management system to capture all the evidence allowed easier access to the evidence in court and sped up the process.

When asked whether the police had sufficient capacity to carry out the prevention and early intervention work, Matthew Barber admitted that police capacity was always a challenge, but that much of this work was not, or did not need to be, carried out by the police – for example, social intervention and liaising with schools was undertaken by social workers. That was why the Home Office had asked the PCC to oversee this work. Matthew Barber informed Members that due to the Government's initiative to recruit 20,000 more police officers, Thames Valley had so far been given financing for an additional 183 police officers and had currently recruited 80 of these. It was hoped that there would eventually be funding for a total of 600 extra police officers in the Thames Valley area. Matthew Barber admitted that there had always been a problem with officers transferring from the Thames Valley to London but this was not currently as great a challenge as it had been in the past.

In reply to a question about how the extent to which police forces acted on the PCC's priorities was measured, especially with regard to the aim of reducing drugs offences, Matthew Barber explained that the Force Delivery Plan scheduled regular performance meetings to scrutinise the crime data. With regard to the recorded number of drug possessions, this had increased recently, but that was due to a deliberate increase in use of the stop and search powers rather than an increasing problem. The stop and search powers were being used as a method of early intervention, as those caught with drugs

could be given a warning and be sent on a drugs awareness course instead of being prosecuted for a first offence. If the offender was not compliant, or if there were further offences, this would lead to prosecution.

The Mayor thanked Matthew Barber for coming to the meeting to talk to members and answer their questions.