

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held remotely on  
Tuesday 9 February 2021 at 8 pm**

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**Present:** Councillors D. Mills (Chairman); J. Anderson; K. Baker; D. Bragg;  
S. Brindley; A. Chadwick; J. Cheng; M. Doyle; M. Forrer; K. Gilder;  
M. Green; A. Heap; C. Jewell; T. McCann; M. Nagra; B. Rowland;  
J. Sartorel; R. Skegg; D. Smith; B. Soane; A. Swaddle; P. Wicks

**Officers present:** K. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk; L. Matthews, 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 there were no members of the public wishing to address the Council the Town Forum did not take place.*

57. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors N. Al-Sanjari and S. Rahmouni.

58. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

59. **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2020**

The Town Mayor presented the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 December 2020.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 December 2020 and that they be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 1 Abstentions: 2

60. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

60.1 **Minutes of the Planning and Community Committee: 5 January 2021**

Councillor Wicks presented the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 5 January 2021.

**RESOLVED:**

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

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2

**60.2 Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee: 12 January 2021**

Councillor Bragg presented the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 12 January 2021.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 12 January 2021.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 0 Abstentions: 5

**60.3 Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee: 19 January 2021**

Councillor Baker presented the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 19 January 2021.

**Minute No. 54: Risk Management Working Party**

Councillor Baker presented the 2021/22 Risk Management Strategy and the Risk Register to Council.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To adopt the Risk Management Strategy 2021/22.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 0 Abstentions: 5

- ◆ To receive the Risk Register.

**Minute No. 55: Charges 2021/22**

**a) Oakwood Centre charges**

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the 2021/22 charges at the Oakwood Centre, as set out in the Proposed Charges 2021/22 Appendix.

Voting: For: 13 Against: 0 Abstentions: 5

**b) Leisure Services charges 2021/22**

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the charges for Leisure Services for 2021/22, as set out in the Proposed Charges 2021/22 Appendix.

Voting: For: 13 Against: 0 Abstentions: 7

**Minute No. 57: Budget Estimates 2021/22**

**c) Budget and precept 2021/22**

Councillor Baker presented the 2021/22 budget and the recommended precept level for 2021/22 to the Council.

Councillor Baker said that the pandemic had caused huge financial stress to the Council as its income had been wiped out at a stroke, apart from that received from the precept. He said that the Council's officers had shown unbelievable diligence and determination to set a budget for the coming year. All households in Woodley had been consulted to find out how much precept increase they would be prepared to accept and Councillor Baker thought that the response rate of 1 in 5 had been exceptional. The comments received from respondents had been very useful. After taking into consideration the

consultation responses, a precept increase of 56p/month on a Band D property was being recommended to Council.

Councillor Jewell echoed Councillor Baker in thanking officers for the work they had done to find savings when setting the budget. She said it was a shame that Wokingham Borough Council had not supported Town and Parish Councils, and local residents, by passing on some of the funds they had received from the Government to alleviate the effects of the pandemic.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the budget for 2021/22, as presented in the Budget Appendix.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 0 Abstentions: 6

- ◆ To approve a precept level of £1,293,034 for the 2021/22 financial year, as set out in the Budget Appendix.

Voting: For: 13 Against: 0 Abstentions: 6

**Minute No. 61: Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

**c) CIL project proposals suggested by Wokingham Borough Council**

Councillor Jewell noted that the suggested project to install improved signs and way finding for pedestrians and cyclists, to enable them to make full use of the infrastructure for cycling and walking, would be very useful and it would be a good thing if this could go ahead in Woodley.

**Minute No. 64: Exclusion of public and press**

In reply to a question, it was noted that the motion to exclude the public and press had been made in accordance with Standing Order 5b.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 19 January 2021.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 1 Abstentions: 4

**60.4 Minutes of the Planning and Community Committee: 26 January 2021**

Councillor Wicks presented the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 26 January 2021.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 26 January 2021.

Voting: For: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2

**61. LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader of the Council made the following statement:

As this is the final Full Council Meeting of the year, I thought I would look back at events during the previous 12 months, and firstly I would like to thank the Mayor for the way he has conducted the meetings under very stressful conditions. It has been a bit of a roller coaster year with the biggest impact being the pandemic which started in March. The Covid-19 virus hit the country hard and has severely impacted every aspect of all our lives. From financial stress, businesses collapsing,

job losses and severe health issues including untimely deaths this virus has hit in a way never experienced before since the war.

But when such horrendous things happen it brings out the best in people and our residents have been exemplary in this. For example, I manage a group of 200 volunteers who act as a single point of contact for every road in Woodley, all 314 of them. The FaceBook group "Woodley Volunteer for COVID-19" has a membership of over 1,400 every one either living in Woodley or has a connection with Woodley. One of the administrators for this group has, since March, collected nearly 80,000 items of food and toiletries for the Woodley Food Bank. These are just a few examples of our great caring community and you all probably know of many others.

On behalf of Woodley Town Council and all councillors I want to put on record our sincerest thanks to each and every one of them.

At the same time as all these volunteers stepping forward there has been a huge number of key workers carrying out their normal work only this time under very difficult circumstances. We have the teachers who have been working throughout, initially just for key workers' children. Then there are the care workers with an incredibly difficult job looking after the most vulnerable in our community. We then have the NHS workers who have definitely been in the front-line right from the beginning and have experienced a tremendous amount of heartache as they have nursed their patients through their illnesses. We also need to remember those "hidden" key workers – the refuse workers, the delivery drivers, the shop workers in food shops – all playing their part in providing essential services.

Again, on behalf of Woodley Town Council and all councillors I want to put on record our sincerest thanks to each and every one of them.

Unfortunately, over the past 12 months, officers have also had to endure a degree of hostility during committee meetings from a couple of councillors, questioning many things. Nothing wrong with asking questions but the aggression has been unwarranted. I sincerely hope that this coming year every councillor treats officers with the respect they deserve."

62. **WOODLEY MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND CHARITY**

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note that the Annual Return of the Woodley Memorial Recreation Ground charity was submitted on 17 November 2020.

63. **MAINTENANCE DEPOT - ELECTRICITY INSTALLATION**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. FC 1/21. Members were informed that the electricity supply to the Maintenance Yard and footway lighting in that area of the park had been completely lost shortly before Christmas and investigations had established that an underground cable fault was the cause. As the supply cable from the leisure centre to the yard site runs underneath the 3G pitch, it would be difficult to locate and repair any break in the existing cable. It was therefore proposed to install a new supply cable from the substation in the park to the Maintenance Yard. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that supply, laying and connection of the cabling would be provided by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks with excavation work and ducting installation carried out by the Council's Grounds Team.

In reply to a question, the Deputy Town Clerk stated that the Council did not have any plans showing the location of the existing cable and agreed that new "as-built"

plans would be maintained for any new utilities installed in the park. The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that only one quote for the work had been obtained as there were very few companies that were able to undertake this work and the connections could only be carried out by the electrical authority. As it was proposed that the entire installation work be carried out by the electrical authority, the work would automatically be regulated and indemnified. The Deputy Town Clerk did not believe that there would be additional costs related to taking on a new electricity supply contract for the Maintenance Yard.

Members considered whether it would be appropriate to fund this work from the Council's CIL funds.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note Report No. FC 1/21.
- ◆ To allocate £25,000 of CIL funding to install a new electrical power supply to the Maintenance Yard as detailed in Report No. FC 1/21.

Voting: For: 20 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

64. **CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE**

Members noted the update to the Climate Emergency Action Plan, which had been included in the agenda.

In response to a question, the Deputy Town Clerk agreed to circulate to all Members the minutes of the Wokingham Borough Council Climate Emergency Working Party meeting that he and the Chairman of the Town Council's Climate Emergency Working Party had attended. A comment was made that these minutes should have been reported to the Town Council's Climate Emergency Working Party and it was noted that the Working Party had not met for some time.

65. **RESULTS OF PRECEPT CONSULTATION**

Members noted the report of the precept consultation, which had been included in the agenda. The report had been prepared by H M Research and had been circulated to Members in December, as soon as it was available.

When asked about the wording of the questions in the consultation, the Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that the wording of the questions had been devised by officers. He agreed to find out how much the preparation of the report had cost and to circulate this information to Members.

66. **TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING**

Members noted the information provided in the agenda stating that the government had issued regulations making amendments to The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales Regulations 2020) (the Primary Regulations). These amendments took effect from 1 August 2020 and meant that the requirement for Town and Parish Councils to hold an annual parish/town meeting in each year had been disapplied.

Members considered whether or not to hold the Town Electors' meeting scheduled for 2 March 2021, under the present circumstances.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To cancel the Town Electors' meeting scheduled for 2 March 2021.

Voting: For: 21 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

- ◆ To set up a small, cross-party, non-political working party to devise a new format for the Town Electors' meeting, with the aim of holding a Town Electors' meeting before 1 June 2021.

Voting: For: 20 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

67. 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.

68. **SPECIAL MOTION**

The following special motion had been submitted by Councillors Baker, Brindley, Bragg, Cheng and Wicks, and received in accordance with Standing Order 35b:

*Explanation:*

*Following Cllr Nagra's question about whether any standing order existed to allow the Chairman to participate in a debate it transpires that not only is there no such standing order for the Chairman there is no such standing order for any other Councillor other than a proposer and seconder or a Councillor wishing to make a point of order or a personal explanation (see Standing Orders 14, 14. A and 14. B). There is an implied reference in Standing Order 14. A. f which says "a Councillor may not speak further....." which could be read that a Councillor can speak to a motion or an amendment, but it is not specific and could be disputed. Clearly this is a major oversight which has been overlooked for the last 40 years. This special motion formally documents the custom and practice that has been in place for approximately 40 years and removes that reliance on the implied meaning of 14. A. f without any change to 14. A. f.*

Under a special motion as set out in Standing Order 35b it is proposed that the following change to Standing Orders be adopted by the Council:

The proposal is to add the following Standing Order as 14.b under 14. Rules of debate:

"Any Councillor, including both the Mayor and Chairman, can speak during the debate on a motion or amendment as long as they are members of the committee where the debate is taking place."

The motion was proposed by Councillor Baker and seconded by Councillor Brindley. Councillors Baker and Brindley spoke in support of the motion. Councillors McCann, Nagra and Doyle spoke against the motion. Councillor Skegg explained why he was undecided whether to support or oppose the motion.

Councillor McCann called for a recorded vote on this motion.

Following a vote, it was

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ That the motion be carried.

Voting:

<b>FOR</b>	<b>AGAINST</b>	<b>ABSTAINED</b>
J. Anderson	M. Doyle	R. Skegg
K. Baker	A. Heap	
D. Bragg	C. Jewell	
S. Brindley	T. McCann	
A. Chadwick	M. Nagra	
J. Cheng	B. Rowland	
M. Forrer		
K. Gilder		
M. Green		
D. Mills		
J. Sartorel		
D. Smith		
B. Soane		
A. Swaddle		
P. Wicks		
For: 15	Against: 6	Abstentions: 1

69. **SPECIAL MOTION**

The following special motion had been submitted by Councillors Al-Sanjari, Nagra, Doyle, Jewell and Heap, and received in accordance with Standing Order 35b:

Under a special motion as set out in Standing Order 35b it is proposed that the following changes and amendments to the Standing Orders be adopted by the Council:

Standing Order 8 - Delegated Powers

To add the following:

“Standing Order 8d

All councillors who are not members of the Urgency Committee will receive the agenda and any accompanying papers relating to the meeting, before the meeting takes place.

Standing Order 8e

All councillors who are not members of the Urgency Committee shall be allowed to attend an Urgency Committee meeting as observers.

Standing Order 8f

Meetings of the Urgency Committee shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.”

The motion was proposed by Councillor Nagra and seconded by Councillor Doyle. Councillors Nagra and McCann spoke in support of the motion.

Following a vote, it was

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ That the motion be carried.

Voting: For: 20 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2

70. As the time had reached 10:30pm, the remainder of the business set out in the agenda was unable to be completed.

Meeting closed at 10:30 pm

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