



Wallingford Town Council

**MINUTES  
of a meeting of the  
FULL COUNCIL  
held on  
Monday, 18 March 2024 at 7.00 pm  
in Wallingford Town Hall**

**Present**

**Members**

Cllr Mike Acreman  
Cllr Dan Beauchamp (The Mayor/Chairman)  
Cllr Ailsa Charter  
Cllr Marcus Harris  
Cllr Susan Hendrie  
Cllr Stephen Holder  
Cllr Jacki Hoskins  
Cllr Mark Hoskins  
Cllr Nigel Hughes  
Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan, also District Councillor  
Cllr Ros Lester  
Cllr Diana Margarido  
Cllr Len Pannett  
Cllr Christine Sandall

**Officers:**

Michelle Taylor, Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer  
Luke Whitcomb, Meetings Officer  
Jennifer Armitage, Engagement Manager  
Fiona Pringle, Events Manager

**Others:**

James Barlow, District Councillor  
Pete Sudbury, County Councillor  
12 members of the public  
0 members of the press

**682/23**

**MEETING PROTOCOL**

The Mayor outlined the protocols that needed to be followed in the conduct of the meeting.

The Mayor also explained that the meeting was being broadcast live to an accessible location on the ground floor of the Town Hall as the stair lift was currently not working.

**683/23**

**APOLOGIES**

It was proposed by Councillor Acreman, and seconded by Councillor Harris, and

**RESOLVED** that the apologies from Town Councillors Ebrahimjee and Holford be received and accepted

**684/23**

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were declared.

**685/23**

**MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Mayor welcomed two new Town Councillors, Len Pannett and Christine Sandall.

He thanked the local 1155 charity for their organisation of another successful community litter pick which had involved over 200 volunteers.

The Mayor spoke briefly about the Annual Town Meeting which would be reviewed later in the meeting (see Minute 700/23) and reported that he had recently attended the collation of the new Team Rector of the Wallingford Benefice, the Reverend Sarah Nesbitt.

**686/23**

**MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Charter, and seconded by Councillor Lester, and

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on 19 February 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

**687/23**

**ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The Council reviewed progress on 'open' actions agreed by previous meetings of the Full Council. This was undertaken by exception rather than item-by-item.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the action on the insurance for the Carnival had been resolved.

**688/23**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Two members of the public spoke.

The first spoke about the future of The Regal (see Minute 692/23 below). They asked for the access issues to be explained in greater depth and whether the Section 106 money would be lost if it was not used on the particular site. They

also argued that the size of The Regal made it a particularly attractive community space. The idea of partnerships was worth exploring, as that described in Option 1B.

The second was a representative of the Oxford Sheds community workshop, a local affiliate of the national association Men's Sheds. They were having to leave their existing base at short notice and were looking for alternative sites. Members suggested various ideas that could be explored.

689/23

#### **COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS**

County Councillor Sudbury spoke principally about the Climate Emergency and argued that the town/parish council unit was the best size in which to consider and pursue an 'adaptation' strategy. Local knowledge was critical in planning, especially an awareness of those who would be most negatively impacted. He also spoke about speed limits later in the meeting (see Minute 691/23).

District Councillors Barlow and Keats-Rohan reported on their regular surgeries for local residents, the consultation that was underway on the District Council's leisure and sports pitch Strategy, and the outdoor swimming pool and splash park.

690/23

#### **ADOPTION OF ALLOTMENTS AND PLAY AREAS, WINTERBROOK MEADOWS**

The Council considered whether to adopt the allotments and play areas that were being created as part of the major Winterbrook Meadows housing development. This included a detailed proposal by Councillor Holder who advocated the model used by Benson Parish Council in which new green spaces were adopted and management partnerships were developed with local community groups.

It was proposed by Councillor Charter, and seconded by Councillor Margarido, and

**RESOLVED** that the allotments and play areas be adopted by the Town Council using the recommended 'stewardship' model

#### **Action:**

**Inform the District Council of the Town Council's decision to adopt.**

691/23

#### **SPEED LIMITS**

The Mayor and County Councillor Sudbury reported on the recent visit to the Town by senior highways officers from the County Council. Councillor Sudbury was continuing to talk to Cabinet colleagues about the potential for 'geo-fencing' of the 20 mph speed restrictions. He confirmed that contact had been made with the local Community Speedwatch group to access their data.

**THE REGAL**

The Mayor introduced the discussion on the future of The Regal which had been closed for 7 years. He reminded everyone that there were many strongly-held and different views about the site within the community.

This matter had been discussed largely in closed session due to the Council's negotiating position. However the present Council were now intentionally bringing this into 'open' forum for reasons of transparency, although aspects may still need to be discussed in confidential.

The costs of the Council's preferred multi-function solution had increased substantially since it had first been conceived, and for which two sets of architects drawing had been commissioned; these plans had then encountered a major obstacle of access.

The Mayor explained the access challenges in greater detail; these had been the most significant barrier to progress in the past two years. Access from the front (St Martin's Street) was technically now blocked because the land had been sold and new buildings constructed. At the rear, various aspects of the car parking area were owned by South Oxfordshire District Council, Beechcroft Homes and the Town Council. For the Town Council to redevelop The Regal would involve substantial payment to the other landowners. The Town Council had been advised that South Oxfordshire District Council would be legally bound to attract the greatest value for their permission.

The Council considered the following options and variations, and their merits and dis-benefits:

**Option 1 – Retain this particular community space (in whatever form, existing or otherwise)**

1A – Make good the existing building and re-open

1B – Redevelop the site in partnership with a third party to create a multi-function space, including community hall

**Option 2 – Do not retain this particular community space**

2A – sell the site and use the revenue to create a new central community space

2B – sell the site (and no new community space)

2C – remove the existing building and increase car parking space for residents

2D – do nothing

No support was expressed for Option 2 or any of its variations.

The vast majority of support was for Option 1B, although some support was also expressed for Option 1A as it did not preclude further development

Councillor Keats-Rohan tabled a proposal for setting up a Community Land Trust with public body partners including South Oxfordshire District Council (one of the adjoining landowners) to redevelop the site for sustainably affordable housing, with a potential element for community use (the latter only suggested in the meeting).

Around £500k of Section 106 money would be available for Options 1A and 1B, but could only be used for this site. There was a need to spend £260k of this S106 money needs to be spent by 2026, otherwise it would likely need to be returned to the developer.

To pursue Option 1B or an alternative, it was recognised that the Council could not rely on the expertise of any one councillor or officer who were inevitably transient. There was agreement on the need to identify and appoint a professional.

It was proposed by Councillor Sandall, and seconded by Councillor Pannett, and

**RESOLVED** that a professional be appointed to explore and progress Option 1B, or if that is not suitable, identify the best possible alternative, using the Section 106 for professional fees, clarifying the access issues as a first priority and finding a solution, with a clear timeframe with identified milestones, to avoid drift; the first milestone being the next meeting of the Full Council in April 2024 when the professional should be appointed

**Action:**

**Town Clerk – assisted by Councillor Harris – to seek quotations from suitable professionals and present them at the next Full Council meeting (April) in order to appoint**

693/23

**GOLDSMITHS LANE, PROPOSED CAR PARKING FEES FOR 2024-25**

The Council considered the District Council's car parking fee proposals for Goldsmiths Lane for the next financial year.

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Hughes, and

**RESOLVED** that the charged rate be agreed, but not the hours, nor the days, nor any changes to free parking times.

Councillors M Hoskins and Keats-Rohan asked that their votes against the above motion. Neither councillor saw any difficulty with the District Council's proposals.

694/23

**TOWN HALL, ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS AND AV EQUIPMENT**

The Council considered the pressing need for AV equipment in the Town Hall to comply with the requirement to make events accessible. The existing stair lift was no longer working and could not be replaced.

It was proposed by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and seconded by Councillor Hendrie, and

**RESOLVED** the designated funding of £7k be increased to a maximum of £12k for AV equipment for the Town Hall, the office to solicit and compare three quotations.

695/23

**TARIFFS FOR 2024-25**

The Council considered a recommendation from the Tourism and Economic Development Committee concerning proposed charges for next year. A benchmarking exercise had been conducted to inform the recommendations.

It was proposed by Councillor J Hoskins, and seconded by Councillor Charter, and

**RESOLVED** that the tariffs for 2024-25 be approved

696/23

**WALLINGFORD MUNICIPAL CHARITIES**

Wallingford Municipal Charities (WMC) had asked the Council to appoint a nominative trustee.

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Hughes, and

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Sandall be appointed a nominative trustee for a period of four years

Councillor Lester reported that WMC would be appointing the new Team Rector of Wallingford Benefice, the Reverend Sarah Nesbitt, as one of the trustees it chose directly.

**Action:**

**Inform WMC of the Town Council's appointment**

**Update 'Outside Bodies' list**

697/23

**WALLINGFORD SCHOOL FOUNDATION**

Wallingford School Foundation had asked the Council to appoint a member.

It was proposed by Councillor J Hoskins, and seconded by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Lester be appointed to serve on the Foundation

**Action:**

**Update 'Outside Bodies' list**

698/23

**VARIATION OF AGENDA ORDER**

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and

**RESOLVED** the Town Hall Conservation Project (agenda item 12(a)) be considered in 'closed' session due to commercial sensitivities

699/23

**WALLINGFORD AND CHOLSEY RAILWAY**

The Council considered a request to appoint someone to act as the principal liaison with Wallingford and Cholsey Railway.

It was proposed by Councillor M Hoskins, and seconded by Councillor Margarido, and

**RESOLVED** that Councillor J Hoskins perform this role

700/23

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2024**

The Council reviewed the recent Annual Town Meeting which had been well-attended and viewed 600 times online. Feedback had been positive, with some suggestions for incremental improvement.

The first-time live broadcast and recording of the event appeared to have worked particularly well. Going forwards, we would consider a way of allowing attendees to be off-camera and to submit questions without being identified or speaking themselves.

The Mayor reported that two potential dates had already been identified for 2025 subject to venue availability, 24 and 26 March, both of which were in school term time.

**701/23**

**INTERNAL AUDIT**

The Council reviewed the second interim up-date report of the Internal Auditor for 2023-24.

It was proposed by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and seconded by Councillor Hughes, and

**RESOLVED** that the Internal Auditor's report be received

It was proposed by Councillor Holder, and seconded by Councillor Hendrie, and

**RESOLVED** that the effectiveness of the Internal Audit be confirmed

The Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer reported that the recommendations had already been actioned or were in the process of being so.

**702/23**

**FINANCE RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Council reviewed the annual Finance Risk Assessment.

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Hughes, and

**RESOLVED** that the Finance Risk Assessment be approved

**703/23**

**INSURANCE**

The Council considered the annual renewal of its insurance policy.

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Hughes, and

**RESOLVED** that the insurance policy with Zurich be approved for a 1-year term and that in the meantime, potential alternative suppliers be investigated, taking account of ethical, social, environmental considerations, sourcing comparative quotations using procurement guidelines



704/23

**POLICIES**

In view of the scheduled and likely national and regional elections taking place during 2024, the Council considered its approach to allowing political parties to canvass in the Council-owned outdoor spaces.

It was proposed by Councillor Harris, and seconded by Councillor Margarido, and

**RESOLVED** the Council should continue its historic, strict non-partisan approach, allowing all political parties to canvass during election periods

The Mayor explained that the Council already had a lettings policy regarding use of its indoor spaces. Councillor M Hoskins asked that the indoor policy be explained to him in the light of public complaints about a particular booking in 2023.

**Action:**

**Events Manager to explain lettings policy to Cllr M Hoskins**

705/23

**STAFF WELFARE**

The Council considered its need as an employer to provide suitable sanitary and changing facilities for members of the Parks and Estates Team.

It was proposed by Councillor Holder, and seconded by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and

**RESOLVED** that the quotation from CabinsGB – including for the waste tank – be approved

706/23

**COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

It was proposed by Councillor Holder, and seconded by Councillor Hendrie, and

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Pannett be appointed to the Tourism and Economic Development Committee in place of Councillor Lester, and that Councillor Sandall be appointed to the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee in place of Councillor Ebrahimjee

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Margarido, and

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Charter be appointed to the Finance and Properties Committee

A new meeting date for the Finance and Properties Committee was being considered by the Town Clerk, if there was sufficient business, to replace the scheduled date of 11 March 2024 which could not go ahead due to the Committee being inquorate.

**Action:**

**Update Committee membership lists, including on the website**

**Consider whether there is sufficient business for a new meeting date for F&P to replace 11 March 2024**

**707/23**

**MAYOR FOR 2024-25**

The Council discussed the selection of The Mayor for the 2024-25 Municipal Year.

Two Members asked to be considered.

After a closed ballot, overseen and counted by two officers, Councillor Dan Beauchamp, who had been put forward by Councillor Harris and Margarido, was chosen as The Mayor for 2024-25. He would be formally confirmed as Mayor at the Annual Meeting on 8 May 2024.

**708/23**

**FUTURE AGENDA MEETINGS**

The following items had already been identified for future meetings:

- The Regal – appointment of professional (Town Clerk/Cllr Harris leading)
- Town Council elections – use of polling cards (Mayor leading)
- Pedestrianisation of front area of Town Hall (Action Log)
- Policies (Town Clerk)
- Governance cycle (Cllr Charter leading)
- Community emergency plan (Mayor leading)
- Community safety – potential for broader working group, including community emergency
- Biodiversity (Cllr Acreman leading)
- The Boat House – next steps

The Mayor asked Members to let the Meetings Officer know of any other items by Friday, 12 April 2024.

709/23

**EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was proposed by Councillor Hughes, and seconded by Councillor Holder, and

**RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

The meeting ended at 10.00 pm

Minutes of the meeting of the  
Full Council held on  
18 March 2024,  
signed as a correct record

Chairman

2024-03-18 FC minutes DRAFT CONFIDENTIAL