



Wallingford Town Council

**MINUTES
of a meeting of the
FULL COUNCIL**

**held on
Monday, 25 November 2024 at 7.00 pm
in Wallingford Town Hall**

Present

Members

Cllr Ailsa Charter
Cllr Mahmood Ebrahimjee
Cllr Marcus Harris
Cllr Susan Hendrie
Cllr Steve Holder (Deputy Mayor) (in the chair)
Cllr Jacki Hoskins
Cllr Mark Hoskins
Cllr Nigel Hughes
Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan, Wallingford Town & South Oxfordshire District
Cllr Ros Lester
Cllr Diana Margarido
Cllr Len Pannett
Cllr Christine Sandall

Officers:

Karen Crowhurst, Locum Clerk
Luke Whitcomb, Meetings Officer
Arthur Hodsdon, Head of Parks and Estates

Others:

Cllr James Barlow, South Oxfordshire District
Cllr Pete Sudbury, Oxfordshire County
2 members of the public
0 members of the press

400/24

MEETING PROTOCOL

The Deputy Mayor welcomed everyone and reminded Members of the protocols that needed to be followed in the conduct of the meeting.

401/24 APOLOGIES

Apologies were tabled from Town Councillors Acreman, Beauchamp (The Mayor) and Holford

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

RESOLVED that these apologies be received and accepted.

402/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

403/24 MINUTES

The Council reviewed the minutes of their last meeting.

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Full Council held on 21 October 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

404/24 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS [PUBLIC]

The Council reviewed the progress of 'open' actions relating to decisions taken at previous Full Council meetings.

405/24 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor had not submitted a report.

406/24 TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Locum Clerk had recently circulated a confidential report to all Members.

407/24 COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

County Councillor Sudbury reported on his recent activities on behalf of the town, including securing extra funding for the clearing of gullies, dialogue with Thames Water, opposition to a planning application to build 400 homes on land west of Shillingford Road and an imminent visit by the County Council's Head of Highways to Wallingford.

The Council NOTED a written report by District Councillor Keats-Rohan that included an assessment of the 2024 season at The Riverside, a new

government consultation on bathing water and the planning application for a major development on land west of Shillingford Road.

In a verbal report, District Councillor Barlow also referred to the Shillingford Road planning application and the emphasised the importance of Wallingford's Approved Neighbourhood Plan in resisting inappropriate development.

Action:

Members to channel comments regarding the visit of the Head of Highways via Councillor M Hoskins, the Liaison Councillor for Transport

Standing Orders were suspended for the next item

408/24

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The co-ordinator and chair of trustees of the Wigod Family Centre thanked the Town Council for their significant support over the past year. The Centre had originally been established in partnership with the Town Council. The last year had involved supporting 780 families, the majority of whom lived in Wallingford. Demand had increased by 167% since 2018 due to increased awareness, the cost-of-living crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Council expressed their appreciation for the Centre's work, in particular that of the Centre's leadership team, through a round of applause.

Standing Orders took effect again

409/24

THE REGAL

The Council considered the next steps in the major redevelopment of this site, having previously (Minute 321/24) selected the viable option that they wished to see pursued, i.e. a new build, replacing the existing footprint, with mixed use and Beechcroft Developments as the preferred supplier.

The Council wished to see momentum maintained on this major project.

The project timeline envisaged that the public consultation would take place in April or May 2025.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that

- (a) the revised terms of reference for the Working Group, reflecting the next phase of the project, be approved, including the retention of the consultancy support of ADP Carter Jonas for the extension of the feasibility study up to a value of £20k funded from ring-fenced Section 106 monies associated with The Regal;

- (b) Councillors Beauchamp, Charter, Ebrahimjee, Hendrie, Keats-Rohan, Margarido (Working Group Chair) and Sandall (Working Group Vice-Chair) be appointed as members of the Working Group

410/24

ALLOTMENTS AND PEST CONTROL

The Council considered a recommendation from the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee (Minute 391/24) for the strengthening of provisions related to pest control in policies for the allotments at both the Fir Tree and Highcroft sites.

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

RESOLVED that the revised policies be approved, subject to the standardisation of wording in both policies and the strengthening of wording describing the action that the Town Council would itself take (in addition to the outlined responsibilities of allotment holders), ensuring that the Council's own measures were in place in time for the next growing season

Councillor Hughes abstained on this vote

411/24

VERGE-CUTTING – AND POSSIBLY VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

The Council considered a recommendation from the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee concerning a contract for verge-cutting.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that the contract be awarded to Oxford Direct Services, a subsidiary company owned by Oxford City Council, based on their quotation DQTE-1701 dated 12 November 2024

412/24

RESTORING THE MILL BROOK

The Council considered a recommendation from the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee concerning a proposed new initiative to restore part of the Mill Brook which had strong heritage and ecological value. The focus of attention would be the stretch between the culvert headwall (near Fir Tree Avenue) and the bypass culvert.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that this initiative be strongly welcomed and endorsed by the Town Council, recognising that the application for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies would be a separate matter

The Locum Clerk reported that use of the Town Council's logo as an indication of endorsement of community projects would be at the discretion of the Town Clerk, including this initiative and the proposed red kite trail discussed at the last meeting of the Full Council (Minute 326/24)

413/24 NON-CIVIC EVENTS 2025

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

RESOLVED unanimously that this item be deferred to the next meeting (December 2024) of the Full Council to allow for further discussion

414/24 TOWN COUNCILLOR SURGERIES

The Council considered the holding of regular Town Councillor surgeries following the example and model established by the two District Councillors.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that the holding of regular Town Council surgeries be approved in principle and that a paper be brought to the next meeting (December 2024) proposing the detail of what form this should take

Action:

Councillor Sandall to prepare a paper for the next meeting (December 2024) describing this proposal in more detail. See also Minute 425/24

415/24 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2025

The Council considered the broad format and arrangements for the following year's Annual Town Meeting which had already been scheduled to fall on Wednesday, 26 March 2025.

Over the past two years, this meeting had been developed into a far more effective community engagement event, reaching many more people (partly through the use of live broadcast) and involving the consistent use of the Council's strategic headings.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that the broad format be retained and that ways of continuing to increase input of different sectors of the community be sought

Action:

Check whether any other major town events were planned for the same evening

416/24

INTERNAL AUDIT

The Council considered a recommendation from the Finance and Properties Committee on the appointment of an Internal Auditor.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that Mulberry and Co. be appointed as the Internal Auditor based on the negotiated fee of £495 based on two audit stages: mid-year and end-of-year

417/24

GRANT-MAKING

The Council considered arrangements, including the application process, for its grant-making during the 2025-26 Municipal Year.

The Locum Clerk had introduced a new application form based on the legal powers presently available to the Council and had proposed a substantially larger provision of £7k compared to the existing annual budget of £1.5k.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that the larger annual provision for grant-making and the new application form be welcomed and supported, with the assumption that the upper end of individual grants would be £500

418/24

BUDGET FOR 2025-26

The Council considered additional items for the 2025-26 Council budget following the recent preliminary budget discussion.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that the following items be included in the draft budget for 2025-26:

- Castle Motte - £38k
- Wigod Family Centre - £40k
- Bid writer for Public Works Loan - £10k
- Consultation on Public Works Loan - £5k
- Grant-making - £7k (see Minute 417/24 above)

419/24

VARIATION OF AGENDA ORDER

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

RESOLVED unanimously that Agenda Item 15(a), Properties, Outsourcing, be taken in closed session due to the commercial sensitivities (see Minute 428/24 below)

420/24

WORKING GROUPS

The Council considered proposals for two 'task and finish' working groups which had previously existed.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that

- (a) the terms of reference for the Wallingford in Bloom Working Group be approved;
- (b) Councillors Acreman, Charter and Holder be appointed as councillor members;
- (c) Anna Hindle, Vicki Baker, Town Council Parks and Estates Manager, Town Council Engagement Manager or Communications Officer, Sue Acreman, Louise O'Leary, Aleck Harrison, Charlie Kyriacou, Denise Eyles, Sarah Beattie, Emma Cross, Mavis Wigod, Tony Stead, Kate Eveleigh, Jane Poulter, Dave and Jean Dawe and Daniel Elsah be appointed as non-councillor members

It was proposed by Councillor Harris, and Councillor Charter, and

RESOLVED unanimously that

- (a) the terms of reference for the Tree Working Group be approved;
- (b) Councillors Acreman, Holder and Lester be appointed as councillor members;
- (c) the Parks and Estates Manager, Brian Landowski, John Branan, Chris Gamester, Darren Chamberlin, and Andrea Dexter be appointed as non-councillor members

Action:

Meetings Officer to update Working Group records to reflect the establishment of these two working groups

421/24

YOUTH (YOUTH COUNCIL) WORKING GROUP

The Council considered a request for an honorarium to be used to provide administrative support for the meetings of the Youth Council.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that an honorarium of £250 (net of tax and NI) per quarter be approved to provide administrative support for the meetings of the Youth Council to be included in the 2025-26 Council budget, with the same expenditure approved for the remainder of the 2024-25, with provision to be considered in the medium term as part of the Town Council's Organisational Design Review

The Locum Clerk confirmed this would be included in the 2025-26 budget

422/24

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The Council considered a proposal for Council and committee meeting dates for the 2025-26 Municipal Year.

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

RESOLVED unanimously that the 2025-26 Calendar of Meetings be approved

423/24

CHRISTMAS OFFICE CLOSURE

The Council considered the dates when the Town Council Office would be closed to the public over the Christmas period

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

RESOLVED unanimously that the Town Council Office would be closed on the following dates: 24, 27, 30 and 31 December 2024, in addition to the public holidays, and would reopen to the public on Thursday, 2 January 2025

The Locum Clerk confirmed that no member of staff would be forced to use their annual leave entitlement for these dates.

Action:

The Locum Clerk to put in place and make know emergency contingency measures, including provision for emergency communications if necessary

425/24

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The following items were identified for future meetings:

- Town Councillor surgeries – detailed proposal (Cllr Sandall)
- Support for non-civic events 2025 (Locum Clerk and Chair of Tourism and Economic Development Committee leading)

- The Regal - outcome of extended feasibility study of selected option, prior to public consultation (March 2025) (Cllrs Margarido and Sandall leading)
- Bull Croft – reference from the Bull Croft Trust regarding the concerns of some residents in Castle Street to the proposed recreational developments (December 2024) (Cllrs Holder and Keats-Rohan leading)
- Pedestrianisation of front area of Town Hall (Town Clerk and staff team leading)
- IT contract, including training and policy regarding document repository (Town Clerk and staff team leading)

The Honorary Freeman item (proposed by Cllr Pannett) would be referred to the next meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Committee.

Action:

Meetings Officer to schedule Honorary Freeman item for the next Civic and Ceremonial Committee meeting

Locum Clerk to discuss with Chair of the Personnel Committee the suggestion that a councillor works alongside the officer responsible for the Town Council-run band concerts the Castle Gardens

Deadline for registration for involvement in the VE Day commemoration to be clarified

426/24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

RESOLVED unanimously 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 8.42 pm

Minutes of the meeting of the
Full Council held on
25 November 2024
signed as a correct record

Chairman

2024-11-25 FC minutes DRAFT PUBLIC