

11th April 2017

Minutes of the proceedings at the **FORTY THIRD ANNUAL TOWN MEETING** held this day in the **MAIN HALL, TOWN HALL, WOKINGHAM** from 7.30pm to 8.50pm.

PRESENT

The Worshipful the Town Mayor of Wokingham
(Councillor Mrs Gwynneth Hewetson - in the Chair)
Cllrs: M Bishop, C J Bowring, N Campbell-White, Mrs UK Clark, D O H Davies, Mrs A N Drake, Ms L Forbes, C R George, Ms S C Gurney, T J Lack, D G Lee, P M Lucey, J P McGhee-Sumner, J P Mirfin, M Monk, K G Morgan, M L Richards, Ms I L Shepherd-Dubey, Mrs S Steatham, A N Waters and R J Wyatt.

IN ATTENDANCE

18 members of the public
Town Clerk
Responsible Finance Officer
Civic Officer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from the following Councillors: M Ashwell, C Moore and S Odedra

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 2)

The Minutes of the forty second Annual Town Meeting, held on 12th April 2016, were submitted to the meeting (pages 285 to 297, copies circulated at meeting).

It was proposed by Cllr Mrs G Hewetson and seconded by Cllr D Davies and it was

RESOLVED
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that the Minutes be received as a true and complete record and be confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Agenda Item 3)

No matters were raised.

NOTICE CONVENING MEETING (Agenda Item 4)

The Town Clerk stated that the Notice had been posted in accordance with statutory procedures.

TOWN MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Town Mayor gave the Annual Report as follows:

I would like to extend a warm welcome to my fellow Councillors, the Representatives of our valued organisations and fellow townspeople.

The Town Meeting is an Annual Event that gives the Town Council the opportunity to let you know what we have achieved, to answer your questions and present the grants to those who give so unstintingly to make our Town the special place it is.

I would like to thank the Town Clerk and Officers who work so well to keep our iconic building and the environment a desirable destination. Jan Nowecki is a stellar leader and the staff and Councillors work happily together - no mean feat! The thread that underpins our work is the Town Vision - To encourage the Life

and Vibrancy of Wokingham Town for its existing and future residents and Businesses.

We could not achieve this alone and the grants tonight are a small way of showing our appreciation for those that so ably help us to achieve that vision: our Town Band, St. Sebastian Wokingham Band (Damon Emes is now our Honorary Town Bugler), Wokingham Choral Society, the Lions, Carnival Committee, more arts. Hundreds of people bringing joy to thousands - the Wokingham Multiplier!

As always the year has been full of contrasts and, as your Mayor, these contrasts have been emphasised for me - we celebrated the Queen's Birthday, not only with a concert but with a Tea Party for all those residents of 90 plus - a joyful occasion - and I was also invited to two 100th Birthday parties - one of which was Fred Clark, thrice Mayor of Wokingham. I wonder if longevity comes with the job? At the other end of the scale we had a tea party with the youngsters who aspired to be Mini-Mayor and this year we selected a young lady from Wescott School, Elysia Ellis. This is a wonderful initiative and I hope it continues to become another treasured tradition.

I was proud to attend the National Finals of the Mock Trials to see our young people from Holt School defend and prosecute at the Royal Courts of Justice and go through to the finals again this year.

Other contrasts will be visible for many years to come. I was invited to the top of the new car park at Carnival pool and I have witnessed the demolition of a large area of Peach Street. It is important with so much going on that we can keep you informed and that is why we are asking you to sign up to our newsletter and one lucky person will win £50. Please don't leave tonight without giving us your details, we promise the communications will be interesting and positive.

We were invited to The Licensing of the Reverend Patrick Mukholi as Associate Priest of Woosehill Church and also, when the Father of our Town Council, Cllr Bob Wyatt, was made an Honorary Alderman by the Borough Council in recognition of his exceptional service since he was first elected in 1968!

Representing our Town, I attended the funerals of John Nike and David Matthews, both men taken unexpectedly from us.

As Mayor, I treasure the Business links and enjoyed all the visits but the most memorable has to have been the opening of the new Specsavers and cutting the cake to celebrate their being 15yrs in the Town. The memorable part was dancing with the Fizzogs the dancing Grannies - I am sure I was the only authentic one!! A brand new forum has formed with the Wokingham Business Association. Our national and independent retailers and businesses are joining together to bring a cohesive voice to the Community, They have already had meaningful interaction with Town and Borough Councils and we look forward to working with them to ensure you have the Town Centre you deserve.

We were proud to receive, for the fourth year, a Silver Gilt award in Britain in Bloom. We have taken a break this year but next time let's make it Gold!

I cannot end this report without a mention of one of my favourite events - the Mayor's Charity Concert in October. It was such a shining example of our talented and selfless groups coming together to deliver an enjoyable event - with the emphasis on the joy. For the first time we had five very different performers who freely gave of their all to raise funds for Soulscape. Soulscape were an integral part of the performance providing Master of Ceremonies, barmen, and

ushers. This was an evening I will never forget and a video is still up on the Wokingham Town Mayor's Facebook page if you would like to remind yourself or see what you missed!

I have a little more than four weeks of my term left and I have to say I have had a ball - not only that but Soulscape are organising a Ball to mark the end of my tenure and raise funds on May 5th. There are still a few tickets left so please let me know if you would like to come. Knowing the team the name, Kaleidoscope Ball, will not be the only colourful aspect. It will be another night to remember.

For the golfers among us we have the annual Town Mayor's Golf Day at East Berkshire Golf Course on 21st April - please enter a team and join the Pink Swingers (wonder if you can guess their identity?).

Being Mayor has enabled me to get to know you better and I hope I have helped publicise your events and raise any issues that were important to you. I will endeavour to use that knowledge to continue to work effectively as a councillor and as a responsible resident of Wokingham in the future.

Thank you for your attention.

I will now hand you over to the Committee Chairman for their reports starting with Councillor David Davies, Chairman of the Finance and Personnel Committee.

COMMITTEES' ANNUAL REPORTS (Agenda Item 6)

Chairman of Finance and Personnel Committee

Cllr Davies stood and presented his report as follows:

Good evening I am David Davies the Chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee, Leader of the Council and member for Wescott East. This is one of the harder speeches to make in my opinion as this committee works best when it is least interesting, given that the committee is responsible for the financial health of the council, making sure that the numbers add up and that we are spending only what we can. This provides the budgets which allows the officers and all of the other committees to make Wokingham the great place that it is to live. To give you an idea of the scale of the work we do, the budget for the coming year is approximately £2.6m, this is funded from a variety of sources including your precept, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Rental and investment and this year a loan to allow the redevelopment of the Market Place surrounding this historic building.

This committee isn't solely about governance and money. We are responsible for staffing matters and this year that includes supporting more flexible working for some of our officers and working to increase the size of the team as the council grows in responsibility and scope. Regarding the officers we have an absolutely excellent team and I am sure my colleagues will be noting that as well however I would particularly like to thank our RFO Nicky Harmsworth for keeping excellent track of the budgets and financing, as well as Jan our Town Clerk without whom this Council simply wouldn't function half as well as it does.

We have the privilege of deciding how to distribute Grants and this year we have provided 22 Grants of approximately £70k to various local charities including the CAB, Winter Carnival and the May Fair. In addition, as part of our work with the police we part fund a PCSO and this committee works as liaison into the police who periodically meet with us allowing the council to put forward its priorities and understand their perspective on Wokingham.

The coming year looks to be extremely exciting as we hope to embark on the redevelopment of the Market Place in partnership with the Borough Council, decisions have still to be made however assuming this is approved this will be one of the biggest projects this council has ever undertaken and we have worked extremely hard to ensure that it is a financially responsible decision. I hope that by the time of this meeting next year the fruits of those labours will be seen around us and Wokingham will have the heart that it deserves.
Thank you all for your time

Next the Mayor asked Cllr Campbell-White to present the Amenities Committee report:

Chairman of Amenities Committee

Cllr Campbell-White stood and presented his report as follows:

Amenities committee has largest workload and is responsible for the following:

- Buildings, Parks & Open Spaces, the Market Place, Christmas Lights, Allotments
- Horticultural Competitions, Graffiti, the list goes on!!

I will say something about each of these categories about what we have done in the past year.

BUILDINGS

1) Town Hall

- Large scale restoration project for the Town Hall windows including the exposure of original stone work surrounds
- Roof repairs to North Facing Dormer roof vents
- Additional Fire protection measures: fire proofing of doors, additional detection and alarm modifications to enhance the safety of all users
- New display cabinets for REME Room which is now designated as an historical reminder of the Aborfield REME Regiment.
- Ongoing maintenance regime to protect the heritage of this building

We are currently planning a re-decoration programme for the Main Hall, Council Chamber and Annexe for early next year.

2) Woosehill community centre

- Minor maintenance work has taken place this year but a larger scale refurbishment is hoped for next year

3) Shops, Cafe, & Offices within Town Hall complex

- These bring in rental revenue into the Town Council

PARKS & OPEN SPACES

- Continued support for Holt Copse Volunteers to carry out various projects which has mainly been the footpaths and the Nature display boards
- Extensive tree works to preserve our tree stocks
- Footpath improvements to Leslie Sears Playing Field and Viking Field, which has greatly assisted the children's "walking bus" to Evendons free School
- Footpath improvements to Redlands Farm Park

- Maintaining against financial restraints 2 weekly cycle of grass cutting and dog waste collections
- Wild Flower planting in Viking Field
- Tree planting with the aid of free trees from the Woodland Trust
- Maintenance of play equipment at the parks

MARKET

Cllr Lucey will be providing an update on this shortly.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

- 2016 new lights in trees by Tudor House and Bosphorus Barbers, Broad Street
- 2016 new roof lights on Tudor House
- 2016 new lights on columns on Old Row Court
- 2017 new three year contract entered into with LITE

ALLOTMENTS

- Four existing sites --Gipsy Lane, Latimer Read, Ormonde Road, St. Paul's Gate..all c.385 plots fully let, but waiting list at shortest in 10 years with 2 to 3 months wait.
- Contact WTC to register your interest (form on webebsite)
- Successful Ormonde Road Open Day in August 2016 with the Town Mayor, part of National Allotments Week
- WTC recently established its allotment policy based upon the health and well-being benefits of allotment gardening
- Ongoing negotiation with WBC and housebuilders re new allotment sites at Montague Park, Keephatch Beech and Kentwood farm
- As a result of significant criminal damage in January at Ormonde Road the security of the site has been significantly improved with close liaison with and support from Thames Valley Police (Wokingham)

GARDENING COMPETITIONS

1) THAMES AND CHILTERN IN BLOOM

2016 Silver Gilt medal for Wokingham in Bloom. Mark of 84%, best yet.

- Well done to the hundreds of volunteers and the small steering group, particularly Paul Smith (AO) who pulled it all together
- Judges Kate Dagnall and Paul Almond said *"Wokingham in Bloom is a true catalyst bringing the community together, instilling pride of place and making Wokingham a better place; keep up the good work as Gold is not far away"*.
- In the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' assessed section for standalone gardening projects:
 - Rose Street Gardeners was assessed as 'thriving'
 - Pavilions Border community garden was assessed as 'thriving'
 - Incredible Edible was assessed as 'thriving'
 - Wokingham Library group was assessed as 'thriving'
 - Norreys Gardening Group was assessed as 'outstanding'
 - Cockpit Path community garden was assessed as 'outstanding'
- The Norreys Gardening Group was also awarded a Britain in Bloom national certificate of distinction for being rated as outstanding for each of the last three years.
- Wokingham in Bloom is not entering T&C in Bloom in 2017 because of the disruption in the town centre. It is hoped to return in 2018.

- But.....There will be 'It's Your Neighbourhood' entries in 2017.

2) WOKINGHAM IN FLOWER

Commercial premises with gardens; Commercial premises with hanging baskets; Public houses. The main sponsor was AB WALKER.

3) GREENFINGERS

Front gardens; Rear gardens; Hanging baskets; Residential & care homes.

Again I would like to express a tremendous thanks to Wokingham Horticultural Society for their time & judging expertise.

4) ALLOTMENTS

Run on a site by site basis and judged by experienced allotmenters on behalf of WTC.

GRAFFITI

- As part of the Bloom entry in 2016 significant areas of graffiti were cleaned off public buildings and street furniture cabinets in June
- Regrettably graffiti still appearing sporadically which is very expensive to remove
- WTC (spearheaded by Cllr Lynn Forbes) is working closely with Thames Valley Police (Wokingham) to apprehend offenders and to develop an educational programme to take into schools about the damage caused by graffiti and the cost of removing it
- Special thanks to M&Co, Marks and Spencer, Scottish and Southern Electricity for their great work in clearing off lots of graffiti from their premises

BIG TIDY UP

There was a successful Town Councillor led litter pick around town centre organised by Cllr Lack on Saturday 01 April.

THANKS

I would like to offer huge thanks to the Amenities Committee for all of their hard work and particularly to Cllr Mark Ashwell for chairing occasionally and also specifically to those who do the real work and not the standard 38 hours, but work as required. Wokingham Town Council is so lucky:

Paul Smith (Amenities Officer)

Rob Vincent (Buildings & Grounds Officer) and grounds staff

Kevin Belstone (**Caretaking**) who looks after all events/bookings for the three Town Hall rooms which support so many functions.

Please remember that the Town Hall is available to be booked for weddings, either for a full service or just the ceremony in this elegant main hall or in our Diamond Jubilee Room for smaller gatherings. Brochures are available here tonight or from our Information Centre.

Next the Mayor asked Cllr Lucey to present the Market Place working party report:

Market Place Working Party Report

Cllr P Lucey stood and presented his report as follows:

The Market Working Party (MWP)'s duties include promoting Wokingham Market and its marketplace. Our focus this year has been on the renewal and improvement of the Market Place itself. (On a personal note, the Market Place improvement has been a long-term ambition of mine.) Currently our Market Place's surface is poor and uneven, the trees have damaged the surface and underlying utilities, there is no power or lighting, the bus route, Denmark Street width, and the "sunken-semi-road" west of the Town Hall are confusing and waste space. The current situation is unsightly, restricts use - and does little to enhance our lovely Victorian Town Hall.

The current plans have been developed over some years and now Wokingham Town Council (WTC), in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), is delighted to be finally proceeding with them. This project is WTCs Biggest Project Ever! We plan a larger, useable space, removing the bus lanes and evening out Denmark St. We will lay proper, even, and attractive stone paving (and I am indebted to the Mayor, Cllr Hewetson, who is driving the mosaic paving stones feature!) above embedded proper power and utilities for lighting and for the market. We will have renewed trees, with proper tree pits that allow their roots to flourish safely. The vision is to have a beautiful, configurable space that can be used to improve market provision, host diverse events, or even restaurant tables. You can see our proposals on display in the Town Hall entrance or behind you this evening and we hope to have larger illustrations in the Market Place itself in due course.

Subject to some final approvals at the end of April we want to start the work ASAP. As I have stated, the Market Place is WTCs Biggest Project Ever, I am truly looking forward to it.

The MWP has also discussed general Market Trading, providing replacement pitches while the work is under way and brainstorming ideas to increase stalls and trade in the future. But of course driving a better market will be much easier once the beautiful market place is complete. My thanks to our loyal current traders and all their efforts through this year – and the next year!

And also my thanks to my fellow councillors and of course to Robert Vincent, the Buildings and Grounds Officer, and to the Town Clerk for all their hard work this year.

Next the Mayor asked Cllr Lee to present the Planning and Transport Committee report:

Chairman of Planning and Transport Committee

Cllr Lee stood and presented his report as follows:

My name is David Lee and I am chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee.

Just on the subject of trees, if anyone has concerns about trees, our committee will always to assess this and to get a Tree Preservation Order in if it is felt appropriate.

The Planning and Transport Committee considers all planning applications and transport proposals affecting our town.

Our role is to ensure that planning applications are fair and adhere to national and local planning conditions and do not unfairly impact upon neighbours and the wider community.

Our findings and recommendations and residents' views and concerns are considered and presented to the Borough Council Planning Committee. Although the Town Council is consulted on all planning issues relating to Wokingham Town it is the Borough Council Planning Committee which makes the final decision.

When comments are made in our reports to the Borough on planning applications to have any impact they must be Material Planning Points. Simply making a statement that we as your representatives do not like an application carries no weight in the decision making process.

Your Town Council Committee members are therefore trained in Planning Law and are fully aware of all Planning Guidance both Local and National. And I would thank them for undertaking this difficult task.

Our normal approach when we have concerns or recommendations regarding an Application is to discuss this with the Planning Officer at the Borough with a view to seeing if the application can be amended to improve the proposal prior to determination.

And I am glad to say that we have been successful in a number of occasions in having the final application amended to reflect these concerns.

If the application is to be heard by the Borough Planning Committee a member of the Town Planning Committee will speak at the Planning Committee to ensure our concerns are fully appreciated by the members before they determine the application.

If you would like a specific application considered by the Committee please let us know; we would also be delighted to hear your reasons for objection or indeed support.

We welcome residents to attend our Committee Meetings and encourage those attending to take an active part in the proceedings. In addition to general applications the Committee will also be asked to comment on various other issues such as:

1. The Regeneration of the town centre and Elms Field
2. The Carnival Pool Redevelopment
3. The Local Plan update which dictates where housing goes and the required infrastructure for the next 20 years.

Applications to be considered by the Committee are listed on the Town Council's web site. And as I mentioned earlier if you would like the Committee to consider any applications please let the office or your local councillor know which.

I would like to thank the members of the Committee for their considerable work over the year which has been invaluable and produced many excellent results. In addition I would like to thank Mike Dunstan, the Town Council's Planning Officer, for his continued enthusiasm, hard work and support to all of the Committee members.

Finally, I thank residents for their contributions to the activities of the Committee and encourage your continued participation in the meetings in the coming year;

your input helps us in our deliberations, guides our actions and is greatly appreciated.

Next the Mayor asked Cllr Mirfin to present the Civic Committee report:

Committee Member of Civic Advisory Committee

Cllr Mirfin stood and presented his report as follows:

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Philip Mirfin and I have had the privilege since May of last year to chair this important committee of this council.

The objectives of this committee are to maintain the Civic Structure of our Town on behalf of the community, supporting the Mayor and co-ordinating civic events to capture and promote our heritage. It is one of our duties to ensure that historical information is available for educational and recreational purposes whilst working closely with many local organisations and our Arts and Culture Committee.

It has always been my personal belief that it is the duty of all elected members to support the continuation of the traditions of our town whilst introducing small improvements that allow for more of our residents to become engaged in our community activities.

The past year has been one of continued variety and interest across the wide age span of our growing population of residents from school children visiting, our Heritage Open Days in September to our Remembrance parade and Church Service.

Last year was also the 90th birthday of our monarch, Queen Elizabeth 2, and to help commemorate her majesty's birthday the Town Council organised a Tea Party with WADE on June 12th for many of our residents who were 90 or over on that day. This was hosted on behalf of the Council by the Mayor, accompanied by Lady Elizabeth our High Steward and Cllr Bob Wyatt and a good time was had by all.

Mid-year we also launched the Wokingham Town App, in time for the Heritage Weekend in September, which can be downloaded for free in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store by searching 'Wokingham Town History.'

Recognising those residents in our community who freely give up their time for others is particularly important to us and on the 8th December I chaired the Civic Awards Selection committee to consider this year's nominees. I would like to thank Cllrs Bishop and Wyatt, as well as Lady Elizabeth Godsal, Mr Phil Creighton the Editor of the Wokingham Paper, Mr Roger Ilett Chairman of Wokingham Scouts and Mr John Patey, the former Royal British Legion President, for their support in choosing our excellent award winners.

In January, we were very pleased to announce that we were appointing an Honorary Town Bugler, namely Mr Damon Eames who will now officiate in that role when ceremonial requirements dictate. Damon has acted as our Town Bugler for many years already, on loan from his role in St Sebastian's Town Band.

We have agreed that from May of this year, we shall be amalgamating our Mayor Making day with Civic Sunday. This will allow more family members and the

public to attend these traditional ceremonies on one day and that day being a Sunday will not affect working commitments etc. The only sadness on my part is that other commitments mean that I shall miss this event for the first time in my time on this Council. But I am sure that it will be a day to remember.

Lastly, I would like to give my especial thanks to our Civic Officer who balances the requirements of the Civic Committee with those of the Mayor and her own family, as well as to all the Members of the Civic Committee.

Next the Mayor presented the Arts and Culture Committee report:

Chairman of Arts & Culture Committee

Cllr Mrs Hewetson stood and presented her report as follows:

Good evening, you could be forgiven for thinking "oh no, not the Mayor again!" But you would be mistaken as I am also the Chairman of the Arts & Culture Committee! Each of our committees has their own vision statement which underpins the Town Council Vision. The aim of the Arts & Culture Committee is :- Encouraging the delivery of more arts & culture throughout our Town - and we really do try to do what it says on the tin!

I would like to thank the Councillors who so loyally serve on my Committee. They could come up with a variety of ideas but without the backing and hard work of our Town Clerk and Officers those ideas would not see the light of day. I would especially like to acknowledge Gemma Cumming and Rob Vincent who are presently working to bring you the Annual Concert on 3rd June which will take place in Broad Street once again. On the day, every officer will play his or her part to ensure the day goes smoothly.

Gemma has also recently completed the May Cultural Month Brochure that I hope has, by now, been delivered to every home in the Town. If you haven't had a copy (or know someone who hasn't) please do help yourself - they are at the back of the room. Compiling this programme is quite a task as it features in excess of 100 events and covers 40 pages. My thanks to the advertisers, most of whom are also event organisers.

One of my first duties as Mayor was to open the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations in Broad Street. After the Service of Thanksgiving we were entertained all afternoon by Rock Choir, Circus Scene entertainers, face painters, the Wokingham Theatre photo booth and costumed characters and our very own Queen complete with Corgi (balloons!) - to mention just a few. As evening fell the 3rd Annual Street Concert took over and there was laughter and dancing until late - not too late as it was a Sunday. One of the things that made our day unique was the lack of rain. Nearly every town around us was deluged whilst we had a maximum of four rain drops, however I am not allowed to make a comment on the righteous!! Suffice it to say that this drew the largest audience since the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.

That day also saw the launch of a brand new event - the ArtFest which brought an art exhibition to the Market Place. It proved so popular that the Organisers are repeating the event on 3rd June this year.

Fun Day is a free event for our youngest residents and this takes place on the last Saturday in May. 2016 was the third time it was held on Langborough Village Green and I believe everyone is now happy with the change. There is room to spread out the rides and entertainments and still space for families to picnic. This

involves Gemma in a lot of organisation but we believe that it is vital that young families can spend the day with their little ones inexpensively.

We welcomed the Arts Trail back in September and this is now well supported and something that families look forward to - truly an event for all ages.

Now -Is it a trail - or is it Public Art? Whatever you decide we are now planning the mosaics that will decorate our regenerated pavements. The art will be conceptual but will relate to an historic event in Wokingham. Each one will be featured on the Town App which will go into more depth about the story and the sponsor. It is a very exciting opportunity to be working on and I would be delighted to hear from anyone who is inspired to contribute to the mosaics as a legacy or a memorial.

Bringing 2016 to a close we had the Winter Carnival, now one of the most popular street events in the South East, brought to you by a group of dedicated Townspeople: this is followed by the Living Advent Calendar delivered by more arts and bringing you a nightly capsule entertainment for the first 24 days in December. Both events are sponsored by the Town Council and we would like to thank the organisers for their dedication and skill

Not an event but an important part of our heritage is the Virtual Museum. We would like to expand this and so we are looking for a voluntary, computer literate, history buff to help us grow this valuable record of our Town artefacts. Not a big ask!!

As the year comes round again, May sees the start of many outdoor events and underpinning these are the Sunny Saturday entertainments. It is highly probable that they will be moved to Erfstadt Court this year but do come along at 11am most Saturdays to cheer them on. The Town sponsors the May Fayre and the Lions will deliver this event, to their usual high standard on May Day this year - perhaps we will see Maypole Dancing amongst their many and varied activities. We will be hearing more on this from Andy Slay in a few minutes.

Theatre in the Park at Howard Palmer Gardens is now in its 4th year and this year brings us a specially adapted Shakespearian tragedy - adapted to the space and for the children so probably not too tragic!

This concludes your whistle-stop journey through our Cultural Year and return to my opening reminder of our upcoming events and Street Concert. I know most of you are involved in the events either as performers or audience. Whatever your part, may I take this opportunity to thank you for your involvement and recommend that you sign up to the Love Wokingham newsletter and website. Thank you for listening

The Mayor thanked all the Chairman for their reports and for the time they set aside to achieve all of these things.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (Agenda Item 7)

Mr Keith Malvern asked:

Wokingham Library

'When did the Town Council first know about plans to move the library? Why had you been told that this was confidential and what action did you and members take?

Now that WBC has said that consultation will take place on the proposed move have you been told the nature and timescale of the consultation and when it comes how will you ensure your comments are known? Will you discuss at Planning, Full Council or a special meeting?’

The Mayor asked Cllr D Davies to respond who gave the following reply:

Thank you for your question.

The Town Council was made aware confidentially on 22nd February this year that a proposal, in principle, was being taken to WBC’s Executive meeting on 30th March. WBC does from time to time share matters confidentially with town and parish councils in the interests of good partnership working.

On this occasion members took this as information. As a council we took no action in terms of feedback to WBC, however Cllr Wyatt did raise with the Town Clerk that he recalled WTC had made a financial contribution to the establishment of the library in 1996 with the then Berkshire County Council. The Town Clerk undertook some research into WTC’s past minutes and indeed this Council did make a donation of £55k at that point. This has subsequently been discussed at a Finance and Personnel meeting on 28th March where it was agreed that WTC would request that, should any move of the library take place, a plaque is sited acknowledging the donation to the current site. In addition it was requested that free space be made available for community arts & crafts to be displayed.

The Town Council has no information about what form or timescale any consultation would take. As is our practice WTC will respond and this is likely to be considered by the Town Council’s Planning & Transportation Committee which of course you will be aware are public meetings to which you are welcome.

Mr Malvern then asked:

Thank you for your reply but as many of you will have seen in the Wokingham Paper last week it talked about the secrecy of this information being kept from the people. It is important that we, the residents, are kept up-to-date. Can I ask why this information was kept confidential and can I urge you to press Wokingham Borough Council to tell our residents what proposals are so that people can be consulted?

Cllr Davies replied as follows:

Things are often shared with this and other councils and on this occasion there was no action to be taken at that point as there was no concrete proposal. WTC will engage with any consultation when it is launched.

The Mayor suggested to Mr Malvern that the matter was drawn to a close and tried to reassure him that the Borough Council would do all they could to consult with residents on this.

Mrs Priest (question received prior to the meeting but not present on the evening) asked:

Cycling on Pavements

With the regeneration taking place will you be banning cycling on pavements?

The Mayor asked Cllr D Lee to respond who gave the following reply:

I am always keen to try to resolve residents' queries, however on this occasion WTC does not have jurisdiction over this matter.

Pavements form part of the highway and these are the responsibility of Wokingham Borough Council.

I can understand Mrs Priest's concerns given that a number of our pavements are quite narrow and indeed this was an issue that was raised at our Full Council meeting in January when Superintendent Rob France, Local Policing Area Commander, attended the meeting. Whilst it is fact illegal to cycle on the footpath Superintendent France explained that this issue has to be considered against all criminal activity that the police deal with and clearly would not for example be prioritised above more serious crime issues such as burglary or assault. They would however tackle it as appropriate when resources allowed.

I will ensure that Mrs Priest's concerns are passed on to both WBC and the local neighbourhood inspector.

Out of interest the legislation on this is as follows:

Cycling on footways (a path at the side of a carriageway) is prohibited by Section 72 of the Highway Act 1835, amended by Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1888.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT ELECTORS MAY WISH TO RAISE (Agenda Item 8)

No other business was discussed

GRANTS (Agenda Item 10)

Presentations were made by Wokingham Lions and JAC to share information about the work they do and how they have benefited from receiving a grant from Wokingham Town Council

The Mayor then asked the RFO to announce the following names of the grant recipients for them to collect their certificates for grants they will be receiving for the financial year 2017/2018:

All Saints Church
ARC Youth Counselling
Wokingham Choral Society
Wokingham & District Citizens Advice Bureau
Cultural Partnership
Dingley Early Years Centre
Friends of Emmbrook
Holt Copse Conservation Volunteers
Home Start
Wokingham Job Support Centre
Just Around the Corner
Wokingham Lions Club
Readibus
Relate
Samaritans of Bracknell, Wokingham, Ascot & District
St. Catherine's Church

Saint Sebastian Wokingham Band
Wokingham Volunteer Centre
Wokingham Winter Carnival

CHAIRMAN