

5th May 2020 Annual Council Meeting Mayoral Inauguration

In accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 this meeting was held virtually.

Minutes of the proceedings of the **FORTY- SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING** of **WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL** held virtually on this day from 7.30pm to 8.20pm.

PRESENT:

Chairman: Cllr L Forbes (Mayor)

Cllrs.: R Bishop-Firth, A Box, J Box, N Campbell-White, P Cunnington, P Dennis, N Fox, M Fumagalli, M Gee, S Gurney, D Hinton, P Hornsby, D King T J Lack, D Lee, T Lloyd, P Lucey, M Malvern, K Malvern, A Mather, I L Shepherd-Dubey, A Tebboth.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Jan Nowecki – Town Clerk

Nicky Harmsworth – Finance Officer

Nikki Payler – Civic Officer

David Dunham – Mace Bearer

Mrs C Lack

Mr C Gee

2 Members of public

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

No apologies were received.

MEMBERS' INTERESTS (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OR PUBLIC (Agenda Item 3)

No questions were received.

Cllr E Bishop joined the meeting at 7.40pm

RETIRING MAYOR (Agenda Item 4)

The retiring Mayor, Councillor Lynn Forbes , addressed the meeting:

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Where did that year go? One minute I was flying back and forth to Crete for the inauguration as Mayor, now under the pandemic of Corvid-19... I exit. You can't say it hasn't been a phenomenal year hasn't it?

Firstly, you all kindly agreed for me to be Mayor during 2019-2020, so thank you for your very kind support. I believe I have had a successful year's tenure in the role.

But I don't believe it would have been as successful had I not had David Dunham at my side most of the time. His, support, his knowledge, his links within Wokingham with businesses and residents are boundless and this role would not have had the bandwidth in the press without his photos, and on a personal note... when he sends them to me the captions, I can't begin to share those but the humour he brought to the role was great, and always made seemingly fraught moments, melt away. So, thank you David, without you at my side the role of Mayor, this year, would not have been so successful I am sure.

Of course the support from both Nicky Harmsworth our Finance guru, supporting me through the sale of the Opera Tickets back in November last year was amazing, thank you for your support Nicky. Opera that was a fun night, a big thank you to Nikki Payler, whose support for the Opera, and during the year, has been amazing. I think I can say we have had fun, achieved some amazing feats, and perhaps come out the other side with a few new ideas. Thank you, Nikki.

Another thank you, to our honorary officers, their support during the year has been wonderful. From Stan the stalker (another story!!) to Father Christmas, (Neil) joining and Martin; and of course, Nigel our Town Cryer, all have been there when needed. A heartfelt thank you to you all.

I've mentioned our Opera evening, for those that attended I think you will agree we achieved a 'touch of class'?

I couldn't have pulled it off without the support of Jan, Nikki, Nicky, David, and our treasured honoraries – thank you.

When I began my year, I chose the Diana Brimblecombe Animal Rescue Centre, DBARC, as my charity. I think you all know that was because my dear companion of some ten or more years, Brandi, suddenly passed away at the same time as I became Mayor, I was going to do a year as Mayor and no dog – I knew the commitment I was taking on! Alas, a tidy house, a quiet house was not for me and dear Magic my new companion arrived. She has accompanied me on one or two events and achieved the name of Mayor Magic, she's a great hit with children and adults and brings fun to any event!

I'd like to take a moment now, to tell you a little detail behind the funds we all raised this year for Diana Brimblecombe, a profit from the Opera of £3800.00, a magnificent £3000 from the Winter Carnival Committee, they work so hard on that project, what an amazing team, thank you for the funds and all the effort every one of you puts into such a fab event, to funds from private donations, Wokingham Choral Society, and various collections and sales over the year, left us ending the year in a very favourable position of being able to give Diana Brimblecome £7960.00. Let me assure you this donation will be gratefully received, as during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Diana Brimblecome team are struggling as they are not able to keep their stream of funding going as pet placement is on lockdown too. So, I am sure I am right in saying this donation has come at a very key time for them.

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Two last things.

A big thank you to Jan for her support and guidance during the year, we are so lucky to have her leading our team – thank you Jan.

Finally, and I'm sure you're very grateful I've come to the end, it gives me great pleasure to hand the baton of Mayor over to Councillor Lack, or should I say Mr Wokingham?

Tony, enjoy it, live every moment, and take all the memories and treasure them, they are fantastic.

Thank you all. Be well and stay safe.

ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR (Agenda Item 5)

The retiring Town Mayor invited nominations for the office of Town Mayor for the ensuing year.

Cllr Daniel Hinton offered some words in support of his nomination for Cllr Tony Lack, Cllr Imogen Shepherd Dubey offered her support of his nomination for Cllr Tony Lack.

It was proposed by Cllr D Hinton and the nomination was seconded by Cllr I Shepherd-Dubey and it was

**RESOLVED
30122**

that Cllr Tony Lack be elected as the Town Mayor for the ensuing year.

A vote was taken and this was unanimous.

Declaration of the Result of Election

The Town Clerk declared Cllr T Lack duly elected to the Office of Town Mayor for the ensuing year.

DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE (Agenda Item 6)

The Town Mayor took the oath of office and the Town Clerk advised that, once Covid 19 restrictions were lifted, the official Declaration of Acceptance of Office would be signed and witnessed.

ADDRESS BY TOWN MAYOR (Agenda Item 7)

The new Town Mayor then gave his introductory speech;

Councillors, Council Officers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lynn for her year as Town Mayor. Lynn became Mayor under slightly unusual circumstances being called back from holiday to take up the office – I'm hoping that these unusual circumstances don't become the norm.

Lynn certainly gave the job her all, she worked upon many projects and kept an interest in all of the Town Council's activities and attended many committees. But mostly I would like to thank her for three items: (Firstly) The work she continued to

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do with our Secondary schools supporting them in the Graffiti and Litter projects. (Secondly) During Lynn's chairmanship students joined us on Committees providing us with some input from their point of view and providing them with a great introduction into local government. And (Finally) Lynn's charity, The Diana Brimblecome Animal Rescue Centre will, I am sure, benefit greatly from the night on £8,000 raised during Lynn's tenure. So, thank you Lynn for all you have done during your year.

So now I would like to thank Council for giving me the honour of being your Council Chairman and therefore Town Mayor of Wokingham. Along with my wife Claire by my side I plan to represent you and the Town with as much energy as we can muster in these strange times.

Claire and I moved to Woosehill in 1984 when it was still being developed, with our first child on the way. The estate was growing; at the time much of the estate's roads were just roughly surfaced and Doctor Darlinson personally cared for everyone - we grew with the estate and the Town in that previous urban expansion. We commuted to work and struggled financially like most young families. Claire went off to work at the Royal Berks and taught at a nursery school while I was employed at NATS Air Traffic Control in an Engineering role. Like most families, we had busy times getting our children (by then James, Amy, Christopher and Alan) through their schooling and to their activities. I got involved with Scouting, Allotment gardening and the Woosehill Community Church. At one stage I had the honour of running the largest Scout Troop in Berkshire with an Air Scout unit on the side. (And/With a very proud moment when the Air Scouts obtained RAF recognition)

A few breaths later our children went off to University or equivalent and (dare I say happily) mostly did not return home as their lives took independent steps. In normal times Claire and I would be getting our kicks visiting, or better still hosting, our 4 children, their 4 partners and the 5 going on 6 grandchildren.

A few years ago Councillor David Lee called round to let me know that I should become a Councillor too. The answer of "one meeting a month" to my "how much involvement" question was very wrong. Happily very wrong. It's been nonstop ever since and I am enjoying every moment of the challenge.

I love the Town Council Civic traditions and adore the things that Amenities provide. In fact, when asked what I would like to achieve as Mayor there is really only one answer; I want to end up having to present myself with "Best Allotment" award. Sadly that can't happen this year.

I now sit on the Planning committee plus the Graffiti and Elms Park Working Parties.

But Amenities remains my love. With others, including Past Mayor Lynn Forbes, I have loved being involved with the Graffiti and Litter WP (removal of, of course). And I have been very keen to see Elms Park maturing into a wonderful Town recreation area.

I suspect this amenities focus was the seed for getting me into one of my latest hobbies - Beekeeping.

It does seem odd to be formally made Mayor in my study (aka small spare bedroom). But that's the way it goes.

Anyway, Claire and I really look forward to going out and about escorted by our wonderful Mace Bearer David Dunham to thank people for what they do and to offer Council's, and our, moral support in their activities. Because of this I have decided that my theme for the year is simply "THANK YOU".

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Each year the sitting Mayor gets to select a charity to support. As a parent and grand-parent myself, I plan to choose a child-related organisation as my nominated charity for 2020/21, details of which I will share in due course. As an aside, there is also a glimmer of hope that WTC might be able to support some charitable causes owing to its underspend on events.

Nikki Payler kindly provided me with a workbook called "preparing to join the chain gang". Its aimed at Mayor's from City to Borough to Town so is pretty varied. But what it does bring to the front is that the Mayor, as Chairman of the Council, is not there to bring his agenda to the Council but rather to support Councillors in bringing their agendas to fruition. I therefore would like to make clear that I am not standing for any specific topic; instead I stand simply to support the Council in everything it does and to try to say "Thank You" on behalf of the Town to every organisation and everyone that has helped us through the strange times in which we are living.

Claire and I therefore thank you for the appointment and we are both really looking forward to representing you in person once we can return to normal functionality.

MAYORESS (Agenda Item 8)

The Town Mayor formally introduced his wife, Claire Lack.

NOMINATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF DEPUTY MAYOR (Agenda Item 9)

The Town Mayor stated that it was usual for the incoming Mayor to indicate their wishes for Deputy Mayor and his nominee was Cllr M Gee.

It was proposed by Cllr T Lack and seconded by Cllr P Hornsby and it was

**RESOLVED
30123**

that Cllr M Gee be duly elected as the Deputy Mayor for the ensuing year.

A vote was taken and this was unanimous.

THE DEPUTY MAYOR'S CONSORT (Agenda Item 10)

The Deputy Town Mayor formally introduced her husband, Chris Gee.

HIGH STEWARD AND TOWN HONORARIES (Agenda Item 11)

The Town Mayor noted the following

- a) That Mrs Lucy Zeal remains High Steward of Wokingham.
- b) That Mr Neil Hodgson and Mr Martin Bishop have been appointed within the year.
- c) That all other honoraries remain the same.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS (Agenda Item 12)

It was proposed by Cllr T Lack and seconded by Cllr L Forbes and the following was

**RESOLVED
30124**

(a) that the minutes of the proceedings of the Council Meeting held on 28th January 2020 pages 16017 to 16021, be received as a true and correct record

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and that they be signed by the Chairman once Covid-19 restrictions were lifted and;

(b) that the minutes of the proceedings of the Mayoral Selection Meeting held on 16th March 2020 pages 16049 to 16050, be received as a true and correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman once Covid-19 restrictions were lifted.

The Mayor asked for a vote to be taken and 23 Cllrs were in favour and 1 Cllr abstained.

ATTENDANCE REGISTER (Agenda Item 13)

The Attendance Chart extracted from the Attendance Register of Members at Council and Committee meetings for the past year was received and noted. Cllr I Shepherd-Dubey wished it to be noted that some of the graphs showed a low attendance from Councillors but this was because of known illness and a period of maternity leave.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda Item 14)

It was proposed by Cllr R Bishop-Firth and seconded by Cllr A Mather and it was

**RESOLVED
30125**

that Cllr I Shepherd-Dubey be appointed leader of the Council for the Municipal Year 2020-21.

The Mayor asked for a vote to be taken and 23 Cllrs were in favour and 1 Cllr abstained.

STANDING COMMITTEES – MEMBERSHIP (Agenda Item 15)

The Mayor noted that Cllr L Forbes would replace Cllr M Gee on the Civic Committee.

It was proposed by Cllr R Bishop-Firth and seconded by Cllr A Mather and it was

**RESOLVED
30126**

That with the change noted above for the Civic Committee, all Standing Committees, including the Emergency Committee, remain the same and be elected for the ensuing year (Local Government Act 1972, Section 101 (1)(a)).

A vote was taken and this was unanimous.

MAYORAL SELECTION COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 16)

It was confirmed that the Mayoral Selection Committee for 2021/22 will be in accordance with Standing Order 23.

STRATEGY WORKING PARTY (Agenda Item 17)

It was proposed by Cllr I Shepherd-Dubey and seconded by Cllr S Gurney and it was

**RESOLVED
30127**

that Cllr A Tebboth and Cllr D Hinton replace Cllr M Fumagalli and Cllr J Box on the Strategy Working Party.

A vote was taken and this was unanimous.

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COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES (Agenda Item 18)

It was proposed by Cllr T Lack and seconded by Cllr A Mather and it was

**RESOLVED
30128**

- (a) that Cllr M Gee be appointed to replace Cllr N Campbell-White to represent the Town Council at Citizens Advice for the forthcoming year and;
- (b) To note all other representatives remain the same.

A vote was taken and this was unanimous.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (Agenda Item 19)

The Mayor noted that due to the Covid 19 emergency the Parish Meeting would not take place. A short summary of the work of Committees will be placed on the Town Council's website.

Cllr Gurney asked if it could be held virtually but the Town Clerk advised that the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 did not cover the Parish Meeting.

AUDIT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2020 (Agenda Item 20)

Cllr M Gee gave background into the Audit regime.

It was proposed by Cllr M Gee and seconded by Cllr D Lee and the following was

**RESOLVED
30129**

- (a) that the Internal Auditor's reports dated 13th January 2020 and 15th April 2020 respectively, for the Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2020 be received;
- (b) the review of effectiveness of internal audit performed by this Council for the year end March 2020 be received and;
- (c) that Claire Connell be confirmed as the Internal Auditor for this council for the financial year 2020/2021.

A vote was taken and this was unanimous.

ANNUAL RETURN 2019/2020 (Agenda Item 21)

It was proposed by M Gee and seconded by Cllr D Lee and the following was

**RESOLVED
30130**

- (a) that the Financial Statements for the year ending 31st March 2020 to include the charity statements for King George V and Leslie Sears playing fields be received and noted;
- (b) to note that full council is de facto the trustee board of above charities;
- (c) that the annual return variance review which accompanies the annual return to the Audit Commission be received and approved; and
- (d) that the the Local Councils Annual Return for the year ending 31st March 2020 be received and approved.

Cllr M Gee noted that the Annual Return required "wet signatures" and these would be obtained outside of the meeting following social distancing rules.

A vote was taken and this was unanimous.

CHAIRMAN

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