

26th September 2022

Minutes of the proceedings of the **CIVIC COMMITTEE** meeting held on this day in **the Main Hall, Town Hall, Wokingham** from 19:30 to 21:00pm.

PRESENT

Chair: Cllr David Lee

Councillors: J Ainslie, R Bishop-Firth (Vice-Chair), M Ferrai, D King, T Lloyd, K Malvern, P Lucey.

IN ATTENDANCE

Civic Officer

Mr Glen Kopanski (resident)

Mrs Kopanski (resident)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr T Lack.

MEMBERS' INTERESTS (Agenda Item 2)

Cllr Malvern asked for it to be noted that he is a member of the Wokingham Society.

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

The Chair invited Mr Kopanski and his Mother Mrs Kopanski to join the table as they indicated they wished to express their views on a couple of matters.

Screen for late Queen's funeral

Mr Kopanski expressed his dissatisfaction that Wokingham Town Council had not put in place a screen for residents to watch the late Queen's funeral. He believed it was unacceptable as people would have liked to have sat with other people to watch the funeral, rather than sit at home.

The Chair responded to Mr Kopanski and his Mother and explained that plans were in place behind the scenes that had been made ahead of the announcement and there were protocols that needed to be followed.

The Chair stated that he totally understood. He advised that a book of condolence was set up and an area was set up for flowers to be laid but, with hindsight WTC could have done a lot better and apologised that the Council didn't come up with something better than we did. The Chair advised that WTC would consider putting in place screens for future occasions.

Grass turf at Remembrance

Mr Kopanski advised that he is a member of the Royal British legion, and the piece of turf that is put out on the Market Place in the Remembrance period is not acceptable.

The Chair explained the following:

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- that this Committee has explored putting other things in place (consulting with the Wokingham Society and RBL) in order to take a different approach, e.g. commissioning for a plaque to be made and placed on the wall outside, but these concepts have been constrained by the Conservation Officer at Wokingham Borough Council who was not in support.
- in the past, residents have asked whether something more formal, e.g., a new memorial, could be placed in the town. However, a War memorial is already situated inside the Town Hall building which was paid for by the people of Wokingham who chose for it to be placed there. WTC are custodians of this for the town and do not think it is within its gift for a new memorial to be created and that we should respect their wishes.

The Civic Officer added that for the last two years, we have put out a different structure for residents to place their crosses into, following feedback from residents, and the turf is no longer used. WTC believes this is now more favourably accepted.

The Chair reiterated to the residents that WTC is very keen to uphold the traditions of the town and every Cllr who has joined the town understands that they are trustees of this, Remembrance certainly being one of the main ones.

Mr Kopanski and his Mother said they appreciated having the opportunity to talk to the committee about their issues and they acknowledged that they had been listened to, which was very important to them.

Awareness of meetings

As an aside, Mr Kopanski advised that he was not aware of the meetings that were held at the Town Hall until Cllr Gee had advised him, and he felt that these should be publicised in more places than WTC's website to allow residents who do not have access to learn about these.

The Chair acknowledged this, and suggestions were made for this to be looked into, including WTC's annual newsletter.

ACTION: Civic Officer

CIVIC COMMITTEE MINUTES (Agenda Item 4)

It was proposed by Cllr P Lucey and seconded by Cllr R Bishop-Firth and it was

**RESOLVED
30505**

that the Minutes of the Civic Committee meeting held on 21st March 2022 (pages 16503 to 16506), be received as a true and correct record and that they be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Monitoring Report dated 20th September 2022 was received and noted.

a) Museum Accreditation

See agenda item 8.

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b) Jubilee Plaque

The Civic Officer updated the committee to advise that since the last meeting, the plaque had been purchased and received, and is now waiting for it to be installed by Volker Highways.

c) Armed Forces Day

The Civic Officer updated the committee to advise that arrangements were made for Saint Sebastian Wokingham Band to play in Peach Place in June this year. The Deputy Mayor, Cllr S Gurney welcomed and thanked the band and also spoke to residents on the day. Cllr Gurney informed the Civic Officer that the band received a good response and was really welcomed by residents. It therefore seems appropriate for the band to continue to perform in Peach Place each year.

d) Bench dedication

The Civic Officer advised that an offer was made to the family of Chris Pape for a plaque to be engraved and placed on a bench in Elms Field in her memory.

The family were most appreciative of the offer and very gratefully accepted. The plaque is now in position.

COMMITTEE'S BUDGET (Agenda Item 6)

A report on the Committee's budget expenditure to 31 August 2022 was received and noted.

TOWN TWINNING (Agenda Item 7)

The committee received and accepted the Civic Officer's report which informed members that the Wokingham Town Twinning Association has closed.

The association had declined in popularity over recent years for several reasons; their membership has gradually declined, as they have not attracted new members. In addition, travel is now much easier and often cheaper than it has been in the past and, of course, the covid pandemic also did not help.

The report advised the following:

1. Wokingham remains 'twinned' with Erftstadt and Viry-Chatillon, but the Wokingham Town Twinning Organisation no longer exists, and they will no longer be organising social trips or social activities.
2. The charters remain in place, between the towns
3. WTTA have archived their minutes, newsletters and photographs with the Berkshire Records Office.
4. Erftstadt and Viry-Chatillon have been advised accordingly. Their 'twinning' organisations are also experiencing similar difficulties and it is questionable if they will also continue.
5. The WTTA website is now closed, but information about our twinned towns is present on WTC's website
6. Some local schools and organisations continue to make their own visits to our twinned towns.

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Cllr Lloyd added that the Arts and Culture committee have commissioned an artist to paint some pictures which will be printed on aluminum and installed in Erfstadt Court. One of these will be a scene of lakes in Erfstadt and will include the German word 'Heimat' meaning homeland.

MUSEUM ACCREDITATION (Agenda Item 8)

The committee members received the Civic Officer's report offering an update to the committee following an independent inspection of WTC's physical collection which in turn provided the Council with a Collection Care report for consideration.

The report noted key observations and highlighted that the main risk to its historical collection is from light, as it can cause permanent and irreversible damage to objects by fading etc.

Some initial work had begun to explore applying for museum accreditation in 2019 and the Civic Officer's report explained that covid lockdowns meant that this work was paused. However, the commissioning of this latest independent report and the receipt of its findings has now better informed WTC and has offered some helpful guidance.

The Civic Committee were all in agreement that work should be progressed, and members agreed with the following Civic Officer's recommendations:

- 1) For WTC to take the first step to apply for museum accreditation with a view to then becoming eligible to be 'working towards eligibility'. Once applied for and confirmed as an 'eligible' museum, WTC would have 3 years with 'Working towards Accreditation' status to submit a full application. Engagement would begin again with the museum volunteer.
- 2) It is hoped that officers can then begin to identify in more detail what is required to bridge the gap for WTC to be able to better store, care for and preserve our historic collection for future generations. It should be noted that the 3 areas of weaknesses currently are:
 - Care and conservation of its core historical collection
 - Improved user engagement
 - Insufficient resources
- 3) It seems sensible to request some initial funding to support the cost of addressing the UV light on WTC's windows. It is worth noting, that if WTC does apply for museum accreditation, it is likely that grant opportunities might be possible and such requests are often met more favourably if the organisation making the request is also taking steps to meet these costs. One initial quote received has indicated that it would cost £9,700 to apply UV protection to WTC's windows and possibly blinds to reduce light in the main hall. Members agreed £10,000 should be requested to F&P for this.

Cllr Lucey remarked that this was a good report and thanked the Civic Officer. He also recognised that it is important for WTC to take its time to prioritise what is most important and to even consider any student involvement if there is interest.

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The Chair also stated that it might be beneficial for Officers to have some support from Civic Committee members to help identify items that might be of most interest to the public and to help consider how best to exhibit these including thinking about some changing displays to display our history. Cllr Tim Lloyd advised the committee that he was happy to assist, along with Cllr Lee.

Mr Kopanski shared that he had a copy of a disc that had been recorded by Mr Ken Goatley talking about lots of Wokingham's history which may be of interest. He will deliver a copy of this to the Town Hall.

ACTION: Civic Officer

HERITAGE OPEN DAY (Agenda Item 9)

The Civic Officer informed the committee that as this event was unfortunately cancelled due to the passing of our late Queen, it would not be possible to reschedule this at another weekend.

The Civic Officer advised that Heritage Open Days are part of a trademarked festival throughout the country, and any events that run outside the festival dates cannot be considered part of Heritage Open Days.

So that WTC can utilise some of the items that were purchased for children's activities, the Civic Officer suggested that an Open Day could be planned for a day in October half term and be marketed to families to visit and enjoy. A proposed date was Tuesday 25 October.

The members were in support of this idea.

ACTION: Civic Officer

Mr Kopanski and his Mother Mrs Kopanski left the meeting.

MAYOR'S SUNDAY CIVIC SERVICE (Agenda Item 10)

The committee received the Civic Officer's report which asked members to discuss the church service element of the Mayor's Sunday event.

Through discussion with the Town Clerk and Civic Officer, the current Mayor in office requested not to include a church service as part of Mayor's Sunday in May 2022 due to personal preferences. The Town Clerk and Civic Officer took the decision to respect the Mayor's preferences, but the intention was for this not to be a permanent change. However, the Civic Chair has asked if this was the right response and has requested that this be brought to the Civic committee for discussion.

Members recognised that some of the sensitivity around this civic service is about the Mayor being expected to play a part in it and the reference that it is taking place in a church which is at the choice of the Mayor.

Members shared the view that perhaps WTC should change the focus of the service to be for the Council as a whole and for guidance to be offered for the forthcoming year for the Council and the community and town it supports, and not for the Mayor. It was felt that the Mayor should only take part, and be personally

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blessed and offer a reading, if they wish to. An alternative approach in how WTC shares details of this service might be to say that the Mayor is attending a civic service, rather than it being the 'Mayor's civic service'.

It was also recognised that having a chaplain may be difficult for some Mayors who are not religious and WTC could make this optional with the idea of a Mayor choosing to have a celebrant, if desired. It was noted that moments of reflection at the start of Council are welcomed by a number of our Councillors.

Members agreed that Council should not make any changes this year, but WTC should look at a consistent approach to retain the tradition of a civic service for 2023 and thereafter, to celebrate the coming council year and not the Mayor. The Civic Officer was asked to look at the following so that this may be discussed further at a future civic meeting:

- a) Share with the committee the previous report where a decision was made to combine the Mayor's Inauguration Ceremony with a Civic service, to re-consider if this should be split back into two separate events
- b) Consider making the civic service a more formal inclusive event for the community, in a similar way to how the church service was presented on the evening of the late Queen's funeral
- c) To explore bringing in representatives from different faiths to the service (up-to-date census data soon to be published may help to inform WTC with this) although it is recognised that Wokingham is not as diverse as other areas.
- d) Consider where WTC would hold services, as in the past it has tried to rotate and attend different Churches in Wokingham
- e) Speak to the Chair of Churches Together in Wokingham to gain his views and input

ACTION: Civic Officer

BUDGET REQUEST FOR 2023-2024 (Agenda Item 11)

The Committee considered if there is any expenditure that might be required over and above the normal annual budget settings for the next financial year.

The following items were discussed, and all members agreed that the following should be requested to F&P for 2023-2024:

- a) To increase the budget for the Christmas Music event from £150 to £1000 to allow the event to be expanded and to be able to pay the performers.
- b) £10,000 to support the cost of reducing UV and light from our windows to protect and preserve WTC's historical collection. See agenda item 8 for further detail.
- c) The Committee would also like to highlight to F&P that the Coronation of King Charles III is likely to fall in the next financial year which it may like to consider. However, details of any required costs for this are currently unknown, as no guidance has been received.

ACTION: Civic Officer

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WTC RESPONSE TO THE PASSING OF THE LATE QUEEN (Agenda Item 12)

The Civic Officer asked if there were any comments members wished to make about WTC's response to the passing of the late Queen in preparation of a debrief meeting later this week.

Cllr Bishop-Firth said that the proclamation went very well and recognised that this was a very big piece of work and WTC wouldn't have had much more resource to do anything else.

The comments expressed by Mr Kopanski and his Mother Mrs Kopanski, in agenda item 3, will be taken to the debrief meeting. However, it was recognised that as WTC is a Parish Council with limited resources, it would have been difficult to do this.

Committee members shared ideas about possible venues where screenings could be placed for future occasions for people to sit down and watch events, including the inside of the Town Hall, WADE and the new Carnival Hub.

ACTION: Civic Officer

INFORMATION ITEMS (Agenda Item 13)

There were no information items.

COMMITTEE INFORMATION (Agenda Item 11)

- a) The Chair asked for a member to join the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Mayor at the Civic Award Selection meeting taking place on Wednesday 7 December at 10am. Cllr D King volunteered to join this meeting provided that she is able to attend.
- b) Cllr Bishop-Firth shared that at the Woosehill Community Centre, there was a framed print with a note attached stating it was on loan. The Civic Officer was asked to look into this.
- c) No information was identified for marketing.

ACTION: Civic Officer

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE _____

CHAIR'S INITIALS _____

