

17th October 2023

Minutes of the proceedings of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Main Hall, Town Hall, Market Place, Wokingham on 17th October 2023 from 7.30pm to 8.24pm.

PRESENT:

Chair: Cllr S Gurney (Mayor)

Cllrs: A Betteridge, R Bishop-Firth, B Callender, R Comber, S Cornish, A Croy, P Cunnington, W Dixon, A Domingue, A Fraser, M Fumagalli, M Gee, A Jones, T Lack, M Lucey, K Malvern, M Malvern, A Mather, A Medhurst, N Nagella, H Richards, I Shepherd-Dubey, L Timlin.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Katy Hughes – Town Clerk.

Thoughts of the day were given by the Mayor's Celebrant Helen Jefferies, prior to the start of the meeting. Mrs Helen Jefferies left prior to the start of the meeting.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

No apologies for absence were received

MEMBERS' INTERESTS (Agenda Item 2)

None were declared.

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

There were no questions raised.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING (Agenda Item 4)

Cllr A Medhurst asked about an action from the Town Clerk in the previous meeting regarding the tabling of draft and approved minutes. The Town Clerk noted that the agenda wording had been adjusted accordingly. Cllr S Gurney asked members to give feedback on the changes to the Town Clerk, via email following the meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr A Croy and seconded by Cllr H Richards and the following was

**RESOLVED
30723**

that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Council Meeting held on 25th July 2023 (pages 16802 to 16806) be received as a true and correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

A vote was taken. One member abstained, all others voted in favour.

MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS (Agenda Item 5)

The Mayor opened her communications by holding a minute's silence to remember the victims of the recent terrorist attack in Israel and the innocent victims of the subsequent conflict.

CHAIR INITIALS _____



The Mayor welcomed Cllr L Timlin to the council as the newly elected councillor for Wescott East ward.

The Mayor congratulated the Officers, Councillors and many volunteers for the fantastic results in the regional 'In Bloom' competition, where Wokingham won Silver Gilt, the regional 'Best Large Town' category for the Thames and Chiltern area and a number of other awards for projects and outdoor spaces. The Mayor noted that the national award results are announced on Monday 23rd October. Councillors gave a round of applause in recognition of the achievements.

The Mayor reported that:

- She had attended some additional events not included on the official list circulated with the agenda, including a BSARD training day with the Mayor's Charity, opening the Oktoberfest event in Peach Place and attending the volunteer fair at the town hall.
- She had given out allotment awards from the annual allotment competition.
- She had witnessed the positive collaboration of various local groups, such as Men's Shed creating signs for the Friends of Fox Hill and working on the Wokingham Hospital Community Garden project delivered by Wokingham In Need.
- There have been lots of arts events, including the Wokingham Arts Trail and the Bloom art competition. We have also had lots of town council events happen since the last council meeting in July, including Theatre in the Park, Chalk About It, Heritage Open Day and most recently the Children's Book Festival. Councillors were thanked for helping at the events.
- Coming up we have the Gardener's Question Time recording at the town hall, Remembrance, and by the next council meeting, we will be into the Christmas events.
- A White Ribbon vigil is being held on 1st December.

The Mayor requested support in:

- Sharing the town council's posts on social media to increase the reach.
- Sharing information on the Civic Awards, for which nominations are open until 24th November.
- Volunteers for poppy collections around Market Place on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays between 28th October and 11th November.

The Mayor's list of engagements since the last Council meeting was also received.

ARTS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 6)

A copy of the draft minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 4th September 2023 (pages 16809 to 16812) was received by members.

CHAIR INITIALS _____



Cllr B Callendar reported that the committee will be looking at a what type of performance to put on for Theatre in the Park next year, and working party has been established to review Sunny Saturdays.

He reported that the committee had considered a request to re-brand the Party in the Park event as a 'Charity Party in the Park'. The committee had agreed that the Mayor's Charity would be given an opportunity to promote themselves at the event, but that the event would not be rebranded.

It was proposed by Cllr B Callendar and seconded by Cllr A Domingue and the following was

**RESOLVED
30724**

that the approved minutes of the proceedings of the Arts and Culture Committee meeting held on 17th July 2023 (pages 16789 to 16792) be adopted

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 7)

Cllr I Shepherd-Dubey reported that the committee had discussed a bus shelter on Wellington Road that had been replaced by Wokingham Borough Council, the usage of the secure cycle lockers and community speed watch signage. She reported on two planning applications discussed at the meeting and refused by the planning authority.

A copy of the draft minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 5th September 2023 (pages 16813 to 16818) was received by members.

AMENITIES COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 8)

A copy of the draft minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 12th September 2023 (pages 16819 to 16822) was received by members.

Cllr T Lack reported that the committee had met at Woosehill Community Hall.

The committee had requested additional funding from the playground reserves to replace the surface at Leslie Sears Playing Fields.

The committee had discussed spending priorities, including a budget uplift for the amenities committee contracts to accommodate increased costs and to hold Park Yoga in 2024.

The committee had reviewed proposals from WBC for nominations of green spaces as part of the updated Local Plan.

The committee had considered uses of the unused pavilion at Langborough, but noted the limitations caused by the lack of parking, hence a proposal to use the space for council storage.

CHAIR INITIALS _____



**RESOLVED
30725**

It was proposed by Cllr T Lack and seconded by Cllr M Malvern and the following was

that the approved minutes of the proceedings of the Amenities Committee meeting held on 11th July 2023 (pages 16786 to 16788) be adopted

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

CIVIC COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 9)

A copy of the draft minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 18th September 2023 (pages 16823 to 16827) was received by members.

Cllr A Mather reported on a number of budget requests made by the committee, including requests for:

- Additional funding for Museum Open Days
- Funding to establish an earmarked reserve for the future replacement of the Mayoral Chain
- Funding for a 'Beating the Bounds' event for 2024

He reported on two key decisions made by the committee:

- Robes of office will not be mandatory for the group council photograph
- The church service held on Mayor Making Sunday will be separated going forward, and the Civic Officer will liaise with Wokingham Churches to investigate alternatives.

Cllr A Domingue noted that the parade to the church had been popular and enjoyed by residents. Cllr A Mather noted that Cllr A Betteridge had raised a similar point, and it had been agreed that the Civic Committee would consider other opportunities for parades.

It was proposed by Cllr A Mather and seconded by Cllr A Betteridge and the following was

**RESOLVED
30726**

that the approved minutes of the proceedings of the Civic Committee meeting held on 19th June 2023 (pages 16776 to 16778) be adopted

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

STRATEGY WORKING PARTY (Agenda Item 10)

The Mayor noted that the Strategy Working Party is a discussion group which can only make recommendations, which would go to other committees for discussion and decisions.

The notes and any recommendations of the Strategy Working Party held on 20th September 2023 were received and noted.

CHAIR INITIALS _____



Cllr A Croy reported that the working party had met on MS Teams and discussed:

- Councillor remuneration, with a recommendation that this be further discussed by the Finance and Personnel Committee.
- Charging policy, with a recommendation for approval by the Finance and Personnel Committee
- A response to the consultation on cuts to bin collections, grass cutting and other services by Wokingham Borough Council
- Matthews Green Community Centre, with a recommendation that an extraordinary meeting of the working party be called to discuss this further, once response to questions raised to WBC have been received. It was noted that any interested member is able to attend this meeting and a date will be circulated to all councillors by the Town Clerk.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

Cllr K Malvern highlighted that notes of the previous working party meeting held on 26th July had not been circulated to members. The Town Clerk was asked to circulate these via email at the earliest opportunity. **ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

Cllr T Lack asked about aspects of the notes on the vision document. Cllr S Gurney reported that in the previous meeting held on 26th July, the Strategy Working Party had begun by brainstorming ideas of things that were important to the local community and things that were important to individual councillors. These ideas had then been collated under four headings.

These ideas, some of which were carried forward from the previous council term, had then been reviewed and voted on, as to whether they should be further considered or not. They were not prescriptive ideas that the council was committing to, simply initial ideas.

Cllr M Gee reiterated that the working party had worked from the bottom up with initial ideas that fed into four principles and finally a vision statement.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr A Croy and seconded by Cllr A Domingue and it was

**RESOLVED
30727**

that the strategy and vision for the town council for the 2023-27 council term, as detailed in appendix 10b of the agenda pack, be adopted.

FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 11)

A copy of the draft minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 26th September 2023 (pages 16828 to 16836) was received by members.

Cllr M Gee reported on the extraordinary meeting of the committee to discuss the recruitment, held on 3rd August. She reported that a job description and advert was agreed, but that insufficient applications were received, so a further recruitment round is currently underway.

CHAIR INITIALS _____



Cllr M Gee reported that at the meeting held on 26th September, the committee and reviewed and approved:

- Updated charges for hall hire, wedding and allotment fees for 2024.
- A request for funding from play park reserves for resurfacing at Leslie Sears Playing Fields
- Delegated authority to the Town Clerk and Cllrs S Gurney and M Gee or B Alvi, for completion of the Timpson lease renewal once legal advise was received
- Updates to the RFO role for recruitment

It was proposed by Cllr M Gee and seconded by Cllr H Richards and the following was

**RESOLVED
30728**

that the approved minutes of the proceedings of the Finance & Personnel Committee meetings held on 19th July 2023 (pages 16793 to 16801) and on 3rd August (pages 16807 to 16808) be adopted.

A vote was taken and was unanimous

ANNUAL RETURN (Agenda Item 12)

Cllr M Gee reported on the completion of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the 2022-23 financial year. She noted that the audit had found that all the council's controls were effective.

It was noted that the item raised by the external auditor which was a matter not affecting their opinion but which they wished to draw to the council's attention, related to a new question on the AGAR form, which, following advise sought from the council's Internal Auditor, was agreed that the question was badly worded and open to interpretation.

Cllr M Gee noted the council's thanks to the outgoing Responsible Finance Officer and the Town Clerk for achieving a clean audit.

COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES (Agenda Item 13)

Representatives' reports were received in relation to the following organisations:

- Cllr A Medhust reported her attendance at a recent meeting of MoreArts and noted how much was being achieved by a relatively small group of volunteers.

The Mayor then closed the meeting.

CHAIR

CHAIR INITIALS _____

