

30th January 2024

Minutes of the proceedings of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Main Hall, Town Hall, Market Place, Wokingham on 30th January 2024 from 7.30pm to 8.05pm.

PRESENT:

Chair: Cllr S Gurney (Mayor)

Cllrs: B Alvi, A Betteridge, R Bishop-Firth, B Callender, R Comber, S Cornish, A Croy, P Cunnington, W Dixon, A Fraser, 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.

Helen Jefferies – Mayor’s Celebrant

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Cllrs A Domingue and M Fumagalli.

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)

It was proposed by Cllr S Gurney and seconded by Cllr H Richards and the following was

**RESOLVED
30780**

that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Council Meeting held on 5th December 2023 (pages 16882 to 16888) be received as a true and correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

MAYOR’S COMMUNICATIONS (Agenda Item 5)

The Mayor reported that the new Finance Manager and Responsible Finance Officer is starting on Thursday, and extended a welcome from the Councillors.

The Mayor reported that in accordance with Standing Orders, any member who wishes to put themselves forward for the position of Mayor for the 2024-25 Civic Year should give notice to the Town Clerk, preferably by 15th March, ahead of the Mayoral Selection Meeting on 18th March.

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The Mayor noted that before the next council meeting in April, the borough council will have gone into the pre-election period ahead of the 2nd May elections.

The Mayor reported on upcoming town council events, including Board gaming on Saturday 3rd February and Lunar New Year on Sunday 18th. She thanked those Councillors who had volunteered to attend and support the event, and encouraged Councillors to attend the Lunar New Year event in Market Place.

The Mayor reported on a number of events she had attended prior to Christmas, and most recently the Civic Awards Event held at the town hall on 26th January. She listed a large number of organisations that benefit from the voluntary work of the 7 recipients of the awards.

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

ARTS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 6)

It was proposed by Cllr B Callender and seconded by Cllr P Cunnington and the following was

**RESOLVED
30781**

that the approved minutes of the proceedings of the Arts and Culture Committee meeting held on 6th November 2023 (pages 16854 to 16857) be adopted

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

A copy of the draft minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 15th January 2024 (pages 16899 to 16901) was received by members.

Cllr B Callender drew members' attention to the discussion held on the Council Strategy and the extent to which the A&C Committee events support the strategy. He extended thanks to Cllr A Domingue for leading this aspect of the committee discussion.

CIVIC COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 7)

A copy of the draft minutes of the meeting of the Civic Award Select Committee held on 6th December 2023 (pages 16889 to 16890) was received by members.

Cllr A Mather highlighted the lower number of nominations received for awards this year and asked Councillors to consider whether they could make suggestions of worthy candidates to the Civic Officer. It was clarified that Councillors cannot directly nominate individuals for awards.

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 8)

It was proposed by Cllr M Gee and seconded by Cllr B Alvi and the following was

RESOLVED

CHAIR INITIALS _____



30782

that the approved minutes of the proceedings of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on 21st November 2023 (pages 16872 to 16881) be adopted

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

A copy of the draft minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 23rd January 2024 (pages 16902 to 16910) was received by members. Cllr M Gee noted that further discussion on the budget would be held under agenda items 11 and 12.

Cllr M Gee reported on two proposals for CIL spending at Woosehill Community Centre which had been circulated to members following the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting. This was for the replacement of the chairs at an estimated cost of £8,000 and the replacement of three fire doors to ensure compliance with fire regulations, at a cost of just over £10,000. It was proposed by Cllr M Gee and seconded by Cllr B Alvi and the following was

**RESOLVED
30783**

that spending on the above items for Woosehill Community Centre be approved from the council's CIL reserves.

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 9)

It was proposed by Cllr I Shepherd-Dubey and seconded by Cllr N Nagella and the following was

**RESOLVED
30784**

that the approved minutes of the proceedings of the Planning and Transportation Committee meeting held on 14th December 2023 (pages 16837 to 16842) be adopted

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

A copy of the draft minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 12th December 2023 (pages 16891 to 16898) was received by members.

Cllr I Shepherd-Dubey reported that the December meeting had reviewed new proposals for development on land adjacent to Blagrove Lane. A number of residents were in attendance at this meeting and Cllr S Gurney noted thanks from Evendons residents for the work of the committee.

Cllr I Shepherd-Dubey reported that the committee had also reviewed two listed building consent applications for St Crispins School and Luckley House School and further proposals for 1-5 Broad Street, which the committee believed required a provision for an affordable housing contribution, as the proposals extended the number of residential units to 11.

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION (Agenda Item 10)

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

- Emmbrook Village Hall Management Committee.

CHAIR INITIALS _____



- Active Travel Task and Finish Group
- Wokingham Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
Cllr R Comber expressed concerns for CAB over the loss of funding from Wokingham Borough Council for the 'One Front Door' funding. It was noted that funding for the core CAB service from Wokingham Borough Council remained in place but that this particular funding was no longer being received from central government.
- Berkshire Association of Local Councils (BALC)
Cllr S Gurney reported that BALC and Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) offer support and training to councils. They can also support training sessions run by councils, provided a number of spaces are made available to other councils.

Membership of BALC gives the council access to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) who lobby government at a national level for issues impacting councils.

Cllr S Gurney noted the issue of non-attendance at BALC / HALC training sessions, and reported that whilst the training is free, non-attendance without two weeks' notice will be chargeable.

Cllr S Gurney asked for any suggestions of Councillor nominations for Royal Garden Party tickets that NALC receive annually.

PRECEPT BUDGETS FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2025 (Agenda Item 11)

Cllr M Gee reported on discussion at the Finance and Personnel Committee regarding budget for 2024-25. She reported on the proposed expenditure and projected income for the council in the next financial year. She noted that the F&P Committee had recommended an 8.75% increase in the precept, on the back of a 7% increase in the previous year, which had been below the level of inflation. She reported on the discussion in the committee on expenditure on one-off items or projects coming from reserves, and noted that the committee had agreed that some additional revenue expenditure could also be covered by reserves in the coming year.

Cllr Croy noted that one item for gateway signage from the Planning and Transport Committee had been missed from the list of proposals reviewed by the F&P Committee in November 2023. It was noted that the request may come back to the F&P Committee for consideration in April for an in-year spend.

Cllr Betteridge asked about the impact of council tax exemption or reductions on the precept. Cllr M Gee confirmed that these do not impact on the level of precept received by the town council.

PRECEPT RECOMMENDATION (Agenda item 12)

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

CHAIR INITIALS _____



**RESOLVED
30785**

that the Finance & Personnel Committee's recommendation be accepted and that the precept be confirmed and set at £1,227,267 for the financial year ending 31st March 2025.

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WORKING PARTY (Agenda item 13)

Cllrs B Callender, M Gee, S Gurney, K Malvern and L Timlin agreed to join a working party to review plans for the Annual Town Meeting on 18 May 2024.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8:05pm.

CHAIR

CHAIR INITIALS _____

