

15th October 2024

Minutes of the proceedings of the **TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Main Hall, Town Hall, Market Place, Wokingham on 15th October 2024 from 7.30pm to 8.34pm.

PRESENT:

Chairman: Cllr R Comber (Mayor)
Cllrs: B Alvi, A Betteridge, B Callender, S Cornish, A Croy, P Cunnington, W Dixon, A Domingue, A Fraser, M Fumagalli, M Gee, S Gurney, C Jamthe, A Jones, T Lack, K Malvern, M Malvern, A Medhurst, N Nagella, H Richards, I Shepherd-Dubey and L Timlin.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Katy Hughes – Town Clerk
David Dunham – Mayor's Attendant

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R Bishop-Firth and Cllr A Mather.

MEMBERS' INTERESTS (Agenda Item 2)

Cllrs Comber and Gurney declared interests in item 9(d) as members of the Wokingham Horticultural Association.

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

There were no questions raised.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS (Agenda Item 4)

It was proposed by Cllr L Timlin and seconded by Cllr C Jamthe and the following was

**RESOLVED
30937**

that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Council Meetings held on 9th July 2024 (pages 17016 to 17020) be accepted as a true and correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

A vote was taken, 22 members voted in favour, one member abstained.

MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS (Agenda Item 5)

- a) The Mayor drew members' attention to the following engagements, which were a selection of those carried out since the last council meeting:
- a. The Collation and Induction of the Reverend Hannah Higginson, at All Saints Church on 10th July
 - b. Visits to independent businesses in the town on various dates
 - c. Opening the Theatre in the Park shows in Elms Field on 3rd August
 - d. Supporting the Beating the Bounds event with the Wokingham Lions Club on 8th September. The Mayor noted the event had been a success with hundreds of residents taking part, and thanked those Councillors who had also attended to support the event.
 - e. The Mindset Unlimited Festival on 14th September

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- f. Recognising the long service of a member of council staff. Mac, one of the council's grounds staff, has worked for the town council for 20 years, on 27th September.
- g. Evendons School assembly, alongside the Mini-Mayor, on 3rd October.
- h. Presenting a Nuclear Test Medal to a 90-year-old resident on 7th October.

The Mayor reminded members that the town council's annual Civic Awards are still open for nominations and encouraged members to raise this opportunity with any local organisations they work with.

The Mayor reminded members that the Wokingham Children's Book Festival is coming up this weekend.

b) The Mayor's list of engagements since the last council meeting was received.

AMENITIES COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 6)

The minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Committee held on 2nd July were received by members. It was proposed by Cllr S Cornish and seconded by Cllr A Fraser and the following was

That the approved minutes of the proceedings of the Amenities Committee held on 2nd July 2024 (pages 17013 to 17015) be adopted.

**RESOLVED
30938**

A vote was taken and was unanimous

Cllr M Malvern reported on the meeting of the Amenities Committee held on 10th September.

She reported that the committee considered budget priorities for 2025-26, which were identified in line with the council's strategic objectives and were listed in order of priority.

Cllr M Malvern reported on the graffiti clearance work carried out by Cllr A Croy which was shared with the committee. It was noted that the committee also reviewed the Risk Register and noted upcoming trustee training for members in relation to the management of King George V Playing Fields and Leslie Sears Playing Fields.

Cllr M Malvern reported on the children's funfair which had visited Elms Field in late August. The event had been very popular and great care had been taken by the organisers to manage litter. The fun fair is expected to return in 2025.

Cllr M Malvern reported that works are underway to resurface the play area at Latimer Road, which is being co-funded by the town council from its CIL reserves.

ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 7)

Cllr B Callender reported on the meeting of the committee held on 15th July.

The approved minutes of the meetings of the Arts and Culture Committee held on 10th June 2024 (pages 16993 to 16995) and 15th July 2024 (pages 17021 to 17024), were proposed by Cllr A Domingue and seconded by Cllr P Cunnington and the following was

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**RESOLVED
30939** That the approved minutes of the meetings of the Arts and Culture Committees held on 10th June 2024 and 15th July 2024 be adopted.

A vote was taken and was unanimous

Cllr B Callender reported on the meeting of the committee held on 2nd September. He reported that the committee were working on a scoring matrix for the committee's events. He reported that the committee had considered proposing a budget for a portable PA system, and he noted that attendance at this year's Theatre in the Park event had been exceptional.

Cllr S Gurney enquired about the Christmas market discussions. Cllr Domingue noted that this was in relation to the Dressing the Christmas Tree event.

CIVIC COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 8)

It was proposed by Cllr A Betteridge and seconded by Cllr K Malvern and the following was

**RESOLVED
30940** that the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 17th June (pages 16996 to 17000) be adopted.

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

Cllr K Malvern reported on the meeting of the committee held on 23rd September 2024. He reported that the committee had discussed the Beating the Bounds event and considered whether this event should be repeated either for each term of the council, or in the event of a boundary change. He noted the work undertaken by the Civic Officer in revising the Remembrance Sunday wreath laying event. He referred members to the tremendous achievements of the Civic Officer over the last 16 years.

FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 9)

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

**RESOLVED
30941** That the approved minutes of the meetings of the committee held on 8th June 2024 (pages 16996 to 17000) be adopted.

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

Cllr M Gee reported on the meeting of the committee held on 24th September 2024. She reported that the committee had discussed the council's investment of long-term funds, and that the committee had resolved to move £380,000 of funds into an alternative bank account to achieve a greater return.

Cllr M Gee reported that the committee had resolved to recruit a part-time Museum Officer to support the work on museum accreditation.

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Cllr M Gee reported on the proposed amendments to the council's Standing Financial Regulations, which have been circulated to councillors along with an explanation of the proposed changes. Cllr M Gee noted that these changes are based on best practice and updated regulations published recently by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

It was proposed by Cllr B Alvi and seconded by Cllr H Richards and the following was

**RESOLVED
30942**

that the council's updated Standing Financial Regulations be approved and adopted.

Cllr M Gee reported on the discussions held at the Finance and Personnel Committee for the town council to support the refurbishment of the Wokingham Horticultural Association building at the Ormonde Road allotment site.

She reported that two matters raised by the committee had been answered, regarding the original planning consent and regarding any restrictions on the use of the building in the original planning consent.

Cllr R Comber noted the presence of a waterless toilet on the allotment site, but asked about the requirement for access to toilets and hand washing facilities, if the building were to be made available for wider public use. The Town Clerk reported that the question had been raised with Iconic and a full response was being awaited.

Cllr A Domingue asked about the lease length. The Town Clerk reported that the committee had agreed to extend the lease, renewed in 2021 to run for 50 years, until 2071. Cllr A Domingue also asked about disability access and provision of accessible toilet facilities.

Cllr W Dixon asked whether the building was on town council-controlled land. The Town Clerk confirmed that it was.

Cllr K Malvern reported on the site visit to the building to meet with Iconic

Cllr N Nagella enquired about the timing for the use of CIL. Cllr M Gee confirmed that none of the council's CIL reserves were nearing the 5-year timeframe

Following discussion, Cllr R Comber, deferred any decision on the matter to allow further time to investigate matters raised by councillors.

PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 10)

Cllr N Nagella reported on the meetings of the Planning and Transport Committee held since the last Full Council meeting.

He reported on the software update to the secure cycle storage which allows more than one user for each unit in a 24-hour period. He reported that the roofs had been painted with eco paint and that usage of the lockers had increased.

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He reported that an audit of the town council's bus shelters was currently underway, but that one shelter located on Wellington Road had been damaged by a vehicle and was subject to an insurance claim for its repair.

Cllr N Nagella reported that Waitrose are undertaking restoration works to their car park boundary wall. He reported on a planning application for St Crispins school and for a fast-food chain site in the town area.
He reported that a noticeboard located in Norreys Avenue is due to be replaced.

It was proposed by Cllr C Jamthe and seconded by Cllr A Betteridge and the following was

**RESOLVED
30943**

That the approved minutes of the meetings of the committee held on 6th June 2024 (pages 16989 to 16992), on 16th July 2024 (pages 17025 to 17030) and on 3rd September 2024 (pages 17040 to 17042) be adopted.

A vote was taken and was unanimous.

Cllr N Nagella gave a verbal report on the meeting of the committee held on 8th October. He reported that the committee had agreed a response to the consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), had noted the consultation on the Local Plan Update, had received the quarterly committee budget report, and had reviewed a proposal for a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) for a route between Reeves Way and Roberts Grove. He reported that the committee had objected to the proposed DMMO as there was insufficient information available to the committee.

Cllr K Malvern congratulated Cllr W Dixon on speaking at a recent WBC planning committee meeting, where the Blagrove Lane development was considered.

STRATEGY WORKING PARTY (Agenda Item 11)

Cllr A Domingue gave a verbal report on the notes of the recent Strategy Working Party meetings held on 11th July 2024 and 18th September 2024. She reported that the proposed updates to Standing Orders, which are due to be discussed at the December Full Council meeting, principally involved the Mayor and Deputy Mayor selection and the process for Mayoral Sunday, which she reminded members is a meeting whose function is set out in legislation.

She reported on further work being undertaken to develop the council's strategic aims into a bigger document.

Cllr Domingue reported that the dates for the Annual Town Meeting have been agreed for 2025 and 2026.

Cllr M Fumagalli asked about the flag poles, which the working party had previously received a report on. The Town Clerk confirmed that any proposals on the flag poles will come to the Amenities Committee once a comprehensive, costed set of options are available.

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STANDING ORDERS (Agenda Item 12)

Cllr M Gee asked councillors who object to proposed changes to Standing Orders raise these with the Town Clerk by Friday 22nd November, so concerns can be collated and circulated to all members ahead of the December Full Council meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr A Domingue and seconded by Cllr M Malvern and in line with Standing Order 38, the matter was adjourned without further discussion, until the December Full Council meeting, scheduled for Tuesday 10th December 2024.

ANNUAL RETURN – CONCLUSION OF AUDIT (Agenda Item 13)

Cllr M Gee reported that the council had received a clean audit report, with no matters raised. Cllr M Gee recorded her thanks to the Finance Manager and RFO for the work undertaken to complete the annual audit.

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION (Agenda Item 14)

There were no reports on outside meetings.

The Mayor took the opportunity to record his personal thanks and thanks on behalf of the council and past mayors for the outstanding work of the Civic Officer, who will be leaving the town council in November.

The Mayor thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 8:34pm

CHAIR

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