

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 24 June 2013

At 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present

Councillor P J Dorward (Chairman)

Councillors:	Mrs J C Baker	D S Enright
	A K Beames	A D Harvey
	Mrs B J Churchill	C Holliday
	R F N Curry	T J Morris
	H B Eaglestone	D A Snow
Officers:	Town Clerk	Democratic Service Officer
	Facilities Manager	Nichola Cayley
Also present:	2 members of the public/ 1 Press Superintendent Colin Paine/PS Lianne Philips	

276 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Councillors Ms C Curry, J S King, B J Woodruff and C K Woodward.

277 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

278 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the following meetings be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman:

Ordinary meeting held on 8 April 2013
Extra Ordinary meeting held on 1 May 2013
Annual Council meeting held on 13 May 2013

279 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The members of public did not wish to speak.

280 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

Superintendent Colin Paine thanked Members for allowing him to speak at the meeting; he commented that it was a privilege to attend and good to be back.

He advised that the policing areas of West Oxfordshire and Cherwell had now merge, which meant that he was splitting his time between Banbury and Witney.

He advised that crime was continuing to fall within West Oxfordshire and in Witney in particular. Unfortunately, there was a small increase in violent crime and burglaries last year, however, this had not continued into this year. He was keen to bring culprits to justice and protect the vulnerable.

Superintendent Paine remarked that West Oxfordshire was a brilliant place to police, and one of the greatest challenges was to combat people's fear of crime, which was disproportionately high. He was working to make people feel safer; however, as an example, he explained that appeals for witnesses appeared to make people more nervous.

He was also aware of concerns regarding parking, speeding and anti-social behaviour; there was a good neighbourhood team in Witney, working together with the Neighbourhood Action Group.

Superintendent Paine concluded by saying that he took people's concerns seriously and was personally willing to regularly take on more difficult cases in order to bring them to a conclusion.

PS Lianne Phillips was invited to give an update from the Neighbourhood Team. She advised that they were working with NAG to reduce graffiti and she agreed that graffiti walls were a good idea. Her team were continuing their outreach work on anti-social behaviour. Other projects were looking at damage in the town centre and speed enforcement. She urged Members to let the police know of any issues or hot spots.

The Mayor thanked Superintendent Paine and his team and invited questions.

A Member queried whether the police ever carried out speeding patrols at the lower end of Corn Street. As a resident he was aware of issues in this area. PS Phillips agreed to look into this and follow up with enforcement action as required.

Members thanked the police for their work to combat graffiti, together with the Environmental Team at WODC. A Member wished to especially pass on his thanks to PC West for his diligent work.

A Member was aware of vandalism in Deer Park Woods. Recently, on a visit, school children had seen evidence of drug taking. Colin Paine agreed to look into this.

A Member enquired as to the results of the drink driving campaign carried out during June. PS Phillips confirmed that there were no major problems in Witney. In answer to a further question, the police confirmed that they continued to crack down on drivers using mobiles.

RESOLVED: noted

(Superintendent Paine and PS Phillips left the meeting at this point, being 7.20pm)

281 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members received and considered the details of the events attended by the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor, as circulated with the agenda.

The report also contained details of events attended by the previous Mayor, Harry Eaglestone. The present Mayor commented on the number of events attended over a two year period, including many lunches!

The Mayor (Cllr Dorward) enlarged on the events he had attended, in particular an enjoyable evening with the ATC and meeting the school children from Le Touquet. He had been particularly impressed by the children singing in Dorchester Abbey, which had included children from Queen Emma's Dyke School from Witney.

It was noted that this was the last meeting for Mrs Elisa Snook (Democratic Services Officer) and Members thanked her and wished her well for the future. Mrs Nichola Cayley was introduced as her replacement.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

282 **ACCOUNTS & AUDIT (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2011 – ANNUAL RETURN 2012/13**

Members received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk, as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the final internal audit report (page 5 of the Annual Return) had shown that everything was in place.

Also circulated were the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2013. The Town Clerk commented that this document was not compulsory; however, she thought it was useful.

In answer to a Member's questions, the Town Clerk confirmed that the drop in interest (page 11) was due to low investment rates and the fact that some of the reserves had been spent on the Corn Exchange, etc. She advised that the Deputy Town Clerk was looking into the interest rates/banking and there would be a presentation to the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee. She confirmed that there was a sum of £325,000 set aside for the cemetery access road (Windrush).

A Member had various questions which he had put to the Town Clerk prior to the meeting, she had agreed to take these back to the DTC/RFO and the outcome would be reported at a future meeting.

A Member remarked that he had concerns regarding the responsibilities of Councillors and the information they received. For example, he would like to see a three year forecast to enable members to assess the effect of council policies on its finances. He requested that the RFO should report to the next Finance & General Purposes Committee and prepare an appropriate 3 year forecast. He urged that Committee to ensure that this was done. He was unhappy with the way the budget was reported to committees, although he understood this was a software issue, he wondered whether manual figures could be added.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that the Statement of Accounts at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2013 be approved.
- 3) that the Annual Governance Statement at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2013, where questions 1 to 8 were answered yes (9 not applicable), be approved.
- 4) that the Unaudited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2013 be noted.

283 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

a) Planning & Development Committee of 16 & 30 April, 21 May and 11 June 2013

Minutes 30 April – WTC/087/13 – A Member commented that another reason to refuse the outside seating area on the pavement would be the effect on the disabled.

Minutes 11 June – WTC/134/13 – A Member had been contacted by a neighbouring property owner who was unhappy about the situation, and advised that these neighbours would be making representations to WODC. Under this application the Town Council had sought a financial contribution. The Town Clerk clarified the position with regard to s106 monies. It was agreed that the status quo should remain until the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was in place.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Planning Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

b) Leisure & Recreation Committee of 20 May 2013

The Vice Chairman of the Committee is Councillor J S King and not Councillor R F N Curry as stated in the minutes.

L206 – Public Participation – A Member remarked that although a statement had been correctly recorded, the Council had not made a definite decision to turn the play area into allotments.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the calendar of meetings did not include the dates for the Leisure & Recreation Committee monthly meetings, as agreed. These would be finalised and included for September onwards.

L209 – Mrs Saunders had now offered to pay an additional sum to allow for the installation of a 6' fence. Members stressed that the Council should not be liable for any future maintenance.

L212 – The Facilities Manager confirmed that the meeting at recommendation (3) had taken place.

L214 – A Member had visited the Mirfield Road play park on several occasions and found it to be well used. There did not appear to be any other suitable space on the estate.

L218 – The Town Clerk confirmed that the next report to L&R regarding Excel Tennis Academy would, as far as possible, contain enough information to enable Members to make a decision.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the suggestion from Mrs Saunders be referred to the L&R Committee, with delegated authority to resolve this issue.
- 2) that the minutes of the Leisure & Recreation Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

c) Public Halls Committee of 3 June 2013

H237 - Corn Exchange - The Town Clerk confirmed that the application for Heritage Lottery was proceeding and that Oxford Inspires were setting up a meeting to go through it.

With regard to the diversion of funds from earmarked reserves for the Windrush Cemetery access, a Member advised that the Council should act with belt and braces in this regard, given that the likelihood of changes to the Shores Green will change the dynamics of Oxford Hill. There could also be changes to the traffic lights and the road widened and possibly requiring a central reservation and slip road.

It was noted that at this meeting the Committee was informed that the soda glass window was no longer in the Corn Exchange, and had been gone for many years.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the Council writes to the solicitor of the Mawle family trust, from whom we purchased the land which included the condition of purchase, to clarify that the Council has no liability in this regard.
- 2) that the minutes of the Public Halls Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

- d) Finance & General Purposes Committee of 10 June 2013 and verbal report of special meeting held earlier in the evening.

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report of the special Finance & General Purposes meeting held earlier in the evening.

The Facilities Manager confirmed that the negotiations regarding the diesel spill were on going and being dealt with by the Deputy Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

284 **COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIVES**

Members received and considered the report of the Democratic Services Officer, as circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that Cllr C Holliday replaces Cllr A D Harvey as a Town Council representative on Witney Traffic Advisory Committee (Cllr Harvey being a representative for West Oxfordshire District Council).

285 **HEALTH & SAFETY AUDIT**

Members received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager, as circulated with the agenda.

A Member noted that it was suggested that this be a standing item on the Council agenda, however, she considered that it should be for each Committee.

It was agreed that the works needing to be done should be given measured approach, with proper financial control. The Facilities Manager remarked that it was difficult to estimate the overall costs at this stage because they would be piece meal and prioritised over the next two years. These works would be referred to the individual committees and reported to the Finance & General Purposes Committee so that they could be built into the budget, and the suggested three year forecast.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that those individual tasks with financial implications beyond current budgets codes are broken down in detail and reported back to the relevant committees as the project continues.
- 3) that Health & Safety be a standing item on all Committees.
- 4) that Councillors Mrs B J Churchill and C K Woodward act in the capacity of Safety Directors to oversee health & safety matters.

286 **CEMETERY ACCESS**

Members received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager, as circulated with the agenda.

A Member agreed that this was a very emotive subject and suggested it should be referred to the Leisure & Recreation Committee for a full discussion. The Facilities Manager confirmed that the Chairman of that

Committee had agreed that it could be referred to Council in order to avoid further delay. Some Members agreed that this meeting should reach a decision.

A Member urged those who had not done so, to visit Tower Hill Cemetery to enable them to get a better understanding of the situation. A Member considered that the gates should be removed as he felt the cemetery should be open to visitors.

A Member commented that the entrance to Windrush Cemetery needed to be improved, especially for those without a car.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that prior to the next Leisure & Recreation Committee, those Members meet in Tower Hill Cemetery, with officers, in order to gain a clear understanding of the situation.

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SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED: that the seal of the Council be affixed to any documents arising from decisions taken by this meeting of the Council.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm

Chairman