

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 6 August 2012

At 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present

Councillor H B Eaglestone (Chairman)

Councillors:	Mrs J C Baker	J S King
	A K Beames	T J Morris
	N Buckle	D A Snow
	Mrs B J Churchill	B J Woodruff
	R F N Curry	C K Woodward
	P Dorward	
Officers:	Town Clerk	Democratic Services Officer
	Deputy Town Clerk	
	I member of the press	9 members of the public

368 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Councillors Ms C Curry, D S Enright and A D Harvey.

369 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs J C Baker declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in matters relating to the Commercial Properties deferred from the Special Finance & General Purposes Committee.

370 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2012 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

371 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Two members of the public wished to speak.

Cynthia Copley commented that she was impressed with the façade of the Corn Exchange, which could be seen now that the scaffolding had been removed. She queried why the balcony looked different. The Deputy Town Clerk commented that the balcony had been removed in 1949 and re-instated during these works.

Owen Edwards wished to speak regarding public participation and involvement in Council business. He considered that the Council should be doing more to encourage people to get involved and acknowledge that the Council had to be open and welcome comments. He appreciated that public participation was on every agenda, whereby a member of the public could speak on an item on the agenda, however, if the Council did not make the agendas available how can the public participate? He was aware that other councils made much more information available prior to their meetings. In particular, the Council meeting dealt with minutes from Committee meetings, however these minutes were not available to the public prior to the meeting. He referred to the Council's standing orders whereby he considered that draft minutes and reports should be available, and on the website. He encouraged the Members to embrace openness, and agreed that changes were happening with Witney becoming a Fair Trade Town, and consultation on West Witney and the Corn Exchange.

The Town Clerk confirmed the situation with regard to agendas, reports and minutes. She confirmed that practices were being reviewed, along with investigations into a more user friendly website.

A Member agreed that there were problems in obtaining information and hoped that these could be remedied in the near future.

372 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

There was no information available from Thames Valley Police.

373 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

374 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

a) Planning & Development Committee of 26 June, 10 & 24 July 2012

Minutes 24 July – P359 – Licensing the Red Lion, Corn Street. A Member commented that the Town Council needs to take licensing applications seriously in order to encourage the District Council licensing committee to take control. The Chairman of the Committee remarked that this was being revisited at the meeting on 7 August as they now had further information.

A Member commented that she used to attend the meetings at WODC and object when necessary and she would be happy to do this, if required.

Another Member remarked that he had dealt with a lot of licensing applications in the past and that it was a difficult situation as the regulations came from central government. He understood that only two groups of people could object, the Police (with proof that the establishment was at fault) and people living within 100 yards of the premises. He agreed that there were problems in many towns and that the police needed to back up these objections.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that a letter be sent to the Member of Parliament setting out the Town Council's concerns regarding the effects of late licenses in the town.
- 2) that the minutes of the Planning Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

b) Leisure & Recreation Committee of 9 July and Special meeting of 23 July 2012

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

c) Public Halls Committee of 16 July 2012

Minute H334 – Langdale Hall – The Town Clerk advised Members that the recommendations had been deferred by the Finance & General Purposes Committee to an Extra Ordinary meeting of the Council, date to be agreed.

RESOLVED: that with the above amendment, the minutes of the Public Halls Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

- d) Finance & General Purposes Committee of 23 July and verbal report of meeting held on 6 August 2012

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 23 July 2012 be received and any recommendations approved.
- 2) that the verbal report of the meeting held on 6 August 2012 be noted and the following **RECOMMENDATIONS** agreed:
 1. that the report be noted.
 2. that the recommendation from the Leisure & Recreation Committee with regard to the tennis courts at West Witney be noted, with the proviso that the independent report be commissioned as a matter of urgency.
 3. that the recommendations from the Public Halls Committee be deferred for consideration at the Council meeting later in the evening.
 4. that the website budget be agreed.
 5. that the situation with regard to health & safety support be noted.
 6. that the decision of the Public Halls Committee that the flat in the Langdale Hall should not be converted into office space remains at this time.
- 3) that the two confidential items (Langdale Hall and Commercial Properties) from the Special meeting held on 6 August 2012 be deferred to an Extra Ordinary meeting of the Council, date to be agreed.

375 **MEMBERSHIP OF OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

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 Councillor H B Eaglestone be put forward as the representative for West Oxfordshire on the OALC Executive & Policy Committee
- 3) that the term of office of the three trustees on Cogges Welfare Trust Charity be extended until further information is received following their meeting in October 2012.

376 **CORN EXCHANGE**

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

In view of the issues surrounding this and other Council properties, it was agreed that this item should be deferred to an Extra Ordinary meeting of the Council.

With regard to the tender interviews, a Member remarked that he considered the preferred architect should be notified and some Members agreed.

A Member suggested that the Council should begin to look for a fund raiser, with suitable experience; however, they should not be engaged until after the Extra Ordinary Council meeting.

With regard to the formation of a Steering Group, which would consist of Councillors and members of the community, Councillors N Buckle and C K Woodward expressed their willingness to sit on this group. A Member commented that as it had already been agreed to refer this to an extra ordinary meeting, it should not be pre-empted by making decisions now.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that this item be deferred to an Extra Ordinary meeting of the Council.

For clarification, the Town Clerk queried whether the decision on appointing an architect was deferred, and this was confirmed. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Council would not be incurring any expenditure at this time.

377 **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 7.30pm

Chairman