



MINUTES OF WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 18th JANUARY 2016 AT 7:00PM IN THE CIVIC CENTRE

Present: Cllrs P Smith (Mayor), T Luker, P Barton, N Clement, K Collins, June Cordwell, John Cordwell (from 8.10pm), N Pinnegar, A Wilkinson, R Claydon, A Kendall, C Young

In Attendance: Town Clerk Ms S Bailey, 19 members of the public

T.4912 Apologies for Absence – L Farmer

T.4913 Declarations of Interest Cllr A Kendall-Fountain Crescent resident, Cllr P Smith -Wotton DIY employer, Cllr A Wilkinson –Chamber of Trade/land behind fire station

T.4914 Public Forum

a) Mr Orme spoke of problems in Court Meadow/Court Orchard area regarding inadequate sewerage and drainage over past 20 years, and poor response from utility companies. However, there is no written evidence of problems or any other resident complaints. He was advised to put the issue in writing with evidence and then arrange a meeting with Severn Trent, which the Mayor would also attend.

b) Many members of CALGS attended and asked the Council to consider a Compulsory Purchase Order for the Coombe allotment site. The landowner has now formally refused to sell to CALGS and formal eviction continues to be the end of March. There is much press interest in this site. The landowner continues to refuse to meet them directly. Compulsory Leasing has not been considered but could be an option. CALGS states that legal fees would be covered up to a certain level so that it does not cost the Wotton taxpayer, but could not give a blank cheque. CALGS were thanked for attending and giving their views.

T.4915 WCSF - To welcome Sarah Watt and Barnaby Beere of WCSF for an update on developments at the New Road Sports Foundation site. A new site illustration board displaying future plans was shown. There are now two artificial pitches with 3000 users a week on average, and youngsters are taking up a variety of more sports and at all levels. No cancelled matches as at other venues due to waterlogged pitches! A full sized football pitch is planned with clubhouse and changing rooms, and South Glos Council has already pledged £200,000 via S106 housing contributions from Charfield. A figure of eight running trail is planned around the site perimeter. Two BMX tracks are planned – one hard, one easy. A new sensory garden is being investigated. An orchard of 37 fruit trees is now in place, and 4,347 trees/saplings have been planted; wildlife of deer, badgers, and foxes now regularly spotted. The Barnwood Trust has given £75,000 towards improved access to overall site. The main foot access path has now raised £82,000 in just one year and needs another £13,000 to be able to start and complete. Final costing details are now being done. 'Men's Sheds' will become a feature of the site and, although may invoke amusement, are actually considered to fill a social gap created by today's society. Sarah and Barnaby were thanked for all of the extremely hard volunteer work which they have put into the site, which is evident in its success. WCSF likewise thanked the Town Council for its continued support over the years.

T.4916 Minutes of the Meeting

Proposed by Cllr P Smith, seconded by Cllr R Claydon that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st December 2015 be approved as a correct record after minor amendments to the public session part of text. Agreed all in favour, 1 abstention.

T.4917 Chairman's Announcements – none

T.4918 Accounts

- a) To approve attendance at GAPTC 'Being a Better Councillor' course 1st March 2016 for Cllr Young cost £95. It was proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded by Cllr R Claydon to approve payment – agreed by all.
- b) To approve payment of £10 to the Trustees of the Rowland Hill Almshouses as contribution towards the cost of electricity for the Tabernacle Christmas Tree lights. It was proposed by Cllr June Cordwell and seconded by Cllr T Luker to approve payment – agreed by all.
- c) To approve Clerk's attendance at SLCC Branch AGM on 17th March 2016 cost £15. It was proposed by Cllr P Barton and seconded by Cllr T Luker to approve payment – agreed by all.
- d) Budget 2015/16. To note report of expenditure against budget. Noted as expected with no concerns.
- e) To approve the accounts for payment. It was proposed by Cllr R Claydon and seconded by Cllr P Barton to approve payments schedule– agreed by all.

T.4919 Audit

- a) To approve appointment of Mr I Selkirk as auditor for the Financial Year 2015/16 at cost of £190 (£5 increase from previous, although fee was negotiated down considerably the previous year). It was proposed by Cllr K Collins and seconded by Cllr R Claydon to approve appointment – agreed by all.
- b) To approve participation in new external audit appointment process from 2017 organised by Smaller Authorities Appointments Ltd following the abolition of the Audit Commission. It was proposed by Cllr R Claydon and seconded by Cllr T Luker to participate in the collective audit process – agreed by all.
- c) To receive report on Quarterly Internal Audit July-September 2015; and to arrange for two Councillors to carry out the quarterly internal audit for October–December 2015 asap. Cllrs A Wilkinson and L Famer carried out the July to September audit check and found no matters of concern apart from the payments over £500 not on the website due to new website was under construction – this has now been rectified. The next audit will be undertaken by Cllrs R Claydon and P Barton.

T.4920 Heritage Centre – To confirm details of grants and arrangements to support continuation and sustainability of the Heritage Centre. A paper explained that it was considered a better option to grant a sum of money £4,300 (representing mostly the utility costs of the Heritage centre and the rental payment to the Town Trust) to the Heritage Centre rather than taking back control of the building. This would reduce the need for extra staff resources and also makes it easier to review the grant allocation each year. The current lease would be extended, with an addendum modifying it to show the responsibility for the maintenance of the actual building reverting to the Town Trust. The Town Council would also donate £1000 towards a new boiler to make the heating more efficient, would pay buildings insurance, and also would take over all PAT testing. Repairs needed to the external fabric are difficult to quantify at this stage but some repairs will be needed. The Heritage Centre will in return provide a larger Tourist Information Point at the front with increased opening hours by volunteers. The improved financial stability of the basic heritage centre would now also allow fundraising and volunteer work to be focussed more towards displays, heritage and tourism rather than utility bill payments. Originally £8000 was requested as a grant and much detailed analysis has reduced the essentials to £4300 plus a boiler. Glos Archives will be investigated for the extra storage of artefacts currently paid for in Wotton library. It was proposed by Cllr R Claydon and seconded by Cllr P Smith to approve this grant – agreed by all.

Arrival of Cllr John Cordwell

T.4921 Land at Fountain Crescent – To discuss SDC disposal of land at Fountain Crescent and feasibility of purchase for affordable housing development. Since the December discussions, SDC has not only indicated that they would expect £700,000 plus for this site when it obtains planning permission for housing, but the SDC committee meeting then actually approved sale of this site for housing, despite two senior asset management officers stating two months prior that they would not undertake such action without consultation with the community. Without any assistance from SDC, it is financially impossible for the Town Council to develop this site for affordable housing. It was proposed by Cllr R Claydon and seconded by Cllr N Pinnegar and agreed 11 in favour 1 abstention, to note the SDC sale of this land for development, however to request that SDC applies the restriction that a reasonable amount of affordable housing must be provided by the developer.

T.4922 Rope Walk Toilets Area – To discuss plans for improvements to this area, consider inclusion in WTC budget and on S106 SDC allocation list. The Clerk prepared a document outlining improvements needed to the area including flower borders, trees, seating areas, bicycle racks, a noticeboard, a wall mural and a map, and also gave evidence of need, estimated costings, and grant source suggestions along with potential partners to work with. Whilst some Councillors expressed concern that the previous trees and map board had been vandalised by youths many years ago, that youths congregating there would be an issue and that finance was scarce, other Councillors stated that this ugly area is the main route from car park to shopping street, it needs drastic improvement, and attempts must be made to encourage tourism into the town. Also the site is now covered by CCTV. It was suggested that local artists and youths could be involved in its makeover and vandalism maybe less likely. Cllr A Wilkinson offered to place this as a Chamber of Trade agenda item in order that some seed money starts off the project. It was proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded by Cllr A Wilkinson that the Town Council supports this project subject to grant funding being sourced and it is taken forward, voted 7 in favour, 5 against.

T.4923 Council Van – To discuss possible procurement of replacement van in new financial year. A quotation from Ford gave costings for an almost new van. The existing 13 year old van is now starting to need extensive repairs of approximately £1000 each time. It was proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded by Cllr R Claydon and voted all in favour that when the van next breaks down, if the repairs are estimated above £1000, then the van is scrapped and a van hired temporarily in order that a new van may be purchased. The Clerk stressed that in order to be able to continue Council operations efficiently and effectively such a breakdown and scrapping scenario would become a matter of urgency and an urgent meeting of Council called to procure a proper replacement van.

T.4924 Annual Budget and Precept Request Financial Year 2016/17

a) To confirm rate increase in charges for facilities hire, allotments and burials, from April 2016 as discussed at the draft budget meeting. It was proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded by Cllr T Luker that the Town Council approves the rate increases as discussed, voted all in favour. It was also agreed to leave the incentivisation of special rates to encourage usage at quieter times to the discretion of the Clerk.

b) To consider a new grant application from WCSF to WTC for new skatepark path, for £10,000. It was proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded by Cllr June Cordwell that the Town Council supports this project and awards a £5000 grant from the new FY budget to be released on invoices only, but paid from earmarked reserves, voted all in favour.

c) To approve the Precept for the Financial Year 2016/17. Two informal budget meetings have been held to discuss the budget requirements to a fine level of detail. It was

proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded by Cllr R Claydon and agreed by all that the Precept for next FY is set at £270,746 which is an increase of 2.4%. However it is also agreed that the Precept request form from SDC which asks for use of Reserves by each Parish Council is not to be filled in, proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded Cllr T Luker and agreed by all.

T.4925 S106 Allocation – To discuss and approve S106 project list and to prioritise the top three projects. SDC have requested that the form be updated to allow them to more appropriately allocate funds towards Town Council requested projects which are deemed important in the community. The form provided by SDC was distributed and the top 3 projects chosen by this Town Council as warranting funding priority are Marchesi Walk upgrading of footpath (costings are needed for this), Rope Walk area toilets outside makeover, and Old Town Toilets improvements, the above was proposed by Cllr A Wilkinson seconded by Cllr T Luker and agreed 10 in favour 2 against, 1 abstention.

T.4926 Christmas Event – To consider whether to organise a Christmas Event in the town, spearheaded by the Council but working with various community organisations. The Clerk provided a detailed toolkit on the amount of preparation needed to stage such an event. A lot of complaints had been received from the public about the lack of any Christmas event in the town last month. Cllr A Wilkinson said that two Chamber of Trade members from the Market St hair salon had offered to organise such an event for this year and that this Council could work with them and provide assistance. It is also hoped that any new Councillors after the May election may wish to get involved.

T.4927 Land Behind the Fire Station – To consider whether to support ‘in principle’ the provision of a car park and a small amount of housing on land behind the Fire Station, but reserving judgement on detailed matters until a planning application has been submitted. There were many views on this subject and a heated debate ensued concerning the need for a car park in town but at what cost regarding the housing location, and the poor access route adjacent to the surgery and traffic problems in that location. It was proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded by Cllr A Wilkinson that the Town Council supports this project in principle but reserves judgement on detailed matters until a planning application has been submitted, voted 8 in favour, 3 against, 1 abstention.

T.4928 Stream Bank at Marchesi Walk – To note erosion of stream bank at Marchesi Walk which is undercutting the pathway. A quote for £5000 gabion remedial works has been received but the problem has been referred to County Public Rights of Way for their assessment in the first instance; their officer has inspected and deemed it as not an immediate danger to the public. They are looking at involving the Cotswold Wardens in some repairs there possibly.

T.4929 Mobile Phone Coverage – To consider relevant issues with mobile phone coverage in the area for submission to the County’s Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee. It appears that different service providers offer different levels of connectivity in Wotton. EE and Three appear to offer better levels than O2 and Tesco, but it is largely subjective and County needs a large survey sent out to gauge any accurate level of response. A signal is usually easily obtainable but the strength of that signal is not consistent, also O2 and Tesco to not appear to have 3g or 4g in Wotton.

T.4930 Good Deeds Section; ‘Thanks to Volunteers’ – to acknowledge recent volunteer work for the benefit of the town/community. It was agreed to send a thank you card from the Mayor to Ian Pullen for all of his snow clearance contribution to the Town Of

Wotton over many years without ever requesting any payment, and also to Mrs Jan Motton for dedication to constantly removing litter and weeds around Synwell.

T.4931 Correspondence

a) Noted - letter from Wotton Kumon Centre informing that the classes will be moving to Yate in order to attract more students and that the last class in the Civic Centre will take place on 11th February 2016.

b) To note letter regarding incident in the cemetery, the actions taken, and to discuss other possible actions. Noted – Clerk explained to Council the actions taken and the circumstances of the event. Clerk to respond to complainant as appropriate

Brochures/Newsletters for information only: Countryside Voice Winter 2015, Recovery Summer/Autumn 2015, War Memorials Trust Bulletin November 2015

T.4932 Reports from Councillors & meetings attended

County Council – written report provided by Cnty Cllr John Cordwell highlighting the just approved County winter weather plan (despite asking for it since last summer), the continued reduction of Highways budget (from £24m 10 years ago to £13m next year), and establishment of an EU Referendum task group.

District Council – Cllr Ken Tucker provided written report highlighting SDC achieving carbon neutral status, changes to refuse collection services, new pay by phone service at SDC car parks, agreement by Committee to sell off Fountain Crescent land to development, the Full Moon application being heard at SDC on 9th February, and an SDC budget rise set at 1.9%. Cllr Reeves was thanked for her ‘attempting’ to stave off District’s sale of Fountain Crescent land.

Footpaths Committee – meeting tomorrow

Special Purposes Committee – to meet shortly when date arranged

Allotments Committee – not met

Youth Liaison Group – not met, but an internal meeting to discuss extra session youth funding arrangements this week.

Town Regeneration Partnership – not met

Sports Foundation – written report from Cllr June Cordwell highlighting small cracks in the new skatepark being sorted, specification for new access path being drawn up, two BMX tracks plans being prepared, costings being obtained for a new play area, a new sensory garden research undertaken at Stratford Park in Stroud, new Sports Centre manager started and set up costs cleared, and some weather damage to advertisement banners.

Recreational Trust – Cllr R Claydon spoke of working towards the new Constitution

SDC Towns & Parishes meeting – Cllrs R Claydon, P Smith and John Cordwell attended and discussed proposed changes to district household waste recycling, S106 & CIL contributions, new neighbourhood wardens, the Glos devolution bid, planning conditions, & neighbourhood plans/costs.

T.4933 Town Affairs

Cllr K Collins – complained about the poor state of roads in Wotton; Cllr John Cordwell stated they are unlikely to improve due to severe County budget cutbacks. Also complaint about water leak at top of Westfields, and inconsiderate parking by private vans outside Potters Pond when working on adjacent house.

Cllr N Clement – Synwell Playing Fields Committee meets this week

Cllr P Barton – white lining/ remarking still needs carrying out Long St– already reported.

Cllr T Luker – reiterated the poor state of the roads

Due to the lateness of the hour past 10pm and in line with Standing Orders a vote was taken to continue the meeting past 10pm in order to complete necessary business as swiftly as possible, proposed Cllr P Smith, seconded Cllr John Cordwell, agreed all in favour, 1 abstention.

PLANNING APPLICATION *To be considered due to SDC time restrictions on responses.*

T.4934 S.15/2799/HHOLD – 45 Bradley Street, GL12 7AR – Two storey rear extension. After viewing the plans and discussions, it was proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded by Cllr R Claydon that the application is objected to on the basis of loss of light to neighbouring properties, thus affecting the neighbours' amenity, and thus contrary to Policy HC8 of the Stroud District Local Plan Nov 2015, agreed 6 in favour, 4 against, 1 abstention, thus carried.

It was proposed by Cllr P Smith, seconded by Cllr T Luker, to enter closed session under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to discuss the following due to matters involving land purchase and/or legal advice, agreed by all. The Public left the room.

T.4935 CALGS – To receive update on allotment land in Coombe and whether to consider an alternative acquisition strategy. The Council considered the information presented to them by CALGS earlier in the meeting and also in written form. After much discussion concerning the uncertain costs of the legal situation, the basis upon which a Compulsory Purchase Order is to be used as a last resort for land acquisition (landowner negotiation must be attempted), and also a very strong backing case needs to be presented to the Secretary of State, it was proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded by Cllr N Clement, agreed all in favour, that the following two strategies are to be pursued:

1. The Town Council will contact Mr Ryan of Loxleys Solicitors to request a meeting with its client, the landowner.
2. The Town Council will contact a barrister/lawyer in order to ascertain how strong a case we have, and what the costs are likely to be.

It was proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded by Cllr K Collins and agreed by all to re-enter Council session.

This completed the business of the Town Council and the Town Trust at 10.15pm

Signed:

Dated:

Chairman of Wotton-under-Edge Town Council