

**MINUTES OF WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
**HELD ON MONDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2017 AT 7:00PM IN THE CIVIC CENTRE**



**Present:** Cllrs T Luker (Deputy Mayor), P Barton, N Pinnegar, June Cordwell, R Claydon, A Proctor, N Clement, L Farmer, A Wilkinson

**In attendance:** Town Clerk Ms S Bailey, District Cllrs K Tucker, C Braun, 5 members of public

**T.5200 Apologies for Absence** accepted from Cllrs P Smith, John Cordwell, A Kendall, C Young

**T.5201 Declarations of Interest** accepted from Cllr A Wilkinson (Chamber of Trade)

**T.5202 Village Agents** – To welcome Anne Robinson, and Ceri Cockram to talk about Village Agents and the service they provide to the community. Anne explained that although she is no longer Wotton’s village agent, she would be continuing the role in Stroud and had hoped to introduce her successor Kate Darch at this meeting. Village agents also operate in urban areas and are a signposting and support scheme for the over 50s or the vulnerable, funded by Glos CC. Future funding, however, is uncertain. Ceri is the lead community safety adviser for the area from the fire service and she explained how Fire Service emphasis is now on measures to prevent fire rather than just attending when a fire occurs. A South West survey analysed fire fatality risks and showed how targeting specific people in a community improved fire statistics. Ceri visits people and community organisations, tying up with local councils and the health service.

**T.5203 Public Forum** no comments received

**T.5204 Hill Road** – To discuss overgrown Council land at Hill Road. Stroud District Cllr Catherine Braun discussed site possibilities and explained how this overgrown area could become a community site or a nature habitat. She has spoken to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and other agencies and has contacted a few neighbours and a few local community members who are enthusiastic about the scheme. Although the site is very small and access is poor, improving the site would have a beneficial effect for local residents. Town councillors explained how the site previously was a children’s play area but had to be closed many years ago due to vandalism and antisocial behaviour. Town councillors felt unwilling at the moment to take this on as a new project, however if there is a sufficient amount of local community interest in furthering this as a project, then Council is willing to listen and consider the possibilities.

**T.5205 To approve the Minutes** of the meeting held December 2016. It was proposed by Cllr P Barton and seconded by Cllr A Proctor and agreed 7 in favour 2 abstentions to approve these Minutes.

**T.5206 Chairman’s Announcements** - none

**T.5207 Accounts**

a) To note lift inspection report and approve recommended works. The Town Clerk provided quotations for lift works considered necessary by the Council’s new lift contractor. The engineer who undertook a service a week ago said that the lift

was of good 'old-fashioned' quality and was well maintained, and that installing a modern new one would not necessarily be better as they are not as sturdy as the older models. Therefore, upgrading some items on this lift which do not comply with 'new installation' regulations which a new modern lift would have to meet, would be beneficial. Quotes were provided for the safety features of:

- full-length infra-red door sensors since the current lift only has one beam detecting at the bottom of the door to reopen it when closing;

- an autodial unit to be used when someone is trapped inside the lift and can dial out via telephone line rather than just pressing a bell which may or may not be heard by others inside the building;

- a pit ladder for maintenance engineers safety to get into the lift between floor openings;

- an electronic pit prop for maintenance safety, so that hydraulic lifts don't fall onto engineers if the prop is knocked.

The works above total £2,439 although a BT line is also needed for the autodial connection. There was much discussion amongst Councillors of the need for upgrading this lift to modern safety standards as it was unclear if further works would also be required in the future. The previous lift contractor also mentioned two of the safety features. It was proposed by Cllr T Luker seconded by Cllr June Cordwell and agreed all in favour to approve these lift works since they are important safety features. The office will also cross-reference and check previous quotations to see if any other lift recommendations are still outstanding.

- b) To approve quote for repairs to Chipping Hall leaking flat roof at rear and discuss replacement stone fleur-de-lys quote received for other end of roof. The Town trust meeting last week approved the works to the flat roof. A £5000 quotation was received to replace the fleur-de-lys stone on the roof, although rather than spending thousands, Council wishes to firstly check whether the stonework can be repaired and how dangerous the risk of falling is, from a health and safety point of view. A stonemason has been contacted and is providing a quote to inspect the stone work.
- c) To approve quotation for repair works to Old Town bus shelter. One quotation was obtained and another is awaited this week.
- d) Budget 2016/17. To note report of expenditure against budget. The budget was noted as healthy and questions from councillors regarding grants received breakdown were satisfied before the meeting. The boiler repair work invoice at the Town Hall is being checked against the installation guarantee before payment. It was proposed by Cllr L Farmer seconded by Cllr T Luker and agreed by all to approve the budget report.
- e) To approve the accounts for payment. After one question regarding the amount payable to BT for youth centre telephone lines, it was proposed by Cllr June Cordwell seconded by Cllr L Farmer and agreed by all to approve the payment schedule for £16,329 for Town Council and £2,135 for Town Trust. It was also requested that another credit card is obtained for Clerk use out of hours, since one remains in the safe.

## **T.5208 Grants**

To consider grant applications for payment from 2017/18 budget. Details of the grants considered at the December budget meeting were circulated again. A late grant application from Cobalt was approved for £50, proposed by Cllr June Cordwell

seconded by Cllr R Claydon and agreed by all. The total grants payable will therefore total £4875 for the next financial year, proposed by Cllr L Farmer seconded by Cllr R Claydon agreed eight in favour one abstention.

#### **T.5209 Facilities Fees/Administration Charges**

- a) To confirm increases in burial fees as discussed at December budget meeting.
  - b) To confirm increase to Chipping Clubroom hire charges
  - c) To confirm no increases to other buildings hire, nor to allotment rents (the latter already increasing from October 2017).
  - d) To confirm increase in annual Administration charge to Town Trust to £7000.
- All of the above facilities fees and administration charges were discussed in detail at the budget meeting in December and circulated again. It was proposed by Cllr L Farmer seconded by Cllr N Pinnegar and agreed by all to approve these.

#### **T.5210 Budget and Precept 2017/2018**

To consider whether to allocate funds to CCTV budget for upgrade of system discussions at the end of January. The council discussed a quotation just received from the CCTV provider regarding upgraded software and cameras needed to produce a better system in line with technological advancement. The provider will be addressing Council directly within the next month, however funds are needed in the budget should Council wishes to carry out these works, this was proposed by Cllr A Wilkinson seconded by Cllr P Barton agreed 6 in favour 2 against, 1 abstention. It was noted that Council has just carried out an expensive CCTV upgrade and the company must be questioned as to the effect of this technology. It is also requested that Police feedback is obtained before any upgrade is discussed further.

To consider whether to increase youth spending budget for summer activities. Councillors questioned the fact that £17,000 is being spent on youth projects each year yet only 10 to 15 youths are attending sessions, effectively subsidising each youth by £500 to £1000. Although summer activities were very successful, maybe contributions towards the trips should be requested. It was proposed by Cllr A Wilkinson seconded by Cllr L Farmer to leave the youth spending budget as recommended, but consider possibly using earmarked funds at a future date should Council later agree on any summer proposals, voted eight in favour one against. To confirm Budget and Precept for the Financial Year 2017/18 and to confirm not to include information regarding Reserves usage on the Precept form. After further budget discussion and consideration of the Precept requirement for of £280,632, approval of this amount was proposed by Cllr L Farmer seconded by Cllr A Wilkinson, voted six in favour, two against, one abstention. Although this is an increase of 3.7% on the yearly Precept, the overall band D calculation would be lower, due to the tax base rise of approximately 2.5%. The exact percentage increase was not to hand at the meeting, but likely 1% or 2%.

**T.5211 Good Deeds Section:** Thanks to Volunteers – to acknowledge recent volunteer work for the benefit of the town/community. It was agreed to send a card of thanks to Mr & Mrs J Walshe for volunteering and opening the Heritage Centre to visitors over the festive season when little else was open in Wotton and when lots of walkers were in the town looking for local tourist information.

**T.5212 Clerk's Report** - no January report due to festive council closure, a late December meeting, and an early January meeting.

**T.5213 Correspondence** to note or request action:

- a) Noted invitation from Western Power Distribution to Stakeholder Workshops.
- b) Noted invitation from Wotton Baptist Church to join them at several events running from 31st March -2nd April 2017, to celebrate the church's 300 years in the town; and the official opening of 'The Link' building extension. This invitation will be scanned and emailed to all councillors
- c) Invitation from GAPTC/GRCC to new Stroud Parish & Town Council cluster meeting at the Cam Parish Council offices 6.30-8.30pm Thursday 26th January & consider attendance. Cllr P Smith may attend this meeting.
- d) Request from GAPTC for specific discussion topics to feed into Parish/Town Council ~ Police Crime Commissioner engagement sessions, regarding subjects of Police and Crime Plan (officially launching Feb17), Neighbourhood policing/Neighbourhood watch/Crime stoppers, Rural crime, Anti-social behaviour, Police reports/stats, Road safety, Community fund. No topics were offered
- e) GAPTC request for Councillor (& ex) nominations for Buckingham Place Garden Party attendance (names to be drawn out of hat) in recognition of community service. Suggestions were made, however all had already attended.

Brochures/Newsletters for information only: none

**T.5214 Reports from Councillors & meetings attended**

County Council – County Cllr John Cordwell provided a written report accompanied by detailed County budgetary information showing that £35m needs to be cut from spending for a proposed budget of £397m next year. After the county elections, the renewal of Amey's Highway contract from April 2019 will be decided. Two thousand pounds is still available from the Children's Activity Fund and must be committed by end of March. Apply online at [www.gloucestershire.gov/childrensactivityfund](http://www.gloucestershire.gov/childrensactivityfund)

District Council – a long, written report was provided by district councillors on various issues. Next year's budgets are being discussed with much further saving needed, although it is pleasing to see that youth spending is in the budget, rather than left as discretionary. SDC has decided to suggest to the Boundary Commission that Wotton and Vale wards join the Thornbury and Yate constituency rather than Wotton remain with Cotswold as currently. Dursley and Cam are retained, although Minchinhampton joins Cotswold constituency. Questions are being asked by district councillors regarding Vale daytime and Stroud Hospital overnight A&E closures. A detailed response was made to the South Gloucestershire Spatial Strategy proposals, however it was disappointing to see that not much emphasis was placed on the much needed re-opening of Charfield railway station. The devolution deal for Gloucestershire appears now to have stalled, and SDC are looking at ways of working more efficiently with South Gloucestershire Council.

PROW & Amenities Committee – not met

Finance & Special Purposes Committee – meeting this week

Allotments Committee – meeting deferred, however the contractor has been instructed to commence path shoring up works at New Rd allotments.

Wotton Youth Partnership WYP (formerly Youth Liaison Group) –informal meeting held at a local hostelry mostly discussing the new mental health venture

Town Regeneration Partnership – not met.

WC Sports Foundation – AGM saw all re-elected. The new 'safe path' to skatepark is being used, and KLB students are using the new jogging trail for cross country.

Every Saturday morning Parc run events are also held with 140 runners last weekend. The astro pitches are now well appreciated, with Wotton seen as a centre of excellence for hockey. The JV company with KLB is well run although challenged financially in some areas. Advertising banners around pitches will be increased and a sinking fund started for another training pitch. Grants are being sought for the next project of BMX track.

Wotton Pool –Cllr Young attended the AGM, and is reported to have said to have commented that it was surprisingly very quick and very brief.

Walking Festival – meeting this week.

Heritage Centre (HC) – volunteer social coffee mornings to re-commence at the Swan soon, 8 chairs have been replaced in the Research/Reading room, a ‘friends of the HC’ event takes place on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, photos are being gathered for the next calendar 2018, a Powerpoint ‘History of the HC’ is being prepared as a fundraiser. This year will see the Reading Room stripped out to install a proper library system for artefacts.

Mental Health Focus Group – inaugural meeting with many attendees interested in seeing Wotton become a pilot town for dealing with mental health issues. Jess Jenkins is collating material and meetings, with initial funding from WYP and the Recreational Trust. Time Out drop-in session operate Friday mornings.

#### **T.5215 Town Affairs**

Cllr A Wilkinson - commented on the success of the Christmas event with each street Christmas tree also having lights on. The buildings manager and caretaker were thanked for their help in putting up and taking down. The car park application has just arrived and Chamber of Trade considers this important for the town.

*The public left the meeting*

The Following items will be dealt with in Closed Session under Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 due to staffing matters of a sensitive nature.

*It was proposed by Cllr L Farmer seconded by Cllr R Claydon and agreed by all to enter closed session*

#### **T.5216 Staffing Matters**

To report on appraisals and actions arising therefrom and to ratify matters agreed at the Finance and Special Purposes meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016, including:

(i) Town Clerk move to SCP42 pro rata from 1/11/16 in accordance with original contract.

*The clerk left the room for the above item*

It was proposed by Cllr R Claydon seconded by Cllr A Proctor and agreed all in favour to approve the payment move as per contract to SCP 42.

(ii) Caretaker – 1 week’s salary in lieu of holiday not taken last year. The clerk explained the situation leading to too much holiday left at the end of the year and it was proposed by Cllr A Wilkinson seconded by Cllr T Luker and agreed by all to make this payment.

(iii) Information Officer –one extra day per week-one year trial basis starting 1/1/17 assisting deputy clerk workloads –also 2016 holiday accrued for administrator cover to be paid, since impossible to take. The Clerk explained the extra cover which the information officer was working due to administrator injury and the fact that much holiday has been accrued but impossible to take. It was proposed by Cllr P Barton seconded by Cllr A Wilkinson and agreed by all to approve these payments.

*This completed the business of the Town Council at 9.15pm*

Signed: .....Dated: .....