



**MINUTES OF WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 19<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2015 AT 7:00PM IN THE CIVIC CENTRE**

**Present:** Cllrs P Smith (Chairman and Mayor), P Barton, N Clement, K Collins, June Cordwell, John Cordwell, A Kendall, N Pinnegar, A Wilkinson, L Farmer  
**In Attendance:** Town Clerk Ms S Bailey 7 members of the public

**T.4825 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs T Luker and R Claydon.

**T.4826 To receive formal presentation from GAPTC** to Town Council of LCAS Foundation Level Award certificate. The Chief Executive of GAPTC Alison Robinson presented a framed certificate to the Mayor and congratulated the Council on being the first Council in Gloucestershire to be awarded a level under the new Quality Status Scheme. She spoke about the scheme and how it shows that Councils comply with minimum standards of procedures and community governance.

**T.4827 To receive a brief introduction from Rebecca Jelf**, County Council Local Engagement Officer for Stroud South, on her role. Ms Jelf is covering for a maternity leave colleague (normal role commissioning) and explained how she is a conduit /signpost link between parishes/towns and the county council, and can help both in finding the right department for any issues and also providing feedback for to County. She highlighted a few forthcoming consultations.

**T.4828 To welcome Mark Graham, Public Spaces Officer** at Stroud District Council, to discuss tree procurement works and ways of lowering costs for amalgamated purchase. Deferred in the absence of Mr Graham.

**T.4829 Public Forum** Mr Martin Clarke spoke on two matters. 1. As Chair of Under the Edge Arts Funding Committee, there are lots of events planned for next year and documents were circulated; the AGM will also be entertaining with a storyteller. 2. Regarding CALGs, 30 weeks have passed since eviction notice on allotment site issued by landowner. CALGS intends to make a bid for the site under Community Asset Status early next year before eviction, although likely at agricultural prices rather than potential development land price. The Council is urged to commission a District Valuation of the site in order for fair value to be assessed (CALGS would aid payment of this). This would be needed for a Compulsory Purchase Order, which the Town Council is urged to consider. The Council is also urged to check the validity of any offers purporting to be from developers. CALGS is meeting the Recreational Trust to explore new set up possibilities & site management. CALGS reiterate that Knapp Rd and New Rd Council current allotment sites are too far from Coombe and sense of community would be lost. CALGS look forward to input into the community plan from an allotment perspective.

**T.4830 Declarations of Interest** Cllr John Cordwell SW Councils (closed session), Cllr P Smith Wotton DIY, Cllr A Kendall Culverhay Patients Group.

**T.4831 Minutes of the Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015**

Proposed by Cllr June Cordwell, seconded by Cllr John Cordwell that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015 be approved as a correct record. Agreed all in favour.

**T.4832 Chairman's Announcements** - none

## **T.4833          Accounts**

- a) To approve purchase of Emergency Evacuation Chair for Civic Centre plus associated training (backing doc). The mid and higher range chairs sourced from the local Mobility Shop were discussed in detail with their attributes. Only the higher end model can negotiate the curved emergency staircase, and despite having a main straight staircase, this could be an issue if lift were out of order and main staircase blocked. Therefore it was proposed by Cllr June Cordwell and seconded Cllr A Wilkinson and agreed by all that the model ExitMaster Elite for cost of £1322 + vat (incl training) is purchased to comply with emergency evacuation procedures of building, funded by contingency.
- b) To approve Clerk's attendance at mapping system training seminar at a cost of £70. Proposed to approve by Cllr A Wilkinson and seconded Cllr L Farmer and agreed by all.
- c) To approve earmarking £850 from current Footpaths budget 15/16 for wall repairs at Holywell Leaze, expected to be scheduled for May 2016. Proposed to approve by Cllr John Cordwell and seconded Cllr P Barton and agreed by all.
- d) To approve Footpaths Committee recommendation to purchase 4 new trees for The Clump (backing doc). Proposed to approve by Cllr K Collins and seconded Cllr N Pinnegar and agreed by all, with the Scots Pine having to substitute the unavailability of Corsican Pine.
- e) To approve donation of £50 for Royal British Legion in respect of poppy wreath for Remembrance Sunday; and to remind members of arrangements, including laying of the wreath. Proposed to approve payment by Cllr P Smith and seconded Cllr N Clement and agreed by all. The Mayor urged all to attend the Remembrance Day parade.
- f) To note success of Civic Centre rates valuation Appeal against SDC and the consequent reduction of rates back to £649 per month plus refund received of £604. The Clerk was thanked for strongly arguing against this giving this positive result.
- g) To approve renewal of fire alarm system/emergency lighting servicing contract for Civic Centre and Town Hall at same cost as previously (£195 plus VAT p.a. each). Proposed to approve payment by June Cordwell, seconded Cllr L Farmer, agreed by all.
- h) To approve Planning Training attendance at CPRE/GAPTC event at Whitminster 22/10/2015 for Clerk cost £15. Proposed to approve payment by Cllr P Smith and seconded Cllr A Wilkinson and agreed by all.
- i) To confirm receipt of £4300 from Wotton in Bloom towards watering of hanging baskets, total expenditure incurred this season £5950, balance £1650. The Mayor explained to new Councillors how WTC manages the watering contract and receives a donation towards its costs from Wotton in Bloom – this helps to reduce costs, eg VAT.
- j) Budget 2015/16. To note report of expenditure against budget (backing doc). Report noted and budget appears healthy.
- k) To approve the accounts for payment (backing doc). No extra invoices received. Proposed to approve payment by Cllr N Pinnegar and seconded Cllr John Cordwell and agreed by all.

**T.4834 Weedspraying/Litter Picking** - To update Council on weeding and litter picking requirements for the town, and inform that town tidying duties are part of the caretaker vacancy currently being advertised. To discuss at end in closed session.

**T.4835 Old Town Toilets** - To note that overnight locking of the toilets will cease by Veolia on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015 and to consider options going forward. A people counting system would cost £250 per month to monitor usage. A mechanised door locking quotation from the same company that SDC uses is £1195. Clerk requested to provide manual costs of Veolia's locking for comparison and discuss on Planning agenda next week.

**T.4836 Casual Vacancy** - To note that, following the resignation of Mr M Zimmer, a Casual Vacancy will exist on the Council. Subject to fulfilling legal advertisement requirements, to agree co-option at December Town Council meeting following appropriate advertising of the vacancy and legal confirmation from SDC. Agreed by all, proposed by Cllr P Smith, seconded Cllr N Pinnegar.

**T.4837 Committee Membership**

a) To confirm appointment of Cllr N Pinnegar to Footpaths Committee.  
b) To confirm appointment of Cllr A Wilkinson to Town Regeneration Partnership.  
c) To note that Cllr June Cordwell is standing down from representing the Council at Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum and to appoint Cllr A Wilkinson in place.  
Above items proposed by Cllr L Farmer seconded Cllr A Kendall, agreed by all.

d) To appoint new representatives following Mr M Zimmer resignation as follows:  
(i) Wotton & District Recreational Trust – Cllr N Pinnegar  
(ii) Wotton in Bloom – Cllr P Smith  
(iii) Snow Warden – Cllr A Kendall  
(iv) Chamber of Trade – Cllr K Collins

Above items proposed by Cllr John Cordwell seconded Cllr P Barton, agreed by all.

**T.4838 Wotton-under-Edge & District Recreational Trust Constitution** - To discuss personal liabilities that could apply to Town Council Representatives appointed to the Recreational Trust and possible ways forward. Suggested solutions are either establishing a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) or buying insurance to mitigate liability - Mr J Walshe is investigating these options.

**T.4839 Culverhay Surgery Patients Participation Group** - To note letter and documents received and to consider aspects raised therein regarding adjacent road (backing doc). Cllr A Kendall gave the background to this issue and his involvement with the patients group. Elderly patients and those with wheelchairs appear to have difficulty crossing the busy road outside and also navigating the pavement when traffic mounts it. Due to constant parked cars, it is effectively one way and busy. Visibility for motorists is also a problem. Although there is no official accident data at this site, WTC is asked what could sensibly be done to aid pedestrians. Cllr John Cordwell was surprised at not being involved in these discussion earlier as the area's county councillor and also surprised that the Chair of the Patients Group did not speak to his wife who was the Town Clerk for 22 years when this issue was previously dealt with and has much knowledge of this. After much discussion of the difficulty in removing the parked cars opposite to install a crossing (which would only displace cars to other areas, and is not suitable anyway due to lack of 2metre pavement width), Council considered investigating the possibility of installing a bollard in the wide passenger area of the entrance to the surgery – a site meeting with Mr Sykes, Cllr John Cordwell, the Highways Manager and the Clerk is suggested to explore

the issues around this suggestion. A Traffic Regulation Order is unlikely to be successful here for double yellow lines, due to many objectors as previously explained.

**T.4840 Dryleaze Court** - To discuss the potential loss of at least part of the site of Dryleaze Court for redevelopment due to its unsuitability for elderly housing, as recommended in SDC's ARK report (already circulated). Stroud District Cllr June Cordwell explained the background to this with SDC asset management considering its whole suitability of housing stock moving forward. Dryleaze Court was built in 1969, is of poor quality, with poor maintenance, and suffers low take up due to unsuitability of accommodation. We must wait and see what happens, since it would not necessarily be replaced due to lack of funding and may be sold off for some type of housing development.

**T.4841 Traffic Regulation Orders** - To consider street 'candidates' for TRO's to feed into our budget process. Cllr John Cordwell explained the process of TRO's via a document – with costs of about £10,000. Suitable double yellow lines/problem areas are outside Potters Pond, Gloucester St above Civic Centre, Locombe Place, Wortley rd with School rd, Parklands Coombe rd, Synwell Green opposite Knapp rd. Clerk to put on map and contact Highways Manager.

**T.4842 Local Transport Plan Consultation Response Report** - To note that further consultation commences on 20th November and to discuss submitting comments in support of re-opening Charfield railway station. County Council not yet approved this so deferred until November agenda.

**T.4843 Locking of Symn Lane Play Area** - To discuss whether the overnight locking of the play area should continue and to note letter of support for the continued locking by neighbour volunteers who lock on rota system. No police statistics received despite request. It appears that the neighbours are happy to continue with their rota system for locking and unlocking and on this basis the Council is happy to continue overnight locking as currently stands, proposed by Cllr P Smith, seconded Cllr A Kendall agreed by all.

**T.4844 Holywell Leaze Fencing Agreement** - To approve new draft of Holywell Leaze Fencing Agreement as recommended by Footpaths Committee (backing doc). It was proposed by Cllr June Cordwell, seconded Cllr N Pinnegar and agreed by all to approve this document and that point 2.1 is noted i.e. the siting of fence near stream is not the legal boundary.

**T.4845 Full Moon Site and Garages** - To confirm request of September Council meeting to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment to protest at District Council's handling of matters with regard to the Full Moon site and adjacent garages. It is suggested that Council awaits the visit by SDC Asset Management before the Planning Committee meeting next week, when they will explain to us their asset strategy for the garages site. To defer item to next week's planning agenda.

**T.4846 New Good Deeds Section on Agenda** 'Thanks to Volunteers' – to acknowledge recent volunteer work for the benefit of the town/community, as follows: Wotton in Bloom for lovely town hanging baskets this year; local rota volunteers for locking/unlocking of Symn Lane Play Area; volunteers who organised the Youth Curry Night which raised over £1600 for youth activities.

**T.4847      Emergency Lighting, Chipping Clubroom** - To note that, after checking legislative requirements with contractor, emergency lighting is now installed to ensure compliance with fire safety regulations in public buildings. Certification has been received. All noted that Council is now fully compliant at this new facility.

**T.4848      Clerk's Report** - The Clerk's Report was noted. We are still cutting grass as weather is so mild. Administration is still very busy. Clerk is pleased that this report is useful for Councillors to show activity at the Council as a whole, including One Stop Shop.

**T.4849      Correspondence**

- a) Pleased to note email thanking Council for clearance work at Dyers Brook.
- b) Letter from SDC, Mr M Hammond introducing himself as Head of Community & Facilities asking what we would like to see from the Neighbourhood Warden Service throughout the district. Council reiterated that we would like to see the role reinstated to previous level of service, including issuing reports on activities undertaken, not sitting in the One Stop Shop but out and about performing role, and introduce themselves by attending our meetings periodically. Clerk to respond.

**T. 4850      Reports from Councillors**

Cty Cllr John Cordwell – written report provided detailing many forthcoming consultations  
District Report by Cllr L Reeves – thanked in her absence – no questions.  
Finance & Special Purposes Committee – discussed caretaker role – refer in Closed Session.  
Allotments – Cllr P Barton getting quotes for new water piping at New rd site  
Youth Liaison Group – Phil Sullivan will step down soon from being Chair, also new treasurer sought. Curry evening very successful. A grant has been applied for, for music /social/heritage recording from SDC for £8,000.  
Regeneration – not met  
WCSF – not attended due to illness. Clerk to ask what has happened to written reports such as Minutes of newsletters from WCSF meetings. Skatepark has now raised £75k of £90k needed.

**T.4851      Town Affairs**

Cllr John Cordwell – the recent re-done Parklands resurfacing is yet again not up to standard and will have to be redone again!

Cllr A Wilkinson - the Chamber of Trade breakfast is this Friday at the Falcon which won recent pub of the year. A busy schedule is planned with various events soon.

Cllr Barton – unhappy that St Marys church would not listen to parishioners who disagree with changes proposed to internal arrangements in the church. The church consulted us a year ago on proposals and our views given. St Marys does not have to conform to normal planning authority regulations regarding application changes, but consults the Diocese.

*It was proposed by Cllr P Smith, seconded by Cllr John Cordwell, to enter closed session under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to discuss the following due to staffing matters, and contracts/tendering of a sensitive nature, agreed by all. The Public left the room.*

**T.4852 Plumbing works at Youth Centre /CCR** - To consider quotations to extend heating system from Youth Centre into Chipping Clubroom to reduce electricity costs (backing doc). One expensive quote received, two others still begin sourced. Defer until quotes received.

**T.4853 CALGS** – To consider update on allotment land in Coombe and whether to consider land purchase options. The Mayor updated Council on the meeting with the land agent who explained that they had a developer interested in the site and who had made an offer in writing for the site. This would be considered once allotmenters had vacated, and an application to remove community asset status to SDC commenced. A councillor has taken on the task of checking validity of the offer letter.

Much discussion centred on our current allotments and our very small waiting list at present, and whether the sites are suitable for displaced CALGS allotmenters. The Clerk advised that in order to consider pursuing the lengthy (and costly?) process of a Compulsory Purchase Order the Council must satisfy itself that it is doing so because it wishes to make a bona fide purchase of the site for allotments rather than prevent development there. If that is such and a case can be made, then a District Valuation Officer must be commissioned to value the site and Stroud District Council legal team involved. This would be a very time consuming and possibly costly process. The Town Council would also have to consider what it then wished to do with the allotments, eg in relation to management of them (using WTC resources?) or handover to another organisation?

CALGS in the meantime are also looking for other allotment sites in Coombe.

Councillors felt they needed more time to accurately assess the situation before coming to a decision; Clerk requested to circulate more backing information and place on Planning Committee agenda next week.

*It was proposed by Cllr L Farmer and seconded Cllr John Cordwell to suspend Standing Orders in order to allow PC Firth to speak who had just arrived at 9:25pm, all in favour.*

**T.4854 PC Firth** apologised for delay due to an emergency and gave out the requested statistics for antisocial behaviour calls/ incidents at **Symn Lane Play Area** last summer versus this summer. Statistics are 21 calls for 2014 and 2 for 2015. Thus the overnight locking was deemed to be successful. PC Firth was thanked for the statistics, for taking the time to come to the meeting, and also for asking PCSO Rollins to provide a monthly update on police/crime issues in Wotton.

*It was proposed by Cllr P Smith and seconded Cllr June Cordwell to reinstate Standing Orders all in favour.*

**T.4855 Caretaker** – to update Councillors on resignation/vacancy and agree replacement process. Also to consider a living wage introduction as minimum payment to all employees. (Confidential backing doc)

The Mayor & the Clerk updated Council on the activity over the last few weeks, namely the decision at Special Purposes Committee to request a meeting with the caretaker to discuss his role whereby he is paid for 10 hours a week yet only works 2 to 4 hours according to 9 months of timesheets. He was asked to carry out tasks which are in his job description, he agreed, then he signed off sick, then he resigned. His manner has been aggressive and unhelpful towards staff. Legal advice has been sought and followed at

every step. A letter which the caretaker subsequently sent to every Councillor's home address was explained as being factually incorrect in most aspects and the response to it given to councillors. Councillors are surprised at the turn of events, although content that the issue is being tackled in the right way.

The caretaker vacancy has been advertised and applicants will be interviewed next week. It was agreed by all to provide a low cost mobile phone for use by the new caretaker, proposed by Cllr L Farmer seconded Cllr June Cordwell.

The Council is keen to promote local sustainability and fairness, and considers that as a basic minimum the living wage of SCP11 equivalent £7.90 be immediately paid to all staff – this affects three staff positions of caretaker, information officer and cleaner. It was proposed by Cllr A Kendall seconded by Cllr N Pinnegar and agreed by all to approve this. The next two positions above (Administrator and Buildings Manager) will have the resultant differential considered after the staff appraisal process.

*It was proposed by Cllr John Cordwell and seconded by Cllr L Farmer and agreed by all to re-enter Council session.*

This completed the business of the Town Council at 9.45pm

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

Chairman of Wotton-under-Edge Town Council