

**DRAFT MINUTES OF WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING,**  
**MONDAY 17<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2020 AT 7PM** *(remote Zoom meeting due to Coronavirus)*



**Present:** Cllrs R Claydon (Chairman), N Pinnegar, T Luker, J Turner, D Thomas, S Wood, M Tucker, J Cordwell,

**In attendance:** Town Clerk Ms S Bailey, District Cllrs K Tucker, C Braun, G James, Public members 4

**T.6053 Apologies for absence.**

Apologies received from Cllrs P Barton, R Hale, K Church

**T.6054 To receive Declarations of Interest/Dispensations.** Personal interest declared by Cllr N Pinnegar (Bear St garage payment schedule)

**T.6055 Public** Residents from the roads surrounding the Hill Rd land site (a former play area closed many years ago due to behaviour problems and now very overgrown) attended to listen to council deliberations on future plans and to request that something is done to tidy/deal with the encroaching overgrowth from the area.

**T.6056 To receive reports from County Councillor and District Councillors**

Cllr J Cordwell had circulated a report in advance. The Dept of Transport has now received many funding applications for national transport schemes – reopening of Charfield Station is one of them. Horsfield Tip site/Pyke Quarry is to re-open soon on Wednesdays after complaints regarding the busy site. Also the booking system is to be re-analysed after pre-booking problems whereby an email address must be provided as this is discriminatory to those without one.

A District Council report was distributed in advance. Questions were asked about Rope Walk toilets and the inadequacy of opening only one disabled access toilet (but use for all) for the whole of Wotton. Cllr K Tucker to investigate. Elsewhere, SDC is moving towards a system where some workers re-enter Ebley Mill on a rota system, after social distancing measures have been introduced throughout the building.

**T.6057 Minutes of the Council Meeting:** July 2020 – It was **resolved** to approve these Minutes, all in favour.

**T.6058 Chairman's announcements** – Cllr R Claydon submitted a report in advance on meeting on meetings and issues attended to, such as the remote meeting with SDC (with Cllr M Tucker & the Clerk) to discuss High St reopening funding measures & possibilities, and analysis of the overgrown Hill Rd site options.

**T.6059 Accounts**

a) To consider continuing and increasing contribution to grass-cutting costs for the Tabernacle graveyard. After discussion concerning the legislation surrounding closed churchyards, and rising costs since the last agreement in 2008, it was **resolved** to increase the yearly payment up to £195 for cutting Tabernacle graveyard, agreed by all.

b) To consider request to pay the remaining 2 x £3500 amounts to the Swimming Pool following May's Council decision to retain the amount in WTC earmarked reserves. The Pool management submitted cashflow forecasts and financial analysis to assist in deliberations. Discussions concerned the improving financial situation of the Pool and the need for this finance to be in Council's reserves or paid directly to the Pool as per the

SLA. It was **resolved** to pay the £7,000 directly to the Pool, agreed 5 in favour 3 against, to provide the Pool with the future financial security it needs to operate. This will result in Pool reserves reaching £14,000 at the end of this season as per their forecast.

c) To approve quote for fire alarm relay installation to new automatic Civic Centre doors. After discussion regarding the need for the doors to open safely by themselves in the event of an emergency it was **resolved** to pay this amount of £200, agreed 7 in favour 1 against.

d) Budget 2020/21 –report noted.

*Cllr N Pinnegar left the meeting*

e) To approve August accounts for payment. An updated sheet was provided with late additions. It was **resolved** and agreed by all to pay the amounts (net) of £5,238 for Town Trust and £19,050 for Town Council.

*Cllr N Pinnegar returned to the meeting*

### **T.6060 Hill Road Amenity Area**

It was **resolved**, agreed by all, to suspend standing orders to receive a few late comments regarding the site by the public. It was then **resolved** and agreed by all to reinstate standing orders.

- a) To note email requesting permission to use some of the land and detailing how it is possibly being used by some other local residents. Councillors are concerned about reports that the land is being misused by local residents, either as a dumping ground for waste, for items storage, for unlawful gated access, or for land grabbing by boundary encroaching. The council grounds staff are requested to clear the area to ascertain the exact boundaries, to match with title and the issue progressed lawfully. The options for use appear to be as a house build site, although this was abandoned when attempted a number of years ago by perceived access issues, as a community orchard area, or selling the site to other parties in a 'one lot' sale. It was **resolved** to ask the Clerk to consult with SDC on pre-application advice as to whether a house build is indeed a possible option, an/or whether change of use could cover sale for garden usage or as a community orchard – this may incur costs of up to £200, agreed by all.
- b) To consider carrying out a consultation with local residents into the possible uses of the land and to approve a draft consultation letter. This will take place once the option possibilities are known – consultation will be an important part of the process.
- c) To arrange date for meeting with local residents - to be arranged after the above.

**T.6061 New Road Allotments** – To decide appropriate action regarding the child's playhouse on Plot 5, which the tenants have refused to remove. The Allotments Committee Chairman was consulted prior to the meeting although illness prevented him from attending today. An alternative suggestion for the plot tenant was for them to use a pop up removable tent or parasol to provide much needed shade for their toddler whilst they were working on the allotment. This would likely not contravene the allotment regulations and the shade should be removed at the end of each allotment session. If this is unacceptable then plot eviction would result, since a permanent plastic playhouse on the site is unacceptable. It was **resolved** to approve this action, 6 in favour 2 abstentions.

**T.6062 Good Deeds Section: Thanks to Volunteers** – To acknowledge recent volunteer work for the benefit of the town/community. Wotton Pool thanked the Council for the card congratulating them on the Pool reopening.

**T.6063 Clerk's Report** The Town Clerk's report was circulated, detailing all works at council. It has been very busy catching up on projects delayed due to lockdown. Today the re-opening of the One Stop Shop took place in its new location inside the main civic

centre. Initial comments/impressions are pleasing. Ecotricity has been responding to billing problems, although a few issues remain. Cllr D Thomas is thanked again for his intervention. The Smart Meters are still unavailable.

#### **T.6064 Correspondence**

- a) To note email detailing traffic/parking issues in Knapp Road and the request for double yellow lines (consider if/how to proceed). The Council sympathises with the parking issues however installing double yellow lines in any location requires a Traffic Regulation Order which costs £15,000. Thus potential sites for TRO's must be amalgamated in order to maximise cost benefits of the application. There are also issues as to how enforcement would take place and where the displaced vehicles would then park leading to problems elsewhere.
- b) To note email advising that WAMA will stop their services on 5th September 2020. This was noted and the Council remains appreciative of their hard work.

*The SARA fundraising request was missed off this agenda and it is requested that it be added to the next council agenda which is 'planning' next week.*

#### Brochures/Newsletters for information only Countryside Voices Summer 2020

#### **T.6065 Brief reports from Councillors**

*Footpaths Committee, Special Purposes Committee, Allotments Committee, Wotton Youth Partnership, Town Regeneration, Sports Foundation, Wotton Pool, Heritage Centre and any other meetings attended.*

No meetings held. The Recreational Trust AGM was cancelled due to Covid 19, however amendments were made to the constitution to allow for remote operation of the committee and that the current volunteers remain in their posts.

#### **T.6066 Town Affairs** – very brief comments from Members or items for future agendas.

Cllr D Thomas explained that he is pursuing various funding opportunities for renewable energy projects and that another quote has been received for the new car park solar canopy and electric charge points.

*The public and district cllrs left the meeting*

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It was **resolved**, all agreed, to enter Closed Session due confidential matters of either a legal, contractual or staffing nature.

**T6067 Former One Stop Shop** - to approve commercial rental agent & fees and proceed to formulate the lease and advertise premises for rental. A proposal document, received from the land agent David James and Partners (djandp) who have much local knowledge and expertise, was sent to Councillors for prior analysis. There is very little decent available office/shop front rental space in Wotton at the moment and this is in an excellent location. Cost is £500 per month rental, giving £6000 income to Council per annum, and makes good use of asset space at the civic centre. It was **resolved** to appoint djandp to find tenants and prepare the lease as per the proposal document for the fee of £715 plus vat, agreed by all.

**T6068 IT upgrades at Civic Centre** – to approve upgrading IT systems at town council offices (emails, computers, cloud storage, software & hardware). The Clerk secured 4 quotations and produced a spreadsheet analysing them for comparison, which was sent to all in advance. The working group had not yet met to produce a recommendation due to limited time. The Clerk stressed that problems with the civic centre IT systems were ongoing and indeed getting worse, with many days productivity being lost, and that a decision was now needed urgently in order to maintain a safe, secure and efficient council

operating system. It was **resolved** to delegate the decision to the Town Clerk (under delegated powers) to engage a contractor after meeting with the councillor working group the following working day to discuss a few outstanding issues, agreed by all.

**T6069 Town Hall – to consider condition survey**/report of djandp and consider the way forward. Also to consider scaffolding quotes/ requirements. The report was very informative and highlighted the good care taken of the Grade II listed town hall building by the town council internally over the last 20 years. However the external areas of façade, masonry, guttering, windows, wooden gables and wooden ornamentation was now in desperate need of attention. Cllr J Cordwell advised that the ‘Growing Our Communities Fund’ by Glos County Council be completed for scaffolding and laser scan survey of gable woodwork costs likely to cost about £5000. Cllr R Claydon produced an analysis of the report’s projected work costs to the exterior of the building, likely to cost £120,000 in year 1, £19,000 in year 2, and £9000 each in years 3 & 4. The whole project is quite complicated, not least because neither the Town Council nor the Town Trust currently has sufficient funding to enable these works to be carried out, but because certain parts of the project need to be carried out in advance of, or in conjunction with, others. Furthermore the high cost of scaffolding needs to be used appropriately for each project, and also to enable immediate netting of the problem gable areas so that further wood debris does not fall and injure pedestrians.

It is **resolved** to form a working group to meet asap (remotely after the planning committee meeting next Monday) comprised of Cllrs R Claydon, J Cordwell, T Luker, N Pinnegar, J Turner, D Thomas. Agreed by all.

**T6070 Recruitment** – to receive update on recruitment process for new assistant clerk. Applications close tomorrow and the response has been very good with a pleasing number of candidates to choose from. The shortlist will be compiled this week with interviews later next week.

It was **resolved** by all to re-enter council session.

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

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