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# **MINUTES OF WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING,**

## MONDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER 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, P Barton

### In attendance:

Town Clerk Ms S Bailey, Deputy Clerk Mrs Y Milsom, District Cllrs K Tucker, C Braun, G James

Members of the Public: 4

### T.6071 Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr R Hale.

### T.6072 To receive Declarations of Interest/Dispensations.

Personal interest declared by Cllr N Pinnegar (Bear St garage payment schedule); personal interest declared by Cllr T Luker (WRYFC grant)

### T.6073 Public

Mr M Ansell was attending regarding the poplar tree on Marchesi Walk. He has been corresponding with the Town Council for a number of years, detailing his concerns about the tree. He understood that there had been contractor issues so that the work that had been scheduled for last Autumn had not been carried out. The tree is behind his property and, in view of its size and rate of growth, he is very concerned about the safety of his property, family and users of the public footpath. A substantial branch fell off in a recent storm. His concern was only for safety, not visual amenity.

Mr and Mrs Clutterbuck asked if there was to be any short-term action regarding the Hill Road amenity area. The Town Council has requested pre-application advice from Stroud District Council and this matter will be put back on the agenda when the advice is received.

Mr D Driver was attending regarding the tree planting at Knapp Field. He would be grateful if Council could make a firm decision on whether or not to proceed at this meeting so he can take the matter forward accordingly.

*Cllr D Thomas entered the meeting*

There was some discussion about formal agreements and public access. Mr Driver explained the differences between Public Rights of Way, Permissive paths and Public Access land and asserted that Permissive rights were sufficient to qualify for the free Woodland Trust saplings.

### T.6074 To receive reports from County Councillor and District Councillors

Cllr J Cordwell had circulated a report in advance, which included discussions on Restoring our Rivers proposals; the Government’s intention to dismantle Public Health England; and the Rainbow flag crossing proposals.

A District Council report was distributed in advance. Discussions regarding the local government reorganisation proposals to possibly change Gloucestershire to a unitary authority had been postponed. The reforms to the Planning system had generated a lot of comments and concerns. The Climate Action Plan is expected to be ready in late September or early October.

### T.6075 Minutes of the Council Meeting: August 2020

It was **resolved** to approve these Minutes with one minor correction, all in favour.

### T.6076 Chairman’s announcements

Cllr Claydon submitted a report in advance on meetings attended, which included the tree planting meeting at Knapp field; and the remote meeting regarding the Remembrance Day arrangements, which unfortunately the RBL representatives were unable to attend. It seems very unlikely that the normal Remembrance Day parade and ceremony will be able to go ahead this year due to COVID-19 restrictions.

### T.6077 Accounts

1. To ratify quote from SITM for remedial works to staff emails for £350 plus VAT.  The Clerk explained that the higher sum of £886.50 plus VAT invoiced by SITM also included emergency works to repair the failing NAS terrastation.  A new IT system has now been installed by SoVision, as agreed by Council.  It was **resolved** toratify the SITM quote, agreed by all.
2. To authorise ILCA course, a sector specific online course, for the new Assistant Clerk at a cost of £99 plus VAT. It was **resolved** to approve this, all in favour.
3. To approve Clerk’s attendance at the SLCC Virtual National Conference on 12-16th October at a cost of £25 plus VAT. It was **resolved** to approve this, all in favour.

*Cllr T Luker left the meeting*

1. To consider a grant application from Wotton Rovers Youth Football Club. There was little money left in the current year grants budget. It was normal practice, and Council Policy, to consider all grants at the Council’s informal budget meeting in November/December, to formalise them at the following January Town Council meeting, ready for payment in April. Councillors were very complimentary about the work done by WRYFC and it was **resolved** to consider this grant application at the budget meeting in accordance with Council policy.

*Cllr T Luker returned to the meeting*

1. Budget 2020/21 –report noted. The expenditure on Old Town Toilets was high considering the toilets had been closed for some months. This was because of incorrect high electricity charges for estimated readings and a refund was expected very shortly.

*Cllr N Pinnegar left the meeting*

1. To approve September accounts for payment. An updated sheet was provided with one late addition. It was **resolved** and agreed by all to pay the amounts (net) of £1008.32 for Town Trust and £21418.42 for Town Council.

 *Cllr N Pinnegar returned to the meeting*

### T.6078 Marchesi Walk Poplar Tree

This poplar is the largest tree on Marchesi Walk. Our tree consultant had recommended a crown reduction of the tree and a contractor had been appointed to carry out the work. The contractor has been unable to fulfil the contract, firstly due to staff injury, then COVID-19 restrictions and finally because the sub-contractors he works with do not wish to be associated with the work, which they all feel is inappropriate as it will both weaken the structure and encourage regrowth, thus worsening the situation. There are safety issues to consider, for Mr Ansell’s property, Britannia Mews properties and to the public using Marchesi Walk. It should also be noted that some local residents are strongly opposed to the tree being removed. Quotes had been obtained to get a second professional report on the tree to progress this matter urgently. It was **resolved** to approve the quote for £150 for an inspection and report on the tree, requesting that a CAVAT analysis be included and that the report is received in time to consider at the October Council meeting. Agreed all in favour.

### T.6079 Knapp Field Tree Planting

Mr Dominic Driver had presented his written proposals for the tree planting scheme at Knapp Field. Council needed to consider whether to approve the plans and to discuss the detail. For ease the main considerations would be broken down individually, as follows:

1. **Planting Proposals –** It was **resolved** all in favour to approve the tree planting proposals subject to the following considerations:
2. **Access** – Occasionally the Council would need tractor access to the ditch and possibly to the allotments hedge. After some discussion over options it was **resolved** to keep a tractor access route to run along the boundary with the allotments. Agreed in favour with one abstention.
3. **Formal Agreement** – The Council considered whether a formal agreement was needed with an appropriate formal entity, preferably Wotton Area Climate Action Network. It was **resolved** that such an agreement would be required, agreed all in favour.
4. **Public Access** – The free Woodland Trust trees are subject to public access to the trees. The proposal was therefore for some form of public access, possibly permissive, to be agreed in principle. Mr Driver had offered to provide a Risk Assessment. It was **resolved** to allow some form of public access, details to be agreed at a later stage; and to accept Mr Driver’s offer to carry out a Risk Assessment for Council consideration. Approved all in favour.

### T.6080 Cemetery Exhumation

To note that an exhumation is taking place at the cemetery despite Council objections, which had been overruled by the Diocese.

### T.6081 Good Deeds Section: Thanks to Volunteers

To acknowledge recent volunteer work for the benefit of the town/community. It was **resolved** to send a card of thanks to the KLB student, Arthur Garrett, who had been regularly litter-picking around the town throughout lockdown, approved all in favour.

### T.6082 Clerk’s Report

A written report had been provided detailing recent work undertaken. The Clerk had just received an email report from NALC which said that QR codes were now required for all community buildings and that we would also now need to take contact details for visitors to the One Stop Shop for NHS Track and Trace.

### T.6083 Correspondence

1. Receipt of an email was noted complaining about the inadequate parking in the town. A response had been sent that a new car park should soon be provided.

### T.6084 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.*

The Clerk asked if Council wished to reinstate the currently suspended working group and committee meetings. It was agreed to review this at the October meeting when it was hoped a more reliable remote conferencing system would be in place.

Cllr Barton had attended the Wotton Youth Partnership meeting. The Partnership had given £500 to the new junior parkrun, which is starting on Sunday. The Heritage Project is progressing. Wotton Lions have a new chairman as Pat Comer has stood down.

### T.6085 Town Affairs

Very brief comments from Members or items for future agendas.

Cllr Cordwell - Haw Street had been dug up 4 or 5 times by Severn Trent since the resurfacing works were completed a couple of months ago. The bus companies had not been notified of the resultant road closures, which had caused many problems.

Cllr Thomas – He had received complaints about damage to cars parked in the Chipping car park, which he had advised should be referred to the Police.

Cllr Luker – He had complained to SDC about the state of Synwell Lane and they had advised that this should be reported to Gloucestershire County Council. It was suggested that he should use the Report-it facility of the GCC website

*The public and district cllrs left the meeting*

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

### T6086 NALC Pay Agreement

The NALC pay agreement of 2.75% had been awarded, backdated to April 2020. All staff contracts are aligned with this. It was **resolved** to approve this, all in favour.

### T6087 Recruitment

The position for Assistant Clerk had received 16 applicants, six of whom were interviewed. The standard was very high and the new person, Karen Wilson, will start tomorrow.

### T6088 One Stop Shop

A proposal had been received from a prospective new tenant for the former One Stop Shop premises. Some changes would have to be made at the tenant’s expense to accommodate the new use, which will actually improve the room. It was **resolved** to approve this new use and consequent works, subject to safeguards in the lease ensuring that the room would be left in good condition on vacating the premises; and to ask whether a rent deposit will be provided. Agreed all in favour.

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

*This completed the business of the Town Council at 8.40pm*

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