# Minutes of Wotton-under-Edge Town Council Meeting

#  Monday 18th October 2021 at 7pm held in the Civic Centre

## Present: Cllrs M Tucker, P Barton, J Cordwell, T Luker, D Thomas, J Turner, L Taylor, D Davidson, R Hale, N Pinnegar, T Creese, J Lewis.

## In attendance: A Durn (Town Clerk), Y Milsom (Deputy Clerk); District Cllrs K Tucker, G James; Police Sergeant Gloyn; 6 members of the public

The Chairman called for a minute’s silence in view of the tragic events leading to the death of MP Sir David Amess.

## T.6368 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr R Claydon; and District Cllr Braun.

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##  T.6369 To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Cllrs J Turner and N Pinnegar in respect of accounts for payment.

It was noted that the order of the agenda would be changed in response to items of interest to the members of the public present.

## T.6370 Stroud Neighbourhood Police Team

Sergeant Gloyn of the Stroud Neighbourhood Police Team was welcomed to the meeting and gave an overview of policing in the area. The Neighbourhood Police Team for Wotton also covers Kingswood, North Nibley, Hillesley and Alderley. Their remit is problem solving, maintaining relationships and reducing crime. There is also a local policing response team, which is normally based in Stroud. The response team’s target time for responding to an emergency in Wotton is 20 minutes and unfortunately, they are able to meet this target only 50% of the time. Wotton is the second quietest area in the district for reported incidents, with 900 reported in the last year. Wotton is generally a very safe place to live and, apart from differences due to reporting methods, the crime figures have remained stable for the last 4-5 years. Next month the Neighbourhood Police Team will be holding a workshop at The Keepers and councillors are welcome to attend. Questions were raised about speeding, parking, dog theft, and anti-social behaviour, advice was given including a number of links to web information.

## T.6371 Public Forum

A member of the public commented on a number of police issues, including the lack of visible police presence in the town; difficulties in finding information on the police website; and difficulties when calling the 101 number. Sergeant Gloyn explained the dedicated police resources for Wotton area and acknowledged difficulty with the 101 system which is being reviewed, he said that non-emergencies could be reported online.

There were no further questions.

*Sergeant Gloyn left the meeting*

## T.6372 Minutes of the Meeting of 20th September 2021

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 20th September 2021.

## T.6373 Gloucestershire 20’s Plenty Group

The Council welcomed Mr Scott McNeill, Councillor for Brockworth Parish Council and campaigner for 20mph speed limits to be imposed in residential areas, and other areas where people and traffic mix, throughout Gloucestershire. Mr McNeill presented the Motion he requested the Town Council adopt and detailed his campaign and the reasons behind it, including improved road safety resulting in fewer casualties, reduced pollution, and encouraging healthier lifestyle options such as cycling and walking. He advised that 70 parish councils were already on board with efforts to lobby the County Council in this matter. He was asking the Town Council to support this campaign and write to the County Council asking them to adopt this policy throughout Gloucestershire. It was stated by a member that current legislation does not permit a blanket policy for imposing 20mph limits and it would be too costly for GCC to do this piecemeal. He referred to the Gloucestershire County Council Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting where legal advice was given stating it would not be possible to have 20mph limits without Traffic Regulation Orders unless the Department of Transport It was proposed that the County Council should instead be asked to lobby the Department for Transport to introduce measures so that this policy can be implemented.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the Motion of the Gloucestershire’s 20’s Plenty Group and to ask Gloucestershire County Council to lobby the Department for Transport to allow the implementation of 20mph limits in all appropriate residential areas.

*2 members of the public left the meeting*

## T.6374 Presentation from Tree Warden

Ian Turner, a voluntary tree warden for the Town Council, was welcomed to the meeting. He gave a presentation of the in-depth work he had been doing during lockdown on the trees throughout Wotton. He is a qualified and experienced arboriculturist and was not only assessing the health of the current trees but also suitable sites for new, sustainable planting which would be resilient to the impact of climate change. The work he had already done was very thorough and he suggested that the development of an effective strategy could offset the impact of disease and climate change already affecting our native trees. He proposed more engagement with the Town Council to work towards long-term management of trees, via electronic records, planting, working with the Wotton Area Climate Action Network (WACAN), in a commitment to providing a healthier environment for the town.

It was **RESOLVED** to work with and support Ian Turner and WACAN in this aim.

## T.6375 Trees and Land Management

A report had been provided by Ian Turner in his capacity as Tree Warden regarding several trees managed by the Town Council. The last Town Council meeting had already RESOLVED to remove one of the trees in the cemetery and it was advised that the stump should be ground out and mulching and ground preparation would need to be carried out before a replacement tree could be planted. The ash tree near the entrance to the cemetery had a reasonable functioning canopy at present and should be reviewed again in the spring, but it is likely that it will need to be removed within the next 12 months. With regard to the maple in St Mary’s churchyard it was suggested that the overhanging branches should be removed.

It was **RESOLVED** to work with Ian Turner on a suitable replacement for the tree in the cemetery; to reassess the ash tree in the cemetery in the spring; and to get quotes for the removal of overhanging branches of the maple in St Mary’s churchyard.

## T.6376 Biodiversity

1. Holywell Leaze - A management plan had been submitted by WACAN to improve biodiversity, visual aspect and habitat for pollinators, and which was in keeping with the flora of the local area. It would be planted by WACAN volunteers, and the plan also detailed a mowing regime which considered the public use of the site as well as optimising development of plant life.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve this plan.

1. Streamside Walk – WACAN proposed starting with a low-key planting of cowslip plugs, leaving those areas unmown to allow seeding and then mowing as per the normal regime.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve this plan.

1. Full Moon Wood - the gateposts at the entrance to the land were rotten and needed replacing.

It was **RESOLVED** to delegate to the Clerk in collaboration with Cllr Barton to implement the installation of a suitable gating arrangement to include a small pedestrian gate and larger, padlocked access gate, with appropriate new posts.

1. WACAN were requesting support for a funding bid to Cotswold National Landscapes for their Wild Town Wotton project, which included the planting of Holywell Leaze and the Streamside Walk; and the installation of an information board and a mown ride to Full Moon Wood to improve visitor experience.

It was **RESOLVED** to support this bid. WACAN were thanked for their hard work.

*2 members of the public left the meeting*

## T.6377 Reports from County Councillor and District Councillors

County Councillor L Cohen was unable to attend the meeting this evening but had submitted the following report:

1. My next monthly meeting to allow residents to meet and discuss concerns and new initiatives will be at The Keepers on Symn Lane in Wotton on Saturday 23rd October at 11.00am. It would be useful if this information could also be shared on the Parish Council website.
2. Highways: We are meeting with Paul Helbrow on Friday 22nd October to walk the areas of concern in Wotton and to agree priorities. If there are any matters arising from the meeting on 18th October, then they will be added to the list for discussion.

Parking on Haw Street continues to be a problem. I will make one further approach to the driver of the offending van and then I will take it up with the police.

1. Blue Coat School Trees - I met with the Head at Blue Coat who had been assured by The Governors that they would contact the residents of Venns Acre to discuss concerns. This had not happened by 12th October, and I have subsequently written to The Governors asking for resolution of the matter.
2. Road Safety – The social media campaign will be launched at the end of half term to provide impact as children return to school.
3. Community Recovery Fund – I have now received further indications of interest from The Door and plan to meet with Victoria Robson to discuss this further.

A reminder: The £2 million fund is to help communities to recover and rebuild from the impacts of Covid-19.

The fund provides a total of £40,000 for each of the county’s 53 electoral divisions to allow each county councillor to support bids in their area and ensure the benefits of the investment are shared across Gloucestershire.

The fund is open to (but not exclusively) community groups and voluntary organisations, parish councils and sports groups.

Anyone who would like to find out more can email me on linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk or ring me 07791 110906

1. Open call for land – Gloucestershire County Council is looking for land in the county to help to plant one million trees by 2030. Landowners who can help should email the climate change team at glosclimate@gloucestershire.gov.uk
2. Survey of Gloucestershire residents view on Fire and Rescue Service – Consultation has begun on the Fire and Rescue Service’s Community Risk Management Plan which takes place over an eight- week period ending on 26 November 2021. The survey can be found here: [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/glos-fire-crmp/](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/glos-fire-crmp/)
3. National Carers Survey – This year’s survey of adult carers in England (SACE) will inform local and national work to find out what support carers need. All councils are gathering local responses. A sample of 1,000 carers in Gloucestershire will be sent the survey from early October. The Carers Hub will be also holding a virtual feedback session on 12 November at 12pm to give carers who don’t receive the survey the opportunity to share their views.
4. Advocacy Services – A survey is being conducted by Gloucestershire County Council. Views are being sought from anyone who uses or has experience of the service <https://haveyoursaygloucestershire.uk.engagementhq.com/statutory-adults-advocacy-services>
5. Employment and Skills Hub to support the county’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic – This free new service is available to all Gloucestershire residents and provides advice on early careers, apprenticeships, retraining and adult education from specialist coaches. <https://forms.gloucestershire.gov.uk/EmploymentandSkillsHub>
6. COVID-19:

Testing: Our nearest Mobile Testing Unit location is:

Dursley Rugby Club, Hounds Green, Dursley GL11 6AJ (Monday-Tuesday)

Lloyds Pharmacy Wotton-under-Edge provides on-site testing for people with no symptoms – 43 Long Street, GL12 7BX. Opening hours 9am-6.30pm (Monday – Friday), 9am-5pm (Saturday).

Cases

In the week 30th September – 6th October there were 948 confirmed cases of COVID 19 in the county. This compares to 1,484 cases in the previous week – a decrease of 36% from the week before.

The rate of cases in the last 7 days per 100,000 is 148 in Gloucestershire. This is lower than the rate in the South West and lower than the rate for England.

District Councillors Braun, Tucker and James submitted the following report:

**New Council Plan**

The new **draft Council Plan** (previously known as the Corporate Delivery Plan) has been discussed at each of the Committees and is due to be approved at the Council meeting in October. Both Cllr Braun and Cllr Tucker have been greatly involved and are working with officers to produce a Plan with clear targets and one we can be proud of. The plan has 3 priorities, 16 objectives and 74 projects. Further performance monitoring targets are being developed to manage progress and delivery.

The plan can be viewed [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s1015/Item%205%20-%20Appendix%20A%20-%20Draft%20Council%20Plan.pdf).

**Strategy & Resources Committee** (Cllr Braun & Cllr Tucker) – 30 September

The Committee considered the budget monitoring report for Q1 and the **budget strategy** for the next financial year, setting out the assumptions that will be used when preparing the upcoming Medium Term Financial Plan.

There were updates from various **county level meetings** – including Leadership Gloucestershire, the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee, and the Scrutiny Committee.

Information sheets were provided on **Brimscombe Port** and installation planned for October of **Water Source Heat Pumps** at Ebley Mill and Brimscombe Port Mill which will replace the previous gas boilers.

Committee Papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=1120).

**Community Services & Licencing Committee**. (Cllr Tucker) – 16 September

Members received an update on the **Committee’s Budget Monitoring Report** for Q1 2021/22. Allowing for additional expenditure due to Covid, the spend was mainly in line with predictions.

Some changes to the current **Taxi Licencing Policy** were considered to adopt the Common Licensing Standards for Licensing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers in Gloucestershire, following public consultation. The document was developed by the Gloucestershire Licensing Officers Group (GLOG) with the aim of aligning local policies on matters included in the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards issued by Department for Transport in 2020. The Statutory Standards focus on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Both this and an **amendment to change the current vehicle age policy** to exempt electric vehicles from the age requirements were agreed.

Similarly, Officers presented Members with a review on SDC’s current **Statement of Principals under the Gaming Act 2005**, which is an annual requirement and considered recent updates to the Act. This proposal was also unanimously agreed.

One of the largest topics of work currently being undertaken is the District Council’s **Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy for 2021-2041**. Officers presented a draft strategy which provides the rationale and recommendations to enable the delivery of exemplary leisure and wellbeing provision in the district over the next 20 years. Detailed options will now be prepared and presented to the Committee in December.

This Strategy also addresses a unique and exciting opportunity for the district, across sectors and in partnership with allied health professionals and educationists, to establish a dynamic network of services and facilities which are cutting edge and accessible to all.

Officers presented a report which highlighted initial learning from local context and the new **‘Feeding Gloucestershire Partnership’**. It recommended that Stroud District Council set up a new Food Justice Task and Finish Group to engage with the partnership and embed learning from their work into relevant council action plans. This was unanimously passed with enthusiasm.

A number of update reports were received from Members who sit on a range of ‘external bodies’. The future Work Programme to May 2022 was reviewed and updated. All committee papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=1116&Ver=4).

**Environment Committee –** 9 September(Cllr James)

The draft **Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground**, the long-term spatial planning agreement between county, the districts and GFirst LEP, was debated and approved. The committee discussed how the statement would be used, what it covered and didn’t cover, and its relationship to the District’s Local Plan. Any major changes before finalisation will come back to the committee.

The Stroud District **Cycling & Walking Strategy Task & Finish Group** was established, to drive delivery on the Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans (LCWIPs) for the district, and to help realise the council’s wider Active Travel ambitions. This will be chaired by Cllr Robin Layfield (Labour), with Cllr Martin Brown (Green) as Vice Chair. External members include GCC officers, Stroud Active, and the Stroud Valleys Cycling Campaign. It was noted that equalities/inclusion issues should be added to the groups Terms of Reference.

It was agreed that a Terms of Reference to re-establish the **Planning Review Panel** would be put to the next committee meeting.

Committee papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=140&MId=1118&Ver=4).

**Housing Committee –** 14 September

The Committee looked at the quarterly budget monitoring and performance monitoring reports, the District Council’s response to the **Social Housing White Paper** and received an update on actions plans for cleaner estates and for service standards.

The main item for decision was on the options for **decarbonisation and energy efficiency** of council homes in the District.

Following consideration of all the options, the Committee voted to support the recommendation, which will require investment of £180 m over the next 30 years to insulate council homes. This is part of the Council’s ongoing commitment to address the climate emergency and will mean a reduction in emissions of up to 24.5%, with council tenants saving up to 11 % on fuel bills. It includes decarbonisation and retrofit programme for the council’s 5,000 properties. This new investment, which requires some borrowing, will mean on average council homes will meet SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) C ratings by 2030.

Committee papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=142&MId=1147&Ver=4)

**Audit & Standards Committee** – 28 September

The Committee received a **Counter-fraud update** with assurance over the counter fraud activities of the Council in relation to the work undertaken by the Counter Fraud Unit (CFU). The CFU is a specialist criminal enforcement service working with the Gloucestershire Local Authorities, West Oxfordshire District Council and a number of other public sector bodies such as social housing providers.

A number of councillors asked about probity on **Covid Grants** and it was confirmed a report will come to the next meeting.

There was discussion on the **2020/21 External Audit** – and it was noted that we were waiting on pension data to finalise the accounts

In the **Statement of accounts**, only minor mainly timing restatements were made to the draft unqualified accounts reviewed in July and were approved pending final adjustments

The **Treasury Management Report** showed investments had returned 2.7% in quarter and questions were asked about when detail of the ethical fund split will be provided.

**Internal Audit Progress Report** reported on progress in relation to the approved plan for 2021/22. This will come back to the next meeting.

The **Risk Management summary** was briefly discussed as had been received late, it was noted that risk assessment had been improved, but that better reporting is needed.

Committee papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=1115&Ver=4).

**Brimscombe Port**

All remaining occupying tenants have handed in their keys and vacated the site. SDC and members have supported them to move.

Grace Network, which runs a number of social enterprises including The Long Table, have been fortunate to find alternative accommodation across the road at Brimscombe Mill, which is separate to the SDC development site. SDC planners are working closely with them on issues related to their new operations site. The proposals for the site can be seen at the following link: A short video setting out the vision for this £40 m development is now on the SDC website: <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/brimscombe-port/brimscombe-port-our-vision>

Ecological and asbestos survey work is planned shortly, prior to demolition of the buildings on site. A process is now underway to appoint a developer partner to work with the council to deliver the project. The basin and road infrastructure can be started from 2022. Once this is completed, 150+ homes (30 % affordable) will be built adjacent, with planning expected in 2023 and the project completed by the end of 2025. This will include a number of quayside businesses, such as a boat chandler, restaurant and a community centre. The port itself will be ‘land locked’ for a period, until the Brimscombe to Stroud stretch of the canal is restored. Until then, provision will be made to accommodate the ‘narrow’ and similar boats in the port basin, by craning them in.

**Canal project - Ocean Bridge, Stonehouse**

The next big project on the Stroudwater Canal is to replace the existing Bristol to Gloucester Railway Bridge at Stonehouse. This will now take place from the 24 December to the 31December. The existing bridge will be removed, foundation prepared, and the new bridge lifted into place during this tight schedule. The cost will be £1.8m and it is part funded by the Heritage Lottery.

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/news-archive/find-out-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-new-ocean-railway-bridge-in-stonehouse-at-this-event>

This build is part of Phase 1B, which will connect the completed Phase 1 to Saul Junction on the Sharpness Canal, about 4 miles in length. The significant infrastructure works during 2019-21at the Fromebridge Roundabout, have provided a method of traversing under the A38, but exposed through the roundabout. It is well worth a visit to admire this £4m work of art, which was paid for by Highways England. Work on Phase 1B is expected to commence in 2022.

**Planning**

District Councillors continue to liaise and work with Wotton Town and North Nibley/Stinchcombe Parish Councils and SDC Planning Officers on a number of planning applications.

The District and County Councillors were thanked for all the work they do for the town.

*District Cllrs Tucker and James left the meeting*

## T.6378 Accounts

1. Representatives of Synwell Playing Field Committee were invited to address Council regarding the grant application they had submitted. Due to COVID restrictions they had not been able to carry out fund-raising or generate income from events, however, grass-cutting and maintenance costs were ongoing. Recently they had incurred a lot of expenditure on the installation of a new central heating system after their old boiler failed; and replacing rotten doors and windows; both required for the maintenance of the changing rooms. They are also facing costly repairs to their equipment. They require financial assistance urgently and pointed out that this was the only open space of its kind within the town. They are requesting a grant of £3000 from the Town Council to cover grass-cutting costs. They also request a regular grant for future years from the Council to cover ongoing maintenance of the field.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the grant request for £3000 for the current financial year from the unused PWLB2 budget.

It was further **RESOLVED** to discuss at the Council’s informal budget meeting what assistance can be offered in future years.

*2 members of the public left the meeting*

1. A quotation for extra CCTV cameras in Church Street was considered. It was **RESOLVED** to delay action until a full survey of the current system and future requirements could be undertaken.
2. A quotation for a legionella audit for all Council and Trust buildings was considered.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the quotation from Valens Water for £550 plus £85.50 travelling expenses to carry out the audit, with potential additional expenses of £50 per water sample if needed.

1. A quotation for two additional laptops for the office was considered. The Clerk explained the difficulties with only the one current laptop shared by all staff. One member of staff had no office PC; many training events were held online requiring use of a laptop; and due to data protection requirements and security staff should not use their own personal devices to work on Council business, which was problematic when required to work from home due to COVID.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the quote from SoVision IT for 2 new laptops set up and ready to use at a cost of £1666, to be paid from the unused PWLB2 budget.

1. The budget report to the end of September 2021 was noted.

*Cllrs Turner and Pinnegar left the meeting*

1. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the October accounts for payment, a total of £10,666.98 net of VAT.

*Cllrs Turner and Pinnegar returned to the meeting*

1. It was **RESOLVED** to move the Annual Budget meeting to Monday, 13th December 2021.

## T.6379 Chairman’s Report

The Chairman had previously circulated his report which this was noted with no comments.

## T.6380 Reports from Working Group Meetings

1. Regeneration Partnership – the key topic was the appearance of the town, in particular weeds, hedges and overgrowth. Some members of the public had already started to cut back some of the overgrowth and future community clean-up events were being arranged.
2. Christmas Event – Plans were ahead of schedule and there had been a good response from volunteers. The road closure application had been submitted and insurance was in place. First aiders for the event were still being sourced.
3. Remembrance Parade – The notes of the meeting were noted. The next meeting had been postponed until next week and the new date would be confirmed tomorrow.

## T.6381 Stroud District Council’s Walking and Cycling Task & Finish Group

A brief questionnaire on existing and future walking and cycling projects was received from Stroud District Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to respond and to include the OK path and Greenway project.

## T.6382 Bonfire Night

The Round Table were running the bonfire night celebrations at the WCSF grounds as in previous years. The earlier display would use silent fireworks, although the second display would use conventional, loud fireworks. Questions were asked about whether local landowners with farm animals had been informed but this was not known.

It was **RESOLVED** to permit use of the field for this purpose.

## T.6383 Stroud Tourism Grant

A proposal had been received from the Heritage Centre to use the remaining £815 of the original £2000 SDC Tourism grant towards the production of a tourist photograph book of the town.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve this with the provision that it must include photographs of Synwell Playing Field.

## T.6384 Clerk’s Report

The report was noted. The Clerk stressed the current staffing shortage, with one member of staff having left, others taking annual leave and others having been off due to COVID. The Clerk also gave updates on the Town Hall works; and Old Town Toilets SDC funding.

## T.6385 Correspondence

None

## T.6386 Brief Reports from Councillors

The recent meeting of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) Working Group had not been clerked and it was requested that a clerk should be in attendance at the next meeting in January 2022.

*Deputy Clerk Y Milsom left the meeting*

## T.6387 EXEMPT ITEMS: Prior to consideration of the following agenda items, councillors are invited to pass the following resolution: Pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by S100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that its consideration would involve the disclosure of exempt information

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the Press and public.

**T.6388 Staffing and Health & Safety**

* 1. Consider staffing arrangements and recruitment due to the Assistant Clerk leaving
	2. Consider quotations and agree HR/Employment Law support
	3. Consider quotations and agree Health & Safety support

Items (b) and (c) were taken together and the quotes reviewed and discussed.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Worknest Whittam on a combined service contract for HR/Employment Law and Health and Safety services support for one year.

* 1. To agree to employ a locum Clerk to provide support until new staff are in place.

Item (a) and (e) were taken together. The report and costs were reviewed and discussed.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the report with the change of the Deputy Clerk and Administrator to Assistant Clerks with separate but overlapping duties, the former Administrator to increase her hours to 27 hours/week, two part-time administrative staff to be employed to cover the One Stop Shop and administrative tasks at 20 hours/week each, all posts to be evaluated and agreed, plus the contracting in of a locum Clerk for 12 weeks at 20 hours/week.

* 1. To receive the Clerk’s report and agree actions

It was **RESOLVED** to hold a Long Service Award and Retirement presentation. Councillors offered to personally donate towards the event. Date to be confirmed.

Meeting closed at 10.14pm.