# Minutes of Wotton-under-Edge Annual Town Council Meeting held on

# Monday 16th May 2022 at 7pm in the Civic Centre

## Present: Cllrs R Claydon, M Tucker, P Barton, J Cordwell, J Lewis,

## T Luker, L Taylor, D Thomas, T Creese

## In attendance: A Durn (Town Clerk), Y Milsom (Deputy Clerk); District Cllrs K Tucker and G James; 2 members of the public.

## T.6544 Election of Mayor and Chairman of the Town Council

It was **resolved to** elect Cllr M Tucker as Mayor and Chairman of the Council for the forthcoming year and the Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly signed.

Councillors and the Clerk thanked former Mayor and Chairman, Cllr Claydon, for his hard work, support, and leadership over the last few years and through the particularly challenging times of COVID lockdowns.

## T.6545 Election of Deputy Town Mayor and Vice-Chairman of the Town Council.

It was **resolved to** elect Cllr T Creese as Deputy Town Mayor and Vice-Chairman of the Council and the Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly signed.

## T.6546 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were noted from Cllrs N Pinnegar and J Turner; District Cllr C Braun; County Cllr L Cohen.

## T.6547 To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

None.

## T.6548 Minutes of the Town Council Meeting of 19th April 2022

It was **resolved to** approve the Minutes of the meeting of 19th April 2022.

## T.6549 Chairman’s Announcements

A report from outgoing Chairman Cllr Claydon had been circulated and was noted. The Chairman and Secretary to the Recreational Trust were standing down in July and, to date, no-one had come forward to fill these posts, which was of concern.

## T.6550 Public Forum

Two items had been brought to the Clerk’s attention by members of the public. Concern had been raised about discarded condoms littering the Symn Lane Play Area; and there was growing community demand that the land for sale next to Brown’s Piece be bought for community use.

## T.6551 Reports from County and District Councillors

The following report from County Councillor Cohen was noted:

1. **Highways Maintenance and Speed Controls**

I met with the Town Clerk and we have prioritised all the areas of work following the consultation with residents. We would hope once to have a final plan of action for the Town Council’s consideration and approval at the next monthly meeting once we have met with Highways.

1. **EV Charger points**

I have had preliminary conversations with Jason Humm, Director of Transport and Highways. I will aim to try and set up a meeting with his team to be able to give you dates in advance of the Town Council meeting on Monday.

1. **Build Back Better Fund – Conygres Scout Hut Fund**

I am supporting this project with a grant of £2,000 from the community fund.

1. **Ukraine**

I have continued to keep the Town Council briefed on all County Council updates and will continue to provide this information.

1. **Chief Fire Officer**

Mark Preece has been appointed as the Chief Fire officer at Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. He took over as interim Chief Fire Officer last May.

1. **Foster Carers**

The county council needs more foster carers to help keep children in their local community and close to family and friends.

I would like to work with the Town Council to make this a priority and something that we collectively promote, to ensure that we have engaged with as many potential carers as possible.

I will provide promotional materials. Anyone interested in finding our more can go to [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fostering or call 01242 532654](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fostering%20or%20call%2001242%20532654)

My contact details [linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk) . Mobile 07791110906

It was also reported that there was a new Community Speedwatch funding opportunity.

*2 members of the public left the meeting*

The following report from Stroud District Councillors was noted:

**Stroud District Councillors’ Report – May 2022**

Report of meetings during April

*All Stroud District Council and Committee papers can be found here:* [*https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings*](https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings) *Recordings of meetings are available via the Committee meeting webpage on the Council’s You Tube channel:* [*https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeH\_AmF0s-TShcYlM8Stweg/videos*](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeH_AmF0s-TShcYlM8Stweg/videos)

**Housing Committee – 5 April**

Committee papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=142&MId=1144). Items discussed by the Committee:

* Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22 Quarter 3
* Tenant Engagement Strategy
* Decant Policy
* New Homes and Regeneration Programme Update

The summary report can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s4691/Item%208%20-%20Appendix%20A.pdf). This provides details for the eight new council homes to be built in Wotton on the Bradley Street/ Gloucester Street site – with start on site and construction expected in August 2022, and practical completion expected in July 2023.

* Revised Civil and Financial Penalties Policy (offences in the private housing sector)
* Progress Update on Key Action Plans (Cleaner Estates and Service Standards)
* Updates on the Out of Hours Provisions
* Tenant Representatives update
* Retrofit/Carbon Reduction Task and Finish Group Update
* Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Task and Finish Group Update
* Housing Repairs and Voids Task and Finish Group Update

**Strategy & Resources Committee – 7 April**

Committee papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=1145). Items discussed by the Committee:

* Levelling Up Bid - Use of Business Rates Pilot Funding to support project development costs

(see also overview of emerging Levelling Up Fund bid). Details of the emerging bid “Gateways, Landmarks and Access for All”, can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s4740/Item%205%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Overview%20of%20emerging%20Levelling%20Up%20Fund%20bid.pdf).

* Budget Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2021/22
* Debt Write Off - write off of sums owed by Rush Skatepark Ltd
* Leadership Gloucestershire Update
* Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC)
* Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee (GEGSC)
* Regeneration and Investment Board

**Audit & Standards Committee – 26 April**

Committee papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=1142&Ver=4)

* 3rd Quarter Treasury Management Activity Report 2021/22
* Internal Audit Progress Report 2021/22
* Covid-19 Business Support Grants - Post-Payment Assurance Update

The update confirmed a low level of potential fraudulent claims and those that are suspicious are being pursued.

* Planning Enforcement Management Update

Some positive progress on Planning Enforcement improvements, though resourcing challenges remain.

* Draft Internal Audit Plan 2022/23   
  A Risk Management review by Internal Audit highlighted there are improvements needed, but that SDC is similar in its maturity to other district councils

**Council Meeting – 28 April**

Meeting papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=1143&Ver=4).

* **Climate & Nature Action** Council approved the recommendation from Environment Committee – to endorse the 2030 Annual Report (2021-2022) on the 2030 Strategy and Master Plan – a snapshot of successes is shared below.
* **Review of street or building names and monuments in the Stroud district**

This review was prompted by the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, which highlighted on-going racial injustice and discrimination. A Review Panel was convened involving community representatives as well as councillors, to consider the appropriateness of public commemorations of people and events from history to ensure they represent our area's inclusive values.

The review was launched in July 2021, and a public survey last year received 1,680 public survey responses including more than 1,400 from people with a connection to the Stroud district. At the Council meeting all the Review Panel’s recommendations were approved.

This issue has featured in both local and national media – particularly focusing on the proposal that the council should seek to progress removal of the Blackboy Clock and Statue in Castle Street, Stroud. The Blackboy clock recommendation is in line with findings from the survey where 78% of respondents felt it should be removed (and of this figure, 59% felt it should be placed in a museum) and 22% felt it should remain where it is.

The council has voted to explore how removal could be achieved. This process is expected to take some time and removal is not guaranteed. Approval would be required from numerous stakeholders including the owners of the clock and statue, the Local Planning Authority, Historic England and very likely the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Other recommendations from the Review Panel included:

* Restoration of the Anti-Slavery Arch, Paganhill, taking into consideration its historic and tourism potential.
* Undertaking a review of the street name ‘Blackboys’ in Dursley in consultation with Dursley Town Council.
* A task force to be established to take forward the recommendations and develop a community project for the commemoration of an individual, group of individuals or event suggested in the survey responses.
* Reviewing the council’s street naming protocol – which will include a consultation process on the selection of future street names with a particular aim to ensure future street names are inclusive and reflect diversity within the district and address any potential gender imbalance in the street names across the district.
* The Council’s Cultural Strategy, currently in development, should celebrate and encourage aspects of the district’s cultural and community diversity.

Other reports approved by Council:

* **Equality Diversity & Inclusion** - Annual Report on the Outcome of 2021/22 Equality Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan and Proposed 2022/23 Action Plan.
* **Islamophobia** - Adopting the All-Party Parliamentary Group Definition of Islamophobia – recognising that members of our community face discrimination and prejudice, with British Muslims, being the most disproportionately targeted religious group (according to a Home Office report) as 45% of recorded religious hate crime is targeted towards Muslims. Islamophobia contributes to the dehumanising of members of our community, and with it the undermining of citizenship and fairness for all and is a barrier to the participation of Muslims in public, economic, political, and social spheres of life. The council has committed to include in regular training for Members and Officers. information on recognising and countering instances of Islamophobia, to develop and strengthen our links with religious and community groups that represent and embrace Muslim communities, and to promote events and messaging around Islamophobia Awareness Month (November) and the recently declared UN International Day to Combat Islamophobia (March 15).
* **Appointment of Independent Persons** as required by the Localism Act 2011 - to assist the Council in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst all its members and the towns and parishes within the District. Three people were appointed for an initial period of two years: John Acton, Phyllida Pyper, and Adrian Stratton.
* **Ubico Five Year Vision and Business Plan** 2021/2022 approved
* **Motion – 20s Plenty**

Councillors supported amotion proposed by Cllr Martin Brown (Green) and seconded by Cllr Robin Layfield (Labour) calling for Gloucestershire County Council to make 20mph the default speed limit for residential areas in Stroud District and throughout Gloucestershire.

**2030 Strategy Annual Report**

A picture containing timeline

Description automatically generated

**Other issues**

**Ukraine**

Stroud District Council officers continue to work with other authorities to support the Homes for Ukraine programme, which involves inspecting homes of sponsors in Stroud District who will be welcoming refugee families displaced by the war, with SDC officers working evenings and weekends to help speed the process up. This work involves Government, Gloucestershire County Council, and Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS).

**Canals Strategy consultation extended**

Stroud District Council has extended the community consultation phase of its draft canals strategy to 27 May. The draft strategy sets out how the council, its partners, communities, and landowners can work together to make better use of our canals for culture, recreation, leisure, to support the local economy and to enhance the environment and local wildlife. www.stroud.gov.uk/canalstrategy.

**First Boats Pass Under The New Ocean Bridge**

Boats have sailed under the railway bridge at Ocean, near Stonehouse on The Stroudwater Canal for the first time in 70 years. Members of canal-based charity Cotswold Boatmobility made the inaugural trip in three katakanus, stable catamaran canoes that each seat up to six people.

The trip has been made possible only since the Ocean railway bridge was replaced between Christmas and New Year by Network Rail on behalf of the Cotswold Canals Connected partnership. The previous bridge with its narrow opening was too small to allow boats to pass underneath. Canal volunteers will now begin to carry out work on the towpath between Ocean and Bonds Mill, replacing the path, installing edging, and cutting back overgrown vegetation. The work is due to finish mid-May, allowing the towpath to re-open. Until then an alternative walking and cycling route will continue.

**Unlawful puppy breeder prosecuted**

A woman who bred 18 French bulldogs in three litters without a licence has been ordered to pay more than £3,200 in court following investigations by the SDC Animal Welfare Team, acting to protect the welfare of animals.

**Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund**

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Demonstrator grant is allowing Stroud District Council’s housing service to `deep retrofit’ 28 council houses in the district with the aim of significantly improving energy efficiency, reducing their carbon footprint and fuel costs for tenants. An initial Demonstrator project will pilot the effectiveness of these measures and demonstrate innovative approaches to reducing the carbon footprint of homes. The Hamfallow project, in Berkeley Vale ward, will see the installation of a ground loop heating system, photo-voltaic and battery storage, so that we are able to generate and store energy on site.

Cllr Tucker reported that there were Ukrainian families in Hillesley and Kingswood, some of whom will be attending local schools. An apprenticeship was being sought for a Ukrainian youth who will be 18 this summer.

## T.6552 Register of Interests

Councillors were reminded to complete the Declaration of Interests form and return to the Town Clerk by June 13th 2022.

## T.6553 Policies and Procedures

1. The Standing Orders had been updated in paragraph 18 with regard to post-Brexit procurement conditions. The NALC model standing orders were currently under review and so further revisions to this Council’s policy would be undertaken later in the year. It was **resolved to** approve the Standing Orders as presented.

The Financial Regulations need extensive updates and a meeting of the Finance and Special Purposes Committee would be arranged accordingly. Use of the current Financial Regulations would continue until the review has been completed.

1. It was **resolved** to approvethe Terms of Reference for Committees and Working Groups as presented, but to increase the number of Councillors on the Remembrance Parade Working Group to 5.
2. It was **resolved to** approve the document listing the Council’s extant policies/procedures & confirm the application of these policies for this new period of council. It was noted that the Heritage Centre lease extension is valid until 2024 but that the rent review is overdue.

## T.6554 Election of Membership to Committees and Partnerships

## It was resolved to defer to June Council meeting the membership of other committees in order to include the newly co-opted councillors. Current membership would continue in the interim.

## T.6555 Appointment of Representatives to organisations

It was **resolved to** defer to June Council meeting the appointment of representatives in order to include the newly co-opted councillors. Current membership would continue in the interim and Standing Orders allowed for councillor substitutes where there were currently vacancies.

## T.6556 Appointment of New Committees and Working Groups

Councillors would give this item further consideration at the June meeting. It was suggested that an extended Youth Services committee should be appointed to enhance the monitoring of the youth provision contract and to commence the selection process for provision from September 2022. This would be brought back to the June meeting.

## T.6557 Town Council Banking Arrangements

It was **resolved to** confirm Unity Trust Bank as the banker for the Town Council for the forthcoming year.

## T.6558 Accounts

1. Receipt of CIL funding of £7891.74 was noted. Queries were raised concerning the variation in levels of funding between the Dryleaze and Mount Pleasant developments; and also regarding the available strategic funding. District Councillor Tucker asked that the queries be sent to him, and he will investigate further.
2. Completion was noted of Councillor internal audits, with one still remaining. Cllr Creese volunteered, the Deputy Clerk would contact her to arrange.
3. An increase of 4.9% commencing June was noted from SoVisionIT for IT support.
4. Budget 2022 **–** no report this month due to end of year processes.
5. It was **resolved to** approve the May accounts for payment, including a late addition of £5645 net of VAT, bringing the total payments net of VAT to £16,883.16.

## T.6559 Symn Lane Play Area

1. The play area inspection report was noted. There were several recommendations for repairs, and it was **resolved to** arrange a site meeting with Councillors and the maintenance team to fully assess the most economical way forward. Cllrs Barton, Lewis, Thomas, and Tucker offered to attend.
2. A complaint relating to discarded condoms found in the play area was noted. The maintenance team check the play area on weekday mornings and Cllrs Tucker and Creese agreed to check on Saturdays and Sundays respectively to ensure that any such litter was removed promptly. The Police and Neighbourhood Warden had been informed and were investigating, they are including the play area in their patrols. An incident was also noted of a teenage girl becoming stuck in a child’s cradle swing, requiring the Fire Brigade to release her by cutting the equipment. A replacement will be needed.

## T.6560 Grant bid 2022/23

It was **resolved to** approve the 2022/23 application for an ORCS grant for EV Chargers at Symn Lane car park. Cllr Claydon was thanked for his hard work in preparing the documents. He expressed his frustration at the lack of help available from Gloucestershire County Council and Stroud District Council for this project.

## T.6561 Queen’s Platinum Jubilee 2022

The 200 spaces available for the Big Lunch for schoolchildren had now all been allocated but volunteers were still needed for the day. The wildflower seeds would be distributed to schools next week and arrangements for planting them were in hand. The Build Back Better Fund grant had been received. Councillors were expected to attend the Town Crier’s proclamation on Thursday 2nd June 2022. District Councillor Tucker was thanked for his assistance with the road closure application.

## T.6562 Brief Reports from Councillors

* 1. Wotton Youth Partnership met on 10th May 2022 and agreed to continue for the forthcoming year as a multi-agency partnership. Police representatives would also attend meetings. Cllr Taylor was elected Chair, Cllr Tucker as Vice-Chair and the Town Clerk as Secretary and Treasurer. There was currently 2 Councillor vacancies on the Partnership. Dates of future meetings to be confirmed.
  2. Walking Festival – This was taking place from 10th -12th June 2022 and there were 24 guided walks available.
  3. Wotton Under Edge & District Recreational Trust – A suggestion that the Trust could buy the land at Brown’s Piece could not be pursued due to a lack of available funds.

*2 District Cllrs left the meeting*

## T.6563 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.6564 Staffing Report

1. It was noted that cleaning of the Chipping Clubroom was currently being covered by a different member of staff due to the regular cleaner being unavailable.
2. It was **resolved that** staff working to help over the weekend of the Jubilee celebrations should be paid overtime.

It was **resolved to** exit the confidential session.

The meeting ended at 8.40pm

Signed: Date: