

Woodley Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Town Electors Meeting held at the Oakwood Centre on
Tuesday 6 March 2018 at 8 pm

Present: *Councillors J. Cheng (Chairman); K. Baker; T. Barker; J. MacNaught; D. Mills;
S. Rahmouni; D. Smith; B. Soane; J. Trick; M. Walker*

Also present: *Mrs S Flower, Woodley Adopt A Street Project
1 resident*

WTC Officers: *D. Mander; L. Matthews*

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Brindley, P. Etherington, M. Forrer, D. Fradley, B. Franklin, K. Gilder R. Lay, D. Stares and P. Wicks.

2. **MINUTES OF THE TOWN ELECTORS MEETING HELD ON 7 MARCH 2017**

It was proposed and agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 7 March 2017 be agreed and signed as a true record.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

4. **ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

It was agreed that the report of the Strategy and Resources Committee would be given first to allow Councillor Baker to leave the meeting early, as he had another commitment.

Strategy and Resources Committee

Councillor Keith Baker, Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, apologized for having to leave the meeting early and presented the Strategy and resources report, as follows:

Working parties and sub committees

Investments Working Party

Members met with the Council's investment manager in January to receive an annual report on the Council's portfolio – being built up to pay the principal of the £2M loan to build the Oakwood Centre. Over the past year the fund had increased in value and continued to be ahead of the targets set in the investment plan.

The Treasury Management Strategy was considered by committee and approved at Full Council.

Catering Partnership Management Panel

Brown Bag had been running the café at the Oakwood Centre for 2 years and the centre team and councillors met every 2 months with Brown Bag to review and discuss café operations and the business and social function catering and how to jointly enhance services at the centre. The arrangement with Brown Bag was working well and the Council was pleased to be working in partnership with them.

Risk Management Working Party

The working party reviewed the risk management register and strategy and these were approved in May 2017, following recommendation from the Committee. Officers were doing some initial work on a disaster recovery plan to protect the Council's IT systems.

Personnel Sub Committee

In the past year reviews had been carried out of staff grades and responsibilities in leisure, the council offices and grounds maintenance.

PR/Marketing Working Group

The working group to oversee PR and marketing had met monthly to oversee and guide progress on a new website, new signage at Council buildings and properties and press releases/social media. JMVA was appointed in June 2017 to design and develop the Council's websites. The new Council website was launched in December 2017. The group was also working on the arrangements for events to commemorate 100 years since the end of World War 1 on 11 November 2018.

Licences/legal

Theatre agreement

The committee approved a new agreement with Woodley Theatre for the use of the Alan Cornish Theatre at the Oakwood Centre to 2021.

Reading Road Allotments

The Committee had agreed the proposed terms of a further 10 year lease for the site with Reading Borough Council.

Woodley Pre-School

The terms of a lease agreement with Woodley Pre-School to site their new building on Council land was agreed and signed.

Woodley Airfield Youth and Community Centre

Discussions regarding the agreement relating to the Town Council's interest in the centre were ongoing.

Woodley town centre public toilet

The terms of the licence agreement for the site of the public toilet in the town centre were finally agreed. The toilet had been ordered and would hopefully be in use by the summer.

Community asset transfer offer

Councillors agreed not to take up the offer from Wokingham BC for the transfer of land adjacent to Bulmershe Park under a community asset transfer lease.

Police lease

It was agreed that the expired lease would continue to operate while Thames Valley Police reviewed their renewal of the arrangements to use the office at the Oakwood Centre as a base.

Loddon Mead

Terms for a lease from Wokingham Borough Council were still being considered and would depend on arrangements that would allow the use of the space for a youth project.

Projects

Centre Stage

The terms and conditions for the hire of the new Centre Stage had been agreed by the committee and included a charge to groups using this for fundraising. Arrangements were also being made to introduce more entertainment at the stage.

Woodford Park lake and its surrounds

The Council had applied for a grant of up to £50,000 from the Suez trust towards the costs of the project and had allocated £60,000 from the general reserve towards the total anticipated cost of the project.

Renewable energy

This was discussed by the committee following an offer to fit solar panels to the roofs of Town Council buildings, at no cost to the Council, by Reading Community Energy Society. Further information would be provided in order for the committee to make a decision on this.

The Committee also adopted an Environmental policy and received the report of the 2017 Residents' Survey.

Financial

External Auditor

Mazars were the Council's external auditor for 2016/17 and gave an 'unqualified' report on the Annual Return. From 2017/18 onwards the Council's external auditors would be PKF Littlejohn LLP.

Internal audit

Lightatouch were appointed as the Council's internal auditor for a further 3 years to March 2021.

Grants – 18 grants totalling £3,400 were awarded during the year to community groups and organisations, including 6 to young athletes.

Each meeting received a monitoring report on its budget (as did the other committees).

Free use of the Oakwood Centre was agreed by the committee during the year for the following events:

- a conference organised by the Community Youth Partnership
- Communitrees exhibition
- the Woodley and North Earley Community Forum
- the Festival of Business Woodley

Over the last year the Committee also agreed

- To allocate up to £10,000 to an earmarked reserve for the purpose of matched funding for a grant to refurbish the football changing rooms at Woodford Park Leisure Centre.
- To fund £5,929 from reserves to meet the unanticipated costs relating to the end of the 3G pitch defects period.
- To allocate £4,700 towards the costs of a new Mayoral chain and accompanying items, including the mounting of the old chain for display.
- To allocate £10,000 from the general reserve towards the Lake project.
- To allocate £10,000 from the Building and Facilities Fund to replace the paddling pool liner.
- To allocate £7,000 from the general reserve to purchase speed detection equipment and accessories to set up and run a Community Speedwatch scheme in Woodley.

In addition, the committee proposed that the Council consider applying for a loan of £100,000 from the Public Works Loan Board for the costs of building a new workshop and towards the lake/depot boundary fencing and lake pathways. This had been agreed by the Council, and the final figure would be confirmed by the Urgency Committee once construction costs were known.

Budget

The 2018/19 Budget and precept charge were agreed at the Council meeting on 6 February 2018. The Band D charge would remain at £106.71 for the year.

Following the presentation of the report, Shelagh Flower asked whether the Council had any plans for the future use of the room currently occupied by Woodley Pre-School in Woodford Park Leisure Centre when the Pre-School moved to its new premises. Councillor Baker replied that the Council planned to expand the gym into that room, which would allow more equipment to be provided.

As there were no more questions on the Strategy and Resources report, Councillor Baker left the meeting.

Leisure Services Committee

Councillor Bill Soane, Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee, presented the Leisure Services report, as follows:

Woodford Park Leisure Centre: Sports development and activities

The following new classes and courses started during the year:

- Body Balance (x3)
- Ab Attack
- The Racket Pack (badminton)
- Nerf Wars

The leisure centre currently ran nine children's courses and twenty-nine adult classes throughout the week, an increase of six adult classes from the previous year.

There were currently just under 450 gym members.

The centre offered "play for £1" on the 3G pitch for individuals aged sixteen years and under, which had proved very popular with local children, and also provided a variety of school holiday camps across the year.

Funding achieved for activities

The following funding had been gained:

- Estimated £500 from THROB (The Heart Rehabilitation Organisation of Berkshire) to purchase new fitness equipment to support weekly over 50's silver circuits class.
- Estimated £2,000 to run two separate Sportivate projects aimed at helping individuals between 11 and 24 years of age become and stay physically active.

Total funding secured: £2,500

Woodley Sports Week: May 2017

In partnership with the local School Games Organiser the Town Council hosted the sixth Woodley Schools Sports Week. All nine local primary schools took part resulting in an estimated total of 2,400 local children taking part across the week. Highlights included the opening ceremony Dance Festival, the Paralympics Festival, the Cecil Trembath Kwik Cricket Tournament and the highly competitive Swimming Gala (hosted at Bulmershe Leisure Centre in partnership with 1Life).

Woodley 10km and Junior 2.5km May 2017

The second Woodley 10km organised by Barnes Fitness was a huge success, with 516 adult runners taking part in addition to the 177 children that completed the 2.5km fun run around Woodford Park. The event raised £800 for the Mayor's charity, Launchpad.

Parkrun

Parkrun continued to be a popular weekly event on Saturday mornings, with the 5km timed free runs open to all ages and abilities. Junior Parkrun took place weekly on Sunday mornings.

Buildings

Woodford Park Leisure Centre

Following the discovery of damaged joists in the roof structure of the lobby area, remedial works were undertaken. The work was delayed due to contractor issues and poor weather conditions, but was due to be completed shortly.

Woodley Pre-School

The Town Council agreed to lease land at the site of the former horticultural shed to Woodley Pre-School to allow them to install a modular building to house the pre-school, using grant funding awarded by the Department of Education. Following a successful planning application, demolition of the former horticultural shed was undertaken and installation of the new building was currently underway.

Grounds Depot and Maintenance Workshop

To enable the demolition of the former horticultural shed to take place, the Maintenance Team relocated to the grounds yard. Proposals for a new maintenance workshop and office at the grounds yard were being developed. New roller doors had been installed on the grounds workshop building as the old doors were in very poor condition and had become unsecure and unsafe.

Coronation Hall

One of the powered shutters at Coronation Hall was repaired, requiring a new motor and repairs to the mechanism.

Parks and play areas

A new Grounds Maintenance Manager, Terry Gough, started work with the Council in May 2017, following the retirement of Kevin Weller after 39 years of service.

Woodford Park

- A new pathway was laid to provide better access to the paddling pool from the leisure centre.
- The paddling pool liner was damaged in the summer and was not repairable, due to its age, and would therefore be replaced before summer 2018.
- Repairs were carried out to the skate park.
- Tree planting was undertaken in partnership with the local CommuniTrees project – 6 specimen trees were planted in the park and a row of 8 cherry trees was planted at the northern boundary of the sports pitches by pupils from St. Dominic Savio School.
- The pathway to the Garden of Remembrance was re-laid to address the flooding problems of the old path.
- A signage campaign to raise awareness of the problem of dog fouling in the park had a positive effect but many of the signs were pulled down. New signage would be installed on an on-going basis to maintain awareness of the problem.
- Instances of anti-social behaviour in the Garden of Remembrance were reported to the police.

Green Flag Status application

The Council's application in 2017 for Green Flag status for Woodford Park was unsuccessful. A second application had been submitted in January 2018.

Friends of Woodford Park

The Friends of Woodford Park met regularly with a representative of the Town Council to plan their projects, report on progress and receive updates on work that the Council was undertaking in the park. In the past year the Friends had planted beds on the Memorial Ground, adjacent to the Oakwood Centre and had planted crocuses in the area to the front of the Oakwood Centre in support of the Rotary initiative to raise awareness of the fight against polio worldwide. They had undertaken clearance work to the copse area near the Garden of Remembrance and had installed bird boxes. The Friends had also cleared the overgrown and secluded parts of the Garden of Remembrance in order to deter the anti-social behaviour that had been occurring. The Group achieved a "Thriving" award in the Thames and Chiltern in Bloom Awards in 2017.

Woodford Park Lake

Public consultation days were held in the park in April 2017 and information about the proposals for the lake was provided on the Council's website. Following the public consultation, the suggestions and comments that had been made were considered and the plans were amended and adapted where necessary. Estimates had been obtained for the proposed work and applications for grant funding had been submitted. Clearance of the overgrown areas around the lake had started, with the Grounds Team undertaking much of this work.

Malone Park

A silver birch that had damaged the fence of a neighbouring property was removed after the necessary permission was obtained, as all trees in this area were protected under a woodland order. The seating in the park was refurbished and damaged sections of the fencing to the play area were repaired.

Allotments

Allotments continued to be popular with people wanting to grow their own fruit and vegetables. During the year hedges and undergrowth were cut back and trees that had been donated to the Council were planted in areas not suitable for cultivation. Repairs to the roadways on the site were undertaken by a working group of allotment tenants. Council officers continued to meet regularly with representatives from the Allotment Tenants Committee.

Just Around the Corner Charity (JAC)

The Council had a service level agreement with JAC to provide outreach youth work in the town and Sam Milligan attended the Leisure Services Committee meetings to update Members on the work of JAC and he also provided regular reports.

JAC continued to run mentoring sessions in the community and at Rehoboth, their equine centre. Equine sessions were also held at Rehoboth. In addition to providing a physical presence in the community, JAC used social media to engage with young people, via twitter and Instagram.

During the year JAC took possession of a house they had purchased in Woodley to provide a home for young people in need of support. The first occupant had moved into the house and a second occupant would follow shortly.

Community Youth Partnership

A lease arrangement with Wokingham Borough Council had been agreed in principle for the use of the land at Loddon Mead and under the A3290 for projects for young people. Restrictions on the use of the land had been imposed by Wokingham Borough Council Highways Officers, stating that no structure could be erected within 3m of the columns

supporting the road structure, in order to allow safety checks to be carried out on the columns. The Environment Agency would also need to be informed of any plans for the site.

Just Around the Corner charity (JAC) hoped to be able to meet up weekly on the site with young people, to start work on potential projects, but a licence agreement between JAC and Wokingham Borough Council was required before they could do this. The Town Council had agreed to fund the cost of the licence. JAC were planning to install a container café on the Town Council's land at the site, for use by young people, but would need to obtain planning permission for this.

The Community Youth Partnership received reports from its partner organisations on the provision of services for young people in the town and issues that arose. It was aware that young people's mental and emotional health and well-being was a key issue for a growing number of children and teenagers and their parents. The Partnership was therefore hosting a conference on young people's mental and emotional health and well-being at the Oakwood Centre on 14 March 2018.

Town centre play area

A public consultation was carried out in the town centre, and on the Council's website, regarding new play equipment to be installed in the town centre, replacing the old equipment under the sail. Installation of the new play equipment would commence in March.

Public toilet in the town centre

Planning permission had been granted for the new public toilet in the town centre and the unit had been ordered.

Transfer of open spaces

The Committee declined an offer from Wokingham Borough Council for the transfer of land between Bulmershe Park and Bulmershe Gymnastics Club to the Town Council under a community asset transfer lease, as the land would require significant work to bring it back into public use and would present ongoing costs for maintenance and rubbish clearance.

The Committee also declined an offer from Wokingham Borough Council to take responsibility for Colemans Moor open space under a community asset transfer lease but enquired whether a larger scale transfer of open spaces might be considered, along with funding for maintenance. The Borough Council would only consider transferring play areas, which was not economically desirable for the Town Council and was not pursued.

Presentations

The Committee received a presentation from Mark Rozzier and Steve Outen, the General Manager and Vice Chairman of Woodley United Football Club, on the progress of the club since its formation and the club's plans for the future.

Councillor Soane concluded by congratulating the whole team at Woodford Park Leisure Centre on the way they were performing and noted that the new gym had made a vast improvement to the leisure centre. He also thanked the Friends of Woodford Park for their amazing work in the park, and thanked JAC for all their good work in the community, which was a real benefit to the town.

Following the presentation of his report, Councillor Soane was asked whether there were any plans to continue the redecoration work at Woodford Park Leisure Centre and he replied that the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Regeneration Task and Finish Group was considering options for the future improvement of the centre.

Planning Committee

Councillor Tom Barker, Chairman of the Planning Committee, presented his report, as follows:

The Committee had considered 219 planning applications since March 2017. Members of the public either attended the Plans Committee meeting or wrote to the Town Council about 24 of the 219 applications.

The Committee also received information about planning decisions and appeals, enforcement matters, tree preservation orders, street naming and planning policy documents through the year.

Planning applications of particular concern

- A planning application for the proposed demolition of a two-storey a house in Tiverton Close and replacement by a three-storey house with a basement was opposed by local residents and by the Town Council. The planning application had not yet been determined.
- A planning application for the demolition of one of Woodley's oldest properties, located in Duffield Road, and the erection of 6 two-storey dwellings on the land, was opposed by local residents. The planning application had not yet been determined.

Several planning applications were submitted through the year proposing a change of use of amenity land to residential, so that a garden fence or wall could be moved. In general, the Committee was opposed to the loss of amenity land.

Highways

The Town Council continued to be represented at the Wokingham Borough Council major projects co-ordination meetings by Cllr Walker, who reported to councillors after each meeting.

Bus Service 12

In May 2017, the Committee received a presentation from Rebecca Brooks, Wokingham Borough Council, about proposed changes to the No.19a/c bus service. This was subsequently renamed as the No.12 service, the route was revised and the peak hour service, which had been funded by Reading Buses was withdrawn. When consulted by Wokingham Borough Council on the future of the service from September 2018, the Committee set up a joint working party with Earley Town Council to look at possible options. An extensive survey of the number of passengers using the service at different times of day was undertaken by councillors, local residents and community groups, and a report on the survey results and future requirements for the service was submitted jointly by Woodley and Earley Town Councils. Wokingham Borough Council subsequently agreed that future provision must include a morning peak hour service, and had agreed to fund this, and was currently preparing tender documents in order to select a new operator to run the service from September 2018.

School Crossing Patrollers

When consulted by Wokingham Borough Council on the proposal to withdraw school crossing patrollers that operated on pedestrian crossings, the Committee investigated the possibility of school crossing patrollers being funded by the Town Council, but the cost was found to be prohibitive. The Borough Council was now proposing to withdraw the remaining school crossing patrollers in July 2018 and would install extra pedestrian crossings where these were deemed to be necessary.

Community Speed Watch

After extensive research into speed watch schemes currently being run by various parishes, and the scheme proposed by Thames Valley Police, the Committee resolved to set up a

community speed watch scheme for Woodley. Funding for the necessary equipment was agreed by the Strategy and Resources Committee and this was in the process of being ordered. Volunteers would be sought and training arranged before the scheme could come into operation.

Grants

Annual grants would continue to be given to Citizens Advice Wokingham, ARC and Keep Mobile as part of the 2018/19 Budget. A 3-year service level agreement had been set up between the Town Council and Readibus, under which the Town Council would provide annual funding on a more formal basis instead of an annual grant.

Citizens Awards

Once again awards would be presented to citizens who had made a real difference in the community. This year's chosen recipients would receive their awards from the Town Mayor at a reception on Friday 27 April.

Training sessions

The Committee sent representatives to attend the following training sessions:

- The Local Plan (Wokingham Borough Council)
- Central & Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Hampshire Services)

Representatives also attended the following briefing sessions:

- Civil Parking Enforcement (Wokingham Borough Council)
- Highways and Transport Communications (Wokingham Borough Council)

Consultations

The committee responded to the following consultations:

- From Wokingham Borough Council:
 - Introduction of mapped parking restrictions
 - Proposed changes to traffic regulation orders affecting resident parking zones
 - The future of Bus Service 12 from September 2018
 - 2 consultations on proposed changes to School Crossing Patrols
 - An application by Ruscombe Parish to be designated a Neighbourhood Area
 - An application by St. Nicholas Hurst Parish to be designated a Neighbourhood Area
- From Thames Valley Police:
 - A consultation on a proposed increase in council tax to help protect operational policing
- Other consultations:
 - Joint Minerals and Waste Plan: Regulation 18 Issues and Options consultation – from Central and Eastern Berkshire Authorities
 - A consultation on the Controlled Locality (Rurality) Determination of Reading under the NHS Pharmaceutical Regulations – from NHS England

Wokingham Borough Council also asked for the Town Council's comments on applications for Goods Vehicle Operators' Licences, premises licences and street trading consents.

Housing Land Supply

The Committee sent a letter in support of a report produced by Barkham Parish Council asking the government to reconsider its policy on housing land supply.

Following his presentation of the report Councillor Barker thanked Councillor Walker for attending the Borough Council's major projects co-ordination meetings throughout the year and for reporting back to councilors. He also thanked all councilors and residents who had taken part in the Bus Service 12 survey and he thanked the members of Earley Town Council who had worked so collaboratively with Woodley Town Council on the joint working party to look at the bus service provision for the two towns. Finally, Councillor Barker thanked all

members of the Planning Committee, and the Committee Officer, for their hard work throughout the year.

Shelagh Flower raised the issue of the withdrawal of school crossing patrollers and asked whether it would be possible to move the pedestrian crossing located near the Chequers pub and relocate it closer to the Oakwood Centre, as this was a more natural place to cross Headley Road. Councillor Barker replied that this had been suggested previously, but had been refused by Wokingham Borough Council as the crossing would be too close to the roundabout at the entrance to the car park.

5. **CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence had been received.

6. **GENERAL PARISH AFFAIRS**

No matters were raised under this item.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting closed at 8:37 pm
