

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WOODSTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT 7.30 PM ON TUESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2008
IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR, WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL**

PRESENT:

Cllr P Jay (Town Mayor)	
Cllr T Gardiner (Deputy Mayor)	
Cllr C Carritt	Cllr J Cooper
Cllr A Glees	Cllr Mrs A Grant
Cllr Mrs E Jay	Cllr P Redpath
Cllr Mrs T Redpath	Cllr Mrs E Stokes
Cllr B Yoxall	

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Honorary Townsman John Banbury, Mr Howard Morris (Editor, Woodstock and Bladon News) and five members of the public.

WTC/174/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs P Richardson, County Cllr I Hudspeth and District Cllr Mrs J Dunsmore.

WTC/175/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mrs E Jay declared a Prejudicial Interest in Agenda Item No. 11(b), Banbury Road Exception Site, as she was a Garden Tenant of Blenheim Estate.

Cllr P Jay, the Town Mayor, declared a Prejudicial Interest in Agenda Item No. 11(b), Banbury Road Exception Site, as he was a Garden Tenant of Blenheim Estate.

After her co-option as a Town Councillor, Cllr Mrs V Edwards declared a Prejudicial Interest in Agenda Item No.11(b), Banbury Road Exception Site, as she was a Garden Tenant of Blenheim Estate.

Cllr A Glees declared a Prejudicial Interest in Agenda Item No. 15, Applications for Free Use of Accommodation – Woodstock Literature Society, as his wife had made the application on behalf of the Society.

Cllr C Carritt declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item No. 18, Application for Planning Permission – 94 Manor Road, as he was a friend of the applicant.

WTC/176/08 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on Tuesday 9 September 2008 were signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments.

Add the name of Cllr Mrs E Jay to those present.

Minute WTC/153/08, Implementation of New Ordering System. Delete the words “the case of purchases for Bloom” and insert “appropriate cases”.

Minute WTC/156/08, Membership of Communications Sub-Committee. Insert “Mrs Grant”.

The Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Town Council held on Tuesday 23 September 2008 were signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Delete the word “Mrs” in front of A Gardiner in those present.

Delete Cllr C Carritt from those present.

Add the name of Cllr C Carritt to those apologising for absence under Minute WTC/170/08.

Change the page number from 79 to 42.

WTC/177/08 TOWN MEETING

The Town Council received the draft Minutes of the Special Town Meeting held on Tuesday 16 September 2008. It was agreed that letters of thanks should be sent to the guests who had attended the meeting. It was noted that the decisions of the meeting had been implemented and that follow up action was taking place.

WTC/178/08. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION WITH RESPECT TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Mrs L Glees spoke regarding the application by the newly formed Woodstock Literature Society for the free use of accommodation in the Town Hall. She explained that the Society needed financial support in its first year of operation and hoped that it might be possible to refund this support in due course. The Society had over thirty members lined up. It was expected that visiting authors would give talks and an invitation to attend had been issued to A level students at the Marlborough School. The Town Council had backed Woodstock Celebrates Books and the Society was asking for funding in kind for two or three occasions.

WTC/179/08. COMMUNICATIONS

The Town Mayor, Cllr P Jay, reported the resignation of Cllr Tony Airey. It was agreed that a letter of regret should be sent to Mr Airey and that he be thanked for his service. Members expressed the hope that it would be possible to escape the cost of an election.

It was reported that a letter had been received from Mr John Parry, Director for Community Safety & Shared Services at the County Council, regarding the Town Council's representations over the traffic chaos associated with the first day of the Game Fair in July 2008. It was agreed Nem Con that a letter of reply should be sent, as set out in the Appendix to these Minutes.

It was also reported that a letter on the same subject had been received from Cath James, Strategic Director (Environment) at the District Council. It was generally agreed that the letter did not address the points raised by the Town Council. It was agreed that the Town Mayor should be authorised to prepare a draft response, taking into account comments made by Members at the meeting, for circulation and, if approved by a majority of Members be email, to be despatched without further reference to the Council.

WTC/180/08. QUESTIONS

Cllr C Carritt to the Town Mayor:

“Does the town mayor agree that:-

1. the failure to progress remedial works at the water-meadows sluice represents a disregard for public safety
2. accountability for this failure will not be seen by the public as due entirely to delays on the part of the Environment Agency and the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment. It is now eighteen months since the problems of the sluice first came to light.
3. the present condition of the meadows leaves much to be desired with paths almost impassable and the watercourse banks showing clear signs of over-topping in places; and that a thorough review of the Water Meadows Development Plan is long overdue and is Council adopted policy

4. failure to maintain the water-meadows in a safe and accessible condition is no reflection on the sterling work of the Green Gym volunteers or the effective grazing of livestock, but rather a result of poor management and leadership from this Council.
5. liability for the maintenance of the millstream needs to be addressed further and legal advice obtained if necessary.”

The Town Mayor responded in the following terms:

1 No. The Town Council was not able to authorise the commencement of these important works until the Environment Agency had given their approval to the proposed method of working. There was a delay in this approval being given as BBOWT had to carry out a study of the wildlife and their breeding habitats in the area. When the necessary authority was received, application for grant aid from TOE was submitted. Grant aid has now been approved and the work is due to commence shortly. In the meantime, the condition of the Mill Stream bank immediately upstream of the vehicular bridge and the overspill that runs under it from the middle stream have been kept under constant surveillance. Temporary sandbagging has been checked and reinforced throughout a period of high water levels.

2. Refer to 1 above.

3. The Council cannot lose sight of the fact that these are watermeadows and by definition will flood in high water periods. The past two years have been the wettest in recorded history so it is unsurprising that some pathways – those opened up when the first management plan was put into being - have been near impassable. Board walking is part of the plan for BTCV – and for which the Council has budgeted. This work was not completed at the last BTCV course but a further group is attending for 4 days at the end of October and again in late November. Their programme is to complete this which will aid access.

4. With improved access and the completion of negotiations to repair the bank I cannot agree that there has been “poor management and leadership” on behalf of this Council.

5. Following Council’s consideration of the issue of responsibility for maintenance of the mill stream, a meeting was held with representatives of Blenheim, when that body’s responsibilities in this area were clarified. A report was subsequently made to Council. Responsibility does lie with this Council.

WTC/181/08 HONORARY TOWNSMEN

The Council received and considered a report of the Town Mayor recommending the appointment of Robert Edwards and Ian Lenagan as Honorary Townsmen.

Honorary Townsman John Banbury, at the invitation of the Town Mayor, addressed the meeting on the many attributes of Mr Robert Edwards. His address covered the areas of Mr Edwards’ service as a General Practitioner in Woodstock from 1965 to 1999, his time as a Member of both the Borough Council and the Town Council in the period 1970 to 2008, his community involvement, business interests, his research and lecturing achievements and his travel and other past times.

Cllr Mrs E Stokes, on behalf of her husband Trevor, advised the Council of the great contribution made by Mr Ian Lenagan to the town of Woodstock. She spoke of the achievements and success in his business life, his involvement in sport, his great contributions to the town of Woodstock in such areas as the Youth Club, Wake Up to Woodstock and the annual pantomime, his service as a Town Councillor and his involvement in local charities.

Members of the Council gave their personal opinions on the two proposals before the Council, which were then put to the meeting. They were approved by the two thirds majority required by the Scheme for the Appointment of Honorary Townsmen and Townswomen previously approved by the Council.

RESOLVED

- (a) that Robert Edwards and Ian Lenagan be appointed honorary townsmen of Woodstock, in appreciation of their exceptional services to the town; and
- (b) this honour be conferred at a ceremony in the town hall as recommended in the Town Mayor's report, subject to the post-ceremony celebrations taking place in the Mayor's Parlour.

WTC/182/08 CO-OPTION OF TOWN COUNCILLORS

The Council received and considered a report of the Town Clerk regarding the co-option of Town Councillors to fill the three vacancies that had been left following the election process earlier in the year. Eight people had put their names forward for co-option. Letters supporting their applications were considered by Members, who then voted as to which of the eight applicants should be appointed. Following this process, which was undertaken in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, the Town Mayor, Cllr P Jay, declared that Mrs Victoria Edwards, Dr Gerald Myatt and Mr Ian Thomas had been appointed. Mrs Edwards and Mr Thomas were present at the meeting. They signed their Declarations of Acceptance of Office and assumed their places at the table.

It was agreed by a consensus that the unsuccessful candidates should be advised of the new vacancy following the resignation of Tony Airey.

RESOLVED

- (a) That Mrs Victoria Edwards, Dr Gerald Myatt and Mr Ian Thomas be appointed as Co-opted Members of Woodstock Town Council;
- (b) That authority be delegated to the Town Mayor to write to the unsuccessful candidates thanking them for putting their names forward and advising them of the new vacancy following the resignation of Tony Airey.

WTC/183/08 CARNIVAL SUB-COMMITTEE

The Council received and considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Carnival Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 23 September 2008.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the RFO shall examine the residual bank account of the previous Carnival Committee and confirm that the latest bank statement agrees with the balance prior to the Council taking on responsibility for the carnival and that all income and expenditure from the 2008 event have passed through the bank account of Woodstock Town Council;
- (b) that arrangements be developed, subject to approval by the Council, for the return of the Woodstock Carnival project to its former status external to the Council on the following basis:-
 - i) when the affairs of the 2008 carnival are wound up, the Carnival Sub-Committee be dissolved
 - ii) that at the same time the carnival project be handed back to an independent Carnival Committee

iii) that a grant, which shall be applied for, shall be made towards insurance costs of an independent carnival committee, amounting to 50% of the premium cost or £700 whichever is the lower amount

iv) the funds remaining from carnival events held prior to 2008 and remaining in the bank account held by the former independent carnival committee will remain with that committee

v) the transfer of surplus from the 2008 carnival event to the account of the independent carnival committee as would have occurred had the carnival been run in the traditional way.

WTC/184/08 PLANNING

(a) Listing of the Former GWR Railway Station as a Building of Special Architectural or Historic Interest

The Council received a letter reporting the Secretary of State's decision to request English Heritage to reconsider their decision not to list the former GWR station building. The follow up action taken by Cllr Mrs T Redpath to amplify the Town Council's case was agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the letter from the Secretary of State be noted and welcomed;
- (ii) that it be noted that the Town Clerk has advised the District Council of this situation; and
- (iii) that Members be kept up to date with developments.

(b) Banbury Road Exception Site

Cllrs Mrs V Edwards, Mrs E Jay and P Jay had declared Prejudicial Interests in this matter. They left the room and took no part in the discussion or determination of the matter. The Deputy Mayor, Cllr T Gardiner, took the Chair for the consideration of this item.

The Council received and considered a response from Mr Ian Morrow, Head of Planning Services at the District Council, to the Council's letter expressing its disquiet at the decision of the Uplands Planning Committee in respect of this application for planning permission. After discussion it was

RESOLVED (by six votes to four)

That Woodstock Town Council reinforces its previously expressed objection to an exception site development on this site, and in particular to the total disregard by West Oxfordshire District Council to the Town Council's reasoned comments against the proposal. The Council is shocked that it was unable to influence WODC, and the lateness of the response from the District Council gives no confidence that WODC is going to give the Town Council's view the thought that it deserves. In the circumstances the Town Council finds it impossible to work with the District Council to progress this project.

WTC/185/08 PROPOSALS OR RECOMMENDATIONS

Cllr A Glees

The Council received and considered a proposal from Cllr Glees in the following terms:

“that Woodstock Town Council adopt a binding code of conduct in respect of communications made by Councillors as Councillors to the media or to other Councillors, in written or electronic

format, whose primary purpose is to deliver ad hominem/ad feminam attacks on other Councillors or Council Staff in respect of decisions taken by the WTC as a whole where those decisions are ones with which those making such communications may disagree.”

In connection with this matter, the Council also received and considered a communication from Mr Howard Morris, Editor of the Woodstock and Bladon News, and a letter from Mr Stan Scott.

Cllr Glees spoke in amplification of his proposal. He expressed his shock at the number of public attacks on people that had taken place since 2004, and the culture that allowed this to go on. There was a need to halt this now.

The Town Council discussed this proposal at length. Some Members expressed the view that the comments that had appeared in the Woodstock and Bladon News were fair minded and objective and that adoption of this measure would stop free speech. Other Members supported the proposal which would lead to a more harmonious Council.

Cllr C Carritt made a Personal Statement regarding comments made by Cllr Glees about a letter from Cllr Carritt which had appeared in the most recent issue of the Woodstock and Bladon News. Cllr Carritt stated that he had not intended his letter to be interpreted in the way that Cllr Glees had. Nothing was intended to refer to the Town Mayor’s previous diplomatic career.

Concern was expressed as to how any code would be implemented. It was suggested that this might need an amendment of Standing Orders.

In summary, Cllr Glees stated that the time had come to draw a line under the feuds and arguments that had existed for so long. He rejected the idea that the code would muzzle free speech; it was all about getting Councillors to treat one another with respect.

RESOLVED (By ten votes to two)

- (a) that Woodstock Town Council adopt a binding code of conduct in respect of communications made by Councillors as Councillors to the media or to other Councillors, in written or electronic format, whose primary purpose is to deliver ad hominem/ad feminam attacks on other Councillors or Council Staff in respect of decisions taken by the Woodstock Town Council as a whole where those decisions are ones with which those making such communications may disagree;
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Town Mayor to respond to the letters from Howard Morris and Stan Scott.

WTC/186/08 ***CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND COLLABORATION WITH WAKE UP TO WOODSTOCK***

The Town Council had previously considered the need for a framework agreement defining the scope and basis for collaboration between the Council and Wake up to Woodstock.

The Council now received and considered a report from the Town Mayor, together with draft collaboration agreements regarding Christmas Lights and the proposed Woodstock ‘in Lume’.

Members sought further information regarding the financing of the Christmas Lights for 2008. Concern was expressed that if third party donations were not forthcoming, the Council would have to underwrite the total cost. It was agreed that this was a possibility but that there was good reason to believe that donations would be received.

RESOLVED (By ten votes to two)

- (a) that the memorandum of understanding with Wake Up to Woodstock set out at Annex A to the report of the Town Mayor be approved;

- (b) that the collaboration agreement with Wake Up to Woodstock regarding Christmas Lights set out at Annex B to the report of the Town Mayor be approved;
- (c) that the Finance Committee be invited to include in the recommended forecast outturn for 2008-09 for Christmas Lights the sum of £2,350;
- (d) that, in the event of a net overspend on this item this year the Council will, by a further decision, either make savings elsewhere or draw upon reserves to fund the short fall;
- (e) that the collaboration agreement with Wake Up to Woodstock regarding the Christmas In Lume event set out as Annex C to the report of the Town Mayor be approved.

WTC/187/08 *REPORT OF THE RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER – OCTOBER 2008*

The Council received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer.

(a) Lists of payments for October 2008

RESOLVED

that the list of payments made in the month of September 2008 and amounting to £15,293.28 be received and approved.

(b) Bank Reconciliation Statements (2) for September 2008.

RESOLVED

That the Bank Reconciliation Statements for September 2008 be received and noted.

(c) Summary and Detailed Income & Expenditure Statements for September 2008

RESOLVED

That the Summary and Detailed Income & Expenditure Statements for September 2008 be received and noted.

(d) Property Valuations

It was noted that an updating valuation had been received. Insurance premium adjustments were awaited and a full report would then be submitted.

(e) Christmas Lights

Members noted the potential financial implications for this event in 2008.

WTC/188/08 *FINANCE COMMITTEE*

The Council received the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on Tuesday 23 September 2008.

RESOLVED

That a meeting be arranged to involve Robert Montgomery and Mr Gibb to clarify the original estimate for the works to the Park Street roof, the requirement for a temporary roof and subsequent to that through the RFO and CMfP a full report be made available to Members.

WTC/189/08 APPLICATIONS FOR FREE USE OF ACCOMMODATION

Cllr A Glee had declared a Prejudicial Interest in this item. He left the room and took no part in the debate or determination of the application regarding Woodstock Literary Society.
The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Woodstock Literature Society be offered the free use of the Mayor's Parlour for their first meeting;
- (b) (Cllr C Carritt abstaining)
That the Sustainable Woodstock Group be granted free use of the Committee Room at the Community Centre for its inaugural meeting;
- (c) that Wake Up to Woodstock be granted free access to the Assembly Room, the Kitchen, Room 13 and the Mayor's Parlour for the Woodstock 'In Lume' event, subject to the completion of the collaboration agreement approved under Minute WTC/186/08 above.

WTC/190/08 SAFETY INSPECTION OF MEMORIALS

Further to Minute WTC/167/08 of the last meeting of the Council it was

RESOLVED

That the quote of IMI, based on the charge of £5.50 per standard memorial, to carry out the remedial works to ensure that unsafe memorials are made safe on a temporary basis, be accepted.

WTC/191/08 PLANNING APPLICATION

Cllr C Carritt had declared a Personal Interest in this application.

Ref: 08/1545/P/FP
Erection of single storey side extension
94 Manor Road
Mr & Mrs J Carr
Decision: No Comment.

WTC/192/08 GRASS CUTTING

The Council received and considered a report from the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED

That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the CMfE and any other Members who wish to be involved, to authorize the undertaking of additional cuts throughout the year, as are thought necessary.

WTC/193/08 DIGGING OF GRAVES BY HAND

At the meeting of the Council held on 9 October 2007 it was Resolved as follows:

“That the recommendation contained in Minute EC/35/07, as follows, be adopted for a trial period of twelve months:
that the Council advise funeral directors that in future mechanical digging should cease, all digs to be undertaken by hand and any surplus soil removed.”

The trial period had now expired and, after discussion of this matter it was

RESOLVED

That the trial policy, as described above, be confirmed as a permanent arrangement and funeral directors be advised accordingly.

WTC/194/08 PAINTING OF RAILINGS OUTSIDE HENSINGTON ROAD CEMETERY

Further to consideration of this matter at the last meeting of the Council, the Council received an oral report on the response of the two contractors to the issues which had been raised regarding the specification for the works, as follows:

- 1 Whether special steps would be taken given that the works were immediately adjacent to the pavement of the public highway.
- 2 Whether two people would be employed in undertaking the painting works to ensure a satisfactory finish.

RESOLVED

That the quote from Maurice Billington in the sum of £1500 be accepted.

WTC/195/08 FIRE PRECAUTION WORKS AND ELECTRICAL WIRING WORKS AT THE TOWN HALL AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk on the following issues.

(a) Fire Precaution Works

(i) Town Hall

The Council noted that the provision of signs and emergency illumination for emergency routes and exits was a requirement under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Members commented that as a general principle more than one quotation should be obtained for works of this sort. After further discussion it was

RESOLVED

that the fire precaution works proposed by ADT at a cost of £1361.64 be undertaken.

(ii) Community Centre

RESOLVED

That alternative quotes be obtained for the works to emergency lighting at the Community Centre.

(b) Electrical Wiring Works

It was noted that further investigations were to be undertaken into the remedial works that had been recommended by Southern Electric Contracting and a further report would be presented to the Council.

WTC/196/08 EXTENSION OF TIME

RESOLVED

That the requirement of Standing Order 1 be relaxed to allow the meeting to continue for another fifteen minutes.

WTC/197/08 CIGARETTE STUBS LITTERING THE STREETS AND PAVEMENTS

The Council received and considered a letter from a local resident regarding this nuisance.

RESOLVED

That the Town Clerk write to all public houses in the town asking them to address this issue.

WTC/197/08 CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS

The Council received and considered a report from the Town Clerk.

(a) Street Trading Policy – Review of Street Trading Policy

RESOLVED (By nine votes to four)

That the Town Council supports the present list of “consent” and “prohibited” streets and the proposed time limits of 08.00 to 18.00 hrs on “consent” streets. The Town Council does not wish to see any relaxation of current restrictions on street trading in the town.

(b) Other Consultation Documents

RESOLVED

that the following consultation documents be referred to Strategy Committee for consideration and recommendation to the next meeting of Council:

- (i) The Making and Enforcement of Byelaws;
- (ii) “Options for Growth”. How should we distribute new housing in Cherwell?
- (iii) Partial Review of the South East Plan. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs.

WTC/198/08 CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor reminded all Councillors of the Remembrance Day parade and Act of Remembrance which would take place on Sunday 9 November 2008.

RESOLVED

That the photographing of the Council’s painting of Blenheim at a cost of £50 for use in the Town Council’s Christmas Card be agreed.

WTC/199/08 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED

That in view of the special or confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

WTC/200/08 PROPERTY ISSUES

The Council received and considered a report from the Responsible Financial Officer.

(a) 24 Market Place – Rent Review

The report on this matter was noted.

(b) Community Centre – Ground Floor – Side Room

RESOLVED

That the Community Centre, Ground Floor Side Room be let to Ms Leslee Holderness on a weekly charge of £25 to cover up to five hours occasional use and for limited storage.

(c) 2 Park Street – Lease Renewal

The report on this matter was noted.

**(d) 2 Market Street – Lease Termination
2 - 4 Market Street – Inspection Report**

By a consensus it was agreed that the inspection report should be made available to the tenants and their comments requested.

RESOLVED

That the Property Working Group give urgent consideration to establish a strategy as to how the remedial works identified in the report should be dealt with and the securing of an incoming tenant best achieved.

(f) Rent Receipts

The report on this matter was noted.

WTC/201/08 MATERNITY LEAVE FOR MEMBER OF STAFF

The Council received and considered a report from the Town Clerk and the Responsible Financial Officer on this matter.

RESOLVED

That all possible options for finding a temporary replacement for the member of staff during her maternity leave be investigated.

The meeting rose at 10.50pm

Signed Date