

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WOODSTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT 7.30 PM ON TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2011
IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR, WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL**

PRESENT:

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

One member of the public.

WTC/204/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs A Glees, Mrs V Edwards and E Poskitt.

WTC/205/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr J Cooper declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6, Grants and Donations as he is the Chairman of the Woodstock Youth Club. Cllr C Carritt declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6, Grants and Donations as he is the Treasurer of the Woodstock Youth Club and also a personal friend to the Oxford Community Woodland Project Manager. Cllrs Mrs A Grant and Mrs E Stokes also declared personal interests in Agenda Item 6, Grants and Donations as they are Committee members of the Woodstock Youth Club. Cllr Mrs J Dunsmore declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8, Budget: double booking in the Mayor's Parlour, Town Hall 2012.

WTC/206/11 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No residents wished to address the Council at this meeting.

WTC/207/11 PLANNING MATTERS

(i) Planning Applications

No planning applications had been received since the previous Town Council meeting.

(ii) Suggestions for Names for the new Oxford Road Development

WODC has invited WTC to suggest a name for the new Berkley Homes development on Oxford Street. A variety of names were put forward by Cllrs. The total number of suggestions was reduced to the 8 most popular which the Cllrs then voted for in order to indicate the levels of support. The four most popular suggestions are as follows in order of popularity: 'Railway Cuttings' (9 votes), 'Great Western Place' (7 votes), 'Kate's Place' (7 votes) and 'Ashford Way or Close' (5 votes).

RESOLVED

That WTC suggest to WODC that the new development be called 'Railway Cuttings', 'Great Western Place', 'Kate's Place' or 'Ashford Way or Close'.

ACTIONS: *The Clerk will inform WODC of WTC's four suggestions for names for the new development on Oxford Road.*

WTC/208/11 MINUTES FROM THE FINANCE MEETINGS

The minutes of the Finance Committee meetings of 27th September and 1st November were received and noted. The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee on 22nd November were received and considered. The Chairman of the Finance Committee presented the recommendations of the committee. In minute FC/39/11 the committee recommended that WTC does not use Cllr C Carritt's proposed package to reduce the Environment Working Group budget as a means to increase the grants and donations from £2,500 to £3,500. Cllr C Carritt confirmed that he was happy to accept the recommendation at FC/39/11 as the recommendation in minute FC/40/11 offered an alternative which he considered to be acceptable. The Chairman of the Finance Committee reported that at FC/40/11 Budget 2012/13 (b) Grants and Donations the Finance Committee is aware of pressure from some members of the town council in increase grants and donations and recognises 2 options:

- (i) Increasing the budget for grants and donations to £3.5k by using the cobbles money if it is no longer needed, or
- (ii) Transfer £500 from unallocated property repairs resulting in a budget of £3k for grants and donations and £8.5k for property.

The Mayor asked that this recommendation be noted and considered during the budget discussions and the council agreed to this.

The Mayor proposed that the agenda be re-ordered so that the Budget 2012/13 (Agenda item 8) is taken next, followed by the Precept (Agenda item 7) and then Grants and Donations (Agenda item 6).

RESOLVED

That the agenda be re-ordered so that the Budget 2012/13 (Agenda item 8) be taken next, followed by the Precept (Agenda item 7) and then Grants and Donations (Agenda item 6).

WTC/209/11 BUDGET 2012/13

The following items were discussed:

(a) Pay Award

It was noted that the Government had announced a public sector pay freeze, thereby rejecting the 2% increase recommended by trade unions. Cllr P Jay asked the Chairman of the Finance Committee if it was legislation or a recommendation. Cllr P Redpath said that we are living in stringent times and that this issue should be reviewed at a more appropriate time. The 2% contingency included in the draft budget was removed reducing staff costs by £1.8k.

(b) Adverts

The Clerk reported that the cost of adverts had increased and the council agreed that the budget for this item is increased from £700 to £800.

(c) Marriage Licences

Cllr T Gardiner asked why WTC was increasing the budget for marriage licences from £0 to £1950 in the budget 2012/13. He noted that there was no comparative increase included in the anticipated income to justify this and so queried whether it

was the right thing to do. The Mayor reported that in addition to a probable increase in revenue this action could help resolve a problem with a double booking in 2012. Discussion followed. Cllr P Jay asked some specific questions about the double booking which the Clerk answered. Cllr P Jay noted that he was not sure if the double booking should be addressed at this meeting or whether it should be considered separately by a sub-group. Cllr Mrs L Glees asked that this matter be referred to the Property Working Group. The Mayor noted that this was not the only event that clashed with weddings. The Mayor asked that the Council agree that further discussion about this matter be deferred to the confidential session and the council agreed to this.

The Chairman of the Finance Committee suggested that the potential for additional weddings over the three year licensing period justified the initial cost. Cllr C Carritt proposed that the issue of a licence for the Assembly Room be not taken until a full business case is presented to Council. This motion was seconded by Cllr Mrs L Glees. Other Cllrs considered that this matter had to be decided that evening due to the budget implications. Cllr Mrs A Grant reminded the council that the Finance Committee had brought the additional licensing to council and was happy that it was in the budget. She noted that September and December were popular times for weddings. It was noted that the council income is currently £225 per wedding. Cllr Mrs A Grant reminded Cllrs that it was something that had been considered at the end of the last meeting and so was already approved. Cllr P Redpath said that the cost of the new license would be spread over three years and other groups use the Mayor's Parlour when weddings could otherwise be booked and therefore the investment is worth doing and proposed that this item be kept in the budget. Cllr T Gardiner seconded this motion.

RESOLVED (10 votes for, 1 against and 1 abstention. Cllr Mrs J Dunsmore did not take part in the vote)

That the budget for extending the current wedding licence to include the Assembly Rooms is retained.

(d) Grants and Donations

The Chairman of the Finance Committee noted that grants and donations were not currently included in the draft budget and proposed that they be maintained at a level of £2.5k until the economy improves. This motion was seconded by Cllr Mrs A Grant. Discussion followed. Several Cllrs said that they would be reluctant to put the precept up so the money for grants and donations should be found from elsewhere within the existing budget. Cllr C Carritt considered that due to the current economic squeeze the budget for grants and donations needed to be increased. Cllr Mrs T Redpath proposed an amendment to the proposal so that the budget for grants and donations is increased by transferring £500 from unallocated property repairs resulting in a budget of £3k for grants and donations and £8.5k for property. This was recommended by the Finance Committee at the meeting of 22nd November 2011. Cllr C Carritt seconded this amendment to the motion and it was then voted upon.

RESOLVED (10 votes for)

That the budget for grants and donations is increased by transferring £500 from unallocated property repairs resulting in a budget of £3k for grants and donations and £8.5k for property.

The main motion as amended was then voted upon.

RESOLVED (11 votes for, 1 against and 1 abstention)

That the budget for grants and donations be maintained at a level of £3k until the economy improves.

(e) Precept

The Mayor said she was wholly against any increase in the budget and asked Councillors to look again for savings to enable the precept to remain the same during this economic down turn. Cllr J Cooper said that he was against an increase in the precept. He noted that an increase in the number of properties in Woodstock should result in approximately £2k more precept being collected. It was generally agreed that WTC should try to minimise the need for an increase in the precept by reviewing its budget. Cllr T Gardiner suggested cutting the line for unspecified property repairs completely but Cllr P Jay considered this to be unwise. Cllr P Jay said that the corporate property had been neglected for years and therefore it would be unwise to cut the entire provision from the budget. Cllr T Gardiner said that he would usually agree with this but that the current budget represented a 50% increase that he could not support. The Chairman of the Finance Committee suggested that in order to achieve a realistic compromise the budget be reduced to £7k and that if necessary the target reserve be utilised to fund the shortfall if this budget proved to be insufficient. Cllr T Gardiner proposed that the budget for unspecified property repairs be reduced to £7k. This motion was seconded by Cllr Mrs A Grant.

RESOLVED (9 votes for, 3 votes against and 1 abstention)

That the budget for unspecified property repairs be reduced from £9k to £7k.

Cllr P Jay clarified that WTC must fix the precept that it wishes to receive from WODC. The District Council then divides this amount out between properties so they key thing is to determine how much money WTC requires and inform WODC accordingly. Cllr C Carritt added that WTC could therefore increase its precept without it costing more to residents due to the increased number of houses. Mr Thomas suggested that WTC could limit the increase in the precept to £3k to make it £88k as opposed to the £90k in the draft budget.

(f) Bloom

Cllr Mrs P Richardson asked WTC for a vote of confidence for Woodstock going forward into the National Bloom competition. She said that this project would require an additional budget of £2k giving a total budget of £5k for Bloom 2012/13 and also asked that any unspent Bloom budget for 2011/12 be carried forward. She reported that the judging will take place sometime on or after 10th August 2012. Cllr P Redpath noted that the S106 money was important to this project.

RESOLVED (Unanimous)

That WTC supports Woodstock's inclusion in the National Bloom competition and agrees to increase the budget by £2k for 2012/13.

WTC/210/11 PRECEPT

The budget forecasts for 2012 to 2015 had anticipated steadily increasing the precept year by year. The precept was discussed during the general budget discussions. Cllr C Carritt said that he had been persuaded by Cllr J Cooper's comments and the general economic forecast to support a modest increase in the precept this year and possibly also for further modest increases in future years. Cllr P Redpath proposed that WTC increase the precept by £2k above the current year in the expectation that this will result in no increase in the Band D council tax. Cllr C Carritt seconded this motion.

RESOLVED (Unanimous)

That WTC increase the precept by £2k above the current year in the expectation that this will result in no increase in the Band D council tax.

Cllr P Jay asked that for the Big Pic predictions for the future WTC should still plan for £5k increases in future years and this was agreed.

Cllr P Jay proposed that WTC accept the Budget 2012/13 as amended. This motion was seconded by the Mayor.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That WTC accept the Budget 2012/13 as amended.

***ACTION:** The Town Hall administrative staff will arrange for the budgets to be finalised and that hard copies are printed off and issued to all Cllrs (with spares for possible new Cllrs).*

WTC/211/11 GRANTS AND DONATIONS

Cllr J Cooper declared a personal interest as he is the Chairman of the Woodstock Youth Club. Cllr C Carritt declared a personal interest as he is the Treasurer of the Woodstock Youth Club and also a personal friend to the Oxfordshire Woodland Project Manager. Cllrs Mrs A Grant and Mrs E Stokes also declared personal interests as they are Committee members of the Woodstock Youth Club.

It was noted that there was a slight error in the list of grants and donations 2012/13 and that item (F) should read Oxfordshire Woodland and not Woodstock Community.

(i) Yarnton and Witney Bands

It was confirmed that the payments for the Yarnton Band (Remembrance Day) and Witney Band (Christmas Carols) are not included elsewhere within the current budget. The Mayor proposed that these two grants be retained and that they stay as they are this year. This motion was seconded by Cllr P Redpath.

RESOLVED (Unanimous)

That these two grants will be retained and stay as they are for 2012/13.

Cllr T Gardiner proposed that the payments for the two bands are moved from grants and donations and included within the Civic Budget for 2013/14 and thereafter. Cllr P Jay seconded this motion.

RESOLVED (Unanimous)

That the payments for the two bands are moved from grants and donations and included within the Civic Budget for 2013/14 and thereafter resulting in an increase in the Civic Budget of £150.

ACTION: The Finance Assistant will include these two grants within the Civic Budget from 2013/14 onwards.

(ii) Woodstock Youth Club

Cllr P Jay proposed that £1k be given to Woodstock Youth Club and this motion was seconded by Cllr P Redpath. Discussion followed. The Mayor proposed an amendment so that the Woodstock Youth Club is given £1.5k on condition that they write to all of the other parishes where Youth Club Members live and ask them for a contribution towards the club. This amendment was seconded by Cllr Mrs E Jay and was voted upon.

RESOLVED (8 votes for, 4 votes against and 1 abstention)

That the amount be increased to £1.5k on condition that they write to all of the other parishes where Youth Club Members live and ask them for a contribution towards the club.

The amended motion was then voted upon.

RESOLVED (9votes for, 3 against and 1 abstention)

That the Woodstock Youth Club be given £1.5k on condition that they write to all of the other parishes where Youth Club Members live and ask them for a contribution towards the club.

(iii) Woodstock Scout/Guide Hut

Cllr P Redpath proposed that a grant of £500 be awarded for this purpose and this motion was seconded by Cllr Mrs A Grant. Cllr Mrs E Jay proposed an amendment for the amount to be increased to £1200. Cllr Mrs L Glees suggested that WTC eliminate the things that it did not wish to support in 2012/13 and then see what is left.

The Mayor considered this to be a good idea and asked that the Council agree to defer a decision on the scout hut until the other items had been considered. Discussion followed.

RESOLVED (Unanimous)

That

- a) WTC would not give grants to the 2nd Woodstock Guides, the 1st Woodstock Brownies as these grants were for assistance towards running costs and a holiday rather than long term investments in the organisations.
- b) WTC would not make a contribution towards a new minibus for Spencer Court as the application had not included information about the level of support that was being requested.
- c) WTC would not make a contribution towards the Oxfordshire Woodland.

(iv) Woodstock Carnival

It was noted that:

- a) the Woodstock carnival makes no money for itself, all of the funds raised go to good causes
- b) the WTC grant goes towards the cost of the insurance for the carnival
- c) the committee had not submitted an official application form

Cllr Mrs T Redpath proposed that the carnival be granted £500 in 2012/13 but that in future years this expenditure becomes part of the regular budget. This motion was seconded by Mrs E Jay.

RESOLVED (12 votes for)

That the carnival is granted £500 in 2012/13 but that in future years this expenditure becomes part of the regular budget.

***ACTION:** The Finance Assistant will include this grant within the regular budget from 2013/14 onwards.*

(v) Woodstock Scout/Guide Hut (continued)

After all of the other donations had been considered there was £850 left over.

RESOLVED

That £850 is awarded as a grant towards the repair of the Woodstock Scout/Guide Hut as this was felt to offer more indirect benefit to more people than some of the other applications.

WTC/212/11 ***HISTORIC WOODSTOCK***

Nine designs for Historic Woodstock plaques were received and considered by WTC. These had been created by Giles Macdonald. Cllr Mrs L Glees asked that the council confirms that it is happy with the plaques before they are officially submitted to WTC for planning permission.

RESOLVED (Unanimous)

That WTC fully supports the Historic Woodstock project and supports the proposed plaque designs.

There was unanimous support for the designs. These were considered to be of a very high standard. The possibility of installing a plaque on the Former Railway Station was discussed. It was suggested that a plaque on the side of the building might be an option. Cllr J Cooper proposed that it be minuted that Cllr Mrs L Glees had done a really good job on this project and the Mayor seconded this motion.

RESOLVED

That the designs by Giles Macdonald be accepted and officially submitted to WTC for planning permission.

WTC/213/11 ***EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS***

It was proposed 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 asked to withdraw.

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 asked to withdraw.

WTC/214/11 BUDGET DISCUSSIONS CONTINUED.

Cllr Mrs J Dunsmore declared a personal interest in the double booking in the Mayor’s Parlour, Town Hall, 2012.

The reasons why the double booking had occurred were discussed along with the problems resulting from this and the potential implications for the council. The requirements of the two bookings were discussed. The Clerk advised WTC of the current situation and the actions that were being taken to try and resolve the current difficulties concerning a wedding. Cllr P Jay considered that as it is WTC’s mistake the council must take all necessary action required to fulfil its moral and contractual requirements and preserve the Councils reputation and said that the situation must be managed carefully. Some specific measures were identified that will be introduced to help ensure that such a situation does not reoccur in future. Cllr T Gardiner proposed that

- a) WTC does whatever is necessary to resolve the current situation concerning the double booked wedding
- b) three people are empowered to meet with the bride and groom and take whatever steps are reasonable
- c) the three people be the most senior members on the Council: the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk
- d) A small budget is approved for use as required in order to resolve this matter without the need for further council approval

RESOLVED

That

- a) WTC does whatever is necessary to resolve the current situation concerning the double booked wedding
- b) three people are empowered to meet with the bride and groom and take whatever steps are reasonable
- c) the three people be the most senior members on the Council: the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk
- d) A small budget is approved for use as required to resolve this matter without the need for further council approval

Cllr P Jay asked that the council be kept up to date with developments on this matter.

The Mayor gave Cllrs early notice that an ETC will be held on Tuesday 20th December 2011 in order to consider the Community Centre Refurbishment tenders that have been received from builders.

The meeting rose at 10.30pm.

Signed Date