

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 19th MARCH 2013 AT 7.30PM
IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE, WOODSTOCK**

PRESENT: The Town Mayor, Councillor Mr B Yoxall, members of the Woodstock Town Council (WTC), County Councillor Ian Hudspeth, District Councillors Julian Cooper and Elizabeth Poskitt and some 140 members of the public.

1. **WELCOME**

The Town Mayor welcomed residents to the meeting. He said that last year the Community Centre Building was being refurbished and so was pleased to welcome residents back to it for this year's meeting.

2. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The Mayor asked residents whether they were happy to accept the proposed agenda and nobody opposed this suggestion and so this is the agenda that was adopted for the meeting.

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 19th March 2013 were received and considered. There were no suggestions for amendments and therefore the Mayor signed them as being a correct record.

The minutes of the Woodstock Town Meeting held on 12th December 2012 were also received and considered. There were no suggestions for amendments and therefore the Mayor signed them as being a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Mr Tony Gardiner, Chairman of the Trustees of the former Legacy Funds, raised a matter arising from the Annual Town Meeting 2012. He asked for a progress update about the installation of the Stairlift in the Town Hall. The Mayor reported that this was being installed later that week which was welcomed by Mr Gardiner.

There were no matters arising from the Town Meeting that was held on 12th December 2012.

4. **REPORTS FROM THE TOWN COUNCIL**

a) **Environment**

Residents received a report from Cllr Colin Carritt Chairman of the Environment Committee. Cllr Carritt referred residents to the report that had been distributed at the meeting and was also available electronically. He explained what the Environment Committee does and introduced the Cllrs that looked after the various areas.

Cllr Mrs Pauline Richardson is leading on the Water Meadows and the work to update the Water Meadows Management Plan in order to ensure that this area is kept unspoilt. This is a work in progress. During the year a repair was required to the spillway of the sluice at the Glyme Close end of the meadows. The work has now been completed at an approximate cost of £9k.

Cllr Carritt congratulated Pauline, Robert and the rest of the team involved in 'Woodstock in Bloom' for winning two very prestigious awards.

Cllr Carritt thanked Bob Pomfret for the voluntary work that he undertakes on the OWL Nature Reserve and for the report on the wildlife that he recently produced. He said that Cllr Jay is leading on the OWL Nature Reserve Extension but that the original plans had been scaled back. WTC is proceeding with the land transfer and will manage the site with the least possible disturbance to flora and fauna whilst preventing it from becoming a jungle. A residents forum has been established.

Cllr Glenn Fleetwood is leading on the cemeteries. WTC is currently purchasing an extension to the Green Lane Cemetery. The cemetery rules have recently been updated and work has begun to ensure good quality control etc.

Cllr Mary Robertson is leading on the play areas. WTC has significant funds from the S106 agreement for the Pye development in Shipton Road. This is to be spent on the New Road and Budds Close Play Areas. The play area at Rosamund Drive in Old Woodstock is also somewhat neglected and WTC has recently secured £5k towards a new piece of equipment for that play area.

Cllr Carritt said that WTC is not the responsible authority for highways. They come under the remit of OCC. The current problems include parking and the speed and volume of traffic on the A44. WODC has been asked to review the parking. Cllr Carritt noted that although there were a few initial problems with the Hensington Road improvement scheme the situation was settling down although some remedial work is required.

Cllr Carritt thanked the snow clearance volunteers for their efforts. This had been a huge success that had enabled WTC to keep the town centre clear.

a) Report from the Town Mayor

The Mayor, Cllr Brian Yoxall reported that during the year Russell Gunthardt and David Yates had resigned from the Town Council and been replaced by Cllrs Mary Robertson and Tracy Wray. There is now an equal number of male and female Councillors on WTC.

The Mayor presented the following highlights from the past year. In April 2012 Mrs Gwen Mason and Nigel Clifford were appointed Honorary Townsmen of Woodstock. The last meeting of the former Town Council had included lively debate about options relating to the height of the Community Centre ceiling. The Mayor noted that this had been a controversial project and the Council had had to decide whether to rebuild or refurbish the Community Centre. He thanked the originators of the project, Cllr Mrs Victoria Edwards and former Cllr Mrs Linda Glees for their splendid fundraising effort. In the end just over £150k had been spent and the Mayor thanked all contributors to the project fund. Nearly all of the feedback received has been positive however there is a slight problem with the acoustics which is being monitored. The next stage will hopefully include the installation of UPVC windows throughout and the installation of a courtyard garden to the rear of the building.

In May the number of Town Councillors had reduced from 16 to 12. Although this made it easier to handle debate this reduction has impacted upon the degree of assistance available to help the administrative staff.

The Queen's Jubilee Celebrations took place over the weekend of 3rd and 4th June and was a wonderful team effort. On 9th July the Olympic torch was carried through the town attracting an audience of 13,000 people. This was another team effort involving WTC, WODC, OCC, Thames Valley Police and Blenheim Estates. Sandwiched between these two events was the official re-

opening of the Community Centre by His Grace The Duke of Marlborough on 29th June 2012. This event also marked the building's 100 year history. Some wonderful artistic contributions were provided by the Marlborough School to mark the occasion. The Town Council had also adopted the idea of coloured wall panels from the school and this had resulted in the bright contemporary feeling.

In July a new Town Council committee system was agreed. On 16th July the Council received a letter from solicitors representing Caledonia Properties Ltd giving notice to quit the Old Woodstock Play Area. This notice was later withdrawn following protests from Woodstock Town Council (WTC) and a large number of residents. The Mayor reported that the play area and adjoining field are being sold to Blenheim Estates and so it has had a happy outcome as they intend to preserve both. Residents have suggested calling the field 'Marlborough Meadow'.

In August the external decoration of the Post Office block was completed.

In September 2012 Woodstock was once again awarded 'Gold' in the regional competition of Britain in Bloom. This means that Woodstock has won five Gold awards during the past seven years.

In October Woodstock was awarded 'Silver Gilt' in the national finals. The Mayor said that although this was a great team effort the driving force behind the team was three people: Cllr Mrs Pauline Richardson, Honorary Townsman Dr Robert Edwards and Canon Barbara Doubtfire. During the meeting the Mayor presented Pauline with an award for outstanding services to Bloom and a plant, and also had certificates for Dr Edwards and Canon Barbara Doubtfire. During October the Hensington Road traffic improvement scheme was introduced. This is an ongoing project and further disruption is anticipated during May 2013. The Council passed a motion about the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum (SOFO). There are concerns about the scale of the SOFO development although WTC supported the museum in principle. The Council endorsed the Woodstock Town Partnership report that raised concerns about parking, the problems facing retailers and routing that took tourists out of Woodstock and straight into Blenheim Palace, though WTC had not endorsed a subsequent recommendation from the Town Partnership on housing.

In December WTC responded to the Draft Local Plan (DLP) after this matter was considered at the Town Council meeting on 12th December 2012 and the Extraordinary Town Council meeting on 18th December 2012. The DLP suggested that in the Eynsham/Woodstock sub-area 280 more houses will be required between now and 2029. WTC has informed West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) that Woodstock rejects any more development.

In January 2013 the shoe repair shop in Woodstock came under threat of closure and this situation is on-going.

In February the Mayor delivered a petition to OCC and asked them to come and take a look at the SOFO problem. Concerns were raised about the lack of parking facilities available to meet the needs of the additional 80,000 additional visitors that are anticipated. The local tourism strategy produced in 2009 was reviewed and updated. The strategy aims to develop walking, bus use etc.

During March the stairlift is being installed in the Town Hall and the 60th anniversary of the Queen's coronation year will be marked by the planting of a tree at the War Memorial on 27th March. The future of the Old Woodstock Play Area is now in safe hands as Blenheim Estates has purchased the land on which it stands. WTC is introducing a revised charging scheme for the Town hall and Community Centre.

Looking forward the possibility of installing a disabled toilet is being investigated and also improved lighting and decoration for the Town Hall. Grants will be sought for phase 2 of the Community Centre refurbishment and the possibility of installing solar panels on the roof will be investigated. WTC will continue to work towards resolving the issues identified by the Town Partnership, issues concerning Community Transport and the need for affordable housing that will retain the essential character of Woodstock. There will be a civic church service on 2nd June to mark the 60 years since the Queen's coronation. This occasion will also be marked by a bench being installed in the vicinity of the museum that is being constructed by pupils from the Marlborough School.

The Mayor thanked the Town, County and District Councillors, the Town Council staff and members of the community who had contributed to the success of the last year.

b) Finance

Cllr Peter Jay presented an oral overview of the Town Council's financial position. At 31st March 2012 there had been £155k. The Council spent £316k. It received £87k in council tax (the precept) and £154k from other income, mainly from the properties in the town. WTC had predicted that on 31st March WTC would have £80k in the bank. But in now looks as if there will be £110K in the bank which Cllr Jay explained. He also explained the budget plans for next year.

5 Thames Valley Police

PC Gordon Richardson outlined the position relating to crime in Woodstock over the last 12 months and reported that crime was down in general with serious crime down from 182 to 161 cases. All in all it had dropped in comparison to other local towns in Oxfordshire. The theft of number plates is a matter of concern. Tamper proof screws are going to be distributed to the Suzuki garage in Long Hanborough so that they can be fitted free of charge and he recommended that people utilise this facility. He asked that anyone who has their number plates stolen reports the crime to the police otherwise they may receive letters or tickets for crimes that they did not commit. Reporting the crime helps police to trace it. The other craze at present is the theft of catalytic converters due to their copper content. These have been stolen off vehicles in Long Hanborough recently and are very expensive to replace. Thieves are mainly targeting 4x4 vehicles and large vans. This is a difficult crime to prevent or solve. He reminded people not to leave valuables on display in cars such as 'sat navs' as they are easy targets and can be stolen in seconds.

He reminded residents that the non-emergency number is now 101. This number came into effect 18 months ago and is charged as a flat rate 15p call. He referred residents to the 101 leaflets at the back of the room.

6 Reports from the County and District Councillors

a) County Cllr Ian Hudspeth

County Cllr Hudspeth said that he is first and foremost the County Cllr for Woodstock. Then he became the leader of OCC and the following week he was no longer a District Cllr. He considered it to be an honour and a privilege to be the leader of OCC but he remains committed to being our Cllr and his access to officers helps overcome conflicts e.g. the SOFO project. At the planning meeting Cllr Hudspeth spoke against this application. The planning committee came and looked at this project but finally decided to go ahead. Cllr Hudspeth is backing resident's concerns about this building. He is now the Council Member for Finance as a Council Member has had to retire due to illness. He has carried out this dual role since November 2012. The grants budget has been cut by 32% so £200M has to be saved. When the frozen grants drop out there will be a deficit therefore OCC will have to increase Council Tax by 1.99% to plan for the future. A survey found that 75% of 2000 people asked said that a below the rate of inflation was acceptable. Adult social care costs the most but is demand

led so it is difficult to reduce the budget. Discussion has taken place about people in care homes and also helping people in home. People want to stay in their own homes therefore OCC want to help them to do this. It also saves money. The Councillor Community Budget has been retained for small scale local projects. The education department is changing its relationship with schools that move to become academies. In the centre of Oxford the Primary schools are currently not doing as well as hoped. OCC have retained the Children's Centres.

Cllr Hudspeth spoke about roads and said that the Hensington Road project was part of the Pye Developer 278 Agreement. The contractor has to finish the work. There will be no extra cost to OCC for the extra work required. This year a total of 39,000 pot holes were repaired across the county whereas last year the number repaired had been 24,000. If residents see a pot hole call 0845 310 1111.

Cllr Hudspeth thanked WTC for its support and the Town Clerk and Mayor who have been very supportive.

b) District Cllr Julian Cooper

District Cllr Cooper spoke on behalf of himself and District Cllr Poskitt. He circulated over 100 copies of his report to residents and presented a summary of his report at the meeting. He explained the 2013/14 budget and said that the present level of precept protects vulnerable residents from the effects of national changes to the council tax benefit scheme. WODC has managed to maintain the level of grants to community groups such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. He explained the S106 benefits that Woodstock had received. WODC has joined the 'Better Together Oxfordshire' campaign which is part of the national Big Switch programme. This offers residents the chance to benefit from a bulk buying consortium. Further details are available from WODC, the Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Network on 080107004 or the website www.bettertogetheroxfordshire.co.uk He updated residents about the Local tourism industry that continues to thrive. However it is regrettable that WODC downgraded the information visitors centre at the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock – heart of its prime tourist area. Cllr Cooper also spoke about how WODC was reaching out to all ages, the Local Development Plan, the affordable housing planning application for Heath Lane, Bladon and Bladon traffic.

7 **OPEN FORUM**

No resolutions had been received.

John Hodges noted the problem with pot holes in some areas of Woodstock.

Dennis Allen spoke about three issues. He suggested that WTC consider collecting the email addresses of residents for distributions. He spoke about the problem with car parking and said that we need a capital project for car parking. He spoke about development in Oxfordshire. He suggested that the council sending something that says no development may be a step too far. He suggested that Woodstock should accept limited infill in the town and more affordable housing. He said that his son could not afford to live in the town.

Trevor Hendy said that he had sent a request to WODC regarding tourism. He noted that although WODC was responsible for the regrettable downgrading of the Tourist Information Office the signs were still up. He said that at the museum there are now only a couple of shelves and so it is now embarrassing. He noted that a WODC accommodation leaflet only shows three places in Woodstock. When this was queried he was told that only accommodation checked by WODC could appear in the leaflet. He suggested that WODC needs to sort this out.

Tony Airey asked whether anything would be done to celebrate the anniversary of the Queens Coronation. The Mayor said that nothing was planned but that he would discuss this with members of the Jubilee Committee.

Philip Redpath asked District Cllr Julian Cooper whether Woodstock had completed or nearly completed its quota for local development. He was concerned about mentions of affordable homes and was not sure whether the obligations were being fulfilled. He said that the field behind Hill Rise had just been overtaken by Blenheim Estates and that in 2004 attempts had been made to build on this land with access onto the A40 through Hill Rise. He said that Hedge End could be developed via the A44 or Shipton Road. He said that the field by Budds Close was another potential area for development. He said that he's been fighting unnecessary development for 20 years. He said that a field should be kept between the WODC and CDC boundaries. He said that in five years 60 houses represented a 27% increase in housing in the Hensington Area. This resulted in problems with the roads and pavements. He said that it appears that some of the equity share houses had been sold due to a lack of take-up. He asked Cllr Cooper for information about the share of uptake. He said that windfall sites will crop up and developers will try their luck so WTC should consider each planning application on its own merits. Cllr Cooper said that Woodstock had reached its quota for the planned period but that the whole of Oxfordshire was being targeted and not just Woodstock. He spoke about Manor Road Old Woodstock and said that over the past 20 years a number of houses had been built. He suggested that it would be unrealistic for any District Council to say no to all planning so people must be realistic and everything must be assessed on its own merits.

Chris Baylis said that it was very regrettable that the Visitors Information Centre had closed but the 'Wake Up To Woodstock' brochure now advertises lots of accommodation and there is also an 'App'.

John Daniel said that he had read the pamphlet that spoke about limited infrastructure but noted that it didn't mention shops. He considered that the shops in Woodstock were woefully inadequate for existing let alone any additional residents and suggested that the situation was quite pathetic as Chipping Norton has a vibrant shopping centre. He said that if the Co-OP left it would become a ghost town therefore shops need to be included in any infrastructure plans as they are important part of any development. The Mayor is aware of this general point.

Bob McGurrin said that he is the Chairman of the Woodstock Action Group (WAG). He said that WAG fully supports the town council resolution of 18th December 2012 to oppose any further development in Woodstock. He read the motion that was sent to WODC and the result of the recorded vote. He said that WAG doesn't think that Woodstock won't get an allocation but it should be dealt with on its merits when it arises. In the meantime WAG will keep the community aware of any developments that might affect the town.

Mr Gujural applauded the scout and guide hut additional lease at a peppercorn rent. He said that the Woodstock Bowls and Tennis Club lease renewal had resulted in a rent of £1500 plus legal fees. He estimated that it cost £8k to get the lease extended for 15 years and noted that there were only 65 members. He suggested that the professional advisors had included conditions in the lease without consultation or warning.

Trish Redpath spoke about affordable housing and said that although many people think that affordable housing is for Woodstock children as a right this is not the case. A proportion must be offered to people on the waiting list which covers a bigger area than Woodstock town itself. She had been advised that Pye had promised 20 social houses but only 5 went to Woodstock residents and up to 5 were sold on the open market. Fighting the Local Plan helps to fight development. The Mayor

said that his family's experience reflected Denis's. Denis said that his son's house was on the basis that he owned $\frac{3}{4}$ of it and the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ is rented. He is not allowed to extend or change it.

Jackie Hibberd spoke about the leaflet about the town fair that had been sent to her parents. She asked why restrictions were being proposed now and suggested that retailers thrive from the visiting fair. She said that it links to the housing school issue. She said that it is enjoyed by the older kids such as himself and is the only thing centred on them. Cllr Carritt said that the WTC policy is to support the fair but that there are problems with the fair coming at lunchtime on a Sunday when it doesn't open until 4pm on the Monday therefore we need to get a fairer deal. He said that although not all of the responses are in, the indications are that residents support the fair. Discussions will be held about when they will arrive, the fact that they need to depart promptly and that signs are put up to notify people that it's business as usual.

Rebecca Rush is a parent of a 4 year old and was excited to see the plans for the playgrounds that were on display. She said that she has put her concerns to WTC but was concerned that residents have not been thoroughly consulted and the management of the park was uncertain. She said that if it is good people will drive to it and this will have an impact on residents. Cllr Robertson thanked Rebecca for her question and explained that the plans at the back of the room were the result of a consultation exercise. These will be on display in the Community Centre on 20th April when Cllrs and experts will be on hand to discuss them with residents. This will be an opportunity to look at the details such as hedging, fences etc.

Ruth Fiddy asked about plans for the children aged around 5 years old as there are a lot in the area and asked for details of the budget etc. Cllr Robertson provided this information and explained the S106 contract.

Cllr Cooper said that the S106 £43750 allocation had given the Youth Club a very good base line on which to build. The Youth Club project will cost £300-£400k in total and so grants are being applied for. They are making applications to the big lottery etc. Bob Pomfret handed out a leaflet about the fundraising and the club night for scooters. Cllr Cooper will enquire about the any licences that may be required for house to house collections

Ben Richardson asked whether WTC might back a full time Youth Worker. The Mayor thanked Ben for his enquiry but said that he couldn't comment at present.

Mr Gujural said that the Berkley Homes site looks nice but that up to 50% of the site was up for rent and that the rents were typically between £1.3k and £3k. This is not what was proposed. Chris Baylis said that this is because the town was at loggerheads and so the Planning Inspector removed all of the Affordable Housing due to this confrontation. He said that we need dialogue with developers not confrontation as a way forward. The appeal was the last stage. Trish Redpath didn't agree and said that the controversy was over the demolition of the station building. The original design wasn't fit for Woodstock. WODC put up a poor case for affordable housing. Berkley Homes made a better claim to say that affordable housing was non-viable. Chris Baylis said that we need to have dialogue to work out our deal via consultation and dialogue not confrontation. Philip Redpath said that WODC had let the town down and was scared of getting sued by the developers.

Mr Gujural said that we may need development but can it be a condition that any big development has its own infrastructure? He noted that his disabled friends can't park in Woodstock.

The Mayor then wished the residents good night and thanked them for attending.

The meeting rose at 9.20pm.

Signed..... Date.....

Copies of the papers presented by Cllrs were available at the meeting and information about the Historic Woodstock Wall Plaques. Information was also available from 'Wake-up to Woodstock', the Youth Club Annual Report and Fund Raising Campaign, the memorial garden, the local police, the 'Good Neighbours' scheme, 'Sustainable Woodstock' and the 'Woodstock Action Group (WAG)'. There were also copies of statement from Blenheim Palace and Pye Homes that responded to the WAG literature that had recently been distributed to residents.