

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 17th MARCH 2015 AT 7.30PM
IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE, WOODSTOCK**

PRESENT: The Town Mayor, Councillor Mr J Cooper, members of the Woodstock Town Council (WTC), County Councillor Ian Hudspeth, District Councillors Julian Cooper and Elizabeth Poskitt, and some 67 members of the public.

1. **WELCOME**

The Town Mayor welcomed residents to the meeting. He thanked them for attending and reminded them that they needed to be an elector in order to take part in any votes.

2. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The Mayor asked residents whether they were happy to accept the proposed agenda. Town Cllr P Jay asked the support of the meeting in amending the agenda on the paper so that, as the first order of business after the meeting of last time, residents could consider the following motion that:

'this meeting supports the campaign by the Town Council against the threatened development in east Woodstock and calls upon the developer to enter into meaningful talks with the community and the Town Council about the future of our much loved town'.

Town Cllr B Yoxall seconded this motion and discussion followed. Town Cllr S Parnes proposed an amendment whereby the words '*meaningful talks*' were replaced by the words '*open discussions*'. The proposer and seconder of the motion agreed to this amendment.

Honorary Townsman Dr R Edwards asked that the police officers present be allowed to speak before this business and the proposer and seconder of the motion agreed to this. The following motion was then resolved by the majority present at the meeting.

RESOLVED that this meeting supports the campaign by the Town Council against the threatened development in east Woodstock and calls upon the developer to enter into open discussions with the community and the Town Council about the future of our much loved town.

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 18th March 2014 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 Wednesday 8th October 2015 were also received and considered. There were no suggestions for amendments and therefore the Mayor signed them as being a correct record.

There were no matters arising from either set of minutes.

4. **POLICE REPORT**

Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Chris Jones presented a report on behalf of Thames Valley Police. He noted that crime in general had reduced once again in the area.

There had been a significant reduction in cases of anti-social behaviour in the play areas, schools etc. and not one incident of this type in Woodstock.

Unfortunately there had been an increase in car crimes such as drink driving, driving without a licence and driving without a valid MOT but this increase may be due in part to more proactive policing. Overall more crimes are being reported and solved. In Woodstock the crimes were mainly traffic offences but it was noted that three drink drivers had also been caught within three weeks. Since 1st January 2015 there had been 17 traffic offences but the other crime figures were low in the area.

PCSO Jones noted that the Woodstock and Chipping Norton Neighbourhood policing teams had been combined to deliver smarter policing via 6 PCSO's, 4 PC's and a Sergeant and 1 Inspector working a split shift system. This team now covers a broad area. The police are working more closely with other agents such as health care specialists, West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to stage crime prevention road shows, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), social housing providers and schools e.g. to deliver presentations about drugs. They are also holding regular meetings with neighbouring police forces and working to deliver joined up initiatives.

Last year rural crime was a priority, traffic policing and crime prevention. The current Woodstock police station will remain open until July 2015. PCSO Jones introduced PC Rob Webb who would be joining the team the following week. The police representatives then left the meeting.

5. REPORTS FROM THE TOWN COUNCIL

- a) Report from the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – Cllr Brian Yoxall
Cllr Yoxall considered the 'Woodstock East' planning application to be a reckless and insensitive proposal. He said that Woodstock Town Council had objected to it on many grounds such as the negative impact on Woodstock, landscaping issues, transport issues, environmental grounds, planning considerations, the proposed retail scheme etc. He spoke about the 'SAVE Woodstock' campaign and thanked: those in the community who were displaying posters, Mr P Redpath and Dr R McGurrin of WAG for putting up the larger posters and residents who had signed petitions or submitted letters of objection. He referred residents to a document that was available at the meeting that provided guidance about submitting an objection. He also referred to the campaign web site: savewoodstock.org.

Cllr Yoxall noted that the Town Council is not being complacent. It is sending copies of the formal objection that has been submitted to councillors at Cherwell District Council (CDC) and WODC. This objection letter will also be sent to the local parliamentary candidates when these are known and any new district councillors who are elected in May 2015. Cllr Yoxall urged the community to unite and continue to fight for Woodstock.

Cllr Yoxall repeated the motion from Cllr P Jay, that he had seconded, that

'this meeting supports the campaign by the Town Council against the threatened development in east Woodstock and calls upon the developer to enter into meaningful talks with the community and the Town Council about the future of our much loved town'.

Much discussion followed. Mr P Redpath suggested that this motion was similar to one made by Mr C Baylis at the Town meeting on 8th October that had failed to gain support and so couldn't understand it. He said that a local company now takes twice as long to make deliveries and that traffic issues were being compounded. He queried the meaning of the phrase 'meaningful talks'. Cllr S Parnes shared some of these concerns and proposed that the phrase 'meaningful talks' be replaced by the words 'open discussions' so that everything is fully transparent by holding open discussions at Town Council meetings. Mr P Redpath seconded this amendment which was then accepted by both the proposer and seconder of the original motion. Cllr Mrs E Jay noted that this motion was not the same as the one put forward in October 2014.

Cllr P Jay said that there had been no pre-discussions with Pye but that he wanted to include those who want some talks. Honorary Townsman Mr J Banbury said that he was happy to vote for the amended motion as it provided 'wiggle room'.

Cllr E Poskitt gave a personal explanation about her pecuniary interest and explained that this is why she leaves the room whenever 'Woodstock East' is discussed. She said that another member of WODC will represent her at district council meetings whenever this is appropriate.

Cllr B Yoxall summed up the debate and said that the Town Council had not held any talks with Pye. He noted that it is the Town Council that represents the town and not the Town Partnership. A vote was taken and it was

RESOLVED (the majority of residents voted for, two voted against and 1 resident abstained) that this meeting supports the campaign by the Town Council against the threatened development in east Woodstock and calls upon the developer to enter into open discussions with the community and the Town Council about the future of our much loved town.

b) Report from the Town Mayor – Cllr Julian Cooper

The Mayor reported that Mrs Victoria Edwards had resigned from the Council and thanked her for her hard work and significant contribution. He welcomed Cllr Sandy Rasch to the Town Council.

The Mayor noted that last year some residents had asked for a different style of minutes but that things had moved on and this matter had been superseded by the government introducing a right for any member of the public to record Council and Committee meetings. The Mayor made residents aware of the various reports that were available for collection from the back of the room. He also reported that:

- (i) the Town Council had lobbied the Royal Bank of Scotland to keep the NatWest branch in Woodstock but this had been unsuccessful
- (ii) the Town Council had assisted the Youth Club with their planning application
- (iii) the Town Council has opposed the application for Woodstock East proposal for 1500 houses and he thanked Mr P Redpath and Mr S Scott for putting up 'SAVE' Woodstock campaign posters.

The Mayor noted the passing of the 11th Duke of Marlborough last October. He also noted that a special plaque had been installed on the Community Centre in memory of Cllr Mrs Pauline Richardson.

Cllr Cooper said that it had been an honour to serve the Town as Mayor during the last year.

Honorary Townsman R Edwards reminded the meeting about the annual litter pick scheduled for the following Saturday and that people should meet at the Brook Hill lay-by.

c) Report from the Chair of the Environment Committee – Cllr Peter Jay

Residents received a report from Cllr P Jay Chairman of the Environment Committee. He deferred to Cllr Mrs E Jay for a report upon the water meadows who noted the following:

- (i) The new five year management plan for the water meadows drawn up by the Wychwood Project was now complete.
- (ii) Some of the recommended work had been started e.g. on tree cutting.
- (iii) Lots of work is now being undertaken by various voluntary groups.
- (iv) The possibility of getting some Dexter cattle back on meadows 5 & 6 is currently being explored. They would be kept on the water meadows during the summer and moved to drier land in the winter.
- (v) If the cattle don't come back there will be lots of grass cutting and clearing to do so if anyone had a small sit on mower that could be used please get in touch.
- (vi) If the cows come back they will need regular checking to confirm that they are well.
- (vii) People could sign up to become a Friend of the Water Meadows at this meeting if they were interested in helping in any way.

d) Property – Cllr M Robertson

Cllr Robertson noted that the property portfolio consisted of five residential properties, five retail properties and two public buildings – the Town Hall and Community Centre. There are some commercial offices at the Community Centre as well as the public areas. The Council's property is managed by Carter Jonas who won the tender earlier in the year. All properties are currently let. There are function rooms available to let at the Community Centre and Town Hall. The property brings in a net income of £60k which is quite a substantial amount.

The repairs and maintenance costs are quite high as most of the buildings are listed and old. This year the Council had to repair the roof of the Town Hall which is a listed building. It will be repairing the roof of the Town stocks in the near future which are also listed. The Council will also paint the exterior of the Town Hall.

It is hoped that some work can soon be undertaken to improve the area at the back of the Community Centre to form some sort of garden. The 11th Duke of Marlborough left WTC £500 in his will for use at the Community Centre and a similar amount is available from the donations made in memory of Cllr Pauline Richardson.

Two additional benches have been placed on the Town Square making a total of six. Bell bollards have been installed on the two corners furthest from the Town Hall to help protect the benches and the people using them from vehicles. This now makes a pleasant seating area for residents and visitors.

The money raised from managing and letting the Council's buildings supports the work undertaken at the water meadows and Old Woodstock Railway Line (OWL) nature reserve.

e) Finance – Cllr Peter Jay

Cllr P Jay presented an overview of the Town Council's financial position. He spoke to the sheet entitled 'Budget 2015/16 – Income and Expenditure Summary' that had been made available to residents at the start of the meeting. He noted that the precept would increase slightly from £87k to £90k this year and would cost the average Band D household about £50 a year - or £1 a week. Cllr P Jay noted that the property portfolio provided an invaluable source of income through rents etc and that WTC had inherited this property from deals done when in the 1970's the old borough of Woodstock was replaced by the Town Council as the local government unit in Woodstock. He noted that the town still owed a great debt of gratitude to the Mayor's late mother, Mrs Ann Cooper, and others who fought hard for that prize.

Dr S Vickers noted that the most marked change between 2014/15 and 2015/16 was in the Environment budget and queried the reasons for this. Cllr P Jay said that the main reason was due to expenditure at the Water Meadows - the management plan, tree work etc. Cllr P Jay said that he would send Dr Vickers further information after the meeting.

Honorary Townsman J Banbury noted that residents had been made aware of a lot of things that would soon be happening in Woodstock and queried whether the additional expenditure required e.g. on consultants, had been included in the general and administration budget. Cllr P Jay explained that the Council budget includes a provision for all costs that can reasonably be expected but that no contingencies are included except those in the Capital budget. The budget therefore sets out the realistic plan at a given time but as all budgets are obviously wrong it will be amended in due course at the time of the budget review to keep up with reality.

6 REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

a) County Cllr Ian Hudspeth

County Cllr Hudspeth spoke at some length about the OCC budget. He explained that between 2010 and 2018 OCC had to take £292m out of the budget. It had been hoped that there would be a 0% increase in council tax but unfortunately an increase of 1.99% was necessary - largely due to expenditure on social and health care, a statutory function which has become one of the County Council's biggest challenges. 2% of the OCC budget was being spent on seven and a half thousand people in Oxfordshire. The Council must safeguard children and vulnerable people but this inevitably results in other budget areas coming under pressure. The Council had worked with the police on 'Operation Bullfinch' and was continuing to do so to secure other prosecutions. A serious case review report by Sophie Humphries is due out at the end of June.

He noted that the Cllr Community budgets have had to be scrapped as have the Area Stewards funds.

Cllr Hudspeth said that the news is not all doom and gloom. The Council had been working through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to promote growth and jobs. £108m had already been secured through City Deal in Oxfordshire for expenditure on the science belt. £35m is being spent to try and relieve congestion on the A40. There is also funding available towards the A40 to A44 link road.

When responding to the Woodstock East planning application Cllr Hudspeth explained that OCC could only answer on a technical basis and not on a political or planning basis. OCC has transport concerns but it is likely that some of the issues raised may be mitigated by the applicant. Town Cllr T Wray asked County Cllr Hudspeth whether at some point there might be a conflict of interest for OCC due to their opposing the Woodstock East development on highways technical issues on the one hand and the finances that are being raised through the LEP and City Deal on the other. Cllr Hudspeth recognised that a conflict of interest was possible but said that OCC was good at building Chinese walls and the LEP was not just OCC but comprised several partners. The LEP has been very successful at getting the money in but there can be a conflict of interest between partners.

Honorary Townsman Dr R Edwards asked how much of the total turnover comes from central government and whether this represented a good or bad deal. Cllr Hudspeth said that all county councils get a 'bad deal' but OCC is no better or worse than others. He explained the net expenditure and how this was made up. He said that this includes about £100m of government grants. More government grants are now moving downwards along with the appropriate powers e.g. a two year health budget had been guaranteed at £26m per year for the two year period. He could not confirm what would happen afterwards.

Dr S Vickers spoke about affordable housing and asked whether OCC should be more active in finding possible sites for small houses. It was noted that it looks as if most of the new houses in Oxfordshire will be in Didcot, Bicester and Witney and this will put pressure on the transport systems. Dr Vickers suggested that some sites must be under-utilised in Oxford and so ripe for development and asked whether OCC could have a role in this. Cllr Hudspeth said that there used to be a structure plan that identified the best places for houses and that the larger developments built used to be able to fund some of the infrastructure requirements. Now the district councils prepare the Local Plans and then ask OCC for comments about sustainability which is not very good.

If the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is accepted it has identified an unmet demand for the City Council of between 10 and 20 thousand houses. This requirement may have to be dispersed around the county but OCC, although working with them, will not make the decision. Cllr Hudspeth went on to talk about extra care housing. There is not as much as there should be in Oxfordshire and he noted that some district councils tend to lump this with affordable housing.

Town Cllr S Parnes spoke about the Woodstock East planning application.

1. He queried why OCC had made no comment about the applicant's idea of installing a cycle path on the Bladon roundabout – an idea which some people considered to be stupid and so they were disappointed that OCC had not commented on this.
2. He considered that the idea of using s106 on a car club was unreasonable and also unrealistic.
3. He noted that the decision concerning the Long Hanborough development had been refused unanimously and suggested residents read it.

Cllr Hudspeth noted that when submitting a technical objection you need to retain the right to negotiate and therefore a need to look at mode shift. Vehicle numbers are going up without an increase in road space therefore there is a need to utilise the Long Hanborough railway station etc and look at how we connect to this in the most effective way.

Mrs Sewer asked Cllr Hudspeth how advanced the talks were about the idea of a unitary authority and he responded that they were not. Cllr I Hudspeth said that he had put the idea in the public domain to see whether people want this to happen. Oxford City definitely wants a unitary authority so people needed to be aware of this and also the three options.

b) District Cllr Julian Cooper

A report was available to residents at the meeting. District Cllr Cooper presented the report from the West Oxfordshire District Cllrs. He said that West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) had the second lowest precepting rural district in the country and that Woodstock was the lowest precepting town in Oxfordshire. He said that there was now a 5 year land supply in WODC and also Cherwell District Council (CDC) even though the one thousand new houses south of Witney can not yet be counted as the legal agreement has still to be signed.

Residents were advised to check that they are included on the electoral roll. He said that the postal votes should arrive during the third week in April.

Town Cllr Mrs E Jay asked how far WODC had gone along the pipeline with regard to what was, in her opinion, the appalling idea of tighter traffic enforcement and shorter parking hours in Woodstock that might make the situation worse. She hoped that the idea had died a death but wanted confirmation of this. Cllr Cooper said that WODC had engaged consultants to make recommendations and they have yet to report back. They are looking at parking across the whole of West Oxfordshire and will report back when the results are known.

A town centre resident said that he could not believe that the survey had unanimous support for change as suggested in the WTC newsletter. In his opinion they had no clue in the survey about how many people were involved in the town centre, had no indication from the retailers and restaurants of what their view is, and yet the WTC newsletter suggest that it is done and dusted and the district council won't accept the residents problem of moving their vehicles every two hours. If it does come in he suggested that residents will make sure that they do move their cars every 2 hours every day resulting on 90-100 cars driving round looking for new places to park. There will then be nowhere for the visitors, that the town hopes to see, to park. He considered the survey to be inadequate and not professionally done and that the details required to make it valid were not achieved. Others indicated their support to this point of view.

Another resident living in the centre of the town agreed with the sentiments of the previous speaker and said that the checks and balances had not been carried out properly in the assessment. He said living in the centre of Woodstock is very hard but although he didn't expect too much sympathy he did expect a balanced view and agreed with the previous speaker that the questionnaire and the assessment of the questionnaires were unbalanced. He said that if he lived within say quarter of a mile, but still within Woodstock, from the centre of Woodstock he wouldn't mind about the new rules as he would be able to nip in and go to the bank and so might consider it a good idea. It therefore needs to be thought about very carefully. He thought he'd read that the consultants had given their answer and that nobody really cared and so it was going to be dropped, otherwise there could be a lot of people driving around the centre of Woodstock.

District Cllr Cooper said that this needs to be inputted into the Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC) on Weds 6th May. County Cllr Hudspeth said that it might have been the original proposals that the resident referred to which were dropped. Cllr Hudspeth explained that some new traffic orders were due to come through to tighten up enforcement but he had said that they couldn't come forward at the moment without a solution being found to the problems that had been raised. These traffic orders were therefore stopped. County Cllr Hudspeth suggested that the reason for the complaints may be because people using the time limited parking spaces are overstaying by half an hour or longer and so the spaces aren't churning as required. Cllr Hudspeth said that OCC would therefore put a hold on the traffic order until a solution, if there is one, can be found. He said that there was no change at present and no report. The residents concerns will be reported to the TAC.

Honorary Townsman Mr J Banbury addressed the District Cllrs about Willoughby Way. The footpaths working group had produced a report about the public footpaths in the parish but there is now a need to keep the footpaths free of overhanging trees. OCC are the lighting authority and also own the Primary School that borders Willoughby Way. In the autumn the streetlights were obscured by overhanging trees growing in the primary school along the length of Willoughby Way. This is a footpath used by children attending the primary school and so Honorary Townsman Banbury asked that they be cut back now. He also asked that the owners of the trees on the other side of the path also attend to their trees. He asked that we work together to keep the paths useable.

Louise Axtell, the Care Home Manager from Spencer Court addressed the meeting. Spencer Court is run by the Order of St John's Care Trust which is the largest not for profit care trust and can deliver care to dementia patients and the elderly. Ms Axtell told residents about the activities that were being held at the care home and invited them to come along and join in. The care home would like to engage more with the local community.

7 "A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF WOODSTOCK"

Town Cllr B Yoxall, the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan working group, spoke about the draft paper that was available to residents at this meeting. He explained the background to neighbourhood plans, that these plans assumed some development, had to be consistent with district council Local Plans and approved by a majority of residents through a referendum.

Cllr Yoxall said that some people may be confused by the Town Partnership report and explained that is a separate body from the Woodstock Town Council.

He then spoke in detail about the WTC discussion paper entitled "A Vision for the Future of Woodstock" and what it tried to do. He said that Woodstock Town Council would vigorously oppose the Woodstock East proposals but recognised that some continuing change was likely. Any future housing should fit in with the Woodstock view, not be built on greenfield sites and built on brownfield sites with appropriate infrastructure such as town centre car parking. Town Cllr B Yoxall considered that a health centre on the Hensington Road site to be key.

Cllr Yoxall said that the changing face of retail and tourism was a challenge. Blenheim Palace attracts lots of visitors and there was therefore a need to develop joint initiatives that delivered mutual benefits. He said that when the Post Office has undergone it's re-fit it hopes to be able to provide tourist information and he thanked Mr and Mrs Lally for this.

In summary Cllr B Yoxall said that it was the view of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group that future development in the town should take place along the following lines:

1. Opposition to the Woodstock East proposals realistically needs to be complemented by a constructive approach to future development of the town - that is the raison d'être of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.
2. In order not to dilute the intrinsic special character of the town any future housing development should be on brownfield not greenfield sites.
3. Development should only happen where appropriate infrastructure exists
4. The key to resolving some of the main development issues facing the town lies in unlocking the potential of the Hensington Road site requiring dialogue over a wide front.
5. The change towards a tourist based economy should be fostered by joint marketing arrangements with Blenheim.
6. The Town Council should use its potential for influencing future expansion at the Post Office towards encouraging tourism

The following discussion included the following points:

1. Honorary Townsman Mr J Banbury asked what the definition of a brown field site was and whether the football field at New Road was one. Cllr Yoxall explained that a brown field site is one where there has previously been a building and so the New Road playing field is a Greenfield site
2. Town Cllr S Parnes noted that:
 - (i) only four Town Cllrs had voted for the discussion paper
 - (ii) he queried the demographics quoted about the Station site
 - (iii) there isn't much land that is greenfield in Woodstock
 - (iv) brownfield sites may be hijacked by big developers
 - (v) the GP's surgery should be allowed to make its own decision about what's best for it.
3. Mr Colin Turner asked Cllr Parnes to clarify the points that he was making in order that he could better understand them.
4. Town Cllr T Wray said that she had started the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and reminded the meeting that this is a discussion document which residents are being consulted upon. They therefore need to comment and give feedback about the content of the paper presented by Cllr Yoxall as the discussion paper is meant to be for discussion.
5. The Mayor said that he intends to try and upgrade the medical facilities in the town and several residents indicated approval of this suggestion. Cllr B Yoxall supported the Mayor's comments.
6. Any comments about the discussion paper should be sent to the Town Council.

8 OPEN FORUM

The Mayor congratulated the Primary School for raising over £200 for charity when it had used the Mayor's Parlour for an event recently.

Dr R McGurrin introduced himself as the Chair of the Woodstock Action Group (WAG) and referred residents to the information that WAG had made available at the meeting. He said that people could still file their objections to the Woodstock East planning proposal and told them how to do so. He noted that nearly 700 letters of objection had already been sent. Dr McGurrin said that this represented almost 50% of the 1300 homes in Woodstock and noted

that the lack of response from the rest did not indicate support. He had looked on the CDC web site and could not find one comment in favour of the development. Dr McGurrin thanked all of the people who had helped with the SAVE Woodstock campaign and referred residents to the pink cards produced by WAG which could be dropped off at various sites. He noted that people could make multiple different objections to the proposals and did not have to be Woodstock residents. He then spoke about the WODC draft Local Plan 2012-2031 and noted that there would be a six week period of consultation. He explained what would happen after that and noted that until the Local Plan is approved developers can continue to submit numerous planning applications for sites wherever they liked. Some residents in Green Lane, Churchill Close and Hill Rise noted that they had not received the pink cards produced by WAG.

The Mayor then wished the residents good night and thanked them for attending. Cllr P Jay proposed a vote of thanks to the Mayor for the meeting and residents applauded. The meeting rose at 9.30pm.

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

The following literature was available at the meeting:

- Copies of the minutes from the Town meetings on 18th March 2014 and 8th October 2014
 - the 2015/16 Town Council budget summary sheet referred to during Cllr P Jay's presentation
 - The Spring 2015 report from the District Councillors for Bladon, Blenheim and Woodstock
 - A discussion paper presented by Cllr B Yoxall entitled 'Towards a Vision for the Future of Woodstock'
 - information about the 'SAVE Woodstock' campaign, A4 sized campaign posters and information telling people how to respond to the Woodstock East planning application
 - information from the 'Woodstock Action Group' (WAG) about how to object to the Woodstock East proposal or get involved in WAG
 - The Woodstock Literature Society review of 2014 and calendar for 2015
 - A report about Girlguiding Woodstock
 - The Woodstock Youth Club Newsletter 2015
 - 'Birds on the Reserve' a report from Bob Pomfret the volunteer warden of the Old Woodstock Line (OWL) nature reserve
 - A report from 'Wake-up to Woodstock'
 - A report from the Woodstock Royal British Legion.
 - The Woodstock Town Council Newsletter - Spring 2015
- Leaflets were also available about the Historic Woodstock Wall Plaques, the Royal Air Force Cadets, the Spencer Court Care Home and the annual litter pick.