

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WOODSTOCK TOWN COUNCIL MAYOR'S COMMITTEE
HELD AT 7.30 PM ON TUESDAY 24th MAY 2016
IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR, WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL**

PRESENT:

Cllr E Poskitt (Town Mayor)
Cllr J Cooper
Cllr M Robertson

Cllr F Collingwood (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr P Jay

Cllr S Parnes substituted for Cllr Mrs T Redpath at this meeting. The Town Clerk was on holiday and so the Mayor thanked the Clerk to Bladon Parish Council for minuting this meeting.

Also in attendance was one member of the public.

MC/1/16 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllr B Yoxall and Mrs T Redpath.

MC/2 /16 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

Cllr F Collingwood declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 11 New Road Play Area as he works for the company who is employed by Mr and Mrs Parkinson.

Cllr E Poskitt (the Mayor) declared a general interest in agenda item 7, Planning as a West Oxfordshire District Cllr involved in the Uplands Planning sub-committee.

Cllr J Cooper declared general interest in Agenda Item 7, as a West Oxfordshire District Cllr involved in planning.

MC/3/16 **MINUTES:** The minutes of the Mayor's Committee held on 22nd March 2016 were received and considered. The committee

RESOLVED (unanimous) that the minutes of the meeting of the Mayor's Committee held on 24th March 2015 were approved.

The Mayor then signed the minutes.

MC/4/16 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:** None.

MC/5/16 **MOTIONS:** None.

MC/6/16 **QUESTIONS:** The following questions were raised by Cllr S Parnes under WTC Standing Order No. 8

(1) Why did the Mayor not ensure the published Agenda for the Town Council's May 17th meeting would include some clear indication that the Town Council's retained planning advisor, Mr Huw Mellor, was scheduled to appear in public session to provide guidance and insight in relation to the controversial major development proposals targeting 'Land East of Woodstock'? Residents in the Town might have been interested in attending to help enrich their own objections, if from the Agenda they could have been able to learn of the opportunity.

The Mayor stated that Huw Mellor's confirmation of attendance had been received after the agenda had been finalised.

(2) Does the Mayor accept Councillor Cooper was wrong in telling another Councillor: "You can't do that!"(notwithstanding also the fact he should have spoken through the Chair rather than directly addressing the other Councillor), when at the 17th May Town Council Meeting a newly appointed Member of the Mayor's Committee sought to facilitate a substitute due to a scheduling issue anticipated to cause her non-attendance at the 24th May Mayor's Committee Meeting; and does the Mayor agree she was wrong not allow the substitution process to be facilitated in accordance with Standing Order 15(d) at the time of the request?

The Mayor said she would not answer this question as it was totally inappropriate for one Councillor to ask the Mayor to formally criticise another Councillor in the public arena.

(3) Does the Mayor regret her comments as published April 15th by the BBC, in relation to the April 14th Town Poll [on the Question: "Do you wish for the green fields including agricultural land of the South East of Woodstock (also known as, or including, or related to the so-called 'Land East of Woodstock' and/or 'Woodstock East') to be protected from development and urban sprawl (RE: the Local Plan)?"] which resulted in a Turnout of 19.04% of the Town's electorate, with 411 voting YES, and 73 voting NO?

The BBC Reported: "A total of 484 Woodstock residents took to the polls on Thursday, in what the town mayor called a 'disappointing' response." The report also quoted the Mayor as saying: "Only about 20% of the electorate came out, and they're clearly the ones that are against development."; "What the others think one doesn't know - they're probably a bit fed up of the matter."; "Most people were very much against the bigger development. With this, it's much more difficult to say what is good and what is bad."; and, "If you spend effort having a referendum and you don't know what the views are because only a few turn out, it's a problem." Does the Mayor accept that her comments appear unsound when considering: (a) the turnout on April 14th was greater than that of any contested Parish/Town by-election which took place in West Oxfordshire during the same four-year term but for one by-election in Witney held during a simultaneous District Council Election, (b) the April 14th Town Poll turnout was so comparable to the March 3rd Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan Referendum which had a turnout of 20.89%, and (c) a Town Poll can only facilitate polling during five hours between 4-9pm, whilst a contested election operates polls between 7am-10pm?

The Mayor did not regret what she had said to the reporter. Town Polls cost money and to have had a turnout rate of only 19% of the electorate was disappointing. It may have been more than other recent polls on a similar or the same subject but it was still disappointing. We were left with 81% of the population where we knew nothing about their views or about them except that they did not vote. A poll in 2003 with questions not dissimilar to those in this poll resulted in 42.55% turnout which, although still unimpressive, was considerably greater than the poll this April.

MC/7/16

PLANNING: The Mayor and Cllr J Cooper both declared a general interest. The following planning applications were received and considered:

(a) Ref: 16/01145/FUK – 3 Field Barn Cottages, Woodleys, Woodstock: Construction of manege. The Council

RESOLVED (unanimous) that WTC wishes to make no comment about this planning application.

(b) Ref: 16/01413/FUL & 16/01414/LBC – 30-40 High Street, Woodstock: Construction of new entrance. The Mayor proposed, Cllr J Cooper seconded the motion and after discussion the Mayor's Committee

RESOLVED that WTC wishes to make no comment about this planning application.

MC/8/16

DELEGATED DECISIONS: Cllr J Cooper proposed, Cllr P Jay seconded the motion and the Mayor's Committee

RESOLVED to note and approve a delegated decision made by the Town Clerk since the last meeting to engage Mr H Mellor to attend the Annual Town Council Meeting.

MC/9/16

CIVIC EVENTS: The Mayor's Committee reviewed and considered the forthcoming civic events:

(i) Her Majesty the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations
June 12th is the Queen's official birthday.– The Mayor's request for suggestions on ways to mark this event had attracted a poor response from the town. There will be a parade and civic service on the Sunday followed by a reception at the Town Hall. The Mayor is putting together a display of Woodstock over the last 90 years in the Town Hall with contributions from individuals and groups such as the Woodstock Society. This will require supervision by Councillors and/or Council staff. The Museum will be serving tea in the garden and restaurants and cafes will be encouraged to set tables out on the pavements. Tables will be placed on Market Place, weather permitting.

(ii) Armed Forces Day
Armed Forces Day will be on 25th June 2016. Cllr S Parnes proposed, Cllr J Cooper seconded the motion and the Mayor's Committee

RESOLVED (unanimous) that the flag be flown on that day.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Mayor proposed that in view of the nature of the business to be transacted the public and press be temporarily excluded from the meeting (Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1). Cllr J Cooper seconded this motion.

RESOLVED that members of the public are asked to leave the meeting temporarily whilst the Council considered confidential information.

MC/10/16

CONTRACTS WITH PROFESSIONAL BODIES

The Town Council had tasked the Mayor's Committee to confirm the dates and durations of the contracts for the Council's solicitors, property management company and HR and H&S advisors. The Committee received and considered a report from the Town Clerk that confirmed the dates and durations and discussion followed.

- (i) Henman's Freeth – The current arrangement was discussed and it was noted that this is not a fixed term contract but an on-going service.

Cllr F Collingwood proposed, Cllr S Parnes seconded the motion and the Mayor's Committee

Recommended (3 votes for, 1 vote against and 2 abstentions): **that WTC does not formally appoint any one solicitor for a year but engages with solicitors as and when required when matters arise, after obtaining quotations each time.**

- (ii) Carter Jonas: The current contract was confirmed and discussed. The Mayor's Committee

Recommended: (4 votes for, 1 vote against and 1 abstention) **that Carter Jonas are formally confirmed and approved as the WTC property managers for 2016/17 under the current arrangement.**

A Cllr called for a named vote the result of which was as follows:

For: The Mayor and Cllrs J Cooper, M Robertson and P Jay (4)

Against: Cllr S Parnes (1)

Abstention: Cllr F Collingwood. (1)

- (iii) Ellis Whittam: The current contract was confirmed and discussed. It was noted that the Council has greatly benefited from the services of this contractor particularly on employment matters.

Recommended:(unanimous) **that Ellis Whittam be confirmed as the WTC HR and H&S consultants.**

MC/11/16

NEW ROAD PLAY AREA:

The Deputy Mayor left the meeting at this point as he had a pecuniary interest in this matter. The Mayor provided an oral update.

The meeting finished at 8.40 pm

Signed.....

Date:.....