

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2016 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, Lorraine Watling, Woodstock Town Councillors, Lorraine Watling - the Town Clerk, Mr Huw Mellor from “Kemp and Kemp” – the Town Council’s retained planning advisors, guest presenters and some 96 members of the public.

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received from Cllr C Carritt – Deputy Mayor, and Cllr L Maybury.

**1. WELCOME AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The Town Mayor welcomed residents to the meeting and thanked them for attending. She reminded them that they needed to be an elector in order to take part in any votes. The Mayor then asked residents whether they were happy to accept the proposed agenda.

Cllr P Jay proposed the following motion that was seconded by Mr A McCawley approved by the meeting

*that immediately after the ‘suggested agenda’s Item 2, the minutes the meeting shall hear from our guests, the TVP, from Sharon Williams about the water-meadows and from Iain Nicholson about the town’s commercial future and then proceed directly to Item 11, the Woodstock South-East proposal, in which connection the meeting shall hear from Huw Mellor. Thereafter we revert to the rest of the suggested agenda from Item 3 through to the end.*

**2. MINUTES**

(i) The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015 were received and considered. The following amendments were made:

Page 6 In the fourth sentence ‘their’ was amended to read ‘there’.

Page 8 The mis-spelling in the title of item 7 was amended to read ‘future’. The spelling of Mrs Lally’s name was corrected at the bottom of this page.

The Mayor proposed that the minutes be approved as a correct record. Cllr P Jay seconded this motion and the minutes were then approved and signed by the Mayor as being a correct record.

(ii) The minutes of the Town Meeting that was held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015 were received and considered and approved by the meeting. The Mayor then signed these minutes as being a correct record.

There were no matters arising from either set of minutes. Agenda Item 9 was then brought forward.

**3. POLICE OVERVIEW**

Representatives of Thames Valley Police updated the audience about the police station and reported that although the Police Station was likely to close by the end of the year a police

presence would remain in the town working out of another office. The Thames Valley Police report presented to the meeting is included in the Annex to these minutes. The Mayor thanked the police for the report and they then left the meeting.

#### **4. PRESENTATION ABOUT THE WATER MEADOWS**

Sharon Williams, the Director of the Wychwood Project introduced Hilary Phillips from 'Wild Oxfordshire' and Vaughan Lewis who made a presentation about the 'Evenlode Project' to the meeting. This project is about restoration and monitoring work on the River Glyme, between Stratford Bridge and Woodstock Water Meadows. They spoke about the additional opportunities that had arisen to correct the new channel and improve fish passage along the River Glyme at Woodstock Water Meadows. Mr. Lewis explained how the new sluice would work and what would happen if the project went ahead. He also said that the project would cost between £50k and £150k and so would require sponsorship. A resident asked how they will assess the amount of flooding and whether this had been taken into account. Mr. Lewis confirmed that the work would require a flood consent from the Environment Agency and that they would assess the risk. He noted that the net result would be the same and that it would only be the distribution of the flood water that would change. Mr. Lewis confirmed that this was just an idea at present and that it would be up to the community to decide whether they wanted to go ahead. It was noted that consultation would be required before any decision was reached. The Mayor thanked the presenters and they then left the meeting.

#### **5. WORK BEING UNDERTAKEN BY 'WAKE UP TO WOODSTOCK' FOR THE TOWN**

Chris Baylis reported that he was relocating 'The Real Wood Company' nearer to Chipping Norton and will therefore be standing down from 'Wake Up To Woodstock'. He still intends to be involved in the Town and asked residents to support 'Art in Woodstock' so that it can be reinstated. The Mayor thanked Mr Baylis for the work that he has done for the Town.

Mr Baylis then introduced Mr Iain Nicholson who made a presentation to residents about the activities that he has been undertaking with 'Wake Up to Woodstock' in order to try and attract more visitors and shoppers into the town. Mr Nicholson is currently helping Banbury, Wantage and Wallingford with good results. He asked the audience what they wanted if they could have any kind of new independent business and residents suggested a 'Butchers' shop as the number one priority followed by a 'Green Grocers'. Discussion followed during which Mr Nicholson explained some of the initiatives that he has been involved in to date including 'Pop-Up Shops'. He said that it was important to get the right type and number of shops in order that the mix appealed to shoppers who would then come into the town. Signage and promotion also played important roles to a town's success but the most important thing was for all elements of the town to work together to find solutions. The discussions should include public transport considerations and any new developments. After the presentation the Mayor thanked Mr Nicholson and he then left the meeting.

Agenda Item 11 from the original proposed agenda was brought forward and taken next.

#### **6. "WOODSTOCK EAST" DEVELOPMENT**

The Mayor lives at Hedge End and so has registered a disclosable pecuniary interest in this matter. She therefore left the meeting whilst this matter was discussed. The meeting agreed that Cllr Julian Cooper should assume the Chair and he did so. Cllr Cooper introduced the latest 'Woodstock East' planning application, noting that as far as he was aware the World Heritage site at Blenheim was the only one without a buffer zone. Cllr Cooper introduced Mr Huw Mellor the Town Council's planning advisor from Kemp and Kemp. Mr Mellor referred

residents to the consultation leaflet that had recently been circulated that summarised the latest application. He then explained the background to the current situation in order that all residents present were aware of the historical and current positions.

This is not the first time that a large development has been proposed for this site. In 2006 proposals for 180 houses were refused as the Planning Inspector considered the number to be excessive and that it would result in a significant incursion into the countryside. In 2014 the site was put back on the table and Woodstock Town Council and residents objected.

Unfortunately the WODC Local Plan has currently been suspended by the Planning Inspector because WODC had not identified sufficient houses within the district. This means that WODC is currently exposed and open to speculative planning applications. The planning context is also different to that of 2006. There is nothing under the current planning policy that gives a limit to the number of houses that can be built in any one place. It is not based on proportionality but how it counts towards the overall targets for the district.

Because the Planning Inspector suspended the proposed Local Plan due to a lack of housing the housing policies within the 2011 Local Plan have been set aside and will not carry any weight until the housing numbers have risen. Other policies however will still have weight e.g. environmental policies. Mr Mellor reminded the meeting that Woodstock is special as it has a World Heritage site and so this site must be protected. In 2005/2006 this specialness was identified as was the effect that development could have on the setting of the World Heritage Site. This specialness has not changed, regardless of the housing policies etc.

Mr Mellor then spoke about the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). WODC were asked by Woodstock Town Council to remove Woodstock East from the SHLAA but had declined the request. This site is therefore likely to be in the SHLAA in 2016 in anticipation.

Cllr B Yoxall proposed the following motion to the meeting:

*“The Woodstock Annual Town Meeting opposes the proposed development of 280 houses on a green-field site south of Woodstock because:*

- 1. There is insufficient provision for affordable housing, which should mean no more than what an average earner (about £500 per week) can afford;*
- 2. The overall amount of housing proposed would increase the population of Woodstock by approximately one third, exceeding the infrastructure capacity of the town which is already overstretched by the housing development at Marlborough Place (Phase 2);*
- 3. The proposals make no provision whatsoever for essential infrastructure improvements such as a new Primary School and alleviation of the acute traffic congestion in Shipton Road;*
- 4. The proposed site is a green field and its development would also jeopardise the setting of the World Heritage Site.”*

The motion was seconded by Cllr P Jay. Discussion followed.

Mr Peter Lee said that in view of the advice from Mr Mellor, which echoed similar advice, it seemed that the most important and significant argument is about the World Heritage Site. He therefore proposed an amendment reversing the order so that the current 4 comes first then 3, 2 and 1. Mr Chris Baylis seconded the amendment and it was accepted by the proposer and seconder of the original motion.

Further discussion followed and the motion was then put. A significant majority (approximately 68) of the residents present at the Annual Town Meeting, and entitled to do so, voted for the amended motion and it was

**RESOLVED** that the Woodstock Annual Town Meeting opposes the proposed development of 280 houses on a green-field site south of Woodstock because:

1. The proposed site is a green field and its development would also jeopardise the setting of the World Heritage Site;
2. The proposals make no provision whatsoever for essential infrastructure improvements such as a new Primary School and alleviation of the acute traffic congestion in Shipton Road;
3. The overall amount of housing proposed would increase the population of Woodstock by approximately one third, exceeding the infrastructure capacity of the town which is already overstretched by the housing development at Marlborough Place ( Phase 2); and
4. There is insufficient provision for affordable housing, which should mean no more than what an average earner (about £500 per week) can afford.

No-one voted against the motion but County Cllr Ian Hudspeth abstained.

Cllr Sharone Parnes proposed that Woodstock Town Council call for a second Town Poll, possibly on 5<sup>th</sup> May, and this proposal was seconded by Mr Philip Redpath. Discussion followed about the cost of doing so. Mr Redpath reminded the meeting that a group of residents can call for a Town Poll. During the meeting residents signed a request for this additional poll and passed this to the Town Clerk for forwarding to WODC. The poll request read

“We the undersigned 10 electors of Woodstock, hereby respectfully call for a Town Poll (preferably when polling stations will in any event be open May 5<sup>th</sup> 2016) on the following question arising at the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016 Annual Town Meeting in Woodstock:

*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)?”*

The Mayor then re-joined the meeting and took over the Chair.

## **7. MAYOR’S REPORT**

The Mayor, Cllr E Poskitt, gave a verbal report on the activities of Woodstock Town Council for the municipal year 2015/16. She highlighted the major achievements of each Standing Committee and thanked Councillors for the time they give to their council work and the Staff of Woodstock Town Council for their commitment to their work and the town. The Mayor

reminded residents that there would be the routine four-yearly Town Council elections in May 2016. She encouraged residents to consider standing and representing their Town and referred them to the Town Clerk for further information if interested. The full report is included in the Annex to these minutes.

## **8. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS WHO LEAD SPECIFIC AREAS OF COUNCIL WORK**

### **a) Report from the Chair of the Environment Committee – Cllr Peter Jay**

The report from Cllr Peter Jay is included in the Annex to these minutes. It was noted that the cows are now back on the water meadows and that the new Council will have to decide about the re-routing of the river.

### **b) Property – Cllr Mary Robertson**

The report from Cllr Mary Robertson is included in the Annex to these minutes.

### **c) Finance – Cllr Peter Jay**

Cllr Peter Jay presented an overview of the Town Council's financial position. His report is attached in the annex to these minutes.

The Mayor thanked all of the presenters

## **9. REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

### **a) County Cllr Ian Hudspeth**

County Cllr Hudspeth presented his report. This is contained in the Annex to these minutes.

### **b) District Cllr Julian Cooper**

District Cllr Cooper presented the report from the West Oxfordshire District Cllrs.

## **10. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING GROUP**

Councillor B Yoxall presented the paper about the work of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. This is contained in the annex to this report. Cllr B Yoxall asked residents to provide him with feedback about the proposed 'Vision Statement' which was downloadable from the Woodstock Town Council web site.

## **11. NEW ROAD PLAY AREA**

A resident had previously notified the Mayor that they wished to address the meeting about the New Road Play Area but did not do so on the night and so the meeting moved to the next Agenda Item.

## **12. OPEN FORUM**

Members of the electorate were invited to present questions and/or subjects for discussion and/or debate. Dr R McGurrin said that the Woodstock Action Group (WAG) supported the motion presented by Cllr B Yoxall and that 280 houses would result in 550 extra cars many of which would be accessing the A44 and Shipton Road.

The meeting rose at 10.15pm.

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

## ANNEX

The minutes that were approved are available from the Town Hall. Other reports presented at the meeting are attached to this report:

At the meeting the following information was also available:

- The Spring 2016 report from the District Councillors for Bladon, Blenheim and Woodstock
- “A Vision For Woodstock” (draft summary) and questionnaire asking for views from residents on this document
- A report from the Secretary of Glyme Valley Probus Club for Ladies
- A report from Woodstock Youth Club
- Information about Woodstock in Bloom 2016 and minutes from the Bloom Annual Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016
- Details on bursaries from Woodstock Exhibition Foundation and how to apply in 2016
- Information about Woodstock’s Good Neighbours Scheme

Leaflets were available about:

Woodstock Wall Plaques  
Woodstock Literature Society  
Recycling collections in West Oxfordshire  
Woodstock and District U3A (University of the Third Age)  
OWL Reserve (The Old Woodstock Line)  
The Wychwood Project  
British Legion

## **Thames Valley Police Report for Woodstock Town Council Annual General Meeting**

- 1) A survey was carried out in the summer last year involving residents of New Road. 119 surveys were delivered but only 28 were returned, which indicates that residents are not experiencing many issues. Five returned surveys stated anti-social behaviour was a problem in the park and surrounding areas, of which 3 would like to see police on the beat more often. This is something which I am striving to achieve in my role as it is a policy that I strongly believe in. The other police related issue raised was speeding vehicles – again the neighbourhood team are pro-active in carrying out speeding surveys and enforcement when commitments allow.
- 2) The Woodstock Pub Watch scheme has recently been re-launched. Although there is very little crime and disorder around our licensed premises, we wish to keep it this way and the response I have received from landlords and licensees is that it would be a very positive scheme to have in place. It will give licensees and police the opportunity to share information and intelligence. There is a meeting next week in order to elect a chairman of the scheme and we will go forward from there. The scheme is run by the licensees with the police as an active part of it. Pub Watch enables licensed premises to be able to collectively ban trouble makers from their premises for a variety of offences and disruptive behaviour. The bans can range from 6 months to 5 years and this scheme has proved very successful in other towns.
- 3) The lady that drove her car into the play area at the Bowls & Tennis club was given words of advice by our criminal justice department.
- 4) Crime figures in Woodstock indicate that crime has fallen during the last 12 months. There were 18 instances of criminal damage (to vehicles, property and buildings). This includes the graffiti that appeared at the Budds Close play area in June last year whereby three persons were identified as being responsible and have been dealt with by way of a restorative disposal. There were 14 assaults, although 3 or those relate to the same incident and 23 thefts of which 13 were shopliftings. Recorded drug use and supply is very low in the town (just 3 have been reported) but warrants have been executed in Woodstock and the surrounding areas to enable the police to keep on top of this.
- 5) The future of Woodstock Police Station now looks more certain. At this time it looks like the police station will close around the end of this year. However we understand that the Neighbourhood Team will remain intact and it will be a case of the team being relocated to a different building in the town.

PC 5307 Rob Webb  
Woodstock Neighbourhood Team  
7<sup>th</sup> March 2016

**Crimes and crime related incidents in the Woodstock Town area**  
(Does not include offences committed on Blenheim Palace grounds)

**During the dates 03/03/14 – 07/03/15**

Crime related incidents	35
Assaults	20
Burglaries in a dwelling	2
Burglaries other than in a dwelling	11
Criminal damage	10
Drug offences	0
Harassment	5
Theft (including shopliftings)	29
Theft of motor vehicles	3
Road Traffic Offences	23

**During the dates 08/03/15 – 07/03/16**

Crime related incidents	49
Assaults	14
Burglaries in a dwelling	3
Burglaries other than in a dwelling	3
Criminal damage	18
Drug offences	3
Harassment	4
Theft (including shopliftings)	23
Theft of motor vehicles	1
Road Traffic Offences	12

**Notes:**

Crime related incidents include incidents such as Domestic Incidents where no criminal offences occurred but details of those spoken to are recorded in case of future problems. Also Adult and Child Protection Incidents fall under this category whereby we are informed of vulnerable persons in our community and their details are shared with partner agencies.

Road Traffic Offences are mostly concerned with motorists caught speeding by the Gatso camera on Manor Road.



# **REPORT FROM THE MAYOR ON BEHALF OF WOODSTOCK TOWN COUNCIL TO WOODSTOCK ANNUAL TOWN MEETING March 15<sup>th</sup> 2016**

The year has been a busy one with much of the Council's time being spent considering the major planning application that was Woodstock East. Vigorous activity by Councillors and by residents, enormous help from our planning consultants Kemp & Kemp, most notably Huw Mellor who is here tonight, and of course wise decisions by West Oxfordshire and Cherwell Councillors, resulted in this application being rejected very, very, firmly. That there is now a preliminary proposition for around 280 homes on the West Oxfordshire section of the Woodstock East area promises another busy year ahead for your Town Council.

## **Civic Events**

Looking at events over the year, one of my first roles as Mayor was to meet David Ashford, a descendant of Thomas Ashford, Station Master at Woodstock Railway Station early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ashford Close is named after Station Master Ashford who welcomed Kaiser Wilhelm II when the Kaiser came on the train to Blenheim. David Ashford showed us a gold pin with the Kaiser's monogram which the Station Master was given in recognition of the care given to the Kaiser's party.

Other civic events worth recording are Democracy Day in June (celebrating the Magna Carta) when we had some of the town's ancient charters and other archival materials on display in the Assembly Rooms; the annual Mock Mayor celebrations which took place on possibly the hottest day of the year – not the best weather for the Town Mayor in full ceremonial attire; and the Civic Service in August when we were joined by John Harwood, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, and several Oxfordshire Mayors and Council Chairmen. On Remembrance Sunday we were joined by soldiers from 10 Signals Regiment, stationed at Bicester, who not only joined the parade but provided help in moving church pews and organising the streets. Members of the regiment will join us for future Remembrance Services. The Mayor's Carols event in December was thankfully a dry night and was enhanced by six children from the Primary School reading Christmas themed poems they had written.

Her Majesty's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday. On the subject of celebrations but looking forward, the weekend of 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> June this year will celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Her Majesty the Queen. We hope to mount an exhibition in the Mayor's Parlour (similar to the display there to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee in 2012) of objects relating to the 90 years of the Queen and the past 90 years of Woodstock. If any of you have relevant objects, photographs or printed material which you would be prepared to loan, please let the Town Clerk's Office know. We are toying with the idea of a cake competition with the products consumed at a communal tea party outside the Town Hall and in the Museum garden. We need volunteers to help us if any of these events is to take place. Nicholas Tonks has offered to find

individuals in the town who represent birthdays each year from 1926 to 2016 and to create a photograph showing the spread of Woodstock's residents. It would be good to have some object representing the year of each individual's birth as part of the Mayor's Parlour exhibition. Do think what you could do to make Her Majesty's birthday a community celebration.

Farmers' markets The institution of a second Farmers' Market each month seems to have been welcomed by Woodstock residents. When I spoke with stall holders on Small Business Saturday in November, all were very positive about Woodstock and its residents. Your Council will review continuation of the second markets later this year. We are unable to offer the Mayor's Parlour in the Town Hall as a venue for weddings or other celebrations when the Farmers' Markets are in progress and we do need to consider whether this is a significant issue (WTC has no direct financial gain from the presence of the Markets). The present Council appears keen to continue the twice a month arrangement.

Post Office reorganisation. It was an enjoyable occasion when the Post Office celebrated its upgrading with His Grace the 12th Duke of Marlborough performing a formal opening by 'cutting' (with large cardboard scissors) a stretch of Post Office red tape. The Council is only too aware of the loss of shops and tea rooms in the town and the need, if at all possible, to replace shops that fall vacant with commercial outlets that residents and visitors will use. Woodstock is by no means the only community with problems retaining the commercial heart of the community.

**Environment** (see Cllr Peter Jay's report).

The environment is something which takes a lot of Council time. We are very grateful to Dr Robert Edwards and all the Bloom team for the putting the icing on the cake of our beautiful environment. Dr Edwards recently led the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Litter Pick which this year was part of a nationwide effort to 'Clean for the Queen'. We also thank the WODC staff who act as environmental wardens walking Council territories regularly and reporting – and resolving – problems. On the environmental care scene we thank Bob Pomfret who is the Council's volunteer warden for the OWL nature reserve. I shall not discuss the water-meadows here as they are reported elsewhere and there will be a presentation at the Town Meeting about possible futures for this area.

Our three playgrounds are an important part of our environment and continue to be used extensively by residents. The New Road playground recently suffered considerable damage when a car went through a fence at the Bowls and Tennis Club car park and demolished equipment. Thankfully there was no-one in that part of the playground at the time. Other issues at the playground concern the MUGA, about which some residents complain. This is a matter for which the Council has been busy exploring possible remedies and trying to resolve the issue with the concerned residents for some months. So far no agreement has been reached. (Cllr Peter Jay's report as Council Member for the Environment gives a bit more detail).

It is disappointing that we seem unable to resolve the problem of large waste bins from two of the town's public houses being stored outside the territories of these public houses and in one case taking up vital car parking spaces. As a tourist town we need to be mindful of the street litter which spoils the appearance of the town – and by street litter I do not mean just crisp packets and similar small items discarded on the pavements. At least the substantial bollards on the corners of the paving outside the Town Hall are, from evidence so far, performing their role as protection for the seats on the paved area from careless drivers – something which did cause concern previously.

### **Citizens' comings and goings.**

Sadly there are always departures. Chris Baylis and Real Wood Company are withdrawing to their Chipping Norton base. Chris has done so much in the town including starting Wake up to Woodstock, taking an active part in Woodstock Live and being around whenever there is music/staging/loudspeakers. He has worked with all age groups and throughout the town. He will be missed although Chris states he is not going to abandon this town altogether. We shall see him when there is something interesting happening. Chris was awarded the Chairman's award by the Chairman of West Oxfordshire District Council in 2015 for his exceptional volunteer support to our community. Departures of those whom we shall *not* see again sadly include John Brucker, a revered but warmly remembered past head teacher of Woodstock Primary School. Professor Zeeman, a very eminent mathematician and a longstanding resident of Woodstock, also died recently and Woodstock bell ringers remembered him in a special bell ringing session at lunchtime on March 13<sup>th</sup>. (Christopher had been a regular bell ringer at St Mary Magdalene's Church in earlier years).

Honours bestowed on citizens (as described in the most recent Town Council newsletter) include: a High Sheriff's award for Jean Hollis for her longstanding work as Woodstock's Poppy Appeal Organiser and Chair; Chevalier, Légion d'Honneur, to Harry Pearson for his part in the Liberation of France in 1944. There are, I am sure, others who have received honours whom I have missed out here - congratulations to them all too. Similarly there will be town events important to you which I have left out. This is surely evidence of the vibrancy of our community and of how rich our town is in activities for residents and visitors. Long may this continue.

### **Appreciations.**

It has been an honour and a pleasure to serve as your Mayor over the past year. For all that has occurred and has been achieved I thank my fellow Town Councillors most warmly. They have all been active in their varied ways supporting their Mayor and helping and promoting the town. I also thank most warmly the Town Clerk whose work and help and guidance have been invaluable to me as well as to the town as a whole and all the Town Hall staff who look after daily running of the town and the Council's properties as well as dealing with your concerns. I thanked Robert Edwards and the Bloom group earlier but many of you do your best to keep the town looking beautiful with

hanging baskets, pots and front gardens ablaze with flowers. Thank you for this too. I cannot name all the others who deserve recognition but, if you are not mentioned, we as a Council are grateful to all residents and those working in the town for your help and your roles in not just providing support but in pointing out what we may seem to be overlooking, what needs attention or what crises are developing.

A new Town Council will be elected on May 5<sup>th</sup> (if you are interested in standing there is still plenty of time to put in a nomination form. Please discuss the matter with the Town Clerk). I am sure all members elected to the Council in May will serve you to the best of their abilities just as the present Council has done.

**Elizabeth Poskitt, Town Mayor.**

# **WOODSTOCK TOWN COUNCIL**

## ***Town Meeting Report***

### **THE ENVIRONMENT**

15 March, 2016

#### **PETER JAY**

The council's environment committee, which I chair, looks after things like, our cemeteries – we look forward to seeing none of you there this year – our play areas, where all are welcome, especially our children, our OWL nature reserve along the line of the old railway and a few other odds and ends.

It has been a quiet year; and there is not a lot to report. I am therefore going to ask Councillor Emma Jay to tell you about the water meadows and the progress we are making towards a comprehensive strategy for their maintenance as a safe, pleasant and environmentally sustainable amenity for our people, Emma...

#### **Other matters if required**

I want to pay tribute to our friendly neighbourhood Police Community Support Officer, who did an outstanding job last summer in dealing with an outbreak of graffiti in our Budds Close playground. He handled the problem effectively and sensitively so that the nuisance stopped and the council was not out of pocket.

Some residents objected to the Multi-Use Games Area in the New Road play area and threatened the council, with legal action. The council took legal advice, which has so far cost us about [£8823]. It has acted on the advice, looking for ways of mitigating the problem while also being mindful of its duties to all members of our community including its duty use the taxpayers' money prudently. So far no alternative home for the MUGA has been found; but talks continue. Meanwhile because of the threatened legal, action there is little more that I can say.

I am glad to report that in the Old Woodstock Play area the worn-out goal-mouths have been repaired; and we are also repairing the damage done to the New Road Play Area by a car driven through its fence and across its equipment. The police investigated the incident.

Finally I wish to thank West Oxfordshire council staff for their continued help and vigilance in keeping our town safe, pleasant and tidy. And I thank our own staff, notably the Town Clerk, for ceaseless vigilance and hard work.

**ENDS**

## **Woodstock Town Meeting March 15<sup>th</sup> 2016**

### **Town Council Property report.**

Woodstock Town Council owns a number of properties in the town which provide office accommodation for staff, facilities available to the public and rental income to the Council.

#### **The Property Portfolio**

The Council's property portfolio consists of the following:-

1. The Town Hall. This is a Grade 2 (starred) listed building  
It includes a commercial tenancy in one small part of the building, 24 Market Square
2. Nos. 2, 4, 6 & 8 Park Street Woodstock form a terrace of old cottages with listed building status.
  - Part of no. 2 is currently leased to the Post Office as a shop post office. Part of no.2 is leased as a domestic dwelling
  - No 4 is currently leased to a private tenant as a domestic dwelling
  - No 6 is currently leased to Love Wine merchants
  - No 8 is currently leased to a private tenant as a domestic dwelling
  - Nos 2 and 4 Market Street Woodstock are two of a terrace of properties with listed building status.
  - No 2 is currently leased and operates as a specialist paint and hardware business. There is a residential property above the shop which is part of the lease.
  - No 4 is currently leased and operates as an interior design shop.
  - .There is a residential property above the shop which is leased to the same tenant
- Woodstock Community Centre New Road Woodstock. This is a public community building. However, part of the premises are let for commercial purposes as follows:-
  - The first floor rooms are occupied by Woodstock Solicitors.
  - 3 of the Ground Floor Rooms are let to businesses
  - Otherwise, the Community Centre is used for private, community and commercial daily lettings on a simple bookable basis.

#### **Income and Expenditure:**

Total income from our properties is approximately £145,000 per year and costs are approximately £60,000. Repairs, Insurance, maintenance and management fees comprise the bulk of the costs.

Large items of expenditure this year have included external redecoration of the town hall and the community centre, re-roofing the stocks and updating our IT system.

It is the income from our properties that enables us to maintain such facilities as the water meadows, the OWL and our playgrounds.

## **Woodstock Town Meeting March 15th 2016**

### **Options for use of capital receipt following the sale of a drawing by Capability Brown.**

#### **The Drawing**

WTC has sold a drawing previously stored at the Town Hall. The drawing is believed to be by Capability Brown and was in poor condition. The Council were unable to store it or display it appropriately and following much careful debate decided to sell it.

It has been purchased by Blenheim Palace, restored and is currently on display in their Capability Brown exhibition.

Government regulations mean the money received - £14,640 – must be spent on “capital projects”. This is defined as “Property, plant and equipment (which) are tangible assets (i.e. assets with physical substance) that are held for use in the production or supply of goods and services, for rental to others, or for administrative purposes, and expected to be used during more than one period.”

#### **Options**

Woodstock Town Council agreed at its February meeting to ask for ideas and suggestions at the Town Meeting.

Town Councillors have made the following suggestions:

**1) Improving the ambience of the Mayor’s Parlour.**

Specific items that need replacing are the curtains and cushions for the chairs. At present these are very shabby and the parlour is used as a venue for weddings which generate income for the Council.

Estimates received in 2011 were for approximately **£5,000** for curtains and **£2,000** for cushions.

**2) New paths at the water meadows.** This would entail making a better circular path there, useable by buggies and wheelchairs, which means swapping stiles for kissing gates and making better bridges with ramps, estimated cost about **£5000**

**3) Handrails at Green Lane cemetery.** The access to the cemetery is via a steep path which can be difficult for people with mobility problems. The environment committee in June 2015 recommended the installation of handrails and made a bid to the 2016/17 budget without success. The approximate cost would be **£4,500**.

**4) Playground fencing.**

- 1) When New Road playground was refurbished there were insufficient funds available to replace the fencing alongside the car park. The fencing is wooden and in poor condition and requires frequent minor repair. In addition there was a recent accident at the playground which demolished part of the fence. This is subject to an insurance claim. This presents an opportunity to replace the whole fence with a more substantial metal and wire one. The total estimated cost would be approximately £2,500. Set against this the insurance claim is expected to net approximately £1,000. Total cost to the Council would then be **£1,500**.

We could also consider raising the height of this fence to prevent balls going into the car park, cost unknown at time of writing.



- II) A Complaint concerning balls going into the garden of a house on Cadogan Park which borders the playground has led to consideration of high ball fencing being installed on that boundary. Subject to the outcome of that complaint council members may consider it prudent to set aside the cost of this which would be approximately **£5,000**.

## **5) Disabled Toilet**

The Town Hall has no toilet facility for people with disabilities. The estimated cost has always been prohibitive at **£35,000**. WTC is unlikely to ever have the whole amount unless money is periodically set aside. This capital receipt could be used to begin a fund for this facility

### **Decision**

The views of residents are sought and will be considered at the next meeting of the Town Council where a decision will be made.

# Woodstock Town Council

## *Town Meeting – Finance Report*

15 March 2016

Peter Jay

A quick canter through the council's finances:-

Please look at the single sheet on your seats headed, 'Budget 2016/2017 – Income and Expenditure Summary'.

The top line of the first block on the sheet, called 'Council tax', shows the money we take annually from you to support the council's activities. That was £90,000 in the financial year now ending, £3,000 up on the year before.

We have decided to levy a further increase for the year about to begin to £95,000. This total costs the average band D household £1.24 a week. This is what I called last year 'prudence without austerity'!

We bring in another £55 thousand a year from letting out the town hall and the community centre for group and private activities, like weddings, meetings and exercise classes. To that we add the invaluable nearly £90 thousand a year we earn in rents etc. from the council's property portfolio of houses and shops in the central area. And we bring in *another* £11 thousand from our cemeteries and from the rent paid to us by the Bowls And Tennis Club.

Thus, our total income next year will be about £251 thousand, £10 thousand more than we budgeted for the year now ending.

The middle block on the sheet shows how we spend that money. The first three lines show us spending about £75 thousand operating and maintaining the properties I mentioned earlier.

We will spend another £9 thousand looking after our cemeteries. To this can be added £11 thousand of capital spending, mainly repaying the money we borrowed a few years back to renovate council properties,

Looked at this way our spending next year on properties will be just over £95 thousand; and those properties will bring in £146 thousand. This is thus the beginnings of a positive return on our investment over recent years in repairs and improvements. Occasionally the council discusses whether we would do better to sell the properties; but so far that option has not won majority support.

We spend another £39 thousand on playgrounds, the water-meadows and the town centre. To that we have to add £107 thousand spent on administration, of which £60 thousand is for our wonderful council staff who keep the whole place running despite the burdens and obstacles placed upon them and in their way by councillors.

The other half includes legal fees, professional advice on planning and personnel matters and a long list of miscellanies. We also give away £3 thousand in grants to deserving local causes.

The third block on your sheet shows how it all adds up and affects our bank balance. Next year we will run a surplus of £6 ½ thousand. This will be added to the £50 thousand cash brought in at the beginning of the year in the form of the council's accumulated reserves.

We thus expect to carry out at the end of the year about £56 thousand, which is just over our target reserve of £50 thousand. We expect to keep within £6 thousand of that target through to 2022 as shown in our five-year plan, which can be examined in the full version of the budget plan available at the Town Hall.

I cannot imagine that there are any questions; but if there are, I shall be happy to duck them as best I can.

**PJ**

## County Councillor I Hudspeth Report to the ATM 2016

Each year I have said that I hoped that this budget would be easier than last year's. Sadly that never seems to be the case.

The county council faces a paradox. The county we serve is thriving. Unemployment is low, new jobs are being created.

At the same time, the county council has to make cuts to services that are having a real impact on people and communities. The savings we have to make are unprecedented in local government. We will need to continue to make savings for at least another four years.

The reality of this budget is that we need to deliver more for less.

For the county council that means two contrasting priorities

Firstly, protecting the most vulnerable people in Oxfordshire. That means providing services for adults who cannot look after themselves, and protecting children from abuse and neglect

Secondly, our other very different role is to manage growth effectively as the strategic planning and transport authority.

We're now in our sixth year of cuts – in the process of saving £292m from 2010 to 2018.

We now know that we'll have to save another £69m over four years on top of that.

Difficult decisions have to be taken to balance the books and all councillors are under a legal obligation to set a balanced budget with no borrowing to support revenue expenditure. This is all part of the process to reduce the national deficit that still be around £70 billion this year. We simply cannot pass on debt to our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

I welcome the fact that the other District Leaders and MPs acknowledge that Local Government within Oxfordshire needs reorganising to provide the most efficient service for the residents. I want to have an open and transparent debate about all options with all the evidence produced so we can make an informed decision.

It's clear that residents only want to deal with 1 council and we have to determine what the best form is for the residents not what's the best form for the current structure.

To me it seems logical to have 1 call centre for the whole of Oxfordshire that deals with all enquires rather than different areas having different call centre. Likewise all back office functions should be in 1 location. If that is the case then why is there any need to have more than 1 front office? Do we need 4 CEO's, 4 Finance directors, 4 HR directors etc. in fact do we need 4 different methods of collecting the waste when it all goes to the same location for disposal. Do we need 282 councillors? There is the opportunity to save money that then could be used to protect front line services.

I believe a new authority, as that's what it would be with all councils being abolished, covering the strategic functions for the county could then devolve down to town councils real local power.

It's not about cost shunting but allowing localities to make truly local decisions.

At a more local level I often hear people complaining about being governed by Witney. If the Districts proposal happens then the new council may decide to have its headquarters in Cirencester.

I want a full and open debate with all the facts available so that an informed decision is taken rather than a deal that is conjured up behind closed doors.

Development is always difficult as there is demand in the area and certainly residents ask me where are their children to live if we don't provide more homes but the question is where?

The District and City councils commissioned the Strategic Housing Market Assessment in November 2013 to determine the number of homes required in the county, it was their work. It does mean that there will be more homes what we have to ensure is that the infrastructure is provided.

For instance the primary school was oversubscribed last year, so to was Bladon. If we are to have more homes we need more schools so we need to have development that provides the infrastructure for the new homes to be a sustainable part of Woodstock.

Whilst it may seem that its doom and gloom I would like to remind you of some of the functions of the County Council:

- Assess the care needs of over 10,000 vulnerable people and rising
- Fund long-term social care for 6,500 adults
- Purchases a million hours a year of support, as well as assisting thousands of informal carers looking after friends and family
- Respond to referrals of almost 4,000 children, including over 1,500 protection issues
- Support 600 looked after children, and another 600 on child protection plans
- Register 20,000 births, deaths, and marriages every year
- Maintain almost 3,000 miles of road and repair over 30,000 potholes
- Dispose of over 300,000 tonnes of waste
- Respond to over 5,000 Fire and Rescue incidents
- rolling out superfast broadband to over 95% of premises

## ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MARCH 2016 – Chairman of Neighbourhood Plan Working Group’s Report

For much of the past year the Group has been preoccupied with fighting a robust campaign to resist the Pye/Blenheim consortium’s proposals for Woodstock East. Complete vindication came in the form of near unanimous rejection of the proposals by both West Oxon and Cherwell District Council Planning Committees.

The Group would like to pay tribute to all those who lent their weight to the campaign. It was truly a remarkable community effort. At the time of writing we do not know if the consortium plan to appeal against the planning decisions made by the District Councils last Autumn in respect of the 1200 homes proposals. We do know, however, that we will have to sustain our efforts to prevent further incursion into our precious greenfield assets with the latest revised proposals from the consortium. Although these latest proposals are less ambitious in terms of housing development they will still put additional strain on our already overstretched infrastructure capacity.

The Group is, however, looking to shape the future to meet the needs of the Woodstock community for several decades ahead. As a first step it has produced a statement, now adopted by the Town Council, aiming to present a vision for Woodstock up to 2050. Building on this statement, after it has been refined by input from residents and town organisations, the Group will consult the community in formulating plans for the Woodstock of the future – not only housing but also the community and social infrastructure to ensure that all the town’s residents can live life to the full without having to travel much further afield. In all this our relationship with Blenheim is a key issue and one to be nurtured without compromising essential community interests.

Brian Yoxall

(Chairman of the Town Council’s Neighbourhood Plan Working Group)

March 2016