

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 26 APRIL 2022 AT 7.30PM
AT WOODSTOCK COMMUNITY CENTRE**

PRESENT:

The Town Mayor Cllr M Parkinson, Deputy Mayor Cllr J Lamb. OCC Cllr A Graham, WODC Cllrs J Cooper and E Poskitt. Dominic Hare CEO Blenheim Palace. J Eustace, Clerk and approximately 50 Members of the public.

WELCOME:

The Town Mayor, Cllr M Parkinson welcomed people to the Town meeting. He said there would be several short reports followed by discussion.

MINUTES:

It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 19th March 2019 and the Town Meeting held on Tuesday 7th May 2019. The Mayor, signed the minutes as a true record of those meetings.

TOWN COUNCIL REPORT:

The Mayor reported that work on the Cemetery extension had been completed.

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT:

OCC Cllr Graham reported that the HGV ban at Burford had been lifted. Meetings had been held resulting in highways objection to the Banbury Road and Hill Rise development. Pedestrians and highway safety measure re proposed for the A44 with a new bridge and barriers at the Black Prince being designed for autumn 2022. He reported that he had supported the reduction of the speed limit from 30 mph to 20 mph and the creation of a car parking plan. A partnership had been set up to further the new Health Centre and he had promoted the need for the library to find a permanent home.

Cllr Graham said that he had supported the Village Travel Network initiative and other community safety organisations and the Oxfordshire Museum. He had also been involved in organising a Standing in Solidarity meeting for Ukrainian refugees.

Cllr Graham reported on the parking plans for the town saying that there had been comprehensive consultations with over 260 responses which were now being considered. A report would go to the Town Council on 10 May and to OCC on 26 May.

In response to questions he confirmed his commitment to maintain a sustainable museum within the town.

There was discussion about the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit on the A44 and Cllr Graham said that he would press for preparatory work to start as soon as possible to ensure that the speed reduction could be implemented early in the next financial year. It was noted TVP did not have the resources to police speed limits and that the hope is that lower limits will change drivers behaviour. Vehicle Activated Signs could be considered as part of the scheme. Residents reported concerns about the increase in HGV traffic and the poor state of the roads.

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

Cllrs Cooper and Poskitt presented their report. The past two years had been difficult as caring for vulnerable in the community during the pandemic, administering government grants and helping retail recovery have diverted staff from their usual roles. The two big Woodstock developments (behind Hill Rise and along the Banbury Road) had been with the Planning Officers for over a year but had not yet come

before Councillors for debate. WTC sent strong views about the plans as portrayed so far. When the plans do come up for debate by Councillors, District Councillors will make the strongest representations possible on behalf of the town. Concerns relate to the lack of any significant change to the already inadequate infrastructure supporting the town.

Both District Councillors had promoted the Hensington Road Car Park/Old Police Station/Library/Scout & Guide Hut area to the stakeholders (OCC, WODC, Blenheim and the local medical team) as the only site in central Woodstock where, if the various stake holders could work together, development could create some of the structures so strongly desired by residents, most notably a new surgery and a rebuilt Library. Things move slowly but there now seems some progress towards seeking design proposals for the site.

WODC gives serious consideration to the Climate Emergency in their decisions and actions although a recent merger of the Climate Change Working Group with the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee, without discussion within Council, concerns Councillors that combatting Climate Change will have lowered Council priority.

Both District Councillors had been supporting the 20 mph speed limit through Bladon and Woodstock. It is good that OCC is now promoting 'Twenty's Plenty'. WTC has applied to OCC for 20 mph limits throughout residential Woodstock.

BELINHEIM PALACE ESTATE REPORT

Dominic Hare, CEO gave a report on developments on the estate.

Visitor levels were recovering from the pandemic and there had been a number of successful events. There was to be a wet dredge of the lake in July. 230,000 trees had been planted with another 40,000 to go. A new adventure playground would be built and a number of eco lodges were planned for the old caravan site. Plans were underway to link various villages via the park.

Properties at Park View were selling well with the new Affordable Housing model working well. The estate continued to support provision for the under fives and was working with partners to see whether it was feasible to deliver the Old Police station site as a surgery. Much effort was going into making the estate carbon neutral by 2027 with planting, solar panels and regenerative farming. It was recognised that water management was a major issue.

In discussion, Mr Hare clarified that cyclists were welcome in certain areas of the park but that the policy was to separate pedestrians and cyclist in busy areas. He confirmed that the Estate was holding on to the Police property explicitly to develop a new surgery but that it was for others to decide whether the site met current and future needs.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY RESIDENTS

A member of the Sustainable Woodstock group outlined proposals for a new cycle route which would be both safer and provide better access to the country side. He was disappointed that the Council had refused access to its land and asked that the proposals be reconsidered.

Mr Scott raised concerns about the proposed parking plans which had been very divisive and called for a Parish Poll. Ten electors present at the meeting supported a parish poll which was therefore confirmed.

There was discussion about the cost to the Parish of having the poll and the fact that the results of the poll would have no legal status. However residents felt that there had been insufficient consultation and that a Poll was the only way to express their concerns.

Mr Scott proposed that the question to be put to the Poll be:

Do you want to keep all parking areas free of charge in Woodstock? Yes or no

No other suggestions were put forward.

The new editor of Woodstock and Bladon News introduced herself and was thanked by the meeting for volunteering to take on the role.

A resident spoke about Plastic Free Woodstock and urged everyone to consider ways in which they could reduce their impact upon the Climate.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.30 pm.

DRAFT