

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 20th MARCH 2018 AT 7.30PM
AT WOODSTOCK COMMUNITY CENTRE**

PRESENT:

The Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor, 8 Town Councillors, 1 County Councillor, PC Rob Webb, PCSO Phil Workman, Mr Nicholas Tonks, Dan Sollis and Martine Johnson as invited speakers and approximately 100 members of the public.

APOLOGIES:

Cllrs S Rasch & D Davies, Mr D Hare, CEO Blenheim Estate & Jill and Howard Morris.

WELCOME AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Town Mayor, Mrs Trish Redpath confirmed that this is a Town Meeting but it is incumbent on the Town Council and her role as Chairman of the Council to Chair the meeting and set an Agenda as a starting point for discussion. She advised the residents in attendance to use the 'Open Forum' as it was their opportunity to raise their points during the meeting.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Extraordinary Town Meeting held on Tuesday 17th October 2017 were received and Dr Robert Edwards proposed that they were approved which was seconded by Dr Helen Van Oss. All attendees voted in favour and The Mayor signed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

INVITED SPEAKERS

WODC – Parking In Woodstock

The Mayor informed the attendees that she had suggested that West Oxfordshire District Council were asked to attend this meeting to talk about the parking responsibilities and policies in Woodstock as she is aware from the local social media sites that there is great concern about the parking issues in the town. She expressed her disappointment that many of the residents who had commented about the parking on social media were not in attendance. Even more disappointingly she advised that the District Council had declined to attend the meeting but sent a written report (appendix 1).

Mr John Brimble a resident of the High Street stated that he had recently written an article which was published in the Woodstock and Bladon News which contained his thoughts on the Experimental Traffic Restriction Order (TRO) which Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) had proposed within Market Place in order to create a clear path for buses to negotiate. Mr Brimble had suggested that the 233 & 500 bus services be redirected out of the town and to use the Wootton turning circle, after which OCC withdrew the TRO.

The Mayor confirmed that a short report had been received from the WODC Parking Officer which pointed out the OCC were responsible for both on-street parking and TRO's and WODC's responsibility lies with off-street parking. It also stated that WODC have allocated money to support some on-street changes and a survey had been completed from which they believe that Woodstock needs 150 additional car parking spaces by 2031, with an estimated cost of £13,000 per space which equates to £2 million although WODC are estimating that they would need nearly £4 million. WODC have also committed to undertaking a review of parking which will take place at some point during 2018.

The Mayor drew attention to the fact that currently only illegal parking is being enforced in Woodstock currently and expressed that the lack of enforcement of the limited waiting time bays was a historic problem. A number of comments were received from the floor indicating that parking spaces within the town were being used by employees of the local businesses and commuters using Woodstock as a Park & Ride. The Mayor went on to say that the Council had talked to Blenheim about the parking issues and discussed various ideas to alleviate the current problem.

Cllr I Hudspeth suggested a couple of quick wins that would still allow residents to be able to park easily. His first suggestion was better enforcement of the one and two hour parking bays which would create more churn of those spaces. He then went on to suggest that if on a daily basis there was no parking in the Hensington Road car park between 11-11.30am daily that would stop those people who are parking there all day and commuting out. He indicated that these would be quite simple to do and wouldn't take much in the way of TRO's but that care would need to be taken not to create displacement parking in New Road and Oxford Road. Cllr I Hudspeth also mentioned decriminalised parking which has an effect on better enforcement and residents parking. A comment was made from the floor asking whether WODC were fulfilling their contract and Cllr I Hudspeth agreed to check if WODC are abiding with their terms and conditions and if they are not he would follow that up.

Cllr J Cooper advised that it had been confirmed within the District Councillors report that Woodstock is being allocated more enforcement hours. He commented that several District Councillors voted against development around the town and one of the reasons was the lack of response to two questions, where is the parking going and where is the land for parking? He stated that there are many events organised by the community to bring visitors into the town but when they arrive they struggle to park in the town or in the car park. Cllr J Cooper also referred to a suggestion from Cllr S Parnes that residents who have driveways/car parking spaces they do not use during the day could rent them out via the Internet. He also referred to Cllr A Grant's suggestion that designated motorbike parking spaces should also be looked into.

Cllr F Collingwood suggested that an area with wide grass verges that already has some hardstanding at the Wootton Turn could be converted into parking for commuters travelling into Woodstock from the north which would enable them to connect with both the No 7 & S3 bus services. He thought that this could be achieved without costing a lot of money.

The suggestions below were received from the floor:-

- Have parking restrictions in Shipton Road to try and alleviate the problems of cars parking on both sides of the road particularly at school drop off and pick up times which makes it extremely difficult for coaches and cars to pass safely.
- Encourage people who work in Woodstock to purchase a Blenheim Annual Pass and park their cars in Blenheim grounds whilst they are at work as this would free up a lot of spaces within the town for visitors.
- Parking permits for residents and employees of Woodstock businesses. Cllr I Hudspeth explained that permits would incur a charge and asked would residents be happy to pay for a permit when there is free parking throughout the town? He also confirmed that in areas such as Oxford parking permits are not offered to businesses as issuing their employees with permits would severely reduce the number of parking spaces available.

- Hensington Road car park should be a pay and display car park which goes against WODC free parking policy.
- Introduce a one-way system through the centre of the town (High Street and Market Street) using a design that would provide more parking bays.
- Visitor be allowed to park at Bladon Chains with a shuttle bus into the town running every 15 minutes. The Mayor advised that Blenheim had talked of having a 'fake' park and ride using the field on the corner of Campsfield Road.

Dr R Edwards proposed the following motion which was seconded by Dr H Van Oss:-

“That the parking restriction in the High Street be enforced”

A vote was then taken.

VOTE: For: 22 Against: 13 Abstained: 8

RESOLVED: The motion was carried.

The debate was wound up by the Mayor confirming that all the suggestions would be sent to WODC together with a request that they speed up the pending parking review.

A formal proposal was received from the floor for a stronger message to be sent to WODC as worded below which was seconded by Kate:-

‘doing nothing is no longer an option, you have ignored this for too long, you have rejected every single suggestion we have put forward, without suggesting alternatives, you have simply buried your heads in the sand collectively and done nothing, the situation is no longer tenable’

The Mayor reiterated that the Council does not have any remit other than putting forward the views of the town to both the District and County Councils.

Woodstock Neighbourhood Police Team

PC Rob Webb and PCSO Phil Workman from the Woodstock Neighbourhood Police Team provided a police update for Woodstock and the surrounding areas.

Woodstock Carnival

Mr Nicholas Tonks, Chairman of the Woodstock Carnival Committee advised that 2018 would see the last Carnival in its current format. This is due to the number of local clubs and societies dwindling which has affected the number of participants in the carnival parade and those having stalls along the parade route. He also advised that it cost about £2-3,000 to put the carnival on and the committee have to fund raise for and they have found that donations in the buckets and money taken on the stalls is less than that making it fundamentally unsound. Mr Tonks outlined an idea for the future under the name of Woodstock Festival which might mirror the Woodstock Live event where there might be a weekend of activities such as Open Gardens and Theatrical performances. He acknowledged that Dr Robert Edwards had been involved in the Carnival since the very first one some 40 years ago and expressed appreciation for all the work he had put into it.

Nationwide Banking

Martine Johnson, branch Manager of Nationwide in Oxford and her colleague Dan Sollis, Branch Manager of Nationwide in Banbury provided an outline of potential ways that Nationwide may be able to support Woodstock residents with some of their general banking needs. Martine advised that Nationwide have successfully provided a 'pop up' banking service in Corsham, a town in Wiltshire which has also recently experienced the loss of its local banking facilities. A similar facility could be offered to provide residents with advice on the day to day running of their accounts, setting up savings accounts and providing support for those who have reservations or difficulties with online banking. The frequency of the service provision will be dependent on the feedback from residents and both invited those attending the meeting to email them with their views.

Both the Library and Museum were suggested as potential venues for a pop up banking service.

Chairman's Report

The Mayor, Cllr Trish Redpath gave a brief summary of her report and advised that in the last year the Council has lost three long standing Councillors Mary Robertson, Brian Yoxall and Elaine Stokes, she wished them well and thank them for their contribution to the town. She also welcomed both Ulli Parkinson and Dave Davies the two new Councillors. She also welcomed the Town Clerk who had been appointed since the last annual town meeting. She referred the amount of Councils' time that has been directed at planning with Councillors spending hours reading complex reports and documents to ensure they understand the implications of the planning proposals and are able to advise the professionals they have appointed to assist their opposition to the development in Woodstock.

As WUFA was chosen as the Mayors Charity this year attendees were encouraged to attend their Open Day on Saturday 5th May and The Mayor also acknowledged the support from Woodstock Carnival some 30 years previously in helping WUFA raise the money for their then new building that still remains today.

Report of the Member Responsible for Finance, Cllr F Collingwood

Cllr F Collingwood summarised his report and he thanked Cllr A Grant for standing in and acting as Town Clerk during the 7 months the Council were without a Clerk. He referred to major items of expenditure within the report and advised that Council are budgeting for a deficit in the 2018/19 financial year.

Report of the Member Responsible for Property, Cllr A Grant

The report produced by Cllr A Grant was received. The Mayor reported that the Council had engaged a new agent to manage their property portfolio from April.

Report of the Member Responsible for Environment, Cllr P Redpath

The Mayor gave an overview of the report produced by Cllr P Redpath. She acknowledged the voluntary work undertaken by Bob Pomfret in his role as warden of the OWL nature reserve.

Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock drew attendees' attention to the Community Orchard and encouraged everyone to utilise it as it is a wonderful resource for residents to use. She also mentioned that Woodstock In Bloom had planted bluebells along the footpath there.

The Mayor referred to the reports produced by Sustainable Woodstock and Woodstock Youth Club which were available at the meeting. Cllr P Redpath congratulated Cllr A Grant and the other members of the Youth Club committee for raising the money required for the new building. Cllr A

Grant thanked everybody in Woodstock and the surrounding villages who had given their support and help raising the funds for the new building.

An attendee expressed her concern at the damage that might be caused to the environment by removing the poplar trees in the water meadow. Cllr P Redpath advised that the trees have dropped large branches and they are posing a danger to both the A44, nearby properties and also members of the public who use the water meadows. He confirmed the need to have a balance between safety and leaving the trees there as they create oxygen and provide habitat for wildlife. He explained that when removed they will be replaced with a different species such as mature alder.

Report from the Chair of Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr I Hudspeth provided a summary of his report and encouraged Councils to apply to fund local projects via the Councillor Priorities fund which he has responsibility for. He also referred to the parking issues in Woodstock and stated as a non resident he would go to Long Hanborough to use the Coop as it is easy to access and park there. He confirmed it really is an issue that needs to be addressed and he would take all the comments from earlier in the meeting back.

District Councillors Annual Report

Cllrs J Cooper expressed his disappointment and frustration at why there are no traffic objections from the County Council when new development is proposed. He referred to the application which will intensify housing in New Road and he stated that even when it is reported that emergency vehicles cannot get down the road the planning application was approved. He then went on to provide an outline of the report District Councillors Annual report.

Dr Helen Van Oss

Dr Helen Van Oss confirmed that merging would not be happening in Woodstock and the surgery would not be merging with any other local practices. Dr Van Oss advised that Woodstock Surgery is part of the North East Oxford Locality and both nurses and doctors are increasing networking throughout the locality. As part of the network patients will benefit from the Early Visiting Service, Emergency Surgery Appointments and also Hospital At Home and she briefly described each service. She also advised that there are the North East Oxford Locality Community Services which involves everybody from the chief lead, district nurse, social services, age concern, home care who all talk to each other so that every stakeholder is kept informed and updated. Dr Van Oss confirmed that there is a Health Awareness Day on 5th May in Town Hall.

Woodstock Christmas Lights

The above item was added to the meeting agenda at the request of Dennis Allen, Wake Up To Woodstock. As he was not present at the meeting the Clerk confirmed that Council were exploring alternative lighting for the trees in the town that would hopefully improve and enhance the effect of them.

Pedestrian Crossings In Woodstock

An attendee of the meeting stated that the 10 seconds that the traffic lights on Oxford Road by The Crown public house is not sufficient to enable wheelchair users and less mobile pedestrians to safely cross the road and requested that the crossing time be extended. He also raised his concern that the pedestrian crossing at the Causeway is not very prominent, the lighting there is poor and he also stated from personal experience that when driving from the North of the town the glare from the sun can affect drivers view when approaching the crossing.

He requested that both crossings are improved. The Mayor confirmed that CClr I Hudspeth would take those requests back to Oxfordshire County Council.

Cllr E Poskitt mentioned that it had been agreed to have 'Halo' lights at the Causeway crossing although they had not been installed to date and she also suggested that a pedestrian crossing is also required by Hensington Gate.

Single Use Plastic

Hilary Brown asked that Woodstock as a town including all businesses look at their use of plastic and try to work towards becoming a low carbon economy and improve the environment for the generations to come.

Woodstock in Bloom

Dr Edwards was thanked for his efforts in ensuring that Woodstock looks beautiful by tending the plants and flowers (particularly the daffodils that are shortly due to come out in bloom. Dr Edwards invited residents who were free, to join in with the planting of daffodils in Old Woodstock that was due to take place on Thursday 22nd March.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting Closed at 9.20pm

Signed:

Date: