

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 18th APRIL 2023 AT 7.30PM
AT WOODSTOCK COMMUNITY CENTRE**

PRESENT:

The Town Mayor Cllr E Poskitt, Deputy Mayor Cllr J Lamb. OCC Cllr A Graham, WODC Cllrs J Cooper, K Howe, Interim Clerk, Town Cllrs and approximately 50 Members of the public.

WELCOME:

The Town Mayor, Cllr E Poskitt welcomed people to the Town Meeting and asked for items for the agenda.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:

It was agreed to adopt the agenda

MINUTES:

The minutes previously circulated were slightly edited and the revised version was read out at the meeting.

It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 26th April 2022 The Mayor, signed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM LOCAL BODIES:

Town Mayor Report

The Mayor presented her report to the meeting (Appendix A).

She also advised the room that there was a petition regarding changes to the S7 bus route and the bus companies use of the Town Square to turnaround. If anyone would like to sign it then it is located at the back of the room.

Oxfordshire County Council Report

Cllr Graham presented his report to the meeting (Appendix B).

In addition to his report he also provided the additional information listed below and offered to take questions: -

- 20pmh for Woodstock – The Town Council will organise an initial consultation on the proposals.
- Traffic Advisory Group – All are welcome to attend.

Members of the public raised the following points/questions: -

- Walking Route Safety – Congratulations to Blenheim for the new route that runs parallel to the A4095 between Long Hanborough and Bladon. Could Blenheim be pressed to do the same from Old Woodstock.
- S7 Route – The excuse for the changes given by Stagecoach was due the time it takes to use the turning point near the Duke of Marlborough. It is unfair that Old Woodstock are now having to wait ½ hour between services and when waiting in the Town there is nowhere dry to wait.
- S7 Route – 7 years ago when there were bus issues a meeting was arranged with the bus companies and senior council officer, can this be arranged again?
- Road Maintenance – Will the change in speed limit to 20mph effect road maintenance?
- Main Car Park – Why is there no time limit on the car park, it is being abused by long stayers.

Cllr Graham responded to the S7 points and said that ideally the buses should not be using the town centre. He also said it could be possible to hold a meeting but OCC have an action plan, which includes a safety audit. He went on to say that he wants to resolve the issue as soon as possible.

Cllr Graham also responded to the point on road maintenance and said that the introduction of 20pmh limits would not affect road maintenance.

Cllr Cooper commented on the car park and said that there is a time limit on the car park and that it is the enforcement that is the issue.

West Oxfordshire District Council Report

CLlr Cooper presented his report to the meeting (Appendix C).

CLlr Cooper then offered to take questions.

Member of the public commented on the time limit for the carpark and said a 5hr limit would stop commuters.

CLlr Cooper responded that the limit is 12hrs and the hopefully better enforcement will help.

Blenheim Estates Report

Roy Cox who is the Managing Director – Estates, introduced himself to the meeting.

He started by answering the previous question about safer walking route from Old Woodstock and said that he was happy to look it to it.

He then provided an update on the recent restoration projects: -

- Lake dredging – The dredging is approximately half way through. Work was stopped over the winter due to weather restrictions. Blenheim are working on slowing down the future build up of silt and will be planting areas at high risk of soil erosion with trees that have been chosen to cope with a change in temperature of -/+2 degrees.
- World Heritage Site –
 - Work on the stonework in the stable courtyard is being carried out
 - The roof on the orangery is being replaced back to a slate roof
 - The garden adventure play area is now open and although attendance is not at pre-covid levels it is increasing.

Mr Cox also thanked those who had helped with the new path.

Members of the public raised the following points/questions: -

- Blenheim is becoming a perpetual theme park. The noise from events such as concerts can be heard. Could the location of the speakers etc be re-considered?
- Parking problems along roads in Woodstock.
- Are cyclists policed when cycling through park, they go too fast.

Mr Cox responded that the regarding noise from events that for the last 3 years sensors have been placed around the site to monitor noise and ask that if anyone has any issues to contact Blenheim. He also said the cyclist should always be courteous to walkers and that during the day time the issue should be being policed by the staff. In regards to parking, the possibility of park & rides or additional carparking within the site is being looked at.

Members of the public then raised further questions/points: -

- What is happening to Fishery Cottage?
- Is the application for 500 dwellings still in?
- 5-bed house what are the plans?
- How are traffic management plans decided?

Mr Cox responded that Fishery Cottage has planning approval to revert to residential use and will be refurbished in the Spring/Summer and that the Duke's son will be moving in to the 5-bed house and that the rights of way is to stay in its current location.

Mr Cox also advised that a range of traffic management companies are used depending on the size of the event. Small events are dealt with by Blenheim's own team, medium size events are either their own team or external companies and large events are external companies.

CLlr Poskitt informed the meeting the application for 500 dwellings is due a decision in May.

Thames Valley Police PCSO Report

PCSO Helen Duffield introduced herself and informed the meeting that rural crime is quiet at the moment but there has been an increase of reports of sports car being stolen.

UPDATE FROM STOP BOTLEY WEST:

The representative from Stop Botley West addressed the room.

She explained the formation of the group and that over 1,000 people had registered with the group so far. She also said that the group is not NIMBY or against solar power.

She then went on to read out the details contained in the recent leaflet that the group had produced.

The leaflet covered various points including the size of the proposal, the amount of proposal that is within Green Belt, the amount of fencing proposed and the efficiency of ground solar.

She also said that comments from the developer's website have been fact checked by the group.

A member of the public spoke in favour of the solar farm and made the following points: -

- Ground solar is efficient
- Only 0.09% of farmland is taken up
- The land used is not pure farmland and not biodiverse farmland.

Members of the public also raised the following points/questions: -

- Where is the financing of the scheme coming from?
- Woodstock Town Council should refuse the application and stand up with majority view.

The representative for SBW was unable to answer the question on finance but said that SBW website contains information and hopefully Blenheim will answer the question when the time comes.

Cllr Poskitt said the Town Council were following WODC approach when making an opinion on the proposal.

Cllr Graham explained that taking a view before the final plans have been submitted is not the correct process and you can be accused of already making a decision. He also said the WODC is working with SBW.

Mr Cox advised the room that the second stage consultation will be in the summer and it will include all the facts and other data. He said all views are welcome and to look carefully at the plans.

During the final part of this item a few more comments were made: -

- Check the facts. What future do you want for you children?
- There are positives to the proposal but there are many negatives.
- It is in the green belt and there may be alternative locations that are more appropriate such as Shipton Quarry.
- Using of farmland is not appropriate.
- 14 North Sea wind turbines would provided that same amount of power.
- We have a climate crisis. We need to do everything as fast as we can and reduce CO2 as quickly as possible.
- Solar is 11% efficient, wind is 74% efficient and mini nuclear is 92% efficient. This is yesterday's technology.

UPDATE ABOUT THE DOCTORS SURGERY:

The meeting was informed that during lockdown Blenheim, WODC and OCC had discussed the area.

A specification has been provided and there is no room for expansion or spaces for 60 cars, it was said that it is not clear where idea of needing 60 car parking spaces came from.

A library is proposed for the site and a new GP surgery is needed and this should be in the centre of the Town and not on one of the new developments. Being on one of these developments would mean a considerable distance to walk to it and it would not be as easy to access from a central location.

Residents should express their views on any proposal when they become available.

Members of the public then raised the following points/questions: -

- WTC needs to be firm. The GPs should not have to put up with the current building. Year after year the surgery issue comes up and the build continues to deteriorate.
- The Council is divided, are we getting the representation we deserve? The Town Council needs to communicate much more and much better and represent the resident's views.

- Who else can be involved in the issue? MP? OCC Councillors?
- Blenheim brought the site for the surgery but now it's too small.

Cllr Cooper commented that space on the site is being looked at and that the pharmacy will be staying in the Town Centre.

Cllr Grant commented that Police Station site is large and sloping and that a car park could go underneath and there could be two storeys on top that would not affect the height. We should all join together to press for the surgery to go on this site.

Mr Cox said that it is not Blenheim saying the site is too small it is the GPs and others that are saying it is too small.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY RESIDENTS:

The chair of WAG spoke on the proposed solar farm. He said that they oppose the solar farm and went on to explain the proposal and the impacts it would have on 9 local councils including Woodstock.

He said that solar panels could have been put on the 300 homes at Park View.

A member of the public asked about spraying the streets with a weed killer.

Cllr Poskitt said that no chemicals have been used to treat the weeds.

It was suggested that maybe volunteers could carry out some weeding on the Bank Holiday Monday.

It was also mentioned that weeds on the High Street were an issue and maybe WTC could buy a weed burner.

The meeting was reminded of the bus petition that was available to be signed.

MEETING CLOSE:

The meeting closed at 9:25pm

APPENDIX A

Report from the Town Mayor to Woodstock Annual Town Meeting

7.30pm Tuesday April 18th 2023.

Staffing at the Town Hall. Staff changes have made the past year difficult as the Council has been dependent on Locum Clerks. We thank those who have worked for us during this time, particularly Karen Howe who joined us at the end of 2022 as Interim Town Clerk. Other changes include Rachel Peters taking up the role of Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). She has had a steep learning curve but Council has great confidence in her ability. Christine Inker, Administrative Assistant, retired at the end of 2023 and Rachel has taken on some of her roles particularly for hiring Council property. Many thanks to Rachel taking on extra hours and also to Christine for her many years of loyal and invaluable service for the Council. Ian Watkins, as Caretaker, has also taken on more hours. Our thanks to him for a role which includes out of hours opening and closing buildings for meetings and events. Maurice Parkinson has taken on a volunteer role with the Council as warden for the watermeadows.

Regrettably, none of those responding to our advertisements for a Clerk have had the qualifications or experience suggesting suitability for training as a clerk.

Events. National occasions. Thank you for all those involved in arranging the Platinum Jubilee bring-or-buy-your-own Big Lunch event in Market Square. It was an enjoyable, friendly, occasion despite somewhat chilly and wet weather.

After the sad death of Queen Elizabeth II in September we sent condolences from the Council on behalf of the town to King Charles and in due course received formal thanks with a charming photograph of the King as a child with his mother. London Bridge, the instructions about what to do following the death of the monarch, fell down in the first twelve hours after the Queen's death leading to some confusion. We quickly set up a condolence book in the Mayor's Parlour for those who wished to sign and there was another one in St Mary Magdalene's church. Thank you to all those who kept watch so we could keep the Mayor's Parlour open for signatories over the weekend. Small communities such as Woodstock were not obliged to proclaim the new monarch formally but we felt an historic town such as Woodstock should do this. So, at very short notice following Oxford City's Proclamation at 1pm, the Town Mayor read the Proclamation of King Charles III at 2pm on the Town Hall steps on Sunday September 11th to a significant gathering of residents and others. A very well attended Vigil was held in St Mary Magdalene's church the evening before the state funeral.

Coronation weekend. WTC discussed whether we should have another street party in Market Square on the Big Lunch Day (Sunday) of the Coronation weekend. We concluded that encouraging local street parties was more suitable in view of Britain's uncertain weather as groups could resort to their dwellings if the weather was, or became, unattractive. The Monday of the Coronation weekend is the big Volunteer day. Can your group do anything to promote or provide volunteering activity then? Are you looking for opportunities to volunteer perhaps/ Suggestions welcome for activities you could offer or ways of advertising what you do and how you could welcome volunteers.

Visitors. It was a pleasure to welcome the Mayor and two of the ten Deputy Mayors from Maintenon, France, last August and, more recently, the Mayor of Woodstock, Ontario, Canada, his wife and their Art Gallery Curator and her husband for a very brief visit. Both groups were eager to form links with Woodstock, Oxfordshire. The visitors from Maintenon came the first weekend in August - not a good time for meeting local leaders. Around twenty representatives from various town groups met to discuss possible twinning with the visitors and were enthusiastic. The Maintenon group were keen to have an exchange visit from their town (or from us to Maintenonin pursued this.

The visit from Woodstock Ontario was initiated by an exhibition in the Canadian High Commission featuring an artist from Woodstock Ontario. The Woodstock Ontario Art Gallery has linked up to plan joint events with The Museum of Oxfordshire, perhaps in 2025. The Canadians were keen to develop Woodstock, Oxon., as a Sister City. I had a Zoom meeting with the Canadians on April 14th to find out more about Sister Cities. These seem to be communities which develop loose links over cultural, economic, educational or community experiences and welcomes residents from a Sister City who might be travelling in the relevant area for other reasons. It would be useful to know how you as residents of Woodstock feel about forming links with these communities. Comments to: clerk@woodstock-tc.gov.uk.

Planning. Council has expressed its views on development proposals Behind Hill Rise; North of Banbury Road; South-east of Park View (Perdiswell Farm); and also the Botley West Solar Farm pre-consultation document. The Behind Hill Rise development was refused by Uplands Planning sub-committee in December but the refusal is being appealed (in June). The outline plan for North of Banbury Road has been approved.

We are very disappointed that the long and widely held hope of the town that development around the old Police Station/Library/Scout&Guide hut/Car Park area off Hensington Road could provide a new doctors' surgery has been discarded. After a consultancy firm presented some proposals, the conclusion of a group of officers from OCC, WODC, and representatives of Blenheim and the doctors is that the site does not provide sufficient space for possible future expansion and no possibility of providing car parking for 60 cars (!!).

The Green Spaces Neighbourhood Plan was approved by referendum which only needed to achieve 50% support from those voting) passed (571 For; 64 Against. Turnout 23.5%). Thank you if you took part in the referendum. This Plan provides protection to the green spaces in Woodstock at the level of Green Belt status. As a Neighbourhood Plan, even though only concerned with green spaces, this could mean that (when the CIL money from development does become accepted by WODC), our Council gets a larger percentage of the CIL from developments than if it had no Neighbourhood Plan.

Finances. Currently WTC is in a slightly stronger financial position than has sometimes been the case in recent years. Some funds can probably be carried forwards to cover fairly substantial repairs/upgrading to property and land we own. Happily, Council did not feel it was necessary to raise the precept this year. Many thanks to Cllr Nick Manby-Brown and to the RFO, Rachel Peters, for their skill guarding our finances and updating the systems we use to manage our financial matters.

Traffic issues. Parking and the S7 bus route are listed elsewhere on the agenda. Introduction of OCC's parking plan is somewhat later than originally planned but OCC took over enforcement of parking restrictions on April 1st. Beware: traffic wardens may already be more active than for some years.

Woodstock is in the second tranche of communities to have 20mph limits introduced.

WTC looking forward. There are no May local elections in Woodstock in 2023. In 2024 the whole Town Council is up for election and one of the District Councillor positions is contested. Please do think of discussing the possibility of standing for Council with any of the Cllrs or with the Clerk.

Finally, my term of office as Mayor finishes in early May. I thank all my fellow Cllrs, Council staff and you, the residents, for the activity, ideas and comments by which you have helped me over the past year and also for all you do as residents to support our community

Elizabeth Poskitt, Woodstock Town Mayor 2022/2023

County Councillor Woodstock Division Annual Report 2022/23

Home to School Transport-Improvements to Policy

Chaired the working group to investigate areas of improvement to the Home to Schools Transport Policy.

Evidence was received by County councillors, officers and residents

Recommendations were made in the following areas:

[Discretionary School Transport \(Spare Seats Scheme\)](#)-reviewing the scheme so that it maximises the number of seats available available to parents.

[Walking Route Safety](#)- ensuring all county councillor report parents concerns over the safety of walking routes and where necessary reassess routes

[Independent Travel Training](#)- SEND training provision for post 16 students to increase independent travel,

[Transport Eligibility Appeals](#)-more accessibility and streamlined process

[Decarbonisation of School Transport](#)

This is now with the cabinet for determination April/May 2023.

30 to 20 mph Reduced Speed-Pedestrian Safety-Putting pedestrian Safety First

Schemes consulted upon by the following parish councils were approved by the County: Combe, Bladon and The Bartons

And the following in the pipeline signalled for 23/24: Wootton by Woodstock, Tackley and Woodstock. Kiddington have also signalled their aspiration meaning all towns and villages in the division will have signed up for the scheme by the end of the 24/25 and put in place.

Current road safety issues / proposals are current and ongoing with thanks to SAFER in Stonesfield for their diligence and thoughtful proposals.

Woodstock Traffic Advisory Group

County Council Officers, Councillors from the town and open to the public met twice this year and reported on highways safety issues in particular reference to the A44, updates on highways maintenance, car parking arrangements for off street and on street parking, freight strategy following the lifting of the ban on Burford bridge, Village travel network, improvements to the footbridge at the Black Boar pub, bus routing improvements outside Woodstock schools and Blenheim Traffic management arrangement for major events.

This is reported to the town council.

Bus Service Issues

A subsidised and welcomed one charge anywhere in Oxfordshire of £4 adults and £2 young people was introduced during January- March improving passenger capacity on all routes and assisting in the cost of living crisis.

The S7 bus route was changed without notice avoiding the original bus turning point and instead diverting down the high St, turning at the town hall and through Market Street raised considerable concern over pedestrian safety and congestion issues. Having viewed the situation on a number of cases and raised the issue on behalf of residents at the highest levels at county hall, a safety audit is being undertaken.

Subject to the outcome of the safety audit, other measures may well need to be introduced and I welcome the petition that residents have signed resulting out of this disruption caused by this unilateral decision to avoid using the turning point as designed at the other end of old Woodstock. Supplementary evidence such as photos/videos have highlighted the concerns.

The issue over the lack of bus shelters in the Park View is currently receiving my attention

The S3 Service through Stonesfield, Combe and Charlbury

Following a Covid-related decline in patronage and subsequent increase in operating costs, the Council stepped in with emergency funding to save service S3 and several other routes which would

otherwise have been withdrawn. These contracts run until August 2024, but no decisions have yet been taken on provision beyond this date.

We would hope that by then patronage levels would have recovered, and/or costs reduced, to a point where the service does not require financial support. The Council will be undertaking a review of all the contracts secured with these emergency funds in spring 2024 to consider the case for retention of each service and the funds that may be available at the time. Ultimately, the best way to secure bus service provision in the long term is for the communities on the route to make as full use of them as possible

School Admissions

A total of 93.55 per cent (6,729) of applicants have been awarded their first choice for starting infant or primary school in Oxfordshire.

Last year's figure was 91.49 per cent (6,459), which means a higher number of parents across the county have been offered their first choice of primary school for 2023/24.

A total of 99.01 per cent (number 7,120) have been offered one of the four choices they listed on their application.

The percentage receiving a first choice of primary school in England in 2023 is not yet known. However, Oxfordshire's percentage receiving a first choice is generally better than the national average.

This year there are 7,189 Oxfordshire children who need school places for September 2023. This is 129 more than last year when 7,060 Oxfordshire children needed school places.

Flooding Issues

Have agreed to a catchment area study in Tackley to address the land drainage/flooding issues in Tackley with thanks to OCC officers, parish council.

Happy to report the satisfactory conclusion to the flooding issue in Sandford St. Martin which was resolved through partnership working with the cricket club, Sandford estate and county highways work to the drains now avoiding flooding in the village.

Parking

On street parking is now the enforcement responsibility of the county in West Oxfordshire whilst the district retains responsibility for the car parks.

Parking permits in the centre of Woodstock can be applied for and hotel parking permits. This comes into effect from May 2023.

Library

Library options are now being considered with a commitment to bringing back a library /community hub to the centre of the Woodstock. Ongoing discussions are taking place with the district council as well as key stakeholders.

The report reflects progress in some areas and a few drawbacks but as your county councillor, it is always my intention to address the issues brought to my attention by the residents of the district albeit a challenge to find the best solutions. Thank you for your patience and kind wishes

Andy Graham