

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WOODSTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT 7.30 PM ON TUESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2008
IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR, WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL**

PRESENT:

Cllr P Jay (Town Mayor)	Cllr T Gardiner (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr C Carritt	Cllr J Cooper
Cllr Mrs V Edwards	Cllr Mrs A Grant
Cllr Mrs E Jay	Cllr G Myatt
Cllr P Redpath	Cllr Mrs T Redpath
Cllr Mrs P Richardson	Cllr Mrs E Stokes
Cllr I Thomas	Cllr B Yoxall

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Honorary Townsman John Banbury, County Cllr I Hudspeth, District Cllr Mrs J Dunsmore, Mr G Walters (Woodstock and Bladon News) and three members of the public.

WTC/202/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr A Glees.

The meeting then adjourned to receive a presentation from Colonel Tim May (Vice-Chairman) and Mr Hugh Babington Smith (Project Manager) on the Soldiers of Oxfordshire project which, it was hoped, would be located in Woodstock.

WTC/203/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Mrs V Edwards, Mrs E Jay and P Jay declared Prejudicial Interests in Agenda Item No. 10(b), Banbury Road Exception Site, as they were Garden Tenants of the Blenheim Estate.

Cllr C Carritt declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item Nos. 12, Finance Committee, and 13(iv), Grants and Donations Applications 2009-10, as he was a Governor of the Marlborough School, Treasurer of the Youth Club Management Committee and a member of the Carnival Committee.

Cllr J Cooper declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item Nos. 12, Finance Committee, and 13(iv), Grants and Donations Applications 2009-10, as he was Chairman of the Youth Club Management Committee.

Cllr J Cooper declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 14(a), Strategy Committee, as he knew the owner of the silo referred to in the letter approved by this item.

WTC/204/08 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on Tuesday 14 October 2008 were received and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendments.

Minute WTC/176/08 – Minutes. Delete the word “Mayor’s” and replace with the words “Communications Sub”. Delete the words “Delete Glees and”.

Minute WTC/180/08 – Questions. Replace the word “BBONT” with the word “BBOUT”.

Minute WTC/189/08 – Applications for Free Use of Accommodation. Insert the words “Cllr A Glees had declared a Prejudicial Interest in this item. He left the room and took no part in the debate or the determination of the application regarding Woodstock Literature Society”.

WTC/205/08 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION WITH RESPECT TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

The Council heard from Mr Andy Slade, the grave digger employed by Jerram Brothers, the local funeral directors, with regard to the circumstances surrounding the digging of a grave at the Lawn Cemetery using a mechanical digger. This was in contravention of the Council's recently confirmed policy. Mr Slade explained that he employed four people but that not all of them were able to dig graves by hand, as they had not undergone the requisite risk assessment procedure. He had received little notice of the need to dig the grave in question and, as he had not been available himself, he had asked an employee to carry out the work. This person had forgotten that mechanical diggers were not allowed. In response to a question, Mr Slade stated that he could not guarantee that all graves would be dug by hand in the future, as not all his employees could do this work. Mr Slade explained the dangers associated with digging graves by hand and offered to take steps to ensure that his mechanical digger left no track marks on the grave areas. The Town Mayor informed him that the matter would be discussed by the Council later as per the Agenda.

County Cllr I Hudspeth had submitted a written report in advance of the meeting and offered to answer questions on it.

District Cllr Mrs Dunsmore reported on the outcome of the "Loo of the Year" competition and the appointment of a replacement for Cllr Hudspeth as a Director of Cotsway Housing.

Cllr Cooper expressed his support for the decision of Cllr Hudspeth to resign as a Director of Cotsway Housing and it was agreed that a Proposal regarding the reasons for this could be placed on the Agenda for the Budget Meeting of Council to be held on 25 November 2008.

WTC/206/08 COMMUNICATIONS

None.

WTC/207/08 QUESTIONS

None.

WTC/208/08 CO-OPTION OF TOWN COUNCILLOR

It was reported that, following the resignation of Tony Airey, the resulting vacancy had been advertised. The District Council had not received the requisite number of requests from Electors in the town for a bye-election to be held and the Town Council was now able to proceed to fill the vacancy by way of co-option.

RESOLVED

- (a) That notices be placed on the Council's notice boards, web site and local shops and in the December issue of the Woodstock and Bladon News inviting interested people who meet the qualification criteria to apply to be co-opted as a Town Councillor, with the final decision being taken at the January 2009 meeting of Council;
- (b) That interested people be each requested to submit a letter giving further details about themselves for consideration at January Council.

WTC/209/08 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO FILL VACANCIES ON COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

When appointing Members to serve on the Town Council's Committees, Working Bodies and Outside Bodies at the Annual Meeting of the Council held in May 2008, there had been only thirteen Members

to choose from. Since then three new Members had been co-opted to fill the vacancies that existed on the Town Council after the non-contested election process. However, Tony Airey had resigned as a Town Councillor. The Town Council was invited to consider making appointments to fill the vacancies that existed on various Committees, Working Parties and Outside Bodies.

It was agreed by a consensus that a meeting of the Watermeadows Working Group should be organised.

RESOLVED

That the following Members be appointed to serve on the bodies stated:

- (a) Cllr Mrs V Edwards; Strategy Committee and Watermeadows Working Group;
- (b) Cllr G Myatt: Finance Committee
- (c) Cllr Mrs E Stokes: Youth Club Management Committee
- (d) Cllr T Gardiner: Oxford Airport Consultative Committee

WTC/210/08 FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cllrs Cooper and Carritt had declared Personal Interests in the item concerning Grants and Donations, 2009-10.

The Council received the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on Tuesday 21 October 2008. Minute FC/18/08, Budget 2009-10, was considered in conjunction with the item on the same subject contained in the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (Minute 211/08 hereunder refers).

With regard to Minute FC/18/08, concern was expressed that Members should be able to consider a full range of options before deciding on the Budget for 2009-10. The Chairman of the Finance Committee, Cllr Cooper, stressed that Members must consider the individual lines in the budget book at Finance Committee and recommend Council accordingly. The Finance Committee was asked to identify those Capital Items that were required by Health and Safety regulations. The possibility of selling the properties in the ownership of the Council was mentioned by one Member.

RESOLVED

- (a) that a full range of options for the Budget 2009-10 be considered by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 18 November 2008, for report with recommendations to the Budget meeting of Council on 25 November 2008, to include:
 - (i) an option that reflects the financial strategy adopted by the Council in 2007 of targetting £85,000 in reserve at the end of the budget period, demonstrating a reasonable path from here to there, and adhering to the Council Tax increases as previously agreed in the Plan;
 - (ii) an option that includes the raising of additional funds by way of borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board;
- (b) that the schedule of Grants and Donations for 2009-10 set out in Minute FC/18/08 (c) of the Finance Committee be adopted;
- (c) that the proposed tariffs for the Town Hall, the Community Centre and the Cemetery for 2009-10, as set out in Minute FC/18/08 (d) of the Finance Committee, be adopted

WTC/211/08 REPORT OF THE RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER – NOVEMBER 2008

The Council received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer.

(a) Lists of payments for October 2008

RESOLVED

that the list of payments made in the month of October 2008 and amounting to £13,614.24 be received and approved.

(b) Bank Reconciliation Statements (2) for October 2008.

RESOLVED

That the Bank Reconciliation Statements for October 2008 be received and noted.

(c) Summary and Detailed Income & Expenditure Statements for October 2008

RESOLVED

That the Summary and Detailed Income & Expenditure Statements for October 2008 be received and noted.

(d) Budget 2009-2010

CLrs Cooper and Carritt had declared Personal Interests in the report concerning Grants and Donations, 2009-10.

The Committee received various reports relating to the budget for 2009/10, which were considered in conjunction with the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee considered under Minute WTC/210/08 set out above.

(e) Property Valuations (Reinstatement)

In response to a question, the Responsible Financial Officer reported that the revised figures related to September 2008 and reflected the reinstatement costs and not the market value of the properties.

RESOLVED

That the Council's insurance cover with Zurich Insurance be increased to reflect the new valuations.

(f) Annual Return 2007-2008

RESOLVED

That the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2008 be approved and accepted.

(g) Carnival 2008

RESOLVED

That the Woodstock Carnival project be returned to its former status external to the Council, as per the Minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on 10 October 2008.

Further to discussion of this matter at the last meeting of the Council and to the subsequent revelation that a grave at the Lawn Cemetery had been dug by a machine, the Council received a letter from Mr Nicholas Tonks of Jerrams Brothers, Funeral Directors in the town. Members recalled the comments made by Mr Andy Slade, Jerrams' sub-contractor for digging graves, under Minute WTC/205/08 above.

Some Members commented that Jerrams Brothers did not appear to give much notification to its grave diggers and that extra time to organise this work would benefit the situation. The Council had agreed previously to reduce the minimum depth for graves to four feet and hand held mechanical diggers could be used in digging graves.

Other Members noted that Woodstock appeared to be the only cemetery in the area that had banned the use of mechanical diggers.

RESOLVED

- (a) that Mr Tonks be advised that the Town Council requires Jerrams Brothers to comply with the Council's policies and to ensure that their sub-contractors do likewise;
- (b) that the Council review its policy on the digging of graves by hand at the expiry of the six month period from the date of the decision to confirm the policy that all graves shall be dug by hand and that Mr Tonks and other Funeral Directors who use the Lawn Cemetery be invited to attend and advise the Council of their views on this issue at that time.

WTC/213/08 *EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS*

RESOLVED

That in view of the special or confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

WTC/214/08 *REPORTS/PAPERS OF COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES*

Property Working Group

The Council received the Minutes of the meeting of the Property Working Group held on Thursday 30 October 2008.

RESOLVED

- (a) that recommendations (a) to (k) of the Minutes of the meeting of the Property Working Group held on Thursday 30 October 2008 be adopted;
- (b) that the letter from the Council's tenant be referred to the Council's professional advisers for advice;
- (c) that Mr L Read be invited to research the Council's archives to locate previous records relating to these matters at a rate of pay agreed by the Council;
- (d) that the letter from the Fire Safety Adviser be referred to the tenant for his comments;
- (e) that the Property Working Group, in conjunction with the Council's professional adviser, be invited to recommend to Council a strategy based on a radical review of the way in which the Council manages its properties, taking into account the previous report produced by Cllr C Carritt and all other relevant material;

- (f) that the recommendations of the Property Working Group in respect of the Community Centre be noted and that the Working Group do consider the matter further following the determination of the Budget for 2009/10 at the meeting of the Council on 25 November 2008;
- (g) that the bills submitted by Hall and Ensom in respect of the Community Centre refurbishment scheme and the inspection of the Market Street properties be paid.

WTC/215/08 *PROPERTY MATTERS*

The Council received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Rent Officer's assessment for an increase in the capped rent in respect of 4 Park Street be agreed;
- (b) that action agreed by the Council in respect of unpaid rent be implemented and a further report be submitted to the next ordinary meeting of Council as to the outcome.

The meeting then went back in to Open Session.

WTC/216/08 *LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT*

At the last meeting of the Council it had been Resolved that the Town Council should adopt a binding code of conduct in respect of communications made by Councillors as Councillors to the media or to other Councillors. It was reported that Cllr Glee had prepared a draft Code by way of additions to the Council's existing Code of Conduct. With the agreement of Cllr Glee and on the advice of the Town Clerk, this has been forwarded to the District Council's Monitoring Officer to ensure that the correct procedure was being undertaken to adopt the new provisions, if agreed by Council. The Monitoring Officer had in turn forwarded the proposals to the Standards Board for England for their consideration. The submission of the draft Local Code to Council would take place at the next meeting in December.

WTC/217/08 *PLANNING*

- (a) Listing of the Former GWR Railway Station as a Building of Special Architectural or Historic Interest

The Council received and considered a letter from English Heritage stating that the Secretary of State had decided not to designate the former station building. It was noted that the Council could lodge a further appeal against the decision of the Secretary of State, subject to the limited review criteria attached to the letter. This news was received with disappointment and the hope was expressed that further evidence could be gathered to allow a further appeal to proceed.

Members expressed concern that the District Council might now allow the demolition of the station building, even though the Town Council and local people were opposed to it and a branch of English Heritage had recognised its significance. There was some discussion as to whether the building was located in the Conservation Area.

RESOLVED

That a letter stressing the importance of the station building and the need to retain it be sent to the District Council, subject to the resolution of the Conservation Area issue and the inclusion of words referring to the area's importance as a buffer zone for the adjacent World Heritage site.

(b) Banbury Road Exception Site

Cllrs Mrs V Edwards, Mrs E Jay and P Jay had declared Prejudicial Interests in this item. They left the room and took no part in the debate or the determination of this matter.

In the absence of Cllr P Jay, the Town Mayor, Cllr T Gardiner, the Deputy Mayor, took the Chair for the consideration of this item only.

The Council received and considered a draft response, prepared by Cllr Mrs T Redpath, to the letter from Mr I Morrow, Head of Planning Services at West Oxfordshire District Council, which had been reported to the last meeting of Council. It was Proposed by Cllr Mrs Redpath, seconded by Cllr Mrs Grant

That the letter be approved and sent to Mr Morrow at the District Council.

Some Members expressed their opposition to the content of the letter on the basis that it was misleading. Despite the decision of the Inspector not to agree to the development of the land, the latest application was acceptable as it related to an exception site. Remarks made by Mr James Alcock of the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) about the number of households with a local connection and priority need had been misinterpreted. The current economic and housing difficulties reinforced the need for affordable housing on the Banbury Road site. A Member called for a Named Vote on this issue.

Other Members disagreed that the letter was misleading. The comments attributed to ORCC had been made at a meeting attended by Members and the District Council had admitted that it had breached policy in approving the application to allow the development of this land.

The Proposal was put to the meeting and the voting, by a show of hands, was

FOR the Proposal:	5		
AGAINST the proposal	5		
FOR	AGAINST		ABSTAINED
Cllr G Myatt	Cllr J Cooper		Cllr T Gardiner
Cllr I Thomas	Cllr C Carritt		
Cllr Mrs A Grant	Cllr B Yoxall		
Cllr Mrs T Redpath	Cllr Mrs E Stokes		
Cllr P Redpath	Cllr Mrs P Richardson		
5	5		1

Cllr T Gardiner, Deputy Mayor (In the Chair) gave his casting vote FOR the Proposal.

RESOLVED

That the letter as appended to the Agenda for the meeting be sent to Mr Morrow, with a copy being sent to the Chief Executive of the District Council.

WTC/218/08 TRAFFIC CHAOS ASSOCIATED WITH GAME FAIR

There were no further developments to report in this matter as no replies had been received to the Council's most recent letters to Oxfordshire County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

WTC/219/08 REPORTS/PAPERS OF COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

(a) Strategy Committee

Cllr J Cooper had declared a Personal interest in the item regarding the Council's Transport Strategy.

The Council received the Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy Committee held on Tuesday 28 October 2008.

With regard to Minute SC25/08, Terms of Reference, it was Proposed by Cllr P Redpath, seconded by Cllr Mrs Grant

That responsibility for Risk Assessments should be included in the Terms of Reference of the Finance Committee.

The Proposal was put to the meeting and was defeated by eight votes to five.

RESOLVED

(i) that responsibility for the Council's policy for the assessment and management of risk remain within the Terms of Reference of the Strategy Committee;

(ii) that a letter of reply be sent to the County Council's letter dated 22 August 2008 regarding the Town Council's Transport Strategy as set out in the Appendix to the Minutes of the Strategy Committee, subject to the addition of the following words:

"Finally, we would appreciate a view on the implications for a Water Eaton Parkway station of the recent County Council decision to progress the proposal for a waste recycling plant at this location."

(iii) 1. that in future all Town Councillors be made aware of consultation documents that are received in the office and where they may be viewed;
2. that, if any Member wishes to raise a particular issue contained in a consultation document for debate and possible comment, they may do so by requesting the inclusion of the matter on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Council.

(b) Wall Hangings Trust

The Council received the Minutes of the meeting of the Wall Hangings Trust held on Thursday 11 September 2008.

RESOLVED

That the recommendation contained in Minute 7, Future Promotional Effort, be referred to the Strategy Committee.

(c) Traffic Advisory Committee

The Council received the Minutes of the meeting of the Traffic Advisory Committee held on Wednesday 29 October 2008. Members noted that a copy of the letter from Cecilia Humphries referred to in Minute 5 had been sent to the County Council upon receipt.

In response to a question from a Member, the Chairman of the Traffic Advisory Committee stated that he had raised those outstanding items that he thought appropriate, taking into account the people present at the meeting.

(d) Report of the CMfE

The Council received and considered the report of the CMfE which covered issues such as work at the Watermeadows by Greatbatch and Son, BA Hull, BTCV and Green Gym; work at the Watermeadows by the Council's Environmental Warden; recent developments at the Owl Nature Reserve and the Hensington Road Cemetery and the safety inspection of memorials at the two cemeteries.

RESOLVED

(i) that the Environmental Warden apply chicken wire mesh coverage to the oak vehicle bridge on footpath 10 at the Watermeadows;

(ii) that a 14v AEG drill be purchased at a cost of £199 for use by the Environmental Warden, to be funded from the monies previously agreed by Council for the purchase of tools;

(iii) that a meeting of the Cemeteries (Health and Safety) Working Group be held to consider further action resulting from the safety inspection of memorials at the two cemeteries.

(e) Report of the CMfP

The Council received and considered a report of the CMfP regarding the properties owned by the Council. It was agreed that the recommendations contained in the report had already been considered under different headings at the meeting.

WTC/220/08 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

None

WTC/221/08 PLANNING APPLICATION

Ref: 08/597/P/LB
Internal alterations to create en-suite bathroom.
120 Oxford Street
Navdip Dhariwal

The Town Mayor welcomed the evidence that the economic situation seemed to be drastically reducing the number of planning cases.

Decision: No comment

WTC/222/08 SAFETY TESTING OF MEMORIALS IN THE COUNCIL'S CEMETERIES

It was reported that the safety testing of memorials by IMI had been completed and action had subsequently been taken in respect of those memorials considered to be unsafe and requiring immediate attention.

Copies of the reports from IMI had been attached to the Agenda for Members consideration. The supporting information as to numbers of memorials that had been made safe or laid down, etc. was to be analysed and considered by the Cemeteries (Health and Safety) Working Group.

WTC/223/08 HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUE RELATING TO THE STOCKS OUTSIDE WOODSTOCK MUSEUM

The Council received and considered a report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

RESOLVED unanimously

That no action be taken.

WTC/224/08 LICENSING OF THE TOWN HALL AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Council received and considered a report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

RESOLVED

That the Council apply to have the sale of alcohol element removed from the premises licence for the Community Centre and advertise accordingly, as per the requirements of the District Council.

WTC/225/08 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND THE OXFORD MAIL

The Council was reminded that Cllr Carritt as Chairman of the Christmas Lights Working Group had been contacted by the Oxford Mail. They wished to get involved with the Christmas Lights switch on. Their purpose was to raise funds for their chosen charity (a children's hospital charity) by setting up a bouncy castle somewhere in the town and charging for the use of it. They would also be prepared to put, say, 25% of the takings into the Christmas Lights fund. They would also provide good publicity to attract maximum visitors on the night.

The Council noted the views of Chris Baylis, Chairman of Wake Up to Woodstock, the organisers of the event.

RESOLVED

(a) That the Town Council is sympathetic to the request. However, the event is organised by Wake Up to Woodstock and any agreement to this proposition should come from that body;

(b) That the Town Council considers that its Christmas Lights budget should not benefit from any money that is collected by the Oxford Mail on the night and that all of the proceeds ought to go to the newspaper's nominated children's charity.

WTC/226/08 PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE CURRENT A44 CLEARWAY ORDER

The Council received and considered a letter dated 15 October 2008 from the County Council.

RESOLVED

(a) that the Council re-affirms its support for the policies of the A44A Group and in particular its aim to downgrade the A44;

(b) that, therefore, the Council opposes the proposal to amend the current A44 Clearway Order.

WTC/227/08 TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON EVENT – 10 NOVEMBER 2008

Earlier this year the Council had Resolved that Cllrs J Cooper and B Yoxall attend a liaison event involving the County Council, District Council and town and parish councils in West Oxfordshire to be held on the evening of Monday 10 November in Witney, with the aim of strengthening the links between these bodies.

It was now reported that this meeting had been postponed. The County Council was hoping to reschedule the meeting and had asked for suggestions as to the topics to be discussed at the meeting. It was suggested that one item might be the organisation of the Game Fair, 2008.

RESOLVED

That the Council's representatives be required to follow in all respects the established policy of the Council, including the decision taken at the September meeting of Council regarding the traffic chaos at the time of the Game Fair.

WTC/228/08 CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor reminded Members of the Honorary Townsman evening to be held on Monday 1 December 2008 and confirmed that invitations would be extended as widely as possible.

WTC/229/08 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED

That in view of the special or confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

WTC/230/08 MATERNITY LEAVE FOR MEMBER OF STAFF

The Council received and considered a report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

RESOLVED

That Champion be employed to select a few candidates who can then attend a short informal chat with the Town Clerk to determine suitability to provide cover for maternity leave.

WTC/231/08 INTERIM SALARY AWARD 2008-9

The Council received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer

RESOLVED

(a) that the interim salary award for 2008-09 be implemented in accordance with the Responsible Financial Officer's report;

(b) that the increases be backdated to 1 April 2008.

The meeting rose at 10.30pm

Signed Date