

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE WANTAGE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ONLINE USING ZOOM, ON MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2020, AT 7.30 P.M.**

Councillors present: Councillor Major J Sibbald (Town Mayor)
Councillors I R Cameron A Crawford, A Dunford,
A Duveen, A Gilhome, J T Hannaby, E L Johnson,
A C Menzies, P O'Leary, C Walters and
C H Wills-Wright.

Others present: One member of the public

Clerk: W P Falkenau.

Deputy Clerk: S Sanders

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O C Curley, J Goodman and I L Sheldon.

Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

None.

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 2 November 2020

The minutes were approved.

50. Statements and questions from the public

51. Matters arising from the Council meetings held on 12 October and 30 November 2020

45. District and County Councillors' reports - M4/A34 diversionary routes

The Clerk had not yet written to the District Council seeking an update.

Action: Clerk

48. Provision of meals over the Christmas period to those children who would normally get free school meals

The OALC had confirmed that it was legal for the Town Council to fund vouchers, subject to payment not being made directly to the local education authority. There had been difficulties experienced in contacting Edenred, the company that operates a voucher scheme. No telephone number was apparent on its website. Councillor Johnson agreed to seek to obtain a telephone number.

Action: Johnson

52. Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 12 October and 2 November 2020

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Sibbald
SECONDED BY Councillor Johnson
IT WAS RESOLVED that the minutes be adopted.

53. Minutes of the Leisure and Amenities Committee meeting held on 26 October 2020

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Hannaby
SECONDED BY Councillor O'Leary
IT WAS RESOLVED that the minutes be adopted

54. Minutes of the Promotion, Communications and Events Committee meeting held on 16 November 2020

19. "COVID-19 Safer Public Spaces Proposal" survey

Complete details of the survey would be added to the Council's website when analysis and redacting of the narrative responses had been completed. **Action: Clerk**

17 h). Artisan Christmas Markets

It was noted that the market could proceed under the proposed Covid-19 restrictions due to apply from 2 December. The Town Centre Manager was liaising with District Council officers concerning which stalls were, or were not, permissible.

20. Arrangements and content for December newsletter

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Hannaby
SECONDED BY Councillor O'Leary
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Town Mayor's Christmas message should be featured on the front page of the newsletter.

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Wills-Wright
SECONDED BY Councillor Hannaby
IT WAS RESOLVED that the minutes, as amended, be adopted.

55. Minutes of the Policy, Management and Finance Committee meeting held on 9 November 2020

43 c) Update on plans to pedestrianise western end of the Market Place

The Clerk had received a quote of £2,100 from Glanville consultants to work up a scheme to improve sight lines at the Alfred Street junction and widen the pedestrian walkways at the Mill Street/Market Place junction. He sought approval to proceed with this now, with Glanville, rather than await for approval through the next meeting cycle, that doesn't end until early February, or than to seek quotes from other consultants. He advised that if the sight lines at Alfred Street could not be improved, it was unlikely that the County Council would approve the permanent pedestrianisation of the western end of the Market Place. It was noted that Glanville were fully acquainted with the Market Place and its surrounds having developed a Market Place pedestrianisation proposal for the Town Council some years ago.

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Hannaby
SECONDED BY Councillor Crawford
IT WAS RESOLVED that the quote of £2,100 from Glanville, to work up a scheme to improve sight lines at the Alfred Street junction and widen the pedestrian walkways at the Mill Street/Market Place junction, be accepted. The Clerk was to instruct Glanville.

Action: Clerk

47. Initial report on outcome of "COVID-19 Safer Public Spaces Proposal" survey

Two amendments to the wording of the minutes were to be referred to the next committee meeting. These were "... approximately 60%..." and "...the narrative responses, subject to redaction, were to be published..."

Action: Clerk

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Crawford

SECONDED BY Councillor Walters

IT WAS RESOLVED that the minutes, as amended, be adopted.

56. **To receive External Auditor Report and Certificate 2019/20 and Notice of Conclusion of Annual Audit.**

Moore, the external auditor, had made two comments:

"The Council noted they only review the Code of Conduct when a new model version is issued by NALC. Although we understand the model code is adopted by the majority of authorities and may not require to be updated, the JPAG Practitioners Guide paragraph 1.14 states that this should be reviewed regularly and the Council should actively consider whether the Code remains appropriate to its operations."

and

"The internal auditor has answered 'Not Covered' to box L of the Internal Audit report which relates to whether the Council has demonstrated that it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights. The Council should consider what evidence they are able to provide in to satisfy this assertion in the future."

The Clerk explained that the Code of Conduct adopted in June 2012 was the same one adopted by all parish councils across Oxfordshire. Parish councils had been asked to adopt the same code in order to make the work of the Monitoring Officer easier by only needing to be familiar with one code, rather than many different ones. Whilst a review could take place, it would serve no purpose if there was no intention to change it. A new code of conduct for all parish councils was currently being developed at a national level. He suggested that maybe the Practitioners Guide should be changed to fit in with the practice adopted in Oxfordshire.

The Clerk had asked Mr Rose, the internal auditor, what evidence he would require to tick 'yes' on box L of the internal audit report. He had advised that this question had been raised a year ago at the Internal Auditors forum which was attended by representatives from NALC, SLCC and PKF. The conclusion at that meeting was that there was, in fact, no practical evidence that could be provided. He had not ticked this box for other internal audits where PKF were the external auditors and no comment had been made.

The Clerk suggested that both these matters be referred to the OALC for onward referral to the responsible bodies.

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Crawford

SECONDED BY Councillor Wills-Wright

IT WAS RESOLVED that the conclusion of the audit and the comments of Moore, the external auditor, be noted. The Clerk was to refer the comments to the OALC with a view to securing guidance or seeking changes. The Clerk was to post the 'Notice of Conclusion of Audit' on the Council's notice board and website.

Action: Clerk

57. To approve the opening of savings accounts with building societies

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Walters
SECONDED BY Councillor O’Leary

IT WAS RESOLVED to open savings accounts with Bath Building Society, Beverley Building Society, Buckinghamshire Building Society, Cambridge Building Society, Monmouthshire Building Society and National Counties Building Society with deposits of up to £85,000 and with specific amounts to be agreed with committee chairmen.

Action: Clerk

58. District and County Councillors’ reports.

District Council

Grants were being offered to businesses severely affected by the pandemic. Two marshals, wearing hi-viz jackets, had been employed to visit towns and villages to give guidance on adherence to the Covid-19 regulations and guidance. District Council officers were now actively involved in the track and trace activity, achieving higher success due to local knowledge. In the background work was being undertaken regarding Brexit and on arrangements for vaccinations. Charges in District Council car parks were to be suspended on the Saturdays leading up to Christmas. The cabinet was due to approve contributing to the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement.

County Council

County Council officers were also actively involved in responding to the pandemic. Budgets were still under consideration. There were discussions proceeding regarding various highway schemes. Government funding might be available to help support the reopening of the railway station at Grove. Local representatives had attended the recent HOSC meeting. A meeting of the Town Council’s Health Sub-committee and the CEO of Oxford Health Trust was to be held on 15 December.

59. Town Mayor’s communications.

The Town Mayor's communications were available to view on the Town Council's Website. He reported on activities he had been involved in since the previous meeting.

He had granted the Pride in Wantage Award to the Wantage Silver Band for its services to our community over many decades.

A virtual Town Mayor’s Carols would take place at 7 pm on 9 December. Details were to be posted on the Council’s website.

Action: Sibbald

The meeting closed at 8.31 p.m.

WPF