

CHIPPING NORTON TOWN COUNCIL

At the Council Meeting held remotely due to restrictions imposed by government because of the COVID-19 pandemic, pursuant to notice on Monday 19 October 2020 at 7.15pm via Zoom, the following members were present: -

Cllr. G. Mazower, Town Mayor
Cllr. S. Coleman, Deputy Mayor
Cllr. R. Benfield
Cllr. N. Bradley
Cllr. C Butterworth
Cllr. L. Carter
Cllr D. Davidson
Cllr. J. Graves
Cllr. D. Heyes
Cllr. M. Jarratt
Cllr. R. Poole
Cllr. L. Tuckwell
Cllr. M. Tysoe
Cllr. M. Walker

OCC Cllr H Biles
WWOC Cllr M Cahill
WODC Cllr L Carter
WODC Cllr G Saul

Officers: Janet Eustace, Locum Town Clerk
Louise Steele, LGRC
Miss K. Linnington, Deputy Town Clerk
Terry Palmer, Town Hall Keeper

Others: Inspector Hookham (Item 7512) and 8 Members of the Public

The Mayor opened the meeting by announcing the winners of the William Fowler Allotments Competition. Large allotments: 1st prize Mr I Terry, 2nd prize Mr M Case, 3rd prize Mr E Huckin. Small allotments: 1st prize Mrs E Moorland, 2nd prize Ms J Waterman and 3rd prize Mrs C Pettengell. The Mayor congratulated all the winners on their beautifully tended plots.

7510. Mayor's Welcome.

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. She reported that Civic functions were limited due to COVID 19 restrictions but she had attended a small reception hosted by the High Sheriff, the Scouts AGM (held via Zoom) and had visited the Allotments where she had spoken to a number of plot holders.

7511. The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 21 September 2020. It was noted that a set of minutes with revisions to item 7500 had been circulated the previous week. Subject to this amendment the draft minutes were agreed and will be signed by the Mayor at the next face to face meeting.

7512. Policing in Chipping Norton

The Mayor welcomed Inspector Hookham to the meeting. Cllr Walker referred to an incident in August which required a multi-agency solution. He also referred to the absence of a Police Station in the town. Inspector Hookham reported that the police had been working with Cottsway to address specific problems and he would have more to report at the next Council meeting. PC Rob Webb had been released from operational duties and was back in the town. Two additional officers would be available to assist him. The issue of police resource in the town needed to be taken up with the Chief Inspector and the Superintendent. The enforcement of COVID restrictions had put added pressure on the force but he wished to assure Councillors that policing in Chipping Norton was being taken very seriously.

Council RESOLVED that Cllrs Walker and WODC Cllrs Cahill and Carter should put together a draft agenda for a possible meeting with senior Police Officers about police resource in the town. This would form the basis of deciding who should attend the meeting.

The Mayor thanked Inspector Hookham for his attendance and said that a resident had reported a marked improvement in the last few days. The Inspector said that he was pleased to hear measures taken were working.

Inspector Hookham left the meeting at 19.35.

7513. Public Participation

Stephen Williams spoke about the problem of HGVs in the town. In particular he was disappointed that the Town Council had not resolved to support Cllr Biles' motion to the County Council which had been adopted by OCC in late 2019.

Dawn Mayne spoke in opposition to the possible re-installation of a bus shelter outside her house in Walterbush Road. She questioned whether it was indeed a temporary measure and feared that the police would refuse to attend any future anti-social activity.

7514. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr. E. Coles.

7515. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

7516. HGVs

Cllr Graves summarised the meeting that had been held between Town Councillors, Cllr Biles and OCC officers the previous week. She apologised to those wanting to attend in the belief that it was a TAC meeting and explained that it had been hosted by Cllr Biles.

At the meeting OCC officers had put forward a number of options for alternative HGV routes which had been scored according to deliverability. In discussion it had been noted that the East link road was not a viable option and that a route via the Rollright Stones presented heritage and archaeological issues. Other possible routes ran to the north and south of the Stones. HGV restrictions on 'A' roads required the de-priming of those roads. It was agreed that OCC needed to open discussions with neighbouring Counties as a matter of urgency. Cllr Biles had proposed setting up a small group chaired by herself and comprising OCC Officers and two town councillors to look in detail at the various proposals.

Council RESOLVED that Cllrs Tysoe and Walker should be appointed to this group.

Councillors reiterated their support of OCC Cllr Biles' efforts to find a solution to the problem and, by unanimous vote, RESOLVED to adopt Cllr Biles' resolution (below) which had been adopted by OCC in autumn 2019.

"This Council has recognised and accepted the serious issues facing Chipping Norton given inclusion in LTP's as far back as 2004. The biggest issue in Chipping Norton is the amount of HGV's accessing the High Street in the town. It is now accepted by Public Health England, that Air pollution damages health and can be responsible for deaths. Chipping Norton has been an AQMA since 2006. Air Quality continues to be over EU acceptable limits and one of the highest in Oxfordshire. There is also a safety issue where two A roads merge into a narrow road unable to take an HGV and a car travelling in the other direction and narrow pavements. There have been 2 deaths and a serious accident in recent years. HGV's affect listed buildings and residents. There has been little or no action by OCC. The majority of land at Tank Farm is OCC owned. Given this, there will be a large receipt from development which could be used towards a weight limit and lorry route. This Council requests the Cabinet to face up to the health and safety issues of residents of Chipping Norton and act on the previous LTP2 and LTP3 recommendations for a weight limit or indeed a lorry route."

At the request of the Mayor, Cllr Graves agreed to take forward, before the next meeting of TAC in December, the matter of existing signage in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, possible signage by the Quiet Woman and the updating of Satnavs.

7517. Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr Biles thanked the Council for endorsing her motion and stressed the importance of the term 'lorry route' rather than 'by pass'. She said she would hold the first meeting of the HGV Working Group in November. She stressed the significant costs involved in altering signage.

Cllr Biles reported that OCC and the District Council had introduced a COVID track and trace system which would complement the national NHS system. Cases in the County were on the rise. She confirmed that officers were looking at the Town Council's vision statement for Tank Farm and that the Master Plan was expected in November or December. She confirmed that free parking would continue in West Oxfordshire.

7518. West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllrs Carter and Cahill said they would hold over their reports until the next meeting. Cllr Saul referred to a report he had circulated prior to the meeting and confirmed that the East Chipping Norton Masterplan was due to go before the Cabinet in November.

7519. Committee Structure

Cllr Coleman introduced her paper setting out the recommendations of the Working Group looking at the Council's Committee structure.

By a majority vote of eight councillors voting in favour (with five voting against and one abstention) Council RESOLVED that the current committee system needed updating.

Cllr Coleman advised that she had not had any comments regarding the two possible options for a new Committee structure.

By a majority vote of eight councillors voting in favour (with five voting against and one abstention) Council RESOLVED to adopt a new Committee structure comprising Finance and Resources, Community and Strategic Planning.

The Clerk was asked to contact Councillors to establish the Committees on which they would like to serve and to set up initial meetings as soon as possible.

7520. Bus shelters

The Council received a report from OCC Officers setting out the possible options for bus shelters in Walterbush Road. The Mayor proposed that residents in the vicinity should be invited to comment on the proposals. Cllr Tysoe felt that the costs given by OCC and which were to be met from s106, were high and that a smaller shelter would be a preferable, cheaper option. It was agreed that this should be included within the consultation as a fourth option.

Council RESOLVED that a consultation should be carried out.

7521. East Chipping Norton Working Group

Cllr Heyes reported that there was due to be a full consultation on the master plan in the New Year although it was unclear how this would work given the current COVID restrictions. The Mayor reported that the Oxford Civic Society had circulated the Town Council's Vision Statement. She would be progressing a meeting with RIBA as soon as possible.

7522. Re-opening the Town Hall

The Council received a report from Mrs Steele on the possible re-opening of the Town Hall. The report included a COVID risk assessment and draft COVID Special Conditions of Hire. The Deputy Clerk reported that the Zumba class was keen to restart and she had received queries about the music festival in March. Several Councillors expressed the view the Council should not consider opening the Town Hall when COVID cases were on the rise. It was pointed out that the risk assessment set out options for reopening in a measured and safe manner and that partial reopening could bring benefits for those who are suffering from isolation. The Town Hall Keeper confirmed his view that the Hall could be opened for use by certain groups. Extra cleaning would be needed.

By a majority vote of nine councillors voting in favour (with five voting against) Council RESOLVED that the Town Hall should be opened, within 4 to 6 weeks, in such a way as to comply with Government restrictions. This would mean that only the main hall should be opened with a maximum capacity of 39 in the hall and seven on the stage. COVID Special Conditions of Hire will apply. The opening will be on a trial basis and should be kept under review.

7523. The Council RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue.

7524. Town Clerk Recruitment

Mrs Steele confirmed that she had issued the application packs on 2 October. 3 applications had been received and another 13 had contacted her to express an interest. She urged Councillors to publicise the post via social media if they were able.

7525. Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday

Mrs Steele reported that the RBL had scaled back their plans for Remembrance Sunday with the emphasis being on the laying of wreaths at the War Memorial. This complied with the latest guidance from Central Government.

7526. Christmas Lights

The Mayor reported that plans for a Christmas event had moved on with various activities being proposed. A group of Councillors expressed concerns that this event had not been voted on by Council and, given the background of rising COVID cases across the County, posed an unacceptable threat of infection. They felt unable to support the event. The majority of Councillors felt that the discussion at the September Council meeting had been sufficiently positive to justify the continued planning for the event. The Mayor emphasised that the organisers were exceptionally well qualified to organise the event in such a way as to meet the Government restrictions. The Clerk added that plans for the event would need to be agreed by both the District and the County Safety Advisory Group. It was agreed that arrangements for the event should continue complying with the COVID restrictions in place at the time.

Cllr Tysoe left the meeting.

7527. Traffic Advisory Committee

The Council noted the minutes of the Traffic Advisory Committee meeting held on 17th September 2020.

7528. Planning Committee

The Council noted minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 12th October 2020.

7529. Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Council received the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 15th October 2020. As Cllr Tysoe had left the meeting, it was agreed to defer discussion of most the recommendations to another meeting. Council RESOLVED to accept the Committee's recommendations to transfer the Council's banking to Unity Trust Bank and to invest spare reserves in the CCLA.

7530. The Town Clerk's Report was noted.7531. Date of next meeting: 16 November 2020.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm.