

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF NEWBURY TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, MARKET PLACE, NEWBURY
ON MONDAY 26 JUNE 2017 AT 7.30PM.**

PRESENT

Councillors Howard Bairstow (from 8.16pm); Jeff Beck (from 8.16pm); Jeanette Clifford; Jo Day; Adrian Edwards; Miles Evans; David Fenn (Town Mayor); David Fish; James Frederickson; John Gardner; Dave Goff; Sarah Greenall; Mike Johnston; Elizabeth O’Keeffe; Margo Payne; Anthony Pick; Kuldip Singh Kang; Julian Swift-Hook; Martha Vickers.

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Lynne Doherty, Andrew Steel, Tony Stretton and Arthur Johnson

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chief Executive Officer declared that Councillors Howard Bairstow, Jeff Beck, Jeanette Clifford, Adrian Edwards, James Frederickson, Dave Goff, Mike Johnston and Anthony Pick are also Members of West Berkshire Council, which is declared as a general interest on their behalf and a dispensation is in place to allow them to partake in discussions relating to West Berkshire Council business.

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Newbury Town Council held on Wednesday 10 May 2017, as circulated, were amended as follows:

Minute no. 65 was amended from: “Civic Pride, Arts & Leisure 6 February 2017” to read “Civic Pride, Arts & Leisure 20 February 2017”, and “Community Services 27 February 2017” was amended to read “Community Services 13 March 2017”

PROPOSED: Councillor Anthony Pick

SECONDED: Councillor Margo Payne

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of Newbury Town Council held on Wednesday 10 May 2017, as amended, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

PROPOSED: Councillor Anthony Pick

SECONDED: Councillor Adrian Edwards

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Newbury Town Council held on Friday 12 May 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

The minutes of the Annual Meeting of Newbury Town Council held on Sunday 14 May 2017, as circulated, were amended as follows:

Minute No. 1 was amended to delete the word “Julian” and
Minute No 2 was amended to change the name “Tim” to “Terry”

PROPOSED: Councillor Anthony Pick

SECONDED: Councillor Adrian Edwards

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Annual Meeting of Newbury Town Council held on Sunday 14 May 2017, as amended, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

10. QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions or petitions

11. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

Councillor Jo Day asked the following question:

“Councillor Surgery is one of several ways that NTC communicates with the people of Newbury but some residents are still unaware that the service exists. Is it time to take action to improve the way Councillor Surgery works?”

The Town Mayor responded:

“This is a very timely question, coming during our 20th Anniversary year. I believe the Saturday Surgeries have been in place since the Town Council was established back in 1997 and there has been little or no review of the way they operate since then. They are advertised on the Council’s Social Media accounts Thursday afternoon and Saturday morning prior to the surgery. We now use the large ‘A’ boards on Saturdays on the pavement outside the Town Hall to advise the public that Saturday surgeries are in place. Members of the public are also encouraged to ask their questions via “Ask the Leader” throughout the week on the NTC website.

I believe the time is right to review the operation of the Saturday Surgeries. Are they worthwhile? Can we add more value for the public from the time and effort that all Members give to these. We need to set out what we aim to achieve from Saturday Surgeries before we can consider how to improve the way they work. The Surgeries are an objective in the Council’s Strategy: under Policy Area 2 – Communication and Consultation, the Strategy says that:

We will strive to maintain openness and transparency in our actions and decision making. We will actively seek to hear the needs and desires of people in Newbury, and will respond as quickly and as comprehensively as possible within the limits of our resources and other constraints. In order to achieve this, we will "Make ourselves available to the public by holding Saturday morning surgeries". The Council’s Strategy is reviewed each October and the Strategy Working Group will convene in August to commence this work. I would like to set up a Working Group to consider this matter and report its recommendations to Council in October.

Councillor Martha Vickers asked the following question:

“As the arrangement with Soulstice to provide a Tourist Information Service appears not to be progressing. Does this Council agree that it is time for the Town Council to take further action in order to ensure adequate provision of this important service?”

The Town Mayor responded:

“At present a limited Visitor Information service is being provided under licence from the Town Council by Soulstice who occupy Suite 1 in the Town Hall. This arrangement was approved by The Community Services Committee on 12 December 2016 and a 12 month licence was granted on 19 December 2016.

Soulstice have now informed us that the service does not sit comfortably with their business and they would like to cease providing it. They say it has not given them any extra business and at times is disruptive to their core business. They also point out that some days they do not open until noon and the service is then unavailable.

Accordingly, the Council will look at its options and resources and consider how to sustain the service in the short term, that is, from September 2017 to March 2018. In the meantime, the Council will have to consider the longer term provision of this service, especially in the context of the budget for 2018-19.

For the longer term, I would very much like to see a visitor information service maintained in the town. I believe it is a vital service for the welfare of the town, whoever provides it, and however it is to be provided. I will refer the matter to the Community Services Committee, who might perhaps establish a Working Group with relevant outside representation to consider this matter and make appropriate recommendations to the Policy and Resources Committee. The Council should then know the options available and resources required to provide the service. This will help us to decide whether or not we are in a position to maintain this service, either on our own or in partnership with any other relevant organisations.”

Councillor Martha Vickers asked the following supplementary question:

“I would like to be part of a short term working group. I believe we already have some money set aside for this service?”

The Town Mayor responded:

“Yes there is some money and we need to see how we can make best use of it.”

12. END OF YEAR STATUTORY ACCOUNTS 2016/2017

The Annual Return (subject to external audit) for the financial year 2016/2017 was received.

The Council has responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the accounting statements.

To satisfy this responsibility the Council approved each individual paragraph (1-9) of the Annual Governance Statement, which are as follows:

That this Council has:

- 1 prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

- 2 made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
- 3 only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with proper practices in doing so.
- 4 during the year given all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
- 5 considered the financial and other risks it faces and has dealt with them properly.
- 6 arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
- 7 responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
- 8 disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year-end if relevant.
- 9 met all of its responsibilities where it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

PROPOSED: Councillor Adrian Edwards

SECONDED: Councillor Julian Swift-Hook

RESOLVED: That this Council approves each individual paragraph (1-9) of the Annual Governance Statement as per agenda Appendix 4, and that we confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2017, that we have complied fully with all of these requirements.

Section 1 of the Annual Return was then signed by the Mayor and The Chief Executive Officer.

PROPOSED: Councillor Adrian Edwards

SECONDED: Councillor Margo Payne

RESOLVED: that this Council adopt the accounts, as per agenda Appendix 4 with an amendment to box 9 for 31 March 2017, which now reads £5,895,675, and **authorises** the signing of the Annual Return (subject to external audit) by The Town Mayor in line with the regulatory requirement to sign the accounts by 30 June 2017.

It was noted that the external audit is planned to be undertaken by Mazars and that the date for the exercise of electors' rights has been set as 8 August 2017. The appropriate legal notice with regard to public inspection will be displayed following approval of the Annual return. The external audit may generate further amendments. The final Annual Return, including the Auditor's Certificate, is due for publication by 30 September 2017.

Section 2 of the Annual return was then signed by the Mayor.

13. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

The Town Mayor gave his periodic report, a copy of which was published with the agenda.

14. LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader gave his periodic report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes as Appendix 1.

15. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

The Chief Executive Officer presented his report, a copy of which was published with the agenda.

16. COMMITTEES

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

Planning & Highways	19 April 2017
Policy & Resources	24 April 2017
Planning & Highways	08 May 2017
Community Services	24 May 2017
Planning & Highways	31 May 2017
Civic Pride, Arts & Leisure (Draft)	12 June 2017

17. COUNCILLOR SURGERY ROTA

The information regarding the time table for the Councillor Surgery rota for the municipal year 2017/2018 was received and noted by the Council, as per agenda Appendix 7.

18. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS

Discussion and resolution to be voted on at the next meeting of Council: That the ex-officio Committee memberships of the Leader and Deputy Leader on Planning and Highways Committee be amended, as per agenda Appendix 8.

Discussion and resolution to be voted on at the next meeting of Council: That Standing Order 18, regarding Resolutions moved on Notice be amended, as per agenda Appendix 8.

Discussion and resolution to be voted on at the next meeting of Council: That the Terms of Reference of the Planning and Highways Committee be amended to deal with urgent cases where a response is needed outside the Committee's meeting cycle, as per agenda Appendix 8.

19. LOCAL DEMOCRACY WORKING GROUP

Members noted a verbal update from Councillor James Frederickson on progress of the Local Democracy Working Group. The Council noted that the Group are planning to introduce a new debating competition for local secondary school pupils.

20. INTERNET BANKING

PROPOSED: Councillor Julian Swift-Hook

SECONDED: Councillor Adrian Edwards

RESOLVED: That the resolutions required to open a Council bank account at Handelsbanken, Newbury, as approved by P & R on 24 April in order for the Council to have internet banking services, were approved, as per agenda Appendices 9, 9a, 9b, and 9c.

21. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2017/18 MUNICIPAL YEAR

PROPOSED: Councillor Julian Swift-Hook

SECONDED: Councillor Adrian Edwards

RESOLVED: The amended schedule of meetings for the 2017-18 Municipal Year was approved, with the addition of Mayor Making in 2018-2019 on Sunday 20 May 2018, as per agenda Appendix 10.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, THE TOWN MAYOR DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.20PM

TOWN MAYOR

**LEADER'S REPORT TO NEWBURY TOWN COUNCIL
26 June 2017**

This is my first report after succeeding Councillor Dave Goff as Leader. I wish to record my appreciation of his hard work and leadership over the past two years and that of his deputy Cllr Anthony Pick.

An Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Council was called on 12 May. The purpose was to extend the six month time for disqualification to June so that Cllr Andrew Steel could retain his seat. Cllr Steel has had to spend much time out of the country on business so I was pleased that the proposal was passed by the Council. I would like to thank all the Councillors and Council staff who gave up their Friday evening to make this possible.

The Mayor Making on 14 May was the usual grand pomp and colourful ceremonial event of the year, when Cllr Julian Swift-Hook handed over the chain of office to Cllr David Fenn. We were honoured by the presence of the High Sherriff of Berkshire, Mrs Sarah Scrope and entertained in the interval by some splendid singing by the Falkland School choir.

Another splendid event was the celebration of the Town Council's 20th Anniversary in St Nicolas Church Hall on 22nd May. Cllr Kuldip Singh Kang, the Chairman of the 20th anniversary working group, was the master of ceremonies and several Councillors received long service awards. I was pleased to make a short speech in appreciation of Cllr Julian Swift-Hook's record of 20 years as an elected Member and also to acknowledge Joyce Lewis' outstanding 25 years' service as our Civic Manager. She has organised every civic event ranging from Remembrance Day, the Golden Jubilee, Tigris Memorials and Royal visits. Her primary role is to manage the Mayor's events diary and to date, 25 Mayors including myself, have benefitted from her excellent and long service.

It had been decided that when all the repairs and renovations to Victoria Park had been completed, a Families Day would be held so that the residents and visitors to the town could enjoy the facilities opened up in the Park. Thus a Families Day was organised for 27th May and despite poor weather, the sun came out in the afternoon, so did the visitors and the day was a great success. Now that the Bowls Club is more visible to the public, 7 new members have joined. The Club has been able to resume competitive matches with other Bowls Clubs in the County. The refurbished Tennis Courts were opened by Jonathan Overend, the national tennis commentator and this resulted in a number of family memberships being taken out on the day. £36 a year for a family is a real bargain. My thanks go to the members of the Victoria Park Working Group for their efforts in making the park so delightful, and to the Friends of Victoria Park who also were instrumental in keeping the rose and other flower beds weeded. My thanks also to the Community Services Manager, Granville Taylor and his team for their efforts in Victoria Park, not just for the Families Day but also for the many years in repairing the damage.

As part of the Victoria Park refurbishment, the football pitches were dug up and re-laid and this enabled a Football Festival to be run. Cllr David Fish organised this event which attracted 64 children across 8 teams on the day, 4 teams from Newbury and 4 from Thatcham. All the players were aged 6 to 7 years old. This was the only free football tournament on offer in the area. Next year it is intended to double the number of teams to 16 which will involve 128 children. My thanks go to Cllr David Fish for all his efforts.

Now on to the less glamorous events which have happened in the period. Travellers occupied Town Council land at Hutton Close last month and despite efforts by the Council to move them on, they

refused to leave the area. Eventually, Thames Valley police entered the site and issued a Section 61 Notice and they departed the following day.

Additional physical security measures were put into place to make it more difficult for future illegal incursions onto this land. The Council has now reviewed security on all the land we own against this risk.

You will be aware that we took over responsibility for the toilets in the Wharf from West Berkshire Council. You will be pleased to hear that paddle gates were fixed to the entrance which operate when a 20 pence is inserted. No complaints have been received on either the cost of the toilets nor its operation. It has had a dramatic effect in that the amount of litter left has diminished significantly and there has been no drug paraphernalia found in the building.

Reverting back to Victoria Park, planning permission has been obtained for the lights to the tennis courts, which will be operational from mid-August. A new boat container has been installed in the park, now closer to the pond. Lastly CCTV has been planned which will protect both the users of the park and its infrastructure.

A new floor covering has been chosen for the Council Chamber floor which will be fitted in time for the first wedding on 1st July.

In 2013 the BID agreed to take control of the provision and the financing of the Christmas lights. In this year's budget, the Council provided £12,000 towards the cost of the lights. The BID then asked the Council for a £18,000 contribution which was considered excessive. We checked if the Good Exchange might assist and they confirmed that they would match fund up to £5,000 and the BID have now confirmed that this year's Christmas lights will go ahead. We believe that the Christmas lights benefit the community and entice visitors into the Town but the local businesses reap the financial benefits. We look forward to entering into the earliest possible discussions with the BID to ensure we get the best outcome next year for the community.

Lastly, I have been visiting areas of the Town for which the Town Council is responsible and the first was Victoria Park. While the Park itself is well kept and is a great attraction for both residents and visitors, there are some areas around the perimeter managed by West Berkshire Council, which do not reach the same degree of excellence as ours. Discussions are on-going with WBC officers to determine the way forward on this.

The other area I have looked at is the Charter Market, which is held every Thursday and Saturday. It has been noticeable that the number of stalls and diversity of goods has declined in the last two years. However there has been a recent change with new Markets managers and they are very enthusiastic in attempting to make the market more attractive and increase the number of stalls. The Market Working Group will be looking at supporting the managers and making suggestions on improvements and in advertising the markets.

I will be visiting other areas in the near future. These will include the allotments, playgrounds, open areas, cemeteries and the Town Hall itself.

This is my report and I welcome comments and questions.

Cllr Adrian Edwards
Leader
26 June 2017

