

# OLNEY TOWN COUNCIL



## Minutes of the meeting of Olney Town Council held at The Olney Centre on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 7.00pm

**Present:** Cllrs Aldred, Bethune, Brock, Brown, Geach, Geary, Hall, Pibworth, Rodden, Rowland, Stokes, Tennant, Varley, Ward, Whitworth

**In attendance:** Andrea Vincent (Town Clerk), Sarah Kennedy (Deputy Town Clerk)

**Public Forum:** There were two statements from members of the public

- 1) A local resident congratulated the new Councillors on being elected and continued by asking what has gone wrong with the Neighbourhood Plan? He believed the ONP limit of 300 houses has already been exceeded. He shared concerns regarding traffic congestion, parking problems and lack of infrastructure.

He asked for a public statement to be made as to where we are with current and new developments in Olney with regards to the ONP.

- 2) A local resident asked for full access to meetings after they have taken place by placing the live recordings on YouTube as soon as they have taken place.

The first statement will be responded to by the Clerk.

The Clerk said she had already responded to the resident on the 2<sup>nd</sup> question.

### **OTC21/80: Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence

Cllr Rowland was late due to work commitments

### **OTC21/81: Declarations of interests on items on the agenda**

Cllr Stokes declared an interest in item OTC21/97 as he is Chairman of the adjacent sports club.

### **OTC21/82: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24th May 2021**

Item OTC21/54 Cllr Geach stated that an error had occurred in counting the votes for the Deputy Mayor in that, she did not gain an absolute majority of votes. To rectify this mistake Cllr Geach explained that all Councillors have been consulted about this and all are happy for Cllr Brock to continue as Deputy Mayor. Cllr Geach proposed to affirm Cllr Brock as Deputy Mayor. Cllr Bethune seconded the proposal.

**Resolved:** all were in favour with affirming Cllr Brock as Deputy Mayor.

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Items OTC21/53 and OTC21/54 changes required with reference to the 'Mayor' (not Chairman) and 'Deputy Mayor' (not Deputy Chairman)

Cllr Geach requested an update on actions from 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 meeting from the Town Clerk:

OTC21/62 Representation at external bodies – The Town Clerk will circulate the information required as soon as possible

OTC21/71 Subscription to National Association of Councillors – Cllr Geach proposed that Olney Town Council become members of NAC as a group (£16 per Councillor membership). Cllr Hall seconded the proposal. All in favour.

**Resolved:** to subscribe OTC as a group to NAC

OTC21/75 Press/Media Policy – at the Annual Meeting, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 the Clerk advised that Cllr Pibworth had a conflict of interest in this item and could therefore not join the working group.

Cllr Geach stated that, upon receiving advice after the meeting, that he will respectfully decline the Clerks advice in this instance and make Cllr Pibworth a member of the working group to deal with the press/media policy.

**Resolved:** to agree the minutes of the OTC meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 as a true and correct record once outlined changes had been made

**OTC21/83: To receive new CAB Advice Service offer and agree the service for Olney**

**Resolved:** Cllr Geach and the Clerk to liaise outside of the meeting and revert back to full council with further information

**OTC21/84: Review the request to use the fields on the Recreation ground for a scaled down Riverfest following information from the Ann Hopkin Smith Trust**

**Resolved:** the Ann Hopkins Smith Trust has granted use of the Recreation Grounds for Riverfest

**OTC21/85: To agree the ongoing watering of the High Street hanging baskets by OTC staff**

Cllr Bethune submitted an official proposal requesting that OTC staff water and care for the hanging baskets along the High Street as organised by volunteers of The Olney Group. Cllr Geach seconded the proposal. All in favour.

**Resolved:** that the hanging baskets will be watered by OTC Ground staff

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**OTC21/86: To review a proposal to amend the committee structure with particular reference to the Recreation and Services Committee.**

Cllr Stokes proposed that the existing Recs and Services Committee be split into 2 separate areas

**Resolved:** Cllr Stokes proposed an amended proposal after detailed discussions to keep the Recs and Services Committee as is and to revisit this proposal in 6 months' time.

In the interim the Recs & Services Committee will look at how and if the various elements discussed work together and will bring back to full Council for review in 6 months' time.

Cllr Rodden seconded the proposal. All in favour.

**OTC21/87: To review a proposal to offer "surgery" accommodation without cost at The Olney Centre for OTC Councillors.**

Cllr Geach explained that the Clerk had proposed to charge Councillors personally for using a room at the Olney Centre if they were providing "surgery" meetings to residents. Cllr Geach stated that the primary purpose of a Councillor was to support residents and therefore that the use of OTC facilities do so was within the scope of their duties as Councillors.

Cllr Geary requested an amendment be made by requesting an addition to the proposal that every 6 months a report to the Olney Centre Committee be made detailing how well the service has been utilised. Cllr Geach proposed, Cllr Hall seconded all in favour.

**Resolved:** that the use of The Olney Centre for 'surgeries' go ahead without cost unless there is a paid booking, in this case, the 'surgery' will be held elsewhere or cancelled.

**OTC21/88: To review the QS report for the proposed community building on Asprey's and to agree a way forward.**

Cllr Geach explained that the report from the QS came under confidential cover and therefore is not permitted to be discussed in the open forum part of the OTC meeting. He therefore proposed that this item be discussed at the end of the meeting under confidential matters. Cllr Geary seconded the proposal.

Cllr Geach requested that when future agendas are circulated with a consideration of press and public exclusion item, that Councillors be made fully aware of the facts by the Clerk as to why this should be the case so that they can make an informed decision.

**Resolved:** to defer this item to the end of this OTC meeting with the exclusion of public and press.

**OTC21/89: Clarification of role of Data Protection Officer**

Cllr Geach explained that a named person is required to be a data protection officer.

Cllr Geach proposed that OTC designate the Clerk as the registered data protection officer for matters falling in the scope of the Data Protection Act 2018 relating to the conduct of business of OTC and accordance with any policies in compliance that falls into such obligations and other provisions as defined by the council. It is

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further resolved that the Scheme of Delegation be amended to reflect this resolution and the ICO duly informed.

Cllr Bethune seconded the proposal. All in favour

**Resolved:** that the Town Clerk be designated as the Data Protection Officer

**OTC21/90: To review the proposal for sale of land at Dingleberry considering the independent valuation.**

The previous OTC agreed in principal that this land can be sold at the April OTC meeting. This is an alley way that leads to nowhere and has a gate in front of it. It is of no amenity use. The Town Clerk said that she has asked 3 Land Agents for a valuation, but not one has got back to her as yet. An offer of £3500 plus fees has been made by a resident.

The Clerk confirmed that sufficient due diligence has been carried out and the offer value is a fair sum. Cllr Geary proposed that Olney Town Council sell the land. Cllr Bethune seconded. Cllr Hall abstained all others were in favour.

**Resolved:** that OTC sell the land based on the offer received and on the confirmation by the Clerk that due diligence has been carried out and the offer is a reasonable price for this piece of land

**OTC21/91: To discuss again the request to purchase OTC land at the side of 69 Dingleberry**

**Resolved:** Cllr Geach and others will go to look at the piece of land and speak with the resident for further information

**OTC21/92: To receive and agree the AGAR**

Cllr Bethune proposed to agree the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements 2020/21 (sections 1 and 2) of the AGAR. Cllr Varley seconded.

A couple of Councillors explained that they had not received the AGAR papers despite them being emailed to OTC on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 by the Deputy Town Clerk. It was agreed that an adjournment at the end of the meeting would take place to enable Councillors to review the paperwork before coming back to this meeting to approve the AGAR papers.

**Resolved:** agreement deferred until the end of the public part of the meeting

**OTC21/93: To receive the Town Clerks report**

Cllr Brock asked when the toilets are being shut and requested that they shut later after receiving feedback from local residents. The Clerk confirmed that we are looking at them being left open later. Cllr Ward explained that 5.30pm was a reasonable time to shut the toilets in the week and 6pm on a weekend due to the increased activity down at the Recreation Grounds.

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Cllr Stokes requested that additional signage be posted around the toilets to indicate opening and closing times.

Cllr Geach discussed Zero Hours Contracts stating that he opposed them and had requested that the Clerk produce a contract that gives specified hours. Cllr Bethune pointed out that this should be an agenda item for the HR Committee and Cllr Geach stated it will be when the HR Committee meets for the first time.

Cllr Stokes asked if zero hours contract will be reviewed for existing staff to which the Clerk stated that we can.

Cllr Geach proposed to remove Zero Hour Contracts in their entirety in relation to staff at OTC. Cllr Varley seconded the proposal. All in favour with the exception of Cllr Geary who abstained.

**Resolved:** To remove zero hours contracts in relation to existing and new members of staff at Olney Town Council.

Opening up the High Street – Cllr Brown has volunteered to be the Councillor representing OTC on this project. Cllr Brown pointed out that he has a meeting with Milton Keynes Council Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June regarding this. He requested contact details from the Clerk to contact the shop keepers.

Complaints – Cllr Geach clarified the complaint in the report mentioned in the Town Clerks report relates to a Councillor from the previous Council.

**Resolved:** Noted

## **OTC21/94: To receive an expenditure report**

Various Councillors requested that a further breakdown of costs with specific headings be provided on a monthly basis to provide clarity on the expenses.

Cllr Geary suggested that any Councillor with a query on an expense to call the office prior to the OTC meeting. The office can explain the expense in detail.

**Resolved:** a detailed breakdown of costs with additional headings for clarity to be presented at OTC meetings moving forward.

## **OTC21/95: To receive reports from Chairs of Committees and Councillors who represent OTC at external meetings**

**Resolved:** no Chairs of Committees and/or Councillors have represented OTC at any external meetings

Before Considering the next item, the Council adjourned for 5 minutes to consider the AGAR documents (see item OTC21/92)

Cllr Geach proposed dates from 14<sup>th</sup> June to 23<sup>rd</sup> July for the period for the exercise of public rights were confirmed. Cllr Brock seconded.

Section 1 of the AGAR – agreement proposed by Cllr Geach. Cllr Brown seconded.

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Section 2 of the AGAR – agreement proposed by Cllr Geach. Cllr Varley seconded.

**Resolved:** the AGAR was received and agreed

**OTC21/96: To consider exclusion of Public and Press Representatives pursuant to the Public Bodies (admission to meetings) Act 1960 on the basis that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by the confidential nature of the business to be contracted.**

**Resolved:** Cllr Geach proposed exclude the Public and Press for Item OTC21/88. Seconded by Cllr Aldred. 8 in favour (Cllrs Aldred, Tennant, Ward, Brown, Stokes, Geach, Rowland, Varley), 0 against, 7 abstentions (Cllrs Geary, Pibworth, Hall, Brock, Rodden, Bethune, Whitworth).

The majority vote was in favour and the public and press were excluded.

**OTC21/97:** To discuss the Club House at the Recreation Ground on East Street.

This item was discussed and resolved in the open session.

**Resolved:** Cllr Geary proposed that his item be deferred until the July meeting. Councillors will receive a confidential comprehensive report in the interim (to be received by OTC at least 10 days prior to the July OTC meeting via the Clerk) in order for Councillors to review and be ready to discuss (confidentially or otherwise) at the July OTC meeting.

The papers will be sent out via an emailed and password protected document.

Cllr Rodden requested that all relating and relevant minutes from previous meetings be distributed to Councillors and contained within this document.

Cllr Bethune seconded the proposal.

**OTC21/88: To review the QS report for the proposed community building on Asprey's and to agree a way forward.**

This deferred item was discussed after the exclusion of press and public was agreed (OTC21/96)

Two options were outlined:

A) Build, as originally proposed, a community centre, the cost of which would be borne in the main by the developers.

B) Build a larger community centre with an enhanced specification at an additional cost for the town in excess of £1million.

There was then some debate over how such a centre might be best utilised.

OTC wish to involve the town as widely as possible in such a decision and will be seeking to do so before plans are finalised.

**Resolved:** that this item will go onto the July meeting agenda for further discussion. OTC asked Cllr Geach to produce and distribute a report to OTC and to residents summarising discussions and council views.