

**Minutes of the Meeting of Newbury Town Council
Held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Newbury,
at 7.30 pm on Monday 30 January 2023.**

Present

Councillors Phil Barnett, Martin Colston, Billy Drummond, Sue Farrant, Chris Foster, Jon Gage, Stuart Gourley, Roger Hunneman, Olivia Lewis, Pam Lusby-Taylor, David Marsh, Stephen Masters, Vaughan Miller, Andy Moore, Gary Norman (Town Mayor), Elizabeth O’Keeffe, and Erik Pattenden.

Officers in Attendance

Hugh Peacocke – Chief Executive Officer

53. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Councillors Jeff Beck, Jo Day, Nigel Foot, Sarah Slack, Martha Vickers and Tony Vickers.

54. Declarations of interest and dispensations

Councillors Phil Barnett, Billy Drummond, David Marsh, Stephen Masters, Andy Moore, Erik Pattenden, 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.

The CEO declared that there is a dispensation for all those Town Councillors who live in the parish of Newbury to discuss matters relating to the Town Council budget and setting the precept.

55. Minutes of the meeting of Newbury Town Council held on Monday 17 October 2022.

Proposed: Councillor Billy Drummond

Seconded: Councillor Elizabeth O’Keeffe

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting of Newbury Town Council held on Monday 17 October 2022 as a true record of the meeting.

56. Minutes of the meeting of Newbury Town Council held on Thursday 27 October 2022.

Proposed: Councillor Vaughan Miller

Seconded: Councillor martin Colston

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting of Newbury Town Council held on Thursday 27 October 2022 as a true record of the meeting.

57. Members’ Questions and Petitions

Question received from Cllr. Phil Barnett:

After several years of road works, parking restrictions due to various construction projects, including recent Stirling cables development, residents of Mill Lane, Kings, Boundary, Hambridge and associated roads have had to endure daily problems, whether lane closures, displaced parking or restricted access in and out of their properties.

The recent gas leaks are no exception. They now find the final works to link the new Hectors Way road with Kings Road is to commence , resulting with more of the same for the next few months.

Therefore can this Town Council urgently request West Berks Council Highways:
1/to ensure free access to the above roads properties are kept open at all times
2/traffic not requiring to visit properties in the above roads are directed away and appropriate signage placed at all relevant road junctions
3/ disturbances kept to a minimum
4/ all residents parking remains available at all times, unless suitable parking close to their properties are made available

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Barnett for bringing this matter to the attention of the Council and said that the Council would write to WBC, as requested and keep Councillor Barnett updated with any response received.

Councillor Barnett asked the following supplementary question:
Today, the contractors working on the Stirling Cables site installed bollards along a section of Kings road totally unilaterally without prior warning of the officers or members. Therefore, can this Town Council urgently enquire to WBC if permission was given by WBC Highways officers? If not, why not?
Or if so why weren't appropriate signs placed with WBC engineers permission and dates they were likely to be operated ?

The Mayor replied that these matters would be added to the letter to WBC.

58. Town Mayor's Report (Appendix 2)

The Council received a report from the Town Mayor, Councillor Gary Norman, detailing the many civic engagements he had attended since the October meeting of the Council, including remembrance events and the busy Christmas period.

59. Leader's Report (Appendix 3)

The Council received the report from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Martin Colston. As this was his last report as leader of this Council, he included a summary of the achievements of the Council over the past 4 years. Referring to the upcoming town Council elections in May 2023, Councillor Colston told the meeting that he would not be standing for election in the Town. All present thanked Councillor Colston for his outstanding contribution as Leader of the Council since the election in 2019.

Proposed: Councillor Elizabeth O'Keeffe

Seconded: Councillor Sue Farrant

Resolved: To record a vote of thanks from the council to Councillor Martin Colston for his outstanding contribution as Leader of the Council.

60. Chief Executive's Report (Appendix 3)

The Council received the report from the CEO of the Council. The CEO also referred to this being the last scheduled meeting of this Council, prior to the upcoming elections. On behalf of the Council's officer team, he thanked all of you the members for the courtesy and respect shown over the past 4 years and wished good luck to all running for election again. He thanked each of the Councillors for the huge voluntary commitment they made to the Council and the Communities they served in Newbury.

61. Community United West Berkshire

Apologies were received from Community United, who were unable to attend. The CEO advised that they had been invited to the Council meeting on 26 June 2023.

62. Use of the Market Place for Weekend Events

Councillor Martin Colston, as Chairman of the Market Working Group, told the meeting that the feedback from the Christmas Lights Switch On event and the 2-day Christmas Fayre, indicated that while footfall was up that income had not increased correspondingly. The Charter Market traders had responded that it was inappropriate that they should be displaced by another market. All parties to the Working Group agreed that the Market Place is primarily for the Charter Market. However, it also noted that events are important and that both the Charter Market and events can be accommodated in the Market Place at the same time at the same time.

The Working Group recommended to the Council that in order to plan successful events that benefit the Charter Market and the town in the future they would agree the organisation for these events in the Market Working Group which would comprise representative from the Charter Market Traders, the Newbury BID, Councillors, West Berkshire Council Highways and the event organiser (if there is one).

As The Farmer's Market is held on the first Sunday of each month, they would need to be involved in discussions if an event was proposed that falls on a Farmer's Market day.

The Working Group further recommended that if agreement could not be reached, then the event would not happen.

Concern was expressed that the final decision in these matters would rest with a working group, rather than a decision-making body of the Council. After some discussion, it was agreed that in the event that agreement could not be reached, the matter should be referred to the Community Services Committee of the Council to determine.

Proposed: Councillor Vaughan Miller

Seconded: Councillor Steve masters

Resolved: That the Council approves the recommendations of the Market Working Group regarding shared use of the Market Place for events, subject to the amendment that if agreement cannot be reached between the parties of the Working Group, then the matter is to be referred to the council's community Services Committee for determination.

63. Committees

The Council received the minutes of the following meetings of the Town Council's Committees (already circulated):

- Planning & Highways 24/10, 14/11, 5/12, 9/1 and 23/1
- Civic Pride, Arts & Leisure 28 November 2022
- Community Services 12 December 2022
- Policy & Resources 16 January 2023

64. Strategy 2019 to 2024

The meeting received a presentation from Councillor Martin Colston, as Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, outlining the progress made in completing the objectives of the Council's Strategy 2019-2024. The meeting also noted the delays to the Community Café project in Victoria Park.

Proposed: Councillor Martin Colston

Seconded: Councillor Andy Moore

Resolved: To Approve the review of the Strategy 2019 to 2024

65. 2023/2024 Budget and Precept Budget for 2023/24

The Mayor invited the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee to present the draft budget for 2023-24.

Councillor Colston told the meeting that the main increases in revenue expenditure arose from inflationary pressures, which were reflected in increased salary costs and the new grounds maintenance contract. The draft budget also allowed for the completion of the community café project in Victoria park, which was to be funded from development contributions and loan, without any impact on the Council Tax precept.

The budget as presented allowed for the continuation of all of the Council's services, as well as supporting the Council's key Strategy goals. He noted that current rate of inflation was over 10% and he was very pleased that the precept increase proposed was significantly below that, at 7.8%. He further pointed out that due to the tax base increasing by 1.4% that the average increase for Band D tax payers would be only £5.66 per annum (11 pence per week), an increase of only 6.4%. He said that this reflected the Council's concerns about the cost of living crisis, while at the same presenting a balanced budget.

The Council approved the budget as recommended by the policy and resources Committee.

Proposed: Councillor Martin Colston

Seconded: Councillor Billy Drummond

Resolved: To adopt the budget for Financial Year 2023/2024 and raise a precept of **£1,272,879** for the year.

Proposed: Councillor Martin Colston

Seconded: Councillor Elizabeth O’Keeffe

Resolved: That a leaflet explaining to the public how the precept is to be used during 2023/24 is produced, with that leaflet to be distributed to each household in Newbury and published on the Council’s website.

66. Schedule of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2023-24

The meeting noted the schedule of meetings for the Municipal Year 2023-24.

67. Forward Work Programme for Full Council meetings 2022/23

The meeting noted and agreed the Forward Work programme.

68. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Proposed: Councillor Stephen Masters

Seconded: Councillor Erik Pattenden

Resolved: That under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential personal business to be transacted.

69. Questions and Petitions from Members of the Public

The CEO told the meeting that a question had been received from a citizen of Newbury regarding arrangements for Remembrance Sunday events and as they were not in attendance, the Town Mayor agreed that the CEO could read out their questions:

1. In future could you please provide me with a written document (pass) so that I can prove my legitimate presence and reporting intentions?

The Mayor responded that the Council had advised the citizen that they had the same rights as any other member of the public to record the Remembrance Sunday events. This would continue to be the Council’s position unless or until advised otherwise.

2. Precisely what instructions did NTC give to TVP?

The Mayor responded that Thames Valley Police are responsible for security and crowd safety and control measures for the event. The Council was consulted by TVP regarding crowd control measures, including advising on the plan to cordon off areas to allow for safe parade and public access, which were submitted to West Berkshire’s Safety Advisory Group.

3. Who decided upon this new NTC Policy (presumably a Sub-Committee), how much is this costing and from which financial budget is the cash derived?

The Mayor responded that as stated above, Thames Valley Police are responsible for security and crowd safety and control measures for the event. There was no charge to the Council for this valuable service.

There being no further business, the Town Mayor declared the meeting closed at 8.42 pm.

Town Mayor: _____

Date: _____

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