

Marlborough Town Council



Full Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of Marlborough Town Council held on Monday, 25 March 2024 in the Court Room, Marlborough Town Hall at 7pm

PRESENT	Councillor Nicholas Fogg	Town Mayor
	Councillor Kym-Marie Cleasby	Deputy Mayor
	Councillor Andrew Ross	
	Councillor Noel Barrett-Morton	
	Councillor Lisa Farrell	
	Councillor Mervyn Hall	
	Councillor Mark Cooper	
	Councillor Jane Davies	
	Councillor Caroline Thomas	
	Councillor Mark Luson	
	Councillor Kelvyn Shantry	
	Councillor Susannah O'Brien	
	Councillor Emily Trow	
	Councillor Bethany Kohrt	
	Councillor Caroline Sadler	
	Richard Spencer-Williams	Town Clerk
	Dawn Whitehall	Corporate Services Officer
ALSO		
PRESENT	Neil Goodwin	Marlborough.News
	Two members of the public	

The Mayor welcomed **Councillor Sadler** to her first meeting.

PRAYERS

The **Mayor** opened the meeting with prayers.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Ian Mellor (resident) asked whether the Town Council would reconsider its decision not to renew its membership of the Great West Way from April 2024. The **Mayor** thanked him for his question. The decision had been made; the Council had decided the subscription did not represent value for money. It would be open for review in

future should it be decided that membership would be a good use of town council money, and the Mayor said the decision would be kept under review.

CRIME AND DISORDER

PC Steele had provided a written quarterly report for the period January to March 2024, and gave a summary of the main points:

- 93 crimes were recorded in the Marlborough Town area during this period, including 0 dwelling burglaries, 3 business/retail premises burglaries and 1 vehicle offence
- Speed enforcement had taken place on 18 occasions with 123 drivers offered speed awareness courses, 19 drivers issued with a fine and points on their license and 8 drivers reported to court for excess speed
- 8 community engagement events had included 'Blunt Truth' (an initiative supported by the NHS encouraging youngsters to be confident in reporting knife related crime and highlight the dangers of carrying weapons), a drug awareness day at St John's School in partnership with Connect (Wiltshire Substance Use Service), and a careers fair

Questions included:

- lack of response to members of the public who shared information via mail or 101. PC Steele would feed back to colleagues a request to improve acknowledging and/or replying to emails received via the team's inbox. He apologized for the long delays for people using the 101 service, where it was hoped that ongoing recruitment of staff would lead to shorter waiting times. He reminded people that they could use Crimestoppers to report anonymously
- what was the breakdown of the 93 crimes recorded: at least 12 were shop lifting, others could be domestic violence, assault or criminal damage. PC Steele would try to get details and provide them via email through the Town Clerk
- what could be done to prevent young people getting into trouble, and whether there were records of the number of reports or crimes specifically involving young people. Partnership working with others, e.g. schools and parents, was key. Again, PC Steele would check whether more detailed data was available

The **Mayor** thanked him, passing on the Town Council's appreciation of Officers' work in limited circumstances.

PC Steele and one member of the public left the meeting

QUESTIONS TO AND FROM WILTSHIRE COUNCILLORS

Councillor Hall asked for an update on joining up the railway path to the town's footpath network. **Councillor Thomas** acknowledged that there had been delays, and explained there were three separate areas of work progressing; legal issues with one landowner had now been resolved. She would make enquiries about expected dates.

Councillor Farrell asked for an update about the former police station in George Lane, a useful building standing empty despite planning permission being granted in 2022 to create 24 dwellings; it was noted a recent 'for sale' sign had been erected. **Councillor**

Thomas believed the lack of agreement about S106¹ contributions had delayed any progress – planning expiry dates would only start to tick down once S106 was agreed.

Councillor Shantry asked whether there were any plans to repaint white road markings which had all but disappeared at roundabouts and on A roads. **Councillor Thomas** expected work to recommence in April – the paint would not ‘stick’ if applied during wet weather, although some repainting of road markings and pedestrian crossings had been completed.

Councillor Luson had been pleased to read an announcement about investment in Leisure Centres and asked for an update and timeline for Marlborough. **Councillor Davies** would investigate the outcome of a feasibility study and hoped to get an update at a meeting taking place on 28 March.

481/23 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from **Councillor Sheppard**.

482/23 DECLARATIONS

Councillor O’Brien – agenda item 18 – lifetime achievement recognition - non-pecuniary interest.

483/23 MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor had been privileged to open a new play area at Wye House Gardens for the under-5s earlier that day where one young resident, Joshua, had enjoyed trying out the new amenity. He thanked everyone who had been involved to make the project possible, and asked Members to spread the word to residents.

Plans were afoot to create a Marlborough Folk Festival for 2025, which would start small to begin with but he hoped would grow to an annual event. The Mayor hoped the Town Council would lend its support in due course.

This was the last meeting for **Councillor Noel Barrett-Morton**, who was stepping down after nearly 14 years. **Councillor Barrett-Morton** was one of the town’s stalwarts having been a splendid Town Councillor with a great record of achievement and a much-appreciated Mayor supported by his Mayoress, wife Susan. On behalf of all Members he presented Noel and Susan with gifts and flowers to say thank you.

484/23 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 22 January 2024 were approved as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor

485/23 ACTION LOG

Members noted the updated action log. Verbal updates included:

¹ Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge introduced by the government via the Planning Act 2008. It provides a means of ensuring that a new development contributes to the cost of the infrastructure that the development will rely on, such as schools and roads

#211 – invite Thames Water representative to present to a meeting on its plans to upgrade the system in and around Marlborough and the River Kennet. While there had not yet been agreement to attend a meeting, a written response to questions had been received and circulated and the **Town Clerk** felt positive about the level of engagement in recent integration meetings.

#212 – Meet with White Horse Housing Association to understand more about its approach and policies. The meeting on 28 February had been very positive, with the CEO attending and offering help with the Council's relationships with other providers. Its parish allocation policy was a key part of their approach; this was something that would be very good to be adopted by all other providers.

#213 – Set up meeting with other housing associations to discuss issues raised by residents and councillors. Members clarified that the focus of these meetings should be on understanding their lettings policies, including disposals, and each should be invited to present this publicly at a future meeting. In addition, a meeting should be requested with Aster in the light of the Committee decision about the York Place development to discuss possible ways that S106 money could be spent as well as other matters related to future occupants.

486/23

DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR 2024/25

Proposed by **Councillor Cleasby** and seconded by **Councillor O'Brien** and

RESOLVED: that the Deputy Town Mayor for 2024/25 will be **Councillor Emily Trow**

487/23

LLOYDS BANK CLOSURE

Members considered what the Town Council could do to ensure banking services in the town would remain accessible and relevant to the needs of residents following the closure of Lloyds Bank, announced for November 2024. Discussion points included:

- Whether a community banking hub linked to the Post Office would be possible
- Whilst temporary locations were possible for paperwork transactions, permanent locations would be required for the hub to be able to handle cash
- **Councillor Davies** had contact details for three organisations that offered hub solutions, including Cash Access which had been behind the recent Royal Wootton Bassett hub
- Whether a visit to the Wootton Bassett hub should be arranged
- Whether potential locations could be identified, and whether the Town Council could offer a base e.g. the Town Hall
- Many smaller businesses were already being forced to go to cashless sales due to the lack of cash banking facilities and/or night safes, and this would likely increase after Lloyds closed
- It was believed that Nationwide had confirmed its commitment to the town for at least 3 years; however as a building society it did not offer business banking services

Councillor Cleasby, seconded by **Councillor Lusson**, proposed that the Town Council contact Cash Access in parallel with an approach by **Councillor Davies**. Members then discussed whether to create a new working party, or include a banking hub in the

remit of the existing Town Centre Working Party. **Councillor Cleasby** agreed to an amendment, and it was

RESOLVED: that **Councillor Davies** in her role as Chair of the Town Centre Working Party, Marlborough's Wiltshire Councillor for West Ward and Marlborough Town Councillor to make an approach to Cash Access on behalf of the Town Council to request a meeting to include the Town Clerk to understand the approach and steps that would be required to create a community banking hub for Marlborough

488/23 COUNCIL MEETING DATES 2024/25

RESOLVED: that the calendar of Council meeting dates for 2024/25 was agreed

489/23 D-DAY ANNIVERSARY

RESOLVED: that Marlborough will take part in the Beacon Lighting event on 6 June 2024 to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day, and the proposed timetable of events is agreed

490/23 SAFEGUARDING POLICY

RESOLVED: that the draft Safeguarding Policy be adopted

491/23 WILTSHIRE COUNCIL TOURISM SUPPORT

Members noted a letter from **Wiltshire Councillor Clewer** regarding Wiltshire Council's position in respect of supporting tourism, and considered whether any action was required. Discussion points included:

- It was not yet clear how the town would benefit from the change in approach
- That the Economic Regeneration Team had provided Marlborough with £60,000 over the past 3 years for improvements to the town centre
- Whether any visitor data was available
- Whether there was broad knowledge about the Explore Wiltshire app
- Whether signage, e.g. in shops, could be erected to promote Explore Wiltshire
- That while British coach operators were returning to the town post-pandemic, whether withdrawing from Great West Way would mean the town was no longer promoted heavily to operators in Europe
- Whether to write to Wiltshire Council to express concerns and ask for future proposals and involvement in decisions
- Whether to add an agenda item for a future discussion about tourism and whether the Town Centre Working Party or another route would best meet the need of providing tourism services
- Whether a tourism strategy was required
- Whether to reinstate the Tourism Officer role
- Two attempts to recruit a Town Engagement and Development Officer, to include an element of tourism, had failed to attract any applicants
- Later in the agenda Members would be considering an apprentice role which would allow roles and responsibilities with the existing Officer posts to be reviewed to assess additional capacity to incorporate tourism
- The Staffing Committee had acknowledged that Tourism was integral to many roles and responsibilities rather than a stand-alone role, and it was working

with the Town Clerk to explore how that could be incorporated for existing officer roles

In light of the last two points, Members agreed to move on with the agenda.

492/23 MARLBOROUGH COMMUNITY SUPPORT FORUM

Members noted the work of Marlborough's Community Support Forum, and **Councillor Davies** congratulated the team on the production of its excellent leaflet. It was noted that currently informal support was provided via the Civic and Cemetery Administrator gifting time to the forum, and Members were asked to ratify and confirm this involvement formally.

RESOLVED: that the role of the Council in supporting the Marlborough Community Support Form is ratified

493/23 OUTSOURCING OF SERVICES

Members noted the Town Clerk's report and considered whether it agreed in principle that outsourcing was something it would like to investigate further. Discussion points included:

- The proposal originated at the Finance & Policy Committee. On its behalf **Councillor Shantry** questioned whether, with approximately 30% of the annual budget spent on Open Spaces (salaries for staff, the workshop and equipment associated with grounds team responsibilities) there may be cost benefit to outsourcing some or all of those services
- Some Members supported the proposal in principle while expressing caution about whether or how to approach the research
- Whether to draw up a specification of services and hours, and seek rough estimates of the likely cost to allow a comparison on value for money from a financial prudence perspective
- Whether it would be hard to incorporate everything that members of the Grounds Team do within a specification and therefore, whether an outsourced service would be likely to match the capability of an in-house team, and therefore whether the service would deteriorate
- Recognition that there would be a large amount of work involved, and the impact on staff
- To bear in mind that suppliers would be looking to make a profit from providing a service
- Concerns about sensitivity and the staff's reaction to the idea, and a desire not to alarm them
- At the opening of the Wye House play area earlier in the day, the camaraderie and team spirit had been noted; staff have a loyalty to the Council and town, and we in turn have a loyalty to them
- Staff are part of the team and take ownership of issues
- In-house teams are flexible and respond to emergency situations quickly (e.g. floods and blizzards). Whether an outsourced service would be likely to respond in the same way

- The town's open spaces were the face of Marlborough, a very important part of the town and whether therefore the grounds staff were the most important part of the team
- A recognition that it was important to outsource where there was no technical expertise in-house, and this was already in place
- An example was given of successful transfers where the staff themselves set up their own company to provide a service back in

A proposal "***to consider the initial proposal and whether in principle 'outsourcing' is something the Town Council would want to pursue, and if so for which, or all, services this would be***" failed to attract a seconder.

A proposal "***to ask the Town Clerk to explore whether there might be any value to outsourcing all or part of the services or activities of the Grounds Team***" attracted 5 votes for and 8 against, therefore the proposal failed.

494/23 STAFFING APPRENTICE

RESOLVED: (i) to offer an Information Officer Apprenticeship in Business

RESOLVED: (ii) to instruct the Staffing Committee to review the Civic and Cemetery Administrator post with a view to widening its scope of work to include community and town engagement work

495/23 OUTSIDE BODIES

Members offered updates on their representational roles to external organisations:

The **Jubilee Centre** was currently updating its policies to ensure compliance.

The **Allotment Association** had resolved an incident of 'illegal' digging across allotments at Stonebridge Allotments.

A recent meeting had taken place at Marlborough College with heads of schools where **Councillor Farrell** and the **Town Clerk** had discussed the Youth Council and Youth Centre. Marlborough College would provide volunteers to the latter from May. The next meeting had been arranged for 19 April.

496/23 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

No questions had been submitted.

497/23 COMMITTEE MINUTES

In accordance with para 3.1 of the Scheme of Delegation, members noted the approved minutes of the following committee meetings: **Planning** – 8 January, 5 February and 26 February 2024; **Finance and Policy** – 27 November and 4 December 2023

498/23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, members of the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business as publicity

would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature of that business or the proceedings

Mr Goodwin and one member of the public left the meeting

499/23 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT RECOGNITION

RESOLVED: that the proposed award was agreed

400/23 COMMON SEAL

Proposed by **Councillor Ross** and seconded by **Councillor Barrett-Morton** and

RESOLVED: that the Common Seal of Marlborough Town Council be applied to all documents necessary to give effect to the decisions of the meeting

The meeting closed at 8.58 pm

Signed:

Town Mayor

Date: