

Marlborough Town Council



Full Town Council

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of Marlborough Town Council held Tuesday,
16 January 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 Mark Luson	
	Councillor Emily Trow	
	Richard Spencer-Williams	Town Clerk
	Clare Harris	Deputy Town Clerk
	Dawn Whitehall	Corporate Services Officer
ALSO		
PRESENT	Neil Goodwin	Marlborough.News
	Plus 15 members of the public	

PRAYERS

The Mayor opened the meeting with a minute's silence for Town Crier Mike Tupman MBE and prayers for his family, friends and for Councillor Thomas and her family.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Comments and questions from residents included:

- Whether the Town Council would consider contacting the Pang Valley Flood Forum with a view to setting up a similar forum for the Kennet valley
- Whether the Town Council would consider creating a public meeting for residents to get together to provide feedback on the response to the flood and discuss possible measures going forward. **Councillor Cleasby** confirmed that this was part of the proposal to be considered later in the meeting
- Whether flood water had been analysed for contamination, and if so whether pollution levels were higher than normal. The **Town Clerk** had already asked

this question, and hoped an answer would be forthcoming at a meeting w/c 22 January with the Swindon & Wiltshire Resilience Partnership, Environment Agency and drainage representatives

- Whether the Town Council could raise questions with Thames Water and continue to ask until there was a satisfactory answer. These included Thames Water's response to sewage leaks; discharging into rivers during floods; how sewage leaks had affected areas not otherwise affected by the groundwater/river flooding; that when the water table rises and/or pipes were blocked, effluent was pushed back up the system into homes and out of manhole covers. An anecdotal reply by an engineer that a stretch of sewer was "old and leaky" was mentioned; what were the plans to upgrade it?
- Whether Wiltshire Council could be asked to suspend parking restrictions, or provide permits for a period of time in London Road allowing the various trades to park for longer than currently permitted while working at affected properties
- Whether it was possible to provide any assurances to homeowners that plans were in place, e.g. to improve drainage, that would help to prevent flooding in future. This would be of particular concern when homeowners decided to sell their properties
- Thanks to staff, the emergency services and community for all their help during the flood

The Mayor thanked everyone for their questions and comments. He noted a recent report from Action for the River Kennet (ARK) that streams not seen since Victorian times had reappeared and groundwater levels were the highest on record. It had been an extraordinary situation, and while not having control over the climate, this didn't mean the Town Council shouldn't take whatever steps it could to mitigate future floods. Issues such as storm drains, drainage capacity and planning considerations (e.g. not to build on land near rivers; additional drainage/run off from developments) were all factors to consider.

QUESTIONS TO AND FROM WILTSHIRE COUNCILLORS

Councillor Davies suggested it was important to look at the whole Kennet Valley: for example, Lockeridge had been flooded, all the water meadows in the area had been flooded, and water treatment plants at West Overton and Fyfield had needed additional support. She suggested that all the parishes affected could work with ARK and the local MP to challenge Thames Water, particularly about its approach to discharging into the River Kennet. As an important, rare chalk stream and a site of special scientific interest it was important to protect it.

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APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from **Councillors Sheppard, Thomas, Shantry, O'Brien** and **Kohrt**.

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DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensation.

FLOOD PLAN

Members noted the Town Clerk's report and considered the Town Council's flood plan. Discussion points included:

- Whether to set up a working party to take the flood plan forward
- Re-establishing nominated flood wardens
- Roles flood wardens might be able to adopt (e.g. stopping drivers causing bow waves that pushed water into properties, arranging relief for volunteers)
- Who could take decisions to close roads in times of emergencies; whether the Town Council could be granted temporary power
- Establishing a clearly defined, central point of contact for emergency situations
- Establishing clear communications between Town and Wiltshire Council
- Registering a flood plan with Wiltshire Council would ensure clear contacts and communications would be in place
- Whether any capability of holding back or storing water upstream could be established
- Whether sluice gate management was clearly documented and could be co-ordinated
- Community volunteers played essential roles in emergencies - how to formalise and mobilise them, and how to support them
- Whether a proper explanation of the peak water surge could be obtained
- It would be important when reviewing the plan to include the expansion of post-flood actions and recovery phases, e.g. provision of financial assistance

RESOLVED: to form a working group consisting of Councillors, residents and neighbouring parishes and, with Wiltshire Council support, to review the emergency plan and create a more comprehensive, robust stand-alone flood plan

Councillors who volunteered to join the working group were **Councillors Ross, Hall, Farrell, Cleasby, Davies, Luson** and **Trow**. Members not present would also be given the opportunity to take part.

RESOLVED: that **Councillor Luson** was the preferred Chair of the working group

During a suspension of Standing Orders, residents asked for points to be addressed by the Town Council/working party including:

- A resident of London Road noted that contamination from sewage meant that people would be out of their homes for significantly longer than if the flooding had been spring water. It was important that residents have the opportunity to be part of the working group, and that the issues of controls around sewage be addressed by Thames Water
- Lack of attendance by Thames Water to London Road overnight on Thursday 4 January; previous incidents of backed-up sewage affecting properties and the need for Thames Water to compensate home owners: whether the specific issues of the system in London Road could be addressed

- Whether, because of leaking sewage pipes underground, there was any way to know whether there was likely to be sewage contamination in those properties that were only affected by groundwater flooding rather than the river
- Whether groundwater flood alerts could be provided by the Environment Agency as well as flood alerts from rivers
- Whether more could be done to keep highway gullies and storm water systems clear. **Councillor Davies** acknowledged that Wiltshire Council had recognised this was an issue and was investing in additional equipment, and encouraged everyone to use the MyWilts app to report blocked gullies
- Whether smaller parishes – specifically Ogbourne St Andrew – could be included

Residents present who were interested in taking part in the working group provided their contact details.

The **Town Mayor** thanked everyone for attending and participating, and acknowledged the request for an open meeting for residents, which would be followed up.

ACTION: invite a representative from Thames Water to present to a future Full Council meeting on its plans to upgrade the system in and around Marlborough and the River Kennet

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COMMON SEAL

Proposed by **Councillor Ross** and seconded by **Councillor Barrett-Morton** and **RESOLVED:** that the Common Seal of Marlborough Town Council be affixed to all documents necessary to give effect to the decisions of the meeting

The meeting closed at 8 pm

Signed:
Town Mayor

Date: