

Marlborough Town Council



Property Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Property Committee held Tuesday, 22 October 2024 in the Council Chamber, Marlborough Town Hall at 7pm

PRESENT	Councillor Mervyn Hall	Chair
	Councillor Lisa Farrell	
	Councillor Caroline Thomas	
	Councillor Caroline Sadler	
	Richard Spencer-Williams	Town Clerk
	Dawn Whitehall	Corporate Services Officer

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

232/24 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from **Councillors Cooper** and **Trow**.

233/24 DECLARATIONS

Councillors Hall, Farrell and **Thomas** – Agenda item 10 (Community and Youth Centre) – for transparency, they declared they were Trustees of the Marlborough Youth Forum.

234/24 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

235/24 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 22 July 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair

236/24 ACTION LOG

Members noted the updated action log. Discussion points included:

- #217 – works to the rear of Kingsbury Street property. The **Town Clerk** was meeting with the Town Council's architect the following day. It was likely that windows could be repaired rather than replaced, but it was noted that as a

listed building there may be conditions requested by the Conservation Officer prior to work commencing.

- #239 – Elcot Lane Pavilion: it had taken a while to contact the Boxing Club organiser, but they had confirmed that the club was still in operation. Work was required to make roof repairs, in particular above the toilets, and the Town Clerk had advised of grant routes available to help fund these repairs. Members agreed that the lease should be checked to understand the expiry date and terms and conditions. Suggestions included whether to inspect the building's condition and whether to change the use arrangements so that other similar types of group, e.g. martial arts, might be able to make use of the building alongside the Boxing Club.

ACTION: check that the lease of the Elcot Lane Pavilion to the Boxing Club is still current, and review any details or obligations within it about maintaining and repairing the building

237/24 REPORT ON TOWN COUNCIL PROPERTIES

Members noted a report by the Office Manager.

The **Town Clerk** advised that since preparing the report, 3b Kingsbury Street had been vacated and the keys returned to the Town Council. He and the Council's agent, Carter Jonas, had inspected the property which required complete redecoration, flooring and most white and sanitary goods to be replaced: quotes were being obtained for the work.

This gave rise to a more general debate about the Town Council's residential and commercial properties, where different opinions were expressed about whether a cost-benefit analysis to understand the return on investment (RoI) of the Council's properties was required or should be a priority. Insurance value, income and expenditure costs were already known with a further exercise pending to understand the cost of properties. Generally, the value of property in Marlborough increased year on year. The suggestion to conduct an RoI exercise was made in order to allow the Council to understand whether it was getting good value from the properties it owned or allow it to take decisions to sell any that didn't reflect good value.

Members noted that the Town Council had taken a decision to offer its residential lettings at affordable rates, being mindful of the lack of affordable homes in the town.

A proposal to undertake a cost-benefit analysis to determine the RoI of the Town Council's residential and commercially let properties received two votes for and two against. The **Chair** exercised the casting vote against, and therefore the proposal was not carried.

238/24 TOWN HALL AND COMMUNITY AND YOUTH CENTRE BOOKINGS

Members noted a report by the Office Manager about bookings at the Town Hall and Community & Youth Centre. Discussion points included:

- Income generated by Town Hall bookings was slightly increased on the same period last year: the building had been closed for a time while works were in progress to update the heating system. Community & Youth Centre income was down on the previous year: one regular hirer had now switched to online meetings.
- A different format for the report was requested so that Members could understand the hiring rates, hours used and in particular the income each hiring generated. Costs should also be taken into account, e.g. caretaker or officer time. The request included that the report should allow Members to understand which type of events or room hirings generated the most income, with the option to conduct more focused marketing to increase the income.
- It was noted that the Town Hall and Community Centre were community assets and not being run as a business
- Whether to revisit a previous decision that it was not financially viable to invest in an online booking system. Whether an online booking system would generate reports and statistics.
- Weddings generated the most income from the Town Hall
- A Town Hall working party had been set up in the previous Council: this had given rise to a number of actions (e.g. an online brochure, professional photographs, marketing opportunities, updates to the website). Members discussed whether this should be reestablished: Councillor Farrell would be happy to lead it. The **Town Clerk** noted that more resource would likely be required to support any increase in marketing and hiring of venues.
- The Town Hall was used for a number of community engagement events, e.g. a recent flood fair and events such as Remembrance and Christmas Lights: these were not income generating. These would have to be taken into account if an online booking and reporting system were to be introduced.

ACTION: Town Clerk to investigate the best way to provide a reformatted venue hiring report to show values (e.g. by room, type of hire, rates, hours used, income).

239/24 TOWN HALL HEATING

Members noted the report by the Town Clerk about the project to replace the boilers at the Town Hall. The final commissioning was scheduled provisionally for early November when there would be a formal handover and induction. The project was expected to come in under budget. Members expressed thanks to the **Town Clerk** and all involved for their work on this project.

240/24 WORKSHOP EXTENSION

The **Town Clerk** provided a verbal update on the project to extend the Town Council's workshop at Salisbury Road Recreation Ground, which remained within budget. Negotiations were in process with the preferred contractor before a final tender decision and more detailed plans were being drawn up that would satisfy building regulations. A slight delay to the start of physical work was due to the requirement to dig a test hole to understand the condition of the foundations.

241/24 COMMUNITY AND YOUTH CENTRE

Members noted the update report on the building maintenance works at the Community and Youth Centre. Discussion points included:

- Some patching was recommended to the roof and rainwater goods but it was good news that the roof did not need to be replaced. Quotes were being obtained.
- Ear marked reserves were available to cover the cost of the programme of works; a request was made to check that there were sufficient reserves to cover the full programme.
- Recent hirers had asked that outside lights should always be turned on, especially as street lights in the area were not working. The Town Clerk would ask caretaking staff to ensure lights were on 'auto' setting. A more modern scheme, with downward pointing LED lights would be investigated.
- Lighting at the Skate Park was not working; it appeared that a wire had been deliberately cut. CCTV footage was being checked and a police report being raised: repairs were being pursued. Further sabotage could be prevented by adding tamper proof fixings to the control panel.

242/24 FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS (FRA)

Members noted the Town Clerk's report and considered whether to undertake further assessments at other properties. There had been conflicting advice from the Town Council's Property Agent and Health & Safety advisors on the requirement for FRAs in residential properties.

It was agreed to conduct fire risk assessments at the Town Hall and Community & Youth Centre, and to delay an FRA at the workshop until the building works were complete.

243/24 FINANCE REPORT Q2

Members considered the Property Committee finance report for Q2 (month 5) and the Town Clerk answered questions about Town Hall maintenance and toilet income; he would also check whether figures shown for Town Hall marketing were correct for the previous year.

Budgeted income for venue hire was estimated and would be adjusted once inflation rates had been agreed and the relevant Committee had signed off the proposed increases.

Members discussed the Renters Reform Bill currently being considered by Parliament and whether this would have any impact on how the Town Council managed its properties.

ACTION: ask the Town Council's property agent to provide a summary of increased risks relating to tenancies as a result of expected changes in legislation

244/24 BUDGET 2025-26

Members considered the Committee’s priorities and budget requirements to input to the 2025-26 budget.

Proposed Property Committee priorities for budgeting purposes for 2025 26 were:

1. Maintain existing properties.
2. Workshop extension – phase 2
3. Marlborough Community and Youth Centre building works (as agreed)
4. Kingsbury Street rear windows and gutters

An addition was proposed:

5. to set up a working party to consider venue hire and whether, and how, income could be improved.

It was agreed that the Property Committee priorities for 2025-26 were agreed as proposed with one addition.

The meeting closed at 8.32 pm

Signed:

Chair

Date: