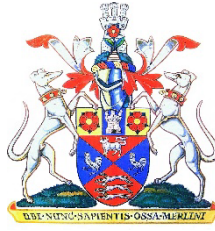


Marlborough Town Council



Full Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of Marlborough Town Council held on Monday 4th November 2024 in the Court Room, Marlborough Town Hall at 7pm

PRESENT Councillor Kym-Marie Cleasby Town Mayor
Councillor Emily Trow Deputy Town Mayor
Councillor Lisa Farrell
Councillor Mervyn Hall
Councillor Mark Cooper
Councillor Jane Davies
Councillor James Sheppard
Councillor Kelvyn Shantry
Councillor Susannah O'Brien
Councillor Bethany Kohrt
Councillor Caroline Sadler
Councillor Abi Beaumont

ALSO

PRESENT Richard Spencer-Williams Town Clerk
Clare Williams Deputy Town Clerk
Rev. Chris Smith Town Mayor's Chaplain
PC Steele Wiltshire Police
Philip Wilkinson OBE Police & Crime Commissioner
Neil Goodwin Marlborough.News
Plus, four members of the public

PRAYERS

Rev. Chris Smith opened the meeting with prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MAYORAL SCOUT

The **Town Mayor** introduced **Robbie Upton**, her second Mayoral Scout for the year 2024/25 and presented him with a medal. Robbie's first duty will be accompanying the Town Mayor at the Remembrance Parade on Sunday 10th November 2024. Members welcomed Robbie into his new role.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A question received from **Kate Godley** was read out to Members. Ms Godley asked whether any of the High Street retailers would be holding any late-night shopping evenings in the lead up to Christmas. **Councillor Shantry**, who represents the Town Council on the Marlborough Business Network agreed that this was a great idea and one which he was more than happy to take forward to the group for consideration.

Mr Peter Morgan, present at the meeting, shared that members of the Manton Residents Association have concerns about the standards of their highway infrastructure in Manton, and will be requesting that Wiltshire Council Highways take steps to bring them up to current standards. In addition, he shared his concerns around the way in which the Local Highways & Footways Improvement Group (LHFIG) operates, in particular in relation to Marlborough Town Council priorities and how these are agreed and taken forward. Mr Morgan made specific reference to the current consultation on proposals for a one-way system at The Parade and the 4G pitch at St John's.

Councillor Sheppard responded as chair of the Town Council's Planning Committee and Chair of the LHFIG to confirm that all requests are considered on their individual merits and decisions are impartial. Advice is sought from experts when required. The Parade is being consulted on and a decision will be made based on the outcome of responses received.

CRIME AND DISORDER

PC Steele, having previously circulated his police report, elaborated on details contained within the report and updated on other issues and activities, to include:

- The two recent Mop Fairs passed with no serious issues, other than the seizure of alcohol and plenty of items of lost property.
- An inaugural Shopwatch meeting was held at the Town Hall with the support of the Town Clerk. This meeting was well received with around a dozen shops and businesses represented. It is hoped to increase the attendance at the next meeting which is due to take place in December with regular meetings thereafter, every couple of months. Issues discussed included improvements to the CCTV network.
- Recent community engagement by officers included a visit to Sixth Form students at St John's and regular drop-in sessions at Nationwide, talking to customers about fraud prevention.
- In the next few weeks, the community engagement vehicle will be visiting Burbage, Pewsey, Ramsbury and The Recreation Ground in Marlborough.
- Hare coursing is a current priority with resources and patrols being increased.
- Rural crime is also a concern, with recent reports of thefts of machinery and equipment etc. Patrols have been increased as a response.
- There has been a recent spate of reported 'overnight' thefts from commercial vehicles in and around Marlborough and these are being investigated. This is not specific to Marlborough but an issue across the whole of the southwest currently.
- Next week, Operation Sceptre, a national knife crime campaign aimed at the reduction of knife-related violence and the education of people on the dangers of carrying bladed weapons will be re-launched.

Questions arising from the report and discussions included:

- Where would the funds come from to make the requested improvements to the CCTV system in Marlborough. It was noted that this would need to be funded by various partners including the Town Council. Budgets within the PCC's control are currently unknown and so a shared approach would be required.

- Knife crime is a concern with two reported incidences in Marlborough which is unacceptable, and it was questioned what is being done to target these drug related crimes.
- Students across Wiltshire and Swindon (36 schools signed up so far) have been taking part in a new initiative called 'Blunt Truth' which teaches them about the possible consequences of carrying a knife and what to do if a friend or family member is stabbed. This is a project, part-funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner involving members of Wiltshire Police and the NHS.
- Of the 118 crimes reported in Marlborough between 1st July and 30th September 2024 it was confirmed that these were made up assaults, criminal damage and theft but that a majority related to shoplifting.
- In terms of detection rates, it was noted that three years ago detection rates were around 4%, however this is now at 16% so whilst still unsatisfactory, it is a big improvement and will continue to rise.
- **Councillor Sheppard** wanted to pass on a thank you from a local farmer who was recently a victim of hare coursing on his land. This incident was responded to very quickly and resolved and he was most grateful.

PRESENTATION BY THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

The **Town Mayor** welcomed and introduced **Philip Wilkinson OBE** to the Full Council meeting.

- Wiltshire Police are currently ranked in the top half of high performing forces in the UK despite being the 2nd worst funded (after Lincoln).
- Anti-social behaviour is down 16%.
- Domestic abuse is down to 13%.
- During his term, the rural crime team has trebled, and improvements have been brought in, to include new night vision equipment and the use of drones and helicopters during response.
- In terms of speed enforcement, a PCC priority, during his first year in office, 1324 speeding tickets were issued. This increased to 15,000 as of last year.
- It was questioned whether any enforcement activity has taken place in Marlborough and Mr Wilkinson confirmed that both gateways from Hungerford (Forrest Hill) and Swindon have had enforcement activity as detailed on the PCC website.
- It was stated that accident hot spots areas are a primary driver of speed enforcement activity, but members questioned that response, stating that anti-social and dangerous driving are a major concern and should be taken into consideration to prevent accidents actually happening in the first place.
- A question was asked about the potential to bring back the fixed speed cameras across the county. It was confirmed that this would not be a financially viable option and that mobile speed cameras are a more cost-effective means of tackling this problem.
- There were a number of other town specific questions in relation to speed enforcement and community speedwatch protocol, which needed more detailed discussion. It was therefore agreed to arrange a separate meeting with Mr Wilkinson to discuss these as a separate concern. Contact will be made by the Town Council to formalise arrangements.
- **Councillor Sheppard**, who sits on the PCC committee confirmed that in the three years since Mr Wilkinson's appointment big strides have been made and

they have seen huge positive changes across the board. The committee are very satisfied with progress and welcome more improvements going forward.

ACTION – Meeting to be arranged with Mr Wilkinson as agreed.

The **Town Mayor** thanked Mr Wilkinson for taking the time to come along and talk to members and looked forward to a future meeting to discuss town specific issues.

Mr Wilkinson and PC Steele left the meeting.

QUESTIONS TO AND FROM WILTSHIRE COUNCILLORS

Councillor Farrell asked a question in relation to housing allocation by Aster at York Place and the need for protections to be put in place to ensure houses are allocated fairly and to the right people. This needs to be given consideration as we move closer to completion of the build. **Councillor Davies** agreed that this was a reasonable request.

Councillor Beaumont asked a question in relation to the renovation of the Leisure Centre and what was being done to ensure that the café would be back up and running ready for opening. The café was a vital part of the leisure centre and was hugely missed when it closed. This needs to be given full consideration now and not an after thought when the centre re-opens. **Councillor Davies** confirmed that efforts have and continue to be made to find a suitable company to take this franchise on. It was noted that this is potentially a big risk for a small hospitality company to take on in the current climate. It was suggested that Wiltshire Council could offer a short-term rent subsidy to attract interest. Councillor Beaumont suggested approaches are made to local catering companies and cafes who may have an interest in expanding their operations. **Councillor Davies** suggested that the Town Mayor writes a letter on behalf of the Town Council to David Redfern (Director of Leisure, Culture and Communities), addressing the Council's collective concerns around the importance of the leisure centre having an operational café going forward and offer its support in terms of publicising the opportunity.

ACTION – The **Town Mayor** to draft a letter expressing the Town Council's concerns and offer of support in terms of promotion of the franchise opportunity.

258/24 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from **Councillors Ross, Fogg, Luson & Thomas**.

259/24 DECLARATIONS

Councillor Farrell declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6 – Cemetery Headstone Damage.

260/24 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Town Mayor** confirmed that following earlier reports of water being cut off in some areas of Marlborough, it is now back on!

The town's Christmas Light Switch on Event is taking place on Friday 29th November and this year includes 'The Real Story of Christmas' which will be enacted in the High Street as part of the planned entertainment. Actors, stagehands and behind the scenes volunteers are currently being recruited, and if anyone would like to be involved, they should contact the Town Mayor, Rod Cleasby or the Deputy Town Clerk.

On Sunday 22nd December, the **Town Mayor** is hosting a Civic Christmas Carol Service at St Mary's Church. The time has yet to be confirmed but will be circulated to all councillors when finalised.

261/24 MINUTES

Councillor Farrell sought clarification on an un-answered question in relation to Aster's housing stock in Marlborough.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 2nd September 2024 were approved as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

262/24 ACTION LOG

There were no outstanding actions.

263/24 CEMETERY – HEADSTONE DAMAGE

The **Town Mayor** thanked Mrs Rebbeck for coming along and sharing her views on what is a very emotive and sensitive subject.

Standing Orders were suspended to allow Mrs Rebbeck to put forward her comments and concerns for members' consideration.

Standing orders were reinstated, and Members discussed the comments made and concerns raised by Mrs Rebbeck and the detail in the **Town Clerk's** report.

RESOLVED: To gift the full cost of the repair to the headstone as stated in the report but in doing so do not accept liability for the damage caused.

RESOLVED: to carry out a review of the current regulations for the management of the cemetery to ensure they are fit for purpose going forward.

264/24 FLOOD PLAN

Councillor Hall commended the work carried out to update the flood plan and noted its importance.

It was noted that a lot of work has been going on behind the scenes, by council officers post Storm Henk in January 2024. Marlborough Town Council are now recognised as a valuable contributor in terms of flooding and community resilience. The Flood Fair organised by the Town Council in October was very well attended and positive feedback has been received. The Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk have been invited to attend and present at the Wiltshire & Swindon Local Resilience Forum Recovery Workshop at County Hall tomorrow (5th November).

RESOLVED: to adopt the Marlborough Town Council Flood Plan 2024

265/24 JUBILEE FIELD TRUST

RESOLVED: To confirm that the Town Clerk will be the main contact for the Jubilee Field Charity with immediate effect.

266/24

BUDGET PROPOSALS

Members discussed the proposal put forward by the Finance & Policy Committee at its meeting on 28th October 2024 and agreed with the proposal in principle going forward, as a means of formalising the process around budget setting.

It was noted however that the timing of this recommendation may not align with the calendar of meetings, in that the Amenities & Open Spaces and Property Committee have already met and agreed their proposed budgets for recommendation to Finance & Policy in late November.

It was noted that the proposal needs to be clarified with a clear explanation as to how members go about formally putting forward requests for new budget.

It was noted that any approved changes to the budget setting process would need to be written into Standing Orders and Financial Regulations going forward.

Members were not clear what the proposal was suggesting that differs to current practice and this needs clarifying in order for them to consider. Finance and Policy Committee members present were unable to offer the clarification required.

RESOLVED: to revise and clarify the proposal at a future meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee.

267/24

BANKING IN MARLBOROUGH

Members noted the report, but, on the whole, were disappointed and dissatisfied with the assessment that identified that Marlborough does not qualify for a banking hub.

The general feeling was that we are at danger of becoming a cashless town and our old and vulnerable residents will suffer as a result of reduced personal service and face to face contact. There is a fear also that the Post Office will be unable to deal with many of the bank account and activity enquiries currently handled in branch. **Councillor Davies** has been doing some research and has found some useful evidence and statistics within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which could help with our 'community request' for re-assessment. Councillor Davies will share this with the **Town Mayor**.

268/24

MARKET UPDATE

Members noted the report, and the extensive anecdotal responses from both customers and traders. The **Town Mayor** extended her thanks to town council officers and councillors who contributed to the survey and the gathering of survey responses.

Discussion points included:

- The survey responses demonstrated clear support within the community for the weekly markets.
- Concerns around the pitch costs and why these are so different to other towns.
- The location of the market and the potential to move it to the north of the High St
- The lack of promotion and advertising
- A lack of drive to expand and grow the markets.
- St Peter's have just launched a monthly market.
- Considerations we would need to look into should we look to run the market in house i.e. resources and budget.

269/24 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL & MAYOR MAKING ARRANGEMENTS 2025/26
Members discussed the report which explained the rationale behind the proposal to change the arrangements for 2025 26.

RESOLVED: to agree the proposed arrangements for the Annual Meeting of the Council and Mayoral Robing Ceremony 2025 26

Councillor Davies left the meeting.

270/24 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME
There were no questions.

271/24 OUTSIDE BODIES
There were no updates.

272/24 COMMITTEE MINUTES
In accordance with para 3.1 of the Scheme of Delegation, the minutes of the following Committee meetings were noted: **Planning** – 20 May, 10 June, 15 July and 29 July 2024; **Property Committee** – 29 April 2024; and **Finance and Policy Committee** - 22 April 2024.

273/24 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

Mr Goodwin left the meeting.

274/24 LAND AT RABLEY WOOD VIEW
Members discussed the Town Clerk's report and the terms and conditions of the proposed transfer of land.

RESOLVED: to accept the terms of the transfer of sale of land to the rear of properties 15, ,16, 17, 18 and 20 Portfield Road, Rabley Wood View.

275/24 COMMON SEAL
Proposed by **Councillor Hall**, seconded by **Councillor Farrell** 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 9.20pm

Signed:
Town Mayor

Date: