

Marlborough Town Council



Full Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of Marlborough Town Council held Monday, 9 December 2024 in the Court Room, Marlborough Town Hall at 7pm

PRESENT	Councillor Kym-Marie Cleasby	Town Mayor
	Councillor Emily Trow	Deputy Mayor
	Councillor Nicholas Fogg	
	Councillor Andrew Ross	
	Councillor Lisa Farrell	
	Councillor Mervyn Hall	
	Councillor Mark Cooper	
	Councillor Jane Davies	
	Councillor James Sheppard	
	Councillor Caroline Thomas	
	Councillor Kelvyn Shantry	
	Councillor Susannah O'Brien	
	Councillor Caroline Sadler	
	Richard Spencer-Williams	Town Clerk
	Dawn Whitehall	Corporate Services Officer
ALSO		
PRESENT	Rev. Chris Smith	Mayor's Chaplain
	Neil Goodwin	Marlborough.News
	One member of the public	

PRAYERS

Rev. Chris Smith opened the meeting with prayers.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The **Mayor** read out a question on behalf of **Rob Williams**: Why is the street lighting in the High Street not being repaired? The High Street has 25 street lamps and only 8 of them work! As someone who travels through the High Street daily this is a serious safety issue and needs to be addressed. I've been reporting the faulty lamps for nearly 10 years but they never get fixed.

The **Town Clerk** reminded people that they could report issues through the MyWilts app and Town Council officers would also be happy to do this on behalf of residents. A Wiltshire Council (WC) Officer had been contacted and had offered to investigate, but the **Town Clerk** had not received a recent update from them. **Councillor Davies**

believed there may be complications related to ownership of some of the buildings with light fittings; she would try to find out the status of street light maintenance within WC. **The Town Mayor** confirmed that a written response would be provided after further investigation.

ACTION: Councillor Davies to pursue within Wiltshire Council and the Town Clerk to respond in writing to the resident

CRIME AND DISORDER

PC Steele had sent his apologies. A written report had been provided and was tabled for Members.

ACTION: circulate the report

Councillor Thomas reported that in the previous week the Area Board meeting had been about 'all things policing': three Wiltshire and one Town Councillor had attended this great opportunity to talk directly to senior police officers. A lot of questions had been dealt with which would be of interest to Members: she encouraged everyone to read the minutes once published.

QUESTIONS TO AND FROM WILTSHIRE COUNCILLORS

Councillor Farrell knew of two 3-bed houses at St Margaret's Mead and one at Rabley Wood which had been empty for over a year and were now being sold by housing associations. Whilst it was perfectly legal for housing associations to do this where it was not economically viable for them to bring them up to EPC standard, concerns about the housing crisis in Marlborough especially for 3-bed family properties had been raised with the Housing Associations by **Councillor Clewer** and **Cllr Farrell** asked whether information that had been promised subsequent to this was yet available. **Cllr Davies** confirmed that HAs usually cite the costs of raising standards to EPC.

ACTION: Town Clerk to write to Cllr Clewer seeking an update

Councillor Sadler asked whether an update was available on completing the new path near the Business Park. **Councillor Thomas** reported the delay was caused by ongoing legal discussions between four parties (Sainsburys, Beechcroft, Tesco and WC) to work out a land transfer of a 1²M parcel of land owned by Sainsburys. Sustrans, which maintains the existing cycle path, had submitted a feasibility study and costs for joining up the two: no significant obstacles had been identified. In terms of completing the MARL30 section of the path, there was some progress being made but there were issues about the rough section with a pipeline beneath it and funding to cover this. The existing S106 funding for this work would run out by January 2026 so the work would need to be completed by then.

Councillor Davies asked whether Members were aware that a recent government inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission had given WC top marks and concluded that children and young people with SEND are valued and prioritised in Wiltshire: one of only five authorities to receive this top grading. An adult social care inspection had also taken place, with the results expected early in the new year.

The **Mayor** noted that it was fantastic to know those who needed these services were getting looked after so well, and thanked **Councillor Davies** and her team.

Councillor Thomas asked whether Members were aware that Marlborough Area Poverty Action Group (MAPAG) and the Youth Forum had between them benefitted from over £7,000 from the Household Support Fund, supporting the provision of 2 x hot meals per week at the Youth Club (50-60 children per week) and vouchers for families before Christmas. The **Mayor** noted that Love Marlborough Kids Meals had also received funding.

Councillor Sheppard asked whether Members were aware that Wiltshire has the equivalent of nine year' building supply already committed, with over 18,000 permissions for houses already granted.

313/24 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from **Councillors Lusson and Beaumont**.

314/24 DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of interest and no requests for dispensation had been received. The Mayor encouraged Members to familiarise themselves with the Code of Conduct.

315/24 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There will be an in-person event at St Mary's Church Hall, Silverless Street on Wednesday, 11 December, 3-7pm, for people to view plans for and provide feedback on McCarthy Stone proposals for the former Police Station. An online consultation was also ongoing. Details were available on the Town Council website.

The Mayor had recently completed a government survey seeking views on remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings and encouraged others to do the same. Links were available on the Town Council website (*the survey closes on 19 December*).

Members should have received invitations for the Civic Carol Concert at St Mary's Church on Sunday, 22 December at 5pm; robing would be at the Town Hall. She hoped all would be able to attend.

316/24 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 4 November 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor

317/24 ACTION LOG

There were no outstanding actions.

318/24 STANDING ORDERS

Members considered a proposal to add a paragraph to Standing Orders, which had been considered at the previous meeting (*Min. No.179/24*) but sent back to the Finance & Policy Committee for clarification.

Members were satisfied that any extraordinary budget proposals not falling within a Committee remit would be considered by Full Council.

RESOLVED: that all requests for proposed budgets for the forthcoming financial year must be formally considered and agreed by the relevant committee and submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee budgetary meeting held in November, and this principle should be adopted for all future years, and that this should be written into Standing Orders

319/24

BUDGET 2025-26

Members considered the budget and precept requirements for 2025-26 as proposed by the Finance and Policy (F&P) Committee. Discussion points included:

- Questions raised at the most recent F&P meeting about the accuracy and presentation of figures had been resolved offline to the satisfaction of the Chair.
- The budget considered at F&P would have seen a precept rise of just over 6%; two adjustments had been made to budgeted income bringing the increase to 5% equating to an additional £12.34 per household per year for a Band D property.
- Election costs: 2025 would be an election year for both Town and Unitary Council seats; casual vacancy or other unpredicted election costs were also provided for within the budget.
- The Council is required to protect 4-6 months running costs in its general reserve. The current proposal provides for just over 5.5 months.
- The General Reserve position at year end had increased each year over the past 4 years.
- Whilst the actual general reserve figure for 2024-25 would not be known until year end, it was currently forecast to be £517,000.
- Some funds had been moved to Ear Marked Reserves to cover the costs of significant projects, e.g. extending the Grounds Team workshop and upgrading equipment.
- While accepting that it was laudable to keep the precept rise as low as possible, questions were raised about whether general reserves were decreasing year-on-year leaving the Town Council exposed to unplanned large costs in future. Examples given were the Town Hall heating system that had failed in the previous year with an unbudgeted high cost (over £150K) taken from general reserves; also costs for providing services which may be devolved from or reduced by Wiltshire Council.
- The people of Marlborough expect the Town Council to maintain its services: the Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer must be provided with the right funds to manage services over the year: if financial resilience is reduced and there is another unforeseen high costs (e.g. related to a building) it could have a negative impact.
- Whether the way accounts were being presented was masking the overall financial status of the Town Council.
- Whether setting a cap of 5% was politically driven; an additional 1% would equate to an additional precept rise of £3 per year so would not place a great

financial burden on the taxpayer but would allow the Town Council to build up its reserves.

- That a 5% increase broadly placed Marlborough in the median position when compared to other similar sized Wiltshire town councils.
- A reminder that the budget being considered was for a single year only (2025-26). If there were questions about the process of preparing the budget, or there were serious concerns that the Council's financial situation was deteriorating over a longer period then these were topics that could and should be discussed at the F&P Committee.
- It was important to remember the impact of the cost of living situation on council tax payers.

RESOLVED: that Committee Budgets are agreed as proposed, and that a net budget precept requirement to levy to Wiltshire Council for 2025/26 be £931,202

The precept increase is equivalent to 5% for a Band D property (an increase of £12.34)

320/24 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

No questions had been submitted.

321/24 OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Shantry thanked Mr Goodwin for publicising a recent Kennet and Avon Medical Partnership patient survey: prior to his intervention only 115 people out of a population of 17,000 patients had responded. Since then, five times as many had submitted their feedback.

322/24 COMMITTEE MINUTES

In accordance with para 3.1 of the Scheme of Delegation, Members noted the approved minutes of the following committee meetings: **Planning** 19 August and 30 September; **Property** 22 July; **Amenities & Open Spaces** 17 July and **Finance & Policy** 8 July 2024

323/24 COMMON SEAL

Proposed by **Councillor Fogg** and seconded by **Councillor Ross** 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 7.51 pm

Signed:
Town Mayor

Date: