

**Minutes of Burford Annual Town Meeting
held in the Warwick Hall 18 April 2017
at 7.00pm**

Present:

Cllr J White - Mayor. Cllr J Tunnell-Westmacott - Deputy Mayor
Cllrs Cohen, Bush, Temple-Bruce, Lofthouse, Taubenheim, Mills,
Cllr D Cotterill, Cllr N Owen (OCC) Maggie Andrews – Town Clerk.
John Yeatman - Treasurer
92 Members of the public

1. WELCOME. The Mayor welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

2. APOLOGIES. Cllr I Brown.

3. MINUTES.

It was proposed, seconded and approved from the floor that the minutes be passed as a true record of last years' meeting. The Mayor then signed the minutes which were previously distributed to the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING.

All matters are covered under the agenda

5. MAYORS REPORT

The Mayor introduced all Councillors.

Shilton Road site. The Council supported the development of the 17 acre field opposite the Garden Centre. Originally WODC refused to grant permission but the matter went to appeal and in January the Inspector from the Government's Planning Inspectorate announced his decision allowing the appeal and granting outline planning permission for the development. Cole's Field. The Council is fighting the development on two fronts. The first being WODC's draft Local Plan 2031. The Local Plan is a useful thing as it helps defeat unwanted development and it has to be approved by the Government. WODC's first stab, which made no mention of Cole's Field was rejected because it did not permit enough houses to be built, in particular, it did not provide for Burford to take any of Oxford City's homeless. WODC has modified the draft Local Plan and resubmitted it – it recommends that 85 houses be built on Cole's Field. The Council is wholly opposed to this proposal. A group of concerned residents, calling themselves 'Protect Burford's Heritage, the Burford & District Society and many locals have objected to the application.

The second Cole's Field front is the application of Carterton Construction for planning permission for 85 houses and a 60 bed care home! Carterton Construction is wholly owned by Mr Harry Watts of Shilton. We are fighting the Local Plan on the general principle that the Shilton Road development will more than fulfil Burford's obligation to provide more housing in West Oxfordshire and we just do not need another 145 dwellings on top of that. We are fighting the application on planning grounds such as the completely unwelcome encroachments on the AONB and the Conservation Areas, the horrendous suggestions of access from Barns Lane and Witney Street, the severe impact on all our roads, parking, the Surgery, the Primary School, water supply and sewerage, our tourist economy and so forth. 100 residents have already lodged objections which is a wonderful response from the community and make us on the Council feel it is all worthwhile.

Unitary Council. We know money has to be saved; we know that completely removing one layer of local Government would do the trick. We know that can't be the Towns and Parishes because we cost so little. That leaves WODC and OCC. OCC is the natural candidate, it is a failed council having proved to be completely incapable of organising itself to cope with austerity by retreating into Never-Never Land shouting 'if we don't do anything, we won't spend any money'.

It came up with the ruse of abolishing all the District Councils, taking their assets (including South Oxfordshire's reserves of £100,000,000!) and putting them into a new Unitary Council split into 24 smaller areas thus preserving jobs for all the existing OCC employees. And WODC, which would have been my choice to take over from a disbanded OCC has not come up with an alternative. We will continue to battle but OCC's scheme is presently under consideration by the Secretary of State with no counter proposals from any one.

Ratepayers will have noticed from your Council Tax demands that Burford's precept has gone up by 19%. OCC has dramatically reduced services – we have to do what we can to plug those gaps.

Finally, I wish to record the enormous debt of gratitude we owe to the Great Triumvirate of Burford – Maggie Andrews our Clerk who keeps us on the straight and narrow, John Yeatman, our Responsible Finance Officer who ensures we can afford to repair the straight and narrow and David Buckland our lengthman who keeps the straight and narrow free from weed and snow. A tumultuous round of applause followed.

6. TREASURERS REPORT

The Treasurer gave his report and the annual accounts for The Tolsey Charity & Burford Town Council were circulated to the meeting. They can also be obtained on request from the Town Clerk.

On the incomings section the treasurer will amend figures from other grants to include monies received from the Chamber of Trade which he has shown under reimbursements.

All payments have been itemised as projects spend for the year.

All the accounts documentation will be available for inspection in the Tolsey from 5 June until 14 July. The annual audit by BDOLLP is 12 June.

7. O.C.C REPORT

Cllr Owen reported that finances continue to be strained, especially in the road maintenance department, however another dragon patcher has been bought bringing the fleet to two. The budget setting is the prime indicator of the financial health of OCC and its ability to carry out its statutory duties. As a result of cuts and reduced spending the County was able to present a balanced budget. Community charge was increased in line with statutory controls. The County Council set its budget for 2017/18 on 14 February. Ahead of the meeting it was announced the Council had £1,957,000 extra, over and above the position reported to the Cabinet in January, as a result of better than expected business rate collections, council tax collection fund surpluses and a higher than expected grant. The Council voted to hold £926,000 of this until the 2018/19 financial year, to deal with future pressures. The rest of the money was allocated in the following ways:-

£170,000 to be spent on additional grass-cutting work on highway verges.

£250,000 one-off funding initially for a pilot Communities Fund for parishes and towns to bid for matched funding schemes following changes/reductions for funding for services.

£600,000 additional funding for children's social care - a part of the council that has been exempted from cuts since 2010 but has continued to experience significant rising demand on services in common with children's social care departments across England

£11,000 increase on the Council's Flood Defence Levy.

The additional funding for Adult Social care announced in the recent budget is welcome news however we are waiting for guidance as to what and where the funds can be spent. It is thought that the funds have to be spent on new projects for further integration with Health care rather than replacing services.

8. W.O.D.C. REPORT

Waste. The waste contract with Kier Group finishes in October. Ubico Ltd will have the new contract from October 2017. 20 vehicles are required in West Oxon for household waste, recycling and green waste collection. Some are 26 tonne large rear loaders and some smaller for locations difficult to access.

Ubico covers West Oxon, Cotswold District, Stroud, Cheltenham & Forest of Dean. Environmental Services have been amalgamated across several Districts to form a new company called ERS Ltd.

Management staff from these Districts are being transferred to a new umbrella company called Publica Ltd. The former Chief Executive from West Oxon, David Neudegg is the Managing Director of this new company which covers several Districts.

The above business model has achieved a 14% cut in costs overall for all Districts involved. The OCC Unitary idea is currently 'on hold' awaiting the outcome of the County election.

The Car Park survey. WODC engaged consultants at £60,000 to conduct a car park survey throughout the district.

The results for Burford show that the Guildenford occupancy parking is at 90% most days and 100% on Saturdays. The survey gives a four point action: Investigate options to provide more parking spaces; TROs to provide more short stay spaces on the High Street; Create a fund to improve parking; Relocate the coach park.

Planning. This is guided by policies and open to subjective interpretation by planners.

Warwick Hall as you can see is a fine building and a much needed development of this site. WODC allowed a structure which blends with the surroundings.

This month the Local Plan 2031 examination resumes on 9 May with the Planning Inspector hearing evidence and arguments for and against the broad calculations, policies, the basis and structure of the main sections of the plan. Each stage is anticipated to take two weeks. Cllr Cotterill has submitted a written objection to policy BC1b which proposes 85 houses on land east of Burford. He has objected to allocation of this land in the Local Plan on various grounds and suggested a better site exists to the west of Burford on land owned by the County Council. This objection is quite separate and predated the application by Carterton Construction for outline permission to build 85 houses and a 60 bed care complex on the same land.

Environment. We experience sewage flooding in Carterton & Brize Norton. Thames Water are measuring flows and tankering raw sewage from various points, Brize Norton, Witney etc. Getting Thames Water to lay larger pipes and improve infrastructure is proving difficult in spite of the number of houses being built, or allowed for building, throughout the District.

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning.

Cllr Walker was unable to attend the meeting but planning applications continue to be looked at and our comments sent to West Oxfordshire District Council's planning officers.

The Council's comments to applications are shown in the monthly minutes.

Environmental/Town Maintenance/Cemetery.

Cllr Tunnell-Westmacott reported that some verges in Burford are continually being eroded by thoughtless motorists.

We are waiting for pavement repairs in several areas, and always being told by OCC there is a lack of funds!

Potholes are an ongoing cause for concern.

A small band of willing helpers together with some Councillors keep the pavements swept from time to time, but we encourage all business to keep their own frontages clean and tidy, thanking those who do.

Cemetery. The spring bulbs have come into their own this year and look wonderful.

Dry stone walling is an ongoing job but David Buckland continues to repair them when necessary. He has also stripped ivy from walls and tees.

Recreation Ground

Cllr Brown said we are indebted to David Buckland our Lengthman for all the work he carries out to the grounds making sure it is kept tidy, repairing dry stone walling and general rubbish clearing.

Two trees have been removed together with several saplings. The west side near the car park/Tanners Lane needs tidying – working parties will be arranged.

It was noted that garden waste is still being dumped on the Rec.

The dog-leg fence has been straightened in the playground making more room for children and equipment.

The Scouts are developing the area west of the scout hut and creating a wildflower area, to include a small fire pit.

The allotments are well used and very productive.

Dog owners are still allowing their dogs to foul the Rec. This is a health concern and many complaints are received from young families and the scout and beavers groups who often camp on the Rec. Cllr Brown urged locals to report any dog fouling incidents to the Town Clerk where possible.

Pavilion.

Cllr Taubenheim reported that the youth group have used the facilities on a regular basis but now meet in the Warwick Hall.

The heating system is proving to be very effective. Swynnerton Walk has been a great asset together with the lights along the walkway.

Hiring rates for the Pavilion for children's parties are very reasonable. Contact the Town Clerk if you want to use the venue.

Traffic Advisory.

The Mayor reported several items including the following:-

Pot holes take a long time to repair but the position should improve because OCC have bought more equipment called a 'dragon patcher'.

We have bigger and better signage to the car park, better road markings on the A40 roundabout and professional HGV signage at the top of Barns Lane.

Progress has been made on controlling HGVs in the High Street. Subject to a number of conditions OCC has agreed to introduce Environmental Weight Limit Restriction in an area which includes Burford. Signage is costly, we are waiting for a firm figure but it will be many tens of thousands. The next step is for OCC to apply to the Government for the necessary Traffic Regulation Order.

Museum.

A report was submitted by Chris Walker the Curator which included:-

Starting in March there were 752 visitors making 6,000 overall for the year.

Stalls held under the Tolley raised over £700, events included Curator evenings, photographs old and new from Peter Gould, the story of the doll's house by Sue Ashton, Scrap books, an Open AGM and social get-together and a new OMC booklet featuring the Tolley on the front cover.

Thanks were noted to all those who volunteer so that the Museum can open regularly.

The financial balance stands at £10,033. 46.

Falkland Hall Trust

The Trust's bank account is held with TSB bank – investments are held in funds with M & G investments and CCLS COIF Charity Funds.

During 2016 the Trustees fulfilled the requirements of the charity scheme giving grants totalling £16,500. The TSB balance stands at £45,528.10.

10. A.O.B./QUESTION TIME

Full copies of all reports are available from the Town Clerk.

Question time was recorded and is available on request, however, some points/comments raised are as follows:-

Why doesn't Burford have a Town Plan?

The Mayor replied we are beginning to start one and will push it forward.

Do we have any plans regarding traffic increase - could we have a by-pass?

A by-pass is not a possibility.

Cole's Field. We must protect Burford's heritage and object to this proposed development.

Is the Shilton Road development in the structure plan?

It would be a great shame if the HGV ban was held up because we couldn't afford the signage.

Should holiday lets, Air b&b be classed as businesses and pay business rates?

This is a matter for HMRC.

Bins are being left out almost permanently in Witney Street which cause obstruction.

If the offenders are reported to the Town Clerk we can get WODC to write to those causing the problem.

Speeding traffic. Why doesn't the 30mph sign extend past the School on the A40.

Initially it was not restricted; OCC altered it to 40mph.

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Could we do anything about the empty shops, i.e. Hacketts, Maison Blanc ? – they are an eye sore.

When will outline planning application on Cole's Field be heard by the Planning Committee?
Around June but late representations will be considered.

When will we know the answers?

We suspect around December. Assuming its refused Carterton Construction will have time to appeal so timing is against us.

Why don't we put the Recreation Ground on Cole's Field and build houses on the Rec?
We could think about it.

Who manages the AONB?

Peter Higgs is on the Board of the Cotswold AONB.

The Reverend Richard Coombs asked for a round of applause for the Council for all their hard work and commitment over the past year.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm