

## **TC Meeting - 10 May 2022**

Present: 11 councillors, the locum town clerk, district and county councillors and several members of the public.

As this was the annual town council meeting, elections for the new mayor and deputy mayor took place. Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt is our new mayor and Councillor Jo Lamb our deputy mayor, congratulations both. Similarly, representatives from the town council to various and numerous committees and working groups were also elected, details can be found in the meeting minutes on the town council website.

Our Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Councillor Andy Graham gave his update. He reported that the feedback from the parking consultation will form the basis of the OCC's decision on parking in Woodstock and that there had been much constructive input leading to amendments being made to the plan recently presented to the town. By the time of press, there will have been a meeting at OCC on 26th May for further representation and a decision to be made whether the plan will go ahead or not. Regarding the new surgery/health centre for Woodstock, the good news is that interested parties will be shortly meeting for a feasibility study. A central location is favoured by Councillor Graham.

Regarding the library, Councillor Graham believes the current location is unacceptable for a permanent solution and is at the top of his list to take to the OCC. Councillor Faulkner noted that the existing agreement with the museum appeared to be working well and Councillor Graham said that there was an ongoing study on the use of libraries and heritage services by OCC. Councillor Lamb made the suggestion of a possible community hub with a health centre, library and café. Councillor Graham is also looking at the traffic flow around the schools, hoping to organise coach movements to avoid congestion on Shipton Road.

Councillor Nick Manby-Brown reported a comprehensive survey of the Woodstock waste bins, identifying needs which will be passed on to the District Council. He noted the presence of both commercial and residential bins on pavements and will continue to work on this problem.

Dr. Robert Edwards from Woodstock in Bloom had previously requested access to the town hall for volunteers to water the planters in the town square. From the council meeting last month the installation of a tap was to be investigated. From this meeting it was agreed to give Robert and 2 volunteers keys to the town hall. Woodstock in Bloom was acknowledged for their work around town.

Finally, two motions in relation to the proposed Oxfordshire County Council parking plan for Woodstock were not considered on the recommendation of the town clerk so as not to influence the public poll held on 18th May. An extraordinary meeting of the town council held on 19th May will send the council's recommendations to Oxfordshire County Council ahead of their meeting of 26th May.

Please refer to the town council website for minutes of the meeting and further information.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 14 Jun 2022**

The Town Council meeting on Tuesday evening was called a shambles by several, with fierce arguments amongst Councillors about the new parking scheme and missives (not missiles) from the public.

Only seven Councillors were present, five of whom have consistently voted together in favour of the new parking scheme. County Councillor Andy Graham, who introduced the parking proposals in the first place, could not be present due to family circumstances.

About thirty members of the public were present, four of whom asked to speak and were restricted to three minutes precisely. Each mentioned the strong feeling in the town against the scheme and the lack of respect for the democratic votes against it, except one town centre resident who said it was everyone else causing the divisions. A majority of the Councillors voted against asking the full Cabinet of Oxfordshire County Council to reconsider the implementation of the scheme, following the delegated decision of one Cabinet member, because of (as was suggested) 'the foreseeable daily impact on the lives and livelihoods in Woodstock', which did not persuade our Town Council.

There followed a very long argument between Councillors, at times involving the Mayor, the Town Clerk and the Responsible Finance Officer about a sum of £7 thousand pounds allocated by the District Council to the Town Council for parking issues, and if some of it should be used to fund the town poll, or saved - it was suggested - for when the County Council ask Woodstock for a contribution towards the implementation of the scheme. An amendment to fund the town poll from an unconnected budget, making it more available for payment to the County Council, was carried.

Further votes for the Council to register objection to the scheme with the County Council, and also to object to a remark by the County Councillor referring to Woodstock as the 'backwoods', were voted down by a small majority of Councillors.

Later in the meeting, development applications for 180 houses and two parking barns in Old Woodstock and 250 houses and two parking barns in Banbury Road were considered, and decisions taken to object to both in exactly the comprehensive manner as twice before.

Stan Scott (kindly standing in for Graham Brown, who was on holiday)

## **TC Meeting - 26 Jul 2022**

A member of the public addressed the Council and suggested that the Council had been too quiet about the controversial parking scheme set to be implemented in the town, which could damage businesses and disadvantage many local people who will have to pay to park. Three times more permits are planned to be issued every year than there are parking spaces in the town centre, and visitors and shoppers are likely to go elsewhere. It was also suggested that our Council could more strongly represent the widespread concerns in the town to the County Council, who have said that they are managing the whole scheme to create a revenue stream for the County. The County Councillor present gave his report. For the first time, all stakeholdersto do with the surgery had been brought together. When asked about the likelihood of the library being rebuilt on the original site, he thought it unlikely. The Town Clerk asked him if there were arrangements for County Councillors to meet Town Councillors to discuss local conerns, as is the practice elsewhere in the country, and he promised to ask. He was also asked if any future parking meters in the town could be designed and installed to be unobtrusive and respectful of our beautiful historic streets. Councillor Graham promised to investigate.

Comprehensive arrangements for maintaining the water meadows were discussed and agreed, as well as play area repairs. The Council agreed to new signage about antisocial behaviour in the play areas.

A Facebook page for Council matters, intended as a 'notice board' for information and events, is to be controlled by two Councillors and the Town Clerk, and progress on this is to be reported back to the Council. Members of the public would not be able to post on the page, but could contact the Clerk to make comment or enquire further.

It was noted that the proposal for the erection of some five hundred houses on land east of Park View is now back in prospect, a planning application has been submitted. Woodstock residents are strongly encouraged to comment and make their views known to Cherwell District Council.

Tony McHugh and Stan Scot

### **TC Meeting - 09 Aug 2022**

Present: 9 Councillors, the locum town clerk, district and county councillors and several members of the public.

On the weekend of 6/7 August the council received visitors from Maintenon, a small town south west of Paris, with a view to establishing links between the two towns. The meeting went well and discussions will continue.

Public participation included myself reminding the council of their responsibility for action on the Climate Emergency as stated on their website and a resident backing onto the Water Meadows declaring a land registry application. No comments were made by the councillors.

County Councillor Andy Graham reported that the 30 to 20 mph speed limit implementation through Woodstock is scheduled for April/May next year and details of the zone will be clarified. Highways and various parts of the County Council have objected to the proposed housing development east of Park View, located in Cherwell District Council. High level discussions between interested parties regarding the Hensington Road site for a health centre and library are continuing with a meeting scheduled for September. Councillor Parnes asked about the new parking system in Woodstock, the results from the hotel consultation are due at the end of August.

The meeting was unfortunately quite fractious and included discussions on the details of the structure, process and organisation of the town council. Three councillors requested the council 'get on with the business of council' and 'work together' however the mayor and town clerk struggled to keep order - the clerk at one point reminding councillors of their Code of Conduct. All very disappointing for the members of public present.

Finally the extremely bad smell detected in Woodstock last week was discussed, council is investigating with government agencies to find out what happened.

Please refer to the town council website for meeting minutes and further information.

Graham Brown

### **TC Meeting - 11 Oct 2022**

In the council meeting of 11th there was a discussion regarding the civility and respect pledge for councillor behaviour. This is a national campaign as a result of growing concerns about the impact of bullying, harassment and intimidation on local councils. Members of our council wanted to know more regarding how potential sanctions for elected members would be regulated. The resolution was voted upon and deferred. The town council resolved to support Bladon Parish Council's response to the planning application to Cherwell District Council for development of the land south east of Park View. A motion to consult utility providers and tenants of town council property to understand where cost controls can be implemented was proposed but moved to the November meeting.

Graham Brown

### **TC Meeting - 25 Oct 2022**

From the council meeting of 25th it was reported that a visit by West Oxfordshire District Council councillors is planned for 10th November to look at the proposed Hill Rise and Banbury Road housing development sites. The council is considering a proposal for a company to take responsibility for the town's bus shelters with an agreement to place advertising on the shelters. A motion to start council meetings at 7pm (instead of the usual 6.30pm) was proposed to make meetings more available for potential councillor candidates. This was discussed but the motion was withdrawn.

A new grit bin at a cost of £250 plus VAT was approved for the junction of Glyme Close and Brook Hill. An audit of grit bins in the town was not pursued but it was stated that during the winter grit will be delivered to a central Woodstock location to be distributed to the various grit bins around Woodstock. A number of complaints have been received by the council regarding the path leading up to the gate of the Green Road cemetery entrance, stating it is hazardous. The council agreed to contact builders for quotations to make safe. Notes and recommendations described in detail from 2 Environment Working Group meetings regarding various council responsibilities were noted and deferred to the upcoming budget meeting. These included grass cutting, St. Mary Magdalene churchyard, Old Woodstock Football Club, the Water Meadows, the Old Woodstock Line reserve, tree works and Christmas lights.

A memorial in the town for Colonel Nigel Clifford was also discussed.

Graham Brown

### **TC Meeting - 08 Nov 2022**

From the meeting of 8th November, 13 members of the public were present and 2 spoke. Firstly, Robert Edwards encouraged councillors to attend the upcoming Remembrance parade and to help receive the armed services representatives at the town hall. Secondly, John Brimble, who had attended the staffing committee meeting the day before. John witnessed a Town Councillor refusing to leave the meeting when requested and was appalled by his 'disrespectful and threatening behaviour'. This was following a resolution from the town council meeting of 11th October where it was agreed non-voting council members would leave committee meetings when requested. This resolution was made after considering advice from the town clerk and the National Association of Local Council Solicitors. The staffing committee meeting was postponed. The revised planning application for the development of Rye Grass was discussed and ended with no comment. A motion calling for a full economic impact assessment of the new parking scheme in the town centre was defeated.

Finally, it was decided that the council meetings will move to the Mayor's Parlour, where they were held pre pandemic. The acoustics in the parlour for the public are poor but unfortunately the members of public present were not consulted.

For full details please refer to the town council website for agendas and meeting minutes or contact the town clerk.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 13 Dec 2022**

Two members of the public spoke at the council meeting, myself and Colin Carritt. The Botley West Solar Farm Project was on the agenda so I spoke to remind the council of their commitment, as stated on their website, to support the provision of renewable energy installation due to the Climate Emergency. With little discussion the council unanimously agreed to submit to the developers a report written by Bladon Parish Council which contained many questions about the impact of the project and stating that most of the area is not suitable for a solar farm of this size. District and County Councillor Andy Graham commented that the District Council will be heading up an impact assessment of the solar farm even though it will not be their planning decision.

Colin Carritt spoke to encourage the town council to support the 20mph speed limit on the A44 through Woodstock. With council approval Woodstock would be included on the Oxfordshire County Council's list of towns and villages for 20 mph implementation. A report from Councillor Poskitt could not be presented as she was absent due to illness so the issue was deferred. It was agreed that the town council's Traffic Advisory Group, meeting on 9th January, would submit a report for the next council meeting on 17th January. Councillor Andy Graham said it was in the budget and will be included in the list of applicants as soon as the town council submit their supporting proposal. The longer this takes the further down the list Woodstock will be and the longer it will take to implement.

The new parking scheme for Woodstock will go live in April 2023, hotel parking vouchers will be included. From the Financial Officer's report, a motion was proposed to maintain the precept (the tax that Woodstock Town Council charges local electors to meet their budget requirements) for the coming financial year at £149,073, this was passed. A recent audit of the town council's finances noted that the council's general reserves were too high at £85,000, the recommended amount should be half of the precept, approximately £75,000.

For full details please refer to the town council website for agendas and minutes. Please note Councillor Mathew Parkinson is acting as the Interim Town Clerk and there is currently no administrative assistant.

Graham Brown

### **TC Meeting - 17 Jan 2023**

One member of the public, Colin Carritt, spoke on the proposed 20 mph speed limit proposal throughout Woodstock and urged the council for their support. The proposal, agreed by the council a year ago, is supported by many residents, the council's own Traffic Advisory Working Group, West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). It is being rolled out throughout the county to make the streets safer, encourage walking and cycling and reduce noise and pollution. Colin reminded the council that further delays may lead to its implementation being delayed to 2024/5. A map showing the extent of the 20mph limit has been produced by the town council's Traffic Advisory Working Group. This will be submitted to OCC once it has been approved by the town council.

This agenda item was brought forward for discussion, the mayor supporting the proposal and urging the council to do likewise to avoid further delays. Councillor Parnes requested that a public consultation should take place. The mayor argued that the proposal had been agreed a year ago and this would cause further delays. The motion for the consultation was seconded and passed by council. At this point two members of the public, both passionate campaigners for the 20mph proposal, disrupted the meeting by speaking without permission saying how disappointed they were in this further delay and that it would continue to endanger the residents of Woodstock. Both then left the meeting. Councillor Parnes said the council would complete the consultation in as short a time as possible, it would be publicised on their website.

In District and County Councillor Andy Graham's report, he said the introduction of the £2 bus fare scheme had been very successful and they had seen a significant increase in the number of people using the buses. Councillor Graham also reported on the proposed Health Centre/Library/ Community Centre on the Hensington Road site. He said meetings between Blenheim, WODC and OCC were going very well and plans for the site had been drawn up. The estimated cost for the project would be £7 million. He said Blenheim had been very helpful and supportive and the decision will mainly depend on the support of the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group as to whether they can provide a health centre on the site.

Owen Mumford has offered the town council help with events where possible, the council will ask for suggestions.

Regarding the Botley West Solar Farm, WODC held a meeting inviting representatives from town and parish councils. WODC is one of the planning authorities and feels strongly for the need for a robust consultation process. The planning inspector will listen to WODC's comments and if the inspector allows submission of the application then a further formal consultation will take place.

Further council budget discussions then followed, the clerk stating that the budget is usually set before the precept (the tax that Woodstock Town Council charges local electors to meet their budget requirements). The precept had already been submitted to WODC. Following somewhat confused discussions both budget and precept were approved. It was noted that the council's accountant advised the council that the precept should not be increased as the council's reserves were so high.

For full details please refer to the town council website for agendas and minutes. Please note Karen Howe is acting as the Interim Town Clerk and there is currently no administrative assistant.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 14 Feb 2023**

So at 6.30pm on 14th February while many people were sitting down to Valentine's celebrations I attended my first Woodstock Town Council meeting. There was a 22 point agenda covering items ranging from upgrading the CCTV system at the Town Hall, planning applications and Working Group Terms of Reference. For the purposes of this write up I will stick to the items that hopefully people will find interesting:

### **1. Health Centre**

Feasibility work has been ongoing for the relocation of the library and the Doctor's surgery to the site by the car park on Hensington Road. Cllr Graham reported that at this stage the move was looking unlikely as there may not be sufficient space to further expand the surgery if that was required. There may still be an opportunity to base the library on the site and currently other options for the surgery are being considered

### **2. Woodstock swimming pool**

Cllr Cooper reported that it was likely that the swimming pool would only be open for the summer school holidays

### **3. 20 mph scheme**

Woodstock is in the 2nd tranche of 20 mph schemes so a decision on whether to support the scheme needs to be made by early summer. The Council agreed to publish the Working Group's document with a structured feedback survey to enable local people to provide comments. It is proposed that the consultation will remain open for two weeks, and then a summary report of the feedback will be published on the Town council website.

### **4. Issues connected to the Shipton Road Development**

Cllr Parnes raised that there were still issues connected to the Shipton Road development. The Town Clerk would notify the County Council about the large pot holes that have appeared on the road and there was a motion passed to request the instillation of a pre vehicle "wheel wash" which would reduce the mud on the road.

### **5. Coronation Celebrations**

There were discussions about what celebrations would take place during the Coronation Weekend. The Council seemed keen to encourage local street parties in Woodstock, there was also discussion of a civic service, and potential commemorative gifts for local children. Options were to be explored and discussed further.

### **6. Botley West Solar Farm**

There were was a motion raised by Cllr Parnes to nominate a number of councillors to liaise with the 'Stop Botley West' Group. This was supported by the Council.

The meeting finished at 9pm, but had not managed to complete all the items on the agenda so it was agreed that a further meeting would be held on Monday 20th Feb at the new start time of 7pm

Finally the Town Council are looking for a new Town Clerk and if anyone is interested the details can be found on the Town Council website.

For full details please refer to the Town council website for agendas and minutes

Penny Stocks

## TC Meeting - 20 Feb 2023

This was a 'resumed' meeting dealing with agenda items not covered at the previous meeting. There were no declarations of interest.

### 1. Planning

The meeting discussed the planning application for 500 hundred houses on 'Land South of Perdiswell Farm, Shipton Road, Shipton –onCherwell'. Opening the discussion, the Mayor, Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, said that in her view these houses would never be a part of Woodstock and would bring no economic benefit to the town. In addition there was a major risk to biodiversity. Councillor Sharone Parnes added that the application offered no clarity as to any planning gains. A draft response had already been circulated and the Mayor and Clerk would work to produce a more detailed response for submission. The council was unanimous in support of the response in opposition to the planning application and also agreed to register as a 'Rule 6 Party' to the proceedings.

### 2. Terms of Reference

These terms related to the Council's Committees and Standing Orders. It was agreed unanimously that Working Groups could be set up and disbanded t any time and would be governed by the full Council's agreed terms of reference, to be reviewed at the Council Annual Meeting or after six months.

### 3. Town Clerk Recruitment

It was reported that there had been no applications for the vacancy.

An interview panel of three councillors from the Staffing committee and the Mayor would be convened whenever relevant.

### 4. Finance.

This item was concerned with the selection of a credit card for use by the council. A credit limit of £500 monthly was agreed. The Council no longer uses petty cash.

### 5. Emergency repairs at Budd's Close

Councillor Nick Manby-Brown reported that he had to take urgent action to make safe a stretch of pathway behind Budd's Close where the fence posts and barbed wire had come down, posing immediate risk to walkers and anyone using the play area. He had found a contractor to remove the barbed wire and to estimate the cost of repairs in general to the area. A warning sign will be placed near the steps. Given the nature of the site the repairs will be complicated. Councillor Ann Grant raised the issue of the council's public liability insurance and there was discussion as to whether the cover should be raised to £10 million. While this was seen as an issue to be decided, Councillor Manby-Brown took the view that the work was too urgent to be halted at this stage, and this was agreed. Councillor John Bleakley commented that this site could be improved over the long term, and this could become a council project. At present it is often messy and unfortunately used by flytippers.

At this point the public session ended and the council went into private session.

Linda Glees

### Comment

Last night's 'extraordinary' Woodstock Town Council meeting illustrated both the positives and negatives of how we manage policy issues at the local level in our town.

Councillors turned out on a chilly Monday evening in February for 7pm meeting, giving their time (some of it truly precious) to trying to resolve a whole medley of unrelated agenda issues, big and small. There is genuine public service here and it should be recognised.

However, there are also problems of policy and delivery and crucially of presentation which Woodstock Town Council must address, both in the interests of transparency and sound policy.

The acoustics in the Mayor's Parlour are fairly appalling (especially for the many of us who are getting on and have hearing aids). Being able to hear clearly what is being said is key to transparency and modern tech should be used. What's more, Councillors repeatedly interrupt each other, and every single one spoke last night without being called to speak, with the acting Town Clerk commenting along the way. This made a logical and formal approach to problem solving virtually impossible. And there is still far too much argument about 'how many angels fit on a pinhead' and often more than a little rudeness.

There is also a more troubling matter: a propensity for secrecy, whether in a failure to declare conflicts of interest, for example over the Blenheim's many far-reaching plans to change the face of our countryside, or over the staffing problems which the public may presume not only bespeak of poor management by councillors but involve payouts we can ill afford. Motions to 'exclude the public' may not always be in the interests of the public not least where money or poor management is concerned.

Whether at national or local level, secrecy is selfevidently the antithesis of open and reasoned governance. It is also an invitation to those who hold elected power not to change their ways.

Woodstock faces huge challenges over the next decade. Our Town Council must rise to them and this can only happen with full transparency and a return to formal styles of public discourse.

Anthony Glees

### **TC Meeting - 14 Mar 2023**

Five members of the public attended the meeting. David Baldwin from Park View spoke to ask when the bus shelters and real time information signs would be installed outside of the estate. The town council recommended David contact County Councillor Andy Graham as it is the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council. David also expressed his concern on the proposed link road between Park View and the proposed new development - Land South of Perdiswell Farm. The Mayor said this had been raised as an issue in the council's statement to Cherwell District Council regarding the development.

County Councillor Andy Graham announced the Councillor Priority Fund will continue and applications can be made directly to him for support of community projects. He has received comments that the new S7 bus has problems turning in the town square and suggested to give it some time. It was agreed that the council will write to Stagecoach with their concerns. The parking Pay and Display machines will be installed in town in May. Finally, regarding the proposed new surgery on the Hensington Road site, the doctors and health authority have decided there is insufficient space on the site for their plans to expand in the future.

There was an update from the Town Clerk regarding the 20 mph proposal through town, the public consultation document is very nearly finished and will be put on the town council website in the next few days.

Regarding planning, the town council will confirm their objection to the Hill Rise development planning appeal.

A motion from Councillor Parnes regarding the adverse economic impact of the new town parking charges on the town was discussed and narrowly defeated.

Waste bins in the town were discussed with Councillor Parnes proposing the bin at the town end of Samsons Lane should be replaced. Councillors M Parkinson and Manby-Brown are in discussions with West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the locations of waste bins, apparently the previous consultation was missed by Woodstock Town Council and bins were allocated without their knowledge. Waste bins cost around £340 per bin to be installed and £340 per bin per year to be emptied and maintained. A new list is being drawn up for consideration and the Sansoms Lane one will be added.

Finally, the Old Woodstock Line reserve has undergone some emergency work regarding wire and concrete posts although the report is not currently available to the public.

For full details please refer to the town council website for agendas and minutes. Please note Karen Howe is acting as the Interim Town Clerk and there is currently no administrative assistant.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 04 Apr 2023 ETC**

Five members of the public attended the meeting.

During the public participation session I spoke regarding the ongoing proposal for solar panels for the roof of the Community Centre in New Road. I was told the project was on hold due to the instability of the council and the lack of a permanent town clerk. This project has been with the council since February 2013.

Councillor Parnes discussed meetings at West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the Botley West Solar project, councillors are awaiting full details as the project is in the hands of developmental control. Mayor Poskitt was reminded that the town council had previously voted to support the Stop Botley West campaign.

The council's Risk Register was discussed at some length (copy not currently available for the public) and the need to carry out risk assessments was identified. The council could fail an audit if this is not carried out. Help from a specialist company was suggested by Councillor Grant.

Following a previous Park View resident's request for bus shelters outside of the development, Councillor Parnes submitted a report including reviewing all bus shelters in town and possible funding for their upgrade. He believed residents do not want sponsored shelters with illuminated advertising. Councillor Manby-Brown was concerned as he has been in discussion with a company supplying such shelters (Primesite Media) as agreed at council in October 2022. It was agreed to defer the issue to the next meeting. County Councillor Andy Graham has been contacted and will hopefully provide an update at the next town council meeting.

There is a Woodstock Traffic Advisory Committee meeting to be held at the Town Hall from 10-12 noon on Monday 24th April. This meeting is chaired by County Councillor Andy Graham and will discuss parking, the 20 mph proposal, the S7 bus route and bus shelters among other things.

The continued deterioration of Shipton Road because of the construction traffic was raised again.

For the King's coronation it was suggested to give gifts to the primary school children to mark the occasion, there is £6,500 in the budget. This will be followed up by Councillors Grant and SpencerChurchill. Mayor Poskitt stated that no funding would be given to street parties organised around the town.

Regarding the possible location of a new doctors' surgery, Mayor Poskitt said she was disappointed with the recent decision and it was agreed to write to all those concerned and push for it to be on the Hensington Road/old police station site. Councillor Spencer-Churchill said there was a meeting of Blenheim trustees on 17th April and that this issue would be discussed and resolved.

For full details please refer to the town council website for agendas and minutes. Please note Karen Howe is acting as the Interim Town Clerk and there is currently no administrative assistant.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 18 Apr 2023 Town Ver2**

The annual town meeting on 18th April was well attended, few seats unoccupied. It is a town electors' meeting, not a council meeting. Traditionally it is hosted by the Town Mayor, who was asked at the outset if public participation could be at the beginning not the end, but this was declined.

There followed reports from the District Councillor, the County Councillor and Blenheim. We learned that the dreadful parking scheme for the town centre is slightly delayed, but will be introduced in May or June. 20mph areas proposed for the town are still some way off, still requiring planning, consultation and preparation.

Evidence is being gathered about the unsafe, noisy and cumbersome way in which buses are turning through the town centre, although there is some anxiety that objection could result in the service being lost altogether. When these double decker buses are joined by residents' and businesses' vehicles parked in the centre, chaos seems likely and all may suffer. None of our representatives has yet spoken to anyone from the bus company, but a petition is being signed by many.

The dredging of the lake may finish around the end of July and we can walk around Queen Pool again. Fisheries Cottage is being refurbished for residential use. Apparently, the Furze Platt buildings will also be a new residence. The Blenheim representative, Roy Cox, made brief comment about housing developments and land for use for solar energy.

A speaker from 'Stop Botley West Campaign' based in Bladon outlined the enormity of the proposed solar 'farm', covering approximately 11 miles by 3 miles of countryside surrounding Woodstock and Bladon. Solar energy is only 11% efficient, it was said, as compared to 98% wind energy efficiency. However, our County Councillor warned against making formal objection too soon, until specific plans are published.

Four local residents then strongly opposed the campaign, in support of the proposed solar farm proposals, on the basis that we all face climate crisis and extreme measures are needed urgently and now to reduce damage to the planet. This did not seem well received from the public present and many loud murmurs and even shouts of protest were heard. Our District Councillor said he would resign his position for WODC in view of a lack of robust opposition to the solar farm from that council.

Our Town Mayor spoke at length, and with evident genuine feeling, in frustration at the lack of agreement between Blenheim and the NHS in regard to using the old police station site and associated land for a decent G.P.'s surgery close to the town centre. A strong letter from the town council is to be written.

The NHS are understood to doubt that the site is large enough for car parking and future area health needs, but Councillor Grant suggested at the meeting that a new building on the site could have several storeys for offices, clinics and the like, leaving adequate parking space available as well as the existing public car park adjacent to the site.

Throughout the evening, some electors expressed disappointment that our representatives seemed not to be robust enough in speaking up for the town when facing major issues, a failure to engage with key bodies (such as bus company bosses, Blenheim, NHS etc) and a lack of communication from our councils about what they are doing on our behalf.

Stan Scott

## TC Meeting - 18 Apr 2023 Town Ver1

Two views of The Annual Town Meeting - Community Centre 18th April 2023

The meeting was chaired by the Mayor Elizabeth Poskitt and the Deputy Mayor Jo Lamb. Between 80-100 residents attended. Interim town clerk Karen Howe took minutes. Minutes of last year's annual town meeting and reports from Mayor Poskitt, District Councillors Julian Cooper and Elizabeth Poskitt and County Councillor Andy Graham were distributed to residents. Hopefully, these reports will be posted on the town council website.

The mayor spoke first, reporting that the town council had no plans for the Coronation but encouraged residents to volunteer for any activities taking place. The implementation of the 20mph speed limit throughout Woodstock, agreed by the town council, will be in the County Council's second funding tranche, date to be confirmed. The town council has just launched a town consultation on where the 20mph limit should be implemented. It can be found on their website if you search for 'Traffic Survey', paper copies can be found in the town hall. The mayor urged everyone to complete the survey by the closing date of May 5th. The mayor also highlighted a petition against the S7 bus turning in town.

County Councillor Andy Graham highlighted some items from his report, firstly his work on Home to School transport improvements. Regarding the 20mph speed limit proposal for Woodstock he is waiting for the town survey results before he can give the go ahead. He is supporting the removal of the S7 bus turning in the town centre. The S3 branch to Charlbury bus service is under threat but is safe for another year.

Parking restrictions in Woodstock will be enforced next month. Councillor Graham is committed to bringing back the library including a community space to Woodstock. During questions a resident commented on how good Blenheim's new Community Path from Bladon to Long Hanborough was and asked about the possibility of one from Old Woodstock into town. It was noted the importance of the S7 bus to potentially link Old Woodstock with regards to Oxford Hospitals, Oxford Parkway, Kidlington and Summertown. A question regarding enforcement of time limits in the Hensington Road car park to provide more spaces was asked and Councillor Graham said this should improve when the new parking scheme comes into force.

Roy Cox, managing director of Blenheim Estates gave a report of activity at Blenheim. He thanked residents for feedback on the new Community Path and said Blenheim was working alongside Safer Routes and the Village Travel Network to identify all possible connecting routes in the area, including Old Woodstock linking to the town. The lake dredging is around half way completed, planning to finish at the end of July. Blenheim has planted 300 acres of new woodland to slow the amount of silt entering the lake in the future. The Orangery roof at the Palace is being replaced to its original slate. Visitors to the Palace have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. During questions a resident raised issues of noise from concerts, car parking after the town gate entrance and dangerous cyclists in the park. Roy Cox replied that noise sensors had been installed in the park to monitor noise from concerts, parking in this area is only from January to March to prevent damage to the grass and that he was aware of the safety concerns regarding cycling and it is being monitored. Regarding the Fisheries Cottage at the end of Queen Pool, this will be restored to residential use. It was also noted by a resident that sometimes the traffic management for large events at Blenheim has been poor which was acknowledged.

PCSO Helen Duffield commented that rural crime was rife in our area, particularly the number of high performance cars that have been stolen and to be aware.

An update from the Stop Botley West Campaign by Karen Squibb-Williams from Bladon explained that they were not against solar panels and renewable energy but formed the group because of the size of the project and various other concerns including fencing, use of green belt and use of agricultural land. A resident explained that ground mounted solar was the best way to deliver renewable energy and that only 0.09% of farmland would be used if all the solar projects were delivered in the UK. Karen was asked what would be acceptable with respect to the scale of solar panels and she referred to local projects such as Charlbury's solar farm being acceptable. Another resident asked why the town council at their meeting of 5th April had not objected to the scheme. The mayor replied that it was too early to comment without sufficient evidence and details. Councillor Graham agreed that when the full plan was on the table then challenges could be made. Roy Cox added that the second stage consultation would happen this summer, with all the facts and he welcomed views but urged residents to look at the plans carefully. An exchange of varying views between residents followed.

The possibility of a new doctors' surgery was then discussed. The current plan for a new surgery at the old police station site has been rejected, mainly through lack of space for future expansion. The mayor commented that car

parking for 60 cars at the surgery should not be necessary and that Charlbury's surgery had parking for only 14 cars. The town council will write to all concerned to show their support of the surgery at this site. There was support for this action and a resident asked what more could be done to show their support. When challenged, Roy Cox stated that Blenheim bought this site several years ago to be used for a new surgery in the centre of Woodstock and it is the doctors saying this site is unsuitable. He reminded us that many people from outside of Woodstock use this surgery. Finally, a resident asked for improved representation on the views of residents and better communication from the town council.

There was a further statement regarding opposition to Botley West Solar. A question was asked regarding the use of weed killer around town that is used to prevent damage to kerbs, etc. Councillor Parkinson explained it would not be used this year as a trial to reduce the use of herbicides for environmental reasons. Dr Robert Edwards suggested that as part of the request to volunteer for the King's Coronation residents should weed a section of their roads.

The meeting concluded at approximately 9.20pm.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 25 Apr 2023 TC**

Three members of the public attended the meeting.

At the start of the meeting the Town Clerk announced that it would be recorded, as a trial.

There were no County or District Councillors reports as it was felt the reports from the recent Annual Town Meeting were sufficient.

Following the Greenspaces consultation, West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) has adopted Woodstock's Neighbourhood Plan which means that it now forms part of the Development Framework against which all planning applications will be assessed.

The Clerk reported that the grass cutting by WODC and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) in Woodstock will be reduced from 4 to 2 times this year. This is due to funding cuts at OCC and an agreed match fund from WODC. The mayor said the public can cut the grass if they wish to. The Council is now using FixMyStreet to report issues around the town, this is a service where anyone can report issues such as potholes, litter, street lighting etc and it will be sent to the relevant council department. It can be found at [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com). The Clerk has used this service to request a tree survey for Woodstock and report the deterioration of Shipton Road.

There has been no acknowledgment from Stagecoach of the letter sent regarding the S7 route through the town centre. Responding to complaints, OCC plans a 3 day safety audit to determine whether the S7 will continue its route through town.

Due to age and safety issues, the decision has been made to replace the cooker in the Community Centre with an electric one costing £2700 plus fitting.

To aid with the identification of decisions made during Council meetings, the Clerk will add the heading 'Decision' at the end of each item so the resolution can be read without having to refer to other documents. The Clerk will put these resolutions onto a register to make reference easier and quicker in future discussions.

A motion was passed to create a Grants Process Review working group in order to provide a better system with regard to reviewing and granting awards from the Council. A motion was also passed to form a S106 working group to discuss potential use of monies generated from the new housing developments.

A request by RiverFly Monitoring to test the water quality monthly in the Water Meadows was passed.

The mayor requested that the Council adopt WODC's suggested Code of Conduct, as recommended for town and parish councils in West Oxfordshire. Currently the Council is using their own code of conduct which the mayor thinks is inadequate. Councillor Grant said that WODC's was complicated and Councillor Parnes requested more time so the item was deferred.

The attendance of councillors at Confidential Sessions was discussed following disruption and objections from previous meetings. The Clerk said many councils do not exclude councillors from confidential sessions unless there is good reason to do so. If a councillor has access to the confidential material they can attend the meetings, however if they are not on the committee they cannot speak unless asked to do so. Councillor Manby-Brown requested this go onto the Council's Standing Orders.

Finally, at the request of Councillor Parnes, the Council discussed matters arising from the Council's conduct at the recent Employment Tribunal for constructive unfair dismissal of a member of staff. Councillor Parnes was unhappy that not all councillors were informed and were not asked their positions, only the Staffing Committee. He suggested two councillors were pressed not to provide evidence unless ordered to do so. Councillor Lamb explained the decision on witnesses was taken by the solicitor and the town clerk.

For full details please refer to the town council website for agendas and minutes. Please note Karen Howe is acting as the Interim Town Clerk and there is currently no administrative assistant.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 09 May 2023 TC**

Four members of the public attended the meeting.

The purpose of this annual meeting was to elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the year to come along with which councillors will attend various Committees, Working Groups and Outside Bodies.

Following an equal number of votes for both Councillors Manby-Brown and M Parkinson, Mayor Poskitt had the casting vote and decided the new mayor to be Councillor Manby-Brown. A similar situation occurred for the election of the Deputy Mayor between Councillors Lamb and M Parkinson, this time Mayor Manby-Brown used his casting vote for Councillor M Parkinson.

A full list of councillor appointments will be available in the meeting minutes on the Town Council's website.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 13 June 2023 TC

9 councillors were present . 7 members of the public attended the meeting, 3 of which spoke.

Hilary Brown of Sustainable Woodstock reminded the council it was Green Week and asked the council to update its website and congratulate themselves with regard to progress made in Woodstock on green spaces, biodiversity (support of areas like the OWL, the Water Meadows and the Community Woodland and Orchard), car-charging points, the 20mph speed limit and public transport (pursuing re-routing of buses to cater for Old Woodstock, reducing pollution in the centre and increasing safety) . She also asked the council to keep an open mind regarding the Botley West solar farm consultation, set aside politics and to take their information from legitimate and reliable sources.

Stan Scott then spoke to the council saying the new parking scheme was not just and the town was full of confusion, anger and disgust. He asked the councillors involved to resign over the issue. Liz Begley also spoke out against the new parking restrictions saying there are now so many spaces available she believes they are acting as a deterrent for people visiting Woodstock and we could lose our shops as a result. She added there was a lack of transparency and that the majority of the residents did not support the parking restrictions.

County Councillor Andy Graham reported that 500 residents had signed the petition regarding buses turning in the town centre. He had just received the safety audit which recommended the bus turning should return to Stratford Lane. The next step is for the cabinet minister responsible to make a decision on the report. S106 funding (money from housing developments) will be used to build bus shelters outside of the Park View entrance, no dates were given.

District Councillor Julian Cooper said he will make a representation at the District Council budget meeting to open the Shipton Road swimming pool earlier than 22 July, it is currently closed due to high energy costs. A member of the public then spoke briefly in favour of the new parking scheme saying visitors could now park in Woodstock and asked Councillor Cooper, in his capacity as a district councillor, to promote Woodstock as 'open for business'.

Councillor Poskitt is attending the planning appeal for the Hill Rise development which will continue for several days. Kay Sentence then spoke about her role as Coordinator for Community First on the Woodstock Community Development Project. Kay, who reports to a steering committee of Community First, Blenheim and Woodstock Town Council, is two and a half years through her three-year contract and has been working hard with community groups in Woodstock to create stronger links within the town and its new development. Her final year will be to consolidate the working already done. A full report of her work is available from the town clerk.

The mayor reported that the town council has arranged for the bus shelters to be cleaned and that the trees in town will be pollarded after the Christmas lights come down.

Woodstock Town Council annual grants were approved to all applicants this year and it was noted that a working group has been formed to encourage applications from new organisations next year.

Councillor Parnes proposed a motion that the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) remove the double yellow lines from outside of the newsagents and CoOp as they were having an adverse impact on business. It was noted by a member of public that the original plans had bicycle racks for this space. Contrary to their commitment to the Climate Emergency, two councillors suggested better use of the space would be for motorcycle parking. Also discussed was a second motion regarding consent for parking signage on properties in the centre of Woodstock. A long discussion followed, it being noted that the parking scheme had only been active for 2 weeks and that would it not be better to compile a list of issues to send to OCC after a longer period. The first motion narrowly passed, the second narrowly failed.

Finally, the decision to purchase an audio recording system for use in town council meetings for a sum of £2,162.50 was deferred to the next meeting. The current recording equipment does not provide high enough quality.

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Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 18 July 2023 TC

9 Councillors were present. 7 members of the public attended the meeting, 2 of which spoke in the Public Speaking session.

Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock spoke regarding the Botley West solar proposal. She said that most people realise the need for sustainable energy to combat the effects of global warming and the Climate Crisis and that the Botley West proposal was very emotive. It is clear that the Stop Botley West campaign is well organised and well funded. Referring to agenda item 11 on Botley West Solar Farm, Hilary reminded Council that Sustainable Woodstock supports solar proposals in principle and appreciates there is work to be done on this project. She asked the Town Council to push back on disinformation and misinformation that sadly seems so prevalent and to do some fact checking of their own. She also urged the Council to take this opportunity to condemn this misinformation.

I spoke on behalf of Leslee Holderness Rumsey from Cockpit Close who could not make the meeting. Leslee explained how the new parking restrictions in Woodstock were creating serious problems in her neighbourhood. She explained that Cockpit Close, consisting mostly of social housing, has been made 'residents parking only' with no paid bays. The entire Close which accommodated around 30 cars now typically has 3-5 cars parked there daily. Residents need to use their limited visitors permits for every single visitor, however short their stay. Leslee asked the Council to support the urgent introduction of some multi-use bays, similar to the scheme in the town centre. Councillor Lamb replied that she had spoken to Leslee about this matter. County Councillor Andy Graham asked for the presentation and that he would forward it to the County department for comment.

County Councillor Andy Graham gave his report (see p.24). It included that OCC has been made the lead authority for nature recovery in the county with £14 million to be divided between 48 councils. The £2 single bus fare cap will continue until October. OCC's hardship fund to support residents was launched in June and a Home Upgrade Grant scheme to improve energy efficiency was promoted. Andy said the decision to re-route buses away from the town centre had not yet been made and there was a meeting planned to discuss this soon. The best outcome would be for Stagecoach to decide themselves to change bus turning back to Stratford Lane as opposed to be forced to by OCC which could lead to a reduction in service.

From the District Councillors' report, there will be vote on whether to invest on roof mounted solar panels on WODC owned property. It was also proposed that the revenue from this be used to employ a part-time Energy Manager. Woodstock's open air swimming pool will be open from July 22nd to September 3rd.

The delayed opening this year was due to financial stress within Greenwich Leisure Services which run the pool for WODC. Regarding Botley West Solar Farm, WODC has submitted comments on the recent Scoping Report (closed July 13th). There will be a public consultation later this year which will give the residents an opportunity to give their opinion to those making the final decision. The Secretary of State is unlikely to make this decision before 2024. The Hill Rise development planning appeal has recently finished but it will be some time before a decision is made. The Councillors were grateful for the preparation, time and effort given by the Campaign to Protect Old Woodstock (C-POW) . Councillor Poskitt presented for the Town Council.

The Mayor congratulated Rachel Faulkner on her appointment as the new Mock Mayor for Old Woodstock. The Interim Town Clerk requested help with the administration of the Town Council and agency help was agreed by the Council. A motion was passed by the Council to write to Campaign to Protect Old Woodstock (C-POW) to thank them for all the time they had spent preparing for and attending the planning appeal for the Hill Rise development.

A motion proposed by Councillor Manson and seconded by the Mayor to oppose the Botley West Solar Farm project 'in its present form' was passed.

Finally, an update on the Adverse Possession Land Claim was given, stating that a claim against the Council had been withdrawn. The movement of £7000 to a new Legal Fees Budget was approved to cover the expected legal fees for the case. No further details were given.

For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes. Please note Karen Howe is acting as the Interim Town Clerk and there is currently no permanent administrative assistant.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 05 Sept 2023 TC

8 councillors were present, 9 members of the public attended the meeting, 3 of which spoke in the Public Speaking session.

The owner of 31 Oxford Road spoke on behalf of her planning application saying she had addressed the previous objections from the council and has support from her neighbours. This was followed by two neighbours of 31 Oxford Road, who spoke in support of the planning application. When discussed later in the council meeting no objections were given to the application. A construction management plan was requested to protect the plants on the opposite verge.

Oxfordshire County Councillor Andy Graham gave his report, mainly focussing on the accident in town involving a bus running into a house while trying to turn in the town square. He said his patience had run out and he will be meeting with the leader of the County Council and cabinet minister for highways before the end of the week to push for immediate action, stopping buses from using the town centre to turn around. The leader of the County Council has been in contact with the CEO of Stagecoach to ask for all buses to turn at the Wootton turn. If this fails then an immediate traffic order would need to be imposed preventing buses entering the town.

From Councillor Poskitt's West Oxfordshire District Council report, the date of the public consultation for the Botley West solar farm proposal was suggested as September although the Town Clerk had heard it was more likely to be in October. The District Council's Local Plan is now 5 years old and is therefore being reviewed.

From the Mayor's report, Woodstock Live and Salon Prive were successful events but he asked for the Council's Events Working Group to improve liaison going forward.

In the Clerk's report, a filming request of the town hall was raised and approved, as was the mowing of the grass in meadows 5 & 6 of the Water Meadows by way of a team of horses. Trees in the Water Meadow have also been surveyed and wildlife cameras have been purchased to follow wildlife in the Water Meadows.

The position of a grit bin for Brook Hill / Glyme Close has been approved by the County Council, one for Kerwood Close is being looked into as the proposed site belongs to Cottsway.

Councillor Parnes proposed a motion to add a Google search function to the Council's website to enable documents to also be searched. The motion was amended to remove Google and any paid subscription and then approved. Councillor Parnes then proposed a motion for the speed humps on Hensington Road to be inspected by the County Council as he believed they were too high. This was approved.

A motion from the Mayor to update the Mayor's chain with the names of the previous mayors was also approved. An agenda item on the maintenance of bus shelters in the town was withdrawn due to lack of paperwork. However, it was stated by the Clerk that the County Council will install 2 new bus shelters opposite Park View using Primesite Media where the new shelters include lit advertising. This will be paid for from S106 money from the Park View development. The Mayor stated that this was a surprise to the Council and that it was not involved in the decision. The maintenance of the town's remaining bus shelters will be discussed at a later meeting. Councillor Parnes stated that there was no discussion regarding the design of the new shelters and he had been told by residents that they did not want the Primesite Media shelters. Unhappy at this decision, Councillor Parnes then left the meeting. Noticing the recording device used at Council meetings was also filming the meeting, he said he was unaware of this and then remarked on data protection before leaving the meeting.

Finally, extensions of the temporary contracts for the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to 31st December 2023 were approved.

Please note: Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes. Please note Karen Howe is acting as the Interim Town Clerk and there is currently no permanent administrative assistant.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 10 Oct 2023 TC**

Five councillors attended, and nine members of the public. The Mayor presided.

Two members of the public spoke : Henry Spilberg on behalf of the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, requesting Council support; and Colin Carritt, requesting that the Council contact the County Council to ask for a Traffic Regulation Order to prohibit buses from using the town centre streets as a turnaround. ( See also below ).

For the County Council, Councillor Andy Graham reported that the 20mph policy would go out to consultation with the whole of Woodstock by the end of the month, with a decision expected in January, and, if approved, implementation in April or May 2024. He also confirmed that the County would engage with the Town Council regarding the bus turnaround, but that it was not a simple matter - it was complicated.

In his Report, the Mayor said that Blenheim had won its Appeal for the building of a total of 180 homes on the Hill Rise site. He also mentioned that this year's Remembrance Ceremony would be on November 12th, and he encouraged as many as possible to attend.

The Town Clerk reported that many trees had fallen down in the Old Woodstock Line Nature Reserve. A request from Woodstock in Bloom for the Council to purchase two replacement planters for the front of the Town Hall was deferred.

A proposal from Councillor Grant for discussion and possible amending of the current policy for upkeep of the Town's Water Meadows was deferred to the next Meeting.

After some inconclusive discussion of a motion from Councillor Lamb that the Council write to the County Council requesting that steps be taken to obtain a Statutory Regulation to ban buses from using Town Centre streets as a turnaround point, the motion was withdrawn, and substituted with a note that the Council wished to have a meeting with the County Council on the matter.

Please note: As mentioned in previous editions, due to restrictions of space, not all Council business has been included in this report. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes.

Tony McHugh

## **TC Meeting - 14 Nov 2023 TC**

9 councillors were present, 4 members of the public attended the meeting, 1 of which spoke in the Public Speaking session.

I spoke on behalf of Sustainable Woodstock in the public speaking session with reference to potential community benefit from the proposed Botley West solar project. From a public meeting on clean energy on 26th October the speakers were surprised at the lack of community benefit on offer. I wanted to make the Council aware, whether they agree with the project or not, that pressure should be applied to the developers to realise a community benefit from the project. Previous projects have shown that this could be a substantial sum of money. Councillor Poskitt replied that the Council had already asked for this benefit.

Councillor Parnes asked the Council and members of the public to hold a minute's silence for the late Trevor Turner and Jane Hibberd, in recognition of their service to Woodstock.

County Councillor Andy Graham reported on the new bus shelters outside of Park View. He promoted the £1 single bus fare on Stagecoach for December and asked the Council to do likewise to encourage bus use. Regarding the proposed 20 mph speed restrictions in Woodstock, Councillor Graham said the Oxfordshire County Council consultation was now open until 1st December and if approved would be implemented, along with other pedestrian friendly measures in April/May of next year. There will be a meeting this month regarding the buses turning in town. Councillor Manson asked about tree maintenance in town, Councillor Graham asked for photos to see if it concerned the highways which would then be OCC responsibility.

In his report, the Mayor thanked everyone for their efforts on Remembrance Sunday. The police know who is putting graffiti on the New Road playground and will deal with it through their youth programme. The Mayor's Carols will not take place this year, there being too much to do in the time available.

The Clerk reported that emergency tree work was needed, at a cost of £2,400, one tree in the Water Meadows and 3 trees on the Old Woodstock Line.

An Urgent Planning Committee was formed consisting of Councillors Grant, Parnes, Poskitt and M Parkinson. This would be used when comments are required by West Oxfordshire District Council but the timing does not fit with the schedule of the Town Council meetings.

The Council agreed to the purchase of 2 planters with commemorative plaques for the coronation of King Charles at a cost of £1,600. Maintenance of the town hall flag pole was also agreed at a cost of between £1400-1600.

A motion from Councillor Manson regarding grants from the Town Council was deferred. This motion proposed increasing the total grant money available from £3,000 to £10,000, to be allocated twice a year, and to review grants policy to try to increase the number of applicants.

Councillor Poskitt reported on a recent Traffic Advisory Group (TAG) meeting. A safety barrier is to be installed next to the Black Prince in February/March next year. An alternative cycle route past Bladon Chains, travelling from Woodstock to Bladon, was proposed by Colin Carritt which will be sent to Oxfordshire County Council. Blenheim informed the meeting that the Game Fair will return in July of next year. A review of the new parking restrictions in Woodstock received generally positive feedback. The parking meters provided an income of £7,500 per month. Five cycle stands will be installed outside of the museum and 7 outside of the Co-Op. The police suggested a one way system around the town centre to ease traffic flow. Finally, the Mayor suggested that the Council took control of the TAG meetings.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes. Please note Karen Howe is acting as the Interim Town Clerk and there is currently no permanent administrative assistant.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 12 Dec 2023 TC**

7 councillors were present, 4 members of the public attended the meeting, 2 of which spoke in the Public Speaking session.

Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock addressed the Council regarding the opportunity for community benefit from the Botley West Solar proposal and to make sure the council does not miss this opportunity in their response to the 2nd consultation. The developer, PVDP, is a commercial business so pressure needs to be applied for them to provide an appropriate benefits package, irrespective of the Council's view on the proposal. At the Sustainable Woodstock & WOBL event at the end of October, Dame Barbara Hammond from the Low Carbon Hub said she was astonished at the lack of community benefit for Botley West. Some benefits have subsequently been added to the second consultation but she believes this is insufficient for the size of the project. Councillor Poskitt added this was being discussed at West Oxfordshire District Council. The second member of the public to speak, Steve Elsemere, also commented on the community benefit offered and for the Council to consider this carefully. He added that the consultations were not well attended and urged organisations such as the Council to encourage residents to attend and comment.

From County Councillor Andy Graham's report, Stagecoach have agreed that the S7 bus will not turn in the town centre. He requested that comments on the Woodstock parking restrictions be submitted to him to be included in Oxfordshire County Council's upcoming review. Woodstock Town Council will raise this feedback in their January meeting. Discussions on the library in Woodstock are ongoing.

From the Mayor's report, Karen Howe, the town clerk, has been appointed as the permanent clerk for Woodstock Town Council. A monthly newsletter from the Council will start in January with news, calendar dates and Council meeting reports. Residents can subscribe through the Council website or contact the clerk.

The Council budget for 2024/5 was discussed and approved. The precept of £149,000 (the amount Woodstock Town Council receives from West Oxfordshire District Council) is the same as last year but due to the increase in the number of houses, council tax will decrease.

Councillor Parkinson requested an increase in the budget for the Christmas lights as he had received many complaints regarding the display this year. It was agreed this would be considered if there was an underspend in another area of Council business.

Councillor Manson proposed the Council change its grant process to 2 application dates per year and that it would be advertised more widely to encourage a wider range of applicants. The motion was approved.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 16 Jan 2024 TC

11 Councillors were present, Andy Graham from the County Council and Julian Cooper from West Oxfordshire District Council. 8 members of the public also attended. The Town Clerk was not present.

Five members of the public spoke in the Public Speaking session. Colin Carritt addressed the Council regarding the community benefit available from the Botley West Solar Farm project. He spoke of a 'magic money tree' - if Botley West goes ahead it will, on a sunny day, generate around £50,000 per hour or over £40 million a year which local communities should have a share. The developer's offer of £50,000 per year is not good enough and should be in the region of at least £1.5 million per year for the lifetime of the project, 40 years. Colin added, whatever the Council's views on the proposal, they should seek a legacy and encourage West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to say likewise. He urged the Council to work toward securing the best possible benefit for Woodstock.

I followed Colin and added that the Botley West consultation on 13 January at the Community Centre was well attended and that Low Carbon Hub were also in attendance. Low Carbon Hub are a local social enterprise group working with communities to meet energy needs in a way that is good for the planet. Due to a lack of government structure regarding community benefit, Low Carbon Hub has offered to help residents to lobby for increased benefit as they believe £50,000 per annum is woefully insufficient. They also thought that the offer of lower cost electricity to residents should not be classed as a community benefit as it would make money for the developer. One thing that was made clear at the consultations was requests regarding Botley West should be specific, for example if you think a 5m path is too narrow do not say make wider but say increase the width to 10m. The Planning Inspectorate that reviews the application is required to read all of the submissions.

Anthony Thompson from StopBotleyWest then spoke, agreeing with the previous comments on community benefits. He asked how the developer and land owner fit with the objectives of the project. Anthony presented a number of documents including where Blenheim had stated they would not build national infrastructure projects and there is no mention of Botley West in their 'Sketchbook of an Emerging Vision of Blenheim Estate'. Similarly, West Oxfordshire District Council's 'Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire' report made no reference to a project the size of Botley West. He finished by saying the county will benefit from clean energy but not from the tax benefits and asked the Council for a considered and balanced view.

Hilary Brown spoke about the Woodstock Society talk held the previous evening where a very distinguished speaker, Professor Sir Chris Llewellyn-Smith, asked the question 'can future energy needs be met sustainably?' The take home message from a fascinating talk was that we have to move away from fossil fuels fast and move to clean electricity from currently available sources (solar and wind) supported by nuclear and other low carbon sources as soon as possible. New technologies can take between 30-50 years to become readily available. He answered the question – 'yes' - but the government needs to invest in wind, solar and the national grid, build large scale hydrogen storage facilities to use when it is not windy or sunny and attract investment into renewable energy. The speaker added that some solutions would not be developed sufficiently until after 2050, such as carbon capture. Hilary encouraged the Council, for the benefit of the community, to engage with the investors of Botley West, even though they do not agree with the proposal.

Finally, Richard Devereux Cook from the Solar Campaign Alliance spoke against Botley West solar farm adding that hydrogen was currently being used by the construction vehicle company JCB and that there will still be a need for gas and oil in 2050. He pointed out that the community benefit spoken of before was not the job of the Inspectorate.

County Councillor Andy Graham gave his report which noted that the Council's Education Committee had been reinstated after some time. He noted that recently young people had not been well supported. The 30 mph to 20 mph proposed scheme for Woodstock is to be decided on shortly at Council and the pedestrian safety measures previously agreed will go ahead at the same time. The County Council, Stagecoach and the Oxford Bus Company were successful in a bid for £84 million to convert Oxford buses to electric. Oxfordshire is leading the way in climate action in the UK. Many comments have been received regarding the new parking scheme in Woodstock, the scheme will remain but the review to enable small changes will take place at the end of January. Councillor Parnes commented on the broken barrier at the corner of Shipton Road and Randolph Avenue and that Fix My Street had not responded. Councillor Graham asked for details to look into it.

Botley West Solar Farm was also included in the District Councillor's written report. The District Council is disappointed that the proposal will by-pass local planning. District Councillors Poskitt and Cooper asked if the consultation had been adequate. They also urged feedback whether or not you approved of the proposal as it would be too late if the project was approved. They would like you to send your views on the project to the developers (by 8th February) and also to

West Oxfordshire District Council (andrew.thomson@westoxon.gov.uk). Botley West will be on the agenda of the West Oxfordshire's Development Control Committee meeting at 11am on 5th February.

The Mayor reported that having met with local organisations, he has agreed to set up a digital diary to contain cultural events taking place in Woodstock.

Several items were deferred due to the absence of the Clerk, including the Council's response to Botley West. Due to the deadline of the consultation an Extraordinary Town Council meeting would need to be arranged.

Quotes have been obtained to repair the steps in the Old Woodstock Line nature reserve. These have been in need of repair for over a year and a half, currently with signs in place to warn users. The Council could not agree on whether the repair should go ahead so, for public safety, will shut the path until further notice.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 27 Feb 2024 TC

8 councillors and 6 members of the public, Councillor Julian Cooper representing West Oxfordshire District Council and Councillor Andy Graham representing Oxfordshire County Council. This meeting was postponed from earlier in the month.

3 members of the public spoke. First, there was a request for a microphone that could be used upstairs for public use, the existing one is not working properly.

The following two spoke regarding the need for transparency regarding the recent Town Council agenda item that follows the exclusion of the press and public, entitled 'Civil Claim, to receive an oral update on the ongoing claim'. The question was raised whether the community would be footing the bill for a cost they knew nothing about? Full details of the parties and liabilities being claimed were requested, ending with the question 'surely our community deserves nothing less?'

Public records show that Councillor Parnes has a case in the small claims County Court against the Town Council. The subject of this claim is not known. The Clerk replied that if anything was said in the meeting it could impact the claim. Councillor Parnes said the case will become public soon. The case will be heard at the County Court in St. Aldates, Oxford on 25 April at 10am.

In another matter relating to upset within the council, the Mayor said there had been an article in the Oxford Mail (dated 8 February) reporting that Christmas gifts had been given to the council staff from the Mayor using council funds. Councillor Parnes had queried the expense. The Mayor said he was seeking legal advice and could not discuss the matter further.

County Councillor Andy Graham reported that the new parking system in Woodstock was being finalised with many positive contributions and suggested improvements, planned to be implemented in the next 6 months. The new 20 mph speed limit has been approved for Woodstock and pedestrian safety measures already agreed with WTC will go ahead over the next 4 months. Discussions regarding a new building for the library/hub are ongoing and a steering group of OCC councillors has been formed to look into HGV movements in Woodstock and Bladon as part of a countrywide study. Councillor Graham said he was disappointed with the evening reduction in service of the S7 but added that it was a commercial decision. Building of the new extension to the Marlborough School will begin June 2025, to open the following year.

From District Councillor Julian Cooper's written report, the District Council's meeting of 5th February discussed their response to the pre-application consultation for Botley West Solar Farm. It was widely felt that the merits of the proposal could not be considered without more detailed description of the environmental ambitions of the proposal. Mitigation of the effects on the Green Belt, good agricultural land and within the setting of many listed buildings needed more explanation from the developers. Also, the offered £50,000 per annum was considered far too low and a far greater contribution should be proposed if consent is given (despite community benefit not being considered for the Planning Inspectorate). District Council Officers are investigating how to fund extending the opening of Woodstock swimming pool to previous levels, from Easter to September.

Regarding the poor service provided by Thames Water and the continued dumping of sewage into our local rivers, the District Council voted to continue Executive and Officer led meetings with Thames Water to ensure appropriate investment is made, with meetings at least once a quarter and reporting back to full Council on a regular basis.

From the Mayor – an antiques assessment day raised £233 for the mayor's charity and he encouraged use of the WhatsOn calendar on the Council website.

Councillor Parnes left the meeting unannounced at 7.50pm, between items 9 and 10 on the agenda.

A public address system to be used by the Council for outdoor events, such as Remembrance Day, has been purchased at a cost of just over £200, including a donation.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 12 Mar 2024 TC**

I was asked to report the above Council meeting in the absence of other contributors, and was interested to see and hear how the councillors conduct themselves now after rowdy meetings recently and controversy over the use of public money which had reached local newspapers.

7 councillors were present, and 3 members of the public. The Mayor mentioned that the meeting was being filmed and recorded.

The Clerk produced a report, which was read and published to the public present. Great concern was expressed, by the Clerk and by the Mayor, that the matter of well-intended Christmas gifts for staff, bought with public money but not brought to the Council for approval, had been raised in such a way as potentially to damage morale and the work of the Council. Potential breaches of financial regulations or Standing Orders are to be further debated at a later date. This is an unseemly row and terrible publicity for Woodstock but all matters concerning public money should be transparent and strictly within the rules. It is such a pity that councillors argue amongst themselves and behind each others' backs. The Council has been divided and polarised for some time now, perhaps dating back to the controversial parking/permits scheme imposed upon us last year, detracting from efficiency. Perhaps we need a complete change when the election comes in May, so that new councillors can all concentrate fully on standing up for us electors?

Other business included preparation for the Annual Town Meeting on 26 March, an electors' meeting hosted by the Town Mayor, at which a suggested or draft agenda is provided, and in theory can be amended by those attending. Sometimes, it was said, councillor reports and Blenheim take up the bulk of the time available, and public participation – the main purpose of the meeting after all – comes at the end when many electors have drifted away. Last year, such a request for earlier public participation was refused at the meeting.

Letters are to be written to the bus company about recent timetable changes and to the County Council about cycle racks in the town. Woodstock bus users, the letter will point out, would really appreciate being consulted perhaps via the Town Council when major changes are being considered. This is particularly now that early and late buses will not be available for those going to and from work or business at those times, including those travelling to and from London and to the hospitals and when yet greater use of public transport is to be encouraged.

The installation of cycle racks in the town centre had apparently been included in the County Council parking consultation and not noticed by anyone. They are seen by many as ugly, perhaps unnecessary and inappropriately placed, and concerns are to be passed to the County Council. The cycle racks are unlikely to be removed, but some re-alignment and/or re-design may be possible and their use can be monitored over the next few months.

On a positive note, the sum of £2,484 was agreed for weed control three times this year, to control weeds in kerbs, channels and pavements, and to control knotweed.

The public part of the meeting closed at about 8pm.

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Stan Scott

## TC Meeting - 26 Mar 2024 Town Meeting

The Mayor's Report given at The Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday 26 March 2024

Welcome - Thank you all for coming to the Annual Town Meeting. My name is Nick Manby-Brown, and I'm currently the Town Mayor. I joined the Council in May 2021, and was elected Mayor in May 2023 by the Councillors. For those that don't know, this happens every May. I was honoured to become your Mayor, and I have enjoyed the responsibility I have been able to chair every meeting except one, and have had a busy year supporting our staff in the office. Plenty of administrative jobs have been completed – revaluing the Town's assets and buildings, renegotiating BT contracts to save money, improving the wifi in the Town Hall, buying recording equipment for Town meetings, buying an internal/external PA system, updating the very antiquated CCTV system, amongst others.

Staff - And I would like to take this opportunity to thank our staff – Karen Howe joined us in December 2022, and we have benefited greatly from her experience in local government. Rachel Peters is our RFO – Responsible Finance Officer – and she has been with us for 20 months. She has done a truly amazing job in managing our accounts, and also looks after the bookings for weddings and functions, and additionally looks after the cemeteries that the Council owns. Ian Watkins is our Caretaker. He joined the Council about 5 years ago and he looks after the Town Hall and the Community Centre. I want to publicly thank them for all their hard work and can honestly say that working with them has been one of the highlights of this last year. Thank you.

Staff Turnover - Sadly however, Karen has given her notice to leave Woodstock - she is kindly staying until the new Council starts. We will miss her, and I would like to thank her for her invaluable support. Whilst on this subject, I would like to express my very great concern about the high turnover of staff - and Councillors - at Woodstock. The Council sadly has a bad reputation with the Clerk community, and I have grave concerns about what is going to happen next year. In the 3 years that I have been on the Council, we have had 5 Clerks – 2 of them were Locum Clerks. The situation is not as it should be and I believe all councillors need to continue to question it. This open, public meeting, is not the right place to discuss the issue but it is one that must be addressed if we are to have a fully functioning Council. We have also had to deal with quite a few, internal, legal issues –which we are also not able to comment on publicly. But these issues take our staff (and Councillors) away from doing the job that we all should be doing – that of serving our Community.

Finances - Going on to good news, the Council is in a healthy financial state, and the precept (the money that the Council requests annually from WODC) has remained the same for the last 2 years. In fact, the amount that the ratepayers pay has gone down slightly because of our larger town. The Town Council has quite a large property portfolio, and we have had a good year with occupancy, with no significant problems. The internal administration has been streamlined, with new accounting software and an online booking system for functions.

Grants - We have changed the process of applying for grants, as we felt the previous system was not transparent and clear enough. Grants will be allocated twice a year from now on, and details will soon be able to be seen on our website.

Newsletters etc

The previous method of subscribing to receive notifications was completely broken, and after a lot of work, it has been repaired. We now send monthly Newsletters out to those that have subscribed, and I would urge everyone to look at our website to join. We also have an active Facebook page to help promote Town Council events.

Planning - The major issue has been the Botley West Solar Farm, which the Town Council has objected to, in its current form. There will be plenty of work to do in the coming months on this, and other issues. The Hill Rise development has gone ahead despite strong local objections from many residents and great work by CPOW - Campaign to Protect Old Woodstock - at the Appeal - which sadly the developers won.

Transport - The new controversial parking system is now in place, and has obviously had a mixed impact – it has certainly freed up spaces in the centre of town, making it easier for shoppers and visitors to come to enjoy our wonderful shops and pubs and restaurants, but as expected it does seem to have caused many displacement issues. OCC is going to make some tweaks to the arrangements, and I would like to thank those who sent in their suggestions. There has been a lot of changes affecting bus services, especially the difficulties of large double decker buses turning in the town centre, and most recently the cancellation of evening services on the S7.

The Watermeadows - The Watermeadows (and the OWL – Old Woodstock Line) are listed in the Council's Assets Register, and whilst they are an enormous asset for the town, they also come with huge liabilities. We have spent

about £35,000 on the Watermeadows and Council trees this year. 2 bridges have been refurbished and boardwalks have been repaired. Also the County Council has replaced the main bridge by the Black Prince. Added signage and extended fencing has given us a very good ROSPA report this year. All the high and medium risks trees have been felled or pollarded – this has also happened on the OWL and the New Road Play Area. I would like to thank Cllr Manson for her hard work and enthusiasm in being the Cllr responsible for the Watermeadows, and also Maurice Parkinson who is an Environment Warden and has taken over the responsibility of strimming the paths.

The OWL - I would like to talk a bit about a recently discovered problem on the Old Woodstock Line Nature Reserve. This area was taken over by the Town Council about 20 years ago, and about 10 years ago the Council agreed to take over the extension (between Verenia Court and Budds Close). Unfortunately, previous Councils only negotiated a 20 year access, so we have learnt just very recently that we may not be able to have any further access from Verenia Court. This is a another legacy issue, and the Clerk is currently investigating options. My feeling is that, like the Watermeadows, the Council and local Community are going to have to work together to come up with solutions. I would like to thank Bob Pomfret and his team who spend countless hours maintaining the eastern section of the OWL.

Bus Shelters - I would like to recount the saga of the bus shelters, because it goes to illustrate the difficulties of trying to get things done in local government and is another example of the current Council coming up against legacy issues. I first got involved with the bus shelter issue in the summer of 2021, and we asked other Councils how they approached the issue. Eventually, we came up with what I thought was a perfect solution – a local company was prepared to install 2 new bus shelters at Park View (with advertising) and renovate and renew our existing 3 shelters. We started negotiations with the company and discussions at Full Council (with the usual arguments between Cllrs of course). It then transpired that about 5 years ago, the developers had agreed to pay S106 money towards these two new shelters. In fact our questions kick started the process to install the new shelters – these are owned by OCC, and not the Town Council. We are left in the situation now of again having to work out how to manage the existing three shelters.

S106 - S106 is money received from developers for the benefit of the Community. The problem is that we all spend a lot of time arguing about whether a development goes ahead or not, and then forget to negotiate the S106 element. The huge development of Woodstock House is a case in point, where unknown millions are being spent over nearly a decade, and the Town has received absolutely no benefit from this. So we proposed a S106 working group last year to try to separate arguments about Planning from S106 concerns, and I very much hope that next year's Councillors takes up the challenge to deal with this issue.

Ending - Finally, I would like to mention that the whole Town Council comes up for re-election on May 2nd, and anyone who is interested in applying to be a Councillor can collect a pack from the Town Hall, or get details from the WODC website. Forms have to be with WODC by April 5th.

Nick Manby Brown, The Mayor

## TC Meeting - 16 Apr 2024 TC

9 councillors and 12 members of the public, Councillor Julian Cooper representing West Oxfordshire District Council and Councillor Andy Graham representing Oxfordshire County Council

Four members of the public spoke. I asked about access to the Old Woodstock Line (OWL) reserve from the town side, it is currently closed due to unsafe steps and ongoing discussions regarding an access agreement. The Mayor told me it was a complicated situation that was being investigated. Three other members of the public spoke to praise the work of the Council, this being the last meeting before appointment of the new Council. The outgoing Council was thanked for its contribution to improving the operation of the Council despite a difficult situation within the Council itself and hoped the new Council will have the same commitment.

County Councillor Andy Graham reported that softer lighting would be installed in the town centre to be more in keeping than the current LEDs. He encouraged feedback on the recently implemented 20 mph scheme in Woodstock, for example where more repeater signs might be needed. Oxfordshire County Council is launching a £7 million road refurbishment programme this spring and has been awarded £2.38 million for improving walking and cycling infrastructure. Also, the County Council has been awarded £3.6 million to upgrade the county's electric vehicle charging infrastructure. There was no news on the library although a decision is expected very soon. Councillor Bailey asked when the Park View nursery would be opening as this is owned by the County Council, Andy did not know but would investigate. A member of the public commented on the Town Gate to Blenheim being wrongly used for car access and Andy said he would arrange a meeting with Blenheim.

From the Mayor's report, he wished the new Council every success with 3 new councillors and 2 previous councillors returning. The Mayor thanked the councillors who had joined the Council with him in 2020, councillors Manson, Lamb, Bleakley and Bailey, for all their hard work, mostly unseen by the public. He also thanked the Council staff, Karen, Rachel and Ian, for all their hard work during the term of this Council. The Clerk, Karen Howe, will be leaving on 15th May.

The Town Clerk gave a report regarding the recent discussions on the gifting of vouchers at Christmas to Council staff. Councillor Parnes had raised concerns over the use of public funds for the purchase of three £50 gift vouchers that had not been brought to Council for approval. The Clerk's report, verified by the Council's internal auditors, clarified that the correct procedure was followed and that no financial regulations had been breached. A discussion followed by members of the Council referring to an internal email being sent to the Oxford Mail which then appeared as an article including pictures implicating the Mayor and Councillor Bailey. The councillor who sent this email has not been identified but it has led to an atmosphere of toxicity and lack of trust within the Council as well as embarrassment for Woodstock Town Council. It was agreed that the Council staff had been put in a difficult position and that this issue should have been raised at Council in the first instance to identify if proper procedures had been followed, and not reported to the Oxford Mail.

An oral update on an ongoing Civil Claim against the Council was given after the exclusion of the press and public.

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Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 14 May 2024**

9 councillors of the 11 elected, the Town Clerk and 9 members of the public were present.

Woodstock has a new Town Council. There were insufficient candidates to trigger an election so all who put their names forward have been duly appointed to the Council. These include Councillors Addis, Grant, Parkinson, Parnes, Poskitt and Spencer-Churchill from the previous Council, Councillors Julian Cooper and John Banbury returning to the Council and 3 new Councillors – Helen Burr, Lizzie Martin and Matt Nethercott. This means there is a vacancy for 1 Councillor to make the full complement of 12.

The final role for the outgoing Mayor, Nick Manby-Brown, was to thank the previous Council, welcome the new Council and conduct the appointment of the new Mayor. Councillors John Banbury and Ann Grant were both nominated and following a brief presentation by each candidate to support their nominations, John Banbury was elected Mayor. The new Mayor then took his position and thanked the Council, adding that the Council would do its best for Woodstock during their term. The Mayor then conducted the vote for Deputy Mayor which went to Councillor Ann Grant.

Following the recent resignation of the Town Clerk, instead of appointing a temporary Proper Officer to cover, the Clerk has offered to work on Wednesdays only until a new Clerk is appointed.

There then followed the appointment of councillors on to various committees, working groups, joint ventures and outside bodies. A full list will be posted on the Council's website in due course but some of the main posts are as follows:

It was decided that the Council's property portfolio would be separated from finance and Councillor Grant was voted to lead this working group. The finance and assets working group was combined with the S106 and grants working groups with Councillor Poskitt leading. The environment working group will include Councillors Nethercott, Parkinson, Grant and Parnes. The staff working group will include Councillors Poskitt, Banbury, Grant and Martin. The events working group, to include the Christmas lights, will be Councillors Addis, Cooper and Martin.

After some discussion, it was generally agreed that Town/Blenheim dialogue was important and the Mayor will contact Blenheim to hopefully restore these public meetings.

The Mayor also proposed that the Town Council meetings should routinely be on Zoom to allow access to all members of the public throughout the year.

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Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 28 May 2024

9 councillors, Councillor Andy Graham representing Oxfordshire County Council and 6 members of the public were present. There was no audio/visual recording of the meeting as there was a problem operating the system.

3 residents asked to speak during the public speaking session. Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock spoke on the Water Meadows policy that was itemised on the agenda. She urged the Council to consider residents as well as nature as beneficiaries of the Water Meadows. She asked the Council to reconsider their previous opposition to public access to and from the Water Meadows to the 9 newly planted woodlands via a footbridge over the river Glyme. Hilary reminded Council that the town-wide 2019 Community First consultation recorded that improvement in footpaths had been ranked amongst the top five suggestions by residents to improve Woodstock and urged the Council to re-enter into possibilities with Blenheim Estate. Hensington residents have benefitted from the Water Meadows for many years and the Town Council could now extend this by considering access to the new woodlands and at the same time offer similar benefits to residents of Old Woodstock.

Tom Harvey then spoke with respect to Councillor Spencer-Churchill attending Stop Botley West meetings on behalf of the Council. Tom noted that Councillor Spencer-Churchill has Blenheim Palace as his address and that Blenheim is a major benefactor in the Botley West project.

Finally, a representative from Woodstock Post Office referred to another business in Woodstock closing due to the new parking restrictions. He urged the Council to consider the existing parking scheme as it is 'throttling the town'. Councillor Addis said she will submit an agenda item for discussion at Council.

County Councillor Andy Graham reported that Oxford United have been given permission to use the land in Kidlington and will now submit a planning application to Cherwell District Council. Oxfordshire County Council have improved their active travel network plan and are inviting Town and Parish Councils to apply for grants to improve active travel. In Oxford, the £4 Park and Ride fee has been frozen for 12 months. Traffic management plans will be in place for both the upcoming EU Summit and Game Fair at Blenheim in July.

From the Mayor's report, at a recent meeting with the CEO of Blenheim it was decided to restart the Town/ Blenheim public meetings.

There then followed a lengthy discussion on a request from St Mary Magdalene's Church for the Town Council to pay for repairs to the church clock at a cost of £1,187 plus VAT. Previous work on the church has been paid for by the Town Council. It was decided to pay for the repair on this occasion but Councillor Martin would work with the church to explore alternative funding possibilities for long term support.

Playground repairs for both New Road and Budds Close were approved. An additional waste bin was approved for Park View and the Clerk will look into bin emptying contracts – the Clerk reported that the contract in Bladon is much cheaper. It was decided that the Council should carry out a tree survey of the trees they are responsible for on an annual basis. The election of Woodstock Town Council in May this year provided only 11 candidates, 12 being the full complement, all of which were duly elected without a vote. The policy of co-option of new councillors to the Town Council (appointment of councillors without an election to fill vacant positions) was approved. If a 12th councillor is not appointed by 24th June an election will be triggered.

Regarding the Water Meadow policy, the previous council had written a policy but it had not been accepted by council. The Mayor suggested this should be accepted as a basis for a new policy. Councillor Burr joined the Environmental Working Group and encouraged discussions regarding access to the Water Meadows. Councillor Martin suggested that the Council should encourage input from residents and to include them in working groups. The Water Meadows policy was carried.

Councillor Spencer-Churchill, who had left the meeting at this point, was voted on to the Environment Working Group and the Oxford Airport Consultation Committee, the Mayor will speak with Councillor Spencer-Churchill with respect to him joining the Stop Botley West Group, there being an obvious conflict of interest.

The Mayor proposed an additional working group, an Opportunities Working Group, the purpose of which would be to present new ideas for the town and work with residents to be more forward thinking.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes.

Graham Brown

### **TC Meeting - 08 Jun 2024**

8 councillors and 7 members of the public attended. Councillor Grant chaired the meeting in the absence of the Mayor. There was no audio/visual recording of the meeting as no one was able to operate the system.

Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock spoke in the public speaking session regarding community benefits related to the proposed Botley West Solar Farm. Hilary was speaking because the developers are consulting the public once again on their proposal before submission to the Government. Hilary urged the Council to feedback on the community benefit for the proposal even though it is not mentioned in the latest consultation document. Although the figure has increased from £50K per annum to £200K this is still far below figures negotiated for other projects. Potentially, £5K per MW would result in a community benefit figure of £4 million per annum which could be used for community projects in the area.

There were no reports from the Mayor, District Councillor or County Councillor.

The Council has decided to meet half of the cost of repairing the church clock.

The Town Council has recently undergone an Internal Audit by an external professional body and the report concluded that the systems and procedures in place are fit for purpose, well established and followed. Councillor Parnes disagreed and proposed the auditors meet with the councillors during their audit, Councillor Grant suggested Councillor Parnes send a list of his questions to the Clerk. The end of year accounts were subsequently approved.

Councillor Parnes proposed a motion regarding the removal of graffiti from the New Road playground, it having been there for 10 months. Councillor Grant suggested this be passed to the Environment Working Group, meeting on 24th June, to consider how such matters can be dealt with more efficiently and then report back to full Council. The motion was then withdrawn.

Councillor Parnes then proposed a motion regarding ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) from a Council resolution dating back to 12th June 2018. Councillor Parnes stated that this resolution remains substantially unimplemented and asked the Council to fully implement the resolution within 6 weeks. The Clerk explained that 3 of the 4 points had been addressed and recommended all Councillors should attend training in GDPR. After a long discussion, Councillor Grant summarised by recommending a full GDPR audit and to ask for professional advice. The motion was then voted upon and defeated.

Councillor Addis requested the Council discuss the parking situation in Woodstock and how the new restrictions had affected business. Councillor Addis had asked businesses in Woodstock and most reported business had dropped, including the Post Office, and customers were going elsewhere. Councillor Parnes noted that Oxfordshire County Council had not carried out an economic impact assessment and wanted it to be done. Councillor Grant suggested that the Council conduct another survey regarding the current parking situation. Councillor Cooper said he would raise the issue in the upcoming Traffic Advisory Group meeting.

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Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 09 July 2024

9 councillors and 9 members of the public attended. The Town Clerk was at another meeting in Witney so Councillor Grant took the minutes. There was no audio/visual recording of the meeting as no one was able to operate the system.

There were 3 speakers in the public speaking session. Firstly, Stan Scott encouraged communication between the residents and the new Town Council, especially regarding the solar farm proposal and the possible use of the police station site for a new surgery. The Mayor expressed his personal view on the latest solar farm consultation in a letter to West Oxfordshire District Council. Next, Kay Sentance from Community First asked the Council if there were any questions on or additions to her final report. The report will be presented at the August Town Council meeting. Finally, Nick Manby-Brown, former Mayor, said he was disappointed that the expensive meeting recording device, purchased by the previous Council, was not being used as he had left notes on its operation before he left.

In the Mayor's report, three tasks have been identified to be completed as soon as possible: the appointment of a full-time Town Clerk, the finalising of the previous Council's accounts and to appoint an additional councillor to make a full complement of 12. A new Town Clerk has been appointed and will start in August. The final accounts will be discussed in detail at the August meeting. The new Opportunities Group will work on several schemes to attract Section 106 monies as well as from other outside sources. The Mayor hopes to invite all the business owners in Woodstock to the Town Hall to hear concerns and try to find ways the Council can help. The Council will also be more active on events such as Remembrance Sunday, the Mayor's Carol Service and hopefully holding an event for volunteers and carers next year.

Councillor Grant commented that, following discussions, the church would now pay towards the clock repair reducing the amount the Council would pay.

County Councillor Andy Graham was asked to comment on traffic arrangements for the upcoming EU summit taking place at Blenheim Palace on 18 July. Councillor Graham said the summit would lead to road closures and diversions and that the rights of way in the Park would be closed. Some bus stops would be suspended and that there would be areas of clearways where traffic could not stop. Councillor Graham said the nursery in Park View would be opening on 15th July. Regarding a possible move of the surgery to the old police station site, most parties concluded that this site was not suitable. Councillor Graham said the County Council were doing everything they could to find a solution, working with the GPs, Blenheim Estate and West Oxfordshire District Council. Councillor Graham also said that talks were continuing regarding a new library and it is hoped it will be sited on the previous Hensington Road site. Councillor Grant commented on the condition of the verges in Woodstock, Councillor Graham asked for her to send him specifics. Councillor Parnes proposed a motion regarding support of a letter from the GPs of Woodstock Surgery which called for timely and coordinated action to secure a new surgery for Woodstock given the age of the existing building and the influx of patients from the new houses being built in the area. The motion was carried unanimously.

Councillor Martin asked the Council to consider a motion asking for a comprehensive review of the community benefits package proposed by the developers of Botley West Solar Farm. Councillor Martin asked the Council to send a formal communication to Rachel Wileman, Director of Planning, Environment and Climate Change at Oxfordshire County Council to ask for a significant increase in the community benefit provision to ensure local residents see meaningful benefits from the development. The motion was carried unanimously. The Council's response to Botley West's Targeted Consultation was discussed and it was agreed to defer the item to the Extraordinary meeting to be held on 24th July.

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Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 24 July 2024

6 councillors and the Town Clerk and 6 members of the public attended. The Mayor announced that the audio/visual recording system was working, there were no objections.

Suspending standing orders, the Mayor declared an open discussion for the Council and members of the public regarding Drs Becker and Fisher presenting their case for a new surgery for Woodstock and asking if the Town Council could help in any way. Dr Becker said that the surgery is “bursting at the seams” and more GPs are needed but there is no more space. The surgery will not be able to look after residents from the new homes being built with an estimated increase of 2-3,000 patients. The surgery has 9,600 patients, 60% living outside of Woodstock. They urgently need new premises and have written to the Integrated Care Board (ICB), the NHS body responsible for local population health and shared strategic priorities for a decision on a new surgery for Woodstock. A surgery on the new Banbury Road development is being considered, the former police station site on Hensington Road has been considered unsuitable due to lack of parking and space for future expansion. Calum Miller, the new Bicester and Woodstock MP, has also been contacted. Dr Fisher finished by saying they had written to several relevant parties to make them aware of the “oncoming storm”. A problem with the Banbury Road site was highlighted, pedestrian access and safety when coming from town, especially if using public transport. A possible option that has been discussed would be for Blenheim to build the surgery on the Banbury Road development site (which would allow for future expansion, but with a loss of affordable housing) and the NHS then rent it from Blenheim. Councillor Poskitt added that this was not a new issue, Woodstock has been number 1 or 2 in line for a new surgery for many years in Oxfordshire but the NHS did not have funds available. Several people spoke in favour of the old police station site but again it was explained that 10 to 20 years of potential expansion is required for a new surgery site. The Mayor concluded the discussion by making a resolution to help find a solution and to back our GPs.

At the public participation, Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock asked if the Council would encourage residents to engage with an Oxfordshire County Council survey on the Climate Emergency.

The Town Council then considered their response to the Botley West Solar Farm targeted consultation. The Town Clerk will respond to the consultation to include Councillors comments with respect to removing and replanting hedgerows. The Mayor said the maps had no scale, lacked detail and were difficult to understand.

Next came a report from the Environment Working Group who met on 24th June. Councillor Banbury agreed to oversee the Water Meadows. Councillor Grant suggested a working budget of £75K for the group, there being several outstanding projects needing funding such as the dredging of the River Glyme in the Water Meadows. The Mayor agreed that action should be taken urgently. The Clerk added that there was an allocation of £8K for the Water Meadows from an Environment Working Group budget of £66K. The Mayor stated that there was money available in the Council reserves if work needed doing, the reserves standing currently at £338K. Recommendations from the Working Group included urgent action to be taken when any graffiti is reported, repairs to the New Road playground and repairs to the Lawn Cemetery (Green Lane) lychgate and front wall.

The Governors of Woodstock Primary School had written to the Town Council about their concern of the volume of traffic outside of their school at drop off and pick up times making it unsafe for those wishing to walk to school. Problems are caused by parked cars, speeding motorists, cars mounting the pavement and coaches using Shipton Road instead of Flemings Road. They asked the Council what could be done to make the road safer as it will only get worse as the school is expanding in September. The Council have referred the matter to Oxfordshire County Council who are responsible for the highways.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 13 Aug 2024**

4 councillors, plus our previous Clerk and our new Town Clerk, Valentin Lavdakov, and 15 members of the public attended.

The standing orders were suspended to allow a subject that was not included in the agenda to be addressed by a member of the public in the public speaking session.

Jo Lamb spoke regarding the County Court hearing of 12th August in Oxford, in which Councillor Parnes brought an action against Woodstock Town Council. Councillor Parnes was not present at the Council meeting.

For background, as far as I know, the public are still unaware of the reasons why action was taken by Cllr Parnes.

Throughout the time of this court action all discussions in Council meetings have been held in private session under the title 'Civil Claim'. We were told the civil claim began in 2022. Several months ago, during a council meeting, a member of the public made a request for more information regards the civil claim but due to the impending court hearing no information was able to be shared.

At this meeting, Jo asked the Council to consider her presentation for the full Council September meeting.

Jo attended the hearing and she summarised. The judge rejected the case for the following reasons:

Councillor Parnes had committed a breach of the court process by failing to submit the correct documentation in a timely manner and there were no acceptable reasons for these breaches. The judge said that the case was in the public interest but these breaches would not be waived. Jo added that as a result Councillor Parnes was now liable for costs payable to the Town Council.

Jo continued with the following points to the Town Council:

1. In the interests of transparency and the interest of the local community Jo asked for there to be a full report by the Town Council on the hearing and this to be made public.
2. She asked that the report should include the time spent by the Clerk and Town Council, time that could have been spent on other important issues.
3. She noted that Councillor Parnes has had a conflict of interest with the Town Council since 2022 and should consider his position as a Town Councillor.

Jo finished by saying that hopefully all parties can now move on and Council time can be spent more productively.

Six planning items were also on the agenda. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 10 Sept 2024

5 councillors and 9 members of the public attended. The new Town Clerk was assisted by the previous Town Clerk. There was no audio/visual recording of the meeting.

The first item of business was to co-opt a new councillor onto the Council as there are currently 11 councillors. There were 2 candidates, Maurice Connolly and Sarah Williams. In a closed vote councillors voted by a majority for Sarah Williams. Sarah took her seat at the table.

At the start of the public speaking session the Mayor announced that if the subject was not on the agenda then it could not be addressed by members of the public. This was a change to previous meetings (and the Council website) where the Council had changed the standing orders on public participation so the public could speak on any topic relevant to the affairs of the Council whether or not it was on the agenda. This was to encourage public participation in Council meetings. This change was not explained to the public present and dealt with abruptly. When a member of the public asked for the standing orders to be suspended to allow them to speak the answer was an emphatic no. No members of the public spoke at the meeting, several left.

From the Clerk's report, several health and safety issues were being addressed including organising an asbestos survey (last done in 2010), repair of the Town Hall flagpole, the removal of graffiti and a fallen tree in the Water Meadows. The Mayor reported the interest shown by McCarthy Stone in the old police station site for a retirement home.

County Councillor Andy Graham said the County were reviewing the situation with respect to coaches parking outside of the Chef Imperial and Bear hotel. In relation to the surgery, relevant parties would be meeting on Friday 13th to discuss local health care provision and Andy was encouraged that Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat) had been appointed chair of the Health and Social Care Committee in Westminster. Andy will also be judging a painting competition in the Oxfordshire Museum.

District Councillor Julian Cooper passed on thanks from Frank Wilson, Interim Managing Director of Publica, to the Town Council for their support during the recent gas outage, especially to the Caretaker. Ubico, West Oxfordshire District Council's waste partner, is trialling zero-emission waste collection vehicles across the District with plans to gradually replace its ageing waste collection vehicles. The Uplands planning committee of the District Council has approved plans to develop the site of the ruined farmhouse Furze Platt, to the north of Blenheim Park on Akeman Street, with a large house. The public right of way will remain intact. The District Council Planning Officers have given a robust response to the Government consultation with respect to increasing housing development in West Oxfordshire.

The Mayor said that the Working Group system was not working well and wished all Working Groups to appoint chairs to call meetings and drive progress. New signage for the Water Meadows was approved with a budget of £6K as was a ROSPA safety report.

Oxfordshire County Council have contacted Woodstock Town Council for comment regarding a government grant for electric vehicle chargers to improve charging infrastructure and possible locations in Woodstock. The suggested sites are Market Street, Marlborough School and the open air pool site, locations based on residents without private parking and the proximity to existing chargers.

During the property report Councillor Cooper raised the possibility of putting solar panels on the Community Centre, something that has been discussed by Council for many years. It was agreed, after a vote, that quotes would be provided for Council consideration.

Details of another parking survey were discussed. Finally it was agreed that a Drs Surgery working group should be formed to support the doctors in their search for a more suitable premises.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes.

Graham Brown

### Public Participation at Town Council Meetings

Editor's Statement: For those who are not aware, at the start of Town Council meetings there has been an agenda item called Public Participation, which provides for up to 5 members of the public being allowed to speak for up to 3 minutes each. At the time of going to press, the Town Council website was quoting accordingly: 'The Town Council has changed its standing orders on the rights of residents to address the Council. Now, the public can speak on any topic relevant to the affairs of the Council whether or not it is on the agenda. The Council hopes that this will encourage

people to air their views on matters of local interest.'

Historically, therefore, residents have been allowed to raise any issue not on the agenda. However, at the meeting on 10th September the Council invoked Standing Order 3e – requiring items for discussion to have been accepted on the agenda - and refused to waive it (as they are allowed to do). Various members of the public were thereby not allowed to speak as they had planned.

Woodstock & Bladon News has therefore decided to show what they were going to say.

Annie Cripps was going to say: \*Under the heading of Transparency which WTC espouses so regularly, when can voters expect to hear the full cost to the public purse of the case brought by Cllr Parnes vs Woodstock Town Council?

Although not able to ask this, Councillors were however provided with a hard copy of The Nolan Principles of Public Office.

The Nolan Principles: Suggested by Committee on Standards in UK Public Life in 1995

Selflessness: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity: Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity: Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability: Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness: Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty: Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership: Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Source: good-governance.org.uk, (accessed 31.08.24 07.31)

Nick Manby-Brown was going to say: \*I can see that you are not using the OWL recording device for this meeting. This unit was purchased by the Council in July 2023 at a cost of £2,162.50, with the purpose of aiding transparency, helping produce accurate Minutes, and preparing for online meetings. It was used by the Council for the next 16 meetings until May 2024. Notes of how to use it were left for the new Council.

Since the new Council started, there have been 7 meetings, and it has only been used for one partial meeting.

Various reasons have been used as to why it has not been active, but it seems to me now that the current Council is against the OWL system. I am therefore asking the Council to start using it immediately, or have an open vote to decide on its fate.

Hilary Brown was going to say: \*Following on from the article 'Sheltering in Woodstock' that was published in September's issue of Woodstock and Bladon News, I planned to speak to the council on the subject of the town's bus shelters. I was going to remind the council that the shelters are used by many residents, school children, visitors and those employed in the town. I wanted to ask the council if they would pick up where they left off with previous discussions and arrange for the repair, refurbishment, and where necessary, replacement of the town's shelters. Also, as residents had followed up by asking me about 2 new shelters a) on the north bound section of the A44 Bladon roundabout and b) A44 northbound in Hill Rise, I was also going to ask the council to confirm what the procedure was for requesting new shelters.

Tony McHugh was going to say: I am sure I was not the only resident who was shocked at the appalling traffic chaos caused by the recent Salon Privé event at Blenheim Palace, at least on the Saturday. For part of that morning one could not drive into or through the town from the Old Woodstock side. And on the approach from the Yarnton side the tail-back extended to beyond the airport - all the way to the main entrance gate to Blenheim! I thought the Town Council, in their regular meetings with Blenheim, had persuaded them to avoid such chaos occurring at future events. How, then, did this recent disaster happen, and what are the Council going to do to ensure it does not happen again?

## TC Meeting - 15 Oct 2024

8 councillors and 7 members of the public attended. The Town Clerk was assisted by the Responsible Finance Officer. It was unclear whether the meeting was recorded.

A moment of silence was observed for the memory of the recently passed Peter Jay, former Councillor and Mayor of Woodstock Town Council.

There were several declarations of interest at this meeting. Councillors Grant, Cooper and Spencer-Churchill for the Youth Club, Councillor Banbury for the Chapel Trust Memorial Garden and Councillor Cooper for Sustainable Woodstock and West Oxfordshire Planning.

Three members of the public spoke. Firstly, John Brimble referred to the Council meeting of 13th August which included the court case of Councillor Parnes vs Woodstock Town Council. John asked if the costs had been paid to the Council, if so when and if the judgement document had arrived and when would the Council produce the report it promised at that meeting. The Mayor replied this would not be discussed at the meeting. Secondly, Jo Lamb stated that the Town Council insists on transparency on the part of the electorate. Referring to the Minutes of the Council meeting of 10th September, Jo said that stating there were no public speakers was not wholly accurate. At the time of the meeting the Council website encouraged public participation, even if the matters were not on the agenda. This was however overruled by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor at the meeting, stating the subject had to be on the agenda. Jo suggested the Minutes should include the following:

“In an effort to discourage public participation, members of the public intending to speak at the meeting were prohibited from doing so in direct contravention of the provisions of the Woodstock town Council website at the time of the meeting”.

This section of the Council’s website has since been removed.

Councillor Cooper suggested that Jo’s amendment to the Minutes be included. The Council then voted in favour of the amendment being included. Councillor Nethercott then asked the Mayor if he could raise a motion to revert to the previous rules regarding encouragement of public participation. The Mayor asked for this to be at the next Council meeting. Finally, the third member of the public spoke regarding a planning application.

The Mayor reminded Councillors that the Armistice Day celebration would take place on Sunday 10th November at 11am.

In the Clerk’s report, regarding the Christmas lights and lack of places to put them following the tree pollarding, the Clerk is looking into alternatives for town decorations at Christmas. The existing lights have been saved. The Surgery’s administration staff are making use of using a room in the Town Hall following the recent flooding of part of the Surgery.

Andy Graham, County Councillor then gave his report. The County is looking into the recent flooding in Bens Close. For the town parking survey, the consultation will close on 25th October. Regarding the area healthcare infrastructure, an Officer-led task working party recently met to address health care provision across Oxfordshire. It noted that Section 106 monies could be prioritised and that the old police station site on Hensington Road was not considered feasible. Although not the responsibility of the County Council, Andy said he remained committed to working with others towards finding a successful outcome.

From the Town Council’s Surgery working group meeting of 25th September, it was decided to ask the Mayor to call a Town Meeting inviting all those involved in the decision making process, including Calum Miller MP.

Councillor Cooper then gave his report on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council. It contained a motion regarding Winter Fuel Payments. It highlighted the importance of Councillors and Officers in helping vulnerable residents throughout the winter and promoting an awareness campaign working with local NHS partners, Parish Councils and charitable, civic and religious groups to encourage eligible elderly residents to register for benefits such as Pension Credit.

Apart from the very visible tree work in the town centre, carried out by the County Council, the Town Council has approved a large amount of tree work (high and medium priority) and surveys in areas they are responsible for such as the Old Woodstock Line, Hensington Road Cemetery, the Water Meadows, Old Woodstock Playground and the Lawn Cemetery. A detailed report from Dowdeswell Forestry on proposed work can be found on the Council website.

Regarding this year's Woodstock Town Council grant allocation, Councillor Martin expressed her frustration that she could not attend the last-minute time changed grants working group meeting as she had work commitments. She also noted that the grant applications were only available as hard copies held at the Town Hall so only accessible when the Town Hall was open. Councillor Martin then reviewed the proposed allocation of funds to the various groups that had applied and highlighted that 36% of the total Council grant fund was going to the Youth Club. There followed no further discussion by the Council and the grant allocation was voted through. No previous declarations of interest were considered. It was then voted in that grant applications to the Council revert to once a year with a budget of £7000 for 2024/2025 (applications should be submitted by the end of February 2025).

Responses to the Council parking survey were being received and the results would be ready for the next Council meeting. Due to the deadline of the County Council consultation, 25th October, the Clerk was tasked with submitting the Town Council's survey results to the consultation by this deadline.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes.

Graham Brown

### **TC Meeting - 23 Oct 2024**

6 councillors and 10 members of the public attended. The Town Clerk was on holiday and the Responsible Finance Officer (acting as Deputy Town Clerk) attended. The meeting was not recorded.

The Mayor, Cllr John Banbury, was in the Chair, and as the first Agenda Item was the election of a new Mayor (after the resignation of the Mayor), Cllr Banbury asked for nominations. Cllr Poskitt nominated Cllr Grant and this was seconded by Cllr Williams. As there were no other nominations, Cllr Ann Grant became the new Mayor. The declaration of office would be signed later as the Responsible Officer was not present.

Cllr Grant took the Chair for the rest of the meeting. There were 5 apologies for absence.

Two members of the public spoke in the Public Participation section. The first, Jo Lamb, thanked Cllr Banbury for his work as Mayor and remarked that the reason for his resignation had not been made public, and she wondered if it was to do with the latest change of policy in not allowing the public to speak of subjects that were not on the Agenda. The Mayor said that this would be addressed in future so as to allow members of the public to speak on any subject.

The second, John Brimble, also thanked the previous Mayor, and then raised a question as to how he would be able to ascertain whether a debt due to the Council by a Councillor had been paid, if the item was not on the Agenda. He handed some questions to the Deputy Town Clerk.

The meeting finished at 7.10pm

Nick Manby-Brown

## **TC Meeting - 12 Nov 2024**

6 councillors and 11 members of the public attended. The Town Clerk was assisted by the Responsible Finance Officer. The meeting was recorded.

A new protocol to clarify public participation at Council meetings was proposed, briefly discussed, and carried. Any subject can now be raised by the public and the Chair has the right to declare any question or statement inappropriate. The suggestion of adjourning the meeting for public participation was not endorsed by the Council. The full rules for public participation can be found on the Council website under Policies and Procedures. Three members of the public then spoke. Jo Lamb spoke of her concern of the new protocol believing it may reduce the rights of the public to free speech at Council meetings. Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock then spoke to thank Councillor Poskitt for placing bus shelters on the agenda and asked the council not to defer or delay their repair and upgrade and to improve the experience of bus users. A third speaker also expressed his concern on the new protocol for public participation at Council meetings. The Mayor was satisfied with what had been previously agreed by the Council on the participation protocol.

Councillor Sarah Williams was then nominated and voted in as Deputy Mayor.

The Clerk reported that to enhance Woodstock's Christmas lights five fully decorated 7 foot Christmas trees for the town will be delivered, at a cost of around £4,500.

County Councillor Andy Graham reported that the parking improvements review would go to the County Council on 14th November. The decision for Glympton to reduce the speed limit from 30 to 20 mph would also be made on 14th. There would be a walkabout in Woodstock by County Council Highways to assess dangerous areas, such as the barrier by the Black Prince, on 22nd November. Councillor Banbury pointed out the poor lighting in Willoughby Way. The Mayor reminded Councillor Graham of the issue of broken bollards in front of the Woodstock Arms on Market Street. This was reported on Fix My Street in August.

District Councillor Poskitt reported on a meeting about the proposed Botley West Solar Farm. If the project goes ahead there is a need to lobby for community benefit and the District Council would like volunteers from Councils and Parishes in the surrounding area to be included. Councillor Poskitt also highlighted the District Council's Rural Crime Survey, focused on reducing rural crime and anti-social behaviour. The survey can be found on the Your Voice District Council website.

The Council had no objection to a planning application from St Mary Magdalene Church for a large solar panel array on the lower south facing roof.

In the Financial Report, the Cash in Hand as of 31st October this year is £463,596.60.

The Capital Expenditure budget for 2025/6 was then discussed. Items included new waste bins, speed indicators to slow traffic and bus shelters (with £6,000 proposed for refurbishment this financial year). Councillor Cooper also proposed that solar panels for the Community Centre be included in the budget.

A 13% increase in the precept (the amount required from Council Tax payers in our area to fund the Council's operations) has been proposed. Councillor Poskitt noted this would not be popular and Councillor Parnes suggested the fund surplus (currently standing at £398,000) could be used. The Mayor concluded the discussion by deferring it to the upcoming budget meeting.

Councillor Poskitt then presented a request from the North Oxfordshire Food Bank for support for Christmas parcels for Woodstock. There are five individuals and five families who currently receive regular support from this Food Bank. The total cost would be £250 and the Council proposal was to provide £115. After discussion it was decided that £100 would be donated.

Councillor Parnes reported the dangerous broken barrier outside of houses past the Marlborough School on Shipton Road. After Oxfordshire County Council replying to say it was not their responsibility it was decided to write to Pye Homes/Blenheim.

Councillor Parnes noted breaches of GDPR by the Town Council and requested these be rectified and that incident logs be created.

Finally, an open Town Meeting will be held on 21st November in St Mary Magdalene Church to discuss the possibility of a new doctors' surgery. Our new MP, Calum Miller, will attend and representatives from the following will be invited - Woodstock Practice, Integrated Care Board, West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Blenheim.

Please note that due to redecoration work in the Town Hall the December Town Council meeting will be held at the Community Centre on 12th December, 7pm.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 26 Nov 2024**

Six Councillors and five members of the public attended. Apologies had been received from Cllrs Lancaster, Addis, Spencer Churchill. The proceedings were audio recorded.

Declarations of interest were declared by Cllrs Cooper and Poskitt (WODC) with Councillor Banbury declaring an interest in the planning application for the redevelopment of the Old Police Station. No members of the public spoke.

Minutes from three previous Council meetings were presented for approval. There were a few misrepresentations of discussions to be adjusted and typos were noted one by one, for amendment.

The Mayor reported that the Town Meeting on 21 November to discuss the future of the Doctors Surgery was very well attended. Following three resignations from the Town Council she confirmed that there will be an election to fill the vacancies on the WTC on 16 January 2025.

The Town Clerk's report elaborated on the upcoming election explaining that if more than three nominations were received, the election would be contested. If only three nominations for the three vacancies it would be an uncontested election. If less than three nominations those nominated would be duly elected and another election called to fill the remaining vacancy.

The outcomes of the recent traffic consultation by OCC were noted with additional double yellow lines in Rectory Lane, Cockpit Close and New Road and dual-purpose parking bays in Cockpit Close. The Woodstock Parking Review results were not considered by OCC.

The consideration of planning applications included a request to demolish and develop the Old Police Station site into retirement living accommodation. Lack of parking spaces in the plans was a concern, also that the design was considered ugly, not least because the proposal is for a three storey build, and the rooms looked small on the plans. It was questioned why another 29 places for the over 55's were needed, on top of Rye Grass, Caroline Court and Upper Brook Hill. It was concluded that this was an inappropriate use and an over development of the site. Concerns were raised about the proximity to the Bear Close flats and potentially any building on the site would inevitably precede any construction of a Doctors Surgery. There was concern that the plan would isolate the library site, casting doubt on whether the library would in fact ever be rebuilt if the development went ahead.

The Budget for 2025/2026 was approved with a 3% increase, to £314,215 expenditure for the year. £11k has been earmarked for Projects (to be decided). The Precept is to remain the same as last year.

Councillors briefly discussed the current relevance of polling cards delivered prior to election day which cost an additional £3k (mostly postage). A majority voted in favour of their continued use.

The Town Meeting about the Doctors Surgery held on 21 November in the church, but no conclusion was reached. The Mayor announced that the town's pressure group will have the support of WTC. There was concern that the various petitions circulating have political party affiliations but this shouldn't be a political issue. ICB to be asked to clarify what criteria they are stipulating when considering a 'health centre' site, this would help understand why the Old Police Station site was considered not suitable. Confusion re whether Blenheim has any intention of building a surgery on the Cherwell site within the 500-house development planned between the Woodstock and Bladon roundabout. Previously 'community space' has been included in both the Hill Rise plan and the Banbury Road development. WODC to be asked to question what is going to be built in the areas designated as such. Be aware the general development of Begbroke and Yarnton is likely to be the new focus for infrastructure development in the future.

The Botley Solar Farm Update reported that delegates from eight parishes will negotiate with the developers on behalf of all 11 affected parishes. There is still no indication of how much would be paid as community benefit. A Government inspector will now decide whether to take the project forward for further consideration.

The Town Hall will be closed from 23 December to 1 January incl. with an emergency contact system.

Due to restrictions of space, not all Council business has been included. Refer to the Town Council website for agendas and minutes. But there was still no update from the Council regarding the recent Civil Case. There was no discussion furthermore of the intended change of office visiting hours (Friday 9am to 1pm only)

Annie Cripps



## TC Meeting - 12 Dec 2024

5 councillors and 13 members of the public attended in the Community Centre. In the absence of the Town Clerk, the Responsible Finance Officer took the role. The meeting was recorded.

Three members of the public spoke. Former Mayor Nick Manby-Brown noted that the previous Town Council had formed a grants working group with a new policy and increased funding. The new Council proposes to revert to the old system, what reasons are there for this? A Bens Close resident then spoke. He was very upset after the recent flooding and being forced into temporary accommodation. He had contacted the Town Council and had no reply. The communication between all parties had been very poor and upsetting for the residents. There are now 12 empty houses in Bens Close and the resident asked what was being done. Councillor Parnes has written a report which is on the meeting agenda. Ed Creasey, a Brook Hill resident, then spoke, also about flooding and communication with the Town Council. Following the flooding of 5 years ago the residents of this area had been ignored. It was agreed that logs and debris needed to be removed from the Water Meadows to prevent the screens being blocked, one of the causes of flooding of the area. The Town Council had been warned about maintaining the Water Meadow, it being their responsibility, but flooding has happened again. What is being done? The Mayor answered that the Council has asked two companies to look at the Water Meadows management and that the screen has been cleared.

Inspector Ball from Thames Valley Police spoke about the deployment of a CCTV camera outside of the Bear Hotel to target anti-social behaviour in and around Market Square. There has been a total of 483 incidents reported to the police in Woodstock in the past 12 months. This is a joint action between Thames Valley Police and West Oxfordshire District Council and the camera will not be installed indefinitely.

Councillor Parnes then reported on the flooding in Bens Close, outlining the distress of and impact on the residents, the parties involved and the lack of communication. Councillor Parnes proposed a motion to communicate the report to all parties stating the Town Council's substantial concerns and disappointment in relation to the difficulties faced by the residents of Bens Close. This was amended for the Clerk to write to West Oxfordshire District Council for action to prevent further flooding and Councillor Poskitt asked for Hensington Close to be added following the 3 houses flooded there. The motion was passed.

In the Clerk's report, Oxfordshire County Council will send a report following their monthly inspection of Woodstock's streets. The barrier at the corner of Shipton Road and Randolph Avenue has been reported.

Under Finance, the current balance of the Town Council's account is £462, 254.

There has been a RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) inspection and report for the Water Meadows. The main recommendations are to continue with the arrangements indicating when access is not advised through clear signage and conducting an inspection post flood, to check the condition of the pathways and bridges. The Council agreed to address all 11 items brought to their attention in the report as soon as possible.

The Council agreed to donate £100 to the British Legion Poppy Appeal to pay for the wreaths for Remembrance Sunday. The Council also agreed to pay for the road closure charge (£151.75) that occurred on the 'Night of a Thousand Candles', organised by Wake up to Woodstock.

The Town and Palace dialogue meetings will be reintroduced with Deputy Mayor Sarah Williams chairing and setting the agenda. The first meeting will be on Tuesday 11th February 2025 at 2pm at the Town Hall. The public are encouraged to attend and suggest items for the agenda.

Policy and guidance for Town Council grants was then reviewed and returned to the previous schedule of 1 application per year. The application form will be available from 1st January, deadline 31st January 2025. Councillor Poskitt asked for it to be a requirement for reports to be submitted on how grants were previously used as well as how many residents were actually involved in using the previous grant award.

The town bus shelters have been surveyed and action was agreed to repair and paint where necessary. Resident Stan Scott was thanked for his help. A new bin for the Park View bus stop was also agreed. The Council will look into placing speed indicators to remind drivers of their speed through the town, the Council will seek advice on their positioning.

Finally, Councillor Williams gave an update on the possibility of a new surgery for Woodstock. From a meeting on 11th December it was heard that the Integrated Care Board (ICB) are happy to consider any proposals put before them. What is required by them is what the GPs need and where Blenheim can help. The Town Council is favouring the new

Banbury Road housing development site.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 14 Jan 2025

7 councillors and 9 members of the public attended the meeting. The audio of the meeting was recorded.

One member of the public spoke, former Mayor Nick Manby-Brown, regarding the upcoming election of town councillors. Nick, on behalf of Woodstock and Bladon News, had printed leaflets containing information written by the four candidates ahead of the election for the vacant town councillor positions and wished to display them in the Town Hall and on the Council noticeboard for the benefit of residents. He was told this was not allowed and against the rules by the Clerk and Mayor. Nick wanted to let the Councillors present know this had happened and to clarify the rules on this matter. Following a comment from Councillor Parnes regarding use of Council resources, Nick tried to reply but was told by the Mayor to sit down and not to speak.

County Councillor Andy Graham reported that he was working with the Town Council on pedestrian safety in the town and that 10 measures will be implemented regarding the A44. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) are on schedule and due to go forward for public consultation. Colin Carritt from Sustainable Woodstock and the Village Travel Network was thanked for his contribution. Regarding flooding, the County Council will review the flooding report on 21st January. The Shipton Road wooden railings will be repaired by Blenheim and the generators outside the Feathers Hotel will be removed by 31st January. The report also included details of the first meeting of the Woodstock Surgery Steering Group, chaired by Calum Miller MP, which took place in December. Blenheim and the doctors have jointly instructed Osmond Tricks to start a Project Initiation Document (PID), a key planning document used to outline a project's goals, scope and risks, for both the Banbury Road and Park View sites. Blenheim will pay for this. The report will take 4-5 weeks to complete and will be reviewed at the next meeting in mid-February. The Integrated Care Board and West Oxfordshire District Council will discuss if any S106 funding is available.

The report from the District Councillors included news of the Government proposal to remove the current two tier (District and County) system of local government in Oxfordshire. In the future model West Oxfordshire District Council would form part of a larger area that would have all council services delivered by a single council or 'unitary authority'. If agreed, the new administrations will be formed in 2027.

In the 'Walk and Talk' Report which was attended by Councillors Graham and Poskitt and Chris Grain from Oxfordshire County Council, loose kerbs, cobbles and potholes were identified and should be repaired within 28 days. The fallen bollards outside the Woodstock Arms were later confirmed the responsibility of the County Council Highways and will also be repaired.

The Council's response to the Cherwell Local Plan Review was deferred. It was noted there will be a West Oxfordshire District Council public consultation held in the Community Centre on 28th January (2-5pm) on this matter.

Under Finance, the current balance of the Town Council's account is £435,414.

Following the end of the access agreement from Verenia Court to the Old Woodstock Line Extension, after much investigation the Council has concluded that the entrance will be closed. The Verenia Court Management Company will install a fence. The Council will remove the steps and add signage to say it is now a dead end.

Various works to be carried out at the Lawn Cemetery, including paved seating areas, fencing, hedges and benches were discussed as the budget is now available. A survey of the Community Centre roof for the possible installation of solar panels was approved.

Councillor Williams updated the Council on actions regarding a possible new surgery. These included writing to Calum Miller MP and the Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board. Members of the Town Council were encouraged to object to the proposed development of the old police station site.

Councillor Parnes requested that the Council instruct a specialist consultant to perform an audit with respect to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Council agreed to obtain quotes.

Finally, the Council was asked to consider a National Association of Local Council's consultation regarding strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities. The Mayor did not see a need for this for various reasons and Councillor Poskitt suggested Councillors complete the consultation themselves.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

### **TC Meeting - 21 Jan 2025**

Seven Councillors including two recently elected, and four members of the public attended. Apologies were received from Cllrs Lancaster, Addis, Spencer Churchill, Parnes and Wheatley. The Councillors briefly introduced themselves to the two recently elected Councillors and were similarly invited to introduce themselves. The proceedings were audio recorded only.

Cllrs Banbury and Poskitt registered their interest in four of the planning application applications to follow.

The meeting was adjourned for public participation but no members of the public spoke. The meeting was then reconvened. This arrangement ensures that any issues raised by members of the public at this time will not be minuted

The Clerk reported on work on the New Road playground will be carried out as a Health and Safety issue.

The Mayor reported that the recent redecoration of the interior of the Town Hall omitted a small area on the first floor from the brief. This area will be redecorated at an additional cost which, as it is under £1000, can be agreed under discretionary powers of the Clerk and Mayor.

Cherwell Local Review: A draft response was reviewed for another planning application (for 400 houses this time) on the land next to Park View. The issue remains that the land in question lies in Cherwell District but has no impact on the parish of Shipton cum Cherwell within which it falls, or Kidlington, but will have lots of impact on Woodstock. There is to be an exhibition by the WODC at the Community Centre on 28 January from 2 to 5.15pm. All Councillors were urged to attend this exhibition and raise their comments and concerns. The Council's response will then be discussed at the WTC meeting on 11 February following attendance at the exhibition.

Four planning applications were discussed and no objections raised.

Karen Howe, the Financial Officer for WTC and Clerk of Bladon PC, who represents WTC on the Committee, updated those present. WTC is registered as an interested party following the application being cleared to go through for Inspection. The Committee charged with jointly negotiating on behalf of the 18 communities, affected to a greater or lesser degree, are currently discussing Community Benefits and what is the best legal way to secure the value of funds available, currently thought to be in the region of £200,000 and how to split it. The rules for S106 do not apply here, indeed the developer does not have to give anything. The parishes are required to submit ideas for what community projects they would spend the money on, however much the award, if any. It is not thought that they would have to be environmentally focussed, but it may help. Community surveys are to be rolled out to give residents the opportunity to make suggestions. In due course the Committee will have the opportunity to present to the panel. The inspector has asked the developer to provide better maps to support their application.

An additional signatory was requested and Sarah Williams now joins Cllrs Grant, Lancaster and Poskitt as signatories for WTC accounts.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

Annie Cripps

## TC Meeting - 03 Feb 2025

9 councillors and 7 members of the public attended the meeting. The meeting was audio recorded.

Four members of the public spoke. Michael Bowles spoke as he was interested to note that on the meeting agenda a Civil Case was to be discussed following exclusion of press and public. Michael assumed it was to discuss the full report of the case brought against the Council by one of its Councillors in 2022. At that point the Mayor interrupted to say that it was a different Civil Claim. Michael continued to say that the previous case was dismissed in 2024 after a great deal of time, effort and expense by the Council and staff. He asked when a full report on the matter would be made available by the Council and when the Councillor had paid costs to the Council, from his recollection by 30th September last year. John Brimble then spoke on the same matter. John reiterated that it has been 6 months since the Civil Small Claims Court case where the judge had ordered Councillor Parnes to pay Woodstock Town Council £1,168.50. John referred to his public participation on 13th August last year asking if the amount had been paid to which the Council replied they were waiting for the judgement document before producing an official report. His further request at a more recent meeting was not minuted. John asked for transparency from the representatives of the community and that a public statement be included within the minutes of this meeting. He hoped that Council would consider the position of Councillor Parnes on the Town Council.

I then spoke regarding the Community Benefit from Botley West Solar Farm. I reminded the Council that the deadline to register as an interested party is 27th February and that the Council to please include reference to the community benefit that should be included in the proposal. Although this figure has increased from £50K to £200K per year this is still woefully inadequate for a project of this size and impact. Low Carbon Hub and other groups are suggesting £4.2 million per year which over a 40 year period makes a significant contribution to the surrounding area. I urged everyone to push for more community benefit as currently this project, in one form or another, seems increasingly likely to happen.

Finally, former Mayor Nick Manby-Brown asked why the recording device, costing £2.5K was not being used to record images, only sound. This would enable residents to join the meetings via Zoom, for example.

The Council then discussed Woodstock allocation of £15K from the £1 million UK Shared Prosperity Allocation given to West Oxfordshire District Council. This fund can be used to support and improve the town centre. Councillor Szabados suggested upgrading the flower planters and showed examples from Bicester. The Mayor suggested refurbishing the Town Hall exterior and relaying the cobbles around the Hall. Councillor Wheatley commented that 6th February deadline for submission of proposals was a very short time (together with the requirement for the funding to be spent by 31 March 2025). Refurbishment and cobble work was voted for, the Mayor saying that flower planters could be looked at using alternative Town Council funding.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 11 Feb 2025

10 councillors and 17 members of the public attended the meeting. The audio of the meeting was recorded.

There was a minute's silence to acknowledge the passing of Brian Cable, the Mayor of Woodstock Town Council in 1975.

Four members of the public presented during the public participation session. Hilary Brown spoke on behalf of Sustainable Woodstock and said while there are several important local issues for the Council to be discussing, Sustainable Woodstock would like the Council to declare the Climate Emergency and consider it in their business. The Climate Emergency was previously only acknowledged by the Council.

Jo Lamb spoke about the Council's commitment to the principles of openness and transparency and how this has changed since last May to curtail, limit and control the opportunities of the electorate to communicate its concerns to the Council. Standing Orders were changed to only permit items on the agenda to be raised in public participation. Then the Council decided to suspend the Council meeting so public participation was outside of the agenda. Now it is being proposed that anyone recording the meeting must cease recording during any period in which the meeting is adjourned, meaning public participation. Where is the openness here? Jo also asked about the civil claim made against the Council last year, with judgment in August and a debt owed by a sitting member of the Council. Request for information has been made on numerous occasions. There is now a second civil claim which surely the public deserves to know the nature of these claims against the Council. Again, lack of transparency.

I then spoke to the Council, thanking the Council for including a section regarding community benefit for Botley West Solar Farm in their representation as an interested party. I had learnt in the Town/Blenheim meeting that there had been a meeting of parishes and councils surrounding the solar farm discussing community benefit. I asked for any records and minutes from the meeting to be made public to co-ordinate the efforts to increase the amount of the community benefit. Karen Howe represented Woodstock Town Council. I was told by the Mayor that this was not possible.

Finally, John Brimble spoke to repeat his previous request for a statement from the Town Council, as previously promised, regarding the civil claim against the Council by one of its members and judgment from August last year. There has only been silence from the Town Council on this matter, the Councillor in question still being in position. And now another civil claim against the Council! The public should know about this second claim.

The Mayor made reference to the number of ducks in town and problems they were causing. No feeding signs were to be encouraged and action is to be considered.

Neither the County Councillor's or the District Councillors' reports were included in the agenda pack.

The Planning section included the Council's lengthy responses to both the Cherwell Local Plan, 450-500 homes development of land south of Perdiswell Farm, Shipton Road and the Botley West Solar Farm, compiled by Karen Howe, the Responsible Finance Officer. The Council has serious concerns regarding the proposed housing development, feeling it is unsustainable and inappropriate for the location. It would create an isolated community with inadequate infrastructure and place unsupportable pressure on local services. Although referred to as part of Woodstock in the Cherwell Local Plan, affordable housing on the site would not be available to residents of West Oxfordshire District Council.

Regarding Botley West Solar Farm, the Council is concerned with the impact such a large solar farm will have on the landscape character of the area, tourism, local biodiversity, possible flood risk, loss of good quality agricultural land and Green Belt. The Council also notes the £200K per annum figure offered as community benefit is far from the average of £3K per MW (£2.52 million per annum) offered to other solar farms. The fund will need to be shared by around 15 parishes in the area affected by the solar farm.

Full responses to these applications are available on the Council website, found under Documents – Meeting Papers.

Under Finance, the current balance of the Town Council's account is £433,275.22

Councillors were appointed to various vacancies in working groups such as Grants, Woodstock Exhibition Foundation, VE Day celebrations, the Water Meadows and Christmas Lights.

Agenda items were considered for the Annual Town Meeting, to be held on Tuesday 25th March. The surgery, parking, solar farm, Cherwell planning and flooding will be included.

Councillor Williams gave a report of the Doctors' Surgery Working Group. From discussions with Roger File from Blenheim, Councillor Connelly said that S106 monies can be negotiated from the Park View development and that it was possible for a surgery to be built before houses in new developments. Councillor Spencer-Churchill commented that he would like this situation to be sorted within the next 2 months. The Mayor also commented on Blenheim now looking at the Owen Mumford site which will become available when the company moves to Witney.

Finally, it was decided, with some objections, to close the Council's Facebook page, the Clerk not having the time to support it and the Mayor not wishing for a single Councillor to have that responsibility.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

### **TC Meeting - 11 Feb 2025 Blenheim**

Woodstock Town and Blenheim Palace Dialogue Meeting 11 February 2025

The Town/Blenheim meetings have returned after an absence of several years. The meeting took place in the Town Hall and was well attended by the public. The Town Council was represented by Deputy Mayor Sarah Williams (chair) and Mayor Ann Grant and Blenheim Palace by Roger File (chair), Dominic Hare, Heather Carter and Marilyn Davies.

Several topics were on the agenda and were presented and discussed by the above parties. These included events to be held in Blenheim Palace this year, housing development schedules, Botley West Solar Farm, flooding issues and the doctors' surgery. Following these discussions the meeting was opened to questions from the public of which there were understandably many and sadly time ran out to allow all questions to be asked.

The meeting was not recorded but the Mayor was taking minutes which will hopefully be made public in due course.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 24 Feb 2025**

24th February (ETC)

Councillors present: Cllrs Banbury, Cooper, Connolly, Grant, Parnes, Poskitt, Spencer-Churchill, and Williams, plus the Town Clerk, Valentin Lavdakov. Four members of the public attended.

Cllr Grant brought to everyone's attention the paragraph at the top of the agenda which states that members of the public must understand that if they do not want to be recorded, they should not attend the meeting as the Chairman cannot ensure that members of the public will not be recorded.

Cllr Grant announced that Cllr Mathieu Lancaster (formally known as Matthew Parkinson) has resigned from the WTC, having already moved out of the area to a new job. Grateful thanks for his service to Woodstock as a Councillor will be minuted.

Apologies were received from Cllrs Addis, Szabados and Wheatley.

One member of the public spoke during the public participation session. Susan Cave asked why the Christmas lights which were not illuminated at Christmas time, are still hanging up in the trees? She thought it was odd a) that they were not put on and b) that they are still in the trees and she wondered why? No answer was forthcoming from Councillors. Mrs Cave was told that to get a response to her question, she should email the Clerk direct.

A response to six Planning Applications were considered, all went forward, with no objection from the Council.

The final item on the Agenda was Staffing. This was considered a confidential matter, and so the members of the public were asked to leave at 7.17pm.

Annie Cripps

## TC Meeting - 11 Mar 2025

11th March 2025

10 councillors and 10 members of the public attended the meeting. The audio of the meeting was recorded.

Two members of the public spoke. I asked about the structural survey that has been carried out on the Community Centre roof with respect to installing solar panels. The Mayor told me this would be discussed in the next Council meeting. I also informed the Council of the annual town litter pick taking place on 22nd March. John Brimble asked why the Annual Town Meeting, taking place on 25th March, had not been advertised. The Mayor replied that notices would be going on the town noticeboards the following day.

During the Mayor's report Councillor Spencer-Churchill mentioned he had a small local charity with funding of £25K for Woodstock and Bladon. The Clerk reported that local groups had been contacted regarding reports they wish to submit for the Annual Town Meeting. Suggested agenda items were the doctors' surgery, parking, flooding and sewage and Botley West Solar Farm. Councillor Poskitt suggested that bus shelters should be included. A meeting is scheduled for 24th March with Satswana, the Council's data protection adviser. A GDPR audit is included and will take place in the Town Hall.

County and District reports were not included in the meeting pack. County Councillor Andy Graham was however invited to the Council table to report on the doctors' surgery. The strategic group, including the doctors, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Blenheim, Councillor Graham and Calum Miller MP will next meet on 27th March to discuss their findings. Blenheim has paid for a feasibility study of the suggested surgery footprint at 2 possible sites – the new Banbury Road development and the Owen Mumford site which is up for sale. A third option is the proposed housing development on the Cherwell District site. West Oxfordshire District Council has however objected to this development. It will be a commercial decision on the building by Blenheim but also taking into account the Woodstock community. A further report will come after the meeting on the 27th. Councillor Williams said they were not being told anything, the feasibility study by Osmond Tricks was not being made public and the Town Council were not being involved in the discussions. Councillor Graham explained it was the strategic group that would be making the decisions, Councillor Williams argued it was not for the doctors to determine what is best for the town. Councillor Cooper was disappointed with Blenheim, again promoting the old police station site in Hensington Road. Councillor Parnes asked what reasons were given by the ICB to reject the old police station site. Councillor Graham replied that the doctors and ICB had said quite categorically that they were not going to fund the site. At this point the meeting was made open to the public for questions. Resident Stan Scott, part of the Council's surgery working group, said local democracy had failed as Woodstock Town Council were not involved or informed and asked for a timeline. Councillor Graham said there should be a timeline after the meeting on 27th. He added that it is not the District Council's responsibility to build a new surgery although in his opinion the lack of provision for health care in the District Council's 2018 local plan was a mistake.

Under Finance, the current balance of the Town Council's account is £433,275.22.

Councillor Wheatley offered to join and chair the Environment Working Group. The Mayor reported that the cemetery work was finished and looked good and the purchase of new benches was agreed. A quote was accepted to remove the steps at the town end of the Old Woodstock Line, this entrance now being closed.

A £4K budget was agreed for the upcoming VE Day celebrations, taking place on 10th May, with Blenheim supplying the traffic stewards.

A report and recommendations on the Council's grants wards was presented and accepted with a total of £2400 being provided by the Council to various local groups.

A clothes collection bank for the Thames Valley Air Ambulance was agreed for a 6 week trial, to hopefully be placed in the Hensington Road car park.

Councillors Poskitt, Grant and Williams agreed to work on a record of significance for former mayor and honorary townsman Nigel Clifford MBE who, among his many achievements was the driving force behind the embroidered panels in the Town Hall.

Councillor Wheatley discussed the Land Use Consultation framework, a Government document encouraging residents and Councils to submit their views on land use in the next 10 years.

Finally it was agreed that the recent grant given to the Town Council for town improvements by West Oxfordshire District Council should be spent on repairing the cobbles around the Town Hall and replacing some windows at a cost of just under £14K in total.

N.B. I previously stated that the Mayor had taken the minutes at the Town/Blenheim Dialogue meeting on 11th February. Apologies, it was in fact Councillor Williams. Unfortunately these minutes cannot be released in draft form or a report given of the meeting by the Council, we will have to wait until the next Town/Blenheim Dialogue meeting.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

### **TC Meeting - 20 March 2025**

20th March (ETC)

Seven Councillors and two members of the public attended. Apologies were received from Cllrs Addis, Spencer-Churchill, Parnes, Banbury. Two members of the public attended; there were no statements made under Public Participation.

The Mayor reported that the Woodstock Town Council vacancy following the resignation of Mathieu Lancaster (Matthew Parkinson) will be filled by election, to take place on 1st May as there are already County Council elections due to be held on that day. Also regarding the Mayor's Charity, she had arranged for an exhibition of Woodcraft in Woodstock by The West Oxon Wood Turners Association, in the Mayor's Parlour between 10 to 1pm.

The Council had no objection to any of the four applications considered.

The Draft Risk Assessment Document for 2024-25 discussed. Suggested amendments included:  
There should be no single bank deposit/investment of more than £85,000 in any one institution.  
The section re Newsletter could be deleted as there was no longer a WTC newsletter.  
Safety regulations for individuals accessing the Town Hall roof were tightened up.

All amendments were agreed and signed off ready for the Audit.

Work could now start on the Risk Assessment for 2025-26.

HM Land Registry discussion documents were marked Private, and it was therefore agreed that discussion should be moved to the confidential part of the meeting where the public are excluded.

The public section of the meeting closed at 7.17pm.

Annie Cripps

## Town Meeting - 25 March 2025

### Annual Town Meeting

25th March 2025, Community Centre, 7.30 pm.

The Mayor, Cllr Ann Grant, chaired the meeting, helped by Deputy Mayor Cllr Williams and the Town Clerk Valentin Lavdakov. Five other town councillors were present including District Cllrs Elizabeth Poskitt and Julian Cooper together with Cllr Andy Graham from Oxfordshire County Council, Dominic Hare from Blenheim and Inspector Chris Ball from Thames Valley Police. The meeting was well attended and recorded by the Council's OWL device. The suggested agenda was adopted although as one resident later said it would have been better to have had questions from the floor after each agenda item not at the end. The minutes from the meetings of 26th March 2024 and 21st November 2024 were circulated and confirmed.

The Mayor announced that there is currently one vacancy on the Town Council to be elected on 1st May - 2nd April is the deadline for nominations. The Mayor thanked Karen Howe, who had worked on the Town Council as Clerk and the Responsible Financial Officer and recently resigned, for her hard work on the Town Council.

There were four invited speakers.

County Cllr Andy Graham began, giving a review of his year working on behalf of Woodstock. Cllr Graham has been active on the strategic group working towards a new doctors' surgery for Woodstock, with the next meeting taking place on 27th March. Cllr Graham sits on the Woodstock Traffic Advisory Group and has been active in support of Woodstock's Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Project (LCWIP) which will be decided in May/June this year. A consultation on tweaking the new parking scheme in Woodstock has been agreed and changes will be implemented in the summer. He worked with Stagecoach to ensure the S7 did not go through the town centre and reverted to turning past Old Woodstock as before. Banbury Road will be resurfaced in May and repairs to the town centre pavements will be carried out in May and June following a review.

Cllr Julian Cooper reported for the District Council. Cllr Cooper spoke of the government plans to abolish County and District Councils and replace them with unitary Councils but details of when and what will happen are vague. A report reviewing Publica has shown it more economical to bring the majority of Council services back in house. West Oxfordshire District Council has lodged a very strong objection to the building of 450 homes on land adjacent to Park View, in Cherwell District Council. Regarding Botley West Solar Farm, the District's Development Control Committee has sent a strongly worded comment on the proposal plans as they currently stand, raising many concerns. The District Council has set up a Community Benefits Group with representatives from town and parish councils affected by the development, if approved. The District Council supports the 20 mph speed limit through Woodstock and Bladon. Inspector Chris Ball from Thames Valley Police spoke next, saying crime is low in Woodstock, one of the safest places in West Oxfordshire. There has been a 26% reduction in crime. There is now a sergeant and PC in Woodstock together with the PCSO. A CCTV camera will soon be installed in the Market Square. A Thames Valley Police survey is open, closing 6th April, asking for residents to set their own priorities for the police to target in their area.

Dominic Hare, the CEO of Blenheim Palace was the final invited speaker. Dominic was pleased that the Town/Palace dialogue meetings had restarted. Blenheim are involved in discussions about a new doctors' surgery which will be raised later in this meeting. Last year was a good year for the Palace, especially the high profile European Summit that took place in July and thanked everyone for their support and understanding. Visitor numbers have increased and scaffolding on the Palace is part of the £2 million two year reroofing project. The later phases of the Park View housing development are under way and the Hill Rise development entrance is complete with work starting soon. S106 has been signed for the Banbury Road development and detailed planning consent will take about a year to complete. Dominic acknowledged the parking issues near the Palace for the Christmas event and said parking enforcement is an option. A beacon will be lit in the grounds on Thursday 8th May at 9.30pm to mark VE Day.

New Doctors' Surgery. Our Member of Parliament, Calum Miller, was unable to attend the meeting due to voting commitments but a statement from him was read by Cllr Williams. Over the year Calum has met with health, rail and energy secretaries to discuss local issues. Regarding the surgery, he has brought together the relevant parties and currently a Project Initiation Document (PID), paid for by Blenheim, is being reviewed. He assured us that the Town Council and residents would be kept informed.

Parking. The Mayor said she had received complaints about the new parking arrangements in Woodstock and that it

had not improved business but caused lots of displaced parking.

Flooding and Sewage. This referred to Bens Close where residents are still not back in their homes. The Mayor asked Dominic for a comment as Blenheim had responded by digging relief channels behind the houses. The problem had come from flooding from the road side.

Botley West Solar Farm. The only comment was from Cllr Poskitt who said the Town Council had submitted a response to the consultation.

Questions from the Floor. (Apologies, I did not hear all the names of those that spoke, some were not given).

Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock urged everyone to push for a better deal on Community Benefit from Botley West Solar Farm if it is given the go ahead. The current offering, as noted by Calum Miller, is pathetic given the size and proximity to housing. Please write to Calum Miller. Cllr Poskitt spoke of the group referred to previously by Cllr Cooper.

Anthony Glees spoke on several issues. He requested that the telephone number of the community police officer be made visible at the Town Hall. He questioned the Council on their public participation policy, emails not being answered and their bunker atmosphere signage at the Town Hall. Anthony asked why the S106 Committee had been dissolved by this Council and that the recent tree pollarding was a disgrace. He also considered community benefit from Botley West a bribe as the opposition to the project was clear. The Mayor replied that there had been some uncomfortable issues at the Town Hall so signage was necessary. The Mayor continued that there was no S106 committee, it coming under finance at Council meetings and that the tree pollarding was down to Oxfordshire County Council. The Mayor added that the public do not have a right to speak at Council meetings and that the Clerk is not obliged to record the public participation in the minutes. Dominic Hare considered not negotiating on community benefit would be a tactical mistake, it is not intended as a diversion - you can say yes or no to Botley West but negotiate community benefit separately. Cllr Graham added the tree cutting policy needs to be reviewed.

A resident spoke to say they were surprised that Woodstock Town Council not being included in the doctors' surgery meetings. The surgery is at capacity and she would like an answer to the question when will the patient list close? Woodstock and surrounding areas have increasing populations. Feedback from these meetings was requested to be made public.

Cllr John Banbury asked Dominic for a safe path from Hill Rise to town avoiding the lorries and heavy traffic on the mair road, especially with the new development being built. John asked for a path inside the estate wall. Dominic said he would look into it and referred to the paths already built by Blenheim linking Bladon and Long Hanborough, Woodstock and Bladon and Bladon and Cassington.

Andy Mills asked if there had been any answers from Thames Water and the Environment Agency with respect to the flooding in Bens Close. Cllr Williams said residents and Calum Miller had approached Thames Water but had received no response.

Former Councillor Meg Manson appreciated the removal of the generator from outside of the Feathers Hotel but asked for a street light nearby to be replaced. For the Blenheim Christmas Lights event, Meg asked Dominic if the shuttle bus to the airport for parking could be returned. Dominic said this was not possible but was doing everything possible to encourage visitors to park on site. The Mayor commented that displaced parking was a nightmare, especially on Brook Hill and Glyme Close. Councillor Graham suggested a survey could be done at times when there is an issue. He said that it was now possible to park in the town centre and shoppers were coming back to Woodstock.

Dr Robert Edwards explained that the trees in town had been pollarded for over 100 years.

Tom Harvey commented on the bank balance of the Town Council being £406K, an increase of £250K over last year and what are the Council planning to spend this money on? The Mayor gave no reply to this question.

A resident commented that the West Oxfordshire District car park off Hensington Road has an 11 hour time limit but no one is monitoring it. Councillor Cooper said that West Oxfordshire was reviewing their car parks.

A resident asked why the crime figures reported by Inspector Ball had fallen. Inspector Ball replied that it was a number

of initiatives including reducing farm machinery theft, knife action and working to reduce domestic violence.

A resident commented that some of the trees in town still had lights in them. She also referred to Botley West Solar Farm and action by NIMBYS and that there were pros to the project in producing green energy but reducing the size should be considered.

A resident asked why there was not solar on the houses in Park View? Dominic replied that no one was doing this in 2017 and he wished they had. Many houses in the final phases of Park View have solar and air-source heat pumps and the new planned developments will have both.

John Brimble explained he was one of the instigators of the town parking scheme. He said there are 300 parking spaces in town and that the new system is increasing churn of traffic and is better for business. The Hensington Road car park is a problem as it fills early in the morning possibly due to the employees from town parking there and commuters using it for travelling to Oxford.

A resident requested the new Councillors share their views which the two that were present did. Barry Wheatley said he wanted value for money and was particularly interested in the Environment Working Group. Maurice Connolly said he was enjoying being on the Council, also interested in the Environment Working Group and also the new surgery and S106 money from Blenheim developments. He asked Dominic if Blenheim had bought the Owen Mumford site, Dominic replied that he could not comment and that Blenheim does not determine where S106 money is used.

Stan Scott said that the town should fight for the doctors' surgery to be on the old police station site off of Hensington Road. Cllr Cooper replied that it is the preferred site in the opinion of the Town Council. Cllr Poskitt said that this site was proposed in 2016 when a new surgery was last discussed but the funding was not available. She hoped that there would be another solution shortly.

A resident referred to the recent dispute between a town councillor and the Town Council and asked if the costs to be paid by the Councillor have been paid. The Mayor gave no reply to this question.

The Mayor then ended the meeting at approximately 8.45pm and thanked everyone for coming.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 08 Apr 2025

8th April

Seven councillors were present. Apologies were received from Cllr's Addis, Spencer-Churchill, and Parnes. Cllr Poskitt arrived later.

Four members of the public attended but no one addressed the meeting.

The Mayor thanked those who attended the West Oxfordshire Wood Turners Association exhibition in the Mayors Parlour on 29 March. The raffle made £100 for the Woodstock Lunch Club and the Wood Turners Association were very happy with their proceeds. Thanks too for a recent grant to buy bird boxes in the water meadows. She announced that this would be her last full Town Council Meeting as Mayor although there is now an ETC Meeting on 15th April.

The Clerk reported that remedial work had commenced on the cobbles alongside the Town Hall, paid for with a grant from WODC, made available to upgrade the business environments in centres within the district.

For guidance, in the interests of neutrality the candidates due for election to fill the current WTC vacancy on 1st May are not allowed to canvas on WTC property including notice boards. Notices from the Returning Officer only may be posted.

Cllr Cooper - WODC reported that our district is a commendable 16th in the country for recycling. The Council have also commissioned a survey of empty homes with a view to getting them back into use.

Planning applications were considered. No objections to the applications, with the exception of Ref:25/00589/HHD where concerns were to be forwarded to WODC. The report from the Planning Inspectorate concluded that the appeal relating to 31 Oxford Rd was dismissed.

Finance was not considered as the documents did not arrive in time for Councillors to consider.

The schedule of meetings for 2025/26 were confirmed with efforts made to avoid a meeting in August.

A Report from the Environmental Working Party, available in full on the WTC website, was widely welcomed. The Wychwood Project was to be approached with a request to return to manage the Water Meadows. Cllr Connolly requested a meeting with the Blenheim Hydrologist to discuss the condition of the banks on their side of the river. An application for Local Nature Reserve status is to be progressed as this opens up access to future support and funding. The Environment Agency (EA) had produced a report on local flooding and they recommended an independent hydrologist be retained. It was decided not to consult an Independent hydrologist to advise the committee, due to the considerable expense and because the EA were due to make a further report. The Parish Church have been recognised as a Bronze Eco Church awarded by an independent charity, however higher profile for the Eco activities was recommended and the WTC invited to join a future event showcasing the work being done. The Council commended the wonderful work done by volunteers in the churchyard.

VE Day - Plans ongoing including applications to close the roads. Local groups all working together: Wake up to Woodstock, Soldiers of Oxfordshire etc. There will be a service conducted by the Rector at 11am on 8th May at the war memorial.

Solar Panels on the Community Centre - following a feasibility report from Allcott Associates (structural engineers) Brecon and Brecon to be asked to secure quotations to carry out the installation. The report stated the roof is covered with asbestos cement tiles.

The GDPR Audit of WTC, carried out at the request of Cllr Parnes, concluded that the Council was meeting all their compliance requirements. Cllr's were nonetheless urged to take personal responsibility regarding the distribution of personal contact information for themselves and others.

Cllr Andy Graham OCC who joined the meeting later, reported that he had spoken to Blenheim regarding the flooding in Bladon and they will be investigating works on the River Glyme to alleviate the issue. Blenheim's retained traffic management company were currently considering the impacts of the Christmas Light trail on the locale so that last years issues are not repeated. Cllr Graham reported that recommendations are due to be received from the New

Doctors Surgery Strategic Steering Committee on which he sits (end of May) moving the Surgery plans forward. Long grass cutting - Cllr Banbury asked for a schedule of who owned what and who was responsible for cutting those areas, so that areas were not left uncut.

Surgery - As there is no Woodstock presence on the Committee, Cllr Williams has asked to be able to sit in on the meetings to observe. The Chair is considering this request and will report back directly to the Mayor. Resolutions were all passed regarding the ongoing Freedom of Information requests which the Council has made regarding the surgery project.

Land use consultation - Cllr Wheatley had prepared a draft response which was well received. Cllr Poskitt gave constructive feedback which Cllr Wheatley will now incorporate before submitting the full report on behalf of the Council.

Civic Budget - A photo of the late Nigel Clifford in his mayoral regalia, is to be displayed in the assembly room mantelpiece to mark the significant role he played in expediting the wall hangings in that room. The presentation will be marked with a small reception for his family and others involved.

OCC have grants available for flooding relief projects. Cllr Connolly is intending to submit applications for funds to relieve potential local areas.

Botley West - Pre examination stage of the application will take in the region of three months. Karen Howe to be asked again to represent WTC on the Botley West hearing regarding negotiations on the level of Community Benefit available.

West Oxfordshire Community Infrastructure Levy - no objection to be noted.

Housing Supply targets - a Planning Reform Conference to be held on-line on 23 September titled Unlocking Sustainable Growth. Three councillors registered a desire to attend at a cost of £300 each.

The public and press were then excluded.

146 pages of Agenda papers supporting these discussions are available on the WTC website.

Annie Cripps

## **TC Meeting - 16 Apr 2025**

16 April 2025 (ETC)

7 councillors and 2 members of the public attended the meeting. The audio of the meeting was recorded.

No members of the public spoke in the Public Participation section.

There was a lot of talk about the planning on the land north of Hill Rise, but as this was just amending the details of the plan that had already been approved, the Council agreed to mention that their objections to the plan still stand, but that they would ask the Clerk to add their concerns about the lack of doctors surgery and the recent flooding issues and lack of infrastructure.

There were two other planning issues which were approved, but there was talk about the lack of energy conservation in the plans.

The finances for March 2025 were approved. Whilst these figures were for the year-end, the actual year-end accounts won't be presented until June 2025. The Cash In Hand stands at £404,000. An invoice for extra work done in the Hensington Road Cemetery was approved.

The meeting closed at 7.14pm.

For other details, please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Nick Manby-Brown

## TC Meeting - 06 May 2025

Town Council Meeting - 6 May 2025

The Meeting was attended by eight councillors and nine members of the public.

Councillor Grant called for a minute`s silence to mark the death recently of Cllr Addis`s husband Dave.

Under Public Participation:

(a) Former Mayor Nick Manby-Brown referred to the unfortunate recent history of the Council`s establishing and then dismantling of Working Groups, the dismantling having been without proper scrutiny or discussion at the 2024 Annual Town Council Meeting. The result had been that important Working Group roles, including that of Finance and Assets, were allocated to a single Councillor, one for Finance and one for Property. With the Council being particularly wealthy in both cash and property, it was incredible, he said, that one Councillor only should be allocated to these roles. He therefore urged Councillors to think carefully about this issue, and the necessary allocation of roles, with a view to decision at the next week`s Annual Town Council Meeting.

(b) Another member of the public, Mr. Dean Fowler, former Secretary of the Woodstock Social Club, addressed the Council. He said that following the closure of the Club, its members had decided to apply to have the Club premises at 44 Oxford Street, registered as a Community Asset under the appropriate legislation. He explained that this would protect the premises from being sold or redeveloped. It was the intention to widen the use of the premises to include many and varied community activities.

The Council proceeded to consider the matter, and decided to support the Club`s application.

Continuing with the further Agenda items, there was one planning application for consideration, and the Council decided to make no objection.

Councillors agreed to sponsor Cllr Wheatley to attend the Planning Reform Conference 2025, at a cost of £306 plus VAT and to report back to the Council.

The Council then agreed to exclude the public and press, as the following business was deemed to be of a confidential nature. This was a Property Report regarding the Cobbled Area to the rear of the Town Hall.

Tony McHugh

## **TC Meeting - 13 May 2025**

Annual Town Council Meeting - 13 May 2024

10 Councillors were present and 8 members of the public attended.

Election of new Mayor: Cllr Ann Grant was nominated by Cllr Spencer-Churchill and seconded by two Councillors. Cllr Grant accepted the nomination, and with no other nominations, her election was confirmed without contest.

Election for Deputy Mayor: Cllr Williams was nominated by Cllr Barry Wheatley and seconded by Cllr Spencer-Churchill. Cllr Williams accepted the nomination, and with no other nominations, her election was confirmed without contest.

Apologies for absence: Cllr Addis and Cllr Connolly.

There was no public participation.

The Mayor offered her sincere thanks to the Clerk for all his hard work since joining and asked that this recognition should be recorded in the minutes. She thanked all staff and Councillors who supported the VE Celebrations in the Town Square by attending on Saturday 10th. Gratitude was also expressed to His Grace the Duke of Marlborough who opened the proceedings, this was entirely appropriate him being a descendent of Sir Winston Churchill. She also thanked all those who took part. The Clerk extended sincere thanks to all Cllrs for their support and patience while he is learning his role.

There then followed consideration of Councillors Roles. Finance, which includes Grants and S106 negotiations was retained by Cllr Poskitt. Cllr Wheatley requested he be the substitute and this will be discussed at the meeting of the 27th.

The Council Member for Property will now be Cllr Cooper working with the Clerk. He takes over from Cllr Grant.

The full list of Councillors Roles in the 12 Working Groups were reviewed including clarification of the remit of the Urgent Planning Committee and Emergency Action Group which has a meeting planned to discuss additional members joining the Group among other things. Cllr Grant sits on all Working Groups with the exception of Christmas Lights. The Website, Social Media and Newsletter Group is controlled by staff only under the guidance of the Clerk as they are covered by insurance. Cllr Wheatley suggested that Councillors would be able to assist the Clerk in this role as he is very busy, but this was rejected by the Mayor, and Councillors were requested to inform the Clerk if they had any suggestions.

There were a few amendments to the current members of the Working Groups including Cllr Wheatley joining the Staff Group as a floating member.

Requests by Cllr Wheatley (and Cllr Connolly in his absence) to join a specific Group as a floating member were deferred to a future meeting when both were present.

It was noted that Bob Pomfritt, the OWL Volunteer Warden, should now sit on the Environment Committee as a member of the public, and would be invited to future meetings.

Drs New Surgery Working Group: Member Councillors to remain pending future consideration at the Extraordinary Town Council meeting to be held on Tuesday 20th May at 7pm. Cllr Wheatley registered his interest in joining this group.

Christmas Lights Working Group: Cllr Szabados would like to join Cllr Spencer-Churchill & Cllr Addis on the group and also Cllr Wheatley. The Group was urged by those present, to meet as soon as possible.

Remembrance Sunday Working Group: At this point Cllr Spencer-Churchill gave particular thanks to our Rector, Sarah Bourne, for the work that she has done in raising all the funds required for the repair of the church roof. Cllr Poskitt endeavoured to explain that the process had actually taken years and was supported by many people in the town, but was waved away.

International Connections: Cllr Wheatley would like to join Cllr Poskitt on this Group.

Joint Ventures: These include the Town and Palace Dialogue, Traffic Advisory, and Stop Botley West Group. Member

Councillors all remained the same. The WODC Parish/Town Liaison Group is made up of The Clerk, the Mayor and Cllr Wheatley will be the +1. There will be some churn within the Exhibition Foundation Councillors as an individual's term of office ends.

Woodstock Town Council is represented at Oxford Airport Consultant Committee Meetings by Cllr Spencer-Churchill with Cllr Parnes as a pre approved substitution. There was some confusion re whether the meetings were on the same nights as WTC or whether dates of meeting were only notified after they had happened. For clarity Cllr Spencer-Churchill undertook to provide a list of future meetings to the Clerk.

Review of Professional Bodies: all agreed to confirm the existing list. It was noted that the auditor's term will expire as they have completed 3 years.

Code of Conduct: This had recently been updated and was therefore adopted - a template from WODC having been rejected as large sections of it were irrelevant to WTC.

Direct Debits and Regular payments were all approved.

Policy documents for consideration had not been received and therefore will be considered at a future meeting. The Mayor asked all present to bring any questions or concerns when reviewing the Policies, to contact the Clerk who will look into it without hesitation.

The Meeting closed at 7.38.

Annie Cripps

## **TC Meeting - 20 May 2025**

Extraordinary Town Council Meeting 20 May 2024

9 councillors and 14 members of the public attended the meeting. The meeting was audio recorded.

Two members of the public spoke. I asked about the progress of looking at putting solar panels on the Community Centre roof. The Mayor said that they had received only one quote so far. John Brimble made note of the refurbishment of the existing surgery saying what a good job had been done and much appreciated by both staff and patients.

The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss and consider a report from Councillor Williams regarding a new GP surgery for Woodstock. As the recent planning application for the former Police station site on Hensington Road had been refused, the Council felt that they should take the initiative in exploring this central town site for the new surgery themselves.

Two documents were made available to the public at the meeting, one regarding a Freedom of Information request to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the other notes from a meeting of the Woodstock Surgery Steering Group from 27th March. Although not stated formally, from these notes present at this meeting were our MP Calum Miller, County Councillor Andy Graham, Blenheim Estates and GPs. Unfortunately, these documents are currently not on the Council website but can be requested from the Town Clerk. In brief, this meeting outlined the progress made in the draft Project Initiation Document (PID) and to identify options for funding. The new surgery detailed in the draft PID is designed to be flexible, allowing new outreach clinics such as cardiology and ultrasound, changing places with shower and WC and 45 parking spaces. It will also provide sufficient space to enable the surgery to follow 'Care Closer to Home' principles and become a training practice. Two locations were discussed but not disclosed. One has planning permission, the other would be submitted shortly. The ICB confirmed that there were no issues in terms of the fact that one was in Cherwell the other in WODC. Blenheim Estate would announce their plans for the former Owen Mumford site shortly. It was agreed that both sites could be worked to be comparable in terms of time. In this document the former Police station site was not mentioned. The next step is for the PID to be formally submitted to the ICB for consideration, no timeline was given.

In view of the above Councillor Williams proposed two motions. The first that the Council seek and pay for legal advice as to whether the Council may explore the provision of the new surgery on the former Police station site. The second, should the legal advice be affirmative, the Council should explore with Blenheim, and ideally the current GP practice, the appointment of a specialist architectural firm to provide a viability study for a surgery on the former Police station site. Both motions were passed.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 27 May 2025

9 councillors and 6 members of the public attended the meeting. The meeting was audio recorded.

Two members of the public spoke. I spoke regarding the possibility of a new surgery for Woodstock. From the Council meeting of 20 May, it was agreed that the Council would be seeking legal advice regarding the use of the old police station site in Hensington Road for a new surgery. I reminded the Council, after hearing from two members of the steering group, that this site has been deemed unsuitable. I urged the Council to speak to the GPs before spending any money on legal fees. The size of the Council fund for this action was not discussed.

Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock spoke to the Council regarding the campaign to highlight the pitiful offering of community benefit from PVDP, the developers of Botley West solar farm. Hilary referred to the recent Planning Inspectorate hearing for the development and asked the Council to sign the petition by Low Carbon Hub to ask Blenheim to use their influence to increase the community benefit sum. Whether for or against the development, the communities should expect fairness and if Botley West was to go ahead they could potentially miss out on millions of pounds over the next 35-40 years.

County Councillor Andy Graham gave his report. Following from the Town Council's decision, in private session at the meeting of 6 May, to remove 4 of the 6 bike stands at the back of the Town Hall to allow for an increase in the outside dining area, Councillor Graham is looking at the possibility of moving the stands to the side of the Town Hall to reduce the damage to the cobbles from illegal parking. The local cycling and walking infrastructure plan (LCWIP) had been approved for the Woodstock area, however funding is now required. The County Council is in discussion with WODC regarding the former library site at Hensington Road, recognising its current state of decay. Councillor Graham mentioned his priority fund of £10K for small local projects with a £500 minimum. The latest on the new doctors' surgery is there will be a meeting in June or July looking at the financial support for the surgery. The site has now been decided but it is certain it will not be on the Hensington Road site. Councillor Parnes enquired about the flooding in Banbury Road. Councillor Graham replied the District Council had done some work and would look into progress. The County Council are funding gully clearance.

From the District Council's report, the planning officers refused the proposed development application of the old police station site to retirement living accommodation for largely the same reasons as the Town Council had given. The Woodstock swimming pool reopened on 24 May with cool water swimming until 22 July and warm water (heating) until 31 August. No closing date has been decided so cold water swimming may continue into September.

From finance, the current balance is £447,927.

Five new benches have been delivered to the Lawn Cemetery and following many requests, brass plaques will be available for purchase in memory of loved ones.

A motion from Councillor Connolly that he and Councillor Melliss become members of the new doctors' surgery working group was proposed and discussed. The Mayor then proposed that this working group be disbanded as the group had gone as far as it could and as money was going to be spent on legal advice then it should be discussed in full Council. Following further discussion and vote it was decided to keep the working group to maintain focus on the new surgery. Councillors Connolly and Melliss were then voted onto the working group and the Mayor then stepped down from this working group saying that there were too many councillors on the working group.

Councillor Parnes reported on dog waste bins and requested for the Samsons Lane one to be reinstated as it was well used. The agreed change to a different company to empty the bins in town to save money has not gone ahead following the resignation of the previous Town Clerk. Following discussion another review of bins was agreed.

Councillor Parnes then requested clarification of the GDPR audit reported in the May issue of Woodstock and Bladon News. During the meeting of 8th April, the Council had stated that it was meeting all their compliance requirements which, according to Councillor Parnes could not be correct as it had only just started. It was agreed to clarify the correct status of the GDPR audit.

Following a motion by Councillor Poskitt, it was agreed to seek estimates to remove old barbed wire entangled in the vegetation at the beginning of the footpath from Hedge End/The Covert beside Park View leading to the A44.

Councillor Wheatley then gave his report from the Environment Working Group. The group had met with Blenheim

Estates to discuss water flow and flooding issues in relation to the Seven Arches bridge and the Water Meadows. Blenheim clarified their responsibilities and said they were happy to help where possible allowing the Council to move forward with the management of the Water Meadows.

A report from the group's meeting on 9 May followed. The Lawn Cemetery lych gate roof is to be repaired and playground maintenance has been reported to the Clerk. Relocation and responsibility of the Old Woodstock playground was discussed and possible S106 funding for future maintenance. A meeting with WODC was requested. Regarding the Water Meadows, the large tree across an internal path would need to be removed and quotes would be sought. A proposed revised management plan was discussed, recognising the current plan needing to be updated to reflect best practices, clarify roles and ensure effective stewardship. It was recommended that the BBOWT plan of 2022 is used as a framework document but adding an annual inspection and a sub-group of the Environment Working Group taking responsibility to produce a detailed workplan every 6 months. It was acknowledged that the Council were not experts and professional advice would be sought. The workplan will include grass cutting, invasive species control, site maintenance, biodiversity enhancement and community engagement.

Regarding flood protection, the group recommended urgent attention to stabilize and repair the banks of the Glyme/Mill Stream to prevent further erosion and protect meadow habitats. The group also recommended obtaining quotes for bunding on the south side of the site to protect Brook Hill properties from flooding. The Mayor asked for the recommendations to be put in priority order with the riverbank repair being the first priority. Councillor Connolly requested the updated management plan be a priority seeking advice from experts, possibly BBOWT to review and update their plan of 2022.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 24 Jun 2025

10 councillors and 8 members of the public attended the meeting. The meeting was audio recorded.

Two members of the public spoke. Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock asked the question 'what if the Secretary of State says yes to Botley West Solar Farm?' with respect to community benefit. On June 9th it was announced that community benefit, money given by the developers to those affected by the project, had been increased from £200K to £440K. An improvement but still well short of what is fair considering the size and location, examples of far larger amounts for other renewable energy projects were given. Hilary encouraged the Council to consider the Government working paper on the subject, deadline of 16th July.

A member of the public, living at 31 Oxford Road, then spoke to object to a planning application at 29 Oxford Road, saying it was too large and overlooked her property.

There was a lengthy discussion on the minutes of the Council meeting of 27th May with regard to the doctors' surgery working group, clarifying vote results and proceedings. The Clerk suggested Councillors listen to the recording of the meeting.

In the Mayor's report the staff and especially the Clerk were acknowledged for their work on the recent successful financial audit. From the Clerk's report it was noted that the frosted glass windows of the Town Hall had been replaced and a quote for removal of the barbed wire at the Hedge End entrance to the path leading to Park View was accepted.

County Councillor Andy Graham informed the Council that a Section 19 report on the flooding of Bens Close had recently been released giving recommendations for the various bodies to take action to prevent future flooding. Regarding the new doctors' surgery, meetings are ongoing and funding is being sought, with the District Valuer's approval being needed before location and design can go ahead. Troubles with parking permits for businesses in town have been forwarded to the officer responsible.

The District Councillor's report was not available although an upcoming survey by West Oxfordshire District Council on the use of the Hensington Road car park was mentioned.

For planning, the Council objected to the extension to 29 Oxford Road. No objections to 10 Park Lane, 36 Blackberry Way, the Feathers Hotel or 10 Hensington Close. Comments would be collected for the objection to the 500 house development on land south of Perdiswell Farm and would be submitted by 20th July to Cherwell District Council.

From finance, the current balance is £425,673.

Additional waste and dog waste bins for Woodstock were then discussed following Councillor Poskitt's report. These included Park View bus stop, Sansoms Lane, Hill Rise bus stop, New Road playground and possibly Park View Under Fives. An alternative cheaper firm for collection will also be considered. The Mayor asked for costings for both new bins and collection to then be raised at the next Council meeting.

The Clerk reported on his findings regarding solar panels for the Community Centre, 2 quotes being received but complicated by the roof tiles containing asbestos. Councillor Cooper requested full detailed quotes for not only solar panel installation but asbestos removal and new tiles so that it could be presented at the next annual town meeting.

Memorial bench plaques, requested by residents, have been priced and standardised. 55 plaques are available at a cost of £100 each.

An oral report from the Deputy Mayor followed. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor recently met with MP Calum Miller and Dr Becker to discuss the current situation on the new doctors' surgery. Councillors Grant and Williams were told that two proposals on the former Police Station site off of Hensington Road had been rejected. A further meeting with Dr Becker noted that he was strongly against this site. Two sites were being considered, the new Banbury Road development and the proposed Cherwell development. The Council discussed their options: 1) accept this situation 2) pursue the former Police Station site 3) survey Woodstock and surroundings areas. The Town Council had been advised by the District Council legal team that it was within the remit of Woodstock Town Council to pursue the former Police Station site. Following research into appropriate architects, invitations have been sent out for feasibility studies for a new surgery on the Hensington Road site. No costs or budgets were discussed.

A report from Councillor Melliss on disability access in Woodstock found improving access would encourage disabled

residents and visitors to use the town more. Councillor Melliss proposed that Woodstock Town Council supported the aim of Woodstock becoming a disabled friendly town. The Clerk added that the Town Council does not have this responsibility and that it was the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council. The Mayor suggested a change in the motion so that the Town Council worked with both County and District Councils to improve disabled access for the town. This motion was carried.

For both reports: Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

### **Traffic Advisory Meeting**

Held at 10am on Tuesday 22 July 2025

Ten members and representatives were present (including Andy Graham, Carritt and Julian Cooper) with three members of the public.#

Andy Graham (Oxfordshire County Council) was re-elected as Chair of the Group, and proceeded to chair the meeting. The minutes of the Meeting of 14 January 2025 were approved.

Representatives of Blenheim Palace set out their proposed programme for the rest of 2025, to include Salon Privé, Horse Trials, Halloween Trail and the Christmas Event as in previous years. For all these events the representatives said they were working closely with the organisers regarding traffic and parking matters. Andy Graham said that there were ongoing discussions with the County Council regarding parking in the town, with the objective of improving the situation.

An update under Highways Repairs was given. The Walking and Cycling Plan shows what the County is trying to fund, but Andy Graham said that a more strategic funding plan was needed to take the matter forward. It should not be approached piecemeal. He called for costings to be produced.

On Bladon Chains, Andy said issues had been reported. He asked that the Group be informed as to what is going to happen. The junction of the B4437 with the A44, at the Duke of Marlborough pub and Judd's Garage, was being assessed for safety improvements. The works would not happen this year, but the planning and design would. They could include traffic lights. The speed limit changes in the town are being reviewed, and will go to Cabinet to consider. A member of the public raised the issue of the bollards in Market Street, outside the Woodstock Arms. They were damaged and needed repair. This was noted, and would be looked into.

The cobblestones outside the Town Hall remained an issue, with loose stones being a danger to the public. It was pointed out that this applied to both sides of the Town Hall. A member of the public said that they must remain, however, as they were part of the character of the town.

On the Hensington Road Car Park Stay Time, a representative of Oxfordshire County Council reported that a review had been carried out, and the decision was to leave parking there free, but that only a shorter stay would be permitted. Andy said a difficult balance had to be struck, with a need to help the town's economy. There would be further work on this, especially as enforcement must be credible. A representative of OCC apologised for the hiccups with the parking meter machines in the town, and said that they are currently working on the problem.

On the Planning Application to Cherwell District Council for 500 homes, the highways issues were discussed. Andy Graham was not happy with the way the planning is developing. On schools, he said that though the current extension works at Marlborough School would be able to meet the additional pupil space required for the current building permissions, they would not be able to accommodate children from another development. He had brought this matter to the attention of Cherwell Council. Also, he had asked for a traffic feasibility study to be carried out. He said that WODC is going to object to the Application. A member asked whether there was a time scale on a Park & Ride project. Andy said that there was no time scale but that the matter should be looked into further, and he would ask a representative of Cherwell DC to attend the Group's next meeting.

The meeting ended at 11.15 am.

Tony McHugh

## TC Meeting - 22 Jul 2025

Town Council Meeting - 22 July 2025

9 councillors and 13 members of the public attended the meeting. The meeting was audio recorded.

**Public Speaking:** Three members of the public spoke. Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock spoke again on the community benefit offered for Botley West solar farm. Hilary referred to the Government Working Paper on community benefit which suggests annually £5000 per MW installed. This would translate to £4.2 million per year as opposed to the £440,000 currently offered by the developers and urged the Council to continue campaigning for a fair amount, especially to our MP Calum Miller. Nick Manby-Brown then spoke regarding item 18 on the agenda, 'unauthorised publication'. Following email communication with Councillor Parnes, Nick assumed that this regarded the inclusion of Town Council minutes on the Woodstock and Bladon News website in a single convenient searchable file. Having not seen the report from Councillor Parnes, Nick said he would have appreciated further communication before the meeting. Finally, I commented on the great progress being made on the solar panel installation on St Mary Magdalene's roof and asked the Council if the Community Centre's solar panels were still being considered. Councillor Cooper confirmed it was in the Council's property work programme and the Mayor agreed.

**Councillors' Reports:** County Councillor Andy Graham reported that for improved road safety a new design of the junction at Judd's garage was being prepared for consultation and welcomed the Council's comments. Also a bus shelter was needed there and will be installed shortly. Councillor Graham has submitted objections to the Cherwell development next to Park View, saying it is isolated and there are concerns with the impact on the highways. The County Council will be looking at the place where a resident was recently struck and killed by a motorist near Brook Hill. The District Councillor's report was not in the agenda pack.

**Planning:** The main discussion was regarding the planning application for 500 dwellings on land south of Perdiswell Farm (near Park View). This land is in Cherwell District Council. Councillor Wheatley had prepared a comprehensive formal objection to the planning application which was complimented upon and approved. This document can be found in the agenda pack for this Council meeting on the Council website. There were no objections to the Cromwells House and Feathers applications. The Council objected to the Union Street application on the grounds of a loss of a garage.

**Finance:** The current balance is £408,855. A number of allocations were made from reserve funds including Water Meadows maintenance and tree works.

**New Doctors' Surgery:** The Council proposed 2 motions. The first that the Council agrees that the preferred site for the new surgery is the old Thames Valley Police site off Hensington Road and secondly the Council is not in favour of plans to site the new surgery outside of the town centre and there is profound disappointment with the way the Stakeholders' Steering Group has been set up, run and not taking into account the views of the Town Council or residents of Woodstock. Both were passed, all in favour.

The Mayor, Councillor Williams and the Clerk then agreed to write a letter to all of the residents regarding the surgery. There is a copy of the latest Stakeholders' Group meeting minutes (19 June) on the Town Council website - found under Latest News on the home page. The Group has agreed to meet again before the end of July to discuss a public update. Also on the Town Council website under Latest News is a 'Your Voice - Your Choice' notice giving the Council's position on a new surgery and encouraging feedback to the Town Clerk either through email or post.

**Environment:** The recommendations of the Environment Working Group meeting of 9th July were brought to Council. These included works on the cemeteries (Lychgate, path work, the front wall of the Lawn Cemetery and rat problems), playgrounds (upgrading), the Water Meadows (willow pollarding, management, riverbank stabilization and flood alleviation). Where quotes had been obtained, the Council agreed on the work to be carried out.

**Other Business:** From the Christmas lights working group report, an increase in budget was requested along with a suggestion of decorating the Town Hall with lights together with large decorated Christmas trees in town, similar to those put up by Blenheim at their Hensington Gate entrance.

Four new waste bins were recommended in a report but this was deferred to the September meeting as Councillor Poskitt was unable to attend the meeting.

The Council will object to the proposal from Oxfordshire County Council to the energy saving 'part-night lighting' framework.

Finally, following a report from Councillor Parnes, the Clerk will look into the possible 'unauthorised publication' of the Council's minutes by a local publishing business.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

## **ETC Meeting - 19 August 2025**

Extraordinary Town Council meeting held at 7pm on Tuesday 19 August

Seven councillors and nine members of the public were present. The meeting was not obviously audio recorded as the OWL recording device was not lit. Rachel Peters was present to take notes, as the Clerk is on annual leave.

The Mayor clarified the situation regarding Declarations of Interest, noting it was up to each Councillor (only) to declare any interest or not on a topic to be discussed.

Two members of the public spoke. Further to the letter put through Woodstock letterboxes regarding the Doctors Surgery, a question was asked why WTC is progressing interest in the Old Police Station for the new Surgery when the Doctors and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) have stated that the site is inappropriate for their needs. The Mayor responded by saying that the Council is listening to the majority of the public.

The second speaker outlined her objections to the current planning application for 29 Oxford Road, citing excessive development given that the initial development permission was only granted in 2023.

Consideration of planning applications: Hill Rise: Cllr Connolly considered that there were many supporting documents to these applications which needed more careful study, but considered that the Council should reaffirm its previous objections to the original applications. Cllr Wheatley noted that the upgrade of landscaping was to be welcomed and suggested more community engagement but was certainly an improvement on what was originally planned. Overall the Council voted to reaffirm previous objections but welcomed sustainability, environmental and landscaping improvements. The Council remains concerned regarding the education provision for this development and seeks clarification regarding the eligibility of Hill Rise children to go to Woodstock Primary School [more below]. On a general point the Council will write to WODC sharing concerns that initial planning permissions are more and more being revisited with requests for changes in the original detailed application; moving the goal posts.

Black Prince: Application withdrawn

56 Oxford Street & 61 New Road - No objections

29 Oxford Road - The Council considered this an overbearing, overdevelopment of the site resulting in negative changes to the character of the site. Following the Council's previous objection, the new amendments had come back even worse and they would be objecting again. Concern was registered regarding the existing trees.

Important Survey regarding Neighbourhood Planning: Woodstock has no Development Plan (other than a partial one to achieve Green Spaces status) so are we able to complete the survey anyway? After lengthy discussion it was decided that the Council's Environment Working Group would complete the survey at their next meeting.

Licence applications: Crepe van for Woodstock Live was passed, and there were no objections to the sale of alcohol on and off the premises at the Topsy Palace in the event that the person named on the licence is not actually on site. It was noted that a previously unsuccessful planning application for 10 Hensington Close has been successfully appealed.

Mayor's Report: The Mayor thanked everyone involved in the distribution of the Drs Surgery letter. There have been a good number of responses which the Clerk will collate on his return.

It was noted that despite WTC having no objection to the initial application for the Feathers Flagpoles, WODC have recently rejected the application on the basis that the flag poles are too large and too long and will cause stress to the structure of the building.

New Drs Surgery: Responses to the distributed letter are not yet available; however responses so far are overwhelmingly in support of the Council's position with few reservations regarding costs and feasibility. It was agreed that the results once determined should be posted on notice boards and WTC website. The Clerk would be asked to provide costs of a feasibility study by our architects for a GP surgery on the site.

An appeal against the planning application by Macarthy and Stone has been lodged but not yet live. How should the council object in the event of the appeal? The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor will research the reasons for the refusal of the application by Macarthy & Stone in detail and advise the council how best to respond. Efforts continue to be made

to resolve the disconnect between the Council's Committee and the Steering Group of decision makers chaired by Calum Miller MP.

Land South of Perdiswell Farm: Education Implications: Councillor Connolly presented a suggested response to OCC Education consultee comments. The document was commended by Cllr Cooper for its clarity in presenting the issues. The catchment area for the primary school is deemed to be within the town of Woodstock so while Old Woodstock will be inside the boundary, Perdiswell Farm development will not, despite being 13 mins walk from Woodstock Primary School. Begbroke school construction was mentioned, but won't be built for years as was Wootton School which has closed! It is suggested the OCC Education give more time to discuss the planning application.

Water meadows: WTC realises the difficulty of finding a contractor to enable a contract to be secured without going through the usual financial quotation procedures required. Therefore a max £6,000 pounds was agreed would be made available to a contractor known to the Council who would be invited to complete the work.

Botley Solar Farm: Report for information is available in the Agenda Pack.

OCC Community Tree and Woodland opportunity: One tree, as yet unspecified, has been proposed to be planted at Cadogan Park.

At 7.45pm, the press and public were then excluded from the meeting while the Councillors received a confidential report on previously discussed matters.

Annie Cripps

The Agenda Pack for the meeting (available on the Council's website) has background information about many of the above reports.

## TC Meeting - 2 September 2025

Town Council meeting held at 7pm on Tuesday 2 September

8 councillors and 9 members of the public attended the meeting. The beginning of the meeting (around 10 mins) was audio recorded with the OWL device.

**Public Participation:** 5 members of the public spoke in the public participation section. The first referred to the developments at Campsfield House, if the Council was aware and how it may affect Woodstock. They were informed of a meeting on 4th at Exeter Hall in Kidlington. This was noted. John Wynne, a resident of Wootton, then asked the Council who to speak to regarding the Water Meadows as he was working on a local energy project. John was asked to go through the Clerk. I asked the Council about the survey of the roof of the Community Centre with regard to installing solar panels. There was no reply this time. Chris Coe spoke about the Council's campaign for the doctors' surgery to be at the Hensington Road site despite being opposed by the commissioning body and doctors themselves. He asked for evidence on their statement that the majority of residents wanted it at this site. He also asked what the Council were planning to do and who would fund and run the surgery if it were there as the major stakeholders involved had determined it will be elsewhere. Finally, Nick Manby-Brown referred to agenda item 11, Policies and Procedures, particularly the Filming Policy and the Copyright Policy. He asked the Councillors to give these their full attention before approving due to previous objections and how they will be enforced.

**Clerk and Councillors' Reports:** The Mayor reported that Councillor Nick Melliss had resigned from the Council and wished him well. The Clerk reported that he was reviewing the disabled access to the Town Hall following Councillor Melliss's report and that work needed to be carried out on the Post Office roof.

County Councillor Andy Graham then gave his report. He is supporting Wootton's campaign for a bus stop at the Judd's Garage junction and would support any upgrades to bus stops in Woodstock if asked. He would also support a request for a Speed Indicator Device (SID) should the Town Council make one. The Oxford Park and Rides will be free to use over the Christmas period. Regarding the doctors' surgery, the steering group met over the summer and a report will be available at the end of the month. It is hoped that a new surgery will be opening in Woodstock in January 2028. Councillor Graham explained that agreement was very close. Two sites are being considered, the Banbury Road housing development and the old Owen Mumford site. He understood the Council's thoughts about the Hensington Road site but that they have moved on. Councillor Williams expressed concerns about access to either site and Councillor Graham took these comments onboard.

From the District Councillors' report, West Oxfordshire District Council is currently developing a new Local Plan helping to steer future growth and development in the district. West Oxfordshire District has been named the top performing rural district in the UK for climate change, reducing carbon emissions and building resilience across the district. The District Council has extended the grant 'Coronation Community Orchard Scheme', which will now run to March 2026 for local tree planting between September 2025 to March 2026.

**Planning:** There was no objection for 35 Hill Rise.

**Finance:** The current balance is £384,305.

**New Doctors' Surgery:** Councillor Williams gave an oral report on the new surgery. She thanked residents for responding to the consultation, there being 152 replies which represents 4.3% of the Woodstock population. 9 said that it should be left to the steering group, the remainder were in favour of the Hensington Road site. The Council has requested a quote for plans to build a surgery at the Hensington Road site. Councillor Poskitt stated that things had moved on and that the Council needed to be realistic.

**Christmas Lights:** Only one company returned a quotation for putting up Christmas lights around Woodstock. Lights would not go on the trees in town as before as cables were cut when the trees were pollarded. There was some discussion on what the Council had agreed on. The quotation was for decorating two 12 foot trees on the square opposite the Co-Op, one outside of the Kings Arms and the usual large tree donated by Blenheim at the front of the Town Hall. There would also be additional lighting on the front facade of the Town Hall. The Council approved the cost of £5,158 plus VAT.

**Environment:** The repair of the river bank in the Water Meadows was discussed. There was only one offer to quote for the repair and it was not clear what role the Environment Agency had in this, whether a licence was required.

Councillor Connolly stressed the urgency of this matter. A quote to clean the War Memorial was agreed.

Other Business: All of the policies and procedures, including copyright, data protection, freedom of information and recordings of meetings were passed.

Due to space restrictions not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

### **ETC Meeting - 24 September 2025**

Extraordinary Town Council meeting held at 7pm on Wednesday 24 September

Attending were eight Councillors and six members of the public.

Starting the Meeting, the Mayor, Councillor Grant, read out a letter of resignation received from Councillor Szabados.

One member of the public wished to speak, Mr. Ray Morris. At the behest of the Council he had recently attended a meeting in Kidlington regarding Campsfield House Immigration Detention Centre. It is scheduled to re-open in November/December 2025. It will be run by the same company as had been running it when it was closed. It will initially house upwards of 200 failed asylum-seekers, and others.

The only item on the Agenda was consideration of the Council's response to the Appeal being brought by McCarthy and Stone Retirement Lifestyles Ltd. against the refusal by West Oxfordshire District Council of their Planning Application to build retirement living accommodation on the Old Police Station site in Hensington Road, Woodstock.

Opening the discussion Councillor Cooper pointed out that the decision by WODC was that of the appropriate officers, and not of the full Council committee. He ran through some of the objections to the proposed development, but also pointed out that he had re-read the West Oxfordshire Local Plan and had discovered that the Plan had actually envisaged a surgery on this site. Woodstock Town Council should ask why this was not mentioned in the officers' decision.

Councillor Poskitt then went through many of the objections to the proposed development, highlighting problems of access and car-parking, as well as the need in the town for affordable housing.

The question was then discussed as to what sort of representation the Council wished to have at the hearing. It was decided to employ professional legal representation. The cost was not yet known, but it was agreed to put this item on the Agenda of the following week's Council Meeting, by which time it was to be hoped the cost could be known and agreed.

Confidential Matters then followed, from which the press and public were excluded.

Tony McHugh

## **ETC Meeting - 1 October 2025**

Declarations of interests were debated; and no members of the public wished to speak.

Two items of planning were discussed - the first was the planning appeal by the Feathers Hotel against the refusal by WODC for their flags on the front of the building - the Council agreed to write supporting WODC's original refusal.

The second item concerned the forthcoming appeal by McCarthy Stone against the recent refusal of planning permission at the Police Station site - at last week's meeting, it was agreed to try to find a professional to represent the Council, and the Mayor reported that they had only had one reply from a local solicitor. She outlined their proposal, and it was agreed to ask Mallams to represent the Council both in writing and in person at the appeal, for a cost of £6,500 plus expenses. It was proposed that a cap of £10,000 was imposed, and the motion was carried. A paper showing the Council's arguments against the proposal was circulated and it was agreed to delegate to the two Councillors who had written it, to make some amendments and then send it to the barrister.

The Clerk reported that WODC requested that town centres need to be cleaned up, especially with regard to unsightly bins. There was discussion about where the problems were located, and the Clerk would send pictures back to WODC. There was also talk about cigarette bins, which WODC were offering, but the Town Council decided against them.

One Councillor left the meeting at 7.20, leaving four Councillors attending. The Council then moved on to polling cards for the upcoming election, which the Mayor reported cost £3,000 last election. It went to a vote and 1 Councillor voted for them, with 2 against, and 1 abstention. The meeting then moved to a discussion of the location of the polling station, which was either the Town Hall, or the Blenheim Estate Office. There was a split vote, and it was decided to ask Blenheim if they were happy to host it, in which case it would stay there.

It was agreed to allow the Clerk to do a CILCA Qualification for a cost of £820.

The meeting closed at 7.31.

Nick Manby-Brown

## **TC Meeting - 14 October 2025**

8 councillors and 10 members of the public attended the meeting. The OWL recording device was not in use. The Town Clerk was unable to attend, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor shared the duties.

**Public Participation:** There were 3 members of the public wishing to speak. Firstly, Woodstock resident Claire Pink spoke on behalf of her son, Ellis. Claire read out a letter Ellis had written to Calum Miller MP requesting help and advice on how to get a skate park for Woodstock. He stressed the lack of activities for 12-16 year olds and listed the benefits of such a facility in Woodstock. The Mayor took a copy of the letter and said it was timely as the Council has a meeting planned with West Oxfordshire District Council that includes leisure and sports facilities. I then spoke about community benefit for Botley West solar farm having attended the recent hearings in Oxford. I had been told the forum of local parish councils had suggested a figure of £500/MW per annum to Oxfordshire County Council. I believe this is still far too low and asked if there was a vote on this and did the Council agree on this figure? The Mayor had not heard from the Council's representative at the meeting but said she would ask. Finally, Annie Cripps spoke regarding a letter submitted to the Council on 29 August containing 40 names asking for information about the expenses due to be paid to the Council from the civil claim brought against the Council by Councillor Parnes. This had been requested several times during the past year and she had not received a reply from the Council, that it was in the public interest and requested a reply from the Council urgently. The Mayor noted that the Council did not reply to this letter as only names were submitted, not signatures and contact details which would then elicit a response. There was no further comment.

**Clerk, Mayor and Councillors' Reports:** The Mayor gave the Clerk's report which stated an election request for the 2 vacant Councillor seats had been triggered. If there are more than 2 candidates the election will take place on 13 November. The Mayor's report included a number of dates for town events which included a thanksgiving service at St Mary Magdalene for the new roof on 3 November, the Remembrance Parade on 9 November and the Mayor's Carols on 13 December.

The report from the District Councillors was not received in time to be included and County Councillor Andy Graham was unable to attend.

**Finance:** The current balance is £434,497.

**Flag request from Woodstock Live:** A request from the organisers of the weekend music festival to fly a Woodstock Live flag from the Town Hall during the weekend had been received. Councillor Parnes outlined the restrictions for this and the Mayor stated that following the rules would mean that planning permission from West Oxfordshire District Council would be required.

**New Doctors' Surgery:** Councillor Williams had met with Calum Miller MP and heard that 3 sites had been identified for the new surgery, none of which were the former Thames Valley Police station on Hensington Road. She was told the footprint of the building will be under 1000 m<sup>2</sup> and Councillor Connolly requested the plans for the proposed building.

**Environment:** No date has been set for the upcoming meeting with West Oxfordshire District Council regarding leisure and sport amenity. Councillor Connolly reported that the S106 monies from the Banbury Road development had not yet been assigned. He then gave a list of potential funding for local projects from S106 funding from Park View and Hill Rise developments, this list is available on the Town Council website. These projects included work on the outdoor swimming pool, a 3G football pitch and cricket pitch.

**Other Business:** Councillor Parnes proposed a motion, in light of the absence of documentation stating that a surgery could not be built on the Hensington Road site, for the Council to write to Thames Valley Police expressing its dissatisfaction and asking for an explanation as to why the site could not be used for the purpose it was sold. Councillor Cooper also stated this site was identified for a surgery in the West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan. The motion was carried.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

## **Blenheim Dialogue Meeting - 28 October 2025**

Woodstock Town Council and Blenheim Palace Dialogue meeting held at 4.30pm on Tuesday 28 October

The Chair alternates every meeting and it was the turn this time for Roger File of Blenheim Palace.

In attendance were Councillors Grant, Poskitt, Parnes, and Williams for the Council, and Heather Carter, Roger File, Dominic Hare, and Merilyn Davies for Blenheim Palace.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were not referred to or approved.

Timetable of Events to be held at Blenheim: Heather Carter said we are in the Halloween event now, and that the usual Christmas at Blenheim events would follow. 2026 would follow a similar pattern to 2025. There would be scaffolding in place till about May 2026, with no filming or weddings as a result. There would be jousting at Easter, Salon Privé, and Half Term entertainments. There would be no Battle Proms or Game Fare in 2026.

Parking Issues: Councillor Grant said there had been many complaints about traffic in the town during Blenheim events, including ambulances being unable to drive through. A Blenheim representative replied that they are working on the problem with County Councillor Andy Graham. Various options are being considered. Some parts of the town are the sole responsibility of the County Council.

At this point Roger File queried why a resident was filming the Meeting. The resident explained his reasons, and the filming was allowed to continue. Another resident asked why a public address system was not being used as it was so hard for many attending to hear, but no answer was given.

The Meeting then continued with Parking Issues: A resident asked whether Blenheim monitor the arrangements they put in place to control the traffic. The reply was that they do. Another resident raised firework noise and could not silent fireworks be used. The reply was that Blenheim puts out warnings to residents for some events, but that other events are not their responsibility as to noise, though they do suggest the silent option to the event organisers. Another resident raised the problem of event parking down the hill towards and into Old Woodstock. The reply was that this was being looked into.

The Agenda item Proposed new doctors` surgery was now brought forward. Roger File referred to the work of the Steering Committee that had been set up, which includes Calum Miller, MP. The Integrated Care Board had at last accepted that a new surgery is needed for Woodstock. He listed the three sites that had been identified by the Committee: the Owen Mumford site in Green Lane, which had been acquired by Blenheim; the Banbury Road development site; and the land East of the Park View development. The Committee would meet again in four weeks` time.

Some work had been commissioned to see how a surgery project could be achieved on the Mumford site. A resident asked how patients were expected to get to a surgery on the Own Mumford site. The reply was that the doctors have got a patients` consultation group together; and 70% of patients come from out of Woodstock. In answer to a question as to what money Blenheim would put up towards a new surgery, Dominic Hare replied that Blenheim always pays what it is obliged to under its Planning Agreements. Roger File added for clarification that it was not the whole of the Mumford site that was being looked at, but just part. A resident then offered Blenheim a "big thank you" on behalf of the surgery`s patients.

Another resident said that there had been an analysis of the factors needed for a new surgery - most factors were met in the Police Station site, but that because there had to be adequate room for expansion over twenty five years, the car parking provision on that site would be insufficient. However, he said, the new surgery really needed to be in Woodstock. Roger File`s reply was that it was not him, but the ICB that had to be convinced. Councillor Parnes said that we had not seen a document claiming that a new surgery could not be put on the Police Station site.

Councillor Williams said that the proposal was for a building with a footprint of just under 1,000 square metres. This would allow for 100 car-parking spaces. The reply was that any proposal must comply with the requirements of the doctors and the ICB, who look for best value for money. A resident asked whether the proposal for the Police Station was for a building of more than one storey. The reply was that there had been many iterations of the proposed scheme, with a lot of work being done by experts, and Blenheim had spent ten years and much money looking at the proposal, including looking at using the fire-station and public lavatories sites. Councillor Grant asked whether

Woodstock will be getting a surgery on the Mumford site by 2028, as MP Calum Miller had claimed. The reply was that 2028 could be achieved for any of the sites, if the parties were willing.

Blenheim housing development schedules: Blenheim reported that the Hill Rise development is under way. The Cherwell site - ie. land to the East of Park View has a planning Application filed, with a hearing by Cherwell District Council expected in the New Year. The Owen Mumford site will be redeveloped for employment-related uses. Asked about access, Roger File said there was lots of parking available. Asked if buses could access the site, he said that Blenheim talks with Stagecoach about all their developments. He did not know if the ICB have rules on the distance of bus-stops from surgeries. He also said the question of availability of pavements would have to be looked at. With regard to the Banbury Road site, details are being worked on and the planning process may start in summer 2026.

Botley West Update: Blenheim reported that the public part of the process is coming to an end, with the deadline for final submissions in November. A decision is expected by the end of January 2026. Adjustments have been made to the original proposal, including some land being removed from it. Councillor Parnes referred to the claim that thermal plumes might affect the radar system at the airport. Roger File said a report on this had been handed in to the inquiry. Resident Hilary Brown raised the issue of the Community Benefit under the proposal, which she said is too low, despite the promoters claiming that their offer is the highest provided by any other project, and she gave two examples. We need to fight for this money, she said, for the community, and she invited the Councillors present to write to continue negotiation for this money.

Hill Rise Development: Councillor Grant said a resident of Hill Rise had expressed concern to her, because of breaches of the planning conditions for this site. Roger File said Blenheim knew nothing of any breaches.

Flooding: Councillor Parnes asked about the flooding in Bear`s Close. Roger File said that Blenheim had done major work on the ditches on their land, but he thought the flooding may be coming from the other side of the road.

Tony McHugh

## TC Meeting - 11 November 2025

Town Council meeting held at 7pm on Tuesday 11 November

10 councillors and 10 members of the public attended the meeting. The recently elected Councillor Cynthia Muthoni was welcomed by all. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

**Public Participation:** 4 members of the public spoke. Hilary Brown reminded the Council that the community benefit fund offered by the developers of Botley West Solar was inadequate and unfair. She urged the Council to write to West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to lobby for more community benefit. Hilary also asked if the Council has a local community emergency plan in place as WODC are encouraging local town and parish councils to make plans, especially with respect to flooding. This plan, with emergency contact numbers should be prominent on the Council website. Sam Dawson then asked the Council to carefully consider the potential closure of the public toilets in Woodstock. There are a large number of visitors to the town and it is a sign of a civil society to have public toilets. Annie Cripps then asked about her recent request regarding the report from the court case involving Councillor Parnes. This is now a petition which includes the names of over 40 residents and Annie asked why the Council was unable to tell them. Chris Coe then also asked for transparency and accountability from the Council over this matter and was shocked the tax payers had not been given an answer to this simple question. The Mayor replied that the Council's insurers had told the Council not to comment on the case and that the Council did not know when the report would arrive if at all. Chris asked for clarification but was told to be quiet and that the public session had finished.

**Planning :**There were no objections to planning applications for 18 Park Street, 27 Boundary Close and 78 Cowells Road. Regarding the proposed McCarthy and Stone development on the Hensington Road Police station site, there will be an appeal in front of a Planning Inspector at WODC in Witney on 17 December.

**Mayor, Clerk and Councillors' Reports:** The Mayor thanked those involved for attending and helping at the Remembrance Day ceremony on Sunday. The Clerk reported that grant applications to the Council are now open, closing on 5 December. The election for the open position on the Council will be on 18 December, closing date for applications being 21 November.

The District Councillors' report contained 2 important plans for West Oxfordshire. The first is a consultation on sites proposed for development as part of the WODC Local Plan. For Woodstock these are the existing sites (Park View, Hill Rise and Banbury Road), although this does not prevent developers applying between now and 2043. The other relates to ideas for the new structure of local government in Oxfordshire to be decided by the government.

**Finance:** The current balance is £425,214.20.

**Environmental:** The riverbank stabilization work in the Water Meadows will be deferred until the summer of 2026 due to Environmental Agency guidance. The first £580K of £1.64 million in S106 allocation is due by March 2016 but coordination between WODC, schools and sports clubs is limited. There is a meeting planned with WODC at the beginning of December.

**Public Conveniences\***Following a meeting between the Council and WODC in October it was clear that the District Council wants the town council to take responsibility for both the Hensington Road car park and Browns Lane facilities. The Hensington Road car park toilets will remain with WODC if not taken on by Woodstock Town Council. The Council voted no to both due to costs (£16K per year each) so the Browns Lane toilets will close.

**Hensington Road Car Park:** WODC is proposing a change to the maximum stay times in the car park. Currently 101 spaces have a maximum stay of twelve hours. Proposed changes are for 66 four hour bays and 35 twelve hour bays. The WODC consultation will run until 26 November. The Council objected to the changes.

**Woodstock Fire Station:** Councillor Andy Graham joined the meeting at this point. He explained that OCC is looking at the Fire and Rescue Service throughout Oxfordshire and there is a consultation under way, starting on 28th November and running through to January. There is a proposal for a new station in Kidlington and closing Woodstock station. The merits of the Fire station in Woodstock were discussed and the Mayor will be organising a town meeting for 2 December to discuss this matter. The Council voted to oppose the closure of the station.

**Other Business: Donations:** the Council agreed to donate £100 to the Royal British Legion for supplying the wreaths for Remembrance Sunday and £300 towards the cost of securing the wall brackets on properties in Woodstock town

centre to display small Christmas trees.

Speeding signs: Councillor Poskitt is looking into vehicle stimulated radar signs to remind drivers of the speed restrictions through Woodstock. Suggested sites are Oxford Street, Manor Road, Banbury Road and Hensington Road. Prices will be confirmed later.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. Please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

### **TC Budget Meeting - 25 November 2025**

Woodstock Town Council Budget Meeting Tuesday 25 November 2025

8 councillors and 5 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

Public Participation: There was no public participation on the agenda and it was not clear why.

Mayor and Clerk Reports: The Mayor thanked the volunteers for their work at the Remembrance service. A meeting regarding the potential Woodstock fire station closure will take place on 4th December at St Mary's church. The Clerk reported that there were no nominations for the vacancy on the town council and that a likely date for a new election would be 22nd January.

Planning: Applications for changes to the development on land north of Hill Rise were discussed and concerns had been raised and dealt with regarding crime prevention and ecology. Ongoing objections regarding sewage, flooding and health care provision were noted.

Environment: Councillor Muthoni was elected on to the Environment Working Group. It was agreed to fund the small Christmas trees on buildings in the town centre at a cost of £500.

Parking Restrictions Consultation - Cadogan Park: Councillor Parnes submitted a report to the Council regarding the above consultation highlighting several potential weaknesses and flaws. It was agreed to forward this report to Oxfordshire County Council.

Interim Internal Audit Report: A report was noted from the Local Council Consultancy, details can be found on the town council website. Recommendations were noted by the Council and will be followed.

Draft Budget for 2026/2027: The draft budget was presented for the next financial year, the details and figures can be found on the town council website. It was noted that the figures were incorrectly summed in the Corporate Property section. The budget, a prediction of expenses and income, will set the precept (the amount of money raised through Council Tax to fund the town council's services) for next year. The Mayor noted that Woodstock is a wealthy council due to its property portfolio and that this keeps the precept at a lower level. The Mayor also noted that the council did have a large amount of surplus money and that she thought that the precept did not need to increase. Councillor Connolly noted that the precept had not changed in 5 years - why had the precept not increased in line with inflation? From the current figures presented at the meeting, there will be a £119K deficit over this year which will be paid for from reserves. It was proposed that this deficit will be reduced to £63K next year. The draft budget was not accepted and it was agreed that it will be discussed further at the next Council meeting.

Other Business: There was no Confidential Session on the agenda but the Mayor introduced one. Councillor Cooper asked what it was regarding and the Mayor replied it was a very delicate issue regarding the audit. The Clerk added that it would be included in the minutes of the meeting. (From those minutes, the internal auditor had identified an error in HRMC Employment Allowance which the Council agreed to pay).

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

## **Town Meeting - Fire Station - 4 December 2025**

TextTown Meeting held at 7pm on Thursday 4 December 2025

This meeting was held at St Mary Magdalene Church and was convened by the Mayor to allow the town to discuss the possible proposed closure of the Woodstock Fire Station at Hensington Road. The magazine was not able to send anyone to report on this meeting.

## TC Meeting - 9 December 2025

Town Council meeting held at 7pm on Tuesday 9 December 2025

6 councillors and 11 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

Public Participation: 3 members of the public spoke. First, Sam Dawson thought that the proposed 2026/2027 Council budget was not in the interests of the residents of Woodstock. She urged the councillors not to approve the budget as it stood as the expenses far exceeded the income, noting that the reserves figure was incorrect and did not add up. To fund this year's shortfall money would be taken from the reserves and there is no policy on the reserves fund.

Second, Chris Coe spoke, also relating to the draft budget. The last 5 years have seen the reserves going from £153K to £405K. However, there is a funding deficit for this financial year of £109K and staff and administration costs have doubled this year. Chris urged the councillors to closely scrutinise the budget.

Finally, Michael Bowles noted that the service and repair of St Mary Magdalene's clock had not been discussed at Council since July. There has been no response to the engineer's quotation. The clock and carillon are important to the town and urged the Council to bring the issue to the agenda of the next meeting.

Planning: There were no objections to any of the planning items from 7 Hensington Road, land north of Hill Rise and 16 Oxford Street.

Reports from the Mayor and Clerk: The Mayor reported that the recent meeting regarding the closure of the fire station in Woodstock was informative and that all residents present were in favour of it remaining open.

The Clerk noted that the Council would need to register for representation at the Cherwell District Council local planning meeting in relation to the development plans to the south of Park View.

Reports from the County and District Councillors: County Councillor Andy Graham said he would be attending the Cherwell District Council's planning meeting for land south of Park View and would be objecting to the development. Councillor Graham noted that the changes at Campsfield House Immigration Centre were a Government directive and Woodstock Town Council would have been informed. He reassured the Council about the arrangements put in place. At the recent Doctors' surgery meeting figures from the district valuer were discussed and it was decided the key site for the new surgery will be the former Owen Mumford site off of Green Lane. As a result of complaints from Cadogan Park residents regarding parking, bollards have been put in place. Similarly, a scheme will be introduced in January for parking issues on Princes Ride and Flemings Road. Stan Scott from the public audience was then given permission to ask Councillor Graham a question about the proposed fire station closure. Councillor Graham said that he had not been involved in the countywide remodelling of the fire service. Councillor Parnes commented that the fire station consultation document was flawed and data needed to be checked.

District Councillor Cooper remarked that West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) was engaged in the Government's plans for unitary local councils. Elections are likely in 2027 with the new unitary council in place in 2028. Similarly, WODC is in discussions regarding the creation of a new Mayoral Strategic Authority where a combination of unitary bodies in the Thames Valley area will be led by a single Mayor. There is a proposal for discussion that opposes the closure of the fire stations at Eynsham and Woodstock.

Parking: A complaint had been received by the Council from a resident regarding parking issues in Brook Hill, Green Lane and Glyme Close. The letter states that the introduction of residents-only parking zones has displaced a significant volume of vehicles into these areas creating serious safety and access problems. Councillor Cooper suggested this was referred to the Traffic Advisory Committee and the Mayor asked for it to be deferred to the January meeting of the Council.

A proposal from Councillor Parnes to request the suspension of the closing date for the Oxfordshire County Council consultation on parking restrictions in Cadogan Park was passed.

Environment: Various works to be carried out at the play areas at Rosamund Drive, New Road and Budds Close were approved by the Council.

Draft Budget for 2026/2027: There then followed another lengthy discussion on the draft budget. The Mayor repeated that the Council's budget must be set before the precept - the amount of money raised through Council Tax to fund the

town Council's services. Councillors asked for more time to consider the figures and to ask for additional information. The Mayor said that Councillors had been asked to suggest projects to go into next year's budget but had not received any. Councillor Poskitt suggested reserves should be increased from £80K to £100K so the precept should be increased. Councillor Muthoni asked for the budget problems to be defined and explained. There was a proposal to defer the decision until the January meeting but Council voted against this. Councillor Connolly questioned why the Water Meadows budget had been reduced from £10K to £5K and was told by the Mayor it was the Clerk's decision as it is his job to set the budget. It was felt that Councillors had not had the opportunity to provide input into the budget.

The Mayor then suddenly closed the meeting, stating it was in her power to do so.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 13 January 2026

Woodstock Town Council Meeting on 13 January 2026

8 councillors and 14 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working. A minute's silence was held as a tribute to former County Councillor Ian Hudspeth who recently passed.

Public Participation: 5 members of the public spoke. Hilary Brown, speaking on behalf of Sustainable Woodstock, thanked Councillor Poskitt for representing the Council on the campaign for a plastic free Woodstock and asked for a new councillor to volunteer as Councillor Poskitt was stepping down. Hilary also mentioned the town litter pick which would take place in early March. Chris Coe spoke regarding the Council's draft budget for 2026/7, asking for a rationale and a source of the numbers. Chris wanted an explanation for the doubling of the expenditure of the Council while at the same time cutting services. Ed Creasey submitted a petition from Brook Hill residents regarding pollution and flood risk to their properties from the Water Meadows. Ed highlighted the fact that sewage had been released 41 times into the Glyme from the sewage works and the Council was halving the Water Meadows budget. He wanted to see the Council protect the community and act as good neighbours. Michael Bowles referred to his question from the last Council meeting regarding the town clock and apologised if any comments had been taken personally by the Clerk. Michael was now in contact with Councillors about the clock maintenance. Next, Annie Cripps spoke, saying 40 residents were still awaiting a response from the Council regarding the legal action taken by Councillor Parnes against the Town Council. Annie said this reflected poorly on the Council and urged an acknowledgment of their correspondence. Finally, Nick Mason from the Fire Service urged those present to complete the consultation if they did not agree with the proposed closure of Woodstock Fire Station.

Planning: The application to extend the Black Prince was rejected by the Council on the grounds of overdevelopment.

The Council will add to its previous objection to the proposed development of 500 houses on land south of Perdiswell farm.

Reports from the Mayor and Clerk: The Mayor commented that McCarthy Stone had lost their appeal for their proposed development on the old police station site off of Hensington Road. £6,568 was spent of the £10K budget for Marrons to represent the Council for the appeal. The Mayor also noted the very good lunch club event at Christmas.

The Clerk noted that there had been a request that may apply to the Council budget, namely taking over the maintenance of St. Mary's churchyard, and therefore moved the draft budget discussions to the ETC meeting next Tuesday. The precept deadline to West Oxfordshire District Council is mid-February. Several councillors argued against this, the Mayor saying it was up to the Clerk to do this and to call the ETC meeting.

Reports from the County and District Councillors: The County Councillor was unable to attend the meeting and the District Councillors report included details of the old police station site appeal and Councillor Cooper commented on Councillor Poskitt's excellent presentation. Councillor Poskitt noted that District Council elections would go ahead in May this year.

Finance: The current balance is £379,857.

Hire for Town Hall and Community Centre and Burial Charges: It was agreed not to increase the charges for the Community Centre and review in 6 months. It was also agreed that weddings in the Mayor's Parlour would remain at £400, those in the Assembly Room increased to £450. Cemetery charges would be increased to £400.

Draft Budget for 2026/2027: This was deferred to the next Extraordinary Town Meeting.

Parking: Following proposals to introduce a proportion of 4hr stay bays at Hensington Road car park (66 of 101 bays from 12hr to 4hr) West Oxfordshire District Council decided to reduce the proportion of longer stay bays and change the maximum stay time for longer stay bays from 12 hrs to 10 hrs to reduce commuter use. Following other reported parking issues around town, the Council voted to call Oxfordshire County Council to carry out a full parking survey for Woodstock.

Fire Station Closure: Following the motion from the meeting of 11 November opposing the closure, Councillor Wheatley agreed to collect further comments from Councillors objecting to the proposed closure of Woodstock Fire Station for the consultation.

Environment: Councillor Connolly proposed that a Sports and Recreation sub working group be formed within the

Environmental Working group to obtain feedback from the town and community groups to enable the S106 monies from housing development to be spent appropriately. This was passed with Councillors Connolly, Muthoni and Wheatley forming this sub working group.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

### **ETC Meeting - 20 January 2026**

Woodstock Town Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 20 January 2026

8 councillors and 8 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

Public Participation: 2 members of the public spoke. Sam Dawson noted the risk assessments on the agenda and was concerned that the Council was underinsured, particularly the Town Hall and items containing gold. As she had professional experience in this field Sam offered her help. Chris Coe then spoke regarding the budget. Chris was concerned with the current draft budget being proposed, particularly with regard to the delayed decision last week due to the possibility of the churchyard being the Council's responsibility. Chris again questioned the increase in staffing costs coupled to the decrease in expenditure on services. He urged councillors to vote against the budget.

Planning: There were no objections to planning applications for Park Side, Park Street, and The Covert.

Asset Register: Councillor Cooper urged the Council to accept Sam Dawson's offer to help with the valuation of the Council's assets. The Council voted to accept the register but to continue to review.

St. Mary Magdalene Churchyard: On 1 January this year, the Council received an email from the parochial church council of St. Mary Magdalene Church wishing to transfer responsibility of the churchyard to the Town Council in accordance with the Local Government Act. The Mayor noted that if the Council did not want to accept this responsibility then it could be passed to West Oxfordshire District Council. After discussion the Council voted to pass responsibility to the District Council.

Oxfordshire County Council Transport Meeting: Notice was given of a meeting on 22 January regarding the introduction of double yellow lines on sections of Cadogan Park, Crecy Walk, Oxford Road, Park Side and the junction of Flemmings Road and Plane Tree Way. (These recommendations were subsequently approved).

West Oxfordshire District Council - Off Street Parking Hensington Road: Following the report from the last Council meeting, a further report from West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the allocation of bays was discussed. The report stated that 50% of the bays would be 10hrs and 50% 4hrs, starting from 1st February. There was some confusion within the Council and clarification was asked for before the next meeting.

Draft Budget for 2026/2027: Following a previous separate meeting of the Clerk, the Mayor and Councillors Poskitt and Wheatley, a £17K overspend was now presented to Council. The figure for the precept was again discussed, the Mayor arguing that it did not need to be increased and that reserves should be spent. After further discussion and questions about protocol and transparency two motions were then proposed. The first motion was to accept the proposed draft budget as it stood, the precept to be determined separately. This motion was passed 4 votes to 3 with 1 abstention. The second motion was to increase the precept to £153K (previously proposed increase to £170K), an increase of £4K. This motion also passed, 4 votes to 3 with 1 abstention. Finally, the Council agreed that £2,450 of under spend from last year be carried over to this year and added to the £4,000 budgeted for local community grants.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

## **TC Meeting - 10 February 2026**

Woodstock Town Council Meeting on Tuesday 10 February 2026

10 councillors and 8 members of the public attended.

**Public Participation:** Hilary Brown of Sustainable Woodstock addressed the Council, hoping that the broken bench on the Millennium Triangle would be repaired; asking again for a councillor volunteer to replace councillor Poskitt with the Plastic Free Community; inviting the Council to promote the Litter Pick organised for 14 March, and to pay £162 for the purchase of litter-picking hoops.

**Planning:** It was agreed that a supplemental submission be made to West Oxfordshire District Council regarding Blenheim's request for approval of the Reserved Matters in the Hill Rise planning permission.

**Mayor's Report:** The mayor reported that a resident had recently had a nasty fall in Union Street due to a pot hole. The pot holes in Oxfordshire are among the worst in the country. It was agreed that the Council must push the relevant authorities hard, and will talk with the MP.

**Clerk's Report:** 1. The public opening day at the Town Hall will change from Friday to Monday, 9am to 1pm, and by appointment. 2. The Council's Policies and Protocols have been reviewed by the Council's legal advisors, and have been approved by them. 3. WODC have introduced zoned parking time limits in the Hensington Road car park from 1st February, with 50% of spaces for maximum 10 hours stay, and 50% for 4 hours stay.

**County and District Councillors' Reports:** In the absence of Oxfordshire County Council's councillor Graham, there was no Report from OCC. 2. Councillor Poskitt reported for WODC matters. WODC will maintain the public toilets that they had wanted local councils to take over, but this will mean that the public toilets in Brown's Lane will close from 31 March 2026. The public toilet in the Hensington Road car park will be upgraded.

**Property:** 1. The new kitchen in the Community Centre is expected to be completed by the end of this week. 2. Councillors agreed the choice of contractor to carry out the maintenance of the Town's flag pole.

**Annual Town Meeting:** Councillors discussed what should be on the Agenda for this Meeting, to be held on Tuesday 24 March 2026. Residents will be invited, via the website, to submit possible Agenda topics.

**Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire:** Councillors discussed a letter received from WODC, which called for a response. Agreed councillors Dawson and Muthani will write a paper on the subject, to be discussed at the next Meeting.

**Environment:** 1. The Council has been served with Notice terminating the Lease of the Rosamund Drive playground on 2 August 2026. Confirmed that the Blenheim Hill Rise development includes a new playground. 2. It was agreed to replace the Millennium Triangle bench at an approximate cost of £380.

**London Oxford Airport:** Some of the concerns arising from the Botley West solar farm proposal have now been allayed; but others have not, and continue to be looked at.

**Woodstock Traffic Advisory Group:** 1. It is not clear whether a signalised option for the A44 and Charlbury Road junction is financially viable. A decision may be made by April. 2. OCC has decided to proceed with the proposal for yellow lines at the Cadogan Park and Flemings Road/Princes' Ride junction. 3. There are plans to reduce the speed limit from Hanborough Railway Station to Bladon, and along Lower Road, to 40mph. 4. The Village Travel Network have raised the issue of vegetation obstructing the cycle path between Bladon and Long Hanborough. It is also exploring with Blenheim and the Environment Agency possible routes across the River Glyme to link Old Woodstock with other parts of the town.

**Woodstock Town Council Policies and Protocols:** On being invited to approve the draft Policies and Protocols, councillors agreed that they could approve some of them, but that others needed to be considered in detail at a specific Meeting.

**Air Ambulance Recycling:** Thames Valley Air Ambulance have proposed to host a clothing bank at the Hensington Road car park. The proposal having been rejected by WODC for siting in this car park, councillors agreed to ask WODC to explain their objection and to reconsider the proposal.

The meeting closed at 8.34 pm.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Tony McHugh

## TC Meeting - 10 March 2026

Town Council Meeting on 10 March 2026

Seven councillors were present, and nine members of the public attended the meeting. It was unclear if the OWL recording device was in use.

**Public Participation:** Two members of the public spoke. Sam Dawson followed up on her concerns raised at the WTC meeting on 20 January regarding the Asset Register and the undervaluation of items including the Town Hall itself, and therefore the real concern that Council assets were under insured. She had professional experience in this field and had offered her help, but had not heard anything back. She also raised concerns regarding the 'surprising' report from RoSPA about the Watermeadows and questioned if the Council had shared with the Inspector all the work that had actually been carried out by residents as opposed to the Council having a regular programme of clearing?

Chris Coe spoke to remind Councillors of the Seven Pillars of Public Life: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership. These apply to those delivering public services to ensure public interest is prioritised. He went on to highlight the disparity between the Council's response to one anonymous letter regarding overflow parking in the Brook Hill area (an agenda item for two meetings already) to two letters signed by 41 and 40 named residents respectively, regarding the civil case: Sharone Parnes vs Woodstock Town Council, which have been ignored. The petition by residents of Brook Hill and Glyme Close had similarly not seen any action.

**Minutes from previous meetings:** Spelling mistakes and grammatical errors were amended. The Mayor confirmed that the minutes were not verbatim but merely a record of decisions made. Any background discussions were not minuted if no decision had been taken.

**Planning:** Reference No 26/00291/FUL Change of use of 10 no. units to commercial use: There was concern voiced of the potential for unsociable noise which would affect the ambiance of the area if this change was agreed and led to the development of gyms, restaurants etc. These concerns were to be noted in their response to the application.

**Appeal decision:** Feathers Hotel appeal against refusal of consent for the two flag poles was refused - they will therefore have to be removed.

**Mayor's Report:** Councillors were requested to please attend the Town Meeting in the Community Centre on Tuesday 24 March at 7.30pm.

**Clerk's Report:** Bleed kit now available, kept inside the defibrillator box outside the Community Centre. Asset Register is being updated with revaluations, including correction of the typing error which noted the value of the Town Hall carried over from last year. Local organisations seeking printing services by Council Staff are soon likely to be charged.

**OCC Report from Andy Graham:** Free Park and Ride services into Oxford have been extended until 26 December. Cadogan Park suffered flooding at the Tennis Club end but clearance of the offending roots has hopefully been successful. Bens Close continues to flood. A meeting has been planned with all interested parties as it is not just an issue for one of the stakeholders, they have to work together to find a solution. The OCC is still trying to understand the best way to light the town centre without being garish. The Owen Mumford site proposed for the new Doctors Surgery - a transport survey is underway to better understand where patients travel from and how and if there are any opportunities to coordinate routes. Cllr Williams asked that the transport infrastructure plan should be an integral part of the planning application not added on after. It was requested that all potholes identified should be logged please on [fixmystreet.com](http://fixmystreet.com).

**Property:** Councillors agreed that £1,488 incl VAT should be spent on a matching locking tower unit cupboard for use by the Stroke Club in the new Community Centre kitchen, to replace their existing rusty one. The total project has come in under the £30k budget. The entire roof on the Community Centre first requires replacement of all the asbestos sheeting before any solar panels can be fixed. No indication of how much the solar panels would generate toward this cost was quoted. It was considered that the Report submitted was inadequate on which to make decisions. More information regarding possible interest free loans, loans, grants etc was needed.

**Environment:** RoSPA Report on the Water Meadows was considered - An unanswered question: how often is the grate actually cleared by WTC? A contractor has refused to clear if the water is too deep. It was not clear how often this had been the case. A suggestion was made that the contractor was engaged to clear the sluice before the water levels got

too high. An issue was introduced; who actually owns the sluice? If OCC owns it, then WTC will not pay for any remedial work clearing the grate and would not do so until the ownership issue is resolved.

Christmas Lights: The relevant committee (Cllrs Spencer Churchill, Addis and Cooper) has yet to meet. This is now becoming urgent otherwise no relevant companies will be available.

Environmental: The Environment Working Group are meeting with Blenheim's hydrologist for advice re the Water Meadows management. There appears to be evidence in documents from the Land Registry which would confirm that in fact OCC own the grills in which case WTC will not have any responsibility for them. American crayfish and the Russian Balsam must be removed but there may be environmental protocols to observe. A statement regarding the appalling potholes and road conditions in our area was agreed and two draft letters of complaint it was agreed would be sent to the Rt. Hon. Heidi Alexander MP the Minister for Transport. The letters will also be sent to Calum Miller, MP and OCC Councillor Andrew Gant. Cllr Spencer-Churchill is to submit a separate letter in support of WTC's position.

Hensington Road car park changes: The Mayor noted that 21 houses in Hensington Road do not have any off road parking and therefore presumably park here. WODC changes to the bays were generally agreed to be no improvement and in fact should revert back to the original layout. Parking spaces for full time workers were deemed inadequate and the ratio of long stay to short stay bays is wrong and creating more deferred parking in the neighbouring streets. More strong representations to WODC are to be made. The redundant garages in Union Street have been ignored to date, but may create an opportunity.

20 MPH signage: Quotations are to be sought from three companies for six illuminated signs. Battery and solar required building on experience from Bladon whose batteries do not last very long at all. The Long Handborough signs with graphics were deemed to be a distraction, although Cllr Dawson noted that there was evidence that they appealed to children who then exerted pressure on the driver to slow down. With no budget allocation, it was suggested that the signs could be paid for from reserves.

Grant Applications: Seven applicants have been successful; Woodstock Harriers were awarded the £300 they asked for, West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice were awarded £500, with all other applicants given £400. There will be a second round of grants which can be applied for using the form on the WTC website.

New Drs Surgery: The draft Letter to WODC Planning was agreed asking for joined up thinking with regard to the Surgery Planning application. This must include a realistic, long term, fully funded transport plan in place before any planning application is granted.

WTC - Amendments to Standing Orders specifically regarding the emailing of council documents. Not all Councillors choose to receive council documents by email, or have access to it.

WTC Policies: The Draft Reserve Policy was passed which notes that WTC maintains three types of reserves: Earmarked, for a specific purpose to be spent within the financial year. The General Reserve is the balance on the Councils revenue account which are not held for any specific purposes other than to cushion the Councils finances against any short term cash flow issues. WTC will endeavour to maintain a minimum General Reserve of three months predicted annual expenditure.

Unitary Council consultation: For anyone keen to understand the options for the OCC/WODC reorganisation that is coming, you are encouraged to review the report by Councillor Muthoni available to view in the Agenda Pack for this meeting. The Mayor led the thanks to Councillor Muthoni for her very comprehensive report, which all agreed would be submitted as the response from WTC.

Air Ambulance Recycling: The siting of an Air Ambulance Clothing Bank in Hensington Road car park was again refused.

Due to restrictions of space, not all Council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Annie Cripps

## **ETC Meeting - 19 March 2026**

6 councillors and 6 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

Public Participation: There was no public participation on the agenda.

Planning: There were no objections to planning applications from 90 Manor Road and 15 Green Lane.

Mayor, Clerk and Councillors' Reports: The Mayor reminded all of the Annual Town Meeting taking place the following Tuesday.

Finance: The current balance is £370,806.

Printing Costs for External Parties: After discussion, it was agreed that printing adverts for local events would be accommodated by the Council, a maximum of 5 copies, one for each noticeboard.

Public Safety Report: Councillor Parnes submitted a report raising concerns regarding the installed air source heat pumps on the front elevations of the new Ryegrass development. The key areas of concern were planning compliance, public safety of water freezing on pavements and character impact. Following discussion, a motion was passed to request an inspection from West Oxfordshire District Council Planning Enforcement, seek clarification from Cottsway Housing Association on the planning consultation process and notify Oxfordshire County Council Highways of the potential hazard.

Confidential Matters: After 32 minutes, the public was asked to leave and the meeting went into a confidential session.

For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

## Annual Town Meeting- 24 March 2026

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor chaired the meeting, attended by approximately 60 residents. The Town Clerk took minutes.

A number of speakers were invited to give a short address. Oxfordshire County Councillor (OCC) Andy Graham told the meeting that he had been busy on their behalf. His focus was to ensure Woodstock gets its fair share and has its say. Regarding travel, free Park and Ride buses in Oxford have been extended to the end of May. The new parking arrangements in Cadogan Park will be implemented in the summer and a junction with traffic lights will be created at the Judd's Garage junction, together with a new bus shelter, next year. The trial of booking to use the recycling centres has seen no evidence of increased fly-tipping. Annual gully cleaning and the removal of roots blocking pipes has resulted in a reduction of flooding.

West Oxfordshire District Councillors (WODC) Cooper and Poskitt reported that the local plan was progressing and reported no new housing plans in the West Oxfordshire part of our area. The swimming pool is undergoing maintenance and will open for 'cold swimming' from 23rd May to 19th July, 'warm swimming' will follow until 30th August. Their written report included details of the proposed unitary authorities plan for 2028, planning updates for land east of Perdiswell Farm, Botley West Solar and Salt Cross Village and local infrastructure including the public toilets, new parking restrictions in Hensington Road car park and the care of St. Mary's churchyard.

Thames Valley Police were represented by Inspector Chris Ball who introduced Sergeant Miriam Purple as the new officer for Woodstock. Woodstock has the second lowest crime rate in Oxfordshire, mainly involving low level anti-social behaviour. There is CCTV in the town centre and the recent use of a drug detection dog found nothing.

Blenheim Estate were invited but were not represented at the meeting.

Councillor Poskitt, as councillor responsible for finance at Woodstock Town Council, then presented a financial report. The approximate year end balance is £360K. Around £470K was spent in the year 2025-26, with an income of £440K, the shortfall will come from reserves. It has been questioned why such a high proportion of the budget is spent on administration and staffing costs and why staffing costs were over budget for 2025-26. Staffing costs did not include pensions and HMRC payments by mistake, staffing salaries will be increasing from April this year and there will be an increase in staff as the Council had been understaffed before. The precept, the amount residents pay to the Town Council in their Council Tax, has increased by a small amount, relating to 40p per annum for a band D house. The Council has budgeted for £370K income and £383K expenditure for 2026/7 so reserves will again be used to cover the difference.

The WODC officer responsible for CIL, the Community Infrastructure Levy, was unable to attend. CIL is a planning charge used by local authorities to fund infrastructure such as schools, transport and parks and has been recently implemented by WODC.

An update from our MP Calum Miller was in written form; Calum apologising for being unable to attend as Parliament was in session. Design work for the new surgery at the former Owen Mumford site is being costed for the District Valuer who will determine value for money, a decision expected late summer. Improving access to the site is being looked into. Flooding problems in Woodstock, particularly seen repeatedly in Bens Close, are being discussed between Thames Water, OCC, WODC, Sovereign Homes and Blenheim Estate. Similarly, following requests from Brook Hill residents, Calum has contacted OCC regarding the trash screen in the Water Meadows. Calum met with crew members at the Fire Station and shared their concerns, confirmation from the Chief Fire Officer stated the proposals were not a cost cutting exercise.

Deputy Mayor Sarah Williams also spoke about the new surgery saying the Town Council fought hard for the old police station site but the Integrated Care Board said no so the option is closed. The Town Council is not opposed to the former Owen Mumford site in principle but are concerned about access and have called for a feasibility study to be carried out. Resident Stan Scott also spoke about access to this site and will object to planning permission on these grounds.

Complaints to the changes in Hensington Road car park were noted, the problem being the 10 hour spaces being used for shorter periods of time. The Mayor said that the Town Council had objected to the changes made by WODC.

As previously noted by Calum Miller MP, OCC are looking into the flooding issues in Banbury Road and Bens Close. Thames Water is looking at an emergency system, a permanent fixture to stop flooding in this area.

Councillor John Banbury spoke regarding the poor lighting on the main roads and particularly where the buses turn on Stratford Lane.

Resident Anthony Gles then spoke about St Mary's churchyard and the transfer of custodianship to WODC. The church authorities asked the Town Council to take this responsibility in January but it was quickly passed to WODC. Anthony was appalled that the Town Council did this, was it a matter of not being able to afford it? He would like to see the Town Council retain responsibility for the churchyard, a green jewel in Woodstock so well maintained by Jenny Atkinson and volunteers. There was loud applause from the audience. The Mayor responded that the Council did consider the matter and took advice, there being other things to consider such as liability if a wall collapsed. She was sure WODC would look after the churchyard. Resident Jenny Atkinson then spoke saying the grass cutter employed by the Town Council was wonderful, careful and looked after the churchyard. It is a closed churchyard and should be the responsibility of the Town Council. People have given money for the upkeep and volunteers are upset. Many people visit the churchyard and it is a community asset.

Resident Tom Harvey asked why £50K had been allocated in Council funds for playground inspections and there had been none. The Mayor replied that currently there is no environmental warden.

Resident Chris Coe questioned how the Council spends its money and why the Council will spend £201K this year on staff and administration costs compared to an average of £101K over the past 6 years. This is the reason we are not getting the services we should have in town. Chris said the Council was not listening and that there had been no response to letters sent.

Resident Dr Robert Edwards made a comment on the Mill Stream in the Water Meadows suggesting Blenheim Estates should pay for the upkeep as stated on the Column of Victory.

Last to speak was resident Sam Dawson who asked why, in real terms with inflation factored in, there had been a recent decrease in the precept? Woodstock has lost out by tens of thousands of pounds. The precept should be increased in line with inflation to improve the lives of residents. Councillor Poskitt responded that she could not agree more but failed to convince the Council.

Paper copies of several reports were available at the meeting, hopefully these will be available on the Town Council website or by request to the Town Clerk.

Graham Brown

## TC Meeting - 14 April 2026

Ten councillors were present, and five members of the public attended the meeting. It was unclear if the OWL recording device was in use.

Before the start of the meeting, the Mayor read a letter of resignation from Linda Addis.

Public Participation: Ed Creasey spoke against the proposal to divert some of the Water Meadow budget to buy two benches for OWL. This Council is the private landowner of the Water Meadow with statutory duties. Under Section 25 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, where a watercourse is impeded, the landowner is legally required to remedy that condition. This is not optional. Local residents have been successfully clearing the watercourse themselves all winter - keeping the river flowing and even a record rainfall didn't impact residents.

Recent testing at the Sheep Wash on the Glyme next to the meadows found nitrate and phosphate levels high enough that Blenheim advised against entering the river. Yet you are knowingly necessitating residents to clear debris from sewage-contaminated water from Woodstock Town Council land to protect their homes. On 14 January, 42 of those residents out of 51, submitted a formal petition asking for the Council to fulfil its obligations. It has not been acknowledged or responded to. The Nolan Principles demand Accountability and Openness. Diverting funding from mandatory infrastructure to buy benches is a reputational and financial risk. Please fulfil your obligations to this land and to these residents before spending on extras.

Minutes from the previous meeting 19 March: The amendments to the draft minutes, again mostly the rectification of spelling and grammatical errors were agreed. The final note pertaining to the discussions in the confidential session highlighted the potential impact on lettings of the vacancy for a Community Centre Caretaker.

Planning: Reference Number: 26/00694/HHD - No objections

Mayor's Report: Thanks were extended to all those who supported the Treasurers Valuation held in aid of the Mayor's Charity on 11 April in the Town Hall.

Notice was given of an Extraordinary Town Council Meeting to be held on 28 April. This was due to agenda items being received too late for discussion at this meeting.

Good news received last night that the Woodstock Fire Station was likely to receive a reprieve from closure. Cllr Cooper took the opportunity to congratulate the Mayor for leading the campaign in our community, to save the fire station.

Clerk's Report: Accounting irregularities in respect of VAT were highlighted by the last internal auditor which are now being addressed, for example day lettings including weddings are a taxable income likely to require the Council to be VAT registered. Given the potential risk to the Council's financial compliance and public accountability this work is now considered urgent and therefore under the clause covering serious risk to the delivery of council services or public safety on council premises, the Clerk exercised his authority to commission a professional company to assess when the council should have registered for VAT, assist with submitting a back dated VAT registration and provide guidance on partial VAT recovery as well as a partial exemption spreadsheet, full report and reasonable aftercare.

The Clerk was not able to give any indication at this stage of the true extent of the council's liabilities or how long the investigation would take. As there was no budget allocated for this liability, it would have to be paid for out of reserves when the time came and these must be carried forward. Cllr Grant noted that in 2023 the then Mayor had said that all VAT had been collected, but that she had always, always, been concerned about the Council's handling of it from the years of running her own business.

The consultation regarding the S7 bus is underway and closes on 20 April. Please email your thoughts to [public.transport@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:public.transport@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

WODC Report: Constitutional change comes into effect after the Annual Meeting in May. Planning changes in the pipeline (moving from two bodies to one) are designed to speed up planning applications. The Mayor said that this did not sound very democratic.

The opening of the Woodstock Swimming Pool which was addressed in the Town Meeting does depend on the basic maintenance work being finished in time.

Thanks were warmly expressed to Julian Cooper for his long service in WODC, first elected in 1986 with just four years 'off' in the intervening 40 years.

Finance:: Income and expenditure reports were passed, noting that expenditure made in the last financial year is reflected as such and not carried over into the new financial year.

WTC Property: Proposed improvements were agreed for the Woodstock Law to action at their own expense. An Insurance Reinstatement Cost Assessment of all council property is still pending as part of the review of insurance cover. The Bowls and Tennis Club have requested a new 20 year lease which was agreed. The escape door replacement at Community Centre to match with the others at a cost in excess of £1000 was agreed.

Environment: Although in a new financial year, the Mayor proposed (seconded by Cllr Williams) an unplanned expenditure to provide and pay for two new benches out of the Water Meadows budget as there was no budget for the OWL. The unplanned nature of this proposal was not discussed, only which pot the money was coming from, and this matter did not meet with general agreement. It was considered very poor optics to take the money out of the Water Meadows budget given the serious situation for the council with regard to their inactivity in acknowledging, let

alone resolving, the Water Meadow issues. It was agreed that the benches would be purchased but the money will come out of general reserves. The Mayor abstained as it was her proposal but agreed to the alteration of the wording and so the proposal was passed.

Christmas lights: Despite the urgent call for a meeting of the Christmas Lights Committee to plan for this year's display, only Cllr Cooper was ready to attend; it was not quorate and therefore did not proceed. Cllr Spencer-Churchill proposed that we have the same decorations as last year. He was reminded that apart from the Town Hall Christmas tree, the decorations were not well received by residents. Others supported decorations down the main streets, maybe including lights around the tree trunks and possibly additional support for the WUTW decorations. A new committee was formed for this year only chaired by Cllr Williams (and to now include the Mayor) to put a plan together by Tuesday 28 midday in the hope that the Clerk could still find a company which would provide something for us within the £12-15k budget.

New Drs Surgery: A Report was presented noting we have a new Thames Valley ICB (Integrated Care Board) having merged Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West with Frimley. The non negotiable priority remains that a feasibility study re transport to the new surgery is completed before the planning application is submitted.

Meetings to support this aim have been arranged with Calum Miller MP and Andy Graham WODC and a meeting is sought with the OCC Transport Officer.

Shipton Road Street lights: Sharone Parnes was concerned regarding the lack of street lights on and around the Shipton Road Mini roundabout. This has been the ongoing situation since September 2025. WTC sought an explanation of why OCC were not acting with greater urgency.

Due to restrictions of space, not all council business has been included. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, supporting documents and minutes.

Annie Cripps

## **ETC Meeting - 28 April 2026**

Extraordinary Town Council Meeting on 28 April 2026

8 councillors and 6 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

Public Participation: There was no public participation on the agenda.

Planning: There was no planning on the agenda.

Mayor and Clerk Reports: The Mayor said there would be a brief memorial service at the War Memorial on 7 May at 11am to mark the anniversary of VE Day. As the last Council meeting as Mayor, Councillor Grant thanked the Clerk and Deputy Mayor for their help over the 18 months she had been in post. The Clerk said he was approaching companies regarding Christmas lights for the town. Work in the Water Meadows was moved to the private session following the exclusion of press and public.

Environment Working Group: An extensive report was presented by Councillors Wheatley and Connolly bringing together the current position on trees, cemeteries, playgrounds, the Old Woodstock Line reserve (OWL), parking at Hensington Road car park, the Water Meadows and leisure and sport. Recommendations to Council were as follows. The Clerk was requested to arrange the overdue annual inspection of trees with priority given to the OWL reserve, the Water Meadows and the cemeteries. The Clerk was requested to bring forward a more cost-effective inspection regime for the playgrounds. Councillor Cooper suggested talking to Blenheim/Pye Homes with respect to their management of the Park View playground and upcoming Hill Rise and Banbury Road sites. The Council was asked to consider a celebration of the 20th anniversary of the OWL reserve and recognition given to the warden, Bob Pomfret, and volunteers. The Clerk was asked to contact Oxfordshire County Council Highways regarding the culvert from the Water Meadows and West Oxfordshire District Council to address the blocked Brook Hill gully/trench. The Council agreed to Councillors Grant and Wheatley continuing their survey of Hensington Road car park and submit their findings to West Oxfordshire District Council.

The Clerk informed the Council that the resolution passed at the meeting on 14 April relating to the budget allocation of two benches for the OWL reserve was non-compliant with the Council's financial regulations and reserves policy and was therefore void and required reconsideration. In his report, the Clerk explained the budgetary process, where mistakes were made and his recommendations. The Mayor suggested the motion should be brought back to Council when unspecified items were being discussed at the meeting of 26th May.

Property: A reinstatement cost assessment report (valuation for insurance purposes) of the property owned by the Council was presented and passed by Council. Regarding the proposal for solar panels for the roof of the Community Centre, the Clerk has contacted Low Carbon Hub (LCH) to seek possible funding. LCH are happy for the Council to apply for their Green Fund but to be eligible they would need to carry out an energy audit of the property. The audit and report costs are covered by the LCH's community benefit fund. If successful, the LCH Green Fund would cover 25% of the project cost up to £10K. The Clerk is aiming for a meeting mid-May.

Council meeting dates for the next financial year were agreed and a suggestion on the reorganisation of Councillor roles by the Mayor was dismissed.

As a neighbouring parish, notification of the draft Wootton Neighbourhood Plan was given by the Wootton Clerk for consultation by Woodstock Town Council but no discussion took place at this meeting.

The Mayor and Councillor Cooper then discussed the rules regarding the Council going into private session which continued as the public was leaving the Mayor's Parlour.

For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

## **Blenheim Dialogue Meeting - 11 May 2026**

WTC/Blenheim Palace Dialogue Meeting on 11 May 2026

Blenheim Palace were pleased to meet with Woodstock Town Council on Monday 11 May as part of their quarterly meeting programme. Meetings are public, held in the Town Hall, and advertised by Woodstock Town Council. In future, meetings will also be advertised on the Blenheim Communities Facebook page.

The extended Park View development by Pye Homes could be with the Planning Committee at Cherwell District Council in July 2026.

The children's playground at Hill Rise will stay open as long as possible, prior to building work, and then will be upgraded in its new position.

The Owen Mumford site is the strongly preferred option of the working party for the new Doctors Surgery (importantly supported by the Doctors and the NHS). This site provides for the expansion of the surgery, as required for the granting of NHS funding, as well as adequate parking. Much work has yet to be done before the site can proceed to a planning application, but Blenheim will continue to work to facilitate a viable option and thank Calum Miller MP and others for their work on this project.

Blenheim has completed work at Benns Close to mitigate the flood risk in the area. This work should hopefully alleviate the concern residents feel until Thames Water and Oxfordshire County Council Highway address the underlying issues. Blenheim are also supporting other agencies, including Woodstock Town Council, on work near the Water Meadows.

Events at Blenheim remain the same as 2025. Blenheim has undertaken several measures to ensure spill over parking doesn't affect the Town, including adding parking to the ticketing bundle. More work can still be done, and Blenheim is committed to continuing to monitor and address parking issues, wherever possible.

A member of the public asked about dogs off the lead in the Park area. Blenheim representatives explained that there has been a three-week public education programme before and during lambing season, to highlight the dangers to livestock, of free roaming dogs. Responses to this were positive, with a drop in reported cases of dogs off their lead, and this will be replicated throughout the year to ensure the continued safety of the animals and birds who call the Park their home.

For a more detailed coverage of the meeting, please check Woodstock Town Council website, where the minutes will be posted in due course.

Merilyn Davies, Head of Community Engagement at Blenheim

## **Annual Town Council Meeting- 12 May 2026**

Annual Town Council Meeting on 12 May 2026

The Clerk, 10 Councillors, and 10 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

Election of Town Mayor: Two Councillors were proposed and seconded. Cllr Williams received 5 votes; Cllr Wheatley received 5 votes. Cllr Grant gave her casting vote in favour of Cllr Williams who was duly elected Mayor for the coming year, and took the Chair.

Election of Deputy Mayor: Two Councillors were proposed and seconded. Cllr Grant received 2 votes; Cllr Wheatley received 7 votes. So Cllr Wheatley was duly elected Deputy Mayor for the coming year. Councillors considered that a change of leadership of the Council was needed.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Parnes

Public Participation: One speaker asked that more notice is given of upcoming meetings to allow members of the public greater opportunity to attend. Town Council meeting dates are set and published a year in advance but Extraordinary Town Council Meetings are being called and advertised at very short notice and far from being 'extraordinary' and special, they aren't. They are just extra, additional. In the case of the recent Town & Palace Dialogue meeting, which members of the public would have surely welcomed the opportunity to attend, the notice was posted on the WTC website at 6.40pm on Friday for a meeting happening at 4.30pm on the following Monday.

Minutes from ETC Meeting of 28th April 2026: Passed, but noted the typo at 22/04/22, that the decision was made to carry forward the discussion re Roles to the Annual Meeting.

Planning to consider the Councils response to applications: \*Three applications were discussed and approved, subject to one of them having no objection from the conservation officer.

Appointment of Councillors Roles \*Finance - Both Cllr Dawson & Cllr Wheatley will work with the Clerk. While the Clerk in his dual role as RFO completes the required processes to monitor the budget it was felt that Councillors would like a close overview.

Property - Cllr Grant was elected unopposed.

Planning - the excessive ETCs are due to the amount of planning applications. Consideration will be given to ways that these can be streamlined.

Staffing - Mayor, Dep Mayor, and Cllr's Dawson, Muthoni and Parnes, although if unable to attend a particular meeting, any Councillor may be co-opted.

Environmental Working Group - this was considered to have too broad a remit and it was voted to disband it, in its current format. Instead it was agreed that three committees would sit: 1) Water Meadows and Nature Reserves made up of three councillors. 2) Sports, Recreation and Playgrounds with three Councillors and 3) Cemeteries with two councillors with each reporting back to Council.

The remaining Working Groups were assembled: Surgery, Remembrance Day, Christmas Lights, Mayor's Carols, Town and Palace Dialogue, WODC Liaison, Airport Consultation Group.

Social Media Working Group - it was confirmed that for insurance purposes any posted content must be controlled by the Clerk and paid staff. No Social platforms are currently engaged with by the Town Council, but there was a view that more effective means of communicating is necessary, beyond relying on notice boards and website. This discussion will be brought back to the next meeting.

The Twinned Town Working Group was disbanded for lack of activity.

The Botley West Working Group - this is currently in abeyance until a decision is made.

The Woodstock Exhibition Foundation - two representatives stepped forward.

Review of Professional Bodies engaged by the Woodstock Town Council: The Clerk reported that many of the

professional bodies listed have five year contracts and therefore there would be a cost to changing contractor prior to expiry.

A Councillor requested a spreadsheet identifying each contracted professional body and when their contract expired. The Clerk mentioned that this would take some time to put together as not all records were available, but in the meantime, Councillors asked that when a contract is coming up for renewal, three competitive quotations are sought as a matter of course.

Re property insurance, the suggestion was made that on the conclusion of the revaluation process, a broker be engaged to find the best value policy for Council's needs.

Standing Orders, Code of Conduct and Financial Regulations: All adopted

Policies and Procedures: All adopted

The meeting closed at 20:06

Due to restrictions of space, not all council business can be included here. For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, supporting documents and minutes.

Annie Cripps