

# HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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**MINUTES** of the **Full Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 at 7.00pm in the Library, Hungerford.

**Present:** Cllrs Simpson, Winsor, Fyfe, Schlanker, Alford, Keates, Greenwell, Armstrong, Cole, Knight, Coulthurst and Hudson.

**Also present:** West Berks District Cllrs Gaines (DG) and Benneyworth (DB). Representatives from Penny Post, Newbury News, the Adviser, and a member of public.

**In attendance:** Claire Barnes (Town Clerk)

**Police Report:** No Police report was received.

**David Inman – Consultant from Rural Services Network** tried to connect remotely to the meeting. Due to technical difficulties, he later emailed a recording of his presentation instead, a summary of which is below: - The Rural Market Town Group is created by Rural Services Network which is a special interest group of the LGA and they argue service cases for rural areas. Bus services, refuse collection services etc. are key. Urban areas are receiving 38% per head more in government funded spending power than their rural counterparts despite the cost to deliver to rural areas being higher. Bus services are discretionary services and are facing cuts. RMTG intends to work together to give rural towns a collective voice. They offer a free trial which is effective up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and charge approx. £100 a year if we wish to subscribe.

**David Reeves** is interested in filling the Councillor vacancy and introduced himself as having recently moved to Hungerford from Didcot and originally from London. He has wanted to live in Hungerford for several years and is attracted by the sense of community. He has some spare time with a good team supporting his business which is based in Undy's Cottage, Hungerford. As an employer and entrepreneur, he runs several marketing and recruitment businesses for the leisure industry. He has worked for Everyone Active and local authorities. The Mayor welcomed David and suggested he attends the committee meetings this month to see what is involved.

**FC2024001** **Note apologies for absence.** Cllrs Cusack and Carlson.  
Also, apologies from District Cllrs Tony Vickers (TV)

**FC2024002** **Declarations of interest** – None

**FC2024003** **Approval of Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council of 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023, and outcome of actions**

**Proposed:** Cllr Schlanker

**Seconded:** Cllr Keates

**Resolution:** Minutes of 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were agreed as a true record.  
Actions are complete.

**FC2024004** **Receive Mayor's Report - See attached report.** The Mayor added that the traffic lights have finally been removed today from the top (south end) of the high street following the accident over a year ago. There is some surface debris left behind where the barriers were. The street cleaner attends at 7am every day so should clear this.

It was noted that it is the second time that the Stamp and Coin shop has been broken into and CCTV doorbell footage has been given to the Police. Cllr Armstrong suggested that there should be a scheme whereby the Police encourage everyone to get a CCTV doorbell at a discount price.

- FC2024005 Receive District Councillor’s Reports** – The Mayor thanked the District Councillors for the removal of the traffic lights. DG confirmed the outside works to the building were complete but the internal work continues.
- ACTION:** DG will chase up removal of the parking suspension by traffic management. She reported; the responses from WBC's Parking Strategy consultation are in, WBC's Budget consultation closes on 11 January and she is speaking to the executive director in finance at WBC about the delay in receiving the tax bases. We may get an extension for the return of the Precept Request forms.
- It is early days but it seems that the new Wiltshire Connect on-demand bus service that links Hungerford to Marlborough is being well used.
- DG confirmed the (DLUHC) Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities stepped in to prevent the withdrawal of the WBC Local Plan. Instead WBC is working with the Inspector and Planning team to improve what they have got. One concern is the high number, 2500, of houses in the Thatcham area and lack of infrastructure. The Rural Housing Community Forum says houses in villages are required and the Local Plan doesn’t address that.
- DG advised it is not likely that the housing requirement for Hungerford will change and WBC will be working to the same timetable.
- The District Councillors confirmed they respect each other’s differing opinions on this topic. DB advised he is happy that the Local Plan is going ahead.
- DB confirmed that Strongrove Hill planning application has been called in.
- FC2024006 Health & Safety – Any complaints or concerns.** It was reported that four lights are out in Marsh Lane. The cost of the call outs to fix the timers on the Xmas tree lights was queried.
- ACTION:** Office to report the lights out.
- FC2024007 Receive any Committee reports (no more than 3 minutes per report)** – Cllr Schlanker advised HTC will be taking over the management of the dog waste bin contract from West Berks Council. Town & Manor will be paying for the cost of emptying 10 dog waste bins. A service level agreement is being drawn up. WBC are looking to reduce the number of general rubbish bins also. From April 2025 the remaining streetlights that we own will be our responsibility to maintain. Signage is to go up to warning against flytipping on the towpath by St Lawrence Church.
- FC2024008 Propose authorisation of payment run (circulated along with copies of invoices) for December**  
**Proposed:** Cllr Winser  
**Seconded:** Cllr Simpson  
**Resolution:** Authorisation of payment run of £34,276.61 agreed
- FC2024009 Propose Year to date accounts – refer to circulated Income/Expenditure Report.**  
**Proposed:** Cllr Winser  
**Seconded:** Cllr Keates  
**Resolution:** Agreed Year to date accounts with a positive variance of £8,503
- FC20240010 Consider recommendations from F&GP for Annual Budget and Precept Request for April 2024-25.**  
**Proposed:** Cllr Winser  
**Seconded:** Cllr Keates
- ACTION:** **Resolution:** Delegate decision to the next F&GP meeting as the tax base has not yet been received from West Berks Council. Cllr Cole abstained.  
 Cllr Cole queried if there is a budget for councillor training and if we are getting the best out of the MS 365 system.
- ACTION:** Discuss a budget for councillor training at F&GP.
- FC20240011 Receive report from Neighbourhood Plan Project Team – Please see attached.** Cllr Hudson added that AECOM need to consult with other bodies, giving them 5 weeks, and we should wait until this is done before starting Regulation 14.
- FC20240012 Propose acceptance of Draft Neighbourhood Plan**

**Proposed:** Cllr Hudson

**Seconded:** Cllr Knight

**ACTION: Resolution:** Adopt draft Neighbourhood Plan (pre-submission regulation 14 consultation version) allowing minor changes to accommodate comments from SEA, prior to consultation.

**FC20240013 Receive report from Town Centre Steering Group** – Cllr Cole advised the most recent meeting of the Town Centre Steering Group took place on 14 December. Members had sent him their views on prioritisation of the ten options then up for discussion (all of which had resulted from the considerable number of public responses received during the consultation organised by WBC in late 2022). The result of the meeting was agreement to further discuss the top six:

1. **The Town Hall**, specifically the area immediately in front of it. Ideas included signage, parking and its possible use as a public space.
2. **The Canal**, particularly the towpath to the east of the High Street bridge, where there is some serious work to be done. The aim of any improvement would be to encourage tourist boats to stop in the town.
3. **High Street facade improvements**, with particular reference to certain shop fronts and perhaps also signage.
4. **Station Road and The Cuttings**, a main entry-route into the town which could benefit from better lighting, pavements and vegetation-management.
5. **Parking**, a matter that WBC was not keen to see as part of the discussion which is an aspect that no responsible town-centre strategy can ignore.
6. **Church Lane**, improvements to which could include additional street lighting.

Discussion at the meeting stressed that the town-centre strategy project was still at a very early stage: most projects were very long-term and all would be dependent on securing funding.

**ACTION:** The Mayor will feedback to the steering group the request for more transparency and better communication with town residents.

**FC20240014 Any other reports (3 minutes each) not to include any proposals - None**

## **PART 2 Confidential**

The public and press may be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity might be prejudicial to the public interest as per the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.

**FC20240015 Propose rental increase**

After discussion,

**Proposed:** Cllr Winser

**Seconded:** Cllr Simpson

**ACTION: Resolution:** Instruct Nye & Co to renew the current tenancy from 4<sup>th</sup> Feb and increase the monthly rent by £100.

**FC20240016 Consider grant donation for Hungerford Primary School**

**Proposed:** Cllr Fyfe

**Seconded:** Cllr Simpson

**ACTION: Resolution:** Town Clerk to find out shortfall of funding for theatre visit and arrange a donation up to a maximum of £500.

Meeting closed 8.45pm

**Mayor's Report**

### OAP Christmas party hosted by year 11's at JOG

This was very well attended and a real highlight for our older residents. The year 11's were extremely attentive and really looked after us, there was singing and bingo and a delicious meal cooked by Donna and her team. Well done to all those who helped make a wonderful party for us to enjoy. It's worth noting the year 11's fund raise to host this event and made a whopping £2000 in doing so this year. Congratulations.

### Hungerford Primary Nativity Play

Just Magical! It never fails to amaze me how well the year 2's remember so many lines, as well as dancing and singing. Albie even managed to perform a solo which was outstanding. Not a dry eye in the house. Congratulations to all the year 2 staff at HPS, you all work so hard to bring us these incredible performances.

### Tuesday Burchett Club Xmas Lunch

Thank you for inviting me to attend again this year. We had a lovely afternoon tea with the most amazing raffle. I know how well this is received each year. Huge congratulations on the purchase of your replacement mini bus. I know you will continue to put on outings for all your elderly members who wouldn't get out otherwise.

### Hungerford Extravaganza

Congratulations Hungerford Chamber of Commerce for another excellent Victorian evening. I know this is a year in planning and takes huge commitment from the chamber committee.

Thank you to Jerry for stepping in at the Mayors carol concert. I hope you all had a lovely service. I was extremely sad to miss it.

### Burglary

I was devastated to read the news of one of our small independent family businesses (Hungerford coin and stamp centre) being raided in the early hours of new year's eve. This was a devastating attack to both the business and the building. Obviously, this is a live police investigation and the family has asked for privacy at this time. HTC wish to extend our sympathies and hope the perpetrators are caught and punished swiftly.

### January 2024 Update on Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) 29/12/23

Good progress again this month:

- Following the site consultations, the Plan has been updated ready for Rule 14 Consultation.
- The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping report produced by AECOM. Expect full report completed early Feb. It's an independent environmental audit that we have to wait for. Copies of the scoping report are available if interested.
- The programme below has been revised, and still a chance of completing by late 2024, but may well end up in 2025. Reluctantly added Jan-March 2025 as delays from the Rule 16 consultation, examination and referendum are quite likely with the timescales out of our control.

Key next actions are: Complete SEA

Start Reg 14 formal consultation. 6 weeks from mid-February 2024.

Neighbourhood Plan Programme				DRAFT																
Ref:	Activity	No of Weeks	Start date	End date	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
1	Review by Cttee & Council Consultations	14 weeks	18/09/23	08/01/24	Completed															
2	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	8 weeks	11/12/23	15/02/24	Future	Future														
3	Publish Draft for Consultation (Rule 14)	6 weeks	15/02/24	29/02/24	Future	Future	Future													
4	Update Plan following consultation	2 weeks	29/03/24	12/04/24	Future															
5	Submit to WBC prepare for Reg 16 Consult	4 weeks	12/04/24	10/05/24	Future															
6	2nd Consultation (Reg 16) (carried out by WBC)	6 weeks	13/05/24	21/06/24	Future															
7	Finalise Plan and prepare for Examination	8 weeks	24/06/24	23/08/24	Future															
8	Examination	1 week	02/09/24	06/09/24	Future															
9	Inspectors Report Preparation	6 weeks	09/09/24	18/10/24	Future															
10	Moifications	2 weeks	21/10/23	01/11/24	Future															
11	Prepare and carry out Referendum	8 weeks	04/11/24	27/12/24	Future															
12	NP comes into force	2 weeks	30/12/24	10/01/25	Future															

key on colour coding: ■ completed ■ future activity ■ activity involving public