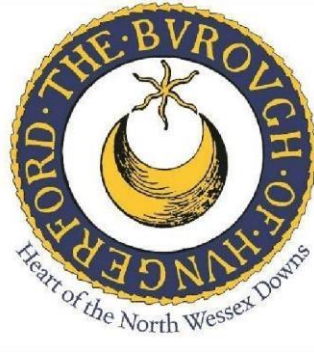


HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES of the **Full Council Meeting** held on Monday 2nd December 2024 at 7.00pm in the Library, Hungerford.

Present: Cllrs, Simpson, Fyfe, Keates, Cole, Knight, Coulthurst, Reeves, Alford, Hudson, Montgomery and Winsler.

Also present: Representatives from Penny Post, the Adviser and Newbury News. Several members of the public including representatives from local businesses, Hungerford Nursery School and PCSO Lee Bremner and PC Luke Smith.

In attendance: Town Clerk, (TC) and RFO.

To support the International Day of People with Disabilities, many of the Councillors and staff present wore purple socks to the meeting. Cllr Coulthurst has led this initiative in Hungerford and has arranged for socks to be on sale, with all the profits going to Swings and Smiles and Parallel.

The Police read out their report. (see attached). The officers present are two of the eight Hungerford & Downlands Team which covers Hungerford to Calcot, excluding Thatcham and Newbury. They added there had been an attempted break in at John O Gaunt School. It is not thought this is a local person and unfortunately there is a lack of forensics to follow it up.

The Police explained that the difference in the figures on the web and in their report is because the team are only giving figures in the report for crimes relevant to the neighbourhood area (e.g. Car crime, ASB related, criminal damage) crimes that effect the community and relevant to the neighbourhood policing team.

They are not including any domestic related assaults, domestic assaults, crimes within the same households because these crimes are irrelevant to the neighbourhood team and do not generally affect others living in the area.

In response to a question the Police advised they do provide the local Neighbourhood Watch Teams with appropriate information, and they would encourage people to start up a Neighbourhood Watch in their road. There is also the option to sign up to text alerts. Crime can be reported by a web form, through 101 or by knocking on the fire station door (*not always manned*).

Members of public put two questions to Town Council (HTC). Below are the questions and responses: -

- 'Given how divisive the Hungerford Town Centre Steering Group committee's proposals of a town square have become - not helped by West Berkshire Council's handling of the way the committee was established in the first place (i.e. with little genuine consultation with retailers, or an open public consultation) - would it not be better to recognise the disharmony and associated lack of progress, and start afresh with a different committee, allowing focus on other matters that look to become challenges to the town (such as WBC's plan to reduce gritting roads, reduce provision of dog litter bins, and increase in fees above the rate of inflation of adult social care provisions?).'*
- 'I am here to express my deep concern over Hungerford Town Council's ongoing participation in, and actions within, the Hungerford High Street Strategy Steering Group. Firstly, as a business owner and resident of Hungerford for 35 years, chairman of Hungerford Chamber of Commerce for seven years and Constable of the Town and Manor for three years, I have never experienced such an argumentative and dysfunctional group as the steering group. It pits the Mayor, Councillors and Council*

against local businesses and other organisations in the town. The resulting discord is not only corrosive to the collaborative spirit that should define local governance, it is causing uncountable hours of wasted time and destroying trust, sowing doubt about the motives and loyalties of individuals as well as organisations.

I too seem to be caught up in the doom loop bubble that is the Steering Group or else I might not have acted in a way that resulted in me having to apologise to the Mayor this evening.

It is possible that you as councillors may feel that the retailers and Chamber of Commerce are acting in an overbearing way and ignoring the general community of people but I can assure we have not. We have made a vast contribution to ideas and suggestions that have been put forward by Adrian, myself, retailers and the Chamber of Commerce. This includes the many retailers who support the creation of a town square with NO loss of parking.

In light of these concerns:

I strongly urge the Town Council to reconsider its support for the Steering Group, the retailers and Chamber of Commerce do not have the power to close this group down, but the Town Council do, and we would wholeheartedly support you if you do.'

Traders present stressed that steering a group is not needed. Any loss of parking will have an effect. The taxi route could be made redundant and easy lift bollards put in without losing parking.

Responses from HTC were 'yes', we need to start afresh and we will be looking at addressing the concerns starting with an informative session to all councillors tonight to come up with a proposal for January's Full Council meeting. The Mayor reiterated her thoughts which are documented in her Mayor's report (see attached). She is upset that information has gone out into the public domain before it was ready which has been detrimental to the town. Concern was voiced over the time and energy wasted and the lack of funding when we have more pressing issues to address. This is affecting people's livelihoods and needs to be closed down.

Members of the public were thanked for coming and left the meeting.

The new headteacher of Hungerford Nursery School gave a presentation (see attached). Afterwards in answer to questions she explained that the numbers of children registered as SEN may rise as they have children who are borderline. They have looked at the process of registering children as SEN and need to make sure it is right for them. The local average is higher at 29%.

FC202400192 Note apologies for absence. Cllrs Carlson and Armstrong

Apologies also from, District Cllr Denise Gaines (DG) from West Berks Council (WBC)

FC202400193 Declarations of interest – None

FC202400194 Approval of Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council of 4th November 2024 and outcome of actions

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Coulthurst

Resolution: Minutes of the meeting of 4th November 2024 were agreed as a true record, two abstentions.

Outcome of actions:

Thanks were expressed to all those that volunteered to marshal.

WBC has been asked whether the bays outside of Dods and the Kebab shop can be joint loading bays/coach drop off points. Also, we have suggested that the corner of Park St/High St should be made a no left turn. Items to be followed up at H&T agenda.

ACTION Clerk to continue to chase progress with costs for cleaning High St footway.

ACTION Clerk will complain to WBC about replacement of the missing cobbles in school alley with concrete. They should have been replaced like for like. Also, the tarmac is in very poor condition and needs repair.

ACTION: Clerk to liaise with HAHA and ask WBC to deliver soil conditioner to Marsh Lane Allotments.

ACTION: Cllr Montgomery is waiting to hear back with a quote for flower tubs for the high street, in order for the Clerk to apply for a member's bid.

FC202400195 Receive Mayor's Report - See attached report.

FC202400196 Receive District Councillor's Reports – No District Councillors were present.

FC202400197 Health & Safety – Receive any complaints or concerns. The Mayor has received a complaint from a lady who when walking their 4-year old son to the Primary School using the zebra crossing on Charnham Street has had a couple of near-misses, with traffic failing to stop when they're already halfway across the road.

ACTION: The Clerk will complain to WBC and add this item to the H&T agenda.
It was noted that this crossing has illuminated columns as well as belisha beacons.

FC202400198 Propose authorisation of payment run (circulated along with copies of invoices) for November.

Proposed: Cllr Winser

Seconded: Cllr Cole

Resolution: Authorise payment run of £39,616.05 for November.

FC202400199 Propose year to date accounts – Refer to circulated Income/Expenditure Report.

Proposed: Cllr Winser

Seconded: Cllr Keates

Resolution: Agree year to date accounts, with a positive variance of £32,367.

FC202400200 Discuss and agree response to Consultation on Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings – Deadline for responses 19th Dec 2024. HTC considered questions from the consultation and expressed support to having the flexibility to meet remotely. It was felt that HTC could put in place any additional rules/restrictions needed through its standing orders.

ACTION: Delegation was given to the clerk to complete the consultation on-line.

FC202400201 Discuss and agree responses to the nine West Berks Council Budget Proposals 2025-26. Deadline for responses 23rd December. After consideration the following responses were agreed:

- 1. To create a voluntary scheme which would allow residents to make an additional charitable contribution on top of their council tax payments.**
Disagree
- 2. To reduce the number of winter gritting routes by revising the criteria used to determine which roads should be treated as part of our Primary Route Network, to align with current national guidance. Our review would consider:**
Agree providing safety not compromised.
- 3. To discontinue the Mobile Library Service from 1 April 2025. The Mobile Driver post will be removed from the staff establishment, and this will reduce expenditure by £42,080 annually out of a total budget of £86,880 for the Mobile Library and At Home service.**
Agree.
- 4. To turn off streetlights in residential locations between midnight and 5am. This will provide an annual saving of £52,000 (5% of the budget).**
Disagree as unsafe.
- 5. To remove 87 dog waste bins and 81 litter bins currently managed by the Grounds Maintenance contractor, on behalf of the Council's Countryside Service. A total of 168 bins overall.**
Disagree
- 6. To remove Downland Sports Centre from the Leisure Management Contract, which means that Everyone Active would no longer be operating the facility for community use.**
We support Compton's decision.
- 7. To cease providing the Adult Respite (ARC) in the Community Service and offer the existing 11 clients alternative provision to meet their needs. This proposal will save the council £28,300 per year.**
Not enough information to comment.

8. **To increase the following fees and charges above the normal annual inflationary rate (October 2024 CPI +2% in 2025/26):**
Not enough information to comment.
9. **To source an external provider to run each of the Resource Centres, with a cost of provision more aligned to that in the private sector. This could include agreement to rent the buildings. If an alternative provider is not found, we will look to provide the services in a different way. We would expect annual budget savings of £469,000.**
Disagree.

ACTION: Clerk to feedback these responses to the on-line budget consultation.

FC202400202 Receive any feedback on recent events – Xmas Lights Switch On and Remembrance Day parade. We have received lots of positive feedback. It was mentioned that at the Remembrance service people are stood as far back as the John O Gaunt Pub and they can't see the wreath laying. Next year Cllr Keates will arrange for a couple of briefed marshalls to move people closer to the memorial.

FC202400203 Propose change to standing orders as recommended by F&GP. Refer to draft wording.

Proposed: Cllr Fyfe

Seconded: Cllr Coulthurst

Resolution: Agree draft wording to be added to pg 11 section 4 – *'Prior to electing a new Chairman of a committee, Councillors should have the opportunity to raise any questions. The prospective Chairman should be present at a Full Council Part 2 meeting to answer any questions, except during exceptional circumstances.'*

FC202400204 Receive any reports (no more than 3 minutes per report which cannot contain any proposals). Cllr Hudson advised all the information for Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 16 has been sent to WBC who have advised that they will need to sign it off but this can't be done until their next Full Council meeting which isn't until March 2025.

ACTION: Clerk to ask WBC if it can be added to any extraordinary agenda that takes place prior. Cllr Hudson advised a Speed Indicator Device is up and running in Charnham Street

FC202400205 Consider recommendations from F&GP for Annual Budget and Precept request for April 2025-26.

Proposed: Cllr Winser

Seconded: Cllr Knight

Resolution: Agree grant of £5350 for Youth & Community Centre for 2025-2026 (year 1)

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Knight

Resolution: Agree to financially support the Youth & Community Centre for year 2 (£5600) and year 3 (£5,900).

Proposed: Cllr Winser

Seconded: Cllr Keates

Resolution: Agree Draft Annual Precept request for April 2025-26 of £383,939, 4.6% increase on last year (subject to receipt of taxbase) with an Annual Budget of £437,953.

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.

FC202400206 Consider Town Council's future involvement in Town Centre Strategy Steering Group – Cllr Cole provided a presentation of the progress of the strategy group so far and problems encountered.

ACTION: A proposal will be put forward to January Full Council. Add to the agenda.

FC202400207 Agree to dissolve Staff Committee

Proposed: Cllr Winser

Seconded: Cllr Fyfe

Resolution: To dissolve the staff committee.

ACTION: Clerk will make necessary amendments to policies. Future issues will be dealt with instead by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, or F&GP Part 2.

FC202400208 Propose awarding of Freedom of the Town to REME

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Keates

Resolution: To award the Freedom of the Town to REME.

Meeting closed 9.30pm

POLICE UPDATE December 2024

On the 10th November the whole team were in the town for the Remembrance parade and service. As always this event is well attended by local people showing their respect. PC Marsh laid the wreath this year on behalf of the team

12th November some members of the team along with a representative from Trading Standards spent the morning at the Town Hall with the U3A. We shared a short presentation on scams and various Frauds and took plenty of questions.

13th November as part of VAWG (Violence against women and girls) the team were in the High Street raising awareness, handing out leaflets and answering questions.

On the 14th November as part of Op Sceptre (a national campaign around the dangers of carrying knives) the team carried out knife sweeps in Hungerford. Thank you to Mayor Helen for joining us.

As December rapidly approaches the team are looking forward to the annual Christmas light switch, the Extravaganza and the festivities that this time of the year brings.

For the month of November

2 reports of ASB.

2 reports of Criminal damage. Both of these relate to separate incidents of car tyres being slashed.

Sometime overnight 24th-25th a van parked on the High Street was broken into and a number of tools were stolen. If anyone witnessed anything or has any information please get in touch quoting crime number: 43240569855. There continues to be a spate of van breaks across West Berkshire. We will look to hold some tool marking events in the town soon.

The Team

The current set up of the Hungerford and Downlands Neighbourhood Police Team is 1 x Inspector, 1 x Sergeant, 3 x Police Constables and 4 x Police Community Support Officers.

The team are contactable by email but this should not be used in an emergency or for reporting crime as it is not monitored 24/7.

HungerfordandDownlandsNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

Please keep reporting incidents to us via 101, the TVP website (www.thamesvalley.police.uk) or 999, in an emergency.

Hungerford Nursery School Head Teacher Introduction – Chloe Summerville

- Teacher in West Berks for 19 years.
- Worked at St Finian's Catholic Primary School-joined as an NQT in 2005 and stayed there until leaving at Easter to join HNS.
- I was the EYFS teacher for the last 13 years but had experience of teaching in all year groups prior to this.
- When I returned from maternity leave from my youngest (8 years ago) I took on the position of Assistant Head/Deputy and supported the Headteacher with many aspects of leading the school-there were only two of us on SLT.
- During my time at St Finian's I also had three children-all boys! They are currently 13, 12 and 8-my youngest still attends St Finian's and it has been lovely to continue to be part of their community as a parent.
- Community is crucial and I am excited to be part of the Hungerford Community!

My aim for Hungerford Nursery is for us to continue to play an important part of the community, providing a high quality of education for the children who attend.

Change can be tricky to navigate and taking over from Suzanne who had been at HNS for so long was a daunting prospect. However, the staff and governors have been fully supportive of me and have made the transition as smooth as possible.

Hungerford Nursery School - Current picture

- 116 pupils/110 families
- 20% Early Years Pupil Premium (vulnerable)
- 24% of our 2 year olds receive Free entitlement 2 year old funding (vulnerable)
- 14% are on our SEND register including 1 EHCP (Education & Health Care Plan) with 3 more submitted and a further 2 more to be submitted. 10% are currently being monitored before a decision about whether they should be placed on the SEND register.
- 9% are EAL (English as an Additional Language)
- Breakfast club and afterschool club provides wraparound care for families who need this provision and is well used and holiday club provides provision for children during the school holidays.
- We have fixed our 15 and 30 hour childcare offer and parents can choose from our offer of:
15 hours being either 9am-12pm every day or 9am-2pm x3 days a week
30 hours being 9am-3:30pm Mon-Thurs and 9am-1pm on a Friday
Any hours outside of these are chargeable.
- Fixing of our offer has made staffing easier to manage.
- We have 8 new children starting with us after Christmas which will take us up to last year's number on roll. We have also been able to accommodate the requests for increases in hours for our current children.

Successes since April 2024

- Numbers have remained good
- WiFi at nursery has been improved - thank you to John Downe! This is enabling us to implement online learning journals so that parents feel more involved in their children's learning journey.
- Boxford Woods trips have happened -all pre-schoolers will have had one visit by end of term.
- Hungerford Resource Centre - link has been formed. We visit the centre monthly with a small group of children-the first two visits have been a HUGE success!
- New Governors have been recruited-still need more!
- Nativities-happening in school and in church.
- Solar panels are up and running-thanks to John Downe! More environmental initiatives are in the early stages which link into the DfE requirement for all educational settings to have a climate action plan by 2025.
- Links being forged with Hungerford Primary School - new HT.

Challenges

As a new HT I am learning as I go along and will continue to learn about the challenges facing us as a MNS! I am involved in as many task groups and forums as possible to help my understanding of what is involved.

Family Hub Update

- Growing Team - FSW for 10 hours per week, Outreach Worker, plus admin support
- Courses:
 - Ante-Natal for 4 weeks running at the doctors surgery with support from midwife.
 - Mini Explorers runs every Thursday in Croft Hall 20-40 people each session
 - CAN Course supporting cooking and health eating for parents
 - BOOST

Challenges

- Getting people to attend courses
- Volunteers to support the courses
- The Croft Hall refurb

Mayors Report - December 2024

General Sir Mike Jackson

Hungerford gathered to pay their respects to Sir Mike, it was heartwarming to see an impromptu walk behind the family to the town's war memorial in Bridge Street. Hungerford Town Council send sincere condolences to Sir Mike's family and friends.

Greenham Common Charity Awards

I was delighted to be asked to present an award again this year. It was an incredible evening with some very worthy winners. Hosted by Ken Bruce MBE. Congratulations to Newbury Soup Kitchen who won charity of the year.

Remembrance Sunday

As always, it's a huge honour to lay the wreath for the town. Thank you to all those who make the remembrance service run safely and smoothly with honour and respect. I was thrilled veterans led proceedings this year. Thank you Close Armoured Support Battalion REME for their continued support. The poppy appeal has already raised a whopping £30k in donations this year. Congratulations.

Allotments

The freehold of a new allotment area has kindly been gifted to the town. Details of the land transfer are currently with our solicitor. I will bring you more details on this in due course, I just want to check they would like their name in the public domain at this time. This is such a kind gift to the town and HTC were completely blown away by the generosity. Thank you.

Town Centre Steering Group

This is certainly a hot topic of conversation, and I know a lot of negative comments have been directed at me in my role as town mayor. I would like you to know I **did** vote in favour of a town centre square which would have resulted in the loss of four car parking spaces, when it was originally presented to the steering group. Alistair's proposal (in my opinion) was the best-looking town square from all the ideas presented. The idea was being worked through. WBC gave feedback on the highway layout which meant it would need to change to overcome highway concerns. The group also considered deliveries of stock to retailers; these were all extremely important notes for consideration. I was looking at other ways to mitigate any loss to parking including allowing permit holders to be able to park off street to free up space. Only on conclusion of all these major points would a scheme be drawn up for full consultation. This was why I voted in favour a second time. Any new proposal would have considered these concerns.

The town centre steering group was bound by a set of TOR's which sadly were not followed. As town mayor I must consider all the resident's views not just those of the retailers. I have requested a part two agenda item this evening to update the team and go over some sensitive feedback which is personal in nature. I hope the council will then look to bring a resolution to a part one agenda item in January.

Christmas

Thank you to all those involved in yesterday's Christmas light switch on. The town looks magical once more. Formal thanks will be sent to all those who participated in yesterday's fun. Our Christmas light donation page is now live on the good exchange. HTC appreciates your kind donations which will again be match funded. Sadly, HTC has received a few complaints about the small trees on the buildings. The trees are ordered months in advance and delivered in bulk, we have a very small window (48hrs) to feed back any concerns, this sometimes can be hard to determine in time. The trees were delivered on the smaller size of the 3-4ft we ordered. The contractor has agreed to reduce the cost of each tree by £2 as a good will gesture.

Devolution

HTC will be looking to feedback on West Berkshire's live consultation, relating to budgeting. Potentially needing to step in and safeguard service levels if WBC is minded to, reduce services because of budget pressures. I have asked WBC how they are determining how far they can reduce services whilst fulfilling their statutory obligation as a local authority. So far, HTC hasn't received any answers to our questions. Personally, I believe WBC has delivered this proposal too late in the day to enable HTC to budget effectively for any lost services in 2025. HTC's budget is almost complete, the WBC consultation closes in late December which will then be too late to find additional funds for any lost services. Please complete the online consultation and have your say.

I look forward to meeting up with you all over the next couple of weeks at various festive events within the community.

Cllr Helen Simpson
Mayor

**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES REPORT FOR FULL COUNCIL MEETING ON 2ND DECEMBER
2024**

MONTH 8 INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 2024

101 FINANCE:

Full Precept received.

102 ADMINISTRATION:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £8,360 positive variance. Salaries of £7,381.09 have not been included this month.

103 GRANTS & DONATIONS:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £2,800 positive variance this month.

104 POOL HOUSE:

Net Income over Expenditure is on budget.

105 CONTINGENCY:

No Expenditure this month.

106 TOURISM SUPPORT BUDGET:

No Expenditure this month.

109 HUNGERFORD 2036 PROJECT:

No Expenditure this month.

201 RECREATION & AMENITIES:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £51 positive variance.

202 WAR MEMORIAL GROUND:

Net Expenditure is a £55 positive variance this month.

203 ST SAVIOURS:

No Income or Expenditure this month.

204 CROFT FIELD:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £304 negative variance. A refund of £133 was due to a cancellation.

205 LIBRARY MAINTENANCE COSTS:

No Expenditure this month.

206 TRIANGLE FIELD:

Net Income over Expenditure is an £41 negative variance this month.

301 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS:

Net Income or Expenditure is a £32,589 positive variance this month.

302 HIGHWAYS:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £1,040 positive variance.

303 CCTV:

No Income or Expenditure this month.

November's Net Income over Expenditure is an £32,367 positive variance.

The Year-to-Date Net Income over Expenditure is a £78,605 positive variance.

Claire Winser

Chair of F&GP

29th November 2024

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