

WESTBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**AT THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT THE LAVERTON,
BRATTON ROAD, WESTBURY ON MONDAY, 6th JANUARY 2014 AT 7.00 PM.**

PRESENT: Cllr D Windess (Chairman)

**Cllrs S Andrews, D Bradshaw, I Cunningham, Mrs S Ezra, R Hawker,
D Jenkins, G King, Mrs C Mitchell, F Morland, M Sutton,
I Taylor, W D Tout, and P Wakeman.
Mr K Harvey, Town Clerk, and Mrs B Mantle.**

1 member of the public.

T.2986

PUBLIC FORM:

Dr P Biggs:

- Trees at All Saints Crescent.
- Congratulations on the Christmas Event and town Christmas Lights.
- Sale of Laverton and Swimming Pool Commemorative Mugs – request for information on numbers sold.
- Agenda Item 10 – Budget 2014/15.
- Agenda Item 11 – Small Grants 2013/14.
- Agenda Item 15 – to improve response to matters raised in the Public Form.
- Agenda Item 17 – Proposed Town Clerk’s blog.
- Unnecessary, tedious debates at Town Council meetings.

T.2987

ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE:

Cllr S Miles - Unwell

T.2988

DISPENSATIONS. Nil.

T.2989

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST. Nil.

T.2990

MINUTES: Following amendment, the Minutes of the Town Council Meetings held on the 4th November and 12th November 2013 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

T.2991

MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES. Nil.

Members’ matters arising from these Minutes. Nil.

T.2992

POLICE REPORT. The Clerk reported he had contacted PC Hucks regarding the Police Commissioner’s statement that police officers will not be attending and reporting to town and parish meetings in future. His sergeant will be seeking clarification. This matter had been raised at the recent Westbury Community Area Board meeting, when the Police Inspector also undertook to look into this further. PC Hucks has submitted a very detailed report covering every logged incident for the past two months, but the Clerk will ask him to submit a summary report in future.

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T.2993 WILTSHIRE COUNCILLORS' REPORTS.

Cllr R Hawker.

- Analysis of the comprehensive survey in relation to the town campus will be debated at the next Westbury Community Area Board meeting in February.
- Complaints have been made about the horses and ponies kept on land adjacent to Mane Way. Due to lack of grass during the winter, the ponies are chewing bark off the trees. The RSPCA have inspected the animals, and consider their condition not to be serious enough to take action, and Wiltshire Council has taken what action it can. Persimmon's, the landowner, has given permission for these animals to be grazed on this land.

Cllr G King.

- Wiltshire Council Cabinet meeting on 17th December 2013 considered options regarding alterations in the waste collection service. These alterations involve re-organisation of collection rounds and working hours, and overall reduction of vehicles in the fleet. Changes will be implemented in two phases and savings are estimated at £475,000 and £560,000 this year, and £700,000 to £875,000 per year thereafter.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) schedules – six week public consultation, which will take the form of electronic and paper consultations, and will include town and parish councils.

Cllr D Jenkins.

- During 2014, Wiltshire Council will be producing its new car parking policy. It is essential that the Town Council considers and contributes fully to this process.
- Vivash Park – requested that the name Vivash be preserved. Cllr Hawker will put this to the next Highways, Planning & Development Committee meeting.

T.2994 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES. The following Minutes were received and noted:

Finance Committee	-	9 th December 2013
General Purposes Committee	-	2 nd December 2013
Highways, Planning & Development Committee	-	18 th November 2013
Highways, Planning & Development Committee	-	16 th December 2013

T.2995 MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES. Nil.

T.2996 NOTICE of MOTION received from the Finance Committee dated 9th December 2013.

DRAFT BUDGET 2014/15

- a. To adopt the Draft Budget 2014/15 as recommended, excluding any council tax support grant from Wiltshire Council and as amended to reflect the increase in Grant from £2,000 to £4,000 for Crosspoint, and

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confirm the Precept as £343,697.00, representing a 11.92% increase, which equates to a Band "D" equivalent of £78.60.

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Draft Budget for 2014/15, excluding any council tax support grant from Wiltshire Council, and as amended to reflect the increase in Grant from £2,000 to £4,000 for Crosspoint. The Precept was confirmed as £343,697.00, representing a 11.92% increase, which equates to a Band "D" equivalent of £78.60.

Cllr Morland voted against this motion

- b. To instruct the Clerk and the Chair of the Finance Committee to produce an appropriate press release to explain the background and reasons for this year's precept increase.

APPROVED.

T.2997 NOTICE of MOTION received from the Finance Committee dated 9th December 2013.

Small Grants 2013/14.

- a. To approve the small grant applications for 2013/14 amounting to £11,570.
- b. To consider an additional grant application for £350 received from the Cygnets Pre-School to purchase replacement ICT toys/equipment to meet their recent OFSTED inspection recommendation.

With the exception of the Leigh Park Play & Learn grant application, which was deferred pending additional information, the list of Small Grants 2013/14 was approved as submitted. (See attachment to these Minutes.)

The additional grant application for £350 received from the Cygnets Pre-School was **APPROVED**.

T.2998 NOTICE of MOTION received from the Finance Committee dated 9th December 2013.

Internal Audit Report 2013/14 (First Interim).

- a. To accept the report (previously circulated with the Finance Agenda 09.12.2013), together with the response to the Auditor's recommendations.
- b. Debit Card Authority – Westbury Town Council Business Account. (Action Plan R5). That the current daily transaction limit on the two Lloyds debit cards held by the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk be reduced from £700 to £500, and that a debit card be approved for Mr D Lawrence, Laverton Hall Development & Marketing Officer, with a daily

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transaction limit of £250 to enable the efficient running of the Laverton Bar.

APPROVED.

T.2999 NOTICE of MOTION received from Cllr Mrs S Ezra dated 12th December 2013.

Bus Shelter at the White Horse Health Centre. Numerous complaints have been received regarding this bus shelter. It is an open cantilever type, which affords bus passengers attending the Surgery no protection from wind, rain or cold. It is proposed to replace this bus shelter with a more substantial enclosed shelter, and for the current cantilever shelter to be removed to Westbury Leigh to replace the old dilapidated bus shelter, erected originally by a private company to sell advertising space. The Community Area Transport Group has agreed to fund £3,500 for this project in anticipation of match funding from Westbury Town Council.

To approve match funding of £3,500 to remove the current bus shelter at White Horse Health Centre to Westbury Leigh and replace with a more substantial, enclosed bus shelter. Funding of £2,500 to be taken from the bus shelter provision ear marked reserve and £1,000 from the rolling capital programme.

APPROVED.

T.3000 NOTICE of MOTION received from Cllr I Cunningham dated 17th December 2013.

Background:

Many councillors are very busy and fail to get motions onto the agenda in time; often the arrival of an agenda reminds a councillor that they have failed to put forward an agenda item. The council removed the "items for next meeting" last agenda on all meetings some time ago; whilst this item made for longer meetings and possibly hurried/ill-conceived motions the reminder aspect was, in retrospect useful.

Motion:

That this council notifies councillors of upcoming council and committee meetings by a "call for agenda items" 7 days before the closing of the agenda where possible or immediately if there are not 7 days available.

This should be done by e-mail whenever possible to save money and using a contact group to save staff time unless any councillor specifically requests a paper based notification; the process can exclude councillors who don't feel this would be useful to them by informing the clerk; they could easily be left out of the e-mail group.

Financial Implications:

Minimal – unless some councillors insist on postal/paper reminders; if postal reminders are a significant request then this policy could be reviewed. Staff time

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should be negligible if they set up a reminder and use an e-mail group to send a standardised e-mail.

Benefits:

Councillors would bring forth motions and possibly better motions (more time to think). The agenda item reminder being (mostly) in electronic form would also serve as a better reminder for the upcoming meeting itself for those councillors who use e-mail and electronic calendars on their computer, tablet or phone as they would be using the device when the agenda call came in; councillors who use paper only diaries would not be disadvantaged by the reminder.

Disadvantages:

Might make for longer meetings – but we should not use this as a reason not to have motions.

APPROVED.

T.3001

NOTICE of MOTION received from Cllr I Cunningham dated 17th December 2013.

Background:

Members of the public who speak in the forum are often disappointed to find that the council appears to “ignore” their comments by simply moving on to its agenda. It is also frustrating for councillors who would like to discuss the topics raised. Clearly it is not possible (or legal) to discuss significant items that were not on the agenda; as for example, councillors and members of the public may have made a decision not attend based on the agenda and councillors would not have had time to consider the item etc. so we can’t change this directly. However, by explaining the situation more clearly and perhaps offering a route for the public to promote a topic directly, we could improve the perception. I am not trying to undermine the role of councillors in representing their constituents but rather make us more approachable.

Note: this motion in no way affects the right of a member of the public to turn up, sign in and speak as they always have done.

Motion

That this council should make efforts to seem more responsive to communications from the public via e-mail, letter or in person by adopting the following:

- a. The chair to make a statement at each meeting *before* any public forum explaining, that according to our standing orders (and the law), councillors will be unable to debate an item introduced during the forum unless the item is also already on the agenda.
- b. Subject to our rules of debate (as set out in our standing orders), topics proposed by a member of the public at least 7 days *before* any meeting can be considered by the Clerk as possible agenda topics for full council

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or an appropriate committee; the Clerk should give a decision to the member of the public (with any explanation deemed appropriate by the Clerk) but it should be made clear that the member of the public can still speak on (a legal) item at the public forum whether or not the topic was adopted for the agenda.

- c. The Clerk be asked to draw up a short article for public consumption to explain the situation with regard to the public forum, communications to the council & council meetings (including items 1 and 2 if adopted), which will be:
 - i. Published on the website (possibly under Clerk's blog).
 - ii. Placed on our main noticeboards.
 - iii. Sent, where appropriate, in responses to e-mails or letters from the public.
- d. Public forum items or communications presented to the council (that were received after the agenda deadline) can be added to the next appropriate council agenda immediately (at the current meeting) by a request from any councillor (with a voting motion if necessary); but with no debate of the item itself at the current meeting.

Financial Implications:

There would be some staff time involved. But unless there is a substantial uptake in public participation it won't be much; it is hoped that this change might increase public participation.

Benefits:

The council would be seen as more responsive. Members of the public would at least understand our apparent "indifference" to their comments. The council might review more items which are of importance to the town.

Disadvantages:

Vexatious persons might use this option to cause "difficulties", but we do not say that their items *will* be added to agenda; as long as we let them know why the item will not be added that should be fine.

Items which break our 6 month rule; are not relevant to the operations of the council; are illegal; don't show respect etc. could all just be turned down on a procedural basis - or even length of agenda. The Clerk is our responsible officer and should be trusted to make sensible judgements on our part.

The member of the public can be reminded:

- a. The clerk and chair are not *required* to add any item to the agenda.
- b. The member of the public can still speak at the forum on the matter (subject to normal legal restrictions).

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- c. The member of the public may still approach any other councillor to bring forward the topic at a meeting or to complain that their suggested item was “wrongly” turned down.

APPROVED.

T.3002 NOTICE of MOTION received from Cllr I Cunningham, Chair of the Website Working Group, dated 17th December 2013.

Background:

Often during debate one of the following occurs:
it becomes clear that more information is needed which cannot be obtained immediately – the Clerk (or sometimes a member) undertakes to find out more the council instructs the Clerk to write a letter. In such circumstances, items have a habit of “getting lost”; everyone is busy, requests are often not replied to, letters not acknowledged but unless a councillor thinks to ask, the status often remains unresolved.

Motion:

Under circumstances where a motion is deferred/halted in order to allow more information to be obtained or that the Clerk is asked to write on behalf of the council: the agenda item is deemed “incomplete” and is *automatically* added to the next agenda as a “Follow up” item (or summary reminder/thereof as written by the Clerk) for the next meeting of the council or relevant committee. Further, if the matter is not resolved at the next meeting, the item is added to the next agenda etc. until such time as the matter is resolved or the council votes to not to continue this. Note: it would therefore be possible for the council to choose *not* to add an item for follow-up on the 1st instance by voting not to continue the item - but this would have to be a deliberate.

Financial:

There would be some staff time involved. Agendas might use more paper.

Benefits:

Items would not get “lost”. The council would be more focussed. Councillors would not feel that items had been lost – when they may be on-going. The council might accept less “foot dragging” by other bodies with which we interact. We will “keep an eye” on things that take more than one sessions to complete.

Disadvantages:

Items may remain “stuck” on agendas through no fault of the council or its staff.

- a. It is simple to move “next item” at any meeting
- b. The council can vote *not* to continue the item

It was **RESOLVED** to refer this matter to the Committee Criteria Task and Finish Group for consideration and report back to Town Council.

T.3003 NOTICE of MOTION received from Cllr I Cunningham, Chair of the Website Working Group, dated 17th December 2013.

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Background:

There are a number of issues that face the council that are not well understood by the public. A recent example that we have discussed is the precept and our support grant. Whilst councillors can (and should) explain these things to the electorate, people are suspicious that we might have a political point to make. On several occasions recently we have identified communication with the town as being the most important point i.e.. if only people understood what was going on then... Misinformation is rife - for example many in the town think that town councillors have just had “another” increase in their allowances. A non-political, “helpful” blog which discusses the issues and presents facts might prove both interesting and useful

Motion:

That the town council’s website should be altered to include a “Clerk’s Blog”. This should be used to provide explanations of issues facing the council, decisions made etc. It should be updated on a regular basis – at least as often as we hold full council meetings. The topics would normally be chosen by the Clerk – although full council can suggest items for inclusion (e.g. an item discussed at council). The blog will not be a forum; members of the public can communicate about blog items in the normal way and if the Clerk feels that a point or answer to question is generally useful this can be included in the blog at the Clerk’s discretion.

The effectiveness of the blog should be reviewed every six months by the website working group. [Councillors, if the blog concept is approved might like to consider how this should be done – web site group is just a suggestion].

The content of the blog could also be highlighted to local newspapers – they might choose to carry it.

Financial Implications:

There would be some staff time involved but this should only be of a few hours every couple of months. The items for the blog might be generally useful information for the council in any case. It would seem sensible in many cases for the same information to be distributed to councillors before it is blogged; if an explanation is useful for the town it would probably be useful for councillors and help their deliberations so some of the time spent on the blog article might already be spent on providing background information to councillors for meetings.

Benefits:

Better understanding of the workings of the council for the public and perhaps also councillors. An opportunity to pre-empt “issues” by release of factual information into the public domain. It might make our website more interesting.

Disadvantages:

Some people might be concerned about the possibility that some items might be too political – but the Clerk is our responsible officer and we should trust his

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discretion; further councillors would still have the power of oversight by appropriate motions at full council.

FAILED.

T.3004 NOTICE of MOTION received from Cllr D Jenkins dated 19th December 2013.

Commemoration of the Great War 2014

To approve funding of up to £3,000 from the Rolling Capital Programme to commemorate this historic event.

APPROVED.

T.3005 PROPOSED SOLAR FARM ADJACENT TO THE SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS, SLAG LANE, WESTBURY (Planning Application W/12/02081/FUL British Solar Renewables Ltd). It was the intention of central government that these sites would accrue planning gain similarly to Section 106 agreements. Unfortunately, it has not been included in legislation, although government is now looking at this closely. It was considered unlikely that a developer, who has already gained planning permission as in this case, would consider negotiating any community benefit. Should another similar application be made for a site in Westbury, the importance of involvement by the Town Council at an early stage was accepted.

T.3006 TELEPHONE AND INTERNET SERVICES. British Telecom (BT) currently provides internet services to both the Town Council and The Laverton Hall at a cost of £770.40 per annum, whilst telephone services are provided by South West Communications Group Ltd (SWC) under contract until 2015. In the past any queries with SWC have been dealt with efficiently, although with BT this has not always been the case. Currently BT charges £64.20 plus VAT per month for the two connections, and SWC are offering the same two connections for £26 plus VAT per month, resulting in a saving of £458.40 per annum.

It was **RESOLVED** to combine all telephone and internet services under South West Communications Group Ltd.

T.3007 COMMITTEE CRITERIA TASK & FINISH GROUP. It was **RESOLVED** to enlarge this task and finish group by two places, and Cllrs I Cunningham and I Taylor were duly appointed with immediate effect.

T.3008 CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE/MATTERS:

Royal British Legion Westbury Branch. Letter thanking the Town Council for the awarded grant. Noted.

T.3009 THE LAVERTON INSTITUTE TRUST MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP. Cllr Bradshaw reported that the website continues to attract numerous visits, with the wedding and what's on pages the most popular after The Laverton

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homepage, which received a total of 92 hits during December. The following on both Facebook and Twitter has substantially increased over the last few months. Hall hire for December was lower than the same time last year, due to cancelled bookings. Tablecloths are now available for hire for a reduced rate from £6 down to £3 each due to favourable terms having been negotiated for laundering.

Cllr Morland expressed his concern that so much of the Town Council's budget is spent on running The Laverton as a community hall. The Clerk commented that in comparison with other local towns, this figure was minimal.

T.3010 **CCTV WORKING GROUP.** Cllr Mrs Ezra reported that all cameras within the town are now working, with the exception of the new camera in Grassacres Park where its installation has been delayed due to the very wet conditions preventing vehicles entering the park.

T.3011 **EMERGENCY PLANNING WORKING GROUP.** Cllr Cunningham reported on the proposal to provide an external electrical hook up point to enable a generator to be hired in to provide power to The Laverton, which it is planned to use as the local control hub in case of a severe weather emergency. Work on the town's Emergency Plan is ongoing and advice is currently being sought from Wiltshire Council on the flood element of the Plan.

T.3012 **COMMUNICATIONS BY THE TOWN MAYOR.** Cllr Windess congratulated the Events Working Group on the Christmas events in the town, and gave details of his forthcoming Comedy and Curry Night and his entry to the Bath Half Marathon.

T.3013 **ACCOUNTS.**

Payment of Accounts. On report by the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the List of Payments made since the last meeting, or to be made, and to confirm the action of the Clerk, the Mayor and one other member in signing the necessary orders for payment and Bank Transfers as follows:

2 nd December 2013	-	£51,360.22
6 th January 2014	-	£35,009.38

10.00 pm

**Signed on behalf of the meeting
this third day of March 2014**

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Chairman

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