



CHIPPING NORTON TOWN COUNCIL

THE GUILDHALL, CHIPPING NORTON, OXFORDSHIRE OX7 5NJ

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Office Hours: Mon – Fri 9am – 1pm

Minutes of the **Community Town Meeting** held on Monday 4th October 2021
in the Upper Hall, the Town Hall at 7pm.

The following members were present:

Cllr G Mazower (Mayor)
Cllr S Coleman (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr N Bradley
Cllr C Butterworth
Cllr L Carter
Cllr R Foakes
Cllr J Graves
Cllr D Heyes
Cllr R Poole
Cllr L Tuckwell
Cllr N Whitmill

Also in attendance:

Kay Linnington – Deputy Town Clerk
Terry Palmer – Town Hall Keeper

50 members of the public

- 1 **Welcome and speech from the Mayor**
Cllr G Mazower, Mayor gave a warm welcome and speech – see attached.

- 2 **Town Councils work in progress**
Reports from Committees
Finance and Resources
Cllr S Coleman gave a report – see attached.
Communities
Cllr S Coleman gave a report – see attached.
Strategic Planning
Cllr D Heyes gave a report – see attached.
Traffic Advisory Committee
Cllr J Graves gave a report – see attached.

3 Reports from Oxfordshire County Councillor and West Oxfordshire County Councillor

- East Chipping Norton SDA (Tank Farm): Cllr G Saul gave an update on the more positive engagement we were now getting from Oxfordshire County Council's officers and cabinet on Tank Farm.
- HGV Working Group: Cllr G Saul gave a brief update on the steps being taken by OCC Highways Officers to explore an alternative lorry route using the Rollright Stones road but with a diversion around the Stones themselves - along with investigating other HGV mitigation steps for the town.

4 Question and answer session

Q: A resident voiced concerns about the new cinema opening in Horsefair stating that it will cause more parking problems in the town. The same resident also questioned why 1200 were being built and why did the Town Council agree to the planning application and how much did it cost to produce the 'Vision Statement'?

A: Cllr Heyes reported that we did not agree to 1200 houses being passed through. The original plan was for 600 then it went up to 1400 where we objected strongly. It was then changed back down to 1200 where once again the Town Council sent its objections. Cllr D Heyes stated that the Town Council had to accept that 1200 houses will be built. The Town Council decided to create a vision statement to set out how we would like the houses to look. £5,000.00 was spent to produce the vision statement document that was delivered to every household in the town. Another resident asked, "what can we do as a Town Council to have more say on planning applications and to stop being overruled all the time?" Cllr D Heyes stated that the Town Council would push as much as we can to have some influence on planning applications. We will consult our community on major developments.

Q: A resident asked, "why are the Christmas trees costing so much money?"

A: Cllr Coleman reported that we are having trees this year but there are health and safety concerns, so advice was taken from a Health and Safety Expert. We decided to consult an expert contractor to ensure that the lights are dealt with in a safe way to protect our community. Cllr G Mazower added that the old lights in the big trees need to be replaced and that in itself would be expensive.

Q: A resident stated concerns on parking in New Street by the recreation ground. He said that he could not get past a vehicle on foot with his mobility trolley without going on the road – he asked if anything could be done. Could a car park be put in the recreation ground?

A: Cllr Graves reported that the New Street recreation is owned by the Field Reeves and that it is not common land. She stated that it is open for vehicles to park for special occasions for example, weddings and funerals. Cllr Graves would raise this at the next Traffic Advisory Committee meeting.

A resident congratulated the Town Council on a successful community town meeting and thanked them for tidying up Middle Row where she is a resident.

Q: A resident asked the question “why are we giving special dispensations to Town Councillors who have missed meetings?”

A: Cllr G Mazower stated that we had received a request for a special dispensation for a long serving councillor and in these exceptional circumstances it was approved by council that the councillor, who has served the community for over 40 years be granted special dispensation. Cllr D Heyes went to say that in the covid pandemic the 6-month rule of a councillor needing to attend 6 monthly meetings for a consecutive period was made exempt.

5 Break out group discussions

The meeting went into a break-out discussion session for both Councillors and residents to discuss certain topics.

6 Feedback from group discussions Key points raised from each group

Supporting families and young people

- The group discussed and raised the point of the need for more emergency services with the expansion of the town.
- It was reported that the Women’s Institute are to set up a group to help support young mums in the town.

Town expansion

- The possible timescale for the Tank Farm development was discussed and it was noted that the developers would have this information to share.
- A question was raised asking how can the community influence the decisions made on developments? Cllr D Heyes explained that the Vision Statement that had been prepared by the Town Council was a way of helping the community and hope that by doing this it was a way of influencing the decisions that are made on their behalf.
- Talks of a possible road through the allotments was discussed by the group and views were given.

Queen’s Jubilee celebrations

- Ideas for the Jubilee Celebrations were discussed that will coincide with the Town Festival in June 2022 which is being organised by the Lions.

HGVs

- Problems with HGV's going through the town were discussed and it was hoped that the problem will be something the Town Council will keep looking at to resolve.

How to nourish, empower and connect our community

- The key discussions for this group were focusing on how we could connect better with the younger community through schools and the leisure centre by using different resources in the town.
- How we make new young families moving to the town more welcome and make them part of the community finding ways to draw the old and the new members of the community together.
- GP services – it was discussed how they do not seem to have the time or resources to connect with the community. How can we change this in the future?

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.31pm

Signed as a correct record and each page initialled by the Mayor:

Mayor.....

Date.....

Mayor's Welcome and Speech/Georgia Mazower
Annual community meeting
4 October 2021

On behalf of the town council, I'd like to give you a very warm welcome to this annual community meeting. Like so much else, this has been delayed because of the pandemic, so I'm delighted that it's finally happening.

Across the country, these annual community meetings are intended to be an opportunity for councillors to listen to the views of the people who have elected them, and we've tried to give this evening a structure that will best enable this to happen.

Before we begin, I'll just run through the agenda which is in front of you.

Under agenda item 1: I will take just a few minutes to highlight some of the work in progress and emerging priorities.

Next we'll hear from Cllr Sandra Coleman about the work of the Finance Committee and the Communities Committee, from Cllr David Heyes on Strategic Planning – and then Cllr Jo Graves on the Traffic Advisory Committee.

Under agenda item 3: We'll hear from our County Councillor and District Councillor Geoff Saul.

That leads on to the **question and answer session**. Terry will have a roving mike, so if you wish to speak or ask a question, please can you say your name - for the minutes - and wait for the mike. If you have a question that you don't want to ask publicly, please jot it down on the post-it notes with your contact information.

Next will be a BREAK and **Refreshments** at the bar - there's soft drinks and wine - and please feel free to help yourselves throughout the meeting. The break is also, obviously, an opportunity to talk to individual councillors.

Apart from myself and Councillor Saul all other councillors are sitting with you at the tables. (Please could councillors stand).

After the break we'll be in what we're calling breakout group discussions – really that means five tables, which will each discuss individual issues, and people can decide which table they'd like to join, and you can see the topics on the agenda. If you want to talk to a councillor about another topic or issue that's also fine.

At around 8.45 we'll get the feedback from the group discussions, and that will conclude the meeting.

I should also say that at the moment, we are sadly without our Clerk, Luci Ashbourne who's had to take compassionate leave for family reasons – so if there's a question that Kay, our

Deputy Clerk, or any of our councillors, don't have the details to hand on, we'll of course come back to you with fuller answers.

I should also say a word about Covid – we've spaced the seating, but if anybody wishes to socially distance, please move the chairs. Normally we have the windows open in the Town Hall for increased ventilation, but because the acoustics in this space are so difficult, unless people feel very strongly they're closed, just so people can hear better. But we're very happy to open them if that's the preference.

In the next few minutes, then, I've selected 8 topics that I'll touch on briefly:

Staff expansion

The town council operates with a very small dedicated team, and the workload of the council outstrips their capacity. The staffing committee will in the next month be beginning to look at what extra capacity we need - in essence which work do we struggle to make happen. We know the community want us to do more, and quicker, and are often frustrated by the stop-start nature of projects. We are often needing to make decisions about slowing work because there isn't the capacity to deliver it, or aware that we are not doing it in an optimum way. We know too that the negotiations regarding the housing development will become increasingly complex and time-consuming. For all these reasons the staffing committee are beginning work to increase capacity, and to bring a proposal to the full Town Council.

Moving on to the Guildhall

We've been talking to WODC about taking on the lease for the whole of the Guildhall. While we look at the feasibility of that, we're also talking with Makespace who are working on a project called Meanwhile Oxfordshire , a scheme and pot of money from central government that aims to identify buildings on the high street that aren't in use and could be used for community groups. MakeSpace support community groups to make them sustainable, and can give money to make improvements to the buildings which they are using. Regrettably the landlords that MakeSpace approached weren't interested in this initiative, but that has meant that we're now talking to them about the Chippy Larder being in residence at the Guildhall for another year, and to have more space to expand, both of which are to be welcomed. (And if you want to know more about that talk to Cllr Rizvana Poole in the break).

But our aim of course is to secure the long-term future of this much-loved building, and for it to be a thriving, well-used resource for the people of the town.

Section 106

Section 106 refers to the financial contribution housing developers need to make to mitigate the direct impact of their developments. If you build a housing development which is full of families there may be a need for a new school for example, people need to get to

the houses so you need roads, existing roads could become clogged so new infrastructure needs to be put in place and so on. Affordable housing can also be built with S106 contributions.

This council has been very proactive in extracting information about what Section 106 money is currently being held for use within the town. More importantly now, is the fact that within the East Chipping Norton masterplan there will be a document about Section 106 contributions. **This is going to become one of the most critical issues for the town as a whole – influencing the negotiating of agreements about contributions from the developers.** We don't want to be caught on the back foot – rather, to have a coherent, well-researched plan as to what the town needs, and to be presenting that, and working with the individual departments of OCC and WODC and Highways to have a joined-up approach.

Last week, I attended a very informative WODC workshop about Section 106 – it will be on the agenda for the next Strategic Development Committee meeting with all the information shared. Importantly, what I've gleaned from that is that I feel confident that WODC officers will be working with us to get the best possible deal. I've already requested a meeting with the Business Manager at WODC who will be at the heart of the process.

This Section 106 money could help resolve *some* of the long-standing issues the town has wrestled with for many years, such as its roads. It will be nowhere near enough! At the time, and this housing development has been in discussion for twenty years, the Community Interest Levy (CIL) – the other way that developers make contributions - was used as a carrot to help sell the development. The CIL consultation is on hold, as the district await new instruction from central government.

Regarding, Section 106, we would welcome any support from the community with this very important piece of work. It is a top priority.

Parking, congestion and cycling

We will be commissioning consultants to work with us on parking and traffic congestion issues, as well as how to create the conditions to encourage walking and cycling. As with the commissioning of a top architectural practice to work with us on the vision for the new housing development, we don't want to be reactive to plans that may come forward, rather we want to be pro-active and have our plans formulated to feed into the master planning. We will obviously be talking to WODC and Highways about how this can fit in with the master planning process of the housing development. It will dovetail with the excellent work Marcus Simmons of Transition Chipping Norton has done on cycle routes. And I'm sure Cllr Jo Graves will talk anon about the work on cycling that is emerging from the Traffic Advisory Committee.

In the meantime, Duncan Enright, the Oxfordshire County Council cabinet member for Transport and HGVs, is very happy to come to a forthcoming town council meeting, and we would encourage a big attendance so he can hear your views.

Collaborative working

The town council are working through a long list of improvements for the town centre – benches are being renovated, new planters installed, the phone box has been done up, and we now have a town piano. In the case of the last two projects, we've worked hand in hand with community groups to bring these to fruition. Next on the list is planting at the base of the trees to suppress weed growth which we are doing with Green Gym, and a new captivating window display for the Museum - being designed by a superb stage designer and Chippy-resident – which aims to help increase museum footfall in 2022. We think the town centre is starting to look better! We're always interested to hear your feedback (please do also tell us when you like something)- and suggestions and ideas, and if we expand our staff capacity, we'll be able to do more.

(Just while I'm talking about the town centre, it's fantastic to see QD open and flourishing – I've spoken to the manager and they are very pleased at how busy they are. The news from the other end of the High Street and the cinema is that they have made a material start to the foundations of the new builds at the rear and are meeting with the contractor this week to finalise commencement of main works. They aim to be in full construction phase before December and are aiming to open in time for Christmas 2022. Setha have also got meetings coming up with co-investors and operators for the HSBC building but no news currently. How great it would be for that to be renovated to complement the great work set to happen with The Branch in the Natwest building!)

Market Town funding

We've been talking with the Market Towns Officer at West Oxfordshire District Council about how to use the allocation of £10,000 from something called The Welcome Back Fund – a Covid recovery package (which has come from the European Regional Development Fund). Councillors and members of the community have been discussing how best to use the small pot of money – whether to use on signage and benches say – all ridiculously expensive - or to kick start a more ambitious longer-term project for the town. That group will be meeting again in the coming weeks and then we'll post information to get the views and ideas of the community.

Website

Just to update you on where we are with the new website – we're working with an excellent web company, who specialise in creating websites for town councils. The new website will allow us to properly communicate all that the council is doing as well as talk about the town more generally – its services, groups, and events all in an attractive and accessible way. The structure is now in place, all the key documents have been transferred, and now the new content is being worked on including: groups and sports, events, a visitors information

section, online booking for the town hall and the phone box, and an easy to use section where anyone can report an issue, or find out who to go to, be it town council, district, county council or Highways.

Finally to - Covid Superheroes

As many of you know, earlier this year we invited nominations in a range of categories for our town's Community Superheroes be they a Neighbourhood Hero, a Frontline Hero, a Parent Hero or for an Extraordinary act of kindness. We had a phenomenal response – over 70 nominations from people from all walks of life supporting individuals and the community in astonishing and inspiring ways. To make the awards and thank them wholeheartedly, we're delighted that the Ditchley Foundation have kindly offered to host the awards at their very beautiful house and this will take place at the beginning of December. Invitations will be going out shortly.

And on that note, with thoughts of heroes and Christmas I will stop and we shall move on to the next agenda item.

Report from Councillor S Coleman
Finance and Resources Committee
Community Committee

As Deputy Mayor and Committee Chair I am reporting on both the Finance and Community Committees and have chosen to combine both reports together. This is because I firmly believe that the work of both is firmly entwined-

our community work can not function without finance and sound policy

and the finance work has no purpose unless supporting functions within our community.

Of course, the projects that our Mayor has already outlined have formed part of the work carried out by our committees- but I won't repeat what has already been covered and will concentrate on other topics.

So first I will outline the main work of the finance committee over the past year.

1. We have both set and monitored the budget. We were very pleased last year to be able to set our budget without increasing the precept. Our accounts have been audited and copies of the AGAR are available. As we are all aware our town is growing- Over the past two financial years the number of dwellings on which our precept is calculated has increased by about 100 from 2609 in 2019 to 2712 in 2021. This is not the exact number of houses that have been built but an approximation used by West Oxfordshire District Council to calculate the tax due to us. The district will inform us of the latest number later in the year.

Last financial year we increased our reserves by approximately £60,000 , as shown on the AGAR, despite additional spending on locum clerking and recruitment of our new clerk and additional grants paid to local organisations supporting our community through the pandemic. Spending was below budget because some work was delayed due to our reduced staffing and restrictions in working due to Covid. This work will need to be carried out over the next year or two and reserves will be earmarked for this process.

2. In order to plan the future maintenance of the Town Hall , which is a very important community building, overseen by the Communities Committee the Council have engaged surveyors to carry out a quinquennial review. The inspection has now taken place and the survey will be with us shortly. The purpose of this document is to enable us to plan repairs and maintenance over the next five years – which will enable us both to maintain the building to the standards we would all expect, and to allocate funds to other projects. Planning work in this way will enable us to more accurately include costs in our budget setting process over the coming months.

3. The Finance Committee is also responsible for staffing, policies and overseeing health and safety. In view of the changes in staffing and to ensure the correct processes are in place we have arranged an external review of Health and safety and implemented the recommendations made by the advisor. These have included reviewing fire safety in this building and training our staff in First Aid and fire safety.

On policies, our Clerk has reviewed the requirements now in place for Councils and produced a schedule to ensure this work is up to date. For example we have just reviewed our policy on document retention, press and media, whistle blowing, freedom of information and recording meetings. Whilst this work can be seen as mundane, it is of course important to the proper functioning of the council, and many of these documents will be available on our new website.

The Communities Committee function is to develop the Town Council's work with and for residents of the town. This includes young people, families, working age and older people. Our intention is to focus on people as well as buildings and facilities. Of course this includes maintaining our buildings, playgrounds, open spaces and cemetery as well as awarding grants and organising events. We hope that by focusing the work in this way we will be able to easily incorporate new projects as needs change.

In particular we have:

1. Ordered an inspection by ROSPA of all our playground facilities. ROSPA are specialists in safety and prevention of accidents -which is so important when children play. The inspection enabled us to prioritise maintenance over the year. This has included repairs to play equipment and work on the surrounding ground surface to remove trip hazards and repair surfaces that had eroded or shrunk. The slide on the mound at New Street is a good example of this work. Other important work at our play areas has included the provision of new litter bins at Cotswold Crescent and Cotswold Gate. Our most recent improvement is the addition of four benches to provide seating at the new playground at Cotswold Gate. These have been provided in response to requests from parents accompanying their children to this popular new playground. The concrete bases have been installed and the benches will be fixed in place later this week.

2. At the cemetery the gates have been renovated and now look smarter and pedestrian gate from the lane has also been repaired. Grass cutting has been difficult this year as the timings of cutting by contractors has not always fitted well with the actual growth of the grass. This has been partly due to the exceptional weather this year but the schedule will be reviewed when the contract is renewed. A small section of the cemetery is allocated for bee conservation and mowed later in the season and we will continue, and consider expanding this work. Our conversations with our grounds maintenance staff and our own visits to the cemetery have revealed the large quantity of plastic that is left as part of floral tributes. This plastic lasts far longer than the flowers, can be blown by the wind, and prevents flowers from easily being composted. Disposing of the plastic is also a cost to the council. I am actively looking for solutions to this problem that still enable families to leave floral tributes and have approached undertakers and those selling flowers in the town who I hope will work with us to reduce this problem.

3. Our Town Hall has of course been closed for much of the last two years. As restrictions lifted we were pleased to be able to welcome our local Muslim community back to meet for Friday prayers and to provide a meeting place for Chipping Norton Community Church in line with regulations for those meeting for worship. More groups are now able to meet in the hall, including a stage school on Saturdays, and activities for babies and small children

with parents and carers . We are pleased that the lower hall is also used by TSB to provide support for customers now the local branch has closed.

The building needs regular upkeep and maintenance which will be scheduled as soon as we receive the quinquennial review. We will also listen to our hirers to ensure we provide the best environment we can for their needs.

4. We have listened to the community about bus shelter provision. The bus shelter on Walterbush Road was removed some years ago due to antisocial behaviour- but this bus stop is well used and in a particularly exposed location and we have received many complaints from people who now wait in the rain. We investigated the problem and realised that there is little provision for young people living in the area. We therefore applied to Oxfordshire County Council Youth Opportunity fund for funding for youth work. We were successful in our bid and are now in the process of agreeing a contract with a local provider and our youth work should start in the next few months. Instead of imposing a traditional youth club format, our youth workers will meet young people where they are, and develop a program of activities to meet their needs which may, or may not take on a youth club format in the future– and they have previous experience working in challenging situations. They will also work with us to develop our play and recreation spaces and to help us secure funding to enable provision to continue beyond existing grant provision.

Now we have a means of addressing antisocial behaviour by young people, and acting on the results of a survey of local residents, the bus shelter will be replaced. The new bus shelter and associated landscaping have been designed to provide basic shelter for those waiting for the bus whilst discouraging gatherings of young people. The new shelter should be installed in November, before the worst of the winter weather.

5. I am sure everyone will remember the noticeboard for community events that used to exist by The Fox Hotel. The notice board was removed a year or two ago as the posts were rotten. The community committee have ordered a replacement board which has been delivered and is awaiting installation. We hope this will be useful to local organisations as events restart.

6. Finally we keep our open spaces under review for maintenance and any necessary improvement. During the winter the path at Pool Meadow can become treacherous, restricting access to this special place. This has prompted us to consider if we should improve access or make any other changes to this space, as has been done successfully in the past. We know from talking to the community that one of the reasons people love Pool Meadow is because it is a wild space and there is no intention to change this. We have approached our Green Gym and the Wychwood Project and other members of our community and established that there is a need to control invasive plants, some of which are not native to this location, and maintain drainage, and over the coming year will work with them to conserve and maintain this wild place.

Our purpose as a Council is to serve, enable and provide for our local community and we welcome your ideas and suggestions. Our contact details are published on our website. We also start every meeting with an opportunity for public participation and these presentations often serve to inspire and provoke our work so do consider taking part.

Strategic Planning Committee Report from Councillor D Heyes

Councillor Heyes talked about the work of the Strategic Planning committee. The main focus of the work has been the East Chipping Norton SDA and he reminded everyone that two years ago the then Leader of OCC had come to Chipping Norton and made several commitments on working with the Town Council. However, despite the efforts of the Town Council there had been no contact with OCC from December 2019 until May 2022.

The Town Council decided in 2019 that we needed to develop our own position on what the town needed. So we commissioned consultants to help us and the result was the Vision Statement, completed in July 2020. Following the elections in May copies were sent to members of the new OCC Cabinet. As a result the Mayor and I held a meeting with the Leader, Liz Leffman and Duncan Enright, Cabinet member for Transport and Strategic Planning. This was a very positive meeting, following which we received this statement from Liz Leffman:

"I support the Town Council's ambition for this to be an exemplary development, which will provide affordable and sustainable homes built to the highest standards. OCC looks forward to working with Chipping Norton to achieve this"

In September WODC set up a meeting with all the landowners and major stakeholders to begin the process of developing a Masterplan.

Councillor Heyes then added two items to the Mayor's list of Town Centre improvements:

- Empty shops disfigure the town so, while we work to find occupiers, we try to ensure that they do not look like empty shops with suitable window decoration.
- Weeds and rubbish disfigure the town centre and while Snips does a marvellous job, it is up to all of us, whether as shop or home owners to keep our own frontage clear.

Report from Councillor J Graves

Traffic Advisory Committee

Report from the Traffic Advisory Committee for the Community Meeting on Monday 4th October 2021 in the Town Hall.

Introduction: The context of the Traffic Advisory – an established forum made up of Traffic Officers from OCC and WODC, together with our local OCC Councillor and our WODC Councillors, Reps of TV Police plus CNTC members and interested members of the public eg Public Transport reps and Transition CN.

The remit is to focus on all matters dealing with Traffic, including Cycling and also impact on the safety of pedestrians. We also flag up issues of road repairs etc, though the public can have access online to “Fix My Street” if there is a particular issue, since we meet 4 times per year.

The main issues that are always on the agenda are :-

HGVs and Parking

We have made progress with getting signage in process to guide HGVs down the Banbury Road – we have also over the years been instrumental in getting a lorry route map which can deter drivers from coming up the A44 and heading west off along the A40 north of Oxford.

A particular focus for TAC has been the introduction of a 20 mph limit through the centre of CN, whilst this was not initially extended up the London Road and Burford Rd outside the schools, with the help of the previous County Cllr we did get flashing signs at beginning and ending of the school day. We lobbied for 20mph roundels to be introduced and another member of the Committee was able to obtain a speed recognition sign to be introduced on New St. – this has made a difference – but it will take Driver Education to make people aware of the dangers of speeding.

Another initiative has been to encourage cycling within the town and there is a move to find safer cycle (and walking) routes, especially to encourage young people and parents to walk to school. Members of TAC have been in touch with the Cycling Champion at OCC and we are proactive in encouraging the “Walk to School ” initiative from Living Streets and the Road Safety Week Campaigns, which take place in May and November, encouraging our local schools to participate.

TAC members, along with Transition CN , supported the recent Cycling event held in the CN market square. Our direction of travel is to get the Town Centre, as a safe place for pedestrians and build on the work done some 30 years ago, with the re-alignment of parking spaces

We were able to make a response to the OCC's Local Transport and Community Plan 4 and LTCP 5 is in draft form with more engagement of the OCC officers to discuss our issues.

A major breakthrough has been the formation of a small working group to focus on the HGV issue in town. This issue will need much discussion and there is no simple solution but a group made up of our County Cllr and 3 CN Town Cllrs together with OCC Officers.

We know what we want to achieve and we are doing what we can within our power as a Town Council.

Cllr JM Graves, Chair Traffic Advisory Committee