

Didcot Town Council

Council Meeting

Monday 2nd November 2020 at 7.30pm

Online at zoom.us (or via your device app)



Minutes

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of the Council.

PRESENT

Councillors:

P Davies	M Mallows
A Dearlove	M McNeill
J Durman	J Moody
P Giesberg	D Rouane
E Hards (Mayor)	A Sandiford
V Haval	P Siggers
A Hudson	A Thompson
M Khan (Deputy Mayor)	M Walsh
A Macdonald	C Wilson
D Macdonald	

Officers:

Janet Wheeler - Town Clerk
Guy Langton – Planning and Environment Officer

The Mayor opened the meeting by suspending Standing Order 71 – standing to address the Chair.

50. To receive apologies

Cllr S Hewerdine was absent.

51. To receive declarations of interests

There were no declarations.

52. To receive petitions

No petitions received.

53. To approve and adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 7th September 2020

The Mayor paged through the minutes for accuracy and to allow for questions.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the full Council meeting held on 7th September 2020.

54. To consider recommendations of Committees to Council in accordance with Standing Orders 95 - 112

a) Planning and Development Committee

It was proposed by Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **16th September 2020**.

It was proposed by Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **7th October 2020**.

b) Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **28th September 2020**.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **26th October 2020**.

(i) Recommendation – Minute 96 – It was RESOLVED to vire £20,000 from the Elections cost centre 1268 to the 3154 cost centre – Other Parks and Recreational areas – maintenance) to allow for work on the new path at Stubbings Land. (NB The Town Clerk later moved this money into the specific cost centre for this project – 32596 Disabled Access Stubbings Land.)

c) Personnel and Administration Committee

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr A Macdonald and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **5th October 2020**.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr A Macdonald and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **21st October 2020**.

- (i) Recommendation – Minute 42** – It was RESOLVED to adopt the Employee Code of Conduct Policy.
- (ii) Recommendation – Minute 46** – The draft objectives of Didcot Town Council were considered. Cllr M Khan stated that they would be evolved over time to become smarter objectives. This is a starting point and would be reviewed on an annual basis. Members expressed the wish to get involved with this document. Cllr A Dearlove said that the previous administration released objectives in 2015. This document would be made

public and it was noted that targets were not currently included. Review would be in the next Civic year.

It was proposed by Cllr P Davies; seconded by Cllr E Hards to add the date that the document is adopted and date of review. The amendment was accepted by Cllr M Khan and Cllr A. Macdonald.

Cllr D Rouane was concerned that the document was not stating what we hoped to achieve and that numbering needed to be reviewed as people construed the numbering as being in order of importance.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr A Macdonald and RESOLVED to accept these objectives as a basis for further work. The vote was: IN FAVOUR = 11; AGAINST = 1; ABSTENTION = 7

d) Environment and Climate Committee

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Hudson and RESOLVED to receive the minutes from the meeting held on **21st September 2020**.

Cllr M Mallows referred to Minute 47 and asked if the proposed bench were to be put on Council-owned land would this be re-considered? The advice was that the Council would need to identify the appropriate land first and this proposal could then be considered at the Committee.

Minute 48 was discussed relating to Tyne Avenue and it was RESOLVED to recommend to reinstate the Working Group to work with the Didcot Town Football Club in relation to this land. It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Macdonald and the vote was unanimous. The terms of reference would need to be considered at the Environment and Climate Committee.

The Mayor referred to Minute 52 and advised that any agreed Policy on metal detecting would need to be approved by full Council.

e) Civic Hall Management Committee

It was proposed by Cllr P Siggers and seconded by Cllr J Moody and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes of the meeting held on **23rd September 2020**.

55. To receive the Mayor's Report

There was just one item on the Mayor's Report as the pandemic had cancelled the majority of events and activities. The Mayor spoke to clarify that there would be no parade for Remembrance Sunday and the priority was to remember our fallen heroes but in a way to ensure that people were safe. It is hoped to lay some wreaths and possibly film the limited ceremony to share on the website.

56. To review the quotes to renew the Town Council insurance

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr J Moody and RESOLVED to delegate this to the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee. The Town Clerk was still awaiting some quotes in order to allow the Councillors to make a decision. The vote was unanimous.

57. To note the response to the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government Consultation White Paper: Planning for the Future

It was noted that the response to this consultation was submitted earlier in the week. Thanks were given to the members of the Working Group and the Planning and Environment Officer for his hard work on this project. A web page had been developed for residents to view the response from the Town Council – <https://www.didcot.gov.uk/mhclg-planning-for-the-future-wh.htm>

58. To note the minutes and notes circulated to all Councillors regarding the emergency meetings of the Pandemic Crisis Working Group from the middle of March to the beginning of May 2020.

The Councillors noted the emergency decisions taken at the start of the pandemic.

59. To receive such communications as the Leader of the Council may wish to bring before Council and to consider the recommendation of the Leader on how such communications should be dealt with.

Cllr M Khan spoke to summarise that the information being received from the Government is to clarify the tiers which currently affect Oxfordshire. He will pass on any further advice as he receives it.

60. To consider motions in the order in which they have been notified:

The following was proposed by Cllr P Davies and Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald:

“That Didcot Town Council (DTC) agrees to nominate Didcot Town Football Club (DTFC) including Clubhouse buildings and pitches as an Asset of Community Value (AVC)”

There was a discussion on the merits of applying to register a building as an AVC. Cllr P Davies wanted to find ways to protect the football club for future generations. Cllr A Dearlove thanked Cllr P Davies for bringing this motion to Council.

Cllr J Moody proposed amending the motion to replace the word “pitches” with “land” – the whole curtilage. Cllr A Hudson seconded this amendment. Cllr P Davies objected to the amendment.

The amendment was debated. The Football Club was described as “the beating heart” of the community. Cllr D Rouane was concerned that this amendment would include the area awaiting a decision on a planning application and could be seen as

a hostile action and pre-judging our view on the proposal to build flats. Cllr Davies explained the wording of his motion and was aware of the planning application that was still to be resolved – he did not want this to look as if the Town Council was trying to take advantage of the situation.

The vote on the amendment: IN FAVOUR = 8; AGAINST = 7; ABSTENTION = 3.
The amendment was carried.

There was further debate. Cllr M Khan said that this would be a final resort to protect the facility for the community. Cllr D Macdonald spoke in summary to echo that this is an insurance as a last resort for both the buildings and the green space.

The vote on the amended motion was unanimous.

61. Didcot Garden Town Project and the report of the Council's representative on the Didcot Garden Town Management Board

Cllr M Khan spoke to advise that a meeting of the Advisory Board was held in October. This was an up-date meeting including the decision of SODC to build their offices on the Gateway site. There were further meetings planned to engage further stakeholders in November. The next meeting of the Advisory Board was 25th January 2021. The old Labour Club was due to be demolished in the new year.

Cllr D Macdonald, who had attended the Parish Councils' Sounding Board, spoke of the concerns relating specifically to Didcot. Concerns were expressed over the size of Didcot; the railway line dissecting the town from east to west; HIF money will be allocated to the infrastructure which may alleviate things to the west but the northern perimeter road will need completing to support the infrastructure to the east side of town; concerns over the building of flats in the centre of town without adequate parking facilities; civil parking enforcement essential in the town and villages and concerns over the fact that the cycle ways do not meet the design standards. Shops were discussed along with reviving the Broadway.

Cllr D Rouane spoke to confirm that there are plans to build a community garden on part of the Gateway site whilst it is awaiting development.

62. Questions to the Leader concerning the business of the Council in accordance with Standing Order 58

Q: In the first lockdown there was an Emergency Committee set up – are there plans to re-activate? (Cllr D Rouane)

A: The Leader confirmed that the group would be re-activated. The membership would consist of the Chairs of the Committees; senior staff and a representative member from all the groups.

The Mayor pointed out that the situation was different this time as the ability to hold meetings using remote services such as Zoom meant that business was able to carry on without too many interruptions.

Q: Can you clarify that the Civic Hall is not up for sale as reported in the local papers? (Cllr P Siggers)

A: The Leader gave 100% reassurance that the Civic Hall is not for sale and never will be. The Civic Hall is a major asset for the community and will remain in our ownership.

Q: Will the Civic Hall remain open during the second lockdown? (Cllr D Macdonald)

A: The Leader said that safety of the visitors and the staff was the primary concern. We were awaiting the legislation from the Government and would like to keep the Civic Hall open if possible.

63. Exclusion of the press and public

RESOLVED: pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960 to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

64. To consider the re-structure of the Didcot Town Council staffing arrangements and a potential new position

Cllr M Khan thanked the members of the Personnel and Administration Committee and the Town Clerk for the work that has gone into this re-structure. He presented the document for consideration as recommended by the Committee and noted that this had been produced alongside the objectives document approved by the Council earlier in the meeting.

Everything is over-arched by the declaration of a Climate Emergency. The Leader would like to see that the Civic Hall always has two members of staff in the building throughout the opening hours. The document is not just about the Civic Hall – there are a lot of other buildings. This new structure makes the best use of the current skills we have on the team and what is needed in the future. The need for a Deputy Town Clerk would be reviewed later in the year or in the next Civic year.

The Civic Hall Management Committee would become the new Property and Facilities Committee and would look after all the Council-owned buildings. The meetings would be six per year as most other standing Committees and would help ease the workload of the Environment and Climate Committee.

There had been a good response to the Outside Services Manager position and seven candidates had been invited for interview with four coming back for second interviews.

The contracting out of the finance element of the Council work is working well at the moment and should be reviewed towards the end of the financial year. The Leader was keen to move the Town Clerk away from minutes and agendas.

This paper was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr V Haval. The paper was then opened to Councillors for debate.

It was RESOLVED that Guy Langton be asked to leave the meeting. The Town Clerk was asked to stay and clerk this section of the meeting. Cllr A Thompson wished to make the point that it was incorrect practice to include the names of staff on this document.

Members were invited to raise questions and then debate. The Mayor took each section separately.

SECTION ONE – OFFICE/ADMINISTRATION/GOVERNANCE/HUMAN RESOURCES

It was AGREED to swap section one: Office/Administration/Governance/Human Resources with section four: Promoting Didcot. However it was also AGREED that all sections were equally important and worked together.

SECTION TWO – OUTSIDE SPACES AND FACILITIES

It was clarified that the cleaner also cleans in the Outside Services team Depot as well as the new pavilion when it is built.

SECTION THREE – COUNCIL-OWNED BUILDINGS AND THE CIVIC HALL

This section will include the new post of Property and Facilities Manager to look after all Council-owned buildings. It was AGREED that Fleet Meadow Community Hall should be included in the list of Council-owned buildings.

SECTION FOUR – PROMOTING DIDCOT

As above - the next version of this document to change section four with section one.

SECTION FIVE – FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Cllr M Khan spoke of the importance of fund-raising as a means of enabling projects to be achieved. Cllr Moody spoke of the steps that have been taken to stream-line the affairs of the Civic Hall with the Town Council.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr P Davies and RESOLVED to add a sentence on climate emergency projects to every section of Council business and to add the item of Fund Raising to Section 5 Financial Responsibility. The Mayor moved from the chair permission to continue the meeting beyond the two hours. It was RESOLVED to continue.

Cllr M Khan summed up the recommendations linked with the new structure – seconded by Cllr V Haval:

- It was RESOLVED to receive all sections of the organisational re-structure document for the Town Council with the Civic Hall as one body.
- It was RESOLVED to approve the salary range for the new Outside Services Manager from £30,000 to £40,000.
- It was RESOLVED to approve the salary range for the new Property and Facilities Manager from £30,000 to £40,000.
- It was RESOLVED to review the finance role towards the end of the financial year.
- It was RESOLVED to review the need for a Deputy Town Clerk in the new financial year.

The vote on the above recommendations was carried.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm.

Signed:

(Mayor)

Date: