

Didcot Town Council

Ordinary Council Meeting

Monday 7th March 2022 at 7.30pm

Main Hall, Didcot Civic Hall



Minutes

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

PRESENT

Councillors:

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

Officers:

Janet Wheeler - Town Clerk

Also present:

Seven members of the public attended plus Kass Jimenez-Sanchez, reporter from the Oxford Mail.

The Mayor opened the meeting with a minute's silence to remember previous Town Councillor and Mayor Des Healy. Councillor Healy was a hardworking member of the Council and had to deal with the tragedy at the power station during his term as Mayor. Cllr Khan had intended putting Cllr Healy's name forward for the Freedom of Didcot and sadly this was not now possible. However at the appropriate time, Cllr Khan would put forward Des Healy's name in order for a road to be named after him.

110. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs P Giesberg, A Sandiford and B Service.

111. To receive declarations of interests

Cllr V Haval declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 4 (b) (v) the Ladygrove Community Centre. She was prepared to leave the room for this item but was invited to stay and advise if required. Cllr D Rouane declared an interest in item 8 as Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council but was advised that this was not a declarable interest to prevent him making comment and voting.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr M Walsh and RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow two members of the public to speak.

Public Participation

Ms Cath Convery spoke as member of Harwell Parish and part of the Didcot Garden Town business sounding board. She referred to the question posed to the Leader at the last full Council meeting about the achievements of Didcot Garden Town. She wanted to know if Didcot Town Council was satisfied with the progress of the sixty plus projects.

Mr Tom Wiltshire – a resident of Ladygrove – spoke regarding the second motion and queried whether this was a good idea in this area. He questioned whether the entire Ladygrove estate should be 20mph or whether the focus should be more on safe, sustainable travel and cycle paths.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr E Hards and RESOLVED to go back into standing orders.

112. To approve and adopt the minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 10th January 2022 and to include questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item.

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr E Hards and RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 10th January 2022. Cllr P Davies raised comments over the meeting to discuss the canopy of trees which was cancelled in December 2021.

113. To receive the Committee minutes and decisions taken under delegated authority and to consider recommendations of Committees to Council in accordance with Standing Orders 98 - 105

a) Planning and Development Committee

(i) To receive the minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr E Hards and seconded by Cllr A Dearlove and RESOLVED to receive the minutes for the meetings held on 5th January 2022 (Emergency Planning meeting); 12th January and 2nd February 2022.

b) Finance and General Purposes Committee

(i) To receive the minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to receive the minutes for the meetings held on 24th January and 28th February 2022.

- (ii) **Recommendation Minute 143** – It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to approve a budget of £15,000 to purchase a container for Edmonds Park for use by the Didcot Town Football Club or any other group in need of facilities. The purchase would include delivery and installation. The unit would be purchased from 304/3387 (Pre-fab toilets) with the remainder coming from 101/1171 (contingency). It was clarified that the container once purchased could also be hired out. The hire charges would be decided by the Property & Facilities Committee.
- (iii) **Recommendation Minute 153** – It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED to approve the ear-marked reserves in the report. It was also RESOLVED to create an additional cost centre to capture unspent monies from the grant aid (201/3188) and contingency cost centres (101/1171) – this new cost centre to be called “Community Projects”.
- (iv) **Recommendation Minute 154** - It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Dearlove and RESOLVED to express interest in future ownership of the freehold of the new Community Centre at Ladygrove North subject to no management fees; consultation on the uni-sex toilets and changing places for adults. DTC would request that the developer pays their legal fees and interest in the square garden – either ownership or an agreement – to allow the users of the Community Centre free and unfettered access. The S106 agreement would result in approx. £60,000 of funding (index-linked) being made available to help DTC to equip the new building.
- (v) **Recommendation Minute 157** – It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to approve the revised wording of the variation to the joint use agreement of Ladygrove Community Centre at All Saints C&E (Aided) Primary School, Didcot. It was noted that the attached inventory may not be complete and the Council would encourage the school and the out-going trustees to work together to approve a full inventory of publicly owned items which must be available to all hirers.
- (vi) **Recommendation Minute 160** - There was a discussion on the amount of the borrowing needed to complete the new pavilion at Edmonds Park. Cllr J Moody confirmed that this approval was needed to start the process of funding the new building. A loan from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) is the cheapest way to borrow with fixed interest rates to help future budgeting. A loan from the Public Works Loans Board would add £60,000 for every million pounds borrowed – so a sum of approx.. £100,000 would be

needed each year to service a loan of £1.5 million. It was hoped to cap the borrowing at £1.5 million. Cllr D Rouane enquired whether funding had been explored from other sources. Cllr P Davies felt that the build of the current design would be nearer to £2 million. He also mentioned the sports building on the Sport England website which had more changing rooms and was cheaper to build. Cllr J Moody said that all avenues were being explored on the funding of this building. Cllr D Macdonald reminded Councillors that this building was not just for football but would provide facilities for other sports and community activities. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by P Siggers and RESOLVED to progress an application for a loan from the Public Works Loans Board.

(vii) Recommendation Minute 161 – It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED to set up a charitable trust to run the Fleet Meadow Community Centre. It was also RESOLVED that the Town Clerk would take legal advice and work with the solicitors to ensure that the trust was correctly set up and managed. The Councillors also RESOLVED that the Town Clerk explore whether other Council owned buildings could be run using a similar model – but not the Civic Hall or Willowbrook Leisure Centre.

c) Environment & Climate Committee

(i) To receive the minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Hudson and RESOLVED to receive the minutes for the meeting held on 17th January 2022.

d) Personnel and Administration Committee

(i) To receive the minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr E Hards and RESOLVED to receive the minutes for the meeting held on 7th February 2022.

e) Property & Facilities Committee

(i) To receive the minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr P Siggers and seconded by Cllr A Hudson and RESOLVED to receive the minutes for the meeting held on 26th January 2022.

(ii) Recommendation Minute 66 – Cllr P Siggers stated that there was an error on the agenda in the recommended cost of the solar panels. The sum should read for £85,595 to cover the Civic Hall; Willowbrook Leisure Centre and the Outside Services Depot in Edmonds Park. It was proposed by Cllr P Siggers and seconded by Cllr J Moody and RESOLVED to approve the appointment of Company C – Dynamic Energy Solutions – at a cost of £85,595 + VAT.

(ii) Recommendation Minute 67 – It was proposed by Cllr P Siggers and seconded by Cllr J Moody and RESOLVED to approve the conversion of LED

lights at Willowbrook Leisure Centre to company B – Lighting Electricians – at a cost of £15,299 + VAT.

114. To receive the Mayor’s Report

The Mayor gave an account of his recent activities as Mayor and reminded the Councillors that the Awards Evening will be held on Saturday 26th March and the Mayor’s Civic Dinner will be held on Saturday 2nd April. He also reminded Councillors that the Annual Town Meeting will be held on Wednesday 23rd March 2022 at the Civic Hall. A full list of events attended is attached to the agenda.

115. To elect the Mayor-designate for 2022 – 2023 civic year

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr M Khan to nominate Cllr P Siggers as the Mayor-designate. There being no other nominations it was RESOLVED to elect Cllr P Siggers as Mayor-designate.

116. To approve the recommended response to the Community Governance Review at SODC

A cross party working group had met to discuss the individual recommendations from members. The Mayor read out the three recommendations that had been agreed to forward on to SODC:

1. SODC to conduct the full boundary review based on population growth.
2. The whole of Great Western Park to be within the Didcot boundaries and under the remit of Didcot Town Council.
3. Aspiration to have an equal number of Councillors to represent an equal number of residents on each ward.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr E Hards and RESOLVED to approve the three recommendations to the Community Governance team at SODC.

Recorded vote

	For	Against	Abstention
Cllr D Chandran	x		
Cllr P Davies	x		
Cllr A Dearlove	x		
Cllr J Durman	x		
Cllr P Giesberg	-		
Cllr E Hards	x		
Cllr V Haval	x		
Cllr A Hudson	x		
Cllr M Khan	x		
Cllr A Macdonald	x		
Cllr D Macdonald	x		

Cllr M Mallows	x		
Cllr M McNeill	x		
Cllr J Moody	x		
Cllr D Rouane	x		
Cllr A Sandiford	-		
Cllr B Service	-		
Cllr P Siggers	x		
Cllr A Thompson	x		
Cllr M Walsh	x		
Cllr C Wilson	x		

The vote was unanimous.

Cllr A Thompson left the meeting.

117. To consider support of SODC's bid for the home of the new Great British Railways HQ to be built in Didcot

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils will be entering a bid for Didcot to be the headquarters of the new Great British Railways organisation. The chance that has been created is a "once in a generation" prospect that will transform the way in which the rail sector works. The over-arching aim is to create a better railway for communities across the whole of the UK. The new organisation will serve as a single, accountable public body responsible for running the rail network across the UK.

A press release and sample letter of support has been sent to DTC. It was agreed to take two votes: the first for the bid and the second for the suggested letter of support supplied by an officer of SODC.

Cllr D Rouane gave some figures to the meeting: over 10,000 people commute through Didcot every day and it is essential that there is local employment with all the new housing. Didcot could be in danger of becoming a dormitory town. Cllr Rouane also spoke of the current traffic movements today – the car parks currently see over 1,000 traffic movements already; there would be only 2-300 people working in the Great British Railways HQ and SODC expect to see around 100 staff in their proposed new offices in the Gateway building – most staff are spending around 3 days a week working from home.

Cllr D Rouane finished by saying that even if Didcot is not chosen for the main HQ – there will be an opportunity to home a regional office.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr E Hards and RESOLVED to support the bid.

Recorded vote

	For	Against	Abstention
Cllr D Chandran	x		
Cllr P Davies	x		
Cllr A Dearlove	x		
Cllr J Durman	x		
Cllr P Giesberg	-		
Cllr E Hards	x		
Cllr V Haval	x		
Cllr A Hudson	x		
Cllr M Khan	x		
Cllr A Macdonald	x		
Cllr D Macdonald	x		
Cllr M Mallows	x		
Cllr M McNeill	x		
Cllr J Moody	x		
Cllr D Rouane	x		
Cllr A Sandiford	-		
Cllr B Service	-		
Cllr P Siggers	x		
Cllr A Thompson	x		
Cllr M Walsh	x		
Cllr C Wilson	x		

The vote was unanimous.

Letter of support

The draft letter was circulated to all Councillors. Several amendments were discussed including references to the future use of the Gateway site. It was delegated to the Mayor to approve the final version to send off to SODC. The vote was unanimous. The final version would be sent to all Councillors.

118. To note the CVA documents from the re-structuring of Soll (Vale) and their relinquishment of the Willowbrook Leisure Centre

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to note the first and final dividend from the re-structuring of Soll (Vale). The sum of £2,728.24 would be received from an outstanding claim of £338,037 – this equates to 0.81p in every pound.

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

Cllr D Macdonald received a letter from the police regarding the ongoing investigation into the collapse at the power station where four men lost their lives. The families have been kept briefed on the on-going investigation but there is no time line on when a conclusion will be finalised. The police are focusing their investigation on corporate manslaughter and health and safety offences.

Cllr M Khan also told the meeting that Didcot Town Council laid a wreath on 23rd February 2022 to pay respects on behalf of the town.

It was proposed by Cllr E Hards and seconded by Cllr M Khan to extend the meeting by a further thirty minutes.

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

Motion One: Proposed by Cllr P Davies; seconded by Cllr D Chandran

That Didcot Town Council respond to Oxfordshire County Council's call for 20 mph zones to request that OCC consider all roads in Ladygrove Ward of Didcot (excluding the A4130) for a ward-wide 20mph zone.

After some debate, it was AGREED that all local roads in Ladygrove would be put forward for a 20mph zone - the exception would be the major roads.

Motion Two: Proposed by Cllr V Haval; seconded by Cllr D Rouane:

That Didcot Town Council supports the Ladygrove Residents Association in the renewal of the Asset of Community Value status for Ladygrove Park and writes to SODC in support of the application.

The current Asset of Community Value expires at the end of March 2022. It was AGREED unanimously to send a letter of support.

121. Didcot Garden Town Project and the report of the Council's Representative on the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board

Cllr Denise Macdonald gave an update on the recent advisory board meeting.

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

Q: Would the Leader and the rest of the Council like to extend their thoughts and sympathy with the people of Ukraine? – Cllr A Dearlove

A: The Leader gave support to this sentiment.

Q: *Does the Leader have an update on the roundabout near Tesco?* – Cllr J Durman.

A: The Leader is still making enquiries.

Q: *Does the Leader agree that with the expansion of the housing, the town is desperately in need of more health facilities?* – Cllr M Walsh

A: Yes.

Q: *Does the Leader agree that the meeting organized for the Queen's canopy tree-planting has been cancelled?* – Cllr A Dearlove

A: The Leader stated that a meeting had been held where this project was discussed.

Question from Cllr Wilson – not audible from the tape.

Q: *The planning application for flats at a site owned by the football club has still not been finalized. Does the Leader agree that this is far too long to leave those residents affected by this application in the dark?* – Cllr A Dearlove

A: The Leader agreed.

123. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960 the committee will be asked 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

124. To confirm the amended arrangements for Operation London Bridge.

The amendments in the paper were discussed and agreed. A revised procedure will be circulated to all Councillors with a confidential appendix A for clarity.

The meeting closed at 10.00pm

Signed:

(Mayor)

Date: