

Council Meeting

Monday 8th January 2024 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:

A Macdonald (Mayor)	J Loder
A Jones (Deputy Mayor)	G Roberts
J Broadbent	S Nohre
S Cole	D Rouane
D Guerra Aragao	G Ryall
N Hards	T Worgan
M Khan	Z Mohammed
C Jennings (Leader)	O Glover
A Hudson	H Macdonald
D Macdonald	L Hislop

Officers:

Janet Wheeler - Town Clerk
Lucy Blake - Deputy Town Clerk

One member of the public was present.

The Mayor asked all those present to observe a minute's silence in remembrance of Bernard Cooper (former Mayor of Didcot); Patrick Arran (SODC Monitoring Officer) and Ian MacFadyen (DTC Groundsman) who all sadly passed away in 2023.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald, seconded by Cllr A Hudson, and **RESOLVED** to allow the member of public to speak before the start of the meeting. All members agreed.

The member of the public spoke regarding the following items:

- HIF1 scheme

The resident reminded members that the HIF1 enquiry was expected to start in February and that the previous administration supported this project but commented that the current administration had not sent any representation to any of the decision-making planning Committee meetings, especially when the County Council refused permission.

Some Councillors criticised the scheme at the Extra Ordinary Council meeting on 7th August 2023, but acknowledged it was needed. An improved scheme was requested. The resident explained that the enquiry process would give DTC the chance to become involved as a 'Rule 6' party, and join various other Parish Councils, including East Hendred, Burcott and Nunenham Courtenay PCs. He further asked that if DTC meant it when members stated the HIF1 was needed, why are Councillors not participating in the enquiry process.

- **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure (LCWIP)**

The resident informed the Council that the LCWIP scheme was signed off by the County Council last month and it would have a huge impact on the town. The main issue would be the closing of the Cow Lane Bridge to vehicular traffic. He went on to explain that the previous administration had been against closing the bridge, even during the Covid-19 pandemic and stated that he had not seen any documentation to state that DTC had commented on or discussed these plans. He asked the Council if they were in support of this.

The Mayor thanked the resident and invited questions from Councillors.

Cllr M Khan stated that DTC had previously been supportive of this project and held additional meetings to reinforce the decision to support the HIF1 project.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald, seconded by Cllr C Jennings, and **RESOLVED** to re-instate Standing Orders. All members agreed.

63. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr K Morrison. All other members were present.

64. To receive declarations of interests

There were no declarations.

65. To approve and adopt the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 6th November 2023 to include questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald, seconded by Cllr A Hudson, and **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** and adopt the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 6th November 2023. All members agreed.

66. 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 to 112

(a) Planning and Development Committee

It was proposed by Cllr A Hudson, seconded by Cllr H Macdonald, and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meetings held on 15th November 2023 and 6th December 2023 (to be approved at Committee). The vote was unanimous. There were no recommendations.

(b) Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr G Ryall, and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes of the meetings held on 20th November 2023 and 18th December 2023 (to be approved at Committee). The vote was unanimous. There were three recommendations:

(i) Recommendations to Council:

Minute 119 – *To approve the budget for 2024 – 2025 financial year.*

Cllr T Worgan thanked the members of the F&GP Committee for all their hard work on the budget which was approved unanimously. Cllr D Rouane thanked the Committee and the staff for their work. It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan and seconded by Cllr J Loder to approve the suggested budget for the 2024-2025 financial year.

Vote: **IN FAVOUR:** 12, **AGAINST:** 0, **ABSTENTIONS:** 8.

It was RESOLVED to APPROVE the budget for the 2024-2025 financial year.

Minute 120 – *To approve the Precept request for £1,470,433 for the 2024 – 2025 financial year.*

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan and seconded by Cllr J Loder to approve this request.

Vote: **IN FAVOUR:** 12, **AGAINST:** 0, **ABSTENTIONS:** 8.

It was RESOLVED to APPROVE the Precept request of £1,470,433 for the 2024 – 2025 financial year.

Minute 123 – *To approve a three-year deal with for Didcot Town Youth FC of £5,000 per annum for use of the pitches and welfare unit facilities at Edmonds Park.*

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr G Roberts, and RESOLVED to APPROVE a three-year deal for £5,000 per annum with the Club, provided regular inspections were carried out on the facilities. The vote was unanimous.

(c) Environment & Climate Committee held on 13th November 2023.

It was proposed by Cllr A Hudson, seconded by Cllr L Hislop, and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes of the meetings held on 13th November 2023 (to be approved at Committee). The vote was unanimous. There were three recommendations:

(i) Recommendations to Council:

Minute 43 – *To approve a three-year agreement with Hatwells Fun Fair to hire Edmonds Park and Ladygrove Park.*

It was proposed by Cllr G Roberts, seconded by Cllr C Jennings, and RESOLVED to APPROVE a three-year agreement with Hatwells Fun Fair on the charges for their hire (£300 per trading day for Edmonds Park and £260 per trading day for Ladygrove Park), provided Hatwells did not increase their prices for visitors. The vote was unanimous.

Minute 44 – To approve a three-year deal with Didcot Casuals at £3,000 per annum.
It was proposed by Cllr G Roberts, seconded by Cllr C Jennings, and RESOLVED to APPROVE a three-year deal for £3,000 per annum with the Club. The vote was unanimous.

Minute 45 – To approve the annual charges for Council services and facilities for 2024 - 2025.

It was proposed by Cllr G Roberts, seconded by Cllr C Jennings, and RESOLVED to APPROVE the annual charges for 2024 – 2025. The vote was unanimous.

(d) Personnel and Administration Committee held on 4th December 2023.

It was proposed by Cllr C Jennings, seconded by Cllr H Macdonald, and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on 4th December 2023 (to be approved at Committee). The vote was unanimous. There was one recommendation:

- (i) Recommendations to Council

Minute 42 – To approve the Annual Leave and TOIL Policy.

It was proposed by Cllr C Jennings, seconded by Cllr G Ryall, and RESOLVED to APPROVE the policy. The vote was unanimous.

(e) Property & Facilities Committee held on 29th November 2023.

It was proposed by Cllr A Hudson, seconded by Cllr H Macdonald, and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on 29th November 2023 (to be approved at Committee). The vote was unanimous. There were no recommendations.

67. To receive the Mayor's report – 6th November 2023 – 29th December 2023

The Council noted the Mayor's report and Deputy Mayor's report.
The Mayor reminded the Council of the Charity event to be held on 1st March 2024.

68. To approve the meeting dates for 2024 – 2025 civic year

A set of revised dates were presented to members at the meeting after conflicts in meeting dates were noticed with SODC.

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan to consider the revised dates at the next meeting. The Town Clerk informed the Council that it would be sensible to approve the revised dates and use them as working framework. Amendments could be made at a later date.

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr J Broadbent, and RESOLVED to APPROVE the revised meeting dates for 2024 – 2025 civic year. The vote was unanimous.

69. To consider whether to appoint a consultant to overview the new building known as North Brook Community Centre

It was proposed by Cllr C Jennings, seconded by Cllr J Loder, and RESOLVED to refer the item back to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to gather more information. The vote was unanimous.

70. To receive 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.

The Leader explained that he had been encouraging members to work together, cross party, which has resulted in a lot of work being completed. He noted the hard work on preparing the budget and also informed the Council that he is keen to implement KPI's (key performance indicators) to help manage the workload of the staff and to ensure, where possible, no staff member is working outside of their contracted hours.

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

Cllr C Jennings informed the Council that he had attended four meetings with various members of the group, regarding the Garden Town recently and was waiting on minutes from the most recent. He spoke on various initiatives including the health of children in Didcot and the identity of the town.

Cllr C Jennings explained that the word 'Garden' in the title, can be confusing to people and was investigating getting this removed (to read 'Didcot Town') but welcomed comments and views on this. Cllr N Hards asked if consideration had been taken regarding the definition of a 'garden town'. Cllr G Ryall questioned whether neighbouring Parishes would feel excluded should the word 'garden' be removed.

Cllr H Macdonald asked if Cllr C Jennings could update the Council on what the Garden Town had found out from the Sounding Boards. Cllr D Rouane explained that the sounding boards had met 18 months – two years ago and reports were available.

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

Q. What arrangements is the Town Council going to make for the opening of the new pavilion? Do you know of any major delays? (Cllr A Hudson)

The Leader explained that there are no confirmed plans for opening at the current time, but the subject can be referred back for suggestions and as far as he is aware, there are no major delays.

Q. In light of the fact that some homes in Didcot flooded last Thursday, can the Leader make discreet investigations into this for an explanation? (Cllr N Hards)

Cllr C Jennings explained that this would be done. He also confirmed that DTC would be updating its Emergency Plan through the Committees.

Q. I recall correspondence from last summer in which it stated grass cutting was a contributing factor to the flooding at Bridge Close, as was the stream. Are you aware of OCC doing anything about this? (Cllr L Hislop)

Cllr C Jennings answered that he was not aware of anything but could look into it.

Q. Do you have a comment on removing vehicle access at Cow Lane? (Cllr J Broadbent)

Cllr C Jennings believes comments from the Council had been taken out of context and also confirmed that in his personal opinion and as a Ladygrove resident, it would be a negative action.

Q. Can the Leader confirm that as a direct result of a Councillor not taking up their seat in the local elections, the £13,000 cost of a Bi-election, in your opinion, was money well spent? (Cllr G Ryall)

The Leader stated that this was not money well spent.

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

73. To approve the incremental pay recommendations from minute 49 of the P&A Committee meeting held on 4th December 2023.

It was proposed by Cllr C Jennings, seconded by Cllr J Loder, and **RESOLVED** to approve the incremental pay recommendations from the P&A Committee. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting closed at 8.41pm.

Signed:

(Mayor)

Date: