

Didcot Town Council

Council Meeting

Monday 9th January 2023 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 (Deputy Mayor)	M Khan (Leader)
D Chandran	D Macdonald (Deputy Leader)
J Durman	J Moody
V Haval	D Rouane
A Hudson	A Thompson
	M Walsh
	C Wilson

Officers:

Janet Wheeler - Town Clerk

The Deputy Mayor, Cllr A Macdonald, chaired the meeting.

Public participation – no members of the public present.

89. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs P Siggers (Mayor); A Dearlove; M McNeill; E Hards; P Giesberg; P Davies; M Mallows and B Service. Cllr A Sandiford was absent.

90. To receive declarations of interests

No declarations were made.

91. To approve and adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 7th November 2022 and to include questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item.

The Deputy Mayor paged through the minutes for amendments and questions.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and RESOLVED to approve the minutes Council meeting held on 7th November 2022 with no amendments. The vote was unanimous.

92. To receive the Committee minutes and decisions taken under delegated authority and to consider recommendations of Committees to Council in accordance with Standing Orders 95 – 112

a) Planning and Development Committee

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr J Moody and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meetings held on 16th November 2022 and 7th December 2022 (to be approved at Committee). The vote was unanimous. There were no recommendations.

b) Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meetings held on 28th November 2022 and 19th December 2022 (to be approved at Committee). The vote was unanimous.

There were several recommendations:

Minute 107: To approve a three year fixed premium insurance cover from November 2022 until November 2025 – at a cost of £22,876.92 with Gallagher (Hiscox). It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to approve the three year insurance cover. There was one abstention.

Minute 120: To approve the proposed budget for 2023 – 2024 and the precept request of £1,331,855. The budget papers and precept recommendation were presented to all Councillors. The increase in the precept was in line with other years at approx. 4.5% however the rising tax base due to housing numbers helped reduce the impact on households. Cllr M Khan thanked the Finance & General Purposes Committee for their hard work on preparing the budget. Cllr J Moody said that the Committee were fully aware of the cost of living but the challenge of heating DTC's public buildings also needed to be factored into the budget. The rise has been kept as modest as possible whilst ensuring that there are funds to run our services, properties and facilities. Cllr Moody confirmed that the new splash park would be funded by the general reserves.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to approve the budget for 2023 – 2024 civic year with a precept of £1,331,855. The vote was: 11 IN FAVOUR; 1 AGAINST.

Minute 122: To approve the option to tax the new Community & Sports Pavilion at Edmonds Park. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to opt to tax the new Community & Sports Pavilion at Edmonds Park. This will enable the Town Council to claim the VAT on the build but would also mean that future room hire costs would be vatable. The vote was unanimous.

Minute 124: To consider the recommendation to refuse the LTA and NTA management of the tennis courts at Ladygrove Park. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to refuse the management plans at this time. Cllr M Khan said that the proposal was a legal agreement for a long space of time. Cllr J Moody said that this agreement would mean that the public tennis courts would have to be booked in advance and residents would no longer be able to turn up and play. It was stated that improvements to the tennis courts would be made and that the NTA would be welcome to contact the Council and organise coaching sessions. The vote was: 9 IN FAVOUR; 3 ABSTENTIONS.

Minute 125: To approve the purchase of a wood chipper for £16,000 and a day's training for the outside services team at £200 each. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to approve the purchase of the wood chipper – and the training. The new equipment would be used all year round and would save on expensive hire costs. The vote was unanimous.

c) Environment & Climate Committee

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Environment & Climate Committee held on 21st November 2022. The vote was unanimous. There were no recommendations as these items were covered by the F&GP Committee.

d) Personnel and Administration Committee

It was proposed by Cllr D Chandran and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to receive the minutes for the meeting held on 5th December 2022. The vote was unanimous.

There were two recommendations:

Minute 43: To approve the Whistleblowing Policy It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and RESOLVED to approve the Policy. The vote was unanimous.

Minute 45: To approve an over-arching Policy Procedure to ensure timely approval of all DTC policies. It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and RESOLVED to approve the Policy Procedure. The vote was unanimous.

e) Property & Facilities Committee

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 30th November 2022. The vote was unanimous. There were several recommendations.

Minute 41: To approve the DTC properties hire tariff charges for the Civic Hall and Willowbrook for 2023 - 2024 It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to approve the hire tariff charges. The vote was unanimous.

Minute 43: To approve the Civic Hall Storage Policy It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to approve this policy. The vote was unanimous.

Minute 45: To approve the Bouncy Castle Policy It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan are RESOLVED to approve this Policy which provide some protection for DTC in the event of an accident. The vote was unanimous.

93. To receive the Mayor's Report and the Deputy Mayor's report

Both reports were noted by the Council for events attended from 3rd November 2022 to 4th January 2023.

94. To review the proposed timetable of Council meetings for 2023 – 2024 civic year

The dates for the meetings were circulated to all Councillors. This draft may change once we know when SODC Planning dates are scheduled for. It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr A Hudson and RESOLVED to approve the meeting dates subject to SODC planning when available. The vote was unanimous.

95. To approve a special dispensation for Cllr E Hards to miss further Council meetings due to ill health

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED to approve a special dispensation for the remainder of the civic term on medical grounds. Cllr M Khan led thanks to Cllr E Hards for her hard work as a Didcot Town Councillor (and past Mayor) throughout the term of office. The vote was unanimous.

96. To review the online consultation on the new Community & Sports Pavilion at Edmonds Park

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr A Hudson and RESOLVED to note the response to the most recent consultation which closed at the end of 2022. Cllr M Khan noted that comments from residents showed that this property was needed at Edmonds Park. Comments on parking issues were recorded along with support for the new Community and Sports Pavilion. The vote was unanimous.

97. 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 had received a letter from the Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council and Cllr D Rouane – Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council - regarding the motion passed at an SODC Council meeting to request a boundary review of the whole Great Western Park area – across the two Districts. The letter was disappointing as it cited lack of time with officers busy with the forthcoming local elections. The suggestion was to put the request on hold. Cllr M Khan asked the Council to approve a response to ask for the item to be progressed as soon as possible. A copy would be circulated to all Councillors.

Cllr M Khan reminded Councillors that they can get involved with the Public Art Delivery working group and a meeting was being set up to which they were all invited.

Cllr M Khan said that the set up of a new CIO to manage the Fleet Meadow Community Hall was almost complete and the first inaugural meeting of the new Trust would be on Monday 30th January 2023 at the Civic Hall at 7.30pm, An agenda and papers would be circulated to all Councillors.

Cllr M Khan encouraged Councillors to buy tickets for the Mayor's Civic Valentine's Ball on Saturday 11th February 2023.

Cllr M Khan also announced that planning permission had been granted for the new Splash Park at Edmonds Park.

98. Didcot Garden Town Project and the report of the Council's representative on the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board

Cllr M Khan attended an Advisory Board meeting on 14th December 2022 – the minutes are not yet available but will be circulated once received. There was a workshop on Traffic and Transport projects which could be suitable to be incorporated in S106 agreements which would fund them. The workshop was to gather ideas. The consultation for the development at the Gateway was open until 11th January 2023 if members wished to make their own comments. Cllr C Wilson said that comments would be accepted at least a week later. Cllr D Rouane endorsed the Garden Town work on the traffic and transport ideas.

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

Q: *“Was the Leader aware that during December all three GP surgeries had closed their books to new patients?”* (Cllr M Walsh)

A: The Leader said that he was aware of the lack of health provision in Didcot.

Q: *“Can the Leader give me any further up-dates on the new CCTV cameras?”* (Cllr A Thompson)

A: The Leader as the Town Clerk to confirm that quotes were due to be considered at the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Q: *“Would the Leader share his views on the potential closing of the Broadway to cars?”* Cllr J Durman

A: The Leader said that he was in favour of measures that would support the climate pledge taken by Didcot Town Council. However he was not in favour of a total ban as in some places it would be inappropriate.

Q: *“Was the Leader in favour of pushing through the 20mph limit in all parts of Didcot even if the residents opposed the idea – as happened at Witney?”* (Cllr J Durman)

A: The Leader said that until a consultation was carried out the question was hypothetical. He was in favour of being guided by the residents’ responses.

Q: *“Can the Leader give a timetable for the completion of the new splash park?”* (Cllr A Hudson).

A: The Leader could not give a time table but wanted it completed as quickly as possible.

100. 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.

101. To approve the incremental pay recommendations from minute 49 of the P&A Committee held on 7th December 2022 and minute 129 of the F&GP Committee held on 19th December 2022.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendations on the report which are mostly contractual. Cllr M Khan spoke to say that the staff work hard and some have passed important qualifications such as the CILCA and ILCA. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting closed at 20.20pm.

Signed:

(Mayor)

Date: