

WOOTTON BASSETT TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Wootton Bassett Town Council held on Thursday 22nd September at the rising of the Revenue and Resources meeting in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Station Road, Wootton Bassett.

PRESENT: Councillors: Steve Bucknell, Jon Booth, Susan Doyle, Linda Frost, Owen Gibbs, Paul Heaphy, Sue Hughes, Mike Leighfield, Peter Roberts, Jenny Stratton, Steve Walls, Audrey Wannell, Chris Wannell.

Officers in Attendance: Johnathan Bourne, Town Clerk, Michelle Temple, Administrative Team Leader, Emily Maiden, Administrative Assistant.

39. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mary Champion, Bill Roberts and Ernie Taylor.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Declarations of Interest in accordance with the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007.

RESOLVED to note that no Declarations of Interest were made.

41. WILTSHIRE COUNCIL CAMPUS PROPOSAL

Wootton Bassett Town Council has been considering its position with regard to the Wiltshire Council Campus Project.

Appendix A was a letter sent by the Town Clerk to Canon Thomas Woodhouse, Chair of the Community Operations Board, which summarises the Council's position based upon resolutions already passed.

The letter does not commit the Town Council to expenditure of the

funding detailed, but does give a clear indication of intent to the Community Operations Board, based upon information that the Town Council has already reviewed at its meetings.

At a meeting held on Wednesday 27th July 2011, Councillors were given the opportunity of reviewing all of the options considered over what has now been a number of years.

The Council was asked to receive a brief summary presentation from the Town Clerk, and then provide a steer as to the direction it wishes to take in respect of both Office and Meeting accommodation in the future. It should be noted that in passing such a resolution, the purpose is to provide steer for future discussions and negotiations, and will not commit the Council at this stage, but will allow for Officers to focus limited resources on the desired direction of travel.

The Council's instructions were sought.

The summary presentation from the Town Clerk raised several issues which were discussed by Members.

It was noted that the resolutions passed at recent meeting with regards to Community Hall provision have focused on the need to find a replacement for the Civic Centre. Members believe that residents are not receiving the best level of service from the current Community space available, and there are also maintenance and accessibility issues. A number of options have been looked at over the years, and the Campus proposal offers the chance to provide Wootton Bassett with high standard leisure and recreation facilities, which could include a Community Hall.

The possible disposal of the Civic Centre leads the Town Council to consider its position with regards to committee rooms and a Council Chamber. This in turn leads onto a wider debate about meeting rooms and office space. Options were covered in the Town Clerk's briefing speech and discussed by the Council as below:-

- a) The first option considers the Council's position should the Civic Centre be disposed of without an alternative venue for a dedicated Council Chamber being sought. This means that each time there is a Council meeting, an alternative meeting room would have to be found, which may not be the same for each meeting. Community Hall space would be provided by the Campus. Meeting space is provided by 117 High Street and at various local venues.

It was felt that there may be some issues with a peripatetic Council Chamber. The need to engage with the community is central to the successful functioning of the Council, and it was felt that to facilitate community engagement with ease, residents must know where they can go to converse with their local Councillor. If the venue for Council meetings is constantly changing, it becomes off-putting and a potential barrier to community involvement. There are also some logistical problems with becoming peripatetic, for example the difficulties posed by having to carry the relevant equipment (laptops, projectors etc) from place to place, and questions over ease of access for residents if the venue was not centrally located.

In discussing this option, Members questioned the validity of having a purpose built Council Chamber – is it cost effective? As the Chamber would only be used for Council meetings, it presents a wasted space for the rest of the time when not in use.

b) The second option would be for the Town Council to move to the new Community Campus, relocating both office space and a Council Chamber. This idea was met with some reservations:-

- At the meeting of the Town Council on July 14th 2011, the Council had expressed the view that adding a Chamber and committee rooms to a Community Hall may compromise the leisure facilities on offer. The focus of the Wootton Bassett Campus appears to lean towards leisure and sports provision, with the COB survey results indicating that residents are in favour of a split-site, with library services remaining in the town centre, and leisure services provided in the Lime Kiln area. The Council therefore felt uneasy about moving offices and committee rooms to an area which was strongly, though not exclusively, linked to sports and leisure provision
- Wootton Bassett Town Council would not hold the freehold on any property at the Campus site, and would be leasing the land from Wiltshire Council. Despite the fact that the building could be purpose built to suit the needs of the Town Council at the present time, not having the freehold means that there would be no flexibility should there ever be any need to expand or downsize.

c) The last option presented by the Town Clerk was for Manor House

to be purchased from Wiltshire Council and converted into office space, with the possibility of housing various meeting / committee rooms at Manor House itself. The building would become a capital asset for the Council as well as a potential source of income through 'lettable space'. The Campus would provide Wootton Bassett's Community Hall.

The space available at Manor House means that Wootton Bassett Town Council could offer conference facilities and exhibition space, neither of which is currently available in the town. A basic costings analysis has been looked at with the aim of discovering whether this option merits a full investigation into its economic viability. Initial research indicates that Manor House has the potential to generate a fair income in comparison to its running costs.

It was noted that should Manor House offer exhibition space and conference facilities, these would not be run in competition with the Community Hall provided at the Campus. The Town Council is fully supportive of the Campus programme, and as such would not jeopardise its success by offering the same facilities. Currently, Wootton Bassett does not have any conference or exhibition space, and it is this that Manor House would seek to provide. There would be no overlap with the facilities on offer at the Community Hall.

The Council were asked whether they believed that the Manor House option was worth investigating further on financial grounds.

After reviewing each of these options, it was **RESOLVED** to support the Wiltshire Campus proposal fully, but not to seek provision of a Council Chamber or Offices on the site.

It was further **RESOLVED** to investigate the economic viability of Manor House in full, alongside a detailed analysis of the running cost of a new build.

42. MOTHER'S DAY RIDE OF RESPECT

The organisers of the Mother's Day Ride of Respect are looking to organise a repeat for next March. Before doing so, they are approaching the Town Council to see if this would be welcomed or whether the town would prefer for the ride to go to another location,

given that repatriations no longer pass through the town.

The Mayor would appreciate a steer on this before he replies to the organisation.

Members felt that it would no longer be appropriate to stage the Ride of Respect in Wootton Bassett, given that repatriations have moved from RAF Lyneham to RAF Brize Norton.

Wootton Bassett is no longer involved in repatriations, and the town is seeking to look to the future. It would be more appropriate for the bikers to show their appreciation at the new memorial in Oxfordshire.

The Mayor thanked the Council for their input and steer on this matter.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.