

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Northleach with Eastington Town Council held in the Westwoods Centre on 15 November 2023, 7pm

Present: Cllrs Terry Morley-Blackwell (Chairman), Brian Hulcup, Matt Jackson, Laura Kirkby, Jules Russell, Patsi Rainey, Mark Tennant, Andrew Wellman, and Guy Woolley

In Attendance: Pauline Rigby (Town Clerk), County Cllr Paul Hodgkinson, District Cllr Tony Dale, and one member of the public

Before the meeting got underway, Annie White, Volunteer and Engagement Officer from the OPCC, introduced the Councillor Advocacy Scheme as a way to better link parishes with their local neighbourhood policing team.

117. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllrs Byron Hadley and Caroline Saunders.

118. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

119. County and district council reports

District Cllr Tony Dale budget reported that:

- Cotswold District Council (CDC)'s budget consultation is open until 8 December.
- A review of the Parking Strategy in the district has been presented to Cabinet. The district council manages 20 car parks. There are three key settlements without CDC car parks: Lechlade, Fairford and Northleach. He has specifically asked for those settlements to be included in the report, so they include the needs of communities not already served.
- Paying to park with cash is unlikely to be available in the near future. PayPoint is the only means of accepting cash, but retailers offering this service are not located near the car parks.
- There is a byelection for the district council seat in Lechlade, Kempsford, and Fairford South.
- A consultancy firm called Human Engine did a report into the shared services company Publica, and all four councils voted for Option 6, bringing the majority of services back in house.

County Cllr Hodgkinson reported that:

- The request to reduce speed limits are with the local highways manager.
- Potholes in Back Lane have been marked out but not filled.
- The poor condition of pavement on the Old A40 coming out of Northleach has been reported.
- County Council reporting of highways issues has moved to FixMyStreet.
- Government plans to close rail ticket offices have been scrapped.
- The County Council budget consultation will start next month.
- The Robin Bus is being served from Northleach; a request will only be rejected if someone is asking for a journey that is served by a regular bus route.
- More funding has been allocated to the Build Back Better Fund for the next 18 months.

120. Public Participation

A member of the public asked who within the Town Council takes an overall view of roads, pavements, or street lighting issues. He asked about progress on various highways issues, including a cone and plate that have been blocking the pavement opposite High Pavement for several months.

121. Confirmation of Minutes

It was noted RESOLVED that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council held on 18 October 2023 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

122. Action Point Update

The Clerk reported that:

- The application to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) has gone in.
- Fields in Trust has approved the management agreement with Cotswold Glorious Grasslands; Cotswold Conservation Board are still waiting final sign off of their funding.
- The lease for the Men in Sheds has been signed.
- A response is awaited from the elections team about representation for Eastington.

123. Planning Matters

Application No: 23/03126/FUL and 23/03127/LBC

Address: The Black Cat Café, Market Place, Northleach, Cheltenham GL54 3EE

Proposal: Refurbishment and conversion of Black Cat Café and current residential accommodation over to form cafe with self-contained accommodation over. Form new access to first floor via new stair in pitches. Roof addition to existing flat roofed block to west of main building.

It was RESOLVED to support the application, on the grounds that the proposal will be a real asset to the community, both in its visual appearance and by improving the functionality of the building.

124. Bus Services

To request that the bus stop on the Market Place is reinstated.

A number of complaints had been received about the temporary bus stop since it was formally moved to the High Street outside Walton House. The temporary bus stop obstructs the pavement, and some services continue to use the Market Place, so the public are confused about where to wait.

It was RESOLVED that the Council would make a formal request to reinstate the bus stop on the Market Place, so that Pulhams' services can be brought back onto the Market Place.

Members expressed a preference for using the bus stop by the toilet block.

125. Polling Places Review

To agree the council's response to the Polling Places Review.

The review proposed to keep the polling place at The Westwoods Centre.

Members did not feel that any comment was necessary.

126. Biodiversity Policy

To note the new duty to have a plan to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

126.1 It was RESOLVED that the council notes the new biodiversity duty.

126.2 It was further RESOLVED to create an informal working group to develop the policy and action plan and bring it back to the next meeting of the council.

Members of the Group: Cllrs Morley-Blackwell, Russell, Wellman, and Woolley.

127. Children's Christmas Show

To confirm ticket price and arrangements for the event.

It was RESOLVED that ticket price be set at £5 for adults and children.

128. Council Archives

To authorise Cllr Hadley to investigate options for future storage of the HMS Starwort and Westwoods School historical collections.

It was RESOLVED that Cllr Hadley be authorised to investigate options for future storage of the HMS Starwort and Westwoods School historical collections.

129. Finance

129.1 To receive the bank reconciliation to 31 October 2023.

The bank reconciliation had been circulated. Members questioned its usefulness without the supporting bank statements. The Clerk explained that the Finance Committee checks the detail quarterly; while presenting the reconciliation demonstrates the process is being followed.

129.2 To receive the budget monitoring report for the year to date.

Questions were raised over how the net position was calculated.

129.3 To authorise the payment of accounts as per the schedule.

It was RESOLVED that payments in the sum of £10,451.31 be authorised as per the schedule appended.

130. Meetings Schedule

To review and agree the meetings schedule for 2024.

Meetings had been moved to second Wednesdays to avoid a conflict with district council meetings, but this had created scheduling difficulties with committee meetings. As district council meetings had since changed; it was proposed to switch back to third Wednesdays.

It was RESOLVED that Full Council meetings be changed to third Wednesdays.

131. Pensions Policy:

To consider and adopt the draft policy confirming how the council will meet its obligations under auto-enrolment legislation.

Cllr Jackson explained that all employees are entitled to a workplace pension. Council must come to a decision this evening so that we know what pension to offer to new employees.

Members of the Finance Committee had discussed the matter formally and informally, and a majority had recommended Option 1, that only the Town Clerk would be eligible for membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

It was RESOLVED that the position of Town Clerk would be eligible for the LGPS and all other employees would be offered NEST on the basis previously agreed by the Council.

132. Pay Award

To note that the National Pay Award for Local Government Services has been agreed, effective 1 April 2023, and backpay be paid as soon as possible.

This information was duly noted.

133. Closed session:

To exclude public and press pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

It was RESOLVED that public and press be excluded.

Members of the public left the room.

134. Staffing Matters

- 134.1 To agree to offer the Westwoods Caretaker post to the preferred candidate, on the terms and conditions recommended by the interview panel.

It was RESOLVED to offer the position of Westwoods Caretaker to Vesna Gusic on SCP6.

The Clerk was instructed to make an unconditional offer.

- 134.2 To agree to offer the Assistant Clerk position to the preferred candidate, on the terms and conditions recommended by the interview panel.

It was explained that the preferred candidate had withdrawn her application earlier in the day.

Cllr Morley-Blackwell asked the Town Clerk to discuss the matter in private. The interview panel (Cllrs Jackson, Morley-Blackwell, and the Clerk) left the room for a short while. On returning it was reported that the matter would have to be progressed outside the meeting.

- 134.3 To ratify the Finance Committee decisions relating to the temporary increase in the Clerk's working hours to cover staff vacancies, and agree any further actions.

It was RESOLVED to ratify the Finance Committee decision to temporarily increase the Clerk's working hours to 33 hours per week until an Assistant Clerk is in post.

135. Future Agenda Items:

To be added: Finance Committee TOR, volunteer group (Cllr Jackson), nominations for Community Awards (Cllr Kirkby).

136. Next Meeting

Members were reminded of the Strategy Meeting on 6 December.

The next Council meeting is on Weds 24 January 2023, 7pm in the Westwoods Centre.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:45pm.

Signature of the Chairman on approval of the minutes: _____

Payment schedule of 15 November 2023

Date	Supplier	Service	Amount
31-May	GAPTC	VAT training	£ 30.00
11-Oct	EDF Energy	Westwoods electricity	£ 377.34
12-Oct	Playdale	Engineer visit deposit	£ 152.88
13-Oct	Sweetfuels	Heating oil	£ 1,244.84
13-Oct	Community Heartbeat	Defib battery	£ 357.00
18-Oct	Viking	Office supplies	£ 38.17
21-Oct	Zen Internet	Broadband	£ 32.40
22-Oct	BrightHR	HR services	£ 24.30
23-Oct	HM Land Registry	Title documents	£ 6.00
23-Oct	Buyabattery	Batteries	£ 24.42
25-Oct	Staff costs	October payroll	£ 4,139.17
26-Oct	Cellar Supplies	Bar supplies	£ 245.01
26-Oct	Playdale	Engineer visit	£ 152.88
27-Oct	Tesco	Bar supplies	£ 3.10
28-Oct	Casual bar staff	Bar staffing	£ 90.00
31-Oct	Amanda King	Westwoods cleaning	£ 180.00
31-Oct	McCracken and Sons	Grounds maintenance	£ 1,527.30
31-Oct	Mainstream Digital	Telephone line	£ 51.41
31-Oct	Grundon	Waste collection	£ 113.10
02-Nov	Screwfix	Cable ties	£ 3.34
06-Nov	BJ Unwin Forestry	Tree inspection	£ 1,176.00
06-Nov	InstantPrint	Correx signs	£ 42.84
07-Nov	GAPTC	Planning training	£ 35.00
07-Nov	Fruitcakes	Milk	£ 3.40
08-Nov	Carole Cooper	Plants	£ 51.41
09-Nov	Roy Balgobin & Irena Litton	Councillor training	£ 350.00
	TOTAL PAYMENTS		£ 10,451.31