

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Town Council held at the Oakwood Centre  
on Tuesday 6 May 2025 at 8 pm**

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**Present:** *Councillors D. Bragg (Chairman); J. Anderson; K. Baker; G. Bello;  
K. Charles Bey; J. Cheng; Y. Edwards; D. Errawalla; M. Firmager;  
K. Gilder; C. Jewell; M. Kennedy; J. Sartorel; P. Singh; B. Soane;  
A. Swaddle; J. Taylor*

**Officers present:** *K. Murray, Town Clerk; M. Filmore, Deputy Town Clerk;*

**Also present:** *Cllr R. Horskins; Cllr M. Holmes (Virtual Attendance)  
2 members of the public*

1. *A maximum of 30 minutes was set aside before the start of the meeting for members of the public to pose questions to the Council in the Town Forum. As there were no members of the public wishing to address the Council the Town Forum did not take place.*

2. **ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR**

The existing Mayor, Councillor Anderson, addressed the Council.

Councillor Anderson called for nominations for the office of Town Mayor for 2025/26.

It was proposed by Councillor Baker, seconded by Councillor Swaddle and

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To elect Councillor Bragg to the office of Town Mayor of Woodley for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 1

3. **TOWN MAYOR'S DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

Councillor Bragg, as the newly elected Mayor, took over as Chair of the meeting and addressed the Council.

The Mayor thanked Members for their confidence in nominating him, stating it was an honour, particularly during such an important year with the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day approaching. He promised to represent and serve the town with respect and energy.

Councillor Bragg advised that Promise Inclusion would be his chosen charity for the municipal year, whose work supports children and adults with learning difficulties or on the autistic spectrum.

Councillor Bragg confirmed he would sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Town Mayor as soon as possible after the meeting.

4. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Holmes, Horskins, Lewis, Nagra, Rowland and Smith. Councillor Horskins and Holmes attended the meeting virtually.

5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

6. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR**

It was proposed by Councillor Anderson, seconded by Councillor Baker, and

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To elect Councillor Smith to the office of Deputy Mayor for the 2025/26 municipal year

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 1

7. **POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS**

7.1 **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillor Soane as Leader of the Conservative Group, and that no Deputy Leader would be appointed.

7.2 **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillor Taylor as Leader and Councillor Edwards as Deputy Leader of the Labour Group.

7.3 **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillor Jewell as Leader and Councillor Rowland as Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group.

8. **ELECTION OF THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL**

8.1 It was proposed by Councillor Gilder, seconded by Councillor Swaddle and

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To elect Councillor Baker as Leader of the Council for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Voting: For: 11 Against: 0 Abstentions: 5 No Vote Registered: 1

Cllr Taylor requested consideration be made for the provision of a description of the role of the Leader of the Council in the Council's Standing Orders. Councillor Baker suggested this be extended to cover the roles of the Town Mayor and political group leaders as well.

8.2 It was proposed by Councillor Gilder, seconded by Councillor Baker and

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To elect Councillor Swaddle as Deputy Leader of the Council for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1 No Vote Registered: 1

9. **STANDING COMMITTEES**

The Mayor advised Members that, if no changes were to be proposed to the terms of reference, known as Powers and Duties, of the Standing Committees then it would be expedient to approve these en masse. No Members proposed any changes, and it was:

- 9.1 **RESOLVED:**
- ♦ To approve the Powers and Duties of the three standing committees - Strategy & Resources, Leisure Services, Planning & Community - for the 2025/26 municipal year, which includes setting the number of places on each standing committee at 10.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 1

9.2 **Strategy and Resources Committee**

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To note the appointment of Councillors Anderson, Baker, Bello, Bragg, Gilder, Horskins, Kennedy, Nagra, Rowland and Swaddle to the Strategy and Resources Committee for the 2025/26 municipal year.

9.3 **Leisure Services Committee**

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To note the appointment of Councillors Bragg, Edwards, Errawalla, Firmager, Gilder, Jewell, Kennedy, Lewis, Singh and Smith to the Leisure Services Committee for the 2025/26 municipal year.

9.4 **Planning and Community Committee**

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To note the appointment of Councillors Baker, Bragg, Guttridge, Horskins, Jewell, Lewis, Sartorel, Soane and Taylor to the Planning and Community Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year, with one Labour group place remaining vacant at the current time.

10. **MEMBERSHIP OF SUB COMMITTEES, TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUPS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Under Standing Orders 6.4a, 6.5a and 6.6a respectively, members of the parent standing committees considered the terms of reference as follows:

10.1 **Strategy and Resources Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Baker, seconded by Councillor Gilder and

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To approve the terms of reference for all committees for whom the Strategy & Resources Committee is the parent committee, as follows:
  - Investments Sub Committee – 4 places
  - Risk Management Sub Committee – 4 places
  - Standing Orders & Financial Regulations Sub Committee – 4 places
  - PR & Marketing Sub Committee – 4 places
  - Personnel Sub Committee – 4 places
  - Woodley Town Centre Partnership – 3 places (including 1 substitute)

Voting: For: 6 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 1

10.2 **Investments Sub Committee:**

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To note the appointment of Councillors Anderson, Baker, Bello and Bragg to the Investments Sub Committee for the municipal year.

**10.3 Risk Management Sub Committee:**

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Bello, Bragg, Guttridge and Horskins to the Risk Management Sub Committee for the municipal year.

**10.4 Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Sub Committee:**

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Baker, Kennedy, Taylor and Swaddle to the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Sub Committee for the municipal year.

**10.5 PR & Marketing Sub Committee:**

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Anderson, Errawalla, Swaddle and Taylor to the PR & Marketing Sub Committee for the municipal year.

**10.6 Personnel Sub Committee:**

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Anderson, Kennedy, Singh and Soane to the Personnel Sub Committee for the municipal year.

**10.7 Woodley Town Centre Partnership:**

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Baker, Holmes and Singh to the Woodley Town Centre Partnership for the municipal year.
- ◆ For Councillor Singh to remain as a named substitute on the Woodley Town Centre Partnership for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Councillor Baker recommended the Council seek to amend the terms of reference to have three full places for Councillor appointments, with no substitute Member.

**10.8 Leisure Services Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Firmager, seconded by Councillor Gilder and

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the terms of reference for all committees for whom the Leisure Services Committee is the parent committee, as follows:
  - Community Youth Partnership – 4 places
  - 3G Pitch Steering Group Sub Committee – 4 places
  - Woodford Park Leisure Centre Development task & finish working group – 4 places
  - Youth Support Services task & finish working group – 4 places

Voting: For: 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 3

## 10.9 **Community Youth Partnership:**

### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Bragg, Edwards, Gilder and Holmes to the Community Youth Partnership for the municipal year.
- ◆ To note the appointment of the following voluntary sector representatives to the Community Youth Partnership for the municipal year:
  - Graham Sumblar (Woodley Baptist Church)
  - Trina Farrance (Bulmershe Gymnastics)
  - Sam Milligan (Just Around the Corner)
  - Dylan Harman (1<sup>st</sup> Woodley Boys' Brigade)
  - Chas Randle (2<sup>nd</sup> Woodley Scouts)
  - Chinyere Davies (Me2 Club)

## 10.10 **3G Pitch Steering Group Sub Committee:**

### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Bragg, Firmager, Lewis and Taylor to the 3G Pitch Steering Group for the municipal year.

## 10.11 **WPLC Development task & finish working group:**

### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Edwards, Horskins, Kennedy and Smith to the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Development task & finish working group for the municipal year.

## 10.12 **Youth Support Service task & finish working group:**

### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Edwards, Firmager, Gilder and Kennedy to the Youth Support Service task & finish working group for the municipal year.

## 10.13 **Planning and Community Committee**

### **Cycling & Walking task & finish working group:**

### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the terms of reference of the Cycling & Walking task & finish working group for the municipal year, including that there be 5 places on the working group, 2 for Councillors and 3 for outside organisation representatives.

Voting: For: 4 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 2

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Jewell and Taylor to the working group for the municipal year.

## 10.14 **Full Council**

### **Annual Town Meeting Sub Committee:**

### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the terms of reference of the Annual Town Meeting Sub Committee for the municipal year, including that there be 4 places on the committee.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 1

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Anderson, Edwards, Horskins and Kennedy to the working group for the municipal year.

#### 10.15 **Bulmershe Site of Urban Landscape Value (SULV) Joint Sub Committee**

##### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note the terms of reference of the Bulmershe SULV Joint Sub Committee.
- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Errawalla, Gilder and Taylor to the committee for the municipal year.
- ◆ For Councillor Taylor to remain as the named substitute on the Woodley Town Centre Partnership for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Councillor Baker requested the Town Clerk contact Earley Town Council to seek to amend the terms of reference to have three full places for Councillor appointments, with no substitute Member.

#### 11. **APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

To expedite proceedings, the Mayor proposed that nominations would initially be sought for each outside body. Where there were more nominations than places, an individual vote would take place on that specific appointment. Otherwise, at the end of all nominations being made, an overall vote would be taken on all uncontested appointments. No concerns were raised with regards to this proposal.

The Town Clerk confirmed that, in a change to the published agenda, the appointment of a representative to the Allotments Tenants Committee has been requested by the committee to be deferred to the next meeting of Full Council.

Councillor Soane advised that the Museum of Berkshire Aviation Trust were not aware of his appointment in the previous year. It was agreed this would be followed up.

##### 11.1 Following a recommendation, it was:

##### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ That the following Members, appointed during the 2024/25 municipal as Town Council representatives to outside bodies, continue for the 2025/26 municipal year:

##### **ARC – 2 places**

Councillor Gilder and Mrs S. Flower

##### **Berkshire Association of Local Councils – 1 place**

Councillor Kennedy

##### **Citizens Advice Wokingham – 1 place**

Councillor Lewis

##### **Friends of Woodford Park Committee – 1 place**

Councillor Horskins

##### **Highwood Management Conference – 2 places**

Councillors Gilder and Holmes

##### **Keep Mobile – 1 place**

Councillor Guttridge

**Museum of Berkshire Aviation Trust – 1 place**

Councillor Soane

**ReadiBus – 1 place**

Councillor Guttridge

**Sonning & District Welfare & Education Trust – 1 place**

Councillor Smith

**Wokingham Borough/Parish Working Group – 1 place**

Councillor Kennedy

**Woodley Bowling Club Management Committee – 1 place**

Councillor Gilder

**Woodley Volunteer Centre – 1 place**

Councillor Kennedy

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 1

11.2 It was then proposed and, following individual votes, it was:

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To appoint the followings Members as Town Council representatives on outside bodies:

**Poor's Land Charity – 1 place to serve until 2028**

Councillor Charles Bey

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 2

**Wokingham Borough Council Town Centre Strategy Working Group – 1 place**

Councillor Soane

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 1

11.3 Continuing representation on the following outside bodies was noted:

**Poor's Land Charity – 3 places**

Councillors Gilder and Holmes serving until 2026

Mrs S. Flower serving until 2028

**Robert Palmer's Almshouse Charity – 1 place**

Councillor Bragg serving to 2028

12. **BANK SIGNATORIES**

It was suggested that a bigger pool of signatories should be considered, noting a recommendation by the internal auditor that responsibility for authorising payments should be spread further. It was commented that, at present, out of the four signatories, authorisation tended to be dealt with by only two of these Councillors on a regular basis. The Town Clerk advised that the auditor's recommendation was that authorisation be shared more evenly amongst the appointed signatories. A further suggestion was made that a bank signatory from outside of the Conservative Group would be welcomed, and Councillor Taylor indicated she would be happy to do so.

Following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To appoint Councillors Baker, Bragg, Kennedy, Swaddle and Taylor as signatories to authorise payments and financial transfers on behalf of the Council for the municipal year.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 1

13. **MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY 2024**

The Mayor presented the minutes of the Council meeting held on 11 February 2025.

Following a query regarding the quality of the sound recording at meetings, the Town Clerk confirmed that a new system had now been purchased and was due to be installed by the end of May.

**Minute 84.4 – Strategy & Resources Committee Minutes: 21 January 2025**

The Town Clerk confirmed that, following a request at this meeting to consider reinstating gates on the play area in Wheble Park, details of progress would be reported back to the Leisure Services Committee.

**Minute 88 – Outside Bodies**

In relation to the Highwood Management Conference, it was highlighted that concern had been raised about a comment made at the Full Council meeting that the extent of Highwood had now been extended to cover South Lake. It was commented that South Lake is entirely within Woodley, and that it would not be appropriate for Earley Town Council, who form part of the Highwood Management Conference, to have any say on this area of Woodley. The Town Clerk confirmed he would follow up this concern after the meeting.

**RESOLVED**

- ♦ To approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 11 February 2025 and that they be signed by the Town Mayor as a correct record.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Recorded: 1

14. **ACTIONS / FOLLOW UPS**

Members noted the update to actions and follow up items raised at previous meetings, as provided in the agenda.

15. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

15.1 **Minutes of the Planning and Community Committee: 4 March 2025**

Councillor Soane presented the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 4 March 2025.

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To receive the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 4 March 2025.

15.2 **Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee: 25 March 2025**

Councillor Firmager presented the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 25 March 2025.



### **Minute 56 – Actions & Follow Ups**

A request was made to update the draft minutes to make it clear that the sports wall referred to is in Wheble Park.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 25 March 2025.

### **15.3 Minutes of the Planning and Community Committee: 1 April 2025**

Councillor Soane presented the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 1 April 2025.

#### **Minute 192.1 – Community Speedwatch**

A request was made for the Community Speedwatch group to consider undertaking activities on Beechwood Avenue, along the straight section between Reading Road and Woodwaye. Councillor Taylor confirmed this road was on the list of potential roads for consideration. Members were also reminded that an online form was available on the Council's website by which requests for potential speedwatch locations can be registered.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 1 April 2025.

### **15.4 Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee: 22 April 2025**

Councillor Baker presented the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 22 April 2025.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve the updated Youth Service Strategy, as set out in the agenda.

Voting: For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Registered: 1

#### **Minute 95 – Oakwood Centre Frontage**

A request was made to consider providing cover for the cycle racks located at the front of the Oakwood Centre. The Town Clerk confirmed this would be considered.

#### **Minutes 82 – Actions & Follow Ups**

Following a query in relation to the extension of the lease of Wheble Park, the Town Clerk confirmed that he had been in contact with the Portfolio Manager at Reading Borough Council and that a draft lease was being written up.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Strategy & Resources Committee meeting held on 22 April 2025.

### **15.5 Minutes of the Planning and Community Committee: 29 April 2025**

Councillor Soane presented the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 29 April 2025.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To receive the minutes of the Planning and Community Committee meeting held on 29 April 2025.

16. **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING SUB COMMITTEE**

Councillor Anderson presented the Report No. FC 3/25 of the Annual Town Meeting sub committee meeting, which took place on 25 March 2025.

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To note Report No. FC 3/25 of the Annual Town Meeting sub committee meeting which took place on 25 March 2025.

16. **FINANCE UPDATE**

A query was raised that, in relation to the Strategy & Resources Committee, the end of year figures provided in Report No. FC 4/25 differed to those presented in the budgetary control document at the Strategy & Resources Committee meeting on 22 April. The Town Clerk confirmed the reason for these differences would be reviewed and details provided to all Members.

It was suggested that purpose of individual funding pots should be made clearer, identifying whether they relate to, or could be spent on, capital or revenue spending. The Town Clerk advised that the aim was to provide clearer details in future, with any feedback welcomed. The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members this was the first time an end of year budget report had been provided to Members with the intention of providing greater levels of information. He also requested that queries on reports, such as these, be raised with Officers prior to the meeting wherever possible in order that they can be investigated and for answers to be formulated.

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To note Report No. FC 4/25.
- ♦ To note that the appropriate authorised bank signatories had checked and signed the Council's bank reconciliations up to 31 March 2025.

17. **LEADER'S STATEMENT**

Councillor Baker, as Leader of the Council, read out a statement, included at **Appendix A**.

18. **OUTSIDE BODIES**

Alongside the outside body reports provided in the agenda, the following additional reports were provided to all Members at the meeting:

- Citizen's Advice Wokingham – Councillor Lewis
- Robert Palmer's Almshouse Charity – Councillor Bragg
- Friends of Woodford Park – Councillor Horskins

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To note the written reports from Town Council outside body representatives, as provided in the agenda and at the meeting.

19. **TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

Members noted the details of the events which the previous year's Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor had attended since the last Full Council meeting, as provided in the agenda.

20. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no suggestions for future agenda items.

21. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

It was suggested that, in light of the recent enhancement of the Communications & Events Managers role, that they might prepare a report regarding future communication and marketing plans and how these intend to be managed.

Meeting closed at 9:44 pm

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**LEADERS STATEMENT**

Cllr Keith Baker

6<sup>th</sup> May 2024

First of all I want to pay a massive tribute to the outgoing Mayor, Cllr Juliet Anderson. She has carried out her task with the highest level of professionalism but also with the right level of humility. She will be a hard act to follow but I know David will rise to occasion during his year of office. I want to give my most heartfelt thanks to Juliet from both a personal basis and on behalf of all Woodley residents.

I also would like to welcome Cllr Darren Smith who has been voted into the role of Deputy Mayor. I have known Darren for many years, in many different roles and I know he will do a great job standing in for David.

As we move into a new year I would like to reflect on the previous 12 months. Collectively we have achieved quite a lot during that period. However, one particular achievement should be highlighted that is around the council tax level. From the moment my group took control in 2013 Woodley Town Council had the unhelpful accolade of being the most expensive Town or Parish Council Tax. Together Officers and my group have worked extremely hard to try and remove that "award". All that hard work has finally paid off so that another Town / Parish Council charges more than us.

The numbers are incredibly impressive. From 2013 to now our Town Council Tax has been reduced by nearly 7% in absolute terms and a whopping 58% in real terms. Throughout that period, we have not cut a single service or facility. We have not cut any of the most generous grant regime in the Borough. We have even started to pay off the huge loan taken out to build the Oakwood Centre. In significant contrast our neighbouring Town Council have steadily increased their Town Council Tax with Wokingham Town increasing theirs by 71% and Earley Town by 45%.

The good news does not stop there. Looking towards next year we have major investments planned for the Oakwood Centre café and the Theatre. We will also start, for what I believe is a first in the Borough, a major exercise on engagement with residents on the budget for 2026 / 27. Obviously, this will lead directly to what happens with the Council Tax figure for that year. These are exciting times and I hope all councillors will fully embrace all of these actions.

My last comment on this past year is about attendance of all councillors at any council meetings. Over the last 6 months there has been a marked drop in attendance at these meetings. Some councillors have not even sent their apologies which is not good. Several councillors have been excellent in sending their apologies and I thank them for that. Remember residents bothered to come out and vote for you to represent them at this Town Council. You cannot do that if you do not turn up so please can everyone redouble their efforts to attend as many of the committees you serve on. The residents deserve that.