

# Gerrards Cross Town Council

South Lodge, East Common, Gerrards Cross SL9 7AD 01753 888018

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## Minutes of the Council Meeting held at 7.00pm on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022 in The Garden Room at Gerrards Cross Memorial Centre

**Present:** Cllr. A Wood (Mayor), Cllr N Barnett, Cllr. M Bracken, Cllr. J Chhokar, Cllr Sarah Davey, Cllr. C Da Costa, Cllr. T Greenfield (arrived at 7.26pm), Cllr. B Holborn, Cllr. B Peck Cllr. J O’Keeffe, Cllr. P Roberts, Cllr. C Stuart-Lee.

**In Attendance:** Chris Brown (Associate Councillor), Jennifer Woolveridge (Associate Councillor), Lisa Lindvall (Associate Councillor), Sue Moffat (Town Clerk), Amy McCreary (Deputy Town Clerk)

**128/21 To accept apologies of absence:** Buckinghamshire Cllr. S Chhokar, Buckinghamshire Cllr. T Broom. The Town Clerk to confirm with Buckinghamshire Councillors G Hollis and P Bass if they want to continue receiving Full Council Meeting invitations or whether Cllr S. Chhokar is representing them.

**129/21 Declaration of Interests** - Councillors please give any declarations of interest at the beginning of the item on the Agenda.

### **130/21 To approve the Minutes from the Full Council meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021.**

Cllr Holborn requested for agenda item 125/21 report on meetings to be amended to: *Cllr Holborn attended the photography session at the high street meeting.* Cllr Holborn informed the Council that the footage from the meeting had been uploaded to Facebook.

Cllr O’Keeffe asked for agenda item 122/21 CCTV Update to be amended to: *There is no CCTV Community Board funding for this year.*

The Council agreed to both these amendments. The Town Clerk to update the Minutes.

Cllr Wood proposed, Cllr Holborn seconded and the Council agreed.

**131/21 Public Speaking** Associate Cllr. Woolveridge informed the Council that she has received a second indirect report from a third person about a man portraying to be a dog warden on the Camp. It was reported that a lady walking her dog around The Camp was approached by a man wearing a fluorescent vest with writing on imitating a dog warden. He informed the lady that she needed to pay a fine because she had not cleaned up after her dog and if she paid now the cost would be reduced. The lady showed the man that she had cleaned up after her dog and refused to pay the fine. Cllr Woolveridge has informed residents to report any such incidents directly to the Town Clerk. Cllr Bracken to inform residents when checking The Camp.

**132/21 To agree to accept Lisa Lindvall as an Associate Town Councillor.** The Council agreed for Lisa Lindvall to be an Associate Town Councillor. Declaration of Acceptance of Office to be duly signed and to agree to adhere to the Code of Conduct.

### **133/21 Report from Buckinghamshire Councillors.**

**Cllr M Bracken** Buckinghamshire Council have been preparing the budget for next year and this will be discussed at the Full Council Meeting in February. Cllr Bracken had a meeting with Capital Maintenance Team and they have agreed the highway’s priorities.

The next Planning Committee Meeting is scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> February, but it has not been confirmed if the Network Railway Bridge application is an agenda item.

**Cllr Wood** attended the Buckinghamshire Council Task and Finish Group meeting along with Buckinghamshire Officers and the Directors of Highways. The current road repair failings werediscussed, and new proposals were put forward. Cllr Wood confirmed that the new process will

no longer involve one company that quality checks their own work. The new tender process will consist of using four companies with a more robust inspection procedure in place.

**134/21 To confirm the Minutes of the following meetings:-**

- (i) Commons Committee 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – Cllr Davey informed the Council that the Chairman received the minutes 1 hour before they were distributed to all the Councillors as part of the Council Meeting Pack. This 1 hour was not sufficient time for the Chairman to properly review, correct or agree the minutes. The Clerk requested it to be minuted that the Commons Minutes dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 were sent out later than usual due to the meeting schedules having changed at the beginning of January. Previously the Town Clerk had more than 3 working days to send out agreed draft Minutes of the Commons meeting before the Full Council meeting.
- Cllr Davey requested the following amendments under item 3: *The proposal brought to the table by the Town Clerk for £60k was very expensive, Cllr Davey and Cllr Greenfield to look for alternatives.*
- Under item 4 – *Under item 4 – The Town Clerk to find a new bench for the council to consider which is not made out of recycled materials.*
- Under item 5 – *The Council agreed that the contractors had done a good job of clearing the lilies and reeds on New Pond.*
- Under item 6 – *The Council agreed that breeze blocks should not be used because they may damage the lining of Latchmore Pond. The duck house has now been installed and the Town Clerk will report back at the next Commons Meeting on how the duck house has actually been secured.*
- Under item 7 *The Council agreed to go with the 4 day quote at a cost of £8270.50 from next years budget. The Clerk to put in a Community Board application in for £8000 match funding and the Council will invest another £8000 into the footpaths to be spent on any path maintenance not completed within the 4 day quote.*
- The Council agreed to the amendments. The Town Clerk to update the Minutes.
- Cllr Davey proposed, Cllr Peck seconded and the Council agreed
- (ii) Highways Committee 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022- Cllr Wood proposed, Cllr Da Costa seconded, and the Council agreed.
- (iii) Planning Committee 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021, 4<sup>th</sup> January and 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – Cllr J Chhokar confirmed the Minutes.

**135/21 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) updates** The Town Clerk has submitted the Draft Screening of the Neighbourhood Plan to the Neighbourhood Planning Team at Buckinghamshire Council. The Town Clerk will report back once feedback has been received.

**136/21 Proposed new terms of GXTC's lease of South Lodge with Gerrards Cross Community Association Update**– Cllr Barnett had a meeting with the Gerrards Cross Community Association regarding the lease. They original lease proposed to provide two car parking spaces but Cllr Barnett has requested four and is waiting for them to confirm. It is important to get the correct number of parking spaces because Gerrards Cross Community Association intend to reinstate the parking restrictions. Currently there is no confirmed date when the parking restrictions will be implemented. Cllr Barnett confirmed that the restrictions will apply after 6.30pm. Cllr Stuart- Lee to discuss the Council's parking arrangements with the Gerrards Cross Staffing Association.

**137/21 Office refurbishment**– The Council agreed that the cost increase for the office refurbishment of £4352 due to the increase in materials was justified. The new total for the office refurbishment is £24352 with an additional cost of £680 for the replacing and tidying of the IT cables. It was agreed that the outstanding balance could be met from the General Reserves once the lease is finalised. The Town Clerk confirmed due to the refurbishment the office would be closed for 2/3 weeks. The Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk would have to work from home and there may be a disruption to the service provided. Cllr Wood requested that the public are informed and if any Councillors need to see paperwork then they will need to arrange to meet the Clerk at the Memorial Centre.

**138/21 High Street Rejuvenation** – Cllr Wood confirmed that there is money available in the Welcome Back Fund for the Council to spend on temporary projects. Temporary projects was defined as refurbishing current furniture e.g. benches, painting bins and high street entertainment. The Town Council would need to pay up front for any projects and this would be refunded back to them. All

projects need to be completed by the end of March 2022. The Council agreed to accept the offer from the Economic Development Officer at Bucks Council for the lamppost banners as long as they are able to remove them if they start to look worn and unkempt. It was agreed that the money should be spent on a deep clean, repainting the benches, refurbish the planters and review the possibility of putting art décor in Jungs' window that promotes the independent businesses in Gerrards Cross. Associate Cllr Lindvall to help organise the décor. It was agreed to delegate further funding decisions to the Town Clerk and Cllr Wood. Councillors to email the Town Clerk with any other ideas by Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

**139/21 Precept for 2022-23** – The Council agreed the Town Clerks proposal to decrease the new budget heading 'High Street Decoration' under Highways. This will reduce the budget from £5000 to £1000 to maintain a 15% precept increase based on the Council Tax base calculation for 2022/23 from Buckinghamshire Council. Accordingly, the precept request will reduce from £348,384 to £344,384.

**140/21 At the request of Cllr Davey:- Invoices being available electronically.** Cllr Davey handed out a Point of Order concerning the heading for this agenda item to the Councillors. Cllr Davey requested for it to be minuted **"That the Proper Procedures for putting items on today's Agenda were not followed by the Town Clerk resulting in proper and legal instructions given to the Clerk being ignored"**. The Town Clerk informed the Council that she had used the wording for the agenda item agreed from the Commons Minutes of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and ratified by Full Council on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Cllr Davey informed the Council that the ratified Commons Minutes did not contain a heading for the requested agenda item, therefore there was no conflict with the agenda heading request. Cllr Davey informed the Council that the original request made on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021 was ignored, the Town Clerk's statement on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022 "It was too late to change the agenda" was not true, an amended agenda could have been sent out of the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022 which would still give three "clear days" notice in line with Gerrards Cross Town Council's Standing Orders. The Council voted that the Town Clerk did not follow Proper Procedures. Cllr Davey stated that the Town Clerk's report titled **"Report On Having Electronic Invoices to be Distributed To All Councillors by S Moffat, Town Clerk"** is not and has never been what the agenda item is about. The agenda item has always been about the digital storage of information (invoices, quotes, contracts, etc.) and it's access. The Council voted in favour for the digital storage of information (invoices, quotes, contracts, etc.) and it's access.

In the Town Clerk's report, an extract from NALC, Legal Topic Note 1, Council's Powers to Discharge their Function, Paragraph 26 was used to support the Town Clerk's assertion that summary information is sufficient for elected Councillors to carry out their elected duties and access to the original information details is not necessary. Cllr Davey made a distinction between the appropriate usage of Summary Information and usage of original information detail, explaining elected Councillors have a right to see original information details to: approve expenditure, inspect against fraud, ensure services quoted was delivered and ensure no conflict of interest has occurred. Cllr Davey referenced the same NALC extract which states **"If a Councillor is a member of a committee, he has a right to inspect documents or to obtain information relating to the business of that committee"**. The Council voted in favour for Councillors to have access to original information details relating to the business of the committees they are a member of

To note, as stated in the Town Clerk's report (as circulated with the agenda) digital storage of Town Councils documents has never been discussed with the Town Clerk and operational procedures have not been considered. The Town Clerk has been unwilling to engage with Cllr Davey on this subject despite numerous attempts by Cllr Davey. Cllr Bracken to look at categorising and implementing a systematic level for invoices to be filed. Cllr Bracken is in the process of discussing the contract categories with the Town Clerk.

Cllr Bracken requested a copy of the NALC Legal Note 5 to ensure the Town Council is compliant. The filing procedure information will be reflected in the revised financial regulations.

The Town Clerk's report questions the security of the Gerrards Cross Town Council IT system, it states **"Lastly the solicitor mentioned about security. Is Microsoft 365 secure or does a more secure IT network required such as doc.gov.uk. and what works best for the Management of the Office."** Cllr Davey stated that the Gerrards Cross Town Council incurred major expenditure in 2016 to modernise and improve how the Town Council operated. Cllr Davey asked if the Town Clerk, in her capacity as the Administrator of the Town Council IT system, is informing the Town Council that it's IT system is not secure? Cllr Davey stated in May 2021 several newly elected Councillors were handed Council iPads which still had former Councillor's credentials, Cllr Davey asked if the Town Clerk (also Administrator) had actually followed the Town Council's IT Policy Procedures for the

departure and arrival of a Councillor? If not, why not? As this could lead to a security breach of the Town Council's IT system. Cllr Davey requested a copy of the Town Council's IT Policy and a Copy of the most recent IT Audit report which would identify if a security breach had taken place. Town Clerk to contact the IT Contractor for the Town Council's IT Policy, recent IT Audit report and whether the Town Council IT Policy Procedures were followed for new Councillors iPads.

**141/21 Internal Auditor** – The Council agreed to delegate to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Finance and General Purpose Committee and the Town Clerk to appoint a new internal auditor . The Town Clerk to arrange a meeting with internal auditor company, IAC. This company have previous experience working with Town and Parish Councils. It was agreed to request the company to review the Town Councils financial policies and regulations.

**142/21 To consider employing a handyman contractor for 2 hours a week.** – It was agreed that Cllr Greenfield and the Town Clerk should have a meeting with the handyman to determine exactly what work he can do and provide a report at the next Commons Meeting.

**143/21 To agree to sign the Devolution Agreement for 2022-23** – The Council agreed to sign the Devolution Agreement which means GXTC will continue devolution work regards grass cutting, hedges etc for another year with a funding from Bucks Council of £12,968.32. This document needs to be signed by 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022

**144/21 To agree the recommendations from the Community Structure Working Party** – The Working Party did an analysis of Town and Parish Councils Committee structures and meeting schedules. Cllr Bracken confirmed that the number of meetings varied per Council, but it was identified that Gerrards Cross Town Council was distinctive because all Councillors are members of all the committees. In May 2021 when the new Council formed, Councillors were asked to attend all meetings so they have an understanding of the different committees. The Town Clerk reminded the Council that Committee members need to be elected in order to vote on the committee. The Council agreed to keep the schedule of meetings the same and if a Councillor wanted to leave a committee they need to discuss it with the Mayor. The Council agreed to set up the Communities Committee who will meet 3 to 4 times a year. All Councillors to complete the Committees structure form before the next meeting. Chairman and Vice Chairman of the new Community Committee will be elected at the first meeting.

**145/21 To approve payments for January, 2022 (to be circulated)** – Cllr Chhokar informed the Council the largest payment that was paid was for the 5 day reed removal from the pond. The Council agreed the payments.

**146/21 Report on meetings** – members update on where they have represented the Town Council. Cllr Holborn raised the flag on 9<sup>th</sup> January and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Cllr Barnett met with the solicitors to discuss the lease. Cllr O'Keeffe attend the Highways and Transport Community Board Meeting, Speed Working Group and the Gerrards Cross Parking Consultation. Cllr Greenfield met with a member of the public to discuss the bollards on the A40 not being lit. Cllr Greenfield received an enquiry from Teenage Culture Together regarding the old youth club. Cllr Da Costa attend a meeting with the highways contractor and Speed Working Group. Cllr Wood attended the Speed Working Group, Highways and Transport Community Board meeting and the meeting with the highways contractor.

**147/21 To note information received in the correspondence at the Council Office** – The next phase of the pothole repairs has already been ratified, but there has been an amendment to include additional potholes which amounts to an extra £7000. This amendment was agreed. The pothole repair work needs to be completed by the end of March 2022.

**148/21 The next Council Meeting of Gerrards Cross Town Council will be at 7.00pm on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at the Memorial Centre.**

**The meeting closed at 8.55pm**

Signed.....

Date.....