

MARLOW TOWN COUNCIL

Court Garden, Pound Lane, Marlow, Bucks, SL7 2AG

MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY ON 16th MARCH 2021 AT 7.00pm

Present	Town Mayor		Cllr R Scott
	Leader		Cllr J Towns
	Councillors		S Brown R Cadman C Funnell N Marshall R Wilson
	Town Clerk		Mrs H Martin
	Deputy Clerk		Mrs K Joy

Also attending: 1 member of the public

M.90.20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Cllr B Johnson, Cllr C Keighley, Cllr K Thomson and Cllr E West.

M.91.20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

M.92.20 COMMUNICATIONS FROM TOWN MAYOR

Mayoral engagements

Now in March 2021 and we are still under lockdown restrictions, although the Government has announced various relaxations for the spring, starting with schools returning on 8 March. I hope that, as and when the other restrictions are gradually lifted, we can return to some sort of normality. We have seen various organisations announcing that their events will take place from late summer onward and, as a Council, we look forward to supporting their activities.

We remain in unprecedented and challenging times but following the lifting of restrictions and the successful vaccination programme, I feel that the community spirit that Marlow enjoys is as strong as ever.

On behalf of the Council, may I again place on record my thanks to all residents and organisations who have helped and continue to help our vulnerable residents.

The number of events to which the deputy mayor and myself have been invited has remained virtually non-existent. However, I did represent the Council at Marlow War memorial on Tuesday 9 March as the hearse bearing John Chapman MBE passed through the town on its way to Amersham Crematorium.

Civic events

As reported at the last Council meeting, the continuing Covid pandemic has meant that all publicly facing civic events have had to be cancelled.

These cancellations have now spread into 2021 and the Council has reluctantly taken the decision to cancel the Mayor's charity golf day, scheduled for 20th April and postpone the Civic service to a date to be arranged for later in the year.

Looking further forward however, the Council has agreed the dates for Remembrance Day and the pre-Christmas civic events of Switch on and Shop and Carols on the Causeway. These are now shown on the Town Council's website.

The annual general meeting of the Town Council will take place on Tuesday 18 May 2021. We would like to hold this physically, rather than electronically, but that will depend on the Covid restrictions that apply at that time. Again, full details will be published on our website.

Cllr Richard Scott
Town Mayor

M.93.20 REPORT FROM LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Leader Report for the Town Council Meeting on March 16th 2021, a recap and review of actions from 2020 and our fast start to 2021.

The year 2020 will go down in our history books as possibly the most damaging for decades! It has dramatically impacted our physical health, mental health, the economy, education, well-being and our income, to mention but a few. The global impact has also been devastating, with the loss of many loved ones. Our hope is that now the vaccine is being rolled out widely we will be able to, carefully, begin to re-build the country, our town and our lives.

The pandemic has however kept your Town Council (TC) really busy and below are some of the actions, successes and highlights from the past year. Plus our fast start to 2021, these show a growing focus on our environment, so very important to all of us.

Environmental matters

Our Environment Advisory Group launched sustainable Marlow in 2019 reporting to the Planning, Environment and Transportation Committee; we were extremely lucky to have two local environmental specialists as part of this team. One of the actions was to publicly commit to making Marlow 'an environmental exemplar town'.

In 2020 we continued the work to deliver on that pledge for the following reasons:-

- the environment is really important for all our well-being and it needs our protection
- the Government had made sustainability and decarbonisation top priorities; and
- there is a widespread desire in our community for more action on this topic, as evidenced by the emergence of groups such as Wild Marlow, the Marlow Energy Group and Marlow Climate Action Network.

Also last year we issued our Climate Change statement and our Clean Air plan, approved at the May Town Council meeting, outlining next steps on each. We now need to broaden out into other areas. We are looking at active transport schemes, a Government and Buckinghamshire Council initiative (a Victorian Town brings limitations).

During 2020 Sustainable Marlow kicked off a number of projects including:-

· Tackling nitrogen dioxide air pollution - Marlow town centre (the A4155: Chapel St, Spittal Street and West Street) was declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in 2017 after monitoring showed illegal levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution. Working with the then Wycombe District Council and now Buckinghamshire Council (BC), the TC has taken actions of its own and is strongly promoting wider changes to bring NO₂ levels back within the legal limit as soon as possible. Actions include signage to raise driver awareness of the AQMA, encouraging smoother driving behaviour and discouraging engine-idling when stationary. The Town Council is lobbying higher government tiers to take further actions in this regard. Interestingly, Marlow has a high take up of electric vehicles which should be a great help over time.

· Marlow eco-schools initiative – sustainablemarlow worked with all Marlow schools to identify and share good environmental practices. Out of those discussions came the idea of a conference bringing the local schools together at an event last March 2020, but sadly cancelled due to Covid. Schools are still catching up with their curriculum, but have recently

expressed an interest in moving this idea forward as a remote/virtual conference. Plans are now in progress. Educating our children will have a positive impact on our local population.

· Refill Marlow - Eliminating single-use plastic bottles. The Council took action to help visitors and residents avoid having to use single-use plastic bottles. A new public drinking water station has been installed on The Causeway, with another at the United Reformed Church on Oxford Road, and two in Higginson Park. We are looking for to install one in the Spittal Street area. Any ideas please let us know.

· The Council's environmental advisory group are registered with the national "Refill" campaign (run by City to Sea, a community interest company). It launched a local scheme to encourage local restaurants and cafes to sign up to providing free tap water refills. Given the current ongoing Covid pandemic this initiative is on hold. This was set up to help residents and visitors alike to buy fewer single-use plastic bottles. As soon as we can, we will re-invigorate it.

· Food – sustainablemarlow signed up to the Plastic Free Communities initiative, encouraging food sharing. According to the waste expert group WRAP, one-third of food world-wide is wasted, and food waste contributes 7% to global greenhouse gas emissions. The Council is encouraging greater food sharing in Marlow via the Olio app and encouraging donations to the One Can Trust.

· ReLeaf – One of our priorities is to increase the number of trees in and around Marlow. There are a good number of trees in certain streets, but there is scope for many more. The Council works closely with Transition Town Marlow and were delighted when they replaced the damaged trees in Seymour Park. Actions include:

o Six new trees planted at the top of Lock Road along the grass verge, funded by a ward budget from one of our Buckinghamshire Councillors.

o We were given two Walnut Trees, plus a Tulip tree, planted in Seymour Park

o Saplings have also been planted at the junction of Wiltshire Road, Marlow Bottom Road, The Ridgeway and Little Marlow Road.

· Re-Wilding – To be mindful of our wildlife we selected four verge areas around Marlow last year to be left unmown for wildflower planting. We also agreed with the then Wycombe District Council to leave two areas, one in Higginson Park and the other in Rookery Park, to be unmown for wildflower planting. This was a pilot scheme which Buckinghamshire Council supported when they became the Unitary Authority and they have agreed to continue with this in the coming year. They also agreed a further two areas designated for wildflower planting, a triangle at Wiltshire Road Roundabout, and an area on Henley Road.

· Waterways – We worked closely with the Angling Association in partnership with the EA and Thames Water to improve the Higginson Park backwater, establishing a much better water flow, and providing a safe haven for fish spawning and creating space for swans to amble among the reeds. This work has been completed with Wild Marlow improving the banks.

· The Marlow Wombles – The TC is very supportive of this local initiative and have helped the Wombles by providing litter pickers, and waste bags. Litter has been a growing problem during the pandemic with many abandoned disposable masks, takeaway boxes and a dramatic increase in disposable cups! We ask you to please take your rubbish home.

· Alleyway clearance – During this last year, we concentrated on our alleyway clearance, contacting land owners, home owners and generally tidying up this network across the town. This has seen a great improvement in accessibility.

· Advisory Speed Limit – Since the first lockdown we have established an advisory speed limit for the High Street of 20mph. Working with BC we hope to make this a more permanent feature including further town centre roads.

General topics:

· Meals from Marlow, The TC has been heavily involved with this fantastic initiative set up by Tom Kerridge and the Pub in the Park team at the started in the first lockdown and still running, providing hot meals for frontline NHS workers at nearby hospitals and meals going to vulnerable people in Marlow, Maidenhead and the surrounding area.

o The entire organisation was run as a ‘not for profit’ and is staffed voluntarily. MTC officers helped with the delivery of meals to schools, open for key worker children, and the vulnerable in Marlow.

o This project has been so successful that Tom has set it up as a permanent charity.

· Remembrance – With the Covid restrictions in place, it was impossible to hold our usual annual Remembrance service, which brings upward of 5,000 people to the town centre. Not to be thwarted, the Council working with the British Legion and All Saints Church were able to film a Covid friendly service. Wreaths were laid in the Church, (and later transported to the war memorial). The whole event was filmed by Tim Ashburner, it was a truly moving tribute, and is available to watch on U-Tube.

· Christmas Lights 2020 – saw the introduction of the Council’s new Christmas lights. A brand new lighting infrastructure was installed across the town to give greater flexibility and reliability. With the continued support of our fabulous sponsors and our new supplier, we were able to add a much improved lighting display across the whole of the town centre. We had fantastic support from Chris Evans and the Brand Events team who enabled us to deliver an exciting virtual ‘Switch On’ event (coveted by many other towns) which was shared nationally and internationally on Facebook and YouTube.

· Christmas Drive-In – So many events that normally happen around Christmas couldn’t take place. Working with the Council and MarlowFM, Brand Events provided a superb ‘Drive-In’ facility at Marlow Rugby Club for many local community groups to hold their Christmas celebrations. In the initial few days several presentations and performances were possible. Sadly half way through Tier 4 was announced and the group took the only decision to close the remaining few days, but what had been achieved was so appreciated. It certainly showed how, with a little thought and ingenuity, much is possible.

· Covid – The Council established a fund from earmarked reserves for Covid related issues, we used it to provide PPE equipment for officers and hand sanitizer for some community groups.

- New website – The Council is delighted to announce the launch of its new website, which went live just before Christmas. Do visit it and feel free to provide feedback. <https://www.marlow-tc.gov.uk/>
- Town Mayor’s Charity – Chris Funnell was Mayor for the year 2018/19 a time when the severity of children’s mental health came to the fore. Chris felt that this was a great opportunity to support our local schools, by providing funds to help staff recognise signs of mental illness. Richard Scott became Mayor in 2019 and agreed to continue this initiative. A registered charity has now been set up for future Town Mayors charity choice.
- Lighting the War Memorial – Permanent up-lighters have been installed around the war memorial to highlight this much respected piece of our history.
- The Allotments and the Cemetery – continue to be well maintained and very fortunately both have been able to remain open during this latest lockdown.
- Council Meetings – All our Council, Resources, PET and Plans only meetings have been taking place electronically throughout the pandemic. These meetings are streamed live on Facebook and the public can also log on to the Zoom meetings. You are welcome to ask a question please submit to the Town Clerk ahead of the meeting.
- The Marlovian – The Council’s quarterly magazine continues to be produced to a very high standard. The magazine provides excellent local news and information and is delivered by hand to each household.
- Enhanced Security Patrols – 4Front Security were engaged by us to monitor Seymour Park, Gossmore Park and parts of Higginson Park. We recently increased their remit to include Rookery Park and further areas of Higginson Park. 4Front Security have a great relationship with the Police with a frequent exchange of intelligence.
- Finger Posts – We have replaced two new finger posts; one at the entrance to All Saint’s Church, signposting visitors to all parts of the town; and one on Pound Lane by the car park. These are a great help to those on foot finding their way around town.
- Cycle Hoops – With the increase in awareness of the environment and the resultant increase in cycling, there was a need to provide more cycle hoops in the town centre. Working with officers from Buckinghamshire Council, we identified 16 extra cycle hoop locations. These were installed the week before Christmas.
- MVAS Speed Devices – to reduce traffic speeds on the town’s roads, we have added two more portable speed devices to our existing unit.
- Bridge Lighting – We continue to work with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Buckinghamshire Council and our lighting designers to come up with an acceptable lighting scheme for our world famous Grade 1 listed bridge.

We kicked off 2021 by:-

- Recruiting – an Environment expert. Nick Rowcliffe was contracted as the TC’s environmental expert (Feb 2021), to help us develop our Strategy, following the launch of the TC’s Environment Policy in 2020.
- Launching the Council’s carbon audit – Cutting greenhouse gas emissions to net zero is widely acknowledged as the existential issue of our age. Every business and every resident including the TC will be affected by a wave of change. As a first step we needed to learn about our own emissions - how big are they and where do they come from? For this reason, the Council commissioned a

comprehensive carbon audit, the results of which were shared in the January Council meeting: full details are available on our website.

- o This carbon footprint study demonstrates that we take climate change seriously.

- o It also provides a baseline for actions for the TC to reduce its own emissions.

- o We encourage households to measure their own carbon emissions, so they become aware of what they can do to help reduce them www.carbonfootprint.com

- And, The Marlow environmental performance index – a starting point for environmental action is to have a strong understanding of current environmental and sustainability factors and to be able to track progress over time. Based on the same approach as national environmental accounts, the Council has created its own simplified environmental performance index making Marlow one of the first small town in the UK to do so. Year by year the index will track trends in important indicators, including air quality, the CO2 emissions rating of cars registered in Marlow and the share of Marlow's recycled waste. This was completed and approved at the January Council meeting and is available on our website.

Forthcoming Environmental Plans and Actions 2021

We will engage with our surrounding parish councils to build a supportive network. We will continue to work closely with the various environment groups in the town and include local businesses and key partners such as the Business Improvement District (Bid Co) in relation to Globe Business Park and the Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

Community engagement with the environment and educating our residents in what they can do to make a difference locally is essential. We've seen, through the discussions around Covid, how difficult this can be. So we need to make it easy for residents to get on board; encourage them to measure their own carbon footprint, make information available on topics such as solar panels, electric heat pumps, electric cars and many more. In addition, we continue to help promote the protection of our wild life, and encourage tree planting and wild flower areas.

Projects underway:

- Wildflower planting – We have increased our wildflower planting in three areas of the town we hope this will increase our butterfly and bee population.

- Bee initiative – We are working with Wild Marlow on an initiatives to further increase our bee population, the wildflower planting should certainly help this.

- Enhanced green space management – We will establish a long term plan for the green spaces that we own, i.e., Seymour Park and Gossmore Park, The Causeway, Plough Corner. Working with ReLeaf we will also plant new trees across the town.

- Verge protection in Lock Road and the Claremonts – The protection of our grass verges in these areas has been agreed, with measures to be put in place in April.

- AQMA banner – Our AQMA banner across Spittal Street will be put up on the 24th January and will remain in place until the 11th April. This is to remind motorists not to sit in idling in traffic with their engines running.

- Green TC – We are looking into the purchase of an electric bike for officers to use around town. This will enable them to make their way around town more efficiently and will be another help in reducing emissions.

· Litter picking – The Council will be supporting the Wombles of Marlow again this year. As in previous years, we will help with the provision of tools for them to do their job. The Wombles are so appreciated by all in Marlow. Thank you.

General Matters 2021

· Annual budget – The budget for 2021/22 was approved at the January Council meeting, when a nil increase in Marlow’s portion of your council tax was approved for the sixth successive year.

· Pound Lane bollards – The Council has agreed with Buckinghamshire Council to joint fund bollards in Pound Lane near to the junction with Henley Road to protect the houses that have all too frequently experienced vehicles crashing on to their land.

· Right of Way Access – We continue to work with Buckinghamshire Council on the ‘Right of Way’ agreement between Cromwell Gardens and Liston Road. Our application for this ROW has now reached the top of the list and should be reviewed imminently.

· Bunting and hanging baskets – These have become a firm favourite in the town and we are happy to report they will be installed again this year. Plus the planters at the entrances to the town have been planted with spring flowers and plants.

· Trinity Road Quietway – Proposal for a temporary traffic order for a closure for 6 months is currently under consultation, to encourage walking and cycling.

· Mayor’s Charity – Currently looking for an external Trustee with Trust knowledge

Public Consultation – sustainablenarlow will be holding a Public Consultation on our environment hosted by the TC with Nick Rowcliffe presenting and taking questions, do join us on 18th March at 6.00pm. Zoom meeting details are available on our website.

Conclusion:

In conclusion we felt it was important to show you in some detail what we have been working on over the last year, and what we already have in the pipeline for this year. We have made a great start to 2021, but there is much more to do, watch this space!

If you would like to help in any way through volunteering, either with litter picking or helping in the environment group or in any area that interests you, please contact office@marlow-tc.gov.uk

Cllr J Towns
Leader

M.94.20 TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES DATED 19.01.2021

RESOLVED:

THAT THE MINUTES DATED 19.01.21 WERE AGREED AS A TRUE RECORD AND WILL BE SIGNED WHEN CURRENT RESTRICTIONS ARE LIFTED

M.95.20 USE OF GOSSMORE RECREATION GROUND

REQUEST FOR USE OF A SMALL USE OF GOSSMORE BY RUNNING LINE RACING (RUNNERS RETREAT)

“Our chosen date would be Sunday October 3rd, but equally Sunday September 26th would be fine also. There would be no impact on football matches taking place on the Sunday morning.

Ideally the event would start from approx. 09:00, with our team onsite from 06:00 to set up, and we should be offsite by 12:30. We are used to being self sufficient at venues, so can unlock gates on arrival and lock up again at the end.

Our infrastructure is light; we would only bring onsite approx. three vehicles plus one further vehicle for our event paramedics. In addition, we would simply erect some pop up gazebos and cordon off event specific areas using stake and tape. In the likelihood that we can't use the toilet blocks in the park, we would hire in event portable toilets for the morning.

I would plan for approx. 300-400 runners, so certainly nothing of the scale of other local events such as the Marlow 5, Marlow Half Marathon or Santa Run for example; with no requirement for road closures et al. We would start runners off in groups at staggered intervals so as to allow safe navigation of footpaths in the early stages of the route and to minimise the impact on pedestrians.

We would take the Thames Path route from Gossmore to the Causeway (via Mill Lane and footpath then crossing St Peters), along the eastern side of Marlow Bridge, to turn left onto Quarry Wood Rd, and ultimately the runners continue into the paths of Quarry Wood. The route returns to Gossmore along the Thames Path from Bourne End. We would sign the route using A4 size arrows on the day before and key points would be marshalled by our volunteers. All event signage would be removed by mid afternoon on event day.

We have chosen to use this route in an anti-clockwise direction so as to minimise the time period which runners may be using high traffic pedestrian areas in Marlow. For example, all runners will have passed All Saints Church by 09:30.

For the use of the space a £500 donation would be made towards the upkeep of Gossmore Recreation Ground". Members agreed with the proposal.

RESOLVED:

THAT MEMBERS AGREED UNANIMOUSLY FOR THE EVENT TO GO AHEAD AND APPROVED THE DONATION OF £500 BE MADE TOWARDS THE UPKEEP OF GOSSMORE RECREATION GROUND

M.96.20

INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT OBSERVATIONS

The interim internal audit review document was circulated to all members.

All the observations have been discussed with the internal auditor; several issues have been raised due to allowances for Covid not being reflected in accountancy regulations. The auditor is satisfied with the procedures put in place and will complete the final audit with the final accounts on 09.06.21.

RESOLVED:

THAT MEMBERS UNANIMOUSLY ACCEPTED THE INTERIM AUDIT OBSERVATIONS

M.97.20

INFORMATION REPORTS

a) Committee Minutes

All members of the Council are encouraged to read Committee minutes, whether or not they are sitting on that Committee. Town Council and Committee minutes are posted to the Town Council website within four weeks of the meeting taking place.

b) Working Towards a Sustainable Marlow

The Environment Working Group and the Councils Sustainability Action Consultant are holding a public consultation event on Thursday 18th March at 6pm via Zoom.

Marlow Town Council is building a new sustainability strategy aimed at greening its own actions and also the sustainability performance of Marlow as a whole.

Members were invited to join the one-hour event here:

Topic: **Working Towards a Sustainable Marlow**

Time: Mar 18, 2021 06:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86098624377?pwd=UFFoRXM0dDExKzZiNmInNWW1uQXFEQT09>

Meeting ID: 860 9862 4377

Passcode: 338904

c) Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit

Circulated to all members was the completed Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit 2020-21 document.

Cllr N Marshall undertook the review on 21.01.21 and recorded no areas for development.

MEMBERS NOTED THE REPORTS

M.98.20

REPORTS FROM OUTSIDES BODIES

Cllr S Brown

Reported Brinkhurst had empty accommodation and was still looking to appoint a trustee.

Cllr J Towns

Reported attending 2 meetings of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce and a meeting of BidCo.

Cllr R Cadman

Reported that there would be photographic competition relating to Budapest Town Twinning. More information to follow.

Cllr C Funnell

Reported that the Marlow Town Regatta and Festival committee were working on the idea of a virtual event.

Cllr R Wilson

Reported that the two archaeological groups in Marlow were looking to combine.

Cllr N Marshall

Reported attending a meeting of the Marlow Society.

Cllr R Scott

Reported that the Marlow Community Association would be re-opening, in a limited way, on 12th April 2021.

M.99.20 REPORTS FROM BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

Cllr S Brown

Reported that the SW Chilterns Community Board (Covid fund) had awarded grants to Transitions UK (£4k) and to the Memorial Garden at St Katharine’s Parmoor (£5k).

Cllr R Scott

Reported attending events but noted that it was a quiet period in the lead up to the 6th May elections.

M.100.20 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 27th April 2021 at 7.00pm

Meeting closed at 7.15pm

Town Mayor **Date**