

# MARLOW TOWN COUNCIL

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

MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2024 AT 7.00pm IN THE SEYMOUR ROOM, COURT GARDEN, MARLOW

## Present

**Town Mayor**  
**Deputy Mayor**  
**Leader**  
**Deputy Leader**  
**Councillors**

**Cllr D Brown**  
**Cllr C Stapley**  
**Cllr C Funnell**  
**Cllr C Hoyle**  
**T Avery**  
**C Heap**  
**N Marshall**  
**R Scott**  
**J Towns**

**Also present:** 12 members of the press and public

## PUBLIC QUESTION TIME:

In accordance with the Town Council's Standing Orders, questions will be taken from residents on the following agenda items.

**Question:** After last Monday and the vote of no confidence of certain Councillors; have you had a chance to meet and talk about asking for resignations over what happened with the Film Studio?

**Answer:** Cllr D Brown: All the information has gone back to Bucks (Council) and we've had an answer back from them and we do have something to speak about at the end of the meeting. Those areas have been covered by Bucks County, rather than us here in Marlow.

**Question:** Will the Council make a statement as what immediate actions following the meeting on Monday and the votes of no confidence, what actions are the Town Council doing to promote confidence in the electorate and to restore democratic processes and to regain some credibility before the next election?

**Answer:** Town Mayor stated the Leader would address that in the Leader's Report.

**Question:** Reference Parish Meeting held on 10.04.24. Why didn't a member of the Council chair the meeting?

**Answer:** Town Mayor was unable to attend due to working late. Town Mayor tendered his apology to the Town Clerk but was unable to appoint a meeting Chairman. Town Clerk confirmed that it was up to the Town Mayor to delegate a meeting Chairman if he was unable to Chair.

**Question:** Can the Council positively confirm that all emails on Council business or related to Marlow Film Studios are being sent via the MTC mail system?

**Answer:** Leader confirmed, any communication has to be on the Marlow Town Council system.

**Question:** Would Marlow Town Council make a statement as to how they have purported to support the application to build the Film Studios and how they have taken into account the views of the electorate which generally opposes the film studio? Was any consultation made with the electorate, it was just you

**Answer:** Leader answered that seven Councillors at a Conservative members meeting, which took place at Liston Hall, decided to support the film studio. Leader requested that Cllr Scott post this on the portal.

Filming/Recording/Photographing at Meetings – please note that this may take place during the public part of the meeting. Notices are displayed in the meeting room.

- Question: Reference Marlow Film Studio: Was there any consultation with the electorate or any public communication? Was it just you and your mates?
- Answer: Leader replied yes, as Councillors. An individual decision was made as Councillors. Under the Design and Access statement on the portal there were 14 months of consultation in Marlow including a meeting, zoom calls and pop ups and the public portal. Up to the general public to engage.
- Question: Reference Marlow Film Studio: What is going to be learned from the handling of this situation, not taking residents feeling about the Film Studio project into account? How are you going to win back residents support and trust? Have you reflected on this situation and can you do things better as a Council?
- Answer: Leader replied that Officers at Bucks have cleared and are happy with the information that has gone out. It was difficult to discuss allegations. If you have any hard evidence then please bring that forward.
- Question: Reference Cllr Scott's submission on the planning portal and a request to have a question answered at a TC meeting in December 2023: With public support showing as between 6.34:1 and 10: 1 against, will Cllr Brown re-issue advice and turn the Council's support for the film studio project and if not why not? Or are does Marlow Town Council support the film studio or is this Cllr Scott's personal opinion? If your doing this as individuals, what's the point of a Council?
- Answer: The Town Mayor responded that the council is built up of individuals and all have an opinion. He didn't believe he could make someone tow the line to follow anyone's single view. He took the question back to the Leader. If their decision was to not answer, that was their decision. They may have already answered it. Town Mayor said we had a meeting, we took a poll, and the for's and against's were published on the portal.

**M.118.23 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R Cadman and Cllr N Mityaeva. Cllr R Wilson had tendered apologies via an answerphone message prior to the meeting. These were not presented at the meeting but had been received.

**M.119.23 Declarations of interest**

None declared.

**M.120.23 Communications from the Town Mayor  
12.03.24 – 16.04.24**

- 16th March – Mayor attended Specsavers 4th anniversary event
- 24th March – Mayor's Civic Celebration

**M.121.23 Report from Leader of the Council  
April 2024**

Thankyou chairman I will address council on our priority matters arising since our last meeting .

As leaders, we are constantly faced with challenges that test our resolve and ingenuity and time .For the last few months, we have seen an unprecedented swell of anxiety from parts of the community on many varying topics from utility road closures, flooded sewers ,flooding incidents ,potholes ,bridge control ,maintenance of the bridge ,traffic sewerage in rivers It is acknowledged that every individual has something that is important to them and global events and personal challenges have heightened anxiety for many families .

A phenomenal amount of hours are being spent by the council team assisting residents with their issues and we share the frustration of residents and their anxiety and will continue to push hard on issues as they come forward.

Marlow Town Council continues to grapple with the ever-present pressure of resources, and we continue striving to allocate resources wisely while ensuring the efficient functioning of our town.

Balancing the needs of the present with the vision for the future is one that we embrace wholeheartedly.

Amidst these challenges, we have also faced criticism and opposition from some members of the public regarding pent up frustration which have resulted in, parish meetings, lively discussions, and concerted lobbying from small groups.

We understand the concerns raised and appreciate the passion some residents have for the well-being of our town, and we are conscious that in all individuals minds they would like their priorities resolving .A good chat is sometimes enough ,we would ask residents to remain patient we do not communicate via social media our preference will always be to speak to individuals and a telephone call is often the best way or a face to face chat .

it is essential to recognize that decisions made by this council are driven by careful consideration and adherence to established protocols and that is what we are entrusted with.

Our democratic process is to underscore and balance that process and we remain confident that despite recent unpleasant abuse and harassment directed towards council members that the returns officer has deemed that this does not serve our residents correctly and votes against members have no practical application.

Today I am pleased to report that the office of the directorate for the deputy chief executive's office at Bucks Council has proposed that no councillors have been found in breach of code conduct and that therefore no issues of ,integrity ,accountability and openness are answerable and polls on that position will not be carried from the parish meeting.

Consequently, we have also been advised that some comments made are potentially libellous and for that reason I will not report further at this point until we have concluded legal advice.

I can confirm that the returns officer will be in touch shortly concerning specifically a poll on the application for the film studio and that will be notified publicly. The result of those polls will be non-binding and we would encourage residents to continue to post appropriate comments to the planning portal .

I would reaffirm our commitment today to serving with integrity, transparency, and dedication. Together, let us continue to work towards building a town that thrives on cooperation, understanding, and progress. Thank you.

Cllr C Funnell | Leader

**M.122.23 Town Council Minutes date 12.03.2024**

**RESOLVED:**

THAT THE MINUTES DATED 12.03.24 WERE AGREED AND SIGNED

**M.123.23 Management Accounts**

**RESOLVED:**

THAT THE MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS DATED 31.01.2024 WERE APPROVED

**M.124.23 Risk Management Plan**

**RESOLVED:**

THAT THE RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN DATED 2024 WAS APPROVED

**M.125.23 Asset Register**

**RESOLVED:**

THAT MEMBERS REVIEWED AND ADOPTED THE ASSET REGISTER DATED 25.03.24

**M.126.23 Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Control**

The Town Council is required to review the effectiveness of the Internal Audit process. It was proposed that two suitably experienced members of the Town Council not sitting on the Resources Committee be approved to work with the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk to carry out an internal audit review for 2023-24.

The remit and scope for this exercise is clearly set out in the practitioner's guide for 2024 which will be adhered to.

The findings of the review will be reported to the Town Council at a future meeting.

Members agreed that Cllr N Marshall and Cllr J Towns be appointed to conduct the review.

**RESOLVED:**

THAT MEMBERS APPOINT CLLR N MARSHALL AND CLLR J TOWNS TO UNDERTAKE AN INTERNAL CONTROL REVIEW AS DETAILED ABOVE

**M.127.23 Standing Orders**

There have been no changes to NALC model standing orders since the last review in 2022. It was recommended that Standing Orders are reviewed every two years. There are no recommended changes to Standing Orders for 2024.

**RESOLVED:**

THAT MEMBERS APPROVED STANDING ORDERS FOR 2024 WITHOUT AMENDMENT

**M.128.23 Civic Visit Approval**

The Town Mayor has been invited to visit Marly-le-Roi in May 2024. The meeting agreed that Cllr D Brown and Cllr C Stapley, Deputy Mayor, be approved to undertake this civic duty.

**RESOLVED:**

THAT MEMBERS APPROVED THE TOWN MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR TO VISIT MARLY-LE-ROI IN MAY 2024 AS A CIVIC DUTY

**M.129.23 Assistance Programme**

The Employee assistance scheme has been extended to include Councillors.

The scheme offered through (BKMLC Bucks and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils) offers a range of support

The Cost of the scheme is £8.10 per Councillor per annum.

**RESOLVED:**

THAT MEMBERS AGREED TO JOIN THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SCHEME AT A COST OF £8.10 PER COUNCILLOR PER ANNUM

**M.130.23 Footpath Widening**

Proposal from Cllr C Stapley

To widen the paved area of the public footpath between Wethered Road and Oak Tree Avenue, Marlow. The entire length of the footpath measures 260m; the section proposed for widening measures 136m; leaving two sections either side measuring 80m and 44m respectively which are not able to be widened due to existing fence lines.

Having spoken informally to existing contractors, initial estimates put the cost upwards of £30,000 to have the metalled surface extended to incorporate the grass area along the proposed length.

Based on this the Council would need to go out to tender.

Members are asked to consider whether they wish to extend the footpath.

Cllr Stapley gave the rationale behind the proposal and took questions from members.

Members were provided with the Active Travel Map, Site Plan and Images of the footpath.

**RESOLVED**

THAT MEMBERS SUPPORTED THE WIDENING OF THE FOOTPATH AS DETAILED ABOVE IN PRINCIPLE BUT DELEGATE THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE TO WORK UP A PROPER PROPOSAL AND WHEN COSTS ARE FULLY KNOWN TO RE-PRESENT TO TOWN COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL

**M.131.23 Committee Minutes**

**RESOLVED:**

THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL NOTED ALL THE COMMITTEE MINUTES PUBLISHED SINCE THE LAST MEETING

**M.132.23 Information Reports**

**a) Insurance Policy and Fidelity Guarantee**

Insurance Policy has been renewed with Zurich for a three-year term with an option to renew for a further discount after two years at a cost of £3,850. Fidelity guarantee is £1m, Public Liability to £15m, Key Personnel accident cover 24/7 for all officers and business interruption cover in the event of the premises becoming unusable.

**b) Social Media Report**

Facebook

From January 2024 to March 2024

Facebook Reach 3.1K up 22% on previous quarter

Most engaging post February Flood Warning 860 reach, 37 shares

Instagram

From January 2024 to March 2024

Instagram reach increased by 3% to 1918 followers

Most engaging post Great British Spring Clean with 273 people reached

X (formerly Twitter)

December January 2024 to March 2024

Top tweet Mayor's Civic Celebration with 116 impressions

Followers increased to 2,963 up 3% on previous quarter

**c) Parish Meeting Monday April 8th- Request from Cllr Heap**

Public question time questions and answers and the Leaders report had provided the necessary information regarding the Parish Meeting.

**MEMBERS NOTED THE REPORTS**

**M.133.23 Reports from Outside Bodies**

Cllr R Scott

Reported attending a meeting of the Chamber of Trade.

Cllr N Marshall

Reported attending a meeting of the Marlow Society who were interested in re-visiting the decked car park proposals for Riley Road. Sorbon had also expressed an interest in this project. Marlow Society wanted involvement with the Trustees of Higginson Park.

Cllr C Heap

Reported attending the Age Concern AGM and Dementia Action Marlow with Joy Morrissey MP.

Cllr J Towns

Reported an open invitation to a BidBoard pop up event on 24.04.24.

Cllr D Brown

Reporting having supported Marlow Museum with their refurbishment.

Cllr C Funnell

Reported that tickets were now on sale for the Town Regatta and Festival; commented that Dementia Action Marlow needed help with regard to finding premises.

**M.134.23 Reports from Buckinghamshire Council**

Cllr N Marshall

Reported that the parking consultation had recommended raising parking charges by 10pph and to charge for parking in Quoittings Square, Marlow. 95% oppose the recommendations.

Cllr J Towns

Reported that the Great British Spring Clean had taken place in Marlow. The clean up resulted in 80 bags of rubbish. There would be a rolling road closure on 21.04.24 for the St Georges Day Parade. Public are invited to nominate EV charging points in Marlow. The CCTV audit was ongoing. £5m had been earmarked for the plane and patch programme.

**M.135.23 Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024 – Parish and Annual Meetings

**Meeting closed at 8.10pm**

**Town Mayor**..... **Date** .....