

THESE MINUTES NOT YET CONFIRMED

**LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING**

**MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 15 May 2024 at 7.30pm at  
1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ**

**Present:**

**Councillors:** M Stubbings (in the chair until Min no 1)  
K Valentine (in the chair from Min no 1)

I Allgood	R Brookes	C Davies
W Dodd	S Fontenelle	A Fricker
S Harriman	K-W Lee	R Minhas
S Murray	J Obaseki	M Owen
C Pond	J Riley	R Sylvan
D Wixley		

**Officers:** M Squire (Town Clerk)  
P Bryce (Community Manager)

**Also Present:** 1 x member of the public

Before the commencement of the meeting, it was noted that Cllr Fontenelle would be recording the meeting.

**1 Election of the Town Mayor for 2024/25**

Cllr Stubbings invited nominations for the role of Town Mayor. Cllr Valentine was proposed and seconded and, there being no other nominations, Cllr Valentine was elected Town Mayor for 2024/25. Cllr Stubbings presented her with the Town Mayor's badge and chain of office. Cllr Valentine took the chair and duly executed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Murray and Cllr Pond led the introductions and welcomed Cllr Valentine as Loughton Town Mayor for 2024-25.

In his closing speech Cllr Stubbings said that his year had been a very enjoyable rollercoaster and he would highly recommend the position. He was now looking forward to relaxing and thanked the Town Clerk and his team for all their work behind the scenes. Cllr Stubbings was presented with his Past Town Mayor's badge.

Cllr Pond led the tributes to Cllr Stubbings for his work during his year in office.

**2 Election of the Deputy Town Mayor for 2024/25**

The Town Clerk reported that this would be deferred and would explain in more detail, later in the Town Clerks report

**3 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Stella Murphy.

**4 Declarations of Interest**

None were declared. The Town Clerk briefly described the difference between pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interest for the benefit of the new Town Councillors.

The Town Clerk reminded Members to complete their Declaration of Interest forms and that if their interests change, they must, within 28 days of becoming aware of the change, complete a new register of members' interests form and return it to the Town Clerk for submission to the Monitoring Officer.

**5 Confirmation of Minutes**

The minutes of the council meeting held on 23 April 2024 were confirmed.

**6 Town Clerk's Report**

The Town Clerk welcomed Councillors to the new Town Council.

The Town Clerk reported on the current electoral status and was awaiting confirmation from the Electoral Commission and Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) on the state of play, as three Town Councillors had not yet been elected due to the polling administrative error by EFDC on 2 May 2024 (the election day). As such, confirmation of the majority of committee structures and members responsibilities would not be considered at this meeting. It was envisaged that a short Extraordinary Town Council meeting would be held before the Recreation Committee Meeting on the 29 May 2024 to finalise these positions.

The Town Clerk stressed the importance attending the Induction Training for New Councillors Tuesday 21 May at 7pm.

The notice from Essex County Council (ECC) dated 30 April 2024 that the application for the demolition of the existing Loughton Library and plans for the new building including the provision of 38 residential apartments had been granted was highlighted and discussed.

Cllr Valentine asked if the children's playground would be protected. Cllr Pond responded that whilst the planning permission had been finalised there was no set date, when this will start. The Town Council would monitor, that protection would be put in place for the playground, safety of the public and provision for the Holocaust Memorial. Also provision of public library service to be sourced whilst the development takes place.

Cllr Owen asked if we could do something as a recognition for a long service award to Councillors, e.g. after ten years' service. The Town Clerk said that this should be referred to the next Resources and General Services Committee meeting.

Cllr Davies suggested that the Past Town Mayor badge should include the date of their time in office.

The Town Clerk highlighted the differential between the separate entities of Loughton Town Council (LTC) and the Loughton Residents Association (LRA) and said he looked forward to working with the new Town Council during the new term.

**7 Appointment of Members, and Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council Committees for 2024/25**

The Town Clerk reported that the appointments to the Committees would be deferred until the Extraordinary meeting, with the exception of the ensuing Planning Committee meeting to be held soon on the 20 May 2024. A temporary panel of member would be set up to deal with this agenda and would include former Planning committee members, Cllr Davies, Riley and Murphy. Cllrs Fontenelle, Lee, Minhas and Wixley also volunteered to join this interim committee.

Cllrs Allgood, Pond and Wixley, were nominated as the three persons per political group authorised to make substitutions in accordance with standing Order 5e. Cllr Wixley stressed that if members were to give apologies, that they should contact all three members as he would not always be able to respond quickly to his e-mail correspondence.

## **8 Nomination of Council Representatives for 2024/25**

8.1 The Town Clerk reported that representatives to outside bodies would be deferred until the Extraordinary meeting.

Cllr Pond reported that the ECC Parish Passenger Transport Meeting was now defunct and there would be no need for a representative.

Cllr Brookes reported that there would be a meeting of the Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership on Thursday 16 May to be held at Barrington Hall at 6.45pm.

8.2 AGREED that the members who represent the Town Council at outside body meetings would be required to provide a short written report for the next full Council meeting.

8.3 Representative to the Joint Standards Committee was deferred until the Extraordinary Council meeting.

8.4 Grievance Hearing and Disciplinary Appeal Panels membership would also be deferred until the Extraordinary Council meeting.

## **9 Membership of Internal Council Groups**

### **9.1 Strategy and Staff Group** (includes the Complaints Panel)

AGREED - Membership to continue as Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor and the chairman of each of the committees, and Cllr Murray as a representative from the minority group. It is always open to the group to invite a member to a particular meeting if special knowledge is required.

### **9.2 Financial Assistance Working Group**

AGREED - Membership to continue as: Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Resources and General Services Committee, Cllr Murray and the immediate past Town Mayor. The Group usually meets in January to consider the annual round of applications.

### **9.3 Roding Valley Recreation Ground Improvements Project Working Group**

To be deferred until after the Extraordinary meeting. It was recommended that this group should be restated as the 'Recreation Projects Working Group', to be confirmed at the next Recreation Committee meeting.

## **10 General Power of Competence**

The Council AGREED to reaffirm the use of the General Power of Competence in the forthcoming Civic Year.

## **11 Confirmation of Standing Orders**

The Council AGREED and confirmed the Town Council's Standing Orders.

## **12 Confirmation of Financial Regulations**

The Council AGREED and confirmed the Town Council's Financial Regulations.

The new 2024 National Association of Local Council's (NALC) recommended template will be reviewed during the Town Council year.

**13 Year End Financials 2023/24**

**13.1 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ending 31 March 2024, including.**

- (i) The Council AGREED AGAR (Section 1) for the Year ended 31 March 2024.
- (ii) The Council AGREED AGAR (Section 2) for the Year ended 31 March 2024.
- (iii) The Council AGREED AGAR NOTING that the internal auditor had completed and signed the Annual Internal Audit Report of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24. Members were presented with a copy of the Auditor's sign-off.

**13.2. Annual Accounts**

The Town Clerk reported that it had once again, been a very tough financial year. A few important areas were highlighted including:-

- the instability and large swings on the levels of utility bills, specifically for electricity which made the true financial picture, difficult to quantify.
- General Reserves had been increased by £12k as a matter of prudence to preserve reserve ratios.
- Proposed Earmarked reserves for Halls Heating / Car Park has been increased by £5k as opposed to £25k, as most of the immediate heating problems had been resolved.
- Large increase in income from Murray Hall, hall hire.
- Significant expense of the new children's playground at the Roding Valley Recreation Ground.
- Reduction in cemetery income.
- Close monitoring of all budget categories, office and staff costs.
- that this current financial year would be equally challenging to continue the level of services that the Town Council provides.

Mention was made of the significant Public Works Loans (PWL) that will mature during financial years 2026 to 2028, which should ease the Town Council's finances. Cllr Murray recommended that new PWL should be taken out at this juncture to cover significant further projects that the Town Council may wish to undertake e.g. pathways on the Recreation Ground.

The Council APPROVED the Annual Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2024. This statement of accounts had been prepared in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Signed .....  
17 July 2024