 Oakham Town Council

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**MINUTES OF A FULL COUNCIL MEETING OF OAKHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 6.30 P.M. IN THE TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Cllrs: C. Nix, C Clark, M Brookes, A Douthwaite, S A Wadsworth and P Ainsley

 **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Chris Evans (Town Clerk) and four members of the public.

Cllr C. Nix opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

**09/25–01 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCES:**

Cllr J Harris has sent his apologies.

Proposed acceptance by Cllr Nix, seconder Cllr Clark, carried.

**09/25–02 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS AND APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION:** Reminder to Members to disclose either a Pecuniary Interest or Other Interest in any item on the agenda. The clerk cannot advise members on this. Members are personally responsible for declaring an interest. Members are respectfully advised to read the Code of Conduct for more information. Councillors are also responsible for ensuring that their Registers of Interests are up to date (within 28 days of any changes) None.

**09/25–03 DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** An opportunity for members of the public to speak in accordance with Standing Orders. None.

**09/25–04 MINUTES:** To confirm the accuracy of the minutes from the meeting held on 6th August 2025.

Cllr M Brookes brought up the minutes 14th May 2025 which it was agreed by Council would be revisited and edited, and Cllr Brookes was surprised not on agenda tonight. The Chair agreed to bring the edited minutes to the next full Council.

Cllr Brookes also brought up that Council agreed Cllr Harris join the Victoria Hall Working Group. The Chair would check over this matter with the office.

Cllr Brookes also requested that the Payee names for salaries be not redacted in the copy for Council and this was accepted.

Proposed by Cllr Nix, seconder Cllr Brookes that the minutes of 6th August are accepted. Carried with only Cllr Brookes against.

**09/25–05 COUNCILLOR’S REPORTS AND QUESTIONS**:

None

**09/25-06 CO-OPTION PROPOSAL**:

The Chair welcomed and introduced Mr Jonathan Nichols who joined the meeting. The Chair requested that Standing Orders be suspended to allow Mr Nichols to introduce himself and answer any questions from the Council. Proposed by Cllr Nix and seconded by Cllr Clark. Carried

Mr Nichols outlined his background stating he had lived in Oakham over 15 years and felt it was time to give something back.

There were no questions from Council members, so Cllr Nix proposed that standing orders were resumed. Seconded by Cllr Douthwaite. Carried

Cllr Brookes proposed acceptance of Jonathon Nichols as a councillor and seconded by Cllr Wadsworth. Carried

**09/25-07 CHAIRMANS/CLERKS REPORT:**

The Chair reported that he attended the VJ's commemoration event.

We laid wreaths at the War Memorial and said a few words to remember those that had made the ultimate sacrifice. We went on to rocks by rail, over between Cottesmore and Ashwell, where they have one of the original steam locomotives that was used to move the POWs in the Far East.

It was a very, very poignant, and heartfelt remembrance, and quite a few of the Oakham residents and the surrounding area have quite clearly been touched by the events of that time. It was lovely to remember those of what has been known as the forgotten army.

Likewise, we had a very brief but nonetheless quite a touching Merchant Navy Day flag raising also quite recently which was well attended.

The Clerk referred to the attached Office Newsletter which highlighted all the salient issues to councillors and would from now on be issued every month.

**09/25-08 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:** None

**09/25-09 BANK STATEMENTS:** To consider and approve the bank statements for August 2025.

The Town Clerk highlighted a slight difference in the reconciliation report from our accounting package in that the white rather than red squares indicate unreconciled invoices i.e. ones that will now not be paid in August. This is mainly due to the three-signatory system with Lloyds whereby until all three signatories have verified payment, they will held over the following month for payment and reconciliation.

Cllr Brookes then asked a series of questions regarding payments. The Chair stated that Cllr Brookes had exceeded his allotted time of three minutes and should stop, and the series of questions would be dealt with by the office

The Chair requested multiple times that Cllr Brookes stopped speaking and requested that he did not interrupt stating this as a warning. Cllr Brookes continued so the Chair then read out Section 2 of the Standing Orders requesting Cllr Brookes leave the meeting. Cllr Brookes refused

Cllr Brookes then requested that the Section 2 order be retracted if he apologised to the Chair and all the Council. The chair accepted his sincere apology.

Cllr Ainsley proposed an amendment to the proposal that the Council do not accept 9.1 and 9.2 and 9.6 i.e. the bank accounts and these be deferred to the following meeting for clarity but accept the rest, seconded by Cllr Brookes. The Clerk highlighted this could cause issues with the audit next year. Carried.

The Clerk highlighted that agenda item 9.6 needed urgently to be cleared this meeting as they were for significant sums.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Payments over £5,000** | **Amount**  | **Client** | **Minute Reference** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Church Wall** | **£18,079.20** | **Rutland & Cotswold Building Contractors Ltd** | **05/25-10** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Flowers**  | **£18,964.68** | **Windowflowers Ltd** | **04/25-12** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Christmas 2025-2026** | **£18,868.24** | **Blachere Illumination Ltd Hire of product** | **07/24-15** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Transfer from HSBC** | **£75,000** | **Oakham Town Council** | **Transfer from HSBC to Lloyds (Oakham Town Council Account) no minuted reference applicable.** |

Cllr Brookes requested that on the payments over 5K more clarity was given over the Local Government Act covering the payment, budgets etc. This was agreed by the Clerk.

Cllr Nix proposed these payments be accepted , seconded by Cllr Douthwaite. Carried.

**09/25-10 STAFFING :** To consider extension of contract for administrative assistant.

The Chair stated that this post was due to expire at the end of September and he was requesting an extension to take it through to the 10th of March 2026.

Cllr Ainsley stated that the Staffing Committee had recommended the expenditure of £8,060 from reserves to extend the contract ( 20hrs / week).

Councillor Ainsley put forward proposal 3 as an addition to proposal 1 & 2.

Proposal 3 read as follows:
*That Oakham Town Council authorises the expenditure of £8,060 to extend the contract of the Office Admin Assistant to 10th March 2026.*

*This decision complies with Oakham Town Councils Financial Regulations and the Local Government Acts 1972 and 2003. Procurement requirements have been met and, as advised by LRAC there is no obligation to re-advertise. The Responsible Financial* *Officer confirms that reserves are adequate and that this non-recurring drawdown supports continuity of Council Operations during a period of staff transition.* *Salary will be paid monthly by electronic transfer requiring a minimum of two signatories.*

Cllr P Ainsley proposed the motion and seconded by Cllr Wadsworth. Carried.

### 09/25-11 ENFORCEMENT ENQUIRIES: Deferred until next month’s meeting.

### 09/25-12 URGENT DECISION PROTOCOL:

### The Town Clerk introduced this agenda item making it clear that this would only be used in exceptional circumstances where there was insufficient time to call an extraordinary meeting of the Council.

1. Council adopts the Urgent Decision Protocol as a supplementary procedure under Standing Order 15.
2. In support of the new protocol a new clause under Standing Order 15(b) is added as follows:

In exceptional circumstances where a decision is required before the next scheduled meeting and an extraordinary meeting is impractical, the Proper Officer may act under delegated authority, following consultation with the mayor and relevant committee chairs, and must report the decision to the next Full Council meeting.

Cllr Brookes proposed, and it was accepted that all available members be consulted prior to a decision being made.

Cllr P Ainsley proposed the motion and seconded by Cllr Brookes the amended proposal.

Carried

**09/25-13 COUNCILLORS SUBMISSION GUIDE:** To review the Councillors submission guide pack.

Cllr Brookes highlighted the fact that the document stated should be sent to the Clerk when it should be enquiries. This was accepted by the Chair and would be amended appropriately.

Cllr Ainsley proposed that Oakham Town Council endorses the adoption of a Councillor Submission Guide and seconded by Cllr Clark. Carried.

### 09/25-14 OAKHAM TOWN COUNCIL ACTION PLAN:

### The Council considered the endorsement of this action plan with a slight amendment highlighted by Cllr Brookes that the year should be 2026.

Cllr Ainsley introduced the proposal that Oakham Town Council formally endorses the Oakham Town Centre Action Plan as the strategic framework for town center improvements. Oakham Town Council notes the £40,000 UKSPF award for 2025 and will endeavor to deliver eligible, measurable projects aligned with UKSPF priorities. All spending will be completed by 31 March 2026, subject to funding constraints and compliance requirements. Cllr Douthwaite seconded the proposal. Carried

( Two more members of public joined the meeting)

### 09/25-15 MARTYNS LAW:

Cllr Brookes introduced the agenda item and thanked staff for the additional work on this item. He stated that government legislation coming forward soon would make this compulsory to protect the public at events from terrorist threat. He did not accept the statement that it will never happen in Oakham etc.

There was some debate over the erection of fencing on bollards on a park under jurisdiction of Historic England.

Cllr Ainsley proposed an amendment which was accepted that the Council directly obtained quotes for the cost of the compliance with Martin's law, and that consultation with relevant bodies will be undertaken, and that would include historic England.

Cllr Brookes therefore proposed that the Council to direct the office to seek quotes for the cost of compliance with Martyn's law and or consultation with relevant bodies. This matter, then be returned to council for consideration and possible approval. Seconded by Cllr Wadsworth. Carried.

**09/25-16 VICTORIA HALL:**

The Chair requested that standing orders be suspended to facilitate a robust conversation with interested parties who have joined us. This was seconded by Cllr Clark. Carried.

The Chair of the Victoria Hall trustees stated that

“ For some time now, the cash flow of the Victoria Hall has been under pressure and

We were quite badly hit by COVID.

It was extremely hard over the autumn and winter season last year, especially following the breakdown of the heating system. For many years the cash flow has not provided sufficient surplus income to enable the trustees to keep pace with maintenance and what is now a.175-year-old building.

We are now at a point where the cash flow doesn't support the day-to-day running of the hall. Income has dwindled, costs have gone up. That's been well reported. These essential day-to-day running costs have increased where we're now at a point where we are facing a negative cash flow situation quite imminently and we're also at a point where the physical state of the whole building I think is impacting our ability to accommodate certain new bookings and to generate new bookings, to continue to drive that income forward.

So as a body of trustees, we've arrived at a point where we've decided to make, really, a once and for all decision on whether there is a route to save the Hall as a key community asset for Oakham and the People of Rutland.

Alternatively, we face the sad but unavoidable decision to close all in accordance with due process laid out by the charities Commissioner in consultation with them, we would be seeking to sell the hall and the proceeds would then be directed at the charities.”

The Chair then opened the discussion up over the position regarding Oakham School of the Bar Extension on the first floor and the ability of Oakham Town Council to become sole Trustee of Victoria Hall and varying the constitution of the Victoria Hall Constitution. The Chair of the Victoria Hall trustees confirmed that last years had been audited and submitted to the Charity Commission.

After some discussion the Chair proposed that the Council go back into session, and this was seconded by Cllr Clark. Carried

Cllr P Ainsley introduced the proposal and its benefits to ensure the Council got expert advice on the legal, financial, and structural issues that need to be addressed on a listed building by employing experts.

Cllr Brookes made it clear he had severe reservations about taking on responsibility for this building.

Cllr Clark proposed an amendment that instead of 10K, 20K was allocated for the proposed expert consultations. The proposer accepted this amendment.

Cllr P Ainsley proposed that Oakham Town Council engages specialist consultants to assess the feasibility, risks, and governance implications and guide a potential takeover of Victoria Hall with a completion target of December 2025. The engagement will be capped at a budget of £20,000, subject to scope and competitive quotes.

This was seconded by Cllr Clark. Carried with one against Cllr Brookes

**Meeting Finished 20.25 pm**

**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETINGS: 8th October 2025**

Signed……………………………………………… Date………………….