

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ALTON TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON 3 MARCH 2015 AT 7:00PM**

Present:	Councillor	G Hill	-	Town Mayor
		M Bayliss		
		D Gardner		
		Mrs P Jones		
		A Murphy		
		R Saunders	-	Deputy Town Mayor
		17 members of the public		
		1 member of the press		
In attendance:		Mr S Parkinson	-	Town Clerk
		Mrs P Harris	-	Admin & Finance Manager
		Mrs S Brown	-	Admin Officer
		Councillor A Joy	-	HCC/EHDC

52 **Welcome and Announcements**

The Town Mayor welcomed all to the Annual Meeting of Electors. He announced that the Town Clerk had tendered his resignation and on behalf of the council thanked him for his exemplary support throughout his tenure and especially on getting the new councillors settled in four years ago.

Councillor Saunders presented the Town Mayor, on behalf of the council, with a candle from Amery Hill School's Holocaust Memorial Day that he had recently attended.

53 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

54 **Town Mayor's Address**

The Town Mayor reported that over the last nine months he was honoured and privileged to have attended 140 events, accompanied by his wife, as Mayoress, the most recent of which had been the opening of the new Wetherspoon's earlier in the day. Some of the more memorable events had been the unveiling of the Victoria Cross memorial at The Cairn, Remembrance Sunday and chairing a large number of council meetings because of the number of large planning applications affecting Alton.

He had discovered that despite 26 years as a resident of Alton, there were a large number of voluntary groups and organisations in the town that he did not know existed. As the Deputy Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group it had also been an extremely busy year and he encouraged everyone present to respond to the public consultation on the draft plan.

The Town Mayor thanked the electors for electing him four year ago and thanked his fellow Councillors for their trust in electing him to office.

55 **Presentation – Alton Town Council’s Activities**

Councillors Bayliss, Murphy, Hill and Saunders gave a presentation on the council’s activity over the last four years, which had been a busy period.

Councillor Bayliss praised the tremendous work and long hours put in by council staff, councillors and volunteers, citing the Last Night of the Proms, Christmas Lights Switch-on, in Bloom competition and Neighbourhood Plan as examples.

Because of this investment in time, successes had been achieved in a time of very tight budgets. These included the Public Gardens play area, new bandstand, the opening of Windmill Hill to the public, new site management plans for open spaces, Information boards, PCSO patrols for open spaces, a new cricket square and looking forward, would include the new Chandos Lodge open space.

The council had engaged with the public in many ways - Alton in Bloom had been commended for community involvement, Active Alton, Walkers are Welcome and the Carnival had public involvement, the running track and rounders pitch had been in response to public suggestions, while commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee and the start of WWI had brought people together.

Many events had been provided or supported by the council, such as the Jane Austen Regency Week, Yuletide Festival, Last Night of the Proms and Victorian Cricket. Local organisations had also been supported with financial grants.

The Coors sports ground planning application had been a difficult challenge, the council had supported a solution that allowed two clubs to survive. The council had also had to address several large and contentious planning applications. Councillor Hill spoke about the importance of the Neighbourhood Plan, praising the work of all the Steering Group and also the excellent public response to the consultations. The public had also been consulted on Flood meadows, Windmill Hill, Holybourne Play Area, allotments, Anstey Park tennis courts and the potential use of developer’s contributions from the yet to materialise new Tesco.

A new committee structure had been created and the staff structure aligned to it. Banking, information technology and telephone systems had all been improved. The problems with the Energique building had posed a financial challenge and the council had needed to look at spending priorities. Costs had been cut so that the council’s reserves could recover.

The council had managed not to increase council tax this year, while delivering committee priorities. Councillor Bayliss thanked staff, councillors and volunteers for enabling the council to pass things on to the next council in a strong position.

56 **Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2014**

The Town Clerk summarised the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2014, highlighting the impact of the expenditure on the Energique building and the depletion of the council’s revenue reserves.

57 Electors' Questions

Mr Sutherland asked, in relation to the Will Hall application, now that Winchester College appeared to be guaranteeing that the source of the River Wey would remain open to public, would the town council consider seeking to take over the water company land to link that site to Flood Meadows. The Town Clerk advised that this had been looked at on previous occasions but the council could certainly make a further approach to the water company.

Councillor A Joy, noted that of the relatively recent Victoria Cross recipients still living, Lance Corporal Leakey and Johnson Beharry were both Hampshire men. He thanked the Town Clerk on behalf of Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council for the tremendous role the Town Clerk had played in partnership working.

Mrs Webster-Brown asked whether the town council would support the listing of the Butts Bridge. The Town Clerk explained that it was on the agenda for the next planning & Transportation Committee meeting. Mr Sharp offered to provide figures if the town council needed any to influence their view.

Mr Wheeler asked where rationale for demolishing The Butts Bridge comes from. Councillor Joy explained how the proposal had come from developers, emphasising that Hampshire County Council had not said that the bridge must be replaced.

Councillor Hill added that the Town Council had submitted a request asking the Secretary of State to call in the decision on the south Alton planning application, which included the Butts Bridge.

Mr Ogilvy noted that proposed development at Will Hall Farm had been reduced to 180 dwellings, but he felt that part of boundary had moved into flood plain. He asked if the council could look at it. Councillor Saunders explained that the decision had already been made by EHDC and there was nothing further that the town council could do.

Mrs Reynolds asked who would be providing new school places, doctors' surgeries and so on under the Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Hill explained that GPs were private businesses and would need to expand to cope with demand. Councillor Mrs Jones explained that discussions had been held with Hampshire County Council and The Butts Primary and Wooteys Junior Schools were to be funded so that they could expand.

Mr Sutherland asked whether the town council would consider adding names of those killed since WWII to the cairn. The Town Clerk said there was no reason why the council couldn't look at that idea, there were also names missing in relation to those killed in the first and second world wars.

Mr Webster-Brown asked if the Christmas tree and Christmas Lights Switch-on could be moved to the Assembly Rooms. The Town Clerk advised that there had been a Christmas tree at the Assembly Rooms for several years now, but the out-door space available was more restricted, road closures would be needed to protect the public and the event would be away from the main concentration of illuminations.

Councillor Mrs Jones asked when there would be a public consultation on the sports centre. Councillor Saunders said that the consultation would be run alongside the consultation period for the planning application that EHDC would be submitting for a new sports centre.

Mrs Reynolds pointed out that from the list of roads to be resurfaced two years ago, some had been done but Greenfields Avenue was still on waiting list. Councillor Joy explained that this had not been done yet because of plans to change the layout, parking and introduce a 20mph limit. The road was still on the list.

Mr Sutherland pointed out that the Town Clerk had been thanked on behalf of each of the three tiers of council, but he wished to propose a vote of thanks to the Town Clerk from the electors, who supported his proposal.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting finished at 7.35pm.

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