

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ALTON TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON 30 APRIL 2014 AT 6:00PM

Present: Councillor D Gardner - Town Mayor
M Bayliss
P Hicks
G Hill - Deputy Town Mayor
Mrs S Hodder
Mrs P Jones
A Murphy
J Nixon
R Saunders
J Smith
K Stevens
D Willoughby

7 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

44 **Welcome and Housekeeping**

The Deputy Town Mayor welcomed all to the Annual Meeting of Electors, asked that all mobiles telephones be turned off or silenced, advised the only exit to the building is the way you came in and to this end, requested that people do not stand in the doorway, advised where the toilets were and advised that a hearing loop was available and that hearing aids should be set to the "T" position.

45 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Lawrence.

46 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Town Mayor.

47 **Deputy Town Mayor's Address**

The Deputy Town Mayor reported that he had attend 28 events ranging from small to large. The largest was the annual Jalsa Salana with 25,000 people attending, residential homes and recently the St George's Parade by the Rotherfield District Scouts.

Councillor Bayliss commented that the Town Mayor had done an extremely good job of representing the town.

48 **Presentation – How your Council Tax is spent**

Councillor Hicks explained where the Council Tax went and which councils did what. He explained the services Alton Town Council provided and that the Town Council was largely reliant on Council Tax. No government grants or business rates. The biggest cost is staffing costs, then property related costs. The Council had faced a dilemma over Energique roof and asbestos. Councillor Hicks showed a graph of the council's reserves since 1998, showing how the Energique work had wiped out the council's reserves.

Showed that 42% of costs directly related to open spaces. Councillor Hicks highlighted potential new open space coming from major housing developments.

Also outlined new committee structure with four rather than three committees. He also explained other activities of the council.

Councillor Hicks announced a proposed later start time for meetings of 7.00pm.

The Town Mayor took the chair.

49 **Town Mayor's Address**

Praised Councillor Hicks for an outstanding job as Leader, councillors had been active in supporting the community, the Yuletide Festival in 2013 was self-funding. Last Night of the Proms was successful with excellent weather, he hoped the next Town Mayor would continue to take things forward for the town. He thanked Councillors, Town Hall staff and the public for their support.

50 **Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2013**

The Town Clerk summarised the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2013.

51 **Electors' Questions**

Mr Broomfield asked if the council had a Profit and Loss and Balance Sheet. The Town Clerk explained.

Mr Souter praised the council for a move to 7.00pm and de-cluttering of the town. He observed that cycle lanes were poorly maintained and needed attention.

Councillor Bayliss responded work due to start soon on Anstey Road cycle lanes in response to the town council lobbying.

Councillor Hill added work due to start on cycle lanes.

Mr Souter asked about Diggers work. The Town Clerk explained still pursuing funding. Mr Souter also made a plea for the removal of rugby posts in Anstey Park.

Councillor Stevens suggested more joining up of cycle lanes which start in the middle of nowhere.

Councillor Mrs Jones pointed out that Hampshire County Council maintained footpaths, not the town council, other than tarmac paths through parks. Councillor Hicks explained he meant that the town council monitored the footpaths.

Councillor Hill referred to the Waitrose S106 money which the town council thought was long overdue for spending.

Mr Chick, 50th anniversary of Britain in Bloom. The Royal Horticultural Society was encouraging planting of sunflowers. Councillor Mrs Hodder responded that the town council was keeping within the theme with more community involvement. The council was receiving mentoring from a RHS judge.

Mr Chick also noted the 40th anniversary of Alton Town Council and would the council be doing anything.

Ms Bradford asked when the tarmacking of the drive in Anstey Park would be undertaken. Councillor Hodder confirmed an order had been placed.

Ms Bradford also commented that some allotments were not in a good state, with a five year waiting list. The Allotments Association used to cut the communal areas on the sites.

Councillor Stevens explained the process for removal of plots and that the town council had, on a trial basis, taken on the maintenance of the allotment sites.

Ms Ramsey commented on the open spaces on the Manor Estate, grass had been cut but left piles of brown grass. The Town Mayor offered to find out what the contract required and would report back.

Mr Broomfield asked about funding for Energique. The Town Clerk explained no borrowing, the roof replaced by the tenant in return for a rent free period. The town council had funded asbestos removal, £100,000. Mr Broomfield also asked if this had been withheld from the public. The Town Clerk explained the commercial sensitivity. Councillor Willoughby explained that all costs had been reported and authorised, nothing concealed from the public.

Councillor Smith commended the Town Clerk and the Leader of the Council for their rapid action. The success story that the roof had not collapsed.

Councillor Mrs Jones reminded all about the Neighbourhood Plan and encouraged all Councillors to attend the Assembly Rooms on the 17 May. Mr Hellis explained on a tight timescale, reason – lots of development coming, Alton needs to prepare and look at allocation of sites. 700 people attended and 900 responses had been received and encouraged everyone to attend on the 17 May.

Councillor Joy said the government was pushing for faster allocation than 2016, but encouraged Alton to grasp the opportunity and ensure this was done locally.

Mr Broomfield asked if it was the council's intention to make a comment on the TAG airspace proposal. Councillor Hicks informed the meeting that at the council objected at the Planning and Transportation Committee on the 23 April due to air pollution and loss of amenity. Councillor Joy suggested to copy the town council's response to the Civil Aviation Authority.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting finished at 7.35pm.

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