

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ALTON TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING
HELD AT ALTON TOWN HALL ON 16 MARCH 2011 AT 6:00PM

Present:	Councillor D J Willoughby	-	Town Mayor
	Ms P J Bradford		
	Ms B Carpenter		
	A B Chick		
	D Crocker		
	Mrs P E Jones		
	A G Patel		
	J F Smith		
	A Joy	-	HCC/EHDC
	32 members of the public		
	1 member of the press		
In attendance:	S J Parkinson	-	Town Clerk
	G C Burt	-	Deputy Town Clerk
	Mrs S Brown	-	Admin Officer
	Mrs P Harris	-	Admin Officer
	Councillor P Burridge	-	East Hampshire District Council

Councillor Willoughby welcomed everyone to the meeting.

25 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R J F Evans, Mrs R L Fitzer, R T Fitzer and R A Saunders.

26 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 2010 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

27 **Town Mayor's Address**

The Town Mayor delivered his report for the year, a copy of which is attached to and forms part of these minutes.

28 **Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2010**

The Town Clerk presented the accounts for the preceding financial year. No questions were asked.

29 Presentation from Councillor Patrick Burridge and to receive questions

The Town Mayor welcomed Councillor Patrick Burridge, Leader of East Hampshire District Council. Councillor Burridge was the first Leader of East Hampshire District Council from the Alton area and this was the first time he had addressed a meeting in the Town Council Chamber since 1992.

Councillor Burridge explained that he became Leader in October 2010, within the early months of the new coalition government. The District Council had faced an immediate reduction in spending, with a grant cut of 38% in a single year, as well as £1.1 million being removed for the new national park. East Hampshire District Council had lobbied the Local Government Minister and increased the settlement by £0.5 million. Because of careful planning, East Hampshire District Council was better placed than most councils to meet such challenges. The District Council was now sharing a Chief Executive, and senior management team with Havant Borough Council, as well as working in partnership with Winchester City Council to improve refuse collection.

The Whitehill/Bordon eco town presented a once in a lifetime opportunity to create a sustainable future for a community. The District Council also welcomed the South Downs National Park as the best way to secure funds for improving an already beautiful environment.

East Hampshire District Council was one of twelve authorities selected for the Big Society project, sharing best practice on community planning. 70% of parishes in East Hampshire had carried out parish plans or town health checks and Councillor Burridge praised the success of such an approach in Alton.

Councillor Burridge then answered questions from the public.

Mrs Andrews asked if there had been any provision made for a replacement sports centre. Councillor Burridge reaffirmed the district's commitment to a sports centre in Alton but could not give a timescale.

Mrs Williams asked if the District Council had money put aside for the sports centre. Councillor Burridge suggested a figure of £25 million may be needed to replace the facility and East Hampshire District Council did not have that. Mrs Williams also asked if the private sector could have any involvement and Councillor Burridge responded by saying the sports centre needed to show a profit before they would be interested.

Mr Grace asked how much had been set aside. Councillor Burridge believed capital reserves of approximately £12 million were available, but there were other demands on the money such as the Community Centre. Mr Grace emphasised the importance of the sports centre for the health of the youth of the town as well as the older people.

Mrs Andrews, asked for assurance that the sports centre would continue to operate until a replacement centre was built and Councillor Burridge responded by saying, as far as possible, yes.

Councillor Burridge answered the following questions in relation to the Alton Community Centre.

A member of the public enquired as to how much money was being spent for ongoing repairs at the Community Centre, Councillor BurrIDGE believed it to be approximately £150,000.

Mr Hill, asked when the Community Centre would be replaced, Councillor BurrIDGE was unable to give a date.

Mr Gay pointed out that a number of groups that meet at the Community Centre, such as Hampshire Youth Service. Would the money for the Boys Club in Nursery Road be better used by the Community Centre and the land at the Boys Club sold to fund other projects in the town. Councillor BurrIDGE responded that they were separate issues.

Councillor Patel informed the meeting that the Sports Centre was built with Alton Urban District Council's money and was handed over to East Hampshire District Council. The 'life expectancy' was only 25 years and he felt that Alton had been left behind.

Mr Hutton was concerned at the scruffy appearance of the town, especially the streets and footpaths. He provided photographs of leaves that had not been swept from October 2010. He wanted to be proud of Alton and asked if a push electric sweeper could be provided, as he would use it if trained and provide his service for free. Mr Hutton had concerns with supermarket trolleys littering the town and asked as part of the planning conditions new supermarkets would have tighter control on their trolleys. The Deputy Town Clerk encouraged residents to report misplaced trolleys to the relevant supermarket.

Councillor BurrIDGE confirmed that East Hampshire District Council has the power to round up trolleys and charge supermarkets for their return. There could be an opportunity for a joint initiative for the District and Town Council. The District Council could not impose retrospective planning conditions on an existing approval. The street cleaning was part of a new contract with Winchester City Council with new standards and arrangements. Councillor BurrIDGE was disappointed that Butts Road had not been swept for six months. Customer focus groups showed an improved perception of street cleanliness compared to eight to ten years ago.

Mrs Wood was complimentary about the trees in the High Street and thought it would be nice to see additional trees towards the Assembly Rooms and Crown Hill.

Mr Hepper was concerned that with the merger with Havant Borough Council services would be reduced. Would it not be a better geographical partnership with either Winchester City Council or Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. Councillor BurrIDGE responded that it was a sharing of management structure only and the councils remained two separate organisations. They would continue to work in partnership with Winchester City Council and the South Downs National Park.

Mrs Norris explained the on street cleaning contractor was obstructed by parked cars, especially in Butts Road. Councillor BurrIDGE advised that parking enforcement will be reinstated at the end of the year.

Mr Wood was disappointed that the District Council had not forced the developer of the flats backing on to the Draymans Way car park to backfill and reinstate the area. It was an eyesore to visitors and locals and traders may be losing money.

Mr Grace was concerned that the river Wey had been polluted too frequently by sewage and wanted to know if there was a plan in place to prevent pollution. Councillor Burridge responded that it would be difficult to plan for every eventuality. Councillor Willoughby referred to Holybourne, where the Town Council and Holybourne Village Association had written to Thames Water to urge a replacement of the old pipe.

Mr Souter, wanted to know how and will the Localism Bill affect Alton. Councillor Burridge felt that it would be possible for the community to organise planning that they want but that it would be harder to stop what they don't want.

Councillor Willoughby asked if there were services that might come to the Town Council. Councillor Burridge said there was a need for local infrastructure levy to fund improvements and Alton would be at the centre of a new local area plan.

Doctor Willis referred to the local feeling that Petersfield got the first bite of the cherry and asked if Alton had any common cause with Petersfield now that it was in the South Downs National Park. Councillor Burridge confirmed planning would lie with the South Downs National Park. Development Control would be delegated to the district council, but would follow the South Downs National Park policies.

Ms Norris referred to the recent letters published in the Alton Herald in respect of Ackender Road and the village of Selborne. She enquired as to why Chawton Park Road did not have any traffic calming measures. Councillor Burridge referred to the question to Councillor Joy but confirmed the District Council would lobby the County Council.

Councillor Crocker said that the town council's planning committee commented on all plans relating to highways and infrastructure and was frustrated and concerned to note that the highways authority made no comment on plans. Councillor Burridge confirmed that the County Council check that plans meet national guidance and Councillor Joy also confirmed that highways reports were full of content but were restricted to 'no objection' in reports to the planning committee.

Councillor Mrs Jones was concerned that too many planning proposals were agreed for unadopted roads, meaning that these would not be maintained by the County Council in the future. Councillor Burridge said that the planning authority would not object if the highways authority were content.

Mr Gay wanted to know why there is not planning conditions for contractors parking on development sites. Councillor Burridge believed that as other legislation covers this, a condition could not be imposed.

Mr King referred to the new fencing and automatic locking gate at the cemetery and felt that the objective had not been achieved. Councillor Ms Bradford confirmed that the District Council were looking into the matter.

Mr Baker commented that only half of the grasscrete on the verges at Mill Lane had been installed and wanted to know when the remainder would be completed as promised. Councillor Joy confirmed it was a County Council matter but he was unaware of the proposals.

Councillor Willoughby thanked Councillor Burridge for his time to attend the meeting.

30 **Electors' Questions**

Mr Wood asked following the recent vandalism of Sheila Betts Florist window, the second time in a matter of weeks, whether the CCTV was of any use. Mr Burt responded that the CCTV would be monitored from 4:00pm to 4:00am once the monitoring suite at Winchester was operational.

Mr Heelis asked about the Alton Town Plan's future. The Town Clerk responded that the council remained committed to the plan, but with elections only six weeks away it was unrealistic to expect the current Councillors to make any progress in this time period. Councillor Joy commented that the Alton Town Plan had made tremendous contributions over time. Local authorities had a major role in delivery of the plan and visions, so they needed to take a lead. He confirmed the County Council's commitment to working with partners at all levels.

Doctor Willis asked if the Town Council would contribute financially to the future of the Curtis Museum and Allen Gallery. Councillor Willoughby and the Town Clerk responded that the current proposals did not require funding from the council and pointed out that those funds would come from raising taxes on Altonians.

The Town Mayor then thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting finished at 7:45pm.

* * * * *