

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ALTON TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING
HELD AT ALTON TOWN HALL ON 7 MAY 2008 AT 6PM**

Present: Cllr Mrs R Fitzer - Town Mayor
Ms P J Bradford
Ms B Carpenter
A B Chick
R J F Evans
R T Fitzer
A Patel
Mrs P E Jones
R A Saunders
J F Smith
D J Willoughby
10 members of the public
2 members of the press

In attendance: S J Parkinson - Town Clerk
G C Burt - Deputy Town Clerk
M O'Mahoney - East Hampshire District Council

6 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Town Mayor reminded all those present to either switch off or silence their mobile phones.

7 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

8 Town Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor gave a summary of her year in office, the important issues that the council had addressed and the many events she had been invited to attend.

A full copy of the address is appended to and forms part of these minutes.

9 Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2007

Copies of the accounts had been distributed and the Town Clerk gave a brief summary of the council's financial position.



10 Open Spaces Survey

Mike O'Mahoney explained the background to the recent open spaces survey carried out by EHDC. This would provide a framework for consistent planning, with an audit of pitches/play areas and the ability to provide a robust list of needs for planning applications. It would also allow EHDC to develop new standards to help identify if there was a surplus or shortfall in particular types of facility.

The report consisted of a main document, a pitch study and a built facilities study. It identified an under supply of allotments and also children's play spaces, especially for 8-13 year olds. There were sufficient parks, sports grounds and informal open space, but an under supply of natural green space. Access to sites in Alton was generally good.

It included suggestions that Anstey Park and Jubilee Playing Fields were potential green flag parks, while identifying the potential to improve provision for young people in a number of areas. Possible improvements were the improvement/enlargement of children's facilities, the creation of site management plans and better signage and access.

The built facilities report indicated that travel between Alton and Bordon was unlikely for many sports users and that the Alton sports centre would need to be replaced not relocated. The study found that more water space and gymnastic area was required, but EHDC would be investigating with Sport England to seek national view.

The Government had changed the VAT regulations regarding community use of college and school facilities and it was hoped this would bring more public use of these assets. Ms K Holbert asked about impact of EU regulations regarding VAT costs. Mr O'Mahoney referred to the example of community schools now opening their facilities up to the public.

In concluding Mr O'Mahoney thanked the town council for contributing to recent training on the effective use of developers' contributions to provide better facilities.

11 Residents Questions

Ms K Holbert asked about the proposals for the Coors sports ground and impact on Anstey Road. A further application was anticipated and Sport England would be consulted on the proposals for new facilities.

Mr D Hinds asked about the benefit of Green Flag status. Mr O'Mahoney said it was a form of "Quality Assurance" label, with rigorous standards. The Deputy Town Clerk explained the progress in improving the Public Gardens for the *In Bloom* competition.

Cllr Mrs Jones asked what "natural" green spaces were. Mr O'Mahoney explained that they were bridleways, meadows and similar features.



Cllr Smith mentioned the Manor Estate, the report indicated that Manor was short of space, so why were EHDC planning disposal of an open space site. Mr O'Mahoney understood that it was a consultation and any disposal would be subject to planning.

Cllr Ms Bradford asked if a study was available for public viewing. Mr O'Mahoney said that it was not yet ready but hoped it would be available by the end of May.

The Deputy Town Clerk asked if "children's play space" meant equipped or unequipped. Mr O'Mahoney indicated that it meant both, but suggested looking at detail of report.

Cllr Crocker was concerned at a suggestion that there were adequate numbers of football pitches as 60 youth teams needed more. He also questioned whether there was a need for an ATP. Mr O'Mahoney confirmed there was a need for more use of an artificial surface.

Cllr Willoughby said that Alton had a higher than national average uptake on sporting activity and asked if the study was based on the average. Mr O'Mahoney said that the study tried to factor in the impact of supply on demand and use. Cllr Willoughby was also pleased at the comment regarding travel to Bordon.

Mr O'Mahoney said the leisure management contract ran out in 2012. The council was trying to include the construction of a new centre in the replacement contract. EHDC would like to avoid rebuilding on the same site, to avoid a long closure and loss of facilities. Mr C Lawrence was concerned at the future of the sports centre, but Mr O'Mahoney suggested that a 5-7 year time frame for replacement was adequate based on a recent condition survey.

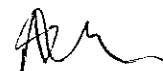
Cllr Mrs Jones asked if the needs of local schools had been considered. For example, no local schools had pools. This was taken into account. Mr Mike Heelis said that PPG17 included school open spaces in overall total and was concerned that core strategy might not recognise this.

Several residents commented on the recent damage to The Butts by the fair, suggesting that the subsequent rolling and filling had been inadequate. Mrs Rudland who lived near The Butts, welcomed the fair coming and had not had problems with the fair people.

Cllr Willoughby asked what assistance EHDC could be in allocating/funding additional open space. Mr O'Mahoney said that it depended on development and developers' contributions. The framework was changing to a "community levy" and the study would provide a basis for informed decisions.

Mr Lawrence asked if Sunday parking charges were a fait accompli. Cllr Willoughby responded that EHDC had made its decision, although HCC had concerns.

The meeting finished at 7.13pm



TOWN MAYOR'S ADDRESS 2007-2008

My year has been enjoyable, sometimes stressful but always rewarding. It has been a busy time juggling teaching at Alton College, family, running a church group and being Town Mayor.

Alton is proving to be a thriving, growing town. It has built on its market and brewing roots to be a popular town for young married couples with children and older folk to retire to. There are a number of housing projects 'in the melting pot' at the moment but the trick will be to increase the services to go with these homes: the doctors, dentists, schools, shops and of course a realistic and viable transport plan.

I started my year with a dinner with the Ahmadiyya Muslim group in the Assembly Rooms. This led to an invitation to join them on their Charity Walk in June and to their mosque in London, for the presentation of very generous cheques to my two charities. Many Altonians were concerned a couple of years ago with the prospect of a Muslim organisation moving onto the farm near Kingsley. As far as I'm concerned, apart from a couple of days a year, they have proven to be very good neighbours.

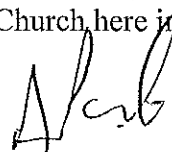
I was very pleased to attend the very successful Alton 8, run by the Youth Council in the Public Gardens last summer. Alton in Bloom is always a popular event with everybody in the town. A lot of work goes into presenting the town in its best light. Greg, our Deputy Town Clerk, co-ordinates this work but I would like to thank all those townspeople who help to make our town, a town to be proud of at this time of year.

I felt privileged to be Alton's Town Mayor in the year the Queen had her Diamond Wedding anniversary and to be invited to the celebrations in Winchester Cathedral. Speaking of anniversaries, this year also marked the 100th anniversary of the Scout movement and I attended the celebration in the Alton Maltings.

Being Mayor sometimes requires some dressing up and this was the case on two occasions during the year, once for the Victorian Cricket and the second time when Farnham Rep Company presented the arrival of William Cobbett. Another highlight was the attendance of the REME troops, just back from Afghanistan, at our Remembrance Day service. The run up to Christmas is always a busy time Mayor-wise, starting with the turning on of the Christmas lights and the arrival of Santa Claus to judging of the Christmas windows and the Christmas Tree Festival as part of the Yuletide Festival.

In January, I opened a new spine ramp at the Jubilee Skatepark and then the refurbished Energique Health Club - both providing leisure activities for the people of Alton. Following on the theme of healthy leisure activities I attended the opening of the first walking trail in Whitehill and their new WOW initiative, 'Wildlife of Whitehill'. Shortly after this, I opened a nature trail at Anstey Junior School, which they have built in their school grounds for the benefit of the children.

Alton Town Council had its second Civic Service this year. Pam Bradford, the chairman of EHDC and I co-hosted this event at the Methodist Church here in Alton.



It was well attended and perhaps other mayors will follow making this a genuine tradition.

Just last week I planted a tree outside the Fire Station. It was donated by the Alton Society in a bid to start their new project of 'softening' the built landscape in our town. They hope that other organisations will follow their lead and plant more bushes, trees or planters to help beautify Alton.

One thing that I became aware of in my period as Mayor is the amazing amount of work done by volunteers in so many areas of our life in the town. This covers sporting activities, fund raising and community activities.

I recently counted up the events, photo calls, openings etc that I have attended and found there had been 99 altogether. As I write this, tomorrow I will be attending the opening of the refurbished public toilets in the car park near the Public Gardens. That will make 100!

All these activities do not run themselves and I wish to thank the Town Hall staff for all their help and patience with me. I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for their help and guidance, especially Pam Bradford whose knowledge and experience were a great help. Lastly I must thank my husband who has helped me in many ways throughout my year.

I give my best wishes to Atul for his coming year as Town Mayor and hope that he will have as enjoyable tenure as I have had myself.

Alan
24.3.09.

