

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ALTON TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON 14 APRIL 2005**

Present: Councillor R T Fitzer - Town Mayor
Ms P Bradford
A Chick
D Crocker
Mrs R Fitzer
Mrs P Jones
P V Mendham
A Patel
P J Robinson
R A Saunders
J F Smith
D J Willoughby
D O'Donnell - EHDC
12 members of the public and press

In attendance: S J Parkinson - Town Clerk
G C Burt - Deputy Town Clerk
Mrs R Wallis - Assistant Town Clerk
PC Dear & Sgt Dugdale - Alton Police
Ms Sallyanne Eddson - Community Safety Partnership

1 Town Mayor's Announcements

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

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

3 Town Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor reflected upon his year in office and the numerous events he had attended during the year. He mentioned the following projects, which had been started or had progressed during his mayoral year:

- (1) Acquired ownership of Flood Meadows from EHDC.
- (2) Constructed a second skatepark in Anstey Park.
- (3) Introduced security patrols on council sites to reduce vandalism and fear of crime.
- (4) Provided land for a new headquarters for the Army and Air Cadets.
- (5) Implemented schemes to improve disabled access to the Assembly Rooms and the Town Hall.
- (6) Increased administration efficiency with new finance software, new telephones and copying facilities.



- (7) Successfully recruited an experienced groundsperson to bring the grounds maintenance team up to strength.
- (8) Worked with other organisations to develop a Town Plan, now nearing publication.
- (9) Supported many local organisations through grant funding.
- (10) About to commence locking of Public Gardens.
- (11) New shelter in Public Gardens.
- (12) Allotment plots for gardeners with special needs under construction.
- (13) Commencing bank restoration at Kings Pond using bio-engineering solutions.
- (14) Continued to comment on planning applications affecting Alton, sometimes with success.

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

4 Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2004

Copies of the accounts had been distributed and the Town Clerk drew the audience's attention to the summary on page 3 showing expenditure of just under half a million pounds for the year.

Mrs Burfoot asked if the zero balance carried forward on the summary of the accounts should be a cause for concern. The Town Clerk explained that this was being addressed over a three year period and revenue reserves would be raised to £50,000.

There were no other questions on the accounts.

5 Discussion on anti-social behaviour

Sallyanne Edson of the Community Safety Partnership gave a brief introduction on measures in place to deal with anti-social behaviour. She then invited questions from the public.

Councillor Ms Bradford raised her concern about reports of groups of young people at Jubilee Playing Fields drinking alcohol and swearing, and asked what the council could do to tackle this. Sallyanne Edson said that it was a balance of what is and is not acceptable behaviour. However, if these incidents were reported, it was the responsibility of the police to investigate these incidents. The police representative said that Jubilee Playing Fields was part of their patrol area and that they had the powers to confiscate alcohol and cigarettes, however, they needed to have these incidents reported in order to respond. Councillor Chick said that as Jubilee Playing Fields was in his ward he, too, was receiving increased reports from residents about this problem and that he would welcome the police making more frequent visits to this area. Sallyanne Edson said that the Community Safety Partnership was working closely with other groups and schools in order to improve the situation.

Mrs Burfoot expressed concern as to where the youngsters were getting the cigarettes and alcohol. The police said that they were working with Trading Standards.

Mr Hughes expressed concern over increasing graffiti on walls and vehicles, in particular in Victoria Road, and that incidents were happening on a daily basis. The police said that it was very difficult to deal with this problem as the culprits were never around when they arrived at the scene, and the public never saw this taking place, however, the police encouraged residents to call them every time. Sallyanne Edson reminded residents that a mobile CCTV

FWH

vehicle could be used if they thought it would help. The Town Clerk said that he had spent some time in Eastleigh looking at their CCTV system and would be reporting back to the council in due course.

Mr Galpin asked why there was a reluctance to prosecute when a crime had been reported and gave an example of his own experiences where he felt that there was sufficient evidence to take the matter forward. The police said that although they could not comment on individual incidents, they invited Mr Galpin to discuss the matter after the meeting.

Sallyanne Edson went through the procedure and said that there was nothing to prevent the police or relevant authority to apply to a county or civil court for a stand-alone order, although this had not been done so far.

Ruth Bright said that youngsters hanging about the Weybridge Pub probably did not realise they were creating a *threatening* atmosphere and was there any way the police could discuss this with the youngsters. Councillor Jones said that there was a high percentage of youngsters that were well behaved and suggested that resources were put into liaising with primary schools. The police said that youths gather at places like the Co-op and Tesco Express, and that street benches were also a target for this activity. However, the anti-social behaviour orders were fairly new but results were slowly being achieved.

Caroline Dibden said that with new housing at Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital, as an example, lessons should be learned in how to develop sites to try and reduce anti-social behaviour. Sallyanne Edson said that it was the landlords' responsibility to manage their properties properly and housing associations, in particular, had methods of dealing with this type of behaviour.

Councillor Smith expressed concern that a small number of youngsters were causing disruption at the Community Centre. The police said that they were taking this very seriously and had authorised extra patrols for this particular area. Sallyanne Edson said that the Youth Service was keen to work with these youngsters and meetings were being held in the Community Centre twice a week.

Councillor Mendham said that the council had encouraged the development of a Youth Council who was keen to introduce a graffiti wall. Sallyanne Edson said that her understanding was that it had been very successful in other areas. However, the police felt that this may only reduce the problem and not stop it.

Councillor Willoughby asked what other measures the Town Council could take to help alleviate anti-social behaviour. Sallyanne Edson said that intervention and positive work with the police was important and the funding of parenting groups for Alton would also be helpful.

Deputy Town Clerk, Greg Burt, asked if the estimated cost of £5,000 per person for implementing an order was accurate and if this hindered the number of orders being issued. Sallyanne Edson said that the orders were implemented on the basis of seriousness and definitely not on cost.

Mrs Coles was concerned about cars parking on the pavements. The police confirmed that it was an obstruction and that the Traffic Warden should issue a relevant ticket. This was also a

problem in Victoria Road where it was felt emergency vehicles could not get through if needed.

The Town Mayor thanked the visitors for attending the meeting.

6(a) Other matters raised by electors

Mr Galpin asked if the grass cutting contractors were also responsible for collecting litter. The Town Clerk said that the grass contractor should remove litter before cutting. However, the same contractor provided the litter picker in the town centre, who was doing an excellent job.

Councillor Crocker felt that the grass cutting had started later than usual in Alton and would be noting the dates when cutting took place in his ward and encouraged other councillors to do the same. Councillor Bradford suggested that the first cut had been *selective*. The Town Clerk noted that Eastleigh Borough Council had increased the amount of cuts they undertook from 12 to 14. Councillor Willoughby felt that the area at the eastern end of the bypass could be improved if greater areas of rough grass were cut properly to stop litter getting caught in weeds. Mr Galpin said that the use of voluntary labour worked very well for smaller litter items. However, there was some iron framework by the bridge across the bypass, which had been there for a year, and should be removed.

Councillor Willoughby encouraged members of the public to report flytipping to East Hampshire District Council.

The Town Clerk said that at the Hampshire Clerks Conference in March a member of the Environment Agency gave a talk on this problem and issued a statement informing the public how to deal with it. It was hoped to include this in the next edition of the *Altonian*.

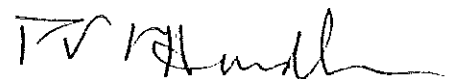
- 6(b) Councillor Chick asked for an update on placing tables and chairs in the Market Square. The Town Clerk said that Pizza Express actually did this last summer, which was successful. However, at the time EHDC had not formulated a licensing policy, which is now in place and we were in discussions with the licensing office to apply for a general license to cover various establishments. However, guidance as to the new legislation was awaited but it was anticipated that something could be in place for the summer.

Councillor Jones noted the increased number of cars parking in the square in the evenings. Councillor Willoughby suggested deregulating the Market Square, however, the Town Clerk said that should this happen it would prove too expensive for the Town Council to maintain.

There being no other business, the Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending and brought the meeting to a close.

Meeting finished at 7.25pm

[Minutes prepared by Mrs R Wallis, Alton Town Council]



Town Mayor's Address

I think we all acknowledge that time seems to pass more quickly the older we become. So, having said that, the speed with which the last year has passed for me suggests that I must be very old indeed.

It has been an eventful year for the Town Council and for me personally. Only one person in the world is ever Mayor of Alton at any one time and this is something I reflect on with pride and humility. As many of my predecessors will know, trying to fill the role of Mayor whilst juggling work and family commitments is no easy business and I congratulate all of those who have managed this successfully in the past.

Dealing with my period of office chronologically, there have been so many things worthy of comment.

Last spring my first engagement involved a trip on the Watercress Line and coincidentally, my last engagement on 28/5 will also involve a trip on the Watercress Line.

The Alton Show continues to be a favourite event and I was delighted to be a guest of the Committee which works so hard every year to keep this a fixture on our calendars.

New facilities were opened in the Public Gardens which enhance the experience of all the users and increase the attraction of one of Alton's favourite open spaces.

After a long wait, the new library was completed and officially opened in September. This is a wonderful building and an important community resource for the people of Alton to enjoy. I was proud to be involved in the opening ceremony.

Alton in Bloom was a great success again although we are still hoping that the judges will be a little kinder to us in future considering the size of our town and our limited resources.

In November, I was asked to light the bonfire at the annual fireworks display sponsored by the Alton Lions. This proved to be a little more difficult than expected due to the damp weather but was finally achieved with the help of a can of petrol. I should warn you never to try this at home!

Christmas celebrations in Alton were better than ever in 2004, with improvements to the decorations and the best tree we have seen in the Market Square. Plans are already in place for 2005 and I can tell you now that we can look forward to an even bigger event.

A marvellous mosaic was unveiled in the new library in December. The Alton Town Twinning Committee hosted a small delegation from our twin town of Montecchio Maggiore and it gave me great pleasure to join the Mayor of Montecchio in the ceremony. Thanks to the Alton Town Twinning Committee for their work in making this possible.

I put on a hard hat and builders boots in January to bury a time capsule in the new 'Maltings' project. The completion of this building overlooking Alton will take place in the summer of this year and I'm sure that the new Mayor will have a role to play in the official opening.

Agreement was finally reached between Alton Town Council and East Hampshire District Council for the transfer of Flood Meadows. We are all very pleased that this important part of Alton is now owned and managed by the Town. A tree was planted by myself and the Chairman of East Hampshire District Council in February to commemorate this transfer.

The annual pancake race took place on a very chilly morning in February but this didn't prevent the largest field for several years lining up in Cross and Pillory Lane. It is events like this and many others that I haven't had time to mention that help to create the Alton that is the envy of many other market towns.

Just last week my wife and I joined other members of the Alton Town Twinning Association in a visit to Montecchio Maggiore. There is a genuine warmth and affection between the people of the two towns and the relationship will surely become even stronger in years to come.

This brings us right up to date and it is now time to reflect on other developments in the town.

Our educational institutions have been improving their facilities including an all weather pitch at Amery Hill. The Assembly Rooms is undergoing a major refurbishment. A skatepark is nearly completed in Anstey Park for the enjoyment of many young people at that end of town. Several commercial developments are taking place as well as additional housing. Alton is alive and growing and this is essential if the town is to sustain itself. A dedicated group of residents have helped to prepare a 'Vision for Alton' which is a major step in identifying the way forward for our town and I thank all of them.

One thing that I have become much more 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 activities and community activities. Their work will be acknowledged at my reception on 29/4 at the Community Centre.

Thanks should also be extended to all of the people who either work for the Town Council or support us in the work we do, and there are too many of them to mention individually.

The finances of the Council are in good order and we are in an excellent position to fulfil our plans for the future.

I give all my good wishes to my successor and hope that he will have as active and enjoyable tenure as I have had myself

Cllr Roger Fitzer