

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE ALTON TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING**  
**HELD IN THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS ON 29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2004**

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Present: Councillor Mrs P E Jones - Town Mayor  
A B Chick  
R J F Evans  
Mrs R L Fitzer  
R T Fitzer  
A G Patel  
R A Saunders  
J F Smith  
D J Willoughby  
County Councillor Dr A R Ludlow  
8 members of the public and press

In attendance: S J Parkinson - Town Clerk  
Inspector Tony Tipping - Alton Police

1 **Minutes**

It was noted that Councillor R T Fitzer's name appeared twice on the minutes of the previous meeting and this was amended. Following this amendment the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2003 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

2 **Town Mayor's Address**

The Town Mayor spoke of the many events she had attended during her year in office and of the many projects the Town Council was involved in. A copy of the address is appended to and forms part of these minutes.

3 **Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003**

Copies of the accounts had been distributed and the Town Clerk drew the audience's attention to the summary of expenditure on page 3 which showed that the council's overall spending was within the budget set for the year. There were no questions on the accounts.

4 **Public Questions**

Due to the delayed arrival of Inspector Tipping, the meeting agreed to consider general issues first before moving on to police matters.

Mrs Johns asked about the future of Marlfield's Care Home on Gilbert White Way. Councillor R T Fitzer advised that it was to become a nursing home with building work starting in June and expected to take 12 months to complete. Mrs Johns also commented that the new pedestrian crossings on Whitedown Lane and Butts Road were a great benefit to the town.

5 **Police Matters**

Inspector Tipping gave a brief introduction on the policing of Alton and emphasised that the police worked for and were accountable to the people of Alton. He then invited questions from the public.



Mr Galpin asked whether anything could be done about delivery vehicles parking on kerbs and causing damage. Inspector Tipping explained that drivers often used the defence that they were keeping the highway clear of obstruction. However, the police would welcome any information on vehicles parking on kerbs.

Mr Galpin also expressed concern that not enough was done about litter. A recent litter pick by volunteers had collected many bags of rubbish. Inspector Tipping emphasised that it was necessary to catch offenders in the act, however, he would ask his officers to be more aware of the problem. Once again, information would be welcomed. Another resident asked if fly-tipping had increased since EU regulations had been tightened. The Inspector replied that he was not aware of an increase.

Councillor Chick commented that police foot patrols had regularly been visible in the town between October and Christmas, however this had fallen since then. Inspector Tipping explained that an officer was on foot patrol between 11am and 3pm every day, covering the area between Anstey Park and The Butts. Mrs John added that she had seen police foot patrols more regularly. The Town Clerk reported that staff in the Public Gardens had regular contact with police foot patrols.

Several councillors expressed concern over the police objection to changes in the licensing hours. Inspector Tipping explained that he was maintaining a consistent policy of objecting to applications for license extensions which were purely for drinking. Licenses should only be granted where drinking was incidental to meals or to music and dancing. Councillor Willoughby felt that social attitudes to drinking needed to change before licensing hours were extended. Inspector Tipping said that he had been pleased with the attitude of the management and staff at Minnesotas who had made considerable effort to regulate behaviour there.

The Inspector announced that Alton had been the first area to bring about a successful prosecution resulting from the use of the mobile CCTV vehicle. Several options for low cost CCTV were being looked at and a small localised bid might meet with success.

The subject of keyworker housing was raised and it was noted that Hampshire Constabulary had not signed up to the new scheme and was one of the few police forces not to. The Town Mayor felt it would be appropriate to write to the Chief Constable asking for an explanation.

One resident was concerned that the public toilets were locked in the evening. Inspector Tipping noted that Petersfield had all night toilets and wondered if there could be a trial in Alton.

Finally the Inspector confirmed that the official contact number for the police was 0845 045 4545. Calls to this number would be prioritised and for *petty* crime that priority might be very low.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending and brought the meeting to a close.

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Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen

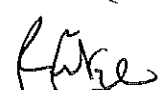
As I approach the end of my term of office as Mayor, I look back at an eventful year and what a year it has been - a year full of new challenges, friendships and good fun. No-one could ever say that the role of Mayor is stuffy and boring. Being Mayor of a town that ranks third nationally as the best at giving to charity and also has the highest percentage of people involved in on-line gambling must make it an interesting place to be.

I have said many times before, that the foundations upon which our town is built are its people and their continuing commitment. I have been privileged to see the work of many organisations at first hand and am constantly humbled by the dedication of the volunteers who tirelessly give of their time. It is fitting that the Alton Town Plan has brought many of these people together and they have successfully highlighted what is important for the Vision for Alton. We look forward to the final draft which we hope will be available this summer.

For our town to flourish it will need to grow; people want to live in Alton and the population continues to rise. We have to accept that there is a need for more housing, but the Town Council, aware of what makes Alton so attractive, have been very proactive opposing over development or unsightly projects that would spoil the nature of our town.

The Town Council itself is a landlord and we would be failing our electorate if our properties and assets were not kept up to standard. They can, and should, represent a source of income for the Council which can then be directed at other projects to benefit the town and its people. The past year has seen the start of several improvements to our properties. The Assembly Rooms should be a jewel in our crown. Internal restructuring will result in a more original use of space as well as providing toilets with disabled access, which public buildings are obliged to have by law, from October this year. These changes should also make the building a more suitable venue for a wider range of functions. This will be important when reviewing community services throughout the town.

Following consultation with local people, the plans for the rebuilding of Finnemore Pavilion have been passed and we hope to start work within 18 months. Alongside these major projects is the ongoing maintenance of all our properties; we want the townspeople of Alton to get good value for their £49 a year.

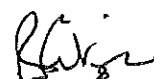
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. White', located in the bottom right corner of the page.

As a town we are blessed with many beautiful open spaces, some of which are set aside for recreation purposes. Our ground-staff are to be congratulated as they keep them to such a high standard; the grass cutting on our properties seldom gives cause for complaint. We have been negotiating with EHDC for the transfer of Flood Meadows to the Town Council and this should be accomplished shortly. We have however, ensured it comes with a 'dowry' so we can continue to maintain it to a high standard. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Alton Society who have worked tirelessly on the upkeep of the paths and watercress beds for many years; we look forward to their continued support.

One of the negative sides to the modern age is vandalism - we as a council have always determined not to give in to it. It would be so easy not to plant new plants after flower beds have been damaged. We have listened to the concerns of our park users and have decided we will no longer tolerate antisocial behaviour on our property. We have therefore employed the services of a security firm who will patrol our open spaces during the summer months starting in early May. We have consulted with Inspector Tipping and other councils and feel that this is the best way forward. We do appreciate all Inspector Tipping has been doing since he came to Alton, especially the introduction of policemen 'on the beat' in the town, but I know, with limited manpower, our policemen cannot be everywhere at once. I am sure he will be able to tell us far more of his future strategies and be willing to answer any questions.

If I were to ask Town Hall staff what problems are most prevalent in a working day it would be complaints about litter, grass cutting and the state of our roads and pavements. I received one such complaint this week by e-mail from Mr Garnet who is concerned about the amount of money needed to repair damaged pavements. Much of this damage could be prevented if motorists parked their cars on the road and not on the pavements. The road traffic plan for Alton was aired last year and we had the opportunity to have our say.

We as a council continue to monitor trouble spots especially one major area in my ward around the new Treloar housing development. We value comments from the public in this respect.



It has been a pleasure to welcome representatives of our new Youth council to meetings. They have been able to shed light on the problems relevant to the young people of Alton and are currently talking to bus companies regarding the provision of evening services and I wish them well in their endeavours. They are the voters of tomorrow.

I have been keeping a diary this year, perhaps if I have time I could write a small book 'My time as Mayor'. It is a delight for me to browse through and recall many happy occasions; events range from ribbon cutting to Brass band concerts, from bonfires to Pancake races.

One of the highlights of my year has to be my visit to our twin town of Montecchio Maggiore. What a welcome they gave us and it was delightful to be able to welcome our Italian friends two weeks ago here in Alton. Many of the Italians had not been to Alton before and it was exciting to see our town through their eyes; it made me realise how lucky we are to live here. I hope the links continue to flourish, particularly those between our schools, a project particularly close to my heart. I look forward to my continued involvement with the Twinning Committee, after all I shall have some free time after May 13th!! and those who know me well, know I like to keep busy!

I owe a big vote of thanks to so many people;


- to my fellow councillors especially my deputy Roger Fitzer. They continue to put Alton first ably supported by the staff at the Town Hall. It is the staff who are often the face of the council for many of the public and they are a great team.

- to my family, particularly my husband John without whose support I would not have managed my busy schedules.

- to my colleagues at Chawton Primary School, particularly my Head teacher, Linda Osborn. It is they, along with the children who have kept me focussed on important issues

- and finally to all the townsfolk of Alton, young and not so young. It has been a privilege to serve you all as your Mayor and an experience I shall never forget as long as I live. Thank you.

Cllr Mrs Pam Jones  
April 2004

  
14/4/2005

