

M I N U T E S
of the
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

held at the Town Hall, Alton on Thursday 2nd April, 1992
at 7 p.m.

Present: Councillor Mrs. J. M. Martin (Town Mayor)

Councillors R. A. Booker
R. Andrews
P. Bicknell
J. M. J. Janes
Mrs. J. L. Mann
P. Mann
P. V. Mendham
W. J. Tuck
P. M. G. Whitmarsh

together with five members of the public

1. Minutes

It was MOVED by Councillor Mrs. Mann, SECONDED by Mr. Edward Jeffares and RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on the 21st March, 1991 which had been circulated at the meeting, be confirmed as a correct record.

The Minutes were then signed by the Town Mayor.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D. G. Grenham and County Councillor A. D. Barron.

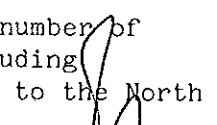
3. Town Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor, Councillor Mrs. Martin, opened the meeting by welcoming her fellow Councillors, Members of the Public and Press, and in particular the two Planning Officers from East Hampshire District Council, Mr. Bob Marshall and Mr. Tony Allen, who had kindly agreed to attend to give a talk on "The Planning System".

The Town Mayor then referred to some of the many items that the Town Council had dealt with during the year.

She referred to the dramatic change in the Town Council following the May 1991 elections when the Town Council had lost four former Town Mayors and had six new members out of a total of 11. All members were now Liberal Democrats.

Planning appeared to cause most interest and comment and a number of large applications had been dealt with throughout the year, including two appeals - one on land at Tanhouse Lane and the other on land to the North of Greenfields Avenue.



The Town Council had been given an opportunity to comment on a number of policy documents from the Basingstoke and North Hants Health Authority, the Hampshire County Council and the East Hampshire District Council.

Sainsbury's development was now well underway and she looked forward to its completion later in the year.

The "battle" to retain the toilets in the Bank Car Park had been lost but an alternative arrangement had been made with the Community Centre, which appeared to be satisfactory.

A Grants policy had been introduced to deal with applications more effectively. Grants were now considered four times a year.

Reports on vandalism were submitted to the Council periodically and all damage was repaired by staff as soon as possible.

Proposals were in hand to introduce dog byelaws on Town Council land and the Town Council continued to encourage sport and recreational facilities.

The Harry Baker Pavilion Extension by the Alton Sports and Social Club was nearing completion and the Town Council had made a grant available.

~~It was hoped that Dr. Hugh Bethell's rehabilitation centre - a scheme to assist heart patients - would be built, together with the Chawton Park Indoor Bowls Club on Town Council land at Chawton Park Road.~~

The Town Mayor said she was delighted that the St. John Ambulance Brigade Headquarters were now complete and would be officially opened by the Princess Royal on 23rd April.

She was honoured that during her year she would have met two members of the Royal Family - Princess Margaret when she visited the Lawns at Holybourne and Princess Ann who was due to open the refurbished C.A.B. and St. John Ambulance Brigade premises.

The skateboard ramp had been moved to Jubilee Playing Fields and she wished the Club many years of use and pleasure from the ramp.

The Town Council had decided on a modest increase in the precept for 1992/93 which she felt was fair in view of the facilities provided.

The Town Council continued to hold monthly surgeries at the Assembly Rooms and two had been held at Beech and Holybourne. In addition a ten minute session was held prior to Council meetings when members of the public could speak.

Finally she thanked County Councillor Barron for attending Town Council Meetings to report on County Council matters.

The Town Mayor concluded her address by inviting Mr. Bob Marshall and Mr. Tony Allen to speak and said members of the public would be invited to ask questions afterwards.

4. "The Planning System"

Mr. Marshall began by stating that Planning was an emotive subject and their job was a difficult one because someone was invariably upset by the decision i.e. the applicant if he did not succeed and the objector if the application was approved.

"Planners" were employed at various levels i.e. the Department of the Environment, the County Council and the District Council.

It was the District Councils who dealt with the day to day applications.

The officer's role was to advise and give guidance and the Councillors made the decisions and that was how the democratic system worked.

45% of applications were dealt with by officers with delegated powers. These included applications such as small extensions and porches etc. If there was an objection to an application then this was considered by the Councillors.

This system was designed to speed up the application process.

He referred to the County Structure Plans which set out broad planning policies for a ten year period and the local plan of the District Council which allocated the areas for specific types of development.

The Local Plans were placed on deposit and it was very important that the views of local people were taken into account.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 was "The Bible" for dealing with planning applications and it was necessary to ensure that all applications complied with this Act. Past decisions on a site were another criteria as well as Government circulars which were regularly received.

If these matters were not taken into account then the District Council could easily lose if the applicant went to appeal.

Consultations took place on applications with the Highway Authority, Environmental Health and Parish and Town Councils.

The Town Council's view was important as it was the view that knew its locality.

Mr. Allen then referred to Alton in particular and said that the future for Alton Town Centre looked very encouraging and a number of changes would take place during the decade.

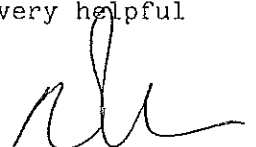
The Local Plan was due to be adopted at the end of 1993 and would be in force until 1996. The principles had been established and this was the plan to which they were working.

The key to the Town Centre was the implementation of the Inner Relief Road which would be in the County Council's 1992/93 programme and should be completed by the end of 1994. This would probably be the single most important development in Alton for some time and would open up more prospects to implement the Traffic Management Plan.

It was not intended that there would be much housing development in Alton in the next few years.

Messrs. Marshall and Allen were then asked various questions including the provision for archaeological investigations on the route of the Inner Relief Road, the period of time that the Local Plan is actually in force and Town Council's comments on applications in the High Street.

The Town Mayor thanked the two Planning Officers very much for attending, for their most interesting and informative talk and for their very helpful answers to the questions.



5. Public Participation

Members of the public from within the electoral area of Alton were then invited to ask questions on matters relating to town affairs.

Mr. Carr asked if consideration could be given to some form of barrier at Cut Pound where there was a wall with a drop of approximately 3 ft. that could be dangerous to children.

He also referred to the state of the pavement outside the Dukes Head.

Mr. Carr wished to congratulate the gardeners for the way the Public Gardens had been kept this year.

The Town Mayor said the matters would be referred to the appropriate authorities, and the staff who tended the Public Gardens.

Councillor Mrs. Mann said she would like to publicly thank the street sweeper known as "Jock" for the cleanliness of the town which was a credit to him.

The Town Mayor agreed that he would be thanked personally.

There being no further questions Councillor Booker, the Deputy Town Mayor proposed a vote of thanks to the Town Mayor for the way she had chaired the meeting and to his fellow Councillors and colleagues and the public for attending.

The Town Mayor then declared the meeting closed.



Town Mayor.

22 APRIL 1993