

M I N U T E S

of the
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

held at the Town Hall, Alton on Thursday 29th March, 1990
at 7 p.m.

Present: Councillor E. Jeffares (Town Mayor)

Councillors R. A. Booker
Mrs. J. M. Martin
P. V. Mendham
G. P. Rushton
G. R. Slone
C. O. G. Smith

together with approximately 22 members of the public.

95. Minutes

It was MOVED by Councillor Booker, SECONDED by Councillor Mrs. Martin and RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on the 30th March, 1989 which had been circulated at the meeting be confirmed as a correct record.

The Minutes were then signed by the Town Mayor.

96. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Crocker and P. Mann.

97. Town Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor, Councillor Jeffares, opened the meeting by welcoming members of the public, Councillors and Mr. Bradley Roynon, the Chief Executive of the East Hampshire District Council who would later be giving a talk entitled "The Way Ahead".

He also welcomed Mr. Peter Fraser, the newly appointed Town Clerk who had taken over from Mr. Kimble in June of last year.

This was the first time the Town Meeting had been held in the Town Hall and he hoped everyone would appreciate the opportunity to visit such a pleasant building.

The Town Mayor then referred to a number of matters which had been dealt with by the Town Council during the past year.

Many people were confused by the tiers of local government and which authority was responsible for any particular matter.

The Town Council had made strong representations to the District Council on the East Hampshire Local Plan and to the Department of the Environment on the Mid Hampshire Structure Plan. More recently comments had been formulated and passed to the County Council on Traffic Management proposals for Alton.

He was pleased to report that the widening of Whitedown Lane had now been deleted from the County Council's programme and the Town Council would continue to press for the early completion of the Inner Relief Road and the Western Bypass.

The completion of Westbrook Walk complemented and enhanced the Market Square and was a great asset to the town.

The Town Council was concerned regarding the increased car parking charges as they felt people should be encouraged to come to Alton for shopping and business purposes. If the charges were too high this would be to the detriment of local businesses.

Sports facilities in Alton were second to none for a town the size of Alton and this was due in no small way to the hard work and efficiency of Mr. Fred James, the Head Groundsman, who would be retiring in June.

The Town Mayor wished him well in his retirement.

New play equipment had been donated by Alton Round Table in the Public Gardens and a safety surface provided by the Town Council. It was hoped to make a start on providing safety surfaces in Anstey Park later this year.

A facility had now been provided for the skateboard enthusiasts on land adjacent to the Sports Centre and the Town Council would be assisting them financially for the provision of ramps etc.

Grants had been allocated to many organisations during the year, the largest being the Community Centre Triangle Project.

Vandalism and litter continued to be a problem and the Town Council does its best to deal with the situation.

Work had commenced on the rethatching of the Bandstand roof which was burnt down on the night of the Children in Need Appeal.

The Town Council was concerned about the environment and was taking action by conserving energy wherever possible, the use of unleaded petrol in its plant and machinery and the planting of trees.

The Council was grateful for the liaison which took place with the County Councillor for Alton - Tony Barron - who attended Town Council meetings.

He regretted it had been necessary to increase the Town Council's precept this year but felt that with the assistance of a small and loyal staff the ratepayers were getting value for money.

Councillors' surgeries continued to be held monthly in the Assembly Rooms and these were advertised in the press.

The Town Mayor then invited Mr. Bradley Roynon to speak.

98. Mr. Bradley Roynon - "The Way Ahead"

Mr. Bradley Roynon gave a most interesting talk on the future of local government and in particular referred to the East Hampshire District Council.

He outlined details of the restructuring which was taking place including a reduction in the number of departments and Council Committees. This streamlining was designed to make the Council more efficient and give a better service to its "customers".

Many changes were taking place in the management of local government in that Councils now had to be competitive in the running of their services and accountable to the public.

Mr. Roynon illustrated his talk with slides which outlined some of the objectives of the District Council and listed a number of schemes which were planned to be carried out in the District during the next few years.

Arrangements were in hand for mobile teams to visit various areas throughout the District which he hoped would have the effect of making the Council less remote.

Mr. Roynon concluded his talk by inviting members of the public to ask questions.

Mrs. Harckham said she felt the District Council was "Government by remote control" and wondered whether they were planning any facilities for Poll Tax queries.

Mr. Roynon said that the Local Presence Office was very dear to his heart and there were plans to revamp the office with a new information service linked with the Tourist Office.

A Community Charge help line had been set up regarding the Poll Tax.

The District Council intended to have a programme of meetings with Parish Councils and other groups if requested. The Public Relations Officer would be working on this exercise.

Miss Canham asked if the dustbin collection dates could be printed in the new District Council's magazine and Mr. Roynon said he thought they could.

Mr. Armitage asked whether the District Council had any jurisdiction over food stores in the town and Mr. Roynon said they did not, but nevertheless consultations were taking place.

They were vigorously enforcing a policy of no out of town shopping centres to encourage town centre shopping.

Mrs. Mann enquired as to when wheely bins would be introduced in Alton and Mr. Roynon's reply was in 1991.

Mrs. Self commented that she thought the shops were better in Petersfield and asked why Alton had such high parking charges, whereas Bordon paid nothing.

Mr. Roynon said that car parks must break even according to government legislation and it had been necessary to increase charges this year.

Mrs. Harckham asked whether representations could be made to the Mid Southern Water Company regarding the increase in charges and the Town Mayor said the Town Council would write a letter asking for an explanation.

The Town Mayor then thanked Mr. Roynon for his time in attending the meeting and for explaining his ideas in such an interesting way.

The Town Mayor then opened the meeting for questions of a more general nature on town affairs.

Mrs. Mann reminded everyone that National Spring Clean Day would be held on Saturday 31st March, 1990.

Mr. Davis enquired about the poor state of the footpath which ran from Orchard Lane to Kings Pond behind the Bass Brewery and County Councillor Barron assured him that the matter was in hand.

Mr. Carr wished to thank the Town Council for looking after the town and thought Alton was getting better as the years went by. He was pleased to see the Industrial Estate sign had been returned to the Gateway junction but suggested it was in the wrong position.

He said the railings had been removed from the river bank by the Army and Navy Stores which was dangerous as there was a considerable drop at that point.

He referred to problems by the Watercress beds and the footpath at Flood Meadow.

The "Stop" sign in Kings Road was broken.

County Councillor Barron said the Industrial Estate sign at the Gateway junction would be resited shortly.

Members of the Alton Society who were present confirmed that work was being carried out by them at Flood Meadow and the points made by Mr. Carr would be dealt with as soon as possible.

Miss Canham enquired about the poor condition of the road and footpath in Cross and Pillory Lane and the Town Mayor said it was intended to repave the road in the same manner as the Market Square.

This was the responsibility of the District Council but he was unable to say when the work would be carried out.

Mr. Armitage enquired whether sponsorship of litter bins had been considered and the Town Mayor said this would be referred to the District Council.

Mr. Armitage also referred to the gas lamp at the top of Kings Road which required attention which was also the responsibility of the District Council.

Mrs. Harckham asked if the Council would press for the link road from the Selborne Road to be constructed as soon as possible.

There being no further questions the Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending.

Councillor Slone said it gave him great pleasure to propose a vote of thanks to the Town Mayor for the way he had conducted the meeting, whereupon the Town Mayor declared the meeting closed.

Phann.

Town Mayor.

21 MARCH 1991