

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

held at the Assembly Rooms, Alton on Thursday 30th March, 1989
at 7 p.m.

- Present: Councillor G. R. Slone (Town Mayor)
- Councillors E. Jeffares
 Mrs. J. M. Barrett
 R. A. Booker
 D. Crocker
 P. Mann
 Mrs. J. M. Martin
 P. V. Mendham
 G. P. Rushton
 W. J. Tuck
-

together with approximately 25 members of the public.

91. Minutes

It was MOVED by Mr. R. Carr, SECONDED by Mrs. C. Harckham and RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on the 24th March, 1988 which had been circulated at the meeting be confirmed as a correct record.

The Minutes were then signed by the Town Mayor.

92. Apology

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C. O. G. Smith.

93. Town Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor opened the meeting by welcoming members of the public, Councillors and Mr. Barry Palmer, the Treasurer of the East Hampshire District Council who was present to give a talk on the Community Charge.

He then referred to some of the achievements of the past year and plans for the future of the Town Council.

He particularly mentioned the many sporting activities which were growing from strength to strength throughout the town and the demand on the Town Council for further facilities.

Plans for the future included an extension of the Finnimore Pavilion, skateboarding facilities, the use of the swimming pool site, playground equipment together with safer surfaces.

The Town Council had been proud to receive the John Ambrose Award for the restoration of the Town Hall and was pleased to see the three shops in the Town Hall now occupied and the Market Square pedestrianisation scheme completed.

The Town Council had made many comments on the draft East Hampshire Local Plan and had reiterated their view regarding the Western Bypass that the only long term solution for Alton's traffic problems lay in the provision of an outer route and not the widening of Whitedown Lane.

Planning applications for the Flood Meadow area and Bass Sports Ground had been strongly opposed by the Town Council. The Town Council was pleased to see both these schemes had been refused at District level; the Flood Meadow application having been dismissed on appeal.

A new library had been the subject of many deliberations throughout the year and the Town Council had a number of reservations about the development. Planning decisions on the current applications were still awaited.

It had been decided not to increase the rate precept for 1989/90 but he felt sure that if it was found necessary to increase the rate in the future to properly maintain or improve the excellent facilities in the town that an increase would be accepted as value for money.

The Town Mayor referred to the death of Councillor Maurice Walker and local historian Charles Hawkins both of whom would be sadly missed.

He then referred to the retirement of the Town Clerk - Mr. Allan Kimble - which would take place on the 25th June, 1989 after five years' service. Mr. Kimble had steered the Council through a number of important decisions, the most notable of which was probably the restoration of the Town Hall.

The Town Mayor wished him well in his retirement.

The Town Mayor then invited members of the public to ask questions on town affairs.

94. Public Participation

Mr. Gowman enquired as to the latest position regarding the library site and County Councillor Barron stated that the principle of the "land swap" had been agreed by the County Council but this depended on planning permission being granted for the existing library site and the bus depot site. A further option would be the sale of another site in town which was owned by the County Council, and would finance the scheme.

Mrs. Schofield stated that the main town centre was an eyesore with many sites still not developed, and empty shops.

Councillor Booker said as far as the Town Council was concerned they had encouraged "start-up" business for retail use such as those in the Town Hall and made representations to the District Council to keep a balance of retail shops in the town centre. He criticised the landlords in the town for delaying development of a number of sites.

Mr. Tony Cross enquired about the press report regarding Mid Southern Water Company's statement that the water rate would have to be increased due to their failure to obtain planning permission for the Flood Meadow site.

Councillor Mann suggested the reason for this announcement was they had taken exception to losing the appeal. He also referred to the application which had appeared in the press applying to extract a further 10 per cent of water from the River Wey and he hoped the Town Council would make representations.

The Town Clerk suggested that members of the public should object as individuals to Thames Water and let the Town Council know of their objections.

A discussion took place on the state of the River Wey in Alton with various theories being put forward as to the cause of the problem.

Mr. Carr referred to the playground equipment in the Public Gardens which in his view required attention and the fact that youths on skateboards were using the footpaths causing a hazard to pedestrians. He also suggested that a couple of litter bins should be placed close to the bandstand. Windows had been smashed in the public toilets in the Lady Place Car Park and he suggested protective bars could be provided in front of the windows.

Mr. Carr also noted that a street lamp on the Town Hall had been damaged, part of the railings in the Market Square were missing and a grille in the paving of the Market Square broken.

There was still no sign at the Gateway junction indicating the Industrial Estate which was misleading for drivers and its reinstatement might prevent at least some heavy vehicles driving through the town centre.

Mr. Carr suggested that the Cairn and the area around could be improved and a plaque provided to commemorate the service to the town of Mr. W. Bradly Trimmer and his father Mr. W. Trimmer from 1860 to 1944.

The Town Clerk explained that the see-saw had been dismantled in the Public Gardens as it was unsafe, new chains for the swings were on order and the items which had been damaged in the Market Square were being dealt with by the District Council. The Town Hall lamp was the subject of an insurance claim.

Mrs. Harekham said she felt the present site for the Library was ideal and she did not favour a new Library adorned with old people's accommodation.

Mr. Genender thanked the Town Council for the prompt action taken in having the travellers removed from the land at Chawton Park Road last autumn and said he felt this area should be left as an informal open space where people could take their dogs for walks.

Mr. Gowman asked if busking could be allowed in the Market Square so that groups could visit and play music and liven the area up.

He also asked if various pavements in the town which had been tarmaced could be reinstated with paving slabs as this did not appear to be followed up.

The Town Clerk pointed out that the Market Square was the responsibility of East Hampshire District Council and pavements the responsibility of the Hampshire County Council.

The Town Mayor then brought the question time to an end and introduced Mr. Barry Palmer.

Mr. Palmer thanked the Town Mayor for the opportunity to give a talk to the Council and members of the public on the Community Charge which he explained would come into effect from the 1st April, 1990.

Mr. Palmer gave a lively and interesting talk on the details of the proposal and invited questions from members of the public.

A number of questions were raised which were dealt with by Mr. Palmer.

The Town Mayor, in conclusion thanked Mr. Palmer for his humorous and informative talk which he felt everyone had very much enjoyed.

Councillor Jeffares said it was his privilege to thank the Town Mayor for the manner in which he had conducted the meeting, whereupon the Town Mayor declared the meeting closed.

Town Mayor.

29th March, 1990



