

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

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held at the Assembly Rooms, Alton on Thursday 12th  
April, 1984 at 7 p.m.

Present: Councillor G. D. Stratford (Town Mayor)  
Councillors C. O. G. Smith (Deputy Town Mayor)  
Mrs. A. Bartlett  
Miss P. J. Bradford  
R. A. Booker  
A. H. Bushnell  
J. H. Cleaver  
D. Crocker  
G. R. Slone  
D. E. Townsend-Rose  
W. J. Tuck

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together with approximately 25 members of the public.

73. Minutes

It was MOVED by Councillor Townsend-Rose, SECONDED by Mrs. C. Harckham and RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on the 24th March, 1983 which were read to the meeting, be confirmed as a correct record.

The Minutes were then signed by the Town Mayor.

74. Town Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor welcomed those present and said there had been a lot of internal problems within the Town Council during the past year.

Elections had been held since the last meeting and no less than five new Councillors out of eleven were elected last Spring.

He welcomed those new Councillors to their first Town Meeting.

The late Town Clerk, Ewart Ings, unfortunately passed away in June and this had left a vacuum in-so-far-as there was no Town Clerk until late September, and then the appointment of Donald Boulton had not proved satisfactory. He had therefore been dismissed in March.

This had put a considerable strain on Councillors and Staff and the Town Mayor expressed his gratitude, in particular for the continued loyalty and support of the Staff.

He also thanked Councillors Booker and Townsend-Rose for their recent support whilst he and the Deputy Town Mayor had been away.

He hoped the Council could now look forward to a better future.

Reflecting over the past year he felt there were many things to be satisfied about in Alton. Firstly the High Street had been resurfaced and part of the paving made good.

There were several new buildings such as Cross and Pillory House, Inwood Court and Fielders Court. The tidying up of Normandy Street was progressing and he felt generally the town was showing signs of improvement.

*66*

He was hopeful that Alton would be an even more attractive town in the future.

He referred to the closure of The Butts to traffic which the Town Council had opposed. They were in direct conflict with the County Council and indeed their own local County Councillor on this issue. The Butts was being damaged by cars turning on its surface.

The solution would appear to be a turning area but as the Butts surface was in the Town Council's view sacrosanct, he felt the County Council would have to find some other means of forming a hammer head junction.

The most horrifying local news was the fact that the main Aldershot to Winchester bus service was being diverted along Northfield Lane, albeit for a trial period. This was in his view a hairbrained scheme which would be a real traffic hazard. Too many people used this road as a shortcut and to have double decker buses using the route would be the final straw.

He had personally tried to create some interest in the Watercress Line and especially the development around Alton Railway Station, so that the projected influx of visitors to Alton could be catered for.

Little progress had been made on this suggestion and he promised to use his endeavours to get the project under way.

He would be very pleased when the Watercress Line was open all the way from Alresford to Alton.

The Town Council would shortly be completing the purchase of the Town Hall.

The playing fields looked extremely well and he expressed on behalf of the Council and the townspeople of Alton, their gratitude to the staff for maintaining these areas so well.

He felt Alton had every reason to be proud of its facilities.

One of the groundsmen, Mr. Olly Olson, would be retiring in May and the Head Groundsman was away sick.

He hoped that the public would bear with the Council during this difficult period.

On the financial side the Council had managed to keep the town rate at the same level as the previous year.

Finally he mentioned the Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital which was still the subject of controversy.

He hoped the Council would do everything they could to ensure that it was kept open.

The Town Mayor concluded his address by inviting members of the public who were local government electors from within the district of Alton to ask any questions on town affairs.

## 75. Public Participation

Mrs. Harekham stressed the bad condition of many of the pavements in Alton and said that she personally had tripped and injured herself. She referred to Kings Road, Church Street and Market Street in particular.

She then mentioned the pedestrianisation of the Market Square and wondered what would happen regarding parking. Parking spaces were shrinking for many reasons in the town centre, and she felt it was important that the Town Council kept an eye on this!

She said that the Vicarage Hill site was still a disgrace, it was a health hazard as it was used as a rubbish tip. It was sad to see such an eyesore in the middle of the town.

She felt the same applied to the Crown Hill site.

The Town Mayor said the Market Square scheme was the responsibility of the District Council. It depended very much on a lot of co-operation and he felt there were many objections regarding the loss of parking spaces.

He agreed that parking was shrinking throughout the town and it was very convenient to stop in the Market Square for a few minutes.

The Town Mayor did not think the Market Square was ready for pedestrianisation as there was not sufficient going on in the Square.

As far as the Vicarage Hill site was concerned, planning applications had been submitted but had been refused; as had the Crown Hill site.

Regarding the pavements throughout the town, the Divisional Surveyor anticipated that they would be completed this year.

One of the problems was that the commercial offices and shops were having their water metered which necessitated taking up the newly laid paving slabs outside individual properties.

Mr. Thomas thought it would help if parking in the Market Square were restricted to a short time as he felt it was used by certain people working in the town who parked there all day. This proposal would help the shopper.

The Town Mayor explained that this would be difficult as the ownership of the Square had been in doubt for many years.

Mrs. Hareldham asked what would happen about the Market if the Square was pedestrianised and Councillor Townsend-Rose assured her there was no question of losing the Market.

Mr. Wilson then referred to the proposed bus route diversion along Chawton Park Road and asked what could be done to stop it.

The Town Mayor explained that it was due to start on the 29th April for a trial period of three months, but that it did depend on the Town Council agreeing to dedicate part of their land at the Jubilee Playing Fields for sightline improvements.

Mrs. West said she had opposed very firmly the route of bus 214 being diverted along Chawton Park Road and that it was not going ahead on the 29th April. It was being referred back for further negotiations, due to the fact that the Town Council had not agreed to dedicate the land.

Mrs. West said she had opposed the scheme on safety grounds.

She felt that what was needed was a mini-bus from the Health Centre to the hospital and back which could possibly pick up those visiting the Sports Centre if necessary.

Mr. Wilson referred to the petition which had recently been signed by residents in Whitedown Lane and Chawton Park Road pressing for the Northfield Lane link and he said they feared if buses were directed along that road, there would be pressure to widen Chawton Park Road and not to construct the Northfield Lane link.

They feared that what had originally been a quiet residential area could well become the main road; he felt that the construction of the Northfield Lane link would be postponed because traffic could escape via Chawton Park Road.

The queue of vehicles which built up in Whitedown Lane encouraged the public to use Chawton Park Road.

The Town Mayor said that the Town Council agreed wholeheartedly with the comments made and these views had been put most strongly to the County Council.

Mrs. West assured the meeting that nothing would jeopardise the introduction of the Northfield Lane link. She was pressing for its construction at the earliest possible time.

Councillor Crocker said he could not imagine anyone in their right mind deciding to divert buses along this route.

He asked if the Town Council had written to the County Council refusing to dedicate the land at the Jubilee Playing Fields and the Town Mayor gave an assurance that they had.

Mr. Earle said he had carried out his own personal survey of traffic and apart from a large number of cars, lorries were also using the route.

He foresaw a number of problems if buses were also diverted along Chawton Park Road. He was also concerned that the village of Chawton would no longer have a convenient bus service, and it would mean passengers having to cross the roundabout and dual carriageway to catch the bus.

Mr. Earle felt it had been very wrong to close The Butts to traffic.

Councillor Cleaver asked if Mrs. West would give the meeting an assurance that the trial period for buses being diverted along Chawton Park Road had been abandoned.

Mrs. West said it would not go ahead if the Town Council did not agree to dedicate the land at the Jubilee Playing Fields.

Councillor Townsend-Rose said that the first time the Town Council knew of the proposal was a phone call from the Divisional Surveyor's office asking for a site meeting at the Jubilee Playing Fields.

Councillor Booker suggested that if residents witnessed lorries using Chawton Park Road illegally that they took the registration numbers and reported them to the police.

Mr. Earle thought the 30 m.p.h. speed limit was in the wrong position in Chawton Park Road and it might help to move it nearer to Treloar's.

Councillor Booker agreed it would be worth asking the County Council to consider moving the sign.

Mr. Genender expressed his sympathy with the Town Council's recent problems and thanked them for holding the Saturday morning Surgeries which he felt were welcomed.

Mr. Genender agreed that a lot of improvements had been carried out in the town recently but the quality of life for those who lived in the Whitedown Lane/Chawton Park Road area was somewhat reduced and they were not able to appreciate the improvements made elsewhere.

He asked if Mrs. West knew whether there were any dates scheduled in the construction of the Northfield Lane link, which he felt was the only long term solution.

Mrs. West said they were hoping to go out to public consultation on the various options later in the year and she wanted to get it into the programme as early as possible.

*Earle*

Mrs. West was also concerned about the improvements to Borovere Lane which would add more traffic on to The Butts Bridge.

The Town Mayor reiterated that the Town Council was fully aware of the problems and were unanimous in their endeavours to press for the Northfield Lane link.

He said that those who had been in the town for many years had been pressing for the Northfield Lane link even before the bypass was built.

Councillor Townsend-Rose said that the District Council was entirely in agreement with the Town Council on this issue.

The Town Mayor said he only hoped that it would happen in his lifetime.

Mrs. Fletcher asked what the attitude of the Town Council was to the closure of The Butts road to traffic and the Town Mayor replied that they were against it.

Mr. Earle wondered whether it was realised that ambulances and fire engines were often held up in Whitdown Lane and the Town Mayor thought this was a very good point to bear in mind.

Mr. Earle referred to the kerbstones which had been installed by the County Council opposite the French Horn and said they were already breaking up due to heavy lorries.

The Town Mayor promised that this would be investigated.

Mr. Gostelow referred to a hedge overhanging at the top of Youngs Road and the Town Mayor promised to investigate.

Mr. Thomas suggested one solution might be to allow buses and ambulances only to go along The Butts and the Town Mayor thought this might be a possibility.

Councillor Crocker said a similar suggestion had been made regarding Chawton Park Road.

Mr. Carr felt that the resurfacing of the High Street was a big improvement, together with the pavements, the rerouting of traffic from Ackender Road had satisfied the residents, but he was sorry to say there was still no sign on Ackender Road and no sign directing Treloar's Hospital.

He also felt there was a problem for pedestrians crossing the road at Key Markets.

He felt the Market Square was a public monument and should not be disturbed, and that the Cairn and the Assembly Rooms Square should be tidied up. He would like to see flowers growing between the stones of the Cairn, as when it had been designed he understood it was meant to represent a heap of stones in a field in Flanders.

Mrs. Harekhan thought the cherry tree in the Assembly Rooms Square should be pruned.

Mr. Carr said it would be better to concentrate on enhancing the Assembly Rooms Square rather than the Market Square. The Market Square was a business area and in his opinion not suitable for planting out etc.

The Town Mayor said the question of improving the Assembly Rooms Square would be considered.

The Town Mayor agreed that Alton was badly signed and the Town Council would try to bring pressure to bear on the responsible authority.

The Town Mayor was asked to elaborate on his opening remarks regarding the Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital and he said he understood that Southampton Hospital were withdrawing their orthopaedic patients from Alton, as was Winchester, which would leave only Basingstoke as a catchment area.

Councillor Cleaver agreed that this was so, but said that plans for the Community Hospital on the site were underway and that Treloar's would expand in the near future rather than close.

Mrs. West asked if something could be done about the railings in the Lady Place Car Park in front of the Sherfield Developments site and the Town Mayor promised to investigate.

Mrs. West also said she would appreciate support from the Town Council regarding the early construction of the remainder of the Town Centre Relief Road.

The Town Mayor agreed the Town Council would give full support.

There being no further questions, the Town Mayor, in bringing the meeting to a close, said it had been an illuminating discussion and he thanked the members of the public for stating their views in such a constructive manner.

Councillor Smith then proposed a vote of thanks, which was endorsed by Councillor Cleaver, for the excellent manner in which the Town Mayor had conducted the meeting and for the way he had discharged his duties as Town Mayor during the past year.



Town Mayor.

28th March, 1985