

M I N U T E S

of the

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

held at the Assembly Rooms, Alton on Thursday 26th March, 1981
at
7 p.m.

Present: Councillor J. D. Mitton (Town Mayor)

Councillors Mrs. A. Bartlett
J. H. Cleaver
Mrs. V. A. Lane
G. R. Slone
C. O. G. Smith
G. D. Stratford

together with approximately 14 members of the public.

61. Minutes

It was MOVED by Councillor Smith, SECONDED by Councillor Cleaver and RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on the 27th March, 1980 which were read to the meeting by the Town Clerk, be confirmed as a correct record.

The Minutes were then signed by the Town Mayor.

62. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. R. Crockett, P. G. Mancini, A. P. Mosely and B. E. Perschky.

63. Town Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor welcomed those present and explained the requirement and purpose of the Annual Town Meeting.

He said that whilst no decisions would be taken at the meeting, any comments would be carefully considered by the Council at its next meeting.

The Town Mayor stated that once again it had been possible to keep the rate precept the same.

This was the good news. The bad news was that some charges for services had been increased by as much as twenty-five per cent.

Since the last meeting the hard surfaced area at Chawton Park Road had come into use and was very popular. The cost of construction had been shared by the Town Council and the District Council.

Consideration had been given to the leasing of the Assembly Rooms to an outside body to try and reduce the rate burden, but after taking note of public opinion it had been decided to keep the building under the control of the Council.

The private Squash and Snooker Club at Anstey Park was now open and would make a contribution to the Council's income.

The open air swimming pool remained a difficult problem and the Council was looking into ways of keeping it open but he was not too optimistic about its future.

There had been a considerable improvement in the condition of Kings Pond and an extensive tree felling and lopping exercise had been carried out on The Butts.

The Town Mayor paid tribute to Mr. Ralph Dutton the Lord of the Manor of Westbrooke who would be handing over the Deeds for The Butts and the Lordship of the Manor the following day.

The Mid Hampshire Structure Plan had now been confirmed by the Department of the Environment, and the Alton Area District Plan's Amended Draft would soon be on deposit for further comment from the public and the Town Council.

The Council had lost its appeal for advertisements on illuminate bus shelters but a new application had been made which he hoped would be more successful.

The Windmill Hill development had commenced despite representation from the Town Council that it should not do so until the road system had been improved.

The Town Council had appealed against the decision of the District Council to refuse permission for residential development on the Borough Allotments.

The Town Council had felt justified in making this application in view of the planning permissions that have been granted on the two sites opposite The Butts and because the Council had a duty to its ratepayers to make the most of its assets.

The Centenary of the Assembly Rooms had been marked in October by modest celebrations including an Old Tyme Music Hall Evening that had been very popular.

The best news for the town had been the decision of the Minister of Health to allow the Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital to remain open.

The Town Mayor concluded his address by thanking fellow Council and Staff for the support he had received during the year and he then invited any elector present to comment on any aspect of the town's affairs they felt to be significant.

64. Public Participation

Miss Hayter referred to the Town Mayor's observation that the local rate had not been increased and the Town Clerk explained that it was the rate precept that had been kept the same.

Mrs. Harckham expressed concern at Market Street being two-way and felt one-way was preferable.

The Town Mayor said the Council feared the speed of traffic would increase if it were one-way and more vehicles would use the Lady Place Car Park as an alternative route.

Mrs. Harckham thought the amount of heavy traffic through the town was getting worse and the Town Mayor agreed; he felt the solution still lay in the construction of the inner relief road and possibly the Northfield Link.

Mr. Lockyer regretted that the original proposal to make Market Street a pedestrian area had been abandoned.

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Mrs. Harekham asked if the Council saw every planning application for Alton and the Town Mayor confirmed this was so, but agreed it was inconvenient the plans were not made available in Alton.

Mrs. Harekham regretted the remoteness of Petersfield as the administrative centre and felt that as a town Petersfield was treated more favourably by the District Council than Alton.

The public present signified their agreement with this observation.

Mr. Gostelow referred to the decision of the Council to increase allotment rents from April 1982 and made a plea on behalf of old aged pensioners on Spitalfields that they be granted a concession as only about half a dozen were involved.

Miss Hayter expressed the fear that the Council might be pricing itself out of the allotment market.

Mr. Lockyer expressed concern at the scale of development at the rear of 104 High Street and regretted the loss of part of the Public Gardens in providing an access and he hoped the Council would be vigilant in seeing that further land was not taken to widen this access at a later date.

The Town Mayor said the point had been taken to the extent that although the Planning Authority had suggested the Council disposed of further Public Gardens land to assist the developer of the site in Cross and Pillory Lane, the suggestion had been rejected by the Town Council.

Councillor Smith referred to the remarks of the Town Mayor in his address concerning the open air swimming pool and he feared the impression may have been gained that there was little possibility of the pool opening this summer, whereas in fact the matter was still under consideration by the Committee of Management.

His personal belief was that the pool could be open and if the weather were good the loss might not be too great.

The Town Clerk referred to the decision of the Council to keep the precept for the ensuing year the same and that it was a fact the longer the pool was open the greater the loss.

He agreed that the Committee of Management was being invited to consider the possible leasing of the pool to a private individual or company.

Mr. Fletcher said he would support a proposal that the pool be kept open by marginally increasing the Town Rate and this was also the view of the Alton and District Sports Council.

The Town Clerk pointed out that it would not be a question of a marginal increase in the Town Rate if the considerable capital works recommended to the Committee of Management were accepted.

Mr. Fletcher felt in regard to the development at the rear of 104 High Street that it should be an essential requirement that people who profit by building should ensure the ugliness is removed, in this case if necessary by having a roof garden.

Mrs. Harekham regretted the absence of Civic Pride as evidenced by various neglected sites.

Mr. Fletcher agreed and hoped it was not too late for Alton to have some tasteful development.

There being no other questions or comments the Town Mayor brought the meeting to a close and once again expressed his appreciation to those who had attended.

Councillor Cecil Smith proposed a vote of thanks to the Town Mayo for the fair way in which he had conducted the meeting.



Town Mayor.

1st April, 1982