

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

held at the Assembly Rooms, Alton on Thursday 27th March,
1980 at 7 p.m.

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

Councillors Mrs. A. Bartlett
J. H. Cleaver
Mrs. V. A. Lane
P. G. Mancini
B. E. Perschky
G. R. Slone
C. O. G. Smith

Together with approximately 30 members of the public.

57. Minutes

It was MOVED by Councillor Smith, SECONDED by Councillor Cleaver and RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on the 29th March, 1979 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.

58. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. R. Crockett, A. P. Mosely, and G. D. Stratford.

59. Town Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor first welcomed those present and explained that the Annual Town Meeting had to be held by Town and Parish Councils under the Local Government Act of 1972 and it afforded a unique opportunity to all electors from within the town to comment on town affairs.

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 continued by stating that in his opinion the most significant thing that had happened since the last Annual Town Meeting was the decision of the Town Council to keep the rate precept for 1980/81 the same as for 1979/80 in spite of inflation that was approaching 20 per cent.

This did not mean the Council had a surplus of funds - far from it.

What it did mean was that there would have to be reduced services and higher charges all round but the Council felt it was only fair that the people who used the facilities should be the ones who paid.

The Town Mayor continued by explaining the Council's attitude towards the open air swimming pool and welcomed the opening of the Jubilee Playing Fields at Chawton Park Road, though he regretted the Town Council had lost the opening cricket match arranged against the Alton Cricket Club.

The largest item of capital expenditure during the year was the provision of the hard surfaced play area adjoining the Sports Centre which was a joint venture between the town and the District Council and would shortly come into use.

In April a Public Enquiry had been held into the Mid Hampshire Structure Plan but no decision had yet been published.

During the year the Alton Area District Plan had been published as a consultative document on which the Town Council had made some 54 observations to which hopefully the District Council would give some heed.

The Town Mayor also stated the Council's views on the proposed development at the Butts and on the erection of bus shelters in the High Street.

He regretted that the traffic situation in the town continued to deteriorate and emphasised that the construction of that section of the inner relief road from Turk Street to the High Street near the new Keymarkets had become urgent.

He concluded by thanking fellow Councillors and the staff for the support he had received during the past year and invited any elector present to comment on any aspect of the town's affairs they felt to be significant.

60. Public Participation

Mrs. Harckham regretted that at the last meeting there had been criticism of the following on which little action had been taken:-

- (a) No street signs in Princess Drive;
- (b) Continued access to Barten End from Lenten Street, and
- (c) Heavy traffic through the town.

The Town Mayor explained that none of these points were the responsibility of the Town Council but representations had been made on all three to the appropriate authorities.

He repeated his undertaking that all comments would be considered by the Town Council at its next meeting.

Mrs. Roberts enquired if the Council intended to lease the Assembly Rooms as had been suggested.

The Town Mayor said no decision had yet been taken by the Council but his personal view was that the Assembly Rooms should remain under the Town Council's control.

The Town Clerk said he intended reporting to the Town Council at its next meeting but any indication from those present as to the possible leasing of the Assembly Rooms would be helpful.

Mr. Jackson wondered if figures could be given of the running costs of the Assembly Rooms and the Town Clerk supplied the information, pointing out that over the past five years there had been considerable improvements to the Assembly Rooms which were now in a better state than they had been for many years.

This expenditure had of course reflected itself in the accounts over the years.

Councillor Smith felt further improvements to the Assembly Rooms should be carried out including the provision of a bar which would help attract both large functions and conferences, but until further improvements had been made, the premises would not be viable.



The Town Mayor said this had always been his view and they were preaching to the converted.

The subsequent discussion revealed that most persons present favoured the retention of the Assembly Rooms under the Town Council's control.

Mr. Colin Roale the Chairman of the Alton Operatic and Dramatic Society questioned the possible leasing of the Assembly Rooms and asked for organisations such as his Society to be advised at an early date of any developments as they did arrange productions a long time ahead and had to make the necessary bookings.

The Town Mayor promised that this would be done.

Mr. Gostelow recalled that at the last Annual Town Meeting he had queried the state of the footpath at the rear of Alexandra Road and that the Town Clerk had promised to pass on the complaint to either the County Council or the District Council, but there had been no improvement.

In reply the Town Clerk said footpaths were not the responsibility of the Town Council but it might be willing to assist by improving the surface of that part of the footpath most heavily used.

Councillor Slone recalled that when he was a member of the District Council he too had made representations about the condition of this footpath and had met representatives on the site.

Tenants in the vicinity had offered to carry out the work themselves if the District Council had supplied the materials but the Council had not been willing to do so.

Mr. Gwyther regretted that the cost of hiring a football pitch for youth teams of under ten was the same as for adult teams which he felt was unfair as they played for a shorter time and caused less wear and tear on the pitches.

The Town Clerk explained that this matter had been carefully considered during the past year following representations by Councillor Slone; nevertheless he would see the matter was considered again.

Mr. Gostelow was once again very concerned that action was not taken against allotment holders who did not commence cultivation soon after the beginning of the allotment year on the 1st April.

As it was only five days away the Town Clerk speculated as to whether many allotments had yet been prepared, but he did undertake to write to all allotment holders when sending out the invoices in a day or two's time pointing out the need for all allotments to be cultivated to a high standard.

Mrs. Harckham congratulated the Council on the appearance of the Public Gardens and the open area at the foot of Amery Hill.

Mrs. Harckham also enquired if it was true that squash courts were to be provided at Anstey Park as she felt there was considerable development already with the Alton Football Club and the Rugby Club. There had also been mention of the Scouts having premises.

The Town Mayor confirmed that the Town Council had agreed to the leasing of land at Anstey Park for the provision of a private squash club.

The Council also hoped to assist the 8th Alton Scouts.

It was his opinion that despite the number of squash courts at the Sports Centre that there was still a shortage which he felt would be overcome by the proposed squash courts at Anstey Park, which he expected would be profitable to the Town Council and help to keep the rates down.

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The Town Clerk explained the Council's proposals regarding the development of the extension with the provision of a driveway and possible further changing accommodation on the extension.

It might also be possible to provide a site for the 8th Alton Scouts

Mrs. Harekham expressed concern that the private squash club would have a licensed bar and there was an interesting exchange between Mrs. Harekham and the Town Mayor on the number of licensed premises in Alton and how the number had varied over the past twenty years.

Dr. Wilson asked for details of the financial arrangements regarding the leasing of the land for the private squash club.

The Town Clerk explained that the lease would be for 35 years with the option of a further 35 years and that there would be five squash courts and seven snooker and pool tables.

The Club would pay a yearly rent of £3,000 plus a percentage of the income.

Mr. Boxall expressed concern at "animated sewage" and oil entering Kings Pond and the Town Clerk explained that so far as he was aware the sewage problem had been solved, but that anyone pouring or leaking oil into a surface water sewer in Alton could pollute Kings Pond.

The algae did however present a real problem and several solutions had been sought and representations made to the Thames Water Authority.

The algae could be cured by the use of chemicals but so far the use of such chemicals had been refused by the Water Authority, though further representations had been made.

The alternative was the physical removal of the algae from the pond which involved considerable effort as well as some distaste because of the smell.

Mrs. Reeves enquired how long the open air swimming pool would be open in 1980 and expressed concern at the condition of the changing rooms.

The Town Mayor said the period of opening would be the same as last year i.e. during the summer school holidays and that no real improvements, apart from maintenance were contemplated.

Mr. Gostelow was concerned at the cycling through the Cemetery in spite of notices that he felt were useless.

Mr. Boxall enquired what progress regarding the provision of bus shelters had been made, and the Town Mayor explained that whilst the Council could provide bus shelters, any advertisements thereon required planning permission which had been refused by the District Council.

An appeal had been made and was awaiting determination.

Mr. Tubb was concerned that with the transfer of the Harp Lager Brewery to Bass and the development of the Courage site by Bass, that there would be increased production involving 24 hours a day for seven days a week. There would be increased heavy traffic that could cause disturbance to residents in the neighbourhood. He said the local Council had endorsed the application by Bass for development of the Courage site wholeheartedly.

The Town Mayor said if there was any nuisance it was a matter for the Environmental Health Officer of the District Council, as well as the Planning Officer of that authority.

Mr. Tubb replied by saying that he had consulted the District Council and had received certain assurances but so far as he was concerned, he felt most of the traffic would use the inner relief road which could add to the congestion in Normandy Street.

Councillor Cleaver thought the Planning requirement was that the traffic would only use Ashdell Road but Councillor Perschky disagreed.

The Town Mayor said the only action the Council could take would be to make enquiries regarding the Planning Permission to see that any conditions were enforced.

Mr. Jackson enquired about the Alton and District Area Plan and was told by the Town Mayor that a draft had been submitted to the Town Council and other Parish Councils on a confidential basis and the Town Council had made some 54 observations thereon.

Mrs. Harekham expressed the hope that the proposals would improve the flow of traffic in Market Street and wondered if it would continue to be two-way.

The Town Mayor was not to be drawn, and explained that later on everyone would be afforded the opportunity to comment on the proposals.

Mr. Tubb expressed concern at the granting of planning permission for development at Windmill Hill and to the speed of present traffic, particularly from the railway bridge to Turk Street and wondered what improvements were contemplated.

The Town Mayor explained that substantial progress would have to be made to one section of the inner relief road before the traffic engendered by the development at Windmill Hill arose.

Mr. Tubb however felt that Windmill Hill could be closed at the New Barn Lane side of the railway bridge so that the traffic from Windmill Hill would then have to go via the Ashdell Park development.

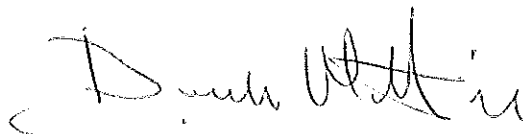
The Town Mayor invited the County Councillor, Mrs. West, to comment and she promised to consult the Police in regard to the speed of traffic on Windmill Hill.

Councillor Mrs. West said she had not been invited to the meeting, but would answer any questions if possible.

Mr. Tibbitt said that residents in the Windmill Hill area were thinking of forming a Committee because they were concerned for the safety of their children.

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 Mayor which was well received.


Town Mayor.

26th March, 1981

