

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

held at the Assembly Rooms, Alton on Thursday 29th March, 1979
at 8 p.m.

Present: Councillor C. O. G. Smith (Town Mayor)

Councillors J. D. Mitton
Mrs. A. Bartlett
J. W. Beard
J. H. Bennett
J. H. Cleaver
B. E. Perschky
G. D. Stratford
N. C. Walker
Mrs. H. E. West

(Councillor J. H. Bennett was also present in his capacity as County Councillor for Alton, together with approximately 30 members of the Public).

53. Minutes

It was MOVED by Councillor Mitton, SECONDED by Councillor Walker and RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on the 30th March, 1978 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.

54. Apology

An apology for absence was received from Councillor B. W. C. Taylor.

55. Town Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor first explained the action taken as a result of the previous Annual Town Meeting and then mentioned the major activities of the Town Council during the past year.

The opportunity was then afforded for any elector to comment on any matter of Town interest and the Town Mayor gave an assurance that whilst no resolution passed at the meeting would be binding on the Town Council, nevertheless the points raised would either be considered by the Town Council or else referred to the appropriate authority responsible.

56. Public Participation

Mr. Slone began by criticising the Town Council for not listening to the public or taking note of the public's feelings.

He raised three issues -

- (a) Football pitches at Anstey Park.
- (b) The sale of land from the Public Gardens.
- (c) The Open Air Swimming Pool.

As regards football pitches at Anstey Park he felt the Council had ignored the petition submitted and whilst he had no quarrel with the Rugby Club nevertheless Football teams were being forced to play at Chawton Park Road when they would prefer to play at Anstey Park.

This was denied by the Town Mayor who stated the sole reason for the Chawton Park Road Playing Fields being in existence was the need to relieve pressure on Anstey Park.

The Town Clerk expressed the opinion that at the present time, in spite of an appalling winter, all football clubs seemed satisfied with the arrangements.

Mr. Boxall then took up Mr. Slone's second point on the sale of Public Gardens land so that a planning permission that existed on land at the rear of 104 High Street could be implemented.

He regretted the loss of such a valuable piece of the Public Gardens and drew a comparison between the Council's previous policy of encouraging development on the industrial estate and the present decision to encourage industrial development in the Town Centre.

Mr. Boxall was supported by Mr. Walkey who feared that the sale of this land could be followed by the sale of further land and by Mrs. Harckham, who felt the applicant could be accommodated on the industrial estate rather than by reducing the Public Gardens which might be further threatened by the widening of Westbrook Road.

Mrs. Self questioned the figure of 40 who might be employed on the site and Mr. Martin thought the access to the High Street to be a suitable alternative.

Mr. Fletcher said it was a charming and attractive area in the middle of the town and as such, in the interests of conservation, it should be preserved.

Councillor Bennet took a broader view.

He felt we lived in an age of change and could only do our best at a particular moment in time. Public land was continually being bought and sold and this was no crime.

Councillor Mrs. West said she could reassure the public. She had seen the plans for landscaping and the public need have no worries.

Mr. Boxall disagreed and queried a press report on the voting by the Town Council on the sale of the land.

Mr. Mardell the local representative of the Alton Gazette in turn disagreed with Mr. Boxall and left the meeting; subsequently returning to give details of the voting.

The Town Clerk then intervened to state that whilst it was not usual to record in the Minutes how members had voted, unless specifically requested to do so, nevertheless on this occasion he felt the details could be disclosed for the record and they were as follows:-

In favour of sale - Councillors Smith, Mitton, Mrs. Bartlett, Walker and Mrs. West.

Against - Councillors Beard and Perschky

Not voting - Councillors Cleaver and Taylor

Councillor Stratford had declared an interest and took no part in the discussion or the voting.

The Town Mayor said he was sorry there were those present who were against the Town Council's decision which had been democratic; the Council had weighed up the Pro's and Con's and had decided it was in the best interests of the town to sell.

The third point raised by Mr. Slone - the future of the Open Air Swimming Pool was then debated.

Mrs. Merry asked if it was the Town Council's intention to keep the Pool open.

Mr. Walkey criticised the depth of the main pool at the Sports Centre and supported the retention of the Open Air Swimming Pool; he also felt it closed too early in the evening.

Mr. Boxall reminded those present that the town had a duty to those who had raised the money for the pool to be built.

Mr. Slone who had first introduced the subject said the former Alton Urban District Council had run the Pool well and he regretted the neglect of the East Hampshire District Council.

The Town Mayor said the Town Council wished to see the Pool kept open but no final decision had yet been taken.

Mr. Gostelow raised the matter of allotments, some of which were neglected and the Town Clerk explained the difficulty of identifying just which allotments were below a reasonable standard.

Mr. Gostelow then queried the state of the footpath at the rear of Alexandra Road and the Town Clerk promised to pass on the complaint to either the County Council or the District Council.

Mrs. Harckham then raised the issue of heavy lorries through the town, the retention of an access to Barton End from Lenten Street, the need for a sign to Princess Drive from Queens Road and the possible use of the Victoria Road depot site for housing so as to assist elderly persons who wished to purchase.

The Town Mayor explained the present routing system for heavy lorries and the need for the Northfield Link.

The access to Barton End was a planning request and development had not yet been completed.

The County Council would be advised of the need for a street sign for Princess Drive and the District Council of the suggested use for the Victoria Road Depot.

Mr. Baker referred to the pollution of Kings Pond and advanced the case for an Angling Club to have fishing rights which would reduce the pollution. He suggested there might be too much wild life and that the ratio between fish and bird life might be unequal.

Mr. Boxall felt there might be strong objections to the removal of fish.

Mrs. Self was very concerned at the condition of the road and footpaths in Nursery Road and Mr. Slone queried the replacement of lamps in Lipscombe Rise.

Councillor Bennett explained the new County Council policy regarding the replacement of lamps.

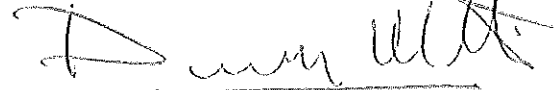
Mr. Boxall felt an indication should be given of when the High Street would be pedestrianised but there was no response.

Several persons present, who had already spoken, mentioned the need for greater publicity for such Annual Town Meetings and the Town Clerk explained that more notices had been displayed than in previous years.

He would however investigate to see if there could be a further improvement and had noted with interest Mrs. Harekhan's comment that it was her letter in a local paper that had increased the attendance.

The Town Mayor then brought the meeting to a close by expressing his appreciation to all who had attended.

The Deputy Town Mayor proposed a vote of thanks to the Town Mayor and this was warmly received.



Town Mayor.

27th March, 1980