

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

held at the Assembly Rooms, Alton on Thursday 31st March, 1977
at 8 p.m.

Present: Councillor M. C. Walker (Town Mayor)

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

Colonel J. P. Archer-Shee, M.C.,
County Councillor for Alton
Mr. J. S. G. Crosland, Chairman of
East Hampshire District Council
Mr. R. M. Moores, Chief Executive,
East Hampshire District Council

together with approximately 15 members of the public.

30. Minutes

It was MOVED by Councillor Stratford, SECONDED by Councillor Mitton and RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on the 1st April, 1976 be taken as read and confirmed as a correct record.

The Minutes were then signed by the Town Mayor.

31. Apology

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

32. Town Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor opened the meeting and introduced the guests.

He said it was the first Town Meeting since the election of the Alton Town Council last May.

The number of Councillors had been reduced from 18 to 11 and of these 11, 7 were also members of the District Council.

Admittedly they were only 7 out of 42 but nevertheless one-sixth was significant.

At the last meeting Mr. Shardlow felt that some members of the Town Council did not consult or communicate with their electors, but hopefully this had been overcome.

Various points were raised at the last meeting and were subsequently considered at Town Council Meetings.

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For example Mrs. Barker expressed her misgivings about the roads at Ashdell Park and he understood the County Council was now actively looking into the question of responsibility so that the roads might be taken over.

Mr. Radford was concerned about car parking in Normandy Street following the loss of the Nether Street Car Park and at a Traffic Meeting held on the 24th February, 1977 the District Council representatives promised to see if further off-street parking could be provided.

Also a certain measure of on-street parking possibly in Victoria Road.

Other complaints concerned the condition of Alton roads and in particular the High Street, but he thought they all agreed that there had now been a considerable improvement.

Regrettably the Town Council had been unable to help as regards the Chawton Park Road/Whitedown Lane crossroads but they had secured an improvement in the routing of heavy traffic and considered this one of their successes following representations from residents of Whitedown Lane.

So much then for the last meeting.

What had the Council done since?

It had decided to make modest improvements to the Assembly Rooms and to improve the standard of other functions for which it was responsible.

The Christmas lighting scheme seemed to have been acceptable and hopefully the Jubilee events would be well supported.

It was a unique opportunity for the people of Alton to take part and to pay their tribute to a wonderful Queen and for just a few days to forget any worries.

The Council had decided to give a donation of £5,000 towards the restoration of St. Lawrence Church and £500 to the Winchester and Alton Railway.

They also lost a controversial £350 in trying to promote a visit by the Horseshoe Theatre of Basingstoke.

This had failed through lack of support and it would be a long time before the Council tried again.

It was hoped shortly to invite tenders for the laying of a new sewer in Anstey Park and the provision of a larger car parking area.

Whether or not the Chawton Park Road Playing Fields would be brought into use had yet to be decided.

They would first be used on Saturday the 4th June by the East Hampshire District Council who would be staging various sporting events in association with their Jubilee programme.

Attempts were being made to arrange a Celebrity Cricket Match on Monday the 6th June but whilst there might be a cricket match it was thought they might be very light on celebrities.

It was proposed to rename the playing fields the "Jubilee Playing Fields".

It was pleasant to be able to note that during the year a new ward at the General Hospital had been opened called "Inwood" but the fear of the closure of Treloar's was still with them.

The Police Station complex was well under construction and the Sixth Form College to be built in the Old Odiham Road had received approval.

The Council continued to comment upon Planning Applications received, and supported the District Council in opposing proposals by a developer to develop land at Windmill Hill.

The Town Council was utterly opposed to this scheme until there had been substantial road improvements, both to Windmill Hill and Turk Street.

Now that Ashdell Road had been widened the Council hoped to improve the Kings Pond recreation area.

Already seats and litter bins had been provided and it was hoped to also improve the surface of the path surrounding the pond.

As regards car parking, the Council continued its fight against the introduction of car parking charges but had been overridden and had now decided to wait a year before reviewing the matter.

What did worry the Council very much was the decline in shopping facilities.

A number of changes of use had taken place from shops to offices mainly for estate agents and the general appearance of the High Street was depressing.

Planning approval had been given by the District Council in respect of Johnson's Corner and the Council very much hoped that this development would proceed; also that the Methodist Church site would be developed.

Local Authorities could in fact take active steps to promote and encourage development and it might be this was what would have to happen.

The Council accepted that a careful balance had to be maintained between the growth in residential development and in shopping facilities and this was why the Council was opposed to any growth taking place in Alton in the foreseeable future that would take it above the 17,500 population mentioned in the Planning Policy Document.

Electors from within the electoral division of Alton were then invited to raise any matter of concern to the Town that they wished.

33. Footpath Diversion

Mr. Gostelow referred to the proposed diversion of Footpath No. 26 from Youngs Road to Widgeons and he feared that it would affect the entrance to Wooteys Allotments.

The Town Clerk explained that the diversion of this footpath had been considered by the Alton Town Council, although it was the County Council that was the footpath authority.

The Town Council had reached the conclusion that it was a reasonable diversion so that the Sixth Form College could be built on the site fronting the Old Odiham Road and that a further school could be built on the former allotment gardens at the rear of Edward Road at a later date.

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The Town Clerk admitted that the plan was not quite clear as to where the diverted footpath rejoined the existing footpath and undertook to investigate to see that a suitable access to Wooteys Allotment was either safeguarded or installed.

Mr. Hawkins observed that the Ramblers Association were interested in this diversion and asked if the footpath would be restored on its line through the allotments.

The Town Clerk indicated this would not be so though he did recall this was the line of a former footpath.

34. Councillor

Mr. Isaac the Chairman of the Alton and District Resident and Ratepayers Association regretted the absence of Councillor Brian Taylor because he said he would like to ask him a question.

He felt that his Association thought it intolerant

At this point the Town Mayor interposed and stopped Mr. Isaac from speaking but Mr. Isaac resumed to say that he was referring to past offences about building regulations.

The Town Mayor said that the matter was sub judice and could not be discussed.

Mr. Isaac remarked that an offence in Whitedown Lane was on record and the enforcement notice had been upheld.

He said he thought it intolerable that a Councillor who could not keep to the rules should remain in office.

The Town Mayor said that the question of enforcement notices and of building regulations was a matter for the District Council.

At this point Councillor Mitton intervened to remark that Mr. Isaac was not an elector of the town and should therefore not take part in the Town Meeting.

Commander West said he was an elector of Alton even though the person on his right was not and had been ruled out of order.

He wondered if the Council was aware of the sense of indignation that existed in the town concerning the matter which Mr. Isaac had sought to raise?

The Town Mayor thanked Commander West but felt it best if there was no further discussion.

He accepted however that the Council was aware of the position.

35. Anstey Park - Football

Mr. Slone expressed disquiet at a press report that the Council had let a football pitch and part of the pavilion to a particular football club.

The Town Mayor explained that no such decision had been taken although such a request had been received.

The Town Clerk said it was the policy of the Council to ultimately transfer football to Chawton Park Road and Mr. Slone accepted that this was so.

He was also relieved that no decision had been taken regarding a particular football club at this time.

36. Normandy Street

In a lengthy address to the meeting Mrs. Cooper was concerned at the decline of any shopping facilities in Normandy Street which she felt had a great potential, especially if it were made into a shopping precinct.

She did not feel that the Planners fully understood the problem and would like the opportunity to discuss the matter if anyone was prepared to listen.

She felt she was speaking on behalf of many shopkeepers.

Mrs. Cooper was also concerned at the increase in the rateable value of her property that had taken place.

She also felt that the rating of shops was high and it would be a loss to the town if the Gallery could no longer make a contribution towards the Arts in Alton, especially as the District Council had only recently formed an Arts Council for Alton.

Mr. Moores explained that the rateable values had been determined since 1948 by the Inland Revenue and any ratepayer could appeal against his/her assessment.

As regards Planning this was always a sensitive area but he did know that they exercised considerable care and listened to what the public had to say.

He felt that representations regarding the future use of Normandy Street could be made through the Chamber of Trade to whom the Planning Officer, Mr. Billenness, was prepared to give a talk, and as regards the Arts that Mrs. Cooper might care to draw the loss of the Gallery to the attention of the newly formed Arts Council.

Colonel Archer-Shee undertook to call in on Mrs. Cooper the following day and to discuss with her the views she held on Normandy Street.

37. Planning - Review of Town Map

Councillor Stratford enquired of Mr. Moores when the first review of the Planning Policy Document would be undertaken for Alton.

Mr. Moores in replying said he had seen it included in a programme for the next four to five years but he hoped that it would be underway in two.

38. Planning Appeals

Mr. Sharp was concerned that a Planning Appeal to be held on 3rd May, 1977 regarding Blanes Farm, Gilbert White Way was scheduled to be heard in Petersfield and he felt it should be held in Alton.

The Town Clerk said that this was the view held by the Town Council and a request had been made to the East Hampshire District Council that this appeal and future appeals be held in Alton.

On the last occasion the Town Council had been successful in its representations and the particular appeal had been heard in Alton and he hoped that the request he had made regarding Blanes Farm would result in a change of venue for the appeal from Petersfield to Alton.

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Mr. Crosland indicated that the policy of the District Council was indeed to hold Alton appeals in Alton but on being pressed by Mr. Sharp he said he would try and see that this particular appeal would be heard in Alton.

Mr. Hamilton supported Mr. Sharp.

Mr. Isaac queried if sufficient publicity was given to such appeals.

The Town Clerk said that prior to reorganisation local appeals were advertised in the press and on the site and all residents within a radius of the appeal site notified.

It seemed though that the District Council did not advertise such appeals in local newspapers though they did exhibit notices on the site.

There was a limited notification to nearby residents based on a hand delivery of notices by an officer.

He undertook to draw these points for greater publicity to the attention of the District Council.

Mr. Crosland and Mr. Moores indicated their willingness to consider such representations.

39. Minutes

Mr. O'Connor regretted that the Town Council Minutes as made available in the Public Library were comparatively brief in comparison with those of the County Council and the District Council.

It seemed that the reports were omitted and he felt the minutes should include greater detail.

The Town Clerk undertook to bring Mr. O'Connor's observations before the Council.

40. Children's Home

Mrs. Cooper again in a lengthy address, referred to the failure of the County Council to build a children's home on her Father's land at Holybourne since acquiring the site some four years ago.

She regretted that the children were being deprived of a new home and urged that some action be taken.

She also regretted the proposal to take part of the land for Council house building.

Colonel Archer-Shee undertook as regards the children's home to discuss this point along with Planning at his meeting with Mrs. Cooper on the morrow.

41. Conclusion

In concluding the Town Meeting the Town Mayor said he was indebted to everyone who had attended and in particular those who had asked questions or made a comment, as this was the purpose of the meeting.

In particular he expressed the Town Council's thanks to the visitors, and to those members of the Town Council who had been able to attend.

In thanking the visitors he felt it to be the wish of everyone present that he singled out Colonel Archer-Shee.

He had served the area of Alton well as its County Council representative for 16 years and before that for three years on the former Alton Urban District Council, and he was not seeking re-election in May.

All present at the meeting indicated to Colonel Archer-Shee their appreciation by applauding.

42. Vote of Thanks

The Deputy Town Mayor then proposed a vote of thanks to the Town Mayor for the way in which he had conducted the meeting and this was carried unanimously.



Town Mayor.

30th March, 1978

