

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE ALTON TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING  
HELD AT ALTON COLLEGE ON 21 MARCH 2018 AT 7:00PM**

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Present:       Councillor   Dean-Paul Phillips   -       Town Mayor  
                               Allan Chick  
                               Sharon Cullen  
                               Mike Dicker  
                               Peter Hicks  
                               Graham Hill  
                               Alex Hunt  
                               Pam Jones  
                               Graham Titterington  
                               James Voller

38 member of the public  
1 member of the press

In attendance:         Leah Coney   -       Town Clerk  
                               Pat Harris   -       Admin and Finance Manager  
                               Mrs S Brown   -       Admin Officer  
                               Councillor A Joy   -       HCC/EHDC  
                               Councillor Guy Shepherd                                   -       EHDC  
                               Simon Jenkins   -       EHDC, Head of Planning  
                               John Geoghegan   -       EHDC Community Officer

Apologies were received from Councillors Matthew Bayliss and Derek Gardner. Councillor Bisi Eni-Olotu was absent.

73    **Welcome and Announcements**

Prior to the Mayor's address, a cheque for £3,895 was presented to Mrs Pat Lerew on behalf of Alton Community Association as Alton Town Council at an Extra-ordinary meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> March had agreed to fund the Alton Community Association's youth provision following removal of their grant funding from Hampshire County Council. In accepting the cheque, Mrs Lerew thanked the Town Council, noting it was down to grant funding such as this which enabled such services to continue; without them they would cease.

The Town Mayor then welcomed all to the Annual Meeting of Electors and reminded those present that a hearing loop was in operation and to switch their mobiles off or to silent mode.

74    **Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

75    **Town Mayor's Address**

The Mayor gave his address as follows:

*This meeting provides an opportunity for the council to reflect where the council is at and where it is going together with providing an opportunity for “you” to have your say. For the office of Mayor, I can only reiterate my pride in having had the privilege of this role and by being re-introduced to the town I thought I already knew but there is so much more.*

*It is an irony that part of tonight is given to the Brewery sites future, as I remember when I ran the Assembly Rooms all those years ago and I watched our active community engage with Coors over the Sports Ground site, one of the directors from America said that Alton was the largest small town they had ever come across; well I take that as a compliment – our community engages and on so many levels, whether it's here and now lobbying your local government, volunteering as a member of Alton Society, the museum and gallery or one of our many volunteer groups or sports club, or dare I say a councillor – the people of Alton selflessly give so much and I am happy to act as ambassador for such a great town.*

*As my Mayoral year comes to an end there is still so much to do. My Community Fund will open for applications from 2<sup>nd</sup> April until 2<sup>nd</sup> May for the distribution of donations I received during my mayoral year. The fund is designed to be a hassle free small pot of money for worthy applicants including but not exclusively, local charities, individuals and clubs that may have a project which demonstrates a benefit greater than that of the individual(s) concerned. Applicants must demonstrate a local connection/benefit. For further details please e-mail [info@alton.gov.uk](mailto:info@alton.gov.uk) after 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Decisions on successful applicants will be made by 16<sup>th</sup> May.*

*May 6<sup>th</sup> will mark “We are Alton” day, which replaces the Mayors reception and is in the Public Gardens or here (Alton College) if wet and is my way of thanking everyone who's contributed to Alton this year and showcasing some of the towns talents, but rather than an invitational event, everyone's invited and details will be going out shortly, so please save the date.*

*I have a Mayoral trip to the War graves in France on Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> May when we will be visiting examples of British, French and German Graves, the Canadian Monument Trenches and Tunnels of Vimy Ridge before ending the day exploring Arras. Tickets will be available through the Town Hall shortly.*

*Lastly, it's been a tough year for Alton the sport centre has exercised public opinion - and continues to do so. EHDC have been criticised for lack of consultation, however, lessons have certainly been learnt and tonight showcases the start of this council's and EHDC's joint consultation on the Brewery site community offering, whilst we welcome the preferred developer for the site Cala Homes here this evening. It is prudent that we all understand this is the beginning and this is your platform to tell us and them what you'd like to see.*

*And just so that you can get really excited, there are a number of other consultations going on: Land East of Selborne Road – Public Exhibition of Residential Development Proposals – from 2pm to 7pm on Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March at the Assembly Rooms; 29<sup>th</sup> March at the Community Centre from 2.00 p.m. 8.00 for the Esso pipeline (Southampton Refinery to Heathrow) and the Brewery Site with the launch this evening followed by 24<sup>th</sup> March, Alton Assembly Rooms from 10 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.; 27<sup>th</sup> March at the Community Centre from 11 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. and 13<sup>th</sup> April at the Town Hall from 1 pm to 4 p.m.*

*We are anticipating that the front entrance at the Assembly Rooms to be open before Easter. Local building, D C Andrews, finished the building works some weeks ago, but unfortunately as a result of the Carillion insolvency the suppliers of the glass entrance doors have been impacted which led to the delay of being able to supply and fit.*

*Finally, please be respectful tonight to all of our speakers and councillors this evening and we are aiming for a 9pm finish to allow an opportunity to you all to speak to the representatives from both Cala Homes and EHDC representatives on the launch of the consultation for the brewery site.*

76 **Launch of the public consultation for the Community Facility on the former Coors brewery site**

The Mayor introduced the Public Consultation for the Community Facility on the former Coors brewery site and invited Cala Homes representatives (Rob Hall, Viv Hill and Aiden Robson) to give a presentation on the Molson Coors Brewery Site and a short power-point presentation ensued.

The Mayor then welcomed EHDC District Councillor and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Guy Shepherd who gave background into Molson Coors being a key employer in the town and its loss which had led to the company to want to make the best use of the land and giving the people of Alton “what it wants”. In 2016 a Development Brief was drawn up by EHDC working with Molson Coors in its delivery. This resulted in the issue of the Brief to potential developers in June 2016 and following the full evaluation of submissions, Cala Homes were selected as the preferred developer of the site. He then went on to say:

The Development brief has two key aspects:

Land use which includes residential, commercial, hotel, community building and employment. In looking to Cala we are looking for a well-balanced, mixed use scheme that will add value to Alton – not just housing. The Community facility – reading from the Development Brief “*there is an opportunity to deliver a new community facility for the town on the Molson Coors site. This could take several forms and could range from a relatively small facility providing a community hub (small meeting spaces, safer neighbourhood team etc, to a large community centre to replace the current Alton Community Centre on Amery Street. The community centre is expected to require a site not greater than 0.18 hectares including landscaping and parking. The scale and nature of any community facilities will need to be confirmed in collaboration with the local community to ensure it meets community requirements and to ensure commercial viability and deliverability*”.

“*The journey*” has now started and right now it is a blank canvas; we are at the “information gathering stage” – nothing decided or presented to the developers. Tonight is the first of four consultations to get ideas on what might best satisfy the requirement and we are open to all ideas. Alton Community Association are suggested as a possible beneficiary but by no means is this set in stone. Several organisations in the community could also come forward with ideas but the site must be viable and deliverable. It needs to deliver a profit for Cala Homes. The community aspect needs to be affordable in this, balancing of land area and cost. The benchmark for value is a building the same size as Alton Community Centre. Mission creeps must be avoided at all costs as this has killed off too many schemes in Alton but we welcome ideas for provision of a facility both on the new development, delivering of “something” off-site or to turn the value into a cash sum to dispense elsewhere in the community. The intention is to gather ideas and then come back with a second round of consultations with several viable options (at least one of which being an on-site delivery as closely in line with the brief as possible) and then to allow the community to vote for their preferred option.

With that, the public were advised that the consultation was now open.

77 **Alton Town Council's Corporate Strategy Annual Review**

The Town Mayor asked for comments on the Corporate Strategy Annual Review, no comments were received and it was therefore agreed as tabled.

78 **Alton Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Annual Review**

The Town Mayor asked for comments on the Corporate Strategy Annual Review, no comments were received and it was therefore agreed as tabled.

79 **Alton Town Council's Audited Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017**

The Town Clerk presented to the meeting the latest set of audited accounts for Alton Town Council for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

The annual accounts were subject to internal audit by LitaTouch on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and presented to the Full Council for approval on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

The annual governance statements were subsequently approved by members at the AGM on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and submitted along with all of the required supplementary documentation, to BDO, external audit, at the end of June 2017.

The conclusion of the external audit was duly sent back to the Council with no comments being made by the auditors and were approved at the Full Council meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2017. The audited accounts are therefore duly presented here for you this evening.

The Accounts were accepted as presented.

80 **To receive questions and statements from Electors**

1. Luath Grant-Ferguson:

Opened by stating he was delighted that Pam Bradford was attending this evening as he believed that they were the only survivors from the old Alton Urban District Council. He spoke of the parallels with 1971-74, a three year period which saw the development of Wootey's by Noyce and Greenfields by Wimpey which led to two bonanzas for the council at that time. It was a time for determining how the financial benefits would be used for the people of Alton. This is how the Community Centre and Alton Sports centre came about; both of which were fully funded from the proceeds of these three events. The Community Centre being town centre centric and the Sports Centre developed in the "best place" for the town and surrounding villages. Stating "in my experience" and as a member of AUDC and EHDC, the size of the footprint, including car parking and accessibility the area set aside on the Coors development is simply not big enough. It was imperative that the town looks at all of its current assets and that it should not make hasty ad hoc decisions on what is needed. We must look at what we have and not make isolated decisions. We have no arts centre in the town and we have a high percentage of school children who will have their own ideas on what they want - there is no provision for the numerous successful choirs and talented musicians in Alton. We need to undertake a three dimension view of what is required – it does not need to be "on site".

2. Jonathan Hughes:

In opening he stated that he felt no need to speak as the previous speaker had covered everything he wished to say. However he wondered as to the whereabouts of the remaining 18,982 residents this evening but felt they would have wholeheartedly supporting everything expressed by Luath Grant-Ferguson.

Indeed it was a sad tale of the Sports Centre – they tried to do things, but the wrong way round. It was very much a “chicken and egg” situation. The people of Alton do nothing until too late and then “we” complain. With a community facility on offer, this gives a unique opportunity to have something to be proud of – a civic centre that could host a variety of events to unite the people of Alton in its coming together, but only if “we” actually take this consultation seriously. It cannot consist only of people going to the town hall and peering at boards and making comments on what is presented before you, rather than coming up with ideas. The town needs to have thousands of response not a mere couple of hundred. Also we need to think about the mechanics – we do not want just the normal groups responding, i.e. EHDC/ATC/Developers making the decisions – we want a full representation of what the town needs and this consultation needs to be as wide as possible otherwise we will more than likely to end up with another “sports centre disappointment”.

3. Ian Dane:

Had two vested interests the first of which that he lived on Windmill Hill and overlooked the brewery site and secondly he was the Chair of the Trustees at Alton Maltings and sought an answer to how the Trustees could be involved as Alton needed enhanced facilities, not a duplication of existing facilities. He also asked how do “we” get the youth of Alton involved.

In responding Councillor Pam Jones suggested that a setting up of a small working group, involving Mr. Dane could be an option but that it was important that interested stakeholders who can engage with every aspect of the community should be represented.

The Mayor re-emphasised that this was the first stage of the consultation.

Councillor Graham Hill echoed everything that Councillor Pam Jones had said and it was important that “we” identify the key stakeholders; seeking to search proactively to pick up on what Luath Grant-Ferguson had previously stated.

4. Alex Golding – representing ASCAG (Alton Sports Centre Action Group)

As Chair of the above and a mum of two, she has previously let it be known that with all the various housing developments in Alton the town is rapidly growing and the decision on the Sports Centre was made not in the light of the future needs for sports provision in the town. She asked was influence can Alton Town Council bring to bear on the facilities mix in the new sports centre and also what can they do on the costs to use the facility. She cited examples of the recent increases from £21.99 to £34.00 per month for the gym membership plus a £72 joining fee.

How could people have faith in any consultation in the future as in the Sports Centre planning process the needs of the people were totally ignored in presenting its consultation findings to the planning authority. She wanted re-assurance that their voices will be heard.

The Mayor, Councillor Dean-Paul Phillips suggested she actively be involved and understood that she had a meeting arranged with the Leader of the District Council which was absolutely the right way forward.

5. Alison Dickson and Angie Collins:

Had a number of questions:

How much affordable housing is on the Coors sites and how will this be enforced as previous developments in the town have delivered a lot less. How do we guarantee “affordable” housing?

The Sports Centre has caused lots of problems and there is cynicism as Alton Town Council does not support local people i.e. the butterfly meadows. So what is the point if our own councillors do not back us?

Everyone Active had already got the contract for the Sports Centre before they had even consulted. Have Cala Homes already got the contract for the brewery site – instead of housing on that site, why no cinema or bowling alley – something for the young people?

In responding the Mayor stated that there is an open consultation for the brewery site but acknowledged notable exceptions in the past. It is now up to the people of Alton to take up the opportunity given to have their say on this site.

In responding to the Mayor’s comments the statement “people of Alton are fed up with you lot” was made.

Councillor Graham Hill stated that the brewery site is a genuine blank piece of paper and that no contract has been signed; Cala Homes have an option on the site to develop it.

The retort was that “you have a lot to do to convince the people of Alton that they will be listened to.”

The Mayor responded by stating that under the Alton Neighbourhood Plan it was a requirement that 40% affordable housing had to be included in the scheme. The Mayor also wished to address the issue of why he had abstained on the vote for planning permission for the Sports Centre, he stated that people fundamentally misunderstand what voting to abstain means. On this occasion he believed this was his only option, given that he had been instrumental with fellow councillors Andrew Joy and David Orme in the decision being deferred due to lack of evidence had been presented to the Committee in respect of adequate consultation. He also noted “I do not showboat”.

Councillor Peter Hicks stated that Alton Town Council had in fact raised several objections and voiced their concerns about the planning process for the Sports Centre and urged that people should not confuse Alton Town Council with East Hants District Council and that it was Alton Town Council who did go out to consultation!

6. Joanna Foley – Alton Gymnastics Club:

Spoke enthusiastically about the club stating that it caters for some 250 children but equally has a waiting list of the same number which cannot be accommodated currently and certainly

the new sports centre will do nothing to help in reducing their waiting list. The club covers a wide age group from toddlers up to adults but acknowledges they take up a lot of space. Some thirty man hours a week is taken in just putting up and taking down their equipment and that the space they occupy at the sports centre could better be utilised by others given this constraint. They are actively looking at a business case to seek other alternative options. They have strong leaders in the club and are looking at producing great leaders for the future. Other venue options need to be considered as if this could be achieved it would open up other options for use of space in the new sports centre.

The Mayor suggested that she speak with EHDC officer John Geoghegan and that a meeting with the Leader of EHDC might be beneficial.

Councillor Pam Jones suggested that she gets all the information out about the consultation to all of their members, active, as well as on the waiting list, so that their views can be heard.

7. Pam Bradford:

In openly expressing her anger at the words that are being said about “the youth provision in Alton”. In her time as a councillor, both at town and district level, she had worked very hard to set up a youth club at the Boys Club in Nursery Road, Alton. She had attended a meeting a few years ago and was asked how much was needed to get it going again and the sum of £300,000 had been muted. In believing this was available, it was only 2 days after that meeting that she learned the Boys Club site had been sold by EHDC which was followed with 4 houses being built on the site.

Secondly, she conveyed the feelings of residents at Brendoncare where cars are now parked on one side of the road in Adams Way, restricting emergency access and what is Alton Town Council going to do about it. She had suggested that she would provide the paint and paintbrushes and residents should do it themselves as despite past agreements that something would be done, nothing had actually materialised.

In responding Councillor Dean-Paul Phillips advised that this now comes under the responsibility of EHDC and Adams Way was only one of a number of roads where yellow lining needs to be undertaken. He went on to say that if she was to provide the paint, he would take up a brush and paint the lines! He went on to say that he remembers the Boys Club fondly as he was a member in his younger years, but that equally they needed the additional 4 Radian Homes badly in Alton.

8. Thom Chapman:

Stated the “youth” yes we do exist and I have a question for Councillor Dean-Paul Phillips.:

He stated his displeasure with the Mayor and his decision to abstain on the sports centre planning application. The proposal is not fit for purpose and “you” have not only let down my generation, but the future generations of Alton. Why did you not stand up for the people of Alton?

In response he re-stated his previous comments on the matter.

9. Mrs Pat Lerew – Chair of Alton Community Centre:

She expressed that she was not over excited about a new community facility as some 4/5 options had “flashed by her” during the course of the last 20 years and said she was “not holding my breath”. A community facility is not a community centre. Any perceived replacement of the existing community centre would need something of at least the size of the current provision and she felt that the 0.8 hectare on offer was completely inadequate. Currently there is an adjoining large public car park to the community centre – statements such as “nearby” for the proposed facility on the Coors site just does not cut it.

Youth provision is hanging on by a thread in Alton. Once funded by HCC a few years ago had its budget slashed, resulting in a loss of grant funding to the Community Centre of 75%. Luckily councillors stepped forward with grants for one year to give an opportunity to seek alternative funding. Currently Alton Town Council had generously funded one youth worker and Community First have also agreed to provide some funding. Picking up on Pam Bradford’s earlier comments, the Community Centre had been promised monies in the past but EHDC had “let us down”. EHDC should put the money back into youth provision and their stance was not acceptable and should not be accepted. We need much more in Alton. The new community facility must not come at the expense of the current Community Centre. EHDC had pulled the plug on agreed funding – initially this had been set at £150,000 to tackle immediate, medium and long term maintenance. Of that initial commitment £110,000 had been forthcoming, but this had led to a shortfall of £40,000 which meant that the medium/long term maintenance had now become immediate but no funding was available and the matter is urgent.

Her burning question was with a new facility, asking “who is going to own it and who will finance it?”

10. Mike Hayward – Ackender Road Residents Association

Posed a question regarding the Butts Bridge and the impact on Butts Road and Whitedown with its proposed closure for 6 months. His latest understanding was that whilst initially due to start in the Spring of this year, this had now been pushed back to the autumn. He went on to state that 70% of traffic is through traffic and if closed, this would lead to major impacts on a number of residential roads in Alton. This coupled with the impact created by the building of the new Sports Centre on Chawton Park Road, the re-direction of traffic via “Alton” seeking access to and from the A339 and M3, Hook as well as the A3 will have a huge impact. His three questions are:

- Does ATC have a policy for dealing with this issue?
- Will there be a public consultation for re-routing of traffic so the people potentially impacted have a say?
- Could County Councillor Andrew Joy give re-assurances at this evening’s meeting on the process for the considering of options available and the decision making process?

In responding the Mayor advised that Dr Haywood could speak with County Councillor Joy after the Meeting. He went on to say that all councillors present were cognisant of the issues and problems associated with this project.

Councillor Pam Jones advised that as far as she was aware Section 278 is still being negotiated and the developer cannot start any work until that is signed off. She agreed that there are a



host of unanswered questions including the thought of how a large lorry could possibly negotiate the junction of Ackender Road and Lenten Street given the installation of traffic calming measures.

11. Sally Stoodley:

Raised two questions – the proposed stakeholders group for the new Coors site – who will these be? Secondly, she wished to raise the matter of the connection between the development and walking through to Kings Pond. Cala Homes do not understand Kings Pond and its importance to the town and how will the Council ensure that the stakeholders took this into consideration when making a decision. In her opinion there should be a tunnel and it didn't matter how much this cost as everything has a cost attached to it.

Councillor Graham Hill responded that the Development Brief included two aspirations – open up the site to allow people to access Kings Pond via the development and de-culvert the River Wey to allow a route through the site. The current Wey Walk was making good progress and EHDC had provided some £15,000 worth of funding towards this. He confirmed there is a “shopping list” and one of the options included a tunnel.

There is also councillor representation on the Wey Walk group which he explained is a walk from the station through to the source of the River Wey and it is hoped to open up the centre of the brewery site as part of the development.

There being no further speakers with questions, the meeting closed at 8:35 pm.