

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ALTON TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING
HELD AT ALTON ASSEMBLY ROOMS ON 18 MARCH 2020 AT 7:00PM

Present: Councillor Graham Titterington - Town Mayor
Matthew Bayliss
Suzie Burns
Sharon Cullen
Pam Jones

In attendance: Leah Coney - Town Clerk
Pat Harris - Admin and Finance Manager
Samantha Brown - Councillor Support/
Admin Officer

1 member of the public

Apologies were received from Councillors Ginny Boxall, Pam Bradford, Gideon Cristofoli, Paul Crossley, Amanda Durley, Graham Hill, Christopher Lawrence, Richard Platt, District Councillor Paula Langley and Press representative, Moira Howells.

88 **Welcome and Announcements**

The Town Mayor 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.

89 **Town Mayor's Address**

“We are living through a very difficult time under the shadow of the Corona Virus pandemic. Most of our normal life activities seem to be coming to a standstill as we try to survive the pandemic and look to rebuild our lives when it is over.

The most important priority is to look after each other and help our neighbours to come through it. Planning is made more difficult because we do not know how things will go and how long the lockdown will last. If we think back just a couple of weeks it is hard to imagine how much things have changed. But tragedies and crises do have a way of bringing out the best in people and we must try to ensure that this is true now.

I would have expected to speak to you about the highlights of my year of office as your mayor, which is now coming towards its end. In the circumstances I will skip this tonight. Alton Town Council has continued to work very hard for the benefit of Alton and its people. We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated team of officers and grounds staff and I want to publicly thank them all for their hard work in often difficult circumstances.

The Council has continued to support several very worthwhile charities that contribute to the quality of life of Altonians, often in the face of decreasing support from the higher tiers of local government as they face budget cuts. I would particularly like to mention the 2 organisations that I selected as my mayor's charities: Bushy Leaze Family Support Centre, and the Kings Arms youth centre that is soon to open its dedicated premises. I am also delighted to report the imminent opening of the new skate

park, which has been designed with lots of input from the people who will use it. The grand opening will have to be delayed due to the Corona Virus, but it should be usable shortly.

The Council has also launched two major initiatives to improve life for Altonians in the longer term. We have joined together with ACAN and Energy Alton to develop a strategy for coping with Climate Change. I firmly believe that this is the most important issue for the future of mankind and we must all play our part in alleviating it, as well as adapting to some inevitable changes. We had planned to spend most of the evening on this topic, but we will now bring our plans to you once the current crisis is over.

The second initiative is our Health and Wellbeing agenda. Social isolation and loneliness are serious problems for many people. We want to help people to find organisations and groups in the town that encourage social interaction and to give support in more physical ways such as improving community transport. These issues are now particularly pressing with medical needs to reduce face-to-face interaction, but we are working with voluntary groups to safeguard against people getting left alone without the support they need. We will circulate a weekly information sheet in conjunction with the Herald newspapers and Royal Mail.

Alton Town Council, as part of its good governance process, has maintained a risk assessment and "business continuity" plan. The Town Clerk has checked that it is indeed suitable for the current emergency to ensure that we continue to deliver the services that Alton needs, for example using home working and teleconferencing when appropriate. Our approach to the crisis is to follow government guidance and support initiatives of Hampshire County Council and East Hants District Council. We are not experts. We must all work together in this cause. The primary role of the town council is to be a "community connector" to help people find the help they need.

Finally, I would again like to thank the Council staff, and my fellow councillors, for their help and support through the year.

90 **Minutes**

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

91 **Alton Town Council's Audited Accounts year ending 31 March 2019 and the Alton Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Review**

The Audited Accounts for Alton Town Council ending 31st March 2019 together with the Alton Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Review were tabled. Councillor Pam Jones commended the Town Clerk on the comprehensive Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Review. Councillors also noted the Audited Accounts as presented and that the External Auditor had raised no comments.

NOTED

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

The Town Clerk confirmed that no questions had been received prior to the meeting.

There being no further questions, the meeting closed at 7.11 pm.