



possible. I would also want to thank the people of Alton for their response including many cases where they organised community support for those in need, and for generally observing the rules and acting sensibly.

Alton Town Council has contributed massively to bringing the town through the last year. It has functioned continuously and held all of its scheduled meetings online – as well as several additional meetings that have been needed to handle urgent matters that have cropped up as we went along. For this I would like to thank my colleagues on the council who have handled the exceptional workload. The council lost about £90,000 in revenue from rents, room bookings and sports pitch fees. We have also incurred extra costs for making the town “Covid secure”. There has been a lot of extra work in performing regular risk assessments of every activity and in responding to the ever-changing government regulations restricting what can be open and what can be done. The council has provided a continuous flow of information about how to navigate the pandemic and what sources of help are available, including a weekly online edition of the Altonian. We have not received any financial assistance from the government, unlike other tiers of local government. Despite this our officers have managed to almost balance the books for the last year, and we enter next year on firm foundations.

We have not stood still. Our state-of-the-art skatepark opened this year. It has been designed with extensive consultation with our younger people and is proving very popular. Sadly it has been too popular this year as some users have insisted in using it when we had to close it under government instruction. The resulting anti-social behaviour is an ongoing problem, but one which we hope will resolve itself when times return to normality.

I am particularly interested in the work of Bushy Leaze Family Support Centre and the Kings Arms Youth Centre as these are my chosen mayoral charities. Sadly most of the events that I would have held to support them this year have been blocked by the Covid regulations, but the 2021 calendars that showcased the photographs of local people have served to raise some much needed funds as well as promoting Alton. The King Arms opened its new building, marking a major milestone in establishing itself in Alton. This is a brilliant example of how the Town Council and a voluntary group can work together for the benefit of everyone. I would like to thank both the Kings Arms and Bushy Leaze for their ceaseless and immensely valuable work.

The Health and Wellbeing agenda is a core part of the work of the Council. Additional measures have been undertaken, including facilitating the new Resilience Fund to help families with immediate needs that cannot be met by existing charitable services. Again, we are grateful to all our partner organisations, and in this case particularly to Alton Lions. The focus on averting social isolation in the Health and Wellbeing agenda will be even more acute as we emerge into the “new normal”, as we will have to repair the damage of a year’s isolation and some of the existing social support groups may not survive. I have alluded to anti-social behaviour. During the year we have tried to improve communications with the local police and to press for more officers in the locality. We regret that East Hants District Council has not been able to organise any meetings of the Community Partnership that used to provide useful coordination between the relevant organisations. We are now treating the restarting of these meetings as a priority. We also plan to upgrade our CCTV installations in the coming year.

The Climate Emergency remains the greatest threat to our long-term wellbeing. As a Town Council we have declared a climate emergency and intend to take action to move forward on this agenda. We are working closely with ACAN to identify practical steps. We have surveyed all our buildings to determine what action is needed to make them carbon neutral and are now seeking funding to implement these findings.

Thank you for your attention and support through the year.

94 **Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

On the proposal of Councillor Pam Jones, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill, it was

**RESOLVED**

**The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and will be signed by the Town Mayor at a later date.**

**All councillors present voted in favour.**

95 **To table the Alton Town Council Audited Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

Councillors noted the Audited Accounts as presented and that the External Auditor had raised no comments

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Titterington, seconded by Councillor Pam Jones, it was

**RESOLVED**

**To approve the Audited Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

**All councillors present voted in favour**

96 **To receive a presentation from the Town Clerk on the Alton Neighbourhood Plan modification process and Regulation 14 consultation**

The Town Clerk presented the Alton Neighbourhood Plan Modification process and Regulation 14 Consultation. The presentation is appended to the Minutes of this meeting.

Councillor Pam Jones wished to formally minute the council's gratitude and thanks to David Allan and Mike Heelis who had contributed to this process and without whose help, the council would not have been able to keep to the timescale outlined.

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

Local resident Nicole Penn Symons (on behalf of local residents) addressed councillors on the question of vendors operating from The Butts on the public highway. A petition from local residents living in the immediate area had previously been delivered to the Town Hall. Residents wished to make clear to councillors that the issue is growing and rapidly getting out of hand and that matters relating to smell, noise and litter were of concern as was health and safety.

The Mayor advised that the issue was also of concern to the Town Council and that it is taking up the matter with EHDC – but that time delays would be evident. The Town Clerk advised that investigations were continuing as to the best approach to be taken in respect of Prohibition Orders, Consent Streets and Licenced Streets and that further discussions are required with the appropriate authorities to ensure that the right outcomes can be achieved.

The Town Clerk was asked to put together a briefing paper for Town Councillors to explain the differences between the options that are to be considered which will be circulated with the papers

for the April Planning Committee Meeting. In addition, County and District Councillors committed to take forward discussions in tandem with the Town Council.

On the proposal of Councillor Pam Jones, seconded by Councillor Ginny Boxall, it was

**RESOLVED**

**That the Town Clerk prepare a briefing paper to all councillors stating the difference between Consent and Licenced Streets together with details of the legal position in respect of Prohibition Streets across the town and which authority would be responsible for implementing.**

**All councillors present voted in favour.**

There being no further questions, the meeting closed at 7.53 pm.

DRAFT