

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ALTON TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING
HELD ON 15 MARCH 2023 AT 7:00PM**

Present:	Councillor	Ginny Boxall Matthew Bayliss Annette Eyre Graham Hill Graham Titterington Jonathan Waugh	-	Town Mayor
Apologies:	Councillor	Paul Crossley Sharon Cullen Pam Jones Suzie Burns Lewis Jones Richard Platt		
Absent:	Councillor	Annie Lancaster		
In attendance:		Leah Coney Pat Harris Samantha Brown Wendy Simson County Councillor Andrew Joy Sgt Mark O'Hanlon 5 members of the public	- - - - - - -	Town Clerk Admin and Finance Manager Councillor Support/ Admin Officer Finance Officer Neighbourhood Police Team

104 **Welcome and Town Mayors Address**

The Town Mayor welcomed all to the Annual Meeting of Electors and made the following address:

A warm Welcome to this evenings Annual Electors meeting -

I would like to begin this evening with a Big Thankyou to our Town clerk and staff of Alton Town council for all their hard work and the extra mile that they all put in to ensure the smooth running of the council throughout the year.

I would also like to warmly thank my colleagues and fellow councillors for their hard work and the contribution they have all made to the council some over very many years and I believe their contribution should be recognised by this community.

A life of serving in the community is often something that goes unnoticed but I believe passionately that these unsung and unpaid volunteers (and Alton has a great many) deserve our Thanks for all they do for Alton and the wider area; without them our town would be very much impoverished.

I am aware of the great privilege I have had this year to serve as Mayor of Alton and I and my consort my husband Gary have had a wonderful year so far attending a great many different and varied events and it has been a very busy year.

I find it hard to single out just one memorable event but one of the highlights must surely be the Christmas lights switch on which was such a joyous occasion when after the confinement of the pandemic our community were out in force and the high street was absolutely buzzing and a hive of festive activity.

I am fortunate to call Alton my home, I think Alton is a fabulous place to live and surrounded by wonderful accessible countryside and a vibrant community life with so many local groups and associations to join and be part of.

Yes, I am proud to call myself an Altonian having lived here amongst you for All of my formative years and I'm proud to call Alton my home,

I will continue to serve here for long after stepping down as Mayor and I wish the New Town council which will be elected in May all the very best in their endeavours to continue making Alton the very best it can be.

105 **Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 16th March 2022**

On the proposal of Councillor Ginny Boxall, 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.

106 **To table the Alton Town Council Audited Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2022**

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

On the proposal of Councillor Ginny Boxall, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill, it was

RESOLVED

To approve the Audited Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2022

All councillors present voted in favour

107 **Town Mayor to welcome Sergeant Mark O'Hanlon (Neighbourhood Police Team)**

The Town Mayor welcomed Sergeant Mark O'Hanlon (Neighbourhood Police Team) who introduced himself and explained a little about the current position in respect of Alton and the work of the local Neighbourhoods Team.

Sergeant Mark O'Hanlon introduced himself and advised the following:

- He was 2 months into the job in Alton
- He had been in the police force for 24 years; a sergeant for 17 years and in the Neighbourhood Police Team for 12 having carried out a police wide strategic review of neighbourhood policing
- Posting to Alton had been requested by himself and he would be here “for the foreseeable future” – Alton being the heartland of Hampshire where people want to live and work
- Concurred that there had been challenges for the police since the 2008 financial crises during which time they have suffered a 25% reduction in funding. There were new recruits coming in but they are still waiting the reap the rewards of an “experienced” workforce but Alton had a full compliment in the Response and Neighbourhood Team
- Responsibilities for the police include (both obvious and hidden) include
 - A rise in the number of domestic violence incidents
 - Those whose voice cannot be heard including children and those with learning disabilities
 - Working with schools
 - Drugs imbedded – there are a small minority who have succumbed to drug addiction who needed support but also they need to stop drugs coming into the area
 - Bringing those that cause harm to justice
- The positive side of the role included
 - Engagement with the public and to listen to the concerns and Mark has a very enthusiastic team however, some of these were not down to the police such as:
 - Noise complaints – Environmental Health Department at EHDC
 - Parking issues – local authorities EHDC currently but returning to HCC shortly
- Nationally crime is on the rise - a rebound across many sectors following Covid and lock down with both the Health Service and the Police seeing a sharp increase in low level crime. Alton compared to Hampshire:
 - Alton has flatlined compared to a 10% increase across Hampshire
 - Reduction in violent crime reported (which is a trend they wish to see continuing)

Sergeant O’Hanlon advised that this had been a brief overview and encouraged members of the public to continue to report incidents either

- On-line (very quick and very efficient and effective)
- calling 101 (appreciated the frustration of your call being answered)
- e-mailing him direct for any other concerns people may have

Councillors and the public were invited to ask any questions - (Responses from Sergeant O’Hanlon are in italics)

- Mike Heelis – Neighbourhood Watch and what is happening?
 - *There are 3/4 schemes (Speedwatch, Neighbourhood Watch and County Watch) but acknowledges it needs to be improved but a strong reliance upon volunteers. One*

of the areas which they will be working on to engage with the public and improve upon

- Mark Rumsby – Drug use which appears to be spreading and is County Lines in Alton
 - *I am the Zsar for Alton – nationally they have just conducted a major intervention over the last couple of weeks and made arrests, seized drugs and money. Putting it into context in Alton – Class A drugs – yes with a small number of addicts who are known. His job is to close down the supply chains. The Police have good strong links with the schools and college and on a positive note Class A & B drugs – there is access to, but they chose not to and this all comes down to a strong community, good parenting and great links into education. You can count on two hands the number of Class A users in the whole of Hampshire*
- County Councillor Andrew Joy - there is a marked increase in shop-lifting in the town – is this actual or perception and how is it being dealt with and are culprits being let off?
 - *In reality, the crime committed is look at in terms of*
 - *Severity and overall what is best for the victim*
 - *Look at the offender – what is the underlying issue – is there one*
 - *Generally with a young person – educate and look at driving factors*
 - *Repeaters to fund a drug habit – no excuse and need to be held to account. There is a scheme in Hampshire which allows the offender to be taken straight to court which is used as and when such action is required*
- County Councillor Andrew Joy – there is concern about speeding motorists and motor-cyclists
 - *Training has fallen by the wayside in respect of Community Speedwatch - although there is data available from surveys and SLR data capture to identify specific areas; road policing and the use of static vans. Good news is that the local policing team are now all training up on the use of speed guns (laser guns) noting that officers can enforce, but PCSOs cannot. Everything is now in place and there will be a heightened presence.*
- Councillor Graham Hill – there used to be a Police Liaison Committee (PLC) which consisted on both District and Town Councils and council officers who met with the police to share information and look at crime stats – is this something that will be resurrected. Secondly, your views on the 101 service and use of it?
 - *Yes to the PLC and accepts these should be regular but couldn't commit to timngs but it is important to have close communications. Happy to share raw data and raw statistics and then discuss in order to draft the narrative . Scrutiny and buy in is an important part of the role and in developing relationships*
 - *There is criticism of the 101 service and not being able to get through. My own personal experience is that it is a superb service (and I do not have any special access – I have the same access as the general public). He has just come from a control centre and acknowledged call waiting times can be extensive. The stark reality – hugely frustration and people do give up but 101 is the best way of reporting complex issues. If not complex report via Hampshire Policy website/report an incident. There*

is no call waiting indication of where you are in a queue on the 101 service

- Councillor Matthew Bayliss – 1. What can we do as a Town Council to assist the police and 2. What are the police doing about anti-social behaviour involving the use of vehicles and “meets”? 3. Speeding issues on certain roads as Alton has a lot of through traffic – what is happening as the last time I saw any kind of police presence to deter speeding was ages ago although did I hear correctly that there was going to be more presence around the town? 4. Noise issues related to modified motorcycles
 - *I met with the Town Clerk and the team at the Town Hall a couple of weeks ago looking at the issues that concern the Council and looking at the reason why things happen. Such meetings are invaluable and I will be looking to continue these on a regular basis*
 - *The local team is established and a process in place in which there is a high police presence (and visibility) to try and stem anti-social behaviour of this type. Operation Cromium established to thwart car meets and there has been local success at Aldi. Design of the new Lidl site – prevention by design. Sainsburys there is an action plan in place. Alton is very much the “end of the line” so they don’t stay long and the police recently had a “welcoming committee” to deter. Some 200 turned up. Councillor Hill asked whether they use stings to which the response was “used only if they fail to stop” Engagement is key*
 - *I have more officers training in the use of speed guns and yes with good data, I can send my team out to those areas where speeding is a problem. The A31 corridor has good site lines all along it. Through the town, it needs to be backed up with good data*
 - *In respect of mopeds/motorcycles modified to make loud noise there is an initiative Roving Road for Mopeds – restricted speed for “L” plates – decibel meter readings can be taken so there are actions that can and will be taken*
- Councillor Ginny Boxall – will there be more “bobbies on the beat”?
 - *Yes and they will be more visible. Everyone probably knows Gemma. I am also looking to work more closely with local licencees and would certainly like to get Shopwatch up and running again*
- Councillor Graham Hill – CCTV cameras that Alton Town Council have – your views?
 - *Certainly act as a deterrent and useful in providing evidence that can be used – quality is good. The camera footage can (and has been) interrogated to provide useful evidence to the police on a number of occasions and will continue to do so.*

The Mayor thanked Sergeant Mark O’Hanlon for sitting in the “hot seat” and for providing an informative update to both Councillors and members of the public.

108 **Open Forum - To receive questions and statements from Electors of the Alton Town Council area, including those received in advance**

The following questions were received in advance of the meeting and circulated to councillors:

Mr. Andrew Brown (requesting a written response)

Initial acknowledgement Response given: *Thank you for your email which has been circulated to Members in advance of Wednesday's meeting. I have also forwarded to County Councillor Andrew Joy for comment as points 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 fall under Hampshire County Council as the Highways Authority.*

- Following the recent development which has now been completed (Cadnams Farm / Maple Fields) we were led to believe from the original planning application that there was to be installed traffic calming pinch points along Gilbert White Way. This has never come to fruition. Why and when will this be completed?

Response: *We are unable to find any agreement relating to traffic calming made with the Highways authority. There was a junction study undertaken for the feasibility of a roundabout at the bottom of Anstey Road/ Anstey Lane but this subsequently was rejected in favour of traffic lights. The link below (which will be sent) is to the legal agreement relating to the site and the one below to the other planning documents*
https://planningpublicaccess.easthants.gov.uk/online-applications/files/8A94EC4D2786BADCA1D75E5C2B48EC04/pdf/55428_001-S106_AGREEMENT-1187151.pdf

Outline Application for up to 275 dwellings together with associated landscaping, children's play area, open space, infrastructure, car parking and roads (as additional information received 03/09/2014) - Land at Cadnams Farm, Upper Anstey Lane, Shalden, Alton

- The above-mentioned development also indicated that a new mini roundabout would be installed at the junction of Gilbert White Way and Anstey Lane. Again, this has not been installed.

Response: *Please see above – we cannot find any record of a new mini roundabout in this location. Again, the link to the documents may be of assistance but this has been raised with HCC Highways Department who cannot find any agreement for this.*

- Damage to the kerb edging due to construction traffic and day to day use by large vehicles from the above development on the junction of Gilbert White Way and Anstey Lane has not been repaired and continue to be damaged

Response: *We would request that you report this through to HCC roads defects, ideally with photographs* <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance>

- 20 mph speed limit up the Old Odiham Road and along Gilbert White Way. When will this be implemented?

Response: *This is down to HCC – there has been a recent consultation on this and we are expecting a statement soon (the response will be town wide and not just for the location identified by yourself)*

- You erect traffic speed limit signs around the town. Why don't the Council publish the data in the local papers? Minimum speed/maximum speeds and average speeds.

Response: We do not publish data collected as a rule largely due to there being limited speeding across the town, with the exception of a few hot spots such as Lenten Street, Anstey Road and Ashdell Road. However, if you wish to see the raw data for any particular area please let us know and if the SLRs have been deployed in this area we can provide the information to you.

- The community speed watch are rarely seen late in the day/evenings or at night! This is when most speeding takes place around the town.

Response: Alton Community Speed Watch (ACSW) are police volunteers and as such are governed by police protocols. They do not permit Speedwatch to deploy after sundown. We are also reliant on volunteers being available at sometimes unsociable hours. However, static Speed Limit Reminders (SLRs) are deployed at various locations in the town and are rotated to speeding hotspots every couple of weeks. If you would like to volunteer for Speedwatch, do contact the town hall who pass on your request.

- There is no crossing point or patrol for students/parents/pedestrians crossing Anstey Lane to Anstey playing fields, Eggar's School or the amenities within Anstey Park (Edgar Hall, Energique, Air and Army Cadets, Scouts, Playgroup, Football Club, Rugby Club, RBL etc). Should we wait until someone is run over?

Response: The Town Clerk has raised this with our County Councillor who has responded that he has also lobbied for a crossing point in this area previously without success. It has also been highlighted as part of the Cycle Alton Safer Routes to schools proposal which has been submitted as part of the District LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) which was submitted to HCC late last year and has also been highlighted as recently as last week in an LCWIP workshop session with officers from HCC.

2. Mr Mark Rumsby

Dear Leah,

As discussed, could you please bring the issue below to the attention of the town councillors at the Electors' meeting this week:

LIFEBUOY EYESORE ON FLOOD MEADOWS

Problem

Late last year, the Town Council had a large red lifebuoy housing unit installed at the edge of the path on Flood Meadows, in response to a perceived risk of children slipping into the water from the adjacent pontoon.

This is an over-the-top response to a hypothetical problem. The maximum depth of water on the River Wey at Flood Meadows is 18 inches and is usually less than that - sometimes zero. No-one other than a baby could drown there, and a lifebuoy is of no use to a baby. As someone said: "If you're in danger of drowning in the River Wey in Flood Meadows, the answer is simple – sit up!"

The lifebuoy holder is bright red and totally out of keeping with the nature of Flood Meadows. Local residents' comments include "ludicrous"; "hideous", and all agree it's an eyesore.

Solution – Option 1

Remove the lifebuoy and its holder completely. Fix a grille between the rails on the pontoon, so that no child could slip into the water.

Solution – Option 2

Replace the bright red lifebuoy housing with one that is less intrusive, ideally green and preferably fixed to the end of the pontoon rather than on a pole by the path. Examples are:



(as used at Petersfield Lake)



(Aspli Safety Ltd. – bespoke)



(I.C. Brindle & Co. Ltd.)

Solution – Option 3

Over-paint the existing lifebuoy housing and post, with a dark green or dark brown plastic paint. This would be visually more in sympathy with the environment.

I await the councillors' response.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Rumsby

This request is supported by a sample of Alton residents who live around Flood Meadows:

- Ann and Tim Cain
- Brian and Christina Good
- Charles Kaye, and Friends of the River Wey
- Mary McIntosh
- Richard Rowland

Mr Rumsby was asked whether he wished to address the meeting and he stated *Little things that annoy you and one of these is the life buy issue*

Following councillors discussing this item it was suggested that this item be put to a Full Council meeting following the elections in May.

109 **Closing Comments**

The Mayor took the opportunity to thank everyone for attending this evening.

There being no further questions, the meeting closed at 8.15 pm.