

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 28th FEBRUARY 2024 AT 7.00PM AT THE TOWN HALL**

Present: **Councillor** **Annette Eyre (Deputy-Mayor)**
 Don Hammond
 Graham Hill
 Matthew Kellermann
 Mark Boyce-Churn
 Nick O'Brien
 Janice Treacher
 Peter Wadman

In attendance: **Pat Harris** - **Town Clerk**
 Hayley Carter - **Deputy Clerk**
 25 Members of the public

93 To Elect a Town Mayor for the Period from 1st March to 29th May 2024

Deputy Mayor, Annette Eyre, welcomed all members of the public who were attending the meeting and asked for nominations for the position of Town Mayor.

Councillor Kellermann made a personal statement about the outgoing Mayor and proposed the following amendment:

“That in order to restore public confidence and a sense of propriety, the candidates who ‘lost’ the Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral vote of May 17th 2023 are elected unopposed, or at the very least given first refusal of said roles, for the period of March 1st - 29th May 2024”

There was no seconder, therefore the amendment was not carried.

The Town Clerk read out a message from Councillor Bayliss, which he had sent by email ahead of the meeting:

“I just wanted to record my (non-voting) support for Annette taking over as Town Mayor. This would obviously be a few months earlier than would ordinarily be expected, but Annette has my full support”.

On the proposal of Councillor Hammond, seconded by Councillor Hill, Councillor Eyre was nominated and consented to the nomination.

On the proposal of Cllr Kellermann, seconded by Councillor Boyce-Churn, Councillor Bayliss was nominated. He was not present to accept the nomination.

Taken in alphabetical order Councillor Annette Eyre received 7 votes and Councillor Matthew Bayliss 1 vote, thus it was

RESOLVED

Councillor Eyre be elected Town Mayor for the period from 1st March to 29th May 2024.

94 **To receive the Town Mayor's Declaration of Acceptance of Office**

Councillor Annette Eyre read out and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

95 **To Elect a Deputy Town Mayor for the period from 1st March to 29th May 2024**

On the proposal of Councillor Kellermann, seconded by Councillor Eyre, it was

RESOLVED

Councillor Hill be elected as Deputy Town Mayor

All in favour.

96 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Matthew Bayliss, Barbara Tansey, Jonathan Waugh and John Chubb

97 **Deputy Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Deputy Mayor then made the following announcements:

- (i) The Mayor has resigned in the light of the fact that he is being investigated by the police; not because he has been found guilty. Whilst these investigations are ongoing, the Council will not be commenting any further on this matter at this time.
- (ii) The next scheduled Full Council meeting is on Wednesday, 6th March here at the Town Hall.
- (iii) The Annual Electors meeting will be taking place on Wednesday, 13th March and will be held at the Assembly Rooms with a 7.00 p.m. start. Light refreshments will be served from 6.30 p.m. The Agenda will be on published this Friday, 1st March

98 **Minutes of the last meetings held on 7th February 2024**

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor O'Brien, it was

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 7th February 2024

All in favour

99 **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

Councillor Graham Hill declared "I have sought the views of the Deputy Monitoring Officer at EHDC and I wish to make the following two declarations of interest:

- 1. For the Draft Local Plan, item 9, I declare a non-pecuniary interest in that I am also a District Councillor at EHDC, which is the decision-making body for the Draft Local Plan. However, this declaration does not stop me from voting on, or participating in the discussion on, this item.
- 2. For the Neighbourhood Plan, item 10, I also declare a non-pecuniary interest in that I am the nominated Town Councillor member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering

Group. This group has already made recommendations to the Town Council. To avoid any possible conflict of interest I therefore will not be participating in the discussion and will be abstaining on this item.”

100 **Questions to the Council**

100.1 17 pieces of correspondence which had been received after publication of the papers, but before the meeting, had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting and were noted. These can be found in Appendix A.

100.2 Stephen Gough stated that he was speaking as a concerned Altonian who has lived in the town for around 50 years. He is concerned about the over-development of Alton with no extra infrastructure in place. He is very concerned about what is proposed for Neatham Down and said that with Alton being the only town placed in Tier 1 in the Local Plan it was like Alton was being made a dumping ground for development from EHDC, who are quite happily residing within the South Downs National park (SDNP). He questioned the need for so many new homes, stating that there were still lots unsold on the new CALA site.

100.3 Mark Weldon from Binsted spoke next, saying that ALT 8, Neatham Manor proposal is not in Alton but will affect the town. It is highly fertile agricultural land that they propose to build 1250 new homes on with one single access to the site, which is ludicrous. The site would be vehicle dependent as it is not practical at all to walk or cycle from there into Alton. According to his calculation this settlement will create a further 1500 vehicle movements around the Holybourne roundabout on the A31.

If you cover all that beautiful land with concrete the rain will not penetrate the aquifer and come out filtered; it will run directly off the land into the River Wey, causing pollution and flooding further down the river.

100.4 Cathie Weldon added that the whole area will be dependent on the same infrastructure – doctors, dentist, schools, etc. There is absolutely no way that can cope with more building. It is absurd and we need to stop it now.

100.5 Dr June Chatfield spoke about water and sewage flooding – her full statement had been sent in prior to the meeting and can be found in the list of correspondence at Appendix A.

100.6 Toby Winn announced that they have set up saveneathamdown.org and he had brought flyers for anyone who wanted to take one.

100.7 James Willis said that he has lived here for many years and was a GP here. He knows how much work the council have done on this and that they are not often thanked. He said the town owes the councillors a massive debt of gratitude for everything they do.

100.8 Abigail Hils spoke about the big focus on Neatham Down and how the proposed development would impact on the dark night skies. Her and her daughter (who was also present) feel very strongly about that as it is the perfect area from which to observe the night sky. They also feel very strongly about the loss of biodiversity in

these big developments. We would lose so much if Neatham Down were to go ahead. Lots of animals would lose their habitats.

On a positive note, the support from this small community has been immense and Abigail would like to thank Alton for that.

100.9 Gary Mills had registered to speak but said everything he had wanted to say had already been said.

100.10 Andrew Joy stated that he has come wearing a suit and tie tonight because he wants to pay respect to the institution that is the Town Council. He has been a resident for 50 years and recognises that there is fantastic expertise in this room and elsewhere in the town. What we are now having to make decisions on has been crudely imposed on Alton and means a small percentage of the district having to absorb the lions share of development. It is grossly out of proportion and also outside of Alton's boundary – the problem there being that Alton will not get the support for improved infrastructure. Any support resulting from the development at Neatham Down would remain inside that development.

The fundamental issue is with the Local Plan and this has been well articulated by the people speaking this evening.

Andrew went on to say that huge credit and immense respect needs to go to everyone involved with the Neighbourhood Plan. People need to be respectful of the quality of work that has been done but understand that there is no point coming up with site allocations until the problems with the Local Plan are resolved.

101 **Response to Local Plan**

Councillor Kellermann proposed an amendment, that a 'Statement of Principle' should be made that "Alton Town Council objects to any further development of green fields (in and around the Parish) to meet the quotas handed down by EHDC." Councillor Hill seconded the amendment and thus it was

RESOLVED

To amend the resolution to make a Statement of Principle that Alton Town Council objects to any further development of green fields (in and around the Parish) to meet the quotas handed down by EHDC, in addition to approving ATC's response to the EHDC Local Plan Regulation 18 (2024) as tabled

On the proposal of Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Hammond, it was

RESOLVED to

- i) approve ATC's response to the EHDC Local Plan Regulation 18 (2024) as tabled (see Appendix B)**
- ii) to make a Statement of Principle that Alton Town Council objects to any further development of green fields (in and around the Parish) to meet the quotas handed down by EHDC.**

All in favour

102 **Alton Neighbourhood Plan**

The Deputy Mayor thanked all the volunteers on the ANPSG and said she recognised the immense amount of work that has been done and how they always put their heart and soul into it.

Councillor Hill reminded the meeting about his declaration but indicated he would remain in the room as his interest is non-pecuniary.

Following indications from councillors that they wanted to defer the approval of the removal of site allocations from the Neighbourhood Plan until they heard back about the response to the Local Plan, the Town Clerk reminded everyone that EHDC do not respond to individual comments or submissions on the Local Plan and there would be no feedback on the outcome of the Reg 18 consultation until at least July.

Councillor O'Brien then proposed an amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Hammond, and thus it was

RESOLVED

to amend the resolution in order that approval of the removal of site allocations from the draft Neighbourhood Plan could be deferred until such time as a meeting has been organised with the Steering Group to provide more information.

All in favour

On the proposal of Councillor O'Brien, seconded by Councillor Hammond, it was

RESOLVED

to defer approval of the removal of site allocations from the draft Neighbourhood Plan until such time as a meeting has been organised with the Steering Group to provide more information.

All in favour

103 **Planning Application – Palace Cinema**

On the proposal of Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Kellermann, it was

RESOLVED to submit a response of No Objection to the application 32440/008 for the building previously used as a two-screen cinema to be converted and extended into 6 Flats (Class C3)

All in favour

104 **Landlord's Consent: Alton Assembly Rooms**

104.1 On the proposal of Councillor Hammond, seconded by Councillor Eyre, it was

RESOLVED to grant Landlord's Consent to Dementia Friendly Alton to install a stairlift at the Assembly Rooms

All in favour.

The meeting closed at 8.18pm