

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 6TH MARCH 2024 AT 7.00PM AT THE TOWN HALL**

Present: **Councillor** **Annette Eyre (Town Mayor)**
 Matthew Bayliss
 Don Hammond
 Graham Hill
 Matthew Kellermann
 John Chubb
 Nick O'Brien
 Janice Treacher
 Peter Wadman

In attendance: **Pat Harris** - **Town Clerk**
 Hayley Carter - **Deputy Clerk**
 2 Members of the public
 County Councillor Andrew Joy
 Anthony Williams, Chairman of East Hampshire District Council

105 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Barbara Tansey, Jonathan Waugh and Mark Boyce-Churn

106 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Town Mayor:

- i. Welcomed everyone to the meeting
- ii. Reminded everyone that next week is the Annual Elector's Meeting at 7pm in the Assembly Rooms, preceded by refreshments at 6.30pm. All are welcome.
- iii. Told the meeting of the two tree planting sessions she had attended in the last two weeks, planting community orchards at Hawthorns and Barley Fields. She said it was a pleasure to see so many people of different ages supporting the project and helping to plant the trees.

107 Minutes of the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting held on 28th February 2024

Councillor Kellermann stated that he wanted the word 'lost' to be put in inverted commas in his proposed amendment regarding the election of a new Town Mayor. He also pointed out an error in that the recorded vote on the same item said, "All in Favour", despite being recorded 7-1. The Deputy Clerk agreed with the request and the amendments were made by the Chair.

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

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Full Council meeting held on 28th February 2024, with the amendments proposed

All in favour

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

No Declarations of Interest were noted.

109 **Questions to the Council**

109.1 Moira Howells indicated she was happy to answer any questions councillors had about the grant application for the Party in the Park.

110 **Response to Planning Applications 35940/003 and 35940/004**

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

RESOLVED

To submit a response of No Objection to Full Planning Application 35940/003 and Application for Listed Building Consent 35940/004 for 4 High Street, Alton, GU34 1BU for conversion and change of use from offices to 5No. 1 and 2 bedroom apartments and remodelling of rear extension with terrace above and enclosed railings.

All in favour

111 **Landlord's Consent – Chawton Park Indoor Bowls Club**

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

RESOLVED

to grant Landlords approval to Chawton Park Indoors Bowls Club to enter into a Licence with South East Water for the purpose of providing space within their car park area for a works compound for a period of 2 months from 22nd April 2024 for a fee of £3,000.

All in favour

112 **Event Grant – Party in the Park**

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

RESOLVED

to approve an Event Grant for the Party in the Park event in the sum of £500 (five hundred pounds)

All in favour

113 Re-instatement of Meet the Councillor Sessions

A proposed amendment was tabled that the sessions:

- i. be held for a trial period of two months with two sessions per month (one on a Saturday and one on a Tuesday)
- ii. each last one hour, with a degree of flexibility according to demand
- iii. are held in 16 Market Square (the middle unit below the Town Hall)
- iv. have two councillors present at each one
- v. are publicised in the Altonian and through social media once councillors have signed up for them

This was proposed by Councillor Hammond and seconded by Councillor O'Brien with all councillors in favour, therefore the amendment was carried.

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

RESOLVED

to reinstate the Meet the Councillor sessions for a trial period of two months as detailed in the amendment above.

All in favour.

Councillors agreed to draw up a rota and advise dates they would be undertaking so that Town Hall Staff could publicise widely.

114 Internal Audit Report

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

RESOLVED

To approve the Internal Audit Report as tabled.

All in favour.

115 Accounts to 29th February 2024

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

RESOLVED

to confirm approval of:

1. **The balance sheet dated 29th February 2024**
2. **The Income and Expenditure account to 29th February 2024**
3. **The bank reconciliations for the Unity Account and the CCLA Deposit Account**
4. **The Payments over £500 covering 1st -29th February 2024**

All in favour.

116 **To receive a Report from and ask questions of the County Council and District Council Representatives**

The report submitted prior to the meeting by District Councillor Emily Young was noted.

County Councillor Andrew Joy offered his gratitude to the Town Clerk for sending through a guide template for reports. He then reminded councillors that the consultation on future services provided by the County Council is open until next month and invited any questions from the council.

The Town Clerk asked if he could clarify the County Council's position on potholes, given that there have been many complaints made to the Town Council about them recently. Councillor Joy replied that there is an enormous effort going on and more funds have been made available from reserves, but that it is impossible to make the repairs when they are so full of water. He said that Councillor Adams-King is really dynamic on this issue and is very pro-active and teams are out constantly trying to keep on top of them. Councillor Joy has already fed back to him that Alton is particularly bad at the moment.

Anyone can report potholes or other highways issues via the 'Ourhants' app or by emailing roads@hants.gov.uk.

The Town Clerk then asked Councillor Joy to confirm that the additional work which is having to be completed at the junction between Basingstoke Road and Pertuis Avenue would be at the cost of the contractor and not the public. Councillor Joy assured the meeting this was the case.

The Town Clerk went on to ask if the changes to the number 13 bus service within the town would be permanent as she had heard that they were. The route the service takes within the town centre has been reduced in order to mitigate the additional time it is taking to get from Bordon to Alton with its current diversion through Selborne, resulting from the SSE works on the B3004. The new route is affecting residents of Southview Rise and Greenfields who no longer have easy access to the service. Councillor Kellermann said he had been in touch with Stagecoach.

Councillor Bayliss asked again whether Hampshire County Council had thought about a referendum to raise council tax in order to reduce the need to cut services. Councillor Joy reminded the meeting that they could only raise it by a certain amount – if they wish to raise it by more they would need to get government approval to take it to a referendum. He said that because they had in the past frozen council tax, and then raised it by a very small amount, Hampshire now have the second lowest shire county tax in the country. This is now meaning that they are around 10-15% behind where they could be, even if they were in the middle range.

Councillor Bayliss went on to ask whether there was any benefit in ATC putting in a corporate response to the consultation. Councillor Joy replied that yes, any response would be considered with due weight. Councillor Williams said that Headley Parish Council (his parish) had decided to put in a response as a council. One councillor had led it and the rest had contributed by email, then it had gone to Full Council for approval. He suggested that it would be good if there were a councillor who could lead it.

Councillor Joy added that councillors could send their comments to the Town Clerk for her to pool together and create a response for Council to approve and submit.

Councillor Hill pointed out that while services such as waste disposal and potholes were very visible to the public, services such as adult social care have huge costs attached but are not necessarily visible to the public unless they are experiencing them first-hand. He asked Councillor Joy to clarify whether the huge amount of reserves held by HCC were being used for the purpose for which they were intended. Councillor Joy said that indeed they were and around £175 million had been drawn upon to meet the increase in need and the increase in the cost of delivery. However, those funds can only be used once.

The meeting closed at 7.58pm.