

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2024 AT 7.00PM AT THE TOWN HALL**

Present: **Councillor** **Annette Eyre (Town Mayor)**
 Mark Boyce-Churn
 John Chubb
 Don Hammond
 Graham Hill
 Matthew Kellermann
 Nick O'Brien

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

57 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Jonathan Waugh, Doug Richards, Peter Wadman, Matthew Bayliss, Janice Treacher and Barbara Tansey

58 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked members of the public for attending. She reminded all those attending that in accordance with the Council's published Recording of Meetings Policy, as displayed on the door, anyone wishing to record a meeting is requested to let the Chair of the meeting know prior to or at the start of the meeting.

If anyone does not wish to be recorded, they must make the Chair of the meeting aware. No filming of any member of the public is allowed without their consent, or of any child or vulnerable person without the consent of them and their parent, guardian or carer.

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12 paragraph 41 (1) only the official signed minutes of the council and its committees will be recognised as the formal, statutory and legally binding record of a meeting.

59 Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 4th September 2024

Councillor Kellermann wished it to be noted that he did not feel the minutes accurately reflected the meeting and he could not see why technology and AI could not be used to write the minutes.

Councillor Hill thanked the officers, particularly Mrs Harris and Mrs Carter, for producing an excellent, very comprehensive set of minutes and Councillor Chubb added that he was in complete agreement and added his thanks to this. Councillor Hill went on to congratulate the Town Mayor for chairing such a busy meeting as well as she did.

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

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 4th September 2024

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill and O'Brien

Against: Councillor Kellermann

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

No Declarations of Interest were noted.

61 **Correspondence Received and Questions to the Council**

61.1 Telephone call followed up with an E-mail confirmation from Treloars College that they have taken delivery of their brand-new electric bus and thanking the Town Council for the £10,000 CIL funding agreed in 2023 towards the cost of the vehicle.

61.2 Mr Paul Fitzgibbon said "At the last council meeting I was one of those raising concerns with the draft neighbourhood plan. I did this to try and help address what seemed an obviously unfair approach that may have failed at referendum. Given where we are with the process I wanted to come this evening and offer the council some support moving forward. To that end I have a simple suggestion. I wonder if the council might make use of the immediate next few weeks to conduct a "lessons learnt" exercise, a simple yet structured reflection while events are still fresh in the mind. It seems to me that this could be done very quickly, be potentially very useful and cost nothing - it may for example help the communications agency being briefed, and with the formation of a new steering group. It would also demonstrate the council wants to learn from the process thus far. I am thinking of a simple survey of various parties, asking three questions about the previous steering group's work - what worked, what didn't work, and what improvements could be made going forward. I would be able to conduct the survey - perhaps with help from Rob Fowell and John Bound, to anonymise the feedback and to make a simple qualitative analysis of the results. The people I would survey - all individually - are the past steering group (who may/may not participate), councillors, EHDC officers, our consultants, residents groups, ATC staff.

Before making this offer to help I thought I would assess how easy this would be to do and so I have, in the past 48 hours, made a start of sorts - I have asked those three questions of two groups of people and received some very interesting and potentially useful feedback; it was incredibly easy to do.

My simple request is for the council to approve proceeding with this suggestion at this meeting so I can get on with it (I can't think why you wouldn't want to do this); I will work with John and Rob to analyse and summarise the findings and provide them to you all in the next few weeks. That's my offer of help."

The council advised that as this was not on the agenda for decision it could not be a formal resolution this evening. Mr Fitzgibbon therefore said he would just take it upon himself to do it and present his findings to council before their workshop in

November, in the hope that the council would be able to use the information and would find it useful.

61.3 Mr Len Meek spoke about the state of the streets in Alton and what a mess some of the pavements and roads are. He said some pavements are unusable as they are so overgrown, in particular the Ashdell Road / Turk Street junction. He has lived in the town for sixteen years and is sick of the state of the place. The Town Clerk asked Mr Meek to provide her with his phone number before he left so that she could arrange for an officer to call him to find out exactly which areas he felt required maintenance so that it could be reported to the appropriate authority.

61.4 Mr Anthony Furnival raised three points:

- He would like to see recorded voting as he feels it is important for transparency. He suggested that Standing Orders could be changed so that all votes are recorded. However, the Deputy Clerk pointed out that particular Standing Order is worded in law. She pointed out that the vote in minute reference 46, which Mr Furnival was specifically referring to, was not recorded because she had been unable to see all councillors from her position at the front of the Assembly Rooms and so had just counted hands. As no councillor had requested a recorded vote names had not been recorded at the time and so the minute could not later be changed.
- He had raised the involvement of the previous Town Clerk as a consultant and did not get a response following the 4th September meeting. He says it is important to give feedback and get rid of the 'them and us' perception and not responding to people does not encourage them to continue getting involved.
- With regards Kings Pond he asked that councillors consider a motion to commit to spending equal amounts of money on multiple options for the pond. In particular he would like a commitment from council that the option of keeping the pond will also be explored.

Councillor Eyre advised that councillors have two workshops in their diaries over the next two months; one on Kings Pond and one on Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Chubb stated that the appointment of Oneill Homer as consultants on the Neighbourhood Plan had been a council decision, made around eighteen months previously, and retaining them once the former clerk had taken up employment with them was not a decision they had taken lightly, but her local knowledge and care for the town was seen as a positive thing, not a negative. He went on to say that recorded voting is not always a good thing as the council has collective accountability for its decisions and councillors must abide by those decisions whichever way they voted at the time. It is not about political gain for any one individual councillor.

Mr Furnival said that he felt a lot of the problems with ill-feeling in the town comes down to a problem with communication.

Councillor Hill acknowledged this and agreed that communication is a big issue. He went on to point out that the council had already resolved (18th January 2023, *minute reference 162*) to explore all options for Kings Pond and had set aside £25,000 to do so. They had also resolved to set aside £250,000 to undertake whatever work was eventually decided upon following further public consultation.

Councillor Kellermann said that he disagreed with Councillor Chubb in that it is not a collective decision, it is a majority decision.

Councillor Chubb responded by stating that he had said collective accountability, not collective decision.

62 **To receive a report from and ask questions of County and District Councillors**

Councillor Hill told the meeting that he had taken on the responsibility of organising a rota for various District Councillors to ensure the Town Council received a written report once a quarter.

63 **Council Structure – Alton Town Council Ways of Working**

63.1 On the proposal of Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor O’Brien, it was

RESOLVED to:

Confirm the Committee structure of the Council comprising of Full Council, Climate Change, Planning Committee & Staffing

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill and O’Brien

Against: Councillor Kellermann

63.2 On the proposal of Councillor Boyce-Churn, seconded by Councillor Kellermann, it was

RESOLVED to:

Formally dissolve the position of Champions

All in favour

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

RESOLVED to:

Approve the amended Terms of Reference for the Climate Change Committee

All in favour

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

RESOLVED to:

Confirm the appointment of Councillor Doug Richards as Councillor Representative to the Allotment Committee

All in favour

63.5 Councillor Kellermann stated that he had offered to put together a rota for the “meet the councillor” sessions but needed formal approval to do so from the council. He therefore proposed an amendment to the resolution, to add on “with Councillor Matthew Kellermann being requested to organise the rota”. This was seconded by Councillor O’Brien with all voting in favour, therefore the amendment was carried.

Therefore, on the proposal of Councillor Kellermann, seconded by Councillor Boyce-Churn, it was

RESOLVED to:

Confirm the re-establishment of “meet the Councillor sessions” to be held on a Saturday morning in the middle unit of the ground floor of the Town Hall building with Councillor Matthew Kellermann being requested to organise the rota

All in favour.

64 **Jubilee Playing Fields circular path upgrade – appointment of a contractor**

Councillor Kellermann stated that he had a problem with the process and could not understand why councillors were only provided with the tender information as ‘Contractor A, B, C and D’. He felt that the names of the contractors should have been published. He also wanted to know who had authorised Councillor Hammond to take part in the opening of the tenders. The Deputy Clerk pointed out that ATC’s Financial Regulations dictate that all sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of council. Coincidentally Councillor Hammond was in the office dealing with another matter and volunteered to undertake this role. Councillor Kellermann went on to demand to know why councillors had not been provided with the full breakdown of the marking and the technical information for the project. The Town Clerk pointed out that all councillors had been sent the full papers almost a week in advance of the meeting and if any councillor felt that they had been provided with insufficient information upon which to base a decision, they should have raised this in advance so the additional information could be circulated to all councillors; Councillor Kellermann should not be haranguing officers in this way in a public meeting.

Councillor Chubb asked whether the recommended contractor had been involved in drawing up the specification. The Deputy Clerk said that two contractors had initially scoped the work for the purposes of the grant applications and the specification drawn from that, and the recommended contractor was one of them. Councillor Chubb said that for the record he felt it had been done fairly.

Councillor Hill added that the council has a team of professional officers who do a very good job of making appropriate recommendations for councillors to make a decision.

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

RESOLVED

To award the Jubilee Field Circular Path Upgrade contract to Contractor A – Blakedown Landscapes - at a contract price of £80,684.33.

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill and O’Brien

Against: Councillor Kellermann

65 Neighbourhood CIL – Brewery Heritage trail – Changes to the project to be approved

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

RESOLVED

to confirm that the changes that have had to be undertaken to the original design of the project still satisfy the terms and conditions of the CIL grant awarded by the Town Council

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill and O'Brien

Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

66 Statement of Accounts

Councillor Chubb acknowledged that it was fantastic budgeting but stated that he felt there was too much money in the current account. The Town Clerk confirmed that the second half of the precept had just been received and so a transfer had not yet been done into the Deposit Account.

Councillor Kellermann stated that he would be abstaining because he did not feel that he had been provided with sufficient time to absorb all the financial information.

On the proposal of Councillor Boyce-Churn, seconded by Councillor Hammond, it was

RESOLVED

to confirm approval of:

- 1. The balance sheet dated 30th September 2024**
- 2. The Income and Expenditure account to 30th September 2024**
- 3. The bank reconciliations for the Unity Account and the CCLA Deposit & Property Fund Accounts**
- 4. The Payments over £500 covering 1st August-30th September 2024**
- 5. The Internal Auditors report to the period 30th September 2024**
- 6. The Financial Risk Assessment 2024/25**

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill and O'Brien

Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

67 External Auditors Report

Councillor Kellermann stated that he could not possibly approve the External Auditors Report as he could not be sure of their impartiality. The Town Clerk confirmed that the External Auditor is provided to the council by a higher authority, not appointed by the council itself or officers.

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

RESOLVED

To approve the content of the external auditors report for 2023/24 financial year

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill and O'Brien

Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

68 **Road Naming – Lord Treloar site**

Councillor Chubb noted that for future sites the council should perhaps be taking into account people who have done good work in the town and should be recognised, rather than just historical references, as history is being made all the time.

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

RESOLVED

to approve the following road names at the former Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital site: Andrews Way; Argyle Gardens and Smart Close which followed consultation with local historian Jane Hurst.

All in favour.

69 **Lease Arrangements**

69.1 On the proposal of Councillor Chubb, seconded by Councillor Hammond, it was

RESOLVED

To grant a new 35-year Lease to Alton Tennis Club.

All in favour

69.2 On the proposal of Councillor Chubb, seconded by Councillor Hammond, it was

RESOLVED

To grant a new 35-year Lease to Alton Rugby Club.

All in favour

70 **Alton Neighbourhood Plan update**

Councillor Kellermann declared that he was not happy that the clerk had issued a press release, which had been copied to all councillors for information. He felt this was over-reaching yet again by officers. In his opinion he stated that the sentence about Oneill Homer was inflammatory, which served to negate the bland nature of the statement. The Town Mayor pointed out that the Town Clerk at the workshop had asked twice for clarification of

what councillors wanted to see in the press release while she made notes, and that the Town Clerk had consulted with the Mayor on it before sending. Councillor Hill pointed out that for clarity of process, the Town Clerk and the Town Mayor may issue a factual press release, which this was. Oneill Homer are our consultants and remain as such, and on balance he felt it was right to confirm that in the statement. Councillor Chubb said that for the record he felt that the Town Clerk and the Town Mayor were acting in the best interests of the Council. Councillor O'Brien added his thanks to the Town Clerk for getting the statement out in a timely manner following the workshop and Councillor Hammond confirmed that everything in the statement was factually correct.

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

RESOLVED

to confirm the action placed on the Town Clerk to scope a briefing paper and submit to professional communication companies

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill and O'Brien

Against: Councillor Kellermann

71 **Alton Town Council's response to the Government consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system**

Councillor Kellermann stated that he had been misrepresented as he had replied to the Town Clerk when she circulated the Draft Council Response to councillors, telling her that he could not put his name to it as he did not agree with all of its content.

Councillor Boyce-Churn said that meetings were for decision making, not attacks on officers.

Councillor Hill said that before he went any further, he would like to thank the Town Clerk for putting in a very detailed response and for working on a Sunday to get this done before the deadline. He said that we must appreciate that our officers work hard to respond quickly and put together expert responses. The Town Clerk's response was very much in line with EHDC's, and they had a whole team working on it.

Councillor Kellermann replied that he had made it perfectly clear that he wanted a note attached that he did not support it.

Councillor Hill pointed out that this response was on behalf of the council, not individual councillors, but that the consultation was open to everyone, and all councillors were welcome to submit their own individual responses. He asked if any councillor had. The answer was "No".

Councillor Eyre clarified that this response was submitted from Alton Town Council and not from just a few councillors who wanted to put their name to it. Councillors must respect a majority decision. She went on to thank the Town Clerk for preparing the response, circulating it for agreement and then adding it to the agenda for retrospective approval, which was the only way the council could have submitted it by the deadline. She said she thought the Town Clerk had done an excellent job on the document and had picked up points she would not have even thought of.

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

RESOLVED

to retrospectively approve the submission as on behalf of Alton Town Council.

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill and O'Brien

Against: Councillor Kellermann

72 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

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

RESOLVED

That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 section 1, subsection 2, and, as per subsection 3A, where the public are excluded from a meeting of a relevant local government body under subsection (2), the body may also prevent any person from reporting on the meeting using methods-
(a) which can be used without that person's presence at the meeting, and
(b) which enable persons not present at the meeting to see or hear the proceedings at the meeting as it takes place or later.

All in favour.

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION

73 **Code of Conduct complaint**

See confidential minute.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm