

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

Present: **Councillor** **Annette Eyre (Town Mayor)**
 Matthew Bayliss
 John Chubb
 Don Hammond
 Graham Hill
 Matthew Kellermann
 Doug Richards
 Barbara Tansey
 Janice Treacher
 Peter Wadman
 Jonathan Waugh

In attendance: **Pat Harris** - **Town Clerk**
 Hayley Carter - **Deputy Clerk**
 County Councillor Andrew Joy
 11 Members of the public

74 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Nick O'Brien, and Mark Boyce-Churn.

75 Town Mayor's Announcements

1. The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked members of the public for attending and informed the meeting that the Remembrance Parade starts from Market Square at 10am on Sunday.
2. 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.
3. She then went on to say:
"I would like to take this opportunity, at the start of this meeting, to draw your attention to a few sections of the revised Member Officer Protocol that is first on our agenda this evening.

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- The reputation and integrity of the council is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of councillors and officers working together to support each other's roles.

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- At the heart of this Protocol is the importance of mutual respect and also of civility. Councillor/officer relationships are to be conducted in a positive and constructive way.
- Councillors shall not criticise or complain about officers, nor raise faults relating to the conduct or capability of any officer (or officers collectively), at meetings held in public, in the press, on social media, or in any other public manner, or in any manner that is incompatible with this Protocol.
- A councillor who is unhappy about the conduct of an officer must:
 - avoid personal attacks on, or abuse of, the officer at all times
 - ensure that any criticism is well founded
 - ensure that any criticism is raised in private (not in public)
 - raise the concern with the Town Clerk in respect of officers, or the Chair of the Staffing Committee in respect of the Town Clerk

Whilst the wording of the Member Officer Protocol has been updated and clarified, the principles that I have just referred to have not changed.

I would also like to draw your attention to Standing Order 2a in our Standing Orders, which says the following.

2a. No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is ignored, the chair of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.

If we find ourselves in a situation where a member is not following the Member Officer Protocol, Standing Order 2a enables me, as the chair, to draw this to the attention of the member concerned and ask that member to confirm that they will improve their conduct in line with the Member Officer Protocol.

If that person should decide not to improve their conduct, whether this is because they choose not to respond positively to my request for confirmation or it becomes evident from their subsequent conduct in the meeting, Standing Orders 2b and 2c will apply.

Standing Order 2b says:

2b: If person(s) disregard the request of the chair of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the chair of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or be excluded from the meeting. The motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.

Standing Order 2c says:

2c: If a resolution made under standing order 2(b) is ignored, the chair of the meeting may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include temporarily suspending or closing the meeting.

Thankfully, these Standing Orders seldom need to be referred to, but I believe it is important to be reminded from time to time that they are there and may be called upon should the need arise."

Councillor Kellermann wished it to be noted that he did not feel the minutes accurately reflected the meeting. Councillor Chubb asked for examples of what was inaccurate, but Councillor Kellermann refused to give any. Councillor Hill pointed out that the draft minutes were published within two days of the meeting and any factual inaccuracies should be raised immediately, not the following month after all the papers have been published.

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

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 9th October 2024

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Chubb, Hammond and Hill

Against: Councillor Kellermann

Abstained (due to being absent from the 9th October meeting): Councillors Bayliss, Richards, Tansey, Treacher, Wadman and Waugh

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

No Declarations of Interest were noted.

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

78.1 Mr and Mrs Stickland had written to councillors to voice their concerns about planning application 60389/001 which forms item 7.2 on the agenda.

78.2 County Councillor Andrew Joy gave his update to councillors:

- He had been to a waste and recycling site meeting at Waterbrook Road
- He had been investigating an apparent breakdown in communication between EHDC and HCC regarding verge clearance around the roundabout at the western end of town, which is now being addressed.
- With regards the Market Street application, he pointed out that number 16 is a listed building, and the turret is an archaeological feature which anyone would recognise. Yes, there were buildings there before, but they were only ever two storeys. Also, putting a blank wall up against the windows of this listed building is completely unacceptable. He went on to say the new vehicle access is inadequate, the whole proposal is ill-thought-through, and he hopes that the Town Council will put in a strong objection.
- With regards the proposed traveller site adjacent to Lumbry Park, he has been involved with it for twelve years and it is constantly being refused but the refusals are being flouted. The proposal requires a new access onto the Selborne Road which is extremely dangerous, especially for getting caravans in and out.

78.3 Mr Meek said that he was interested to hear that Waterbrook was being cleared up, but the section of road just under the railway bridge where Ashdell Road meets Turk Street still needs clearing up. He spoke about it last month, but it still needs doing. He has great concerns about the cleanliness of Alton and wants to know why we should put up with living in such a mess when we all pay our taxes. He said that he appreciates that it is the responsibility of EHDC or HCC, but he can never get through to either of them and so the only conduit he has is to come and speak to the Town

Council. He said that even when they do work the contractors do not clean up behind themselves.

Councillor Hill suggested that Mr Meek take it up directly with his District Councillor, Suzie Burns, and send her photographs, so she can raise it directly for him.

Councillor Bayliss asked if it is possible to get a reminder of service level arrangements so that all councillors are on the same page and know what should be happening when and whose responsibility it is.

78.4 Anthony Furnival read out his statement which can be found at appendix A.

78.5 Mr Mike Hannan spoke about

- Kings Pond, saying that looking at the plans it seems that there are only two options that the council are willing to consider.
- LCWIP, saying that he agreed with some bits of the response but not with other parts, in particular the section through Holybourne. He agreed that the improvements around the junction by the French Horn looked good.

79 **Member Officer Protocol**

Following Councillor Wadman pointing out that it would be prudent to clarify that councillors are elected representatives, not servants, Councillor Bayliss proposed amending the word ‘servant’ to ‘elected representative’ throughout the document. This amendment was seconded by Councillor Eyre with all councillors voting in favour, therefore the amendment was carried.

Thus, on the proposal of Councillor Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Eyre, it was

RESOLVED:

to adopt the Member Officer Protocol with the word ‘servant’ replaced by ‘elected representative’ when referring to councillors throughout the document.

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Chubb, Hammond, Hill, Richards, Tansey, Treacher, Wadman and Waugh

Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

80 **Planning Applications**

80.1 On the proposal of Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Eyre, it was

RESOLVED to:

OBJECT to Full Planning Application (Part retrospective) 50817/016 - Land East of Lumbry Cottages, Selborne Road, for the same three reasons as they objected to the previous application:

- 1. The site is situated within Flood Zone 3, and thus the development is at the highest risk of flooding.**
- 2. The contour of the site runs a high risk of run off into the Lavant Stream causing potential pollution and contamination and the Case**

Officer should ensure that the Environment Agency are consulted for a better understanding of the issue.

3. The proposed development by virtue of its unsafe vehicular access, lack of sufficient visibility splays and close proximity to the Lumbry Park turning, would result in significant harm to the safe and effective operation of the highway network.

All in favour.

80.2 On the proposal of Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Waugh, it was

RESOLVED to:

STRONGLY OBJECT to Planning Application 60389/001 – Land between 12-16 Market Street, Alton, as:

1. The scale and setting of the proposal is inappropriate and represents an overdevelopment of the site.
2. The Heritage statement does not appear to reflect accurately the impact of the proposals on the adjacent listed buildings and the conservation area. The Town Council would like to know what the Heritage officer's assessment, mentioned in the application, was.
3. This is the entrance to an underground car park which houses around thirty cars. Providing such a restricted one-way access to this and the service area for the commercial and residential properties would be potentially dangerous and certainly cause inconvenience and obstruction.
4. The development would create a dangerous situation whereby vehicles would have limited space in which to manoeuvre across a pedestrian walkway / public right of way and which could also lead to vehicles having to reverse back onto the highway, nor does it allow access to the larger vehicles which deliver to the site, or to the refuse collection vehicles.

All in favour

81 **Kings Pond – approval of additional expenditure**

Councillor Bayliss proposed an amendment to add the work 'ecological' before 'survey' in the resolution. This was seconded by Councillor Hill with all councillors voting in favour and so the amendment was carried.

Councillor Kellermann proposed a further amendment to add in "the time-sensitive surveys that are required by law". There being no seconder, the amendment was not taken to a vote.

Thus, on the proposal of Councillor Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Hill, it was

RESOLVED

To approve an additional budget of £15,000 to cover the additional ecological survey work required in preparation of being able to submit applications to both the Environmental Agency & EHDC Planning.

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Chubb, Hammond, Hill, Richards, Tansey, Treacher, Wadman and Waugh

Against: Councillor Kellermann

Councillor Hammond asked that the ‘reset’ Mr Furnival was asking for should work both ways, and could everything the council is doing please be taken in the spirit that it is meant, as the council are working really hard to make sure everything is communicated properly to the public and that all the appropriate information is gathered before it is taken to a full public consultation where the public can make an informed decision. A series of presentations have been organised to ensure the town is kept up to date with what has happened so far and what the next steps are, and all survey results have been published on the council website, as would be all future survey results. Councillor Chubb pointed out that the council are committed to maintaining a great facility for the people of Alton and that no decisions have been made about the space and nor will they be without public consultation. Mr Furnival interrupted to say that there was no point spending this much money on surveys and research without asking the public what they want, and he had been told that the biodiversity net gain would raise £1 million for the council in doing the work at Kings Pond. Councillors pointed out that any money raised from biodiversity net gain would be done purely to help fund whatever solution was decided on at Public Consultation; there is absolutely no ‘profit’ to be made from it. All the survey work and research being undertaken is to get solid facts, rather than fiction and hearsay, to take to the public.

82 **Community Canopy Project**

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

RESOLVED

to grant an “in principle” agreement for a permanent structure to be erected in the Public Gardens, subject to planning approval being obtained.

All in favour.

83 **Kings Arms Youth Services**

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

RESOLVED

to accept the report.

All in favour.

84 **Statement of Accounts to 31st October 2024**

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

RESOLVED

To confirm approval of:

1. The balance sheet dated 31st October 2024
2. The Income and Expenditure account to 31st October 2024
3. The bank reconciliations for the Unity Account and the CCLA Deposit & Property Fund Accounts
4. The Payments over £500 covering 1st-31st October 2024
5. The Pension Audit Letter
6. Transfer of £150,000 from the Unity Current to the Deposit Account on 31st October

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Chubb, Hammond, Hill, Richards, Tansey, Treacher, Wadman and Waugh
 Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

85 **Events Program for 2025**

Tuesday, 18 th February 2025	Pancake Race	Public Gardens
7 th -12 th April 2025	Easter Egg Trail	Public Gardens
Saturday, 11 th May 2025	Spring Garden Fayre	Public Gardens
1 st -31 st May 2025	Alton Walking Festival	Various locations
Sunday, 1 st June	Community Big Lunch	Public Gardens
Saturday, 21 st June 2025	Regency Day & statue unveiling	Assembly Rooms Lawns
June-September 2025	Picnics in the Park	Public Gardens
	Details to be confirmed	
June-August 2025	Wellbeing Wednesdays & Selfcare Sundays	
	Details of exact program to be confirmed	
July-August 2025	Fun Fridays – Summer Holidays	Public Gardens
	25 th July 1 st , 8 th , 15 th , 22 nd & 29 th August	
14 th -20 th October 2025	Autumn Walking Festival	Various Locations

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

RESOLVED

to approve the Alton Town Council's Events Program for 2025 as tabled (shown above).

All in favour.

86 **Review of Alton Town Council Policies**

86.1 Councillor Bayliss proposed removal of several words to amend the tabled policy to read as follows:

“Section 2 – Who is covered by the policy?”

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels and grades, including the Town Clerk, employees (whether permanent, fixed-term or temporary), consultants, contractors, trainees, seconded staff, casual workers, agency staff, volunteers, interns, wherever located (collectively referred to as workers in this policy)."

However, following further discussion about what constituted 'normal and appropriate hospitality', there was no seconder for this amendment and instead, on the proposal of Councillor Eyre, seconded by Councillor Bayliss, it was

RESOLVED

To DEFER the new Bribery & Corruption for Staff Policy.

All in favour

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

RESOLVED

To DEFER the new Bribery & Corruption for Councillors Policy as tabled.

All in favour

87 **Landlord's Consent: Alton FC**

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

RESOLVED

to grant Landlords Consent to Alton FC for the installation of a steel structure at the football ground known as The Enclosure in Anstey Park.

All in favour.

88 **Response to the East Hampshire District Council LCWIP Consultation**

Councillor Tansey had pulled together the response on behalf of the Alton Town Council Climate Change Committee in consultation with Councillors Hammond and Treacher, and Active Travel representative Chris Chappell, then the Town Clerk circulated the draft response to councillors in advance of the meeting.

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

RESOLVED

to approve the draft response tabled by the Climate Change Committee and submit it on behalf of Alton Town Council.

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Chubb, Hammond, Hill, Richards, Tansey, Treacher, Wadman and Waugh
Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

89 **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

90 **Code of Conduct complaint update**

See confidential minute.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Appendix A

Representation from Anthony Furnival

MINUTES

Firstly, I must object in the strongest terms to the minutes for my representation at last months meeting. Two of the three points I made were recorded in a manner which substantially alters their meaning, thus what I asked for has not been accurately represented. My calling for recorded votes was NOT as the minutes suggest “specifically” related to the September meeting, I’d in fact called for greater transparency across the board to enable voters to make informed decisions on political representation. I am disappointed that the discussion on changing working practices for recorded voting was omitted from record meaning the biased response presented did not mirror the evening’s proceedings. On Kings Pond, I called for equal time, money, effort and resources to be allocated to the different options. Whilst this may sound like semantics, what I asked for has a far greater scope than what was recorded. When a member of the public gives up their time to engage the council, they deserve to be treated with decency and respect – this includes having their points accurately committed to public record. These minutes serve to reflect proceedings at a meeting of a public body. Thus, to have concerns on accuracy dismissed and receive a flat refusal to correct these is inappropriate. Whilst minutes are in draft form, they have not been ratified and can be corrected. Whilst there is no obligation to record matters verbatim, summaries should accurately portray what was said, and where this has not occurred, there must be a right to challenge given that such comments are being committed to public record. In being presented knowingly inaccurate minutes, you are being asked to falsify an official document. If it comes to the crunch it is you as councillors who are responsible when you vote this through. I’d therefore urge this council to consider reviewing minute taking processes and create a clear policy which allows the public to challenge inaccuracies.

KINGS POND

I object to the council’s desire to spend further money on reports for Kings Pond, my primary concerns are: 1) The reports and their purpose are NOT publicly identified. I feel a decision made today, even with such disclosure would be insufficient as it has been concealed from the agenda and thus not transacted in the transparent manner expected of local government. I’d remind the council that no reference was made to these reports or the need for extra funding in your published update on the 24th October which again highlights inadequate communication around such matters. 2) Since this council was formed 18 months ago, you have not sought to understand public feeling yet have willingly spent money to pander to the wishes of your predecessors and the former clerk. Yet this is public money and now you wish to spend £40,000 on reports, yet still plan to ignore public opinion until such money has been exhausted. Promising a consultation after you have spent even more money is not good enough. Setting aside the inherent flaws of the last consultation, the pro-pond sentiment has too often been dismissed, we are labelled as a small group who shout the loudest (a quote from someone around this table today), but that is not the case, in January 2023 up to 150 people opposing your proposals attended a meeting, their voices were ignored. Mrs Hardman’s petition was not given weight as doing so would show that greater numbers opposed plans. The council refused acknowledge that a larger petition existed. Against public feeling the council voted to proceed with investigative work. Since, there have been many other procedural issues, a request from a former councillor to examine the dubious consultation responses was refused. Residents were for some time denied a democratic voice in being banned from speaking on non-agenda items. The lead for Kings Pond was not elected to the role, rather, selected by the former clerk with openly propound

councillors kept out of this process. A perception of predisposition exists not because of paranoia but due to what we as residents witness. During the summer I spent over 100 hours at the pond clearing algae, in that time countless people spoke with me, concerned about the future of the pond – not one favoured the offline proposal. Yet many felt alienated from you, our council – they feel ignored, and the truth is that they are. We all are. This needs to change and regardless of my views on the pond, what matters is that processes taking place are right and proper and most importantly are transacted in a transparent manner. Whilst I am not averse to additional spending per se, I do object to a decision being made for unidentified reports without public engagement. You have a responsibility to act in the public interest when it comes to spending and you have not done this to date. If this goes through today, it will be history repeating itself. The issue isn't whether I think the pond should be saved from radical alteration, today I'm fighting for basic democratic principles and pleading for a change in attitudes – a councillor here referred to residents in September as a "mob", and I challenged another about a year ago on suggesting that councillor need "safety in numbers" when dealing with the public. The attitude towards local people needs to change. We are not the enemy, this is our town, we care about it and we simply want our voices to be heard and decisions to be representative of this. What we are seeing is a council motivated by money – credits to be earned through biodiversity net gain. Profits over people – a willingness to destroy habitat and a much loved public space simply because there's a pot of gold for the council at the end of that rainbow. If councillors are here to represent the views of local people, then it is only right and appropriate that this motion is rejected and that proper engagement takes place first. As with Kings Pond, in September we saw exactly the same problem with the neighbourhood plan – a council that has not spent enough time listening and engaging. Engagement isn't just about consultations after the event, its about listening to the public and working to meet their needs every step of the way. The frustrating thing in standing here having said all this... I know it makes no difference, my opinion doesn't matter, the views of countless local people haven't mattered. Those who stand here and challenge or scrutinise the council become maligned and villainised and the sad thing is I know that more time will be given to discussing that than the substance of my speech. Yet the saddest thing is, that if you just listened, engaged and responded to local people, Alton would be a better town for it. Decisions shouldn't be about money making, they should have residents at its heart. You are elected or appointed to represent local people, if you cannot do that, then maybe it is time to open the door to people who will.