

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 8TH JANUARY 2025 AT 7.00PM AT THE ALTON ASSEMBLY ROOMS**

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

In attendance: **Pat Harris** - **Town Clerk**
 Hayley Carter - **Deputy Clerk**
 Samantha Brown - **Admin/Councillor Support Officer**
 43 Members of the public
 1 member of the press

91 Suspension of Alcohol Licence

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

RESOLVED

to suspend the Assembly Rooms alcohol licence in light that the sale of alcohol is not appropriate to the event and authority for its sale is suspended for the duration of the meeting, in accordance with paragraph 10 of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972

All in favour.

92 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Doug Richards and Jonathan Waugh.

93 Town Mayor's Announcements

1. The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked members of the public for attending, especially in light of the terrible weather, and wished everyone a Happy New Year.
2. She then said how sorry everyone at Alton Town Council had been to hear of the sad passing of former Town Mayor Patrick 'Paddy' Mendham and announced that there would be a memorial service on Saturday 11th January at 1.00pm in St Lawrence's

Church. All who knew Paddy are welcome to attend. Councillor Hill added that he knew Paddy well and he was a wonderful man who will be sadly missed.

3. The Town Mayor then reminded all those attending that in accordance with the Council's published Recording of Meetings Policy, as displayed on the doors and the table at the back of the hall, anyone wishing to make any recording of a meeting must 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.

94 **Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 6th November 2024**

Councillor Hill thanked the Deputy Clerk and Town Clerk for an excellent set of minutes.

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

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 6th November 2024

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill, Tansey, Treacher and Wadman

Abstained: Councillors Kellermann and O'Brien

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

No Declarations of Interest were noted.

Dispensation was granted to all Councillors in respect of Agenda item 9: Revised Budget for 2024/2025 and Budget and Precept 2025/2026 for ratification.

96 **Reminder of Financial Regulation 3.4**

Members were reminded that as per Alton Town Council Financial Regulation 3.4, any Member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them.

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

The Town Mayor invited members of the public to speak. She explained that as Standing Order 3f allowed 20 minutes for public questions and thirteen people had registered to speak, three minutes would be allowed per person and the Chair would use her discretion

to extend the time to allow all thirteen to speak, which would take public questions time to around 40 minutes.

- 97.1 An e-mail had been received and circulated prior to the meeting from Jenny Griffiths on behalf of AVLAN/ACAN:

“Could you please ensure that the statement below is seen by Alton Town Councillors ahead of your meeting on 8th January.

Many thanks, Jenny Griffiths (Alton Climate Action Network)

King’s Pond – The Way Forward

Statement from Alton and Villages Local Action for Nature (AVLAN), the nature group of Alton Climate Action Network

For Alton Town Council meeting 8th January 2025

AVLAN volunteers appreciated the detailed and very informative briefing sessions presented by Cllr Don Hammond in November on the possible options and next steps for deciding the way forward for King’s Pond.

Of the two main options that were presented at the briefing sessions, Alton Town Council is clear that it is already committed to conducting the technical and financial assessment of the Dredging option. AVLAN would strongly support a decision by the Town Council to conduct, at the same time, the technical and financial assessment of the alternative Pond & River option. We note that much of the work to be done is common to both options and they would be worked on in parallel.

AVLAN considers it important to maintain a respectful conversation about the future of a much-cherished amenity that is vital for both people and nature in the town, a conversation which needs good-quality information to support it.

As AVLAN said in its statement published in November 2022, the condition of King’s Pond and the condition of the River Wey, a precious chalk stream, are intimately linked. We want local people and visitors to enjoy King’s Pond as:

- a lovely amenity for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy.
- a healthy habitat for thriving and diverse wildlife.
- a space that isn't going to cost a fortune to maintain.

Undertaking technical and financial assessments of both the Dredging option and the Pond & River option is the obvious next step towards ensuring that a decision on the best outcome, for both people and nature, is based on the best possible information.”

- 97.2 Revd. Canon Andrew Micklefield, the Mayor’s Chaplain, sent his apologies that he would be unable to make the meeting.

- 97.3 The following e-mail had been received from residents Mr & Mrs Smith:

Dear Alton Town Council,

Please find herewith a representation to be included on the agenda for the January 2025 meeting in the section for questions to the council.

As pensioners, we have lived in Alton for longer than most, we brought up our children here and have seen a lot of change. We were here when Kings Pond became a public amenity and we even remember when it was fenced off as private land. In that time, like many Altonians, we have come to love the space and its wildlife. We strongly oppose any further council resources being wasted on the pond and river/ offline plan. It was rejected in 2017, again in 2022/23 by townsfolk - why must you keep rehashing plans we don't want when there is so much more you could be doing!

Democracy has failed in Alton - the desire of the council to disregard resident opinions and to keep pushing until they get their way is not what British values are built on. Whether its Kings Pond, the neighbourhood plan or just about any other matter, you ignore residents. Our parents fought in the war against Nazi Germany, they fought for democracy, Michael's father died in the RAF for the liberties we have today. The constant neglectful attitude shown by our councillors towards democracy is an insult to those who fought for it, especially those who died. Democracy isn't about forcing through your ideologies - that is a dictatorship! To summarise, our first question to the council: We ask that the council commits to retaining Kings Pond as it is with silt removal works conducted as they have been before. We ask that this is responded to at the meeting with a clear rejection of alternative plans.

On a separate note, we contacted our ward councillors Mr Churn and Mr Kellernan earlier this year, requesting that Anthony Furnival be formally recognised and receive a mayoral award for his efforts in clearing blanket weed during the summer - the gentleman spent hours at the pond pulling out absolute mountains it and enabled water levels to go from flooding the path to normal. Day in and day out he was there for hours on end.

Both councillors committed in one way or another to exploring an award on emails dated 28th and 27th August respectively, however neither elected to feedback their findings to us - our request was forgotten about, just like Anthony's efforts.. A review of minutes show it wasn't even discussed by the council! What good are councillors who say they'll do something and then don't? Further, why when a resident gives up their time is it acceptable not to formally acknowledge these efforts? Is it the case that the council won't recognise a person who does not align to the ideology to remove the pond from the river?

To summarise this point, We therefore ask again that these efforts are acknowledged and that he receives a mayoral award for these efforts. Will the mayor publicly acknowledge the efforts and confirm that some kind of award will be forthcoming?

We look forward to your responses at the meeting. We would kindly request that this email is included in the agenda as a resident question to the council, as we would like to hear from our council as a group of elected representatives on these matters rather than the view of administrative staff who maintain these inboxes. Many thanks and with the warmest wishes for 2025

Linda & Michael Smith

97.4 The following correspondence was received from Farnborough Noise Group:

Happy New Year to everyone.

2025 will be an important year for this area with decisions on Farnborough and Gatwick Airport's proposed expansion and the government's plans to introduce new flightpaths over us. The impact of these decisions will be felt by future generations in terms of pollution and climate change but more immediately in house prices and noise disturbance. For those of you who have not closely followed developments in 2024:

- Farnborough Airport's plans to double the number of flights is due for decision by Rushmoor Borough Council early in the New Year.

- Gatwick Airport's plans to start operating a second runway are in consultation.
- The government's plans to double the number of UK commercial flights by 2030, introduce much more dense flightpaths over the south east by 2027, as well as more night flights and holding stacks at 3,000ft over places like Petersfield and Farnham is at the final stages of consultation.

It is hard to understand how the government's legally binding commitment to deliver net zero by 2050 is achievable. Especially while the aviation industry plans to double the number of flights by 2030 at the same time it has said it will reduce aviation's emissions by 15% vs 2019 (FYI, they are still growing). Unrealistic and unsubstantiated goals set by governments do little to enhance their credibility and no wonder the public lose (or have lost) faith in elected authorities. Nobody with an unbiased perspective who has looked at the aviation industry's plans for Sustainable Aviation Fuel, electric or hydrogen powered aircraft believe they are credible or achievable, and that includes the government's Climate Change Committee.

The new Labour government has already jumped on the bandwagon of "growth at all costs" without understanding that is a 20th century response to a 20th century problem. The world isn't that simple anymore and when the money from such growth ends up in the pockets of corporates and the very wealthy, few "normal" people buy it. The situation with our rivers is a case in point and the owners of Farnborough Airport are the ex-owners of Thames Water and now Southern Water. Do we really expect such businesses to make decisions that benefit the population?

The reality in 2025 will be that growth will have to be balanced by the social and environmental impact of such growth and we can expect the courts to decide what is appropriate rather than governments. This has already been demonstrated by the Supreme Court who ruled in 2024 that all emissions must be included in Environmental Impact Assessments and so coal mining and oil drilling in the UK were stopped. Environmental Impact Assessments are also required for aviation's proposed expansion and so all emissions from flights will now have to be included in expansion plans....

Tickets available at: <https://www.zerocarbonguildford.org/event-details/farnborough-airport-expansion>

- 97.5 Jenny Griffiths spoke on behalf of AVLAN, ACAN's nature group, about the future assessment of options for King's Pond. She said how much they appreciate the briefings, and the quality of information gained was extremely useful. AVLAN support investigating both options. The River Wey is a very valuable waterway, and the most important thing is that the council obtains the best quality of information, both technical and financial, to support any decision in the future. King's Pond should offer people a lovely amenity to enjoy, with a healthy habitat for a diversity of wildlife, and it should also be sustainable financially. She said that AVLAN look forward to seeing the results of the assessments and to being able to comment further.
- 97.6 Gareth Hurd, a local resident and also a member of AVLAN, then spoke, to say his day job is to look after fairly similar but larger size sites nearer to Guildford and it is

a maintenance-challenging site. As a standing body of water King's Pond is great for wildlife. However, it is a place where water, silt, pollutants, etc collects, and as such it is a 'dirty' site - it has become that because of all the decisions of the past. It is up to us now to choose the best, financially and environmentally sustainable choice for the future.

- 97.7 John Quincey offered his thanks to the current Town Clerk for the non-adversarial manner in which ATC now treats people.

He went on to say that a project manager was needed back in 2023. He stated that the plan basis was a letter from the Environment Agency dated 20/7/2022 which said they wanted to take the pond offline and that it was the previous Town Clerk who had instigated it. South East Water were recently doing something at the pond but ATC had no knowledge of it – they had told Mr Quincey that they were doing the work because they knew Alton Town Council wanted to take the pond offline. He finished by saying that flood modelling is really important and part of what needs to be done to take the pond offline. He would have added more if he could have been permitted more time, but said he would email in to the Town Clerk.

- 97.8 James Willis said he has lived in the town for many years and wished to thanks Alton Town Council for the excellent presentations. He caught the end of one and managed to attend the entirety of another. He also watched the online presentation. He said it was exemplary the way Alton Town Council has informed people on this subject and he is fully in support of exploring both options. He added that he is in awe of the amount of work that has been done and Alton Town Council deserves the public's utmost respect and support.

- 97.9 Anthony Furnival said that in agenda item 8, Alton Town Council commit to being engaged and transparent, but he has concerns about what that means and he would like them to clarify, or go back to the drawing board and say they will do x, y, z.

With regards the Task & Finish Group, he believes it is important that no one single ideology is represented. He thanked Councillors Hill, Bayliss and Kellermann for meeting with him and thinks they would be excellent councillors to take this to the next step.

With regards the future of King's Pond, he said that everyone knows he is committed to keeping the pond and when he looks at the two options he cannot see how, with the pollution and silt problems that we have in the town, taking it off-line will work.

- 97.10 Graeme Parkin thanked Councillor Hammond for his excellent presentation and said that it seemed clear that the opinions of some residents had already been formed. He said some of them had concerns that they would not be able to feed ducks and so on, but that future generations would not forgive us for committing to costly ongoing dredging without first exploring the other options.

- 97.11 Stephen Gough said that he had the opposite view to the previous speaker. He said that first he would like to ask if the dredging costs have been out to multiple tenders. Once in every twenty-five years is worth the cost to preserve the special pond we have. He added that his understanding was that the Redrow (CALA) estate has offered to have some kind of silt trap that will prevent the silt entering the pond and that will extend the amount of time before it needs dredging again.

He thought that Alton Town Council should have a referendum to ask if people would be happy to pay a few more pounds each year to contribute to the dredging that will be needed again in thirty years time and that managing the pond is the way forward.

97.12 Paul Ebbutt stated he had a lot of experience in managing large scale projects and that he has been a resident for over twenty years. He very much appreciates the fantastic open spaces we have in the town, including King's Pond. He said he had noted the options on the website and thanked Councillor Hammond for pulling it all together. Feasibility assessments and proper information is well worth the money; information gathering is so important.

He added that the ongoing cost of removing the silt is a concern and we need a proper, competent assessment so that the public and council can make a proper, informed decision.

97.13 Len Meek said he would like to remind everyone present that the pond is over two hundred years old and that if it was a listed building we would not even be having this discussion. On the noticeboard it says "no visit to Alton would be complete without a visit to King's Pond", so why is the council so hellbent on tearing it all apart? He said someone had asked for £17,000 to be spent on two extra surveys at the last council meeting, but that other things needed money spent on – for example have surveys been done on wheelchair accessibility, swans, etc? He asked what would happen to the swans if the pond was no longer there, and said that £17,000 seemed like a lot of money to spend.

97.14 Jancine Potts then spoke, saying she is new to Alton and one of the things that attracted her was King's Pond. To her it is the jewel in the crown. She said she was very confused by the presentation and thought it waffled a lot. She asked what would happen to the swans if the pond were to get smaller, and why anyone would want to get rid of the pond. She believes the island is a nesting ground, which you are not allowed to disturb. She believes that a provision should be made in the council budget for dredging as it is regular maintenance and so of course it is needed. Getting rid of the pond would be like chopping off your own foot.

97.15 Tony Day said he was there on behalf of the Waterside Court Residents Association and has been a resident of Waterside Court for over twenty years. There was a board meeting of the management committee yesterday – Waterside Court is the next place downstream from King's Pond and he says they have not been consulted at all. He is therefore making a formal request that they be consulted in full.

He went on to say that the dam which forms the downstream end of the pond was reinstated at the same time as Waterside Court was built. What to most people appears to be the footpath around that end of the pond, and the back wall of Waterside Court, is actually the dam. The stream was diverted at the same time. Waterside Court is shown on the Environment Agency's plans as a high flood risk area, and Mr Day stated that there was almost a flood there last year.

He said that the hydrology between the pond and Papermill Lane all goes through their site and they ask to be consulted in full on any proposals.

There were various discussions and queries raised by councillors, including some concerns from one about the amount of money being spent and the detail of the draft Terms of Reference for the proposed Task & Finish Group. It was pointed out that they are draft, councillors could make any amendments they felt were required, and the Task & Finish Group, when established, could also propose amendments to Full Council at a later date should they deem it necessary.

The public were also thanked for coming along whether to voice their concerns or make their support known, and it was stressed that lots of questions had been thrown up during the session, which councillors were not yet able to answer. There were also questions raised during the public engagement sessions and experts need to be paid to provide the answers to all of those questions and provide the proper information for an informed decision to be made.

Councillors stressed what an important project this is, and that money is being spent very carefully on the surveys which must be done. In order to draw up tender documents to get quotes for any option, full technical specifications will need to be written and there requires a huge amount of work to be undertaken.

Thus, each item was taken individually, with Councillor Kellermann requesting a recorded vote on each one.

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

RESOLVED

To conduct a technical and financial assessment of the Pond and River option in parallel with the technical and financial assessment of the Dredging option

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

Against: Councillor Kellermann

Abstained: Councillor Bayliss

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

RESOLVED

To form a Task & Finish Group to take the project forward and adopt the draft Terms of Reference as tabled

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

Abstained: Councillors Kellermann and Bayliss

98.3 Proposals were received for Councillors Wadman, Richards and Hammond to join the Task & Finish Group. Councillor Kellermann requested that the nominations and appointments be voted on individually and that the vote be recorded.

98.3..1 On the proposal of Councillor Hammond, seconded by Councillor O'Brien, it was

RESOLVED**To appoint Councillor Wadman to the Task & Finish Group**

All in favour.

98.3..2 On the proposal of Councillor O'Brien, seconded by Councillor Bayliss, seconded by Councillor O'Brien, it was

RESOLVED**To appoint Councillor Hammond to the Task & Finish Group**

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill, O'Brien, Tansey, Treacher and Wadman
Against: Councillor Kellermann

98.3..3 On the proposal of Councillor Hammond, seconded by Councillor Hill, it was

RESOLVED**To appoint Councillor Richards to the Task & Finish Group**

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill, O'Brien, Tansey, Treacher and Wadman
Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

98.4 On the proposal of Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Bayliss, it was

RESOLVED**To reaffirm that the outcome of the technical and financial assessments of the Dredging and Pond & River options will go to public consultation before any decision is taken to proceed further**

All in favour.

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

RESOLVED**To commit to having a full, engaged and transparent process involving the people of Alton and to maintain regular progress reports and information on the Alton Town Council website**

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Boyce-Churn, Chubb, Hammond, Hill, O'Brien, Tansey, Treacher and Wadman
Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

The town mayor adjourned the meeting for ten minutes to allow a comfort break and to allow any members of the public not wishing to stay for the remainder of the meeting to leave.

34 members of the public left the meeting.

When the meeting reconvened, items 13: Events Grant Applications: (i) Alton Jane Austen Group (ii) Victorian Cricket and 11: Alton Mens Shed: EHDC Community Climate Action Fund Grant Award Terms & Conditions were moved up the agenda.

99 **Events Grant: Alton Jane Austen Group**

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

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the events grant application received on behalf of the Alton Jane Austen Group in the sum of £500 (five hundred pounds)

All in favour.

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

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the events grant application received from Victorian Cricket in the sum of £400 (four hundred pounds)

All in favour.

100 **Alton Men's Shed: EHDC Community Climate Action Fund**

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

RESOLVED

to confirm that Alton Town Council intends to lease the property known as Edgar Hall for community use for at least 10 years

All in favour.

101 **Budget and Precept 2025/26**

Councillor Kellermann advised that he would be abstaining as he had not had time to review the budget.

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

RESOLVED to

- 1. Approve the budget and precept request for 2025/26**
- 2. Approve the revised budget for 2024/25 to enable the appropriate virements to be actioned**

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

Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

102 **Tree Works – Retrospective Approval of emergency tree works carried out at The Dell, Ashdell Road**

Emergency works had been undertaken following the tree reports identifying urgent works and subsequent high winds exacerbating the matter. Councillors had been appraised by the Town Clerk at the time. Due to the location of the site and the difficulty in accessing it to undertake the work safely, the cost of road closure and required equipment increased the cost to over that which the Town Clerk may authorise, thus, on the proposal of Councillor Eyre, seconded by Councillor Boyce-Churn, it was

RESOLVED

to grant retrospective approval of the tree works undertaken at The Dell at a total cost of £16,618 (sixteen thousand, six hundred and eighteen pounds)

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

Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

103 **Statement of Accounts to 31st December 2024**

Councillor Kellermann advised that as per agenda item 9, he would not be voting on this item as he had not had the opportunity to go through the accounts.

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

RESOLVED

To confirm approval of:

- 1. The balance sheet dated 31st December 2024**
- 2. The Income and Expenditure account to 31st December 2024**
- 3. The bank reconciliations for the Unity Account and the CCLA Deposit & Property Fund Accounts**
- 4. The Payments over £500 covering 1st November-31st December 2024**
- 5. To note the CCLA letter in respect of the Local Authority Property Fund held by ATC and the implementation of the FCA sustainability disclosure requirements**

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

Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

104 **Review of Alton Town Council Policies**

Councillor Kellermann proposed an amendment – that in 4.1 – Gifts, any or all gifts should be reported, not just those over £25, and all gifts over that amount should be declined. There being no seconder this amendment was not carried.

Thus, on the proposal of Councillor Boyce-Churn, seconded by Councillor Bayliss, it was

RESOLVED

To APPROVE the new Bribery & Corruption for Staff Policy.

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

Against: Councillor Kellermann

105 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

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

106 **Recruitment**

See confidential minute.

107 **Code of Conduct complaint update**

See confidential minute.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm