

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 9TH APRIL 2025 AT 7.00PM AT THE TOWN HALL**

Present: **Councillor** **Annette Eyre (Town Mayor)**
 Matthew Bayliss
 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**
 3 Members of the public and press
 County Councillor Andrew Joy

155 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Mark Boyce-Churn, John Chubb, Doug Richards, and Jonathan Waugh.

156 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Town Mayor:

1. Welcomed both councillors and members of the public to the meeting.
2. 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.

157 **Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 5th March 2025 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 10th March 2025 for approval**

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

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 5th March 2025

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

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

Against: Councillor Kellermann

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

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 10th March 2025

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

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

Against: Councillor Kellermann

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

No Declarations of Interest were noted.

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

Correspondence received:

159.1 E-mail correspondence from 3 residents (Mr. Tony Souter dated 4th March, Mr. Peter Field dated 12th March & Mr. Giles Lock dated 24th March) sent directly to councillors and copied into the Town Clerk, seeking a response from councillors as to why the Ukrainian flag in support of the Ukrainian people is not being flown in the town

159.2 Further e-mail correspondence from Mr. Souter to the Town Clerk requesting that it be included in full in the agenda papers:

Pat,

I'm unable to attend the full council meeting on 9th but I would be grateful if you would include this email in the agenda notes.

My request to fly the Ukrainian flag alongside the Union flag at the Cairn was first raised with the town clerk on 4th March. The intention, in the wake of the appalling treatment of President Zelenskyii at the White House, was to express solidarity with our Ukrainian guests at the start of talks to negotiate a temporary ceasefire in the region.

These developments have re-traumatised Ukrainians all over again....to them, this was reminiscent of the beginning of the war in February 2022 when the whole future of the country was on the brink.

Quite why a simple display of humanity and solidarity in the form of the Ukrainian flag needs a full council debate is a mystery...no-one has taken the trouble to explain the rationale, least of all the full compliment of councillors to whom I wrote personal letters.

The issues around this subject clearly haven't troubled our Prime minister who writes on social media:

"In February 2022 we raised the Ukrainian flag above 10 Downing Street. It has continued to fly alongside the Union flag ever since.

The war continues and Ukrainians continue to pay the devastating price of it. Our unity and resolve of ensuing Ukraine has what it needs to resist the Russian onslaught remains as pressing as ever. If Putin wins in Ukraine, all our freedoms are under threat.

That is why we have stepped up support to Ukraine this year, and why the Ukrainian flag will continue to fly above Downing Street – as a symbol of our enduring commitment to Ukraine, its people, and the defence of freedom and democracy itself."

What is it about this sentiment that this council has a problem with? We've lost nearly six weeks but now the council has an opportunity to correct an egregious oversight and, albeit late in the day, do the right thing.

*Yours etc.,
Tony Souter*

159.3 E-mail from Linda & Michael Smith dated 31st March:

Dear Mrs Harris and Mrs Brown,

Please include, in full, our letter (herewith) to the council in the agenda for the next full council meeting. Please let it be known that we require a public response and should we not be present at the meeting that such a response is duly recorded in the minutes.

We previously corresponded in advance of the January full council meeting whereby my husband and I requested that our questions to the council be included on the agenda under the appropriate section for questions from the public. As an elderly couple we are not sufficiently mobile to guarantee our attendance at meetings and even with our best will, the inclement weather was a prohibiting factor to our

attendance that evening. A friend did however attend and relayed to us that Mayoress Ayre merely cited that we had sent in a letter and said nothing of its content nor provided councillors with a chance to respond.

We were very disappointed to hear this and believe that Mayoress Ayre's conduct was inappropriate chairing of a public meeting. Written questions should receive the same level of engagement as those presented by those physically in attendance, we are all residents after all! Such an approach disadvantages the elderly and disabled who are less able to attend your meetings to ask such questions. To discriminate in such a manner whether intentionally or not is unacceptable. Michael suggested that maybe a response would be forthcoming in a following meeting, but the meeting minutes for February and March show that this was not the case.

We were further upset when we saw that another person who had emailed ahead of your Wednesday 10th March meeting regarding flying of the Ukranian flag had his representation put on a future meeting for discussion, was duly notified and that this action was documented in the minutes. We are seeing double standards where some residents are heard, and others are not. This is not an appropriate approach when a council is duly elected to represent all constituents of Alton.

We have been ignored and shunned by Mayoress Ayre and feel that she should publicly account for her behaviour and apologise. Elderly residents' questions should not be ignored through being less mobile and unable to easily attend meetings. Are we less important than more physically able residents? Do our views and questions matter less? Do the old folk of Alton really not matter?

We therefore firstly request a full public apology from Mayoress Ayre at the next full council meeting and ask that this is minted should we be unable to attend. We ask that Mayoress Ayre addresses this failure of leadership and commits to ensuring that such behaviour is not normalised in council proceedings.

Whilst our Kings Pond question was not directly addressed, the vote that evening indirectly answers what we asked and feared, what was not addressed even remotely was our request that Anthony Furnival be publicly acknowledged and considered for a mayoral award for the many hours and days he spent clearing the blanket weed at Kings Pond last year.

As per our original email in January, this matter was raised with both of our ward councillors at the time who both committed to exploring some form of recognition for Anthony however failed to do so. Neither councillor got back to us or put this on an agenda. Come January, we pursued this by contacting you both to ask that our question was put on the agenda with a clear caveat that we wanted an answer provided publicly and minuted which you acknowledged. Whilst you did add this to the agenda, our question was ignored by Mayoress Ayre (as per above) and further the matter has not been added to an agenda for discussion since. Equally no correspondence has been received from the council on this matter.

The effort Anthony put in was extraordinary, voluntary and I believe at his own expense. He worked for many hours, at no expense to the council in hot weather. He worked alone, unaided by any councillor or council employee. A public thank you should have come naturally without it having to be requested by residents, yet

councillors did not even manage this! A mayoral award should be embraced as a way to reward those who go above and beyond for the town - we do not know what this might look like, however we know that a budget must be available. It would have been a good opportunity for the council to show that it values residents who give their time for our beautiful town. We still maintain that such an award should be forthcoming and we will continue to champion this until such a time that the matter is publicly addressed.

This should not have been overlooked and we cannot help but think that a refusal to acknowledge his efforts most likely pertain to his opposition to council plans for the future of Kings Pond. This is unacceptable - regardless of views, this should have been judged on merit alone.

To summarise this point, We therefore ask YET AGAIN that these efforts are acknowledged and that he receives a mayoral award to reward what he has done. Will the mayor publicly acknowledge the efforts and confirm that some kind of award will be forthcoming? We require that this is addressed publicly.

*With warm regards
Linda & Michael Smith.*

159.4 County Councillor Joy, speaking in a personal capacity, stated that he had read the correspondence received in the agenda and found it quite worrying the tone with which some people were contacting the council. People who volunteer and give up their time to help and support their communities in the way councillors do should be treated with respect and if people put their hand up to criticise them in this way they will end up with no one wanting to do this job.

159.5 The Town Mayor, with the backing of the other councillors, then read out the following response to Mr and Mrs Smith to be recorded in the minutes:

“Mrs Harris, Town Clerk, acknowledged receipt of the e-mail from Mr. & Mrs Smith and confirmed it would be included as requested under “Correspondence Received”

With reference to their correspondence received in advance of the January Full Council meeting the Town Clerk confirmed that this was included, in full, with the agenda papers for the meeting on 8th January as well as being recorded in the Minutes of that meeting. Agenda papers are published in advance of meetings (on this occasion being published on 2nd January 2025) and as such all councillors had full sight of their correspondence in advance of the meeting and whilst I as Mayor chair the meeting, all councillors who are present at the meeting have the opportunity to comment and/or respond to any item on the agenda. The Minutes can only reflect what took place and no comments were recorded as there was no response from any councillor to your correspondence on the evening.

The Town Clerk has confirmed to me that no written correspondence regarding the Ukrainian flag was recorded as being received when the agenda for the Full Council meeting on 5th March was published. However, it is acknowledged that an e-mail was received on 4th March, although it was not opened by the Clerk until after the meeting on 5th March. Equally, it was not included on the agenda papers issued for the extra-ordinary meeting as these were published on 3rd March. The clerk,

therefore, took the earliest opportunity to raise the matter with councillors and this was verbally at the extra-ordinary meeting held on 10th March. Councillors instructed the clerk to place it on the agenda of the next available meeting so a decision could be made.

I can assure Mr & Mrs Smith that residents comments are taken seriously when they are received at the Town Hall and indeed their previous correspondence was included on the agenda and as such, there are no grounds, based on the fact that their correspondence was included on the agenda that supports their assertion that I ignored or shunned Mr & Mrs Smith and, therefore, I cannot be accused of a failure of leadership.

Regarding their comments about Mr. Anthony Furnival, I can again assure them that both the Town Clerk, and the deputy were in constant dialogue during the period when algae was a big problem at Kings Pond during August of last year and huge thanks were extended at the time to Mr. Furnival. I again, thanked him at the meeting on 4th September. Prior to the Town Clerk going on leave, contingency plans were put in place for twice daily clearance of the weir by the ground teams, but unfortunately the “perfect storm” hit and the situation quickly become so overwhelming despite the heroic efforts of not only Anthony, but also the entire grounds team and Councillor Hammond having to remove mountains of algae not only from the pond itself, but also having to cart it from site and disposing of it, that immediately upon the Clerk’s return from annual leave on 22nd August she engaged an external contractor to clear the algae with mechanical aids as the situation deteriorated.

I would advise that I hold a Civic Reception each year to which members of the public, representatives of charitable and voluntary organisations are invited along with members of the public who carry out and give of their time to a number of community activities at which each and every one of them are thanked for their services. This reception is normally held in March/April of each year.

In terms of their further comments that councillors have not responded to their correspondence, I will leave it with them to respond.”

Councillor Kellermann then spoke, saying that he was raising a point of order, that the chronology in which Alton Town Council deals with items on the agenda is incorrect and that an item should be proposed and seconded before any item is discussed. The Town Clerk read out the standing orders and stated that the motion was the item that had been placed on the agenda. The Mayor clarified that discussion on each motion on the agenda is invited from councillors before a proposer and seconder is sought to allow councillors to understand, debate and make any amendments as necessary to each item before it is progressed to a vote. Councillor Bayliss stated that while Councillor Kellermann raises an interesting point, it is something that needs careful consideration from councillors outside of a meeting and rather than springing it on them in this way, Councillors Hammond and Hill requested that Councillor Kellermann puts his concerns in writing to be taken to a subsequent meeting.

160 **Flying of the Ukrainian Flag**

Councillors discussed at length the flying of various flags in the town. A summary of points raised:

- There had been other requests to fly flags of countries at conflict in the past which had been declined, notably the flag of Israel. There are 144 countries in conflict at present so this could set a precedent and how do you choose which flags to fly and how can you refuse one and fly another.
- While there are many refugees from Ukraine, there are also residents and refugees from other countries, including Russia, who could feel victimised by the Ukrainian flag being flown.
- Supporting one side in an international conflict is beyond the purview of a town council, and while all individuals are welcome and even encouraged to express their support in whatever way they choose, the town council should be careful to represent all of its residents and should not as an organisation be taking sides.
- The tone of Mr Souter's email was felt to be rather aggressive and councillors felt that it was less about support for Ukraine and more about the reception that President Zelensky had received from President Trump.
- The UK has already declared its support for Ukraine and is helping them in whatever way it can.
- Alton is home to many Ukrainian refugees who have escaped their country because it has been invaded by an aggressor.
- Several councillors felt the flag should be flown.
- EHDC is already flying the flag.
- It was generally felt that it should not be flown over the cairn; that this location should be only for the military and Union Flag, but that other flags could be flown from Council buildings; in this case the Town Hall.

It was pointed out that you cannot fly another country's flag over an official building unless the Union Flag is also flown, therefore an amendment to the motion on the agenda was proposed by Councillor Hill and seconded by Councillor O'Brien, that the Ukrainian flag be flown under the Union Flag on the Town Hall for a period of four weeks. Councillors Hammond, Hill, O'Brien, Treacher and Wadman voted in favour of the amendment; Councillors Bayliss, Kellermann and Tansey voted against it and Councillor Eyre abstained, therefore the amendment was carried.

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

RESOLVED

that the Ukrainian flag should be flown under the Union Flag on the Town Hall in Market Square for a period of four weeks.

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

In favour: Councillors Hammond, Hill, O'Brien, Treacher and Wadman
Against: Councillors Bayliss, Kellermann and Tansey
Abstained: Councillor Eyre

161 **Event Grants**161.1 **Alton Art Society**

Councillors felt that this was an internal celebration for the Alton Art Society rather than for the public benefit and as such should not be supported using public money. However, they stressed that if it is just that the public benefit has not been made clear in the application then the Alton Art Society would be welcome to reapply. There being no proposer for approval of the grant the application was therefore unsuccessful.

The Town Clerk was asked to write to the Alton Art Society to explain why, and explain that if it were for the benefit of the community then councillors would support it.

161.2 **Alton Lions**

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

RESOLVED

to approve a grant for The Alton Lions in the sum of £500 (five hundred pounds).

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

All in favour.

162 **County and District Councillor Reports**

The following report was received prior to the meeting from District Councillor Graham Hill:

EHDC District Councillor report for Full Council 9 April 2025:

2025/2026 Budget

EHDC has approved at Full Council a balanced budget for 2025/2026.

The net cost of services will be £14.033m which is an increase of £528,000 compared to 2024/25. District will receive £364,000 less from central government in 2025/26 compared to 2024/25.

There will be a 3.4% increase to council tax resulting in an annual charge of £152 for a Band D property i.e. increase of £5 per year. In England over 30 councils have been granted exceptional financial support. Some have been granted increases in council tax of up to 10% to avoid bankruptcy.

Councillor Grants increase

From April this year each of the 43 Councillors across the District will have £7,000 per year available to fund community projects within their wards. This is a 100% increase from previous years and for Alton means that in total £49,000 is now available in 2025/26.

In addition to this £3,000 per councillor will be available towards the continuation of the Community Climate Action Fund totalling £129,000 across the EHDC this year. Also any unused councillor grant funds can be transferred to the Community Climate Action Fund.

Altogether £430,000 will be allocated across the EHDC for community projects through Councillors.

Projects

Approximately £9.3m will be spent on capital projects across the EHDC on new waste collection vehicles, the wet side addition to the Whitehill and Bordon Leisure Centre and ongoing maintenance to the investment property portfolio.

£100,000 has also been set aside for improving car park maintenance and buying digital speed cameras.

£100,000 has also been allocated for additional enforcement officers within the district. This covers many areas, including parking, littering and other such enforcements.

Councillor Grant application system

A new online system will start in April. This will enable charities, community groups etc to directly apply for Councillor grant funding. Councillors will be notified of an application to enable them to assess the request and authorise.

Whitehill and Bordon

As part of developing the infrastructure in the town a new 16,000 square feet Sainsbury's supermarket will be opening in summer 2026. Also following a campaign by EHDC and Damian Hinds MP a new banking hub is set to open in April.

Local Government award

EHDC has been shortlisted from 1,000 entries in the 'Most Improved Council' category at the 2025 Local Government Awards for excellence in local government. The winners will be announced on 11 June 2025.

Housing numbers

EHDC continues to fight for fair recognition of its unique housing numbers. Matthew Pennycook, Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, met with EHDC officers (Simon Jenkins and Adam Harvey) and Damian Hinds MP on 10 March. He agreed that the district faces a unique situation with more than half of it protected from housing development because it is in the South Downs National Park and therefore it needs an exceptional way to calculate housing numbers.

Affordable housing consultation

EHDC has produced a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that is available for public consultation from Monday, 31 March, to the end of Monday, 28 April 2025. The web link is [Current planning consultations | East Hampshire District Council](#)

Corporate Peer Challenge

EHDC has worked with a team of senior councillors and officers from other authorities to review its operations, interview staff and councillors, and determine what it is going well and what can be improved. The team spent three days with the council in January quizzing staff and councillors and robustly challenging the council's way of working.

The report published last week, hailed EHDC as 'strong and sustainable', with 'passionate staff, who are committed to the council and residents'.

The report is the result of a process called a Corporate Peer Challenge. It saw a team of senior local government councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key finance, performance, and governance information at the council.

EHDC is a 'well-run' council that can 'deliver on its priorities', according to the overwhelmingly positive report by the local government experts.

Councillor Kellermann thanked Councillor Hill for taking the time to write the report. Councillors asked about the Local Plan and were given a brief update on figures which are yet to be published from Councillor Tansey. Councillor Bayliss commented that he was surprised to read about the award, and he suspected many people in Alton may have a different opinion if asked.

County Councillor Andrew Joy then gave a verbal report, saying that he had been to the Holybourne Village Association meeting the previous night and there were strong feelings and quite a strong campaign to get a 20mph limit through the village. He stated that the road is very congested with parking through the village. Councillor Joy suggested that the 20mph zone in Alton Town Centre should be expanded to include Holybourne and indeed more of Alton in order to make the roads safer.

A council has to be the one making the application. Councillor Joy stated that to register an initial application is only £175, but there are then substantial costs (typically around £30,000) involved, which has to be funded by the council making the application. It is all about where safety is crucial and if there are accident records for the location then that does allow for some funding from outside.

A detailed brief of how to apply has been sent through to the Town Clerk and Councillor Hill is doing a walk-round of the town next week with the Highways engineer.

Councillor Hill added that there has been talk of a 20mph speed limit in Holybourne for many years – at least since 2016 to his knowledge – but it has never progressed. He said that this time around we need to progress it very, very strongly.

Councillors thanked County Councillor Joy for his report.

163 **Model Standing Orders – update for adoption**

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

RESOLVED
to adopt the updated Standing Orders as tabled.

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

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

164 **Alton Town Council Assets: quotations to undertake building valuations**

The Town Clerk had recommended appointing the cheapest contractor, but Councillors Hammond and Kellermann stated they did not see how the valuations could be done as a desk-top exercise and would prefer someone to visit each property to ensure they were

accurate for insurance purposes. The Town Clerk pointed out that there was no money allocated in the budget for this so whatever was agreed would be coming out of reserves.

Councillor Kellermann proposed an amendment to the motion on the agenda to appoint Contractor C. This was seconded by Councillor Hammond with Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Hammond, Kellermann, O'Brien, Tansey, Treacher and Wadman voting in favour and Councillor Hill voting against.

Thus, on the proposal of Councillor Kellermann, seconded by Councillor Hammond, it was

RESOLVED

to approve Company C (Eddisons) to provide rebuild valuations for insurance purposes of the Council's owned buildings at a cost of £7,500 (Seven thousand, five hundred pounds) +VAT.

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

All in favour.

165 **Flood Meadows: restoration of riverside pathway**

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

RESOLVED

to approve Company A (Amenity Water Management) as its preferred contractor at a cost of £13,627 (thirteen thousand, six hundred and twenty seven pounds) +VAT, subject to successful site visit and terms being agreed for site compound and approval of working methodology.

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

All in favour.

166 **Security Patrols of open spaces and ad hoc attendance at ATC events**

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

RESOLVED

to approve re-engagement of DGCS under delegated authority to:

- (i) conduct security patrols of the Council's open spaces and undertake locking and unlocking of the Public Gardens within the approved budget limit for 2025/26 & 2026/27**
- (ii) provide road closure event security and first aid at Alton Town Council events: Remembrance Service and Christmas Lights Switch-on**

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

All in favour.

167 **Legal Agreements: Alton Cricket Club Licence to Occupy**

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

RESOLVED

to agree to a further 5 Year Licence to Occupy to Alton Cricket Club for the exclusive use of the Harry Baker pavilion at a fee of £750 per annum

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

All in favour.

168 **King's Pond Task & Finish Group: Terms of Reference for approval and receiving of the meeting notes of the meeting held on 25th March 2025**

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

RESOLVED

to

- (i) approve the amended Terms of Reference for the Kings Pond Task & Finish Technical Group**
- (ii) receive the meeting notes of the inaugural meeting of the group**

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

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

Against: Councillor Kellermann

169 **Statement of Accounts to 31st March 2025**

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

RESOLVED

to confirm approval of:

- 1. The bank reconciliations for the Unity Account as at 31st March 2025**
- 2. Petty Cash balance as at 31st March 2025**
- 3. The Payments over £500 covering 1st- 31st March 2025**
- 4. CCLA Deposit and Property Fund statements**

Councillor Kellermann requested a recorded vote.

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

Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

170 **Appointment to an outside body: Jalsa Salana**

Councillors Wadman and Kellermann declined to stand again. Councillor Kellermann said he did not feel any value to them being there – they were just told what was going on and given food and drink; they were not asked to contribute anything. There being no other volunteers it was agreed that the Clerk would write to them to explain that while Alton Town Council values the Jalsa Salana and the value they bring to the town, their invitation to be part of the community group must be declined at this time. However, she would write to those councillors who were not in attendance to enquire as to whether they wished to put their names forward.

171 **Consultations**

171.1 Hampshire and the Solent Devolution Consultation – opened on 17th February and will close on 13th April 2025

It was noted that this consultation is now open.

171.2 Hampshire County Council Future Services Consultation – Spring 2025 which has opened and closes on 7th May 2025

It was noted that this consultation is now open.

171.3 East Hampshire District Council draft affordable housing supplementary planning document (SPD) consultation opens 31st March until 28th April

It was noted that this consultation is now open.

The meeting closed at 20.51pm