

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF HUNSTANTON
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL, HUNSTANTON
ON FRIDAY 12 APRIL 2013 AT 6.00 PM

Present : The Mayor: Cllr E Clutton Deputy Mayor: Cllr C Bower

Town Councillors:

B Devlin	R Bird	C Earnshaw	D Jones	G Smith
J Smith	J Maiden	R Davies	L Brister	C Dunbar
A Murray	N Godfrey-Cole			

Also present:

9 members of public

BCllr E Watson

Town Clerk & Deputy Clerk

1. Report from the Mayor

It has been a great privilege and a challenge to serve as Mayor of Hunstanton. During the last year there have been some great changes. The Town Council has completed the first year of running the Tourist Information Centre and its refurbishment will be completed later this month. The basement renovations were completed in October with the installation of the kitchen and this month we have taken over the running of the Community Centre. We have been working more efficiently and for the first time in 10 years we have lowered the precept charges for our residents. These and other important issues will be covered by councillors in the committee reports.

My report will focus on my duties as mayor. My theme for this year has been 'working together', building on the work of our previous Mayor Cllr. Bower, ties have been strengthened with the Chamber of Trade, local businesses and with our residents.

During the last year there have been several memorable events and last June saw the town celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and what a wonderful day we had concluding with the impressive firework display. The summer also saw the Carnival, the Hunstanton Festival of Arts Drama Festival which heralded the re-opening of the Princess Theatre, Henry Le Strange 150th Anniversary, and the Ingleby Bowls Tournament.

A community working together shows our towns achievements the Gold Award from Anglia in Bloom, Winners for the second year running of the EDP Pride of Norfolk Community of Year and runners up of the EDP Community Building award for the basement. The prize money of £500 has been distributed to local voluntary organisations.

Other successful projects include the Henry Le Strange Orchard which won a CPRE award.

I have attended numerous civic events from Norwich to Downham Market and RAF Marham to Dereham ranging from Civic Services and receptions to awards ceremonies and festivals. My scrapbooks is overflowing.

Here in Hunstanton we were honoured to welcome the 67th Special Operations Squadron on their 60th anniversary last November. It was particularly sad that Reis Leming passed away at the time he was planning to be with us in Hunstanton. The 67th Squadron also joined us, together with Reis Leming's family to commemorate the important 60th anniversary of the 1953 Floods on 31st January this year.

Other events that my fellow councillors have supported me by attending have been the Civic Service, The Mayor's Charity Gala, the Civic Reception and Business Evening for which I thank them. It has been a pleasure to work with them during the past year. I would particularly like to thank both Cllr Dunbar and Cllr Bower for their support as Deputy Mayors during the last year.

I would also both personally and on behalf of all the town councillor like to thank our officers, our Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Facilities Manager, the staff of the Tourist Information Centre and the caretaking staff who together make a great team and ensure the smooth running of the Council.

2. Reports from Town Council Committee Chairmen

(a) General Purposes

Cllr Carol Bower, the Chairman of the General Purpose Committee, reported that she had greatly enjoyed the challenge of chairing a group with such a varied and demanding workload. In an attempt to work more efficiently the number of working parties reporting has been reduced. This has helped target priorities, both in the long-term and short-term. A continued area of concern has been the issue of localism, where, despite much talk, there is a feeling of impotence when trying to protect our Town, when such things as the ice cream cones outside the pier building are allowed. Our Green is jointly managed with BCKLWN, but we feel there should be more two-way consultation over its use.

Many issues have been raised by members of the Public at our regular surgeries in the High Street: Car Parking, the Spinney, finger-post signs to amenities, public conveniences and the amount of litter in Town in the winter being the most frequent.

We have had many questions to consider and respond to: a letter to Eric Pickles regarding the incinerator application; the pre-submission of the Site Specific Allocation documents; the recent NCC parking study proposal; continued work on the QEII Jubilee fields request – although our wish to include the Green was unsuccessful, we were pleased that the Community Centre Land was included.

There have been many successes, both delivering and promising improvements in the quality of life for residents: the formation of the Town Team, and its award of £10,000 from the Mary Portas fund; Anglia in Bloom was again a success; a £500 Community Award; a reduction in crime generally, though vandalism has recently reared its ugly head; an allocation of £100,000 (of £500,000) regeneration money to an extension of the sailing club to further promote water sports; street lighting has been upgraded and is more “green” and we are finally to get the long-awaited crossing of the A149.

The TIC has been altered to make better use of the space, and the Norfolk Coastal Path has been enhanced by having a marked starting point at the TIC. We have taken over the Youth and Community Centre. These are large commitments for the Council, as evidenced by the difficulty finding qualified staff to run a Youth Club in the Basement. Efforts are being made to organise Musical Theatre, Craft Workshops, Dance, Cheerleading, Little Dragons Tang Soo Do activities to take place there.

As well as looking to the future we have remembered the past, with the naming of Reis Lemming Way and Commemoration of the 1953 floods on 31st January; we also awarded the Freedom of the Town to 67th USAF Special Operations Squadron and Reis Lemming's widow.

(b) Planning

Cllr C Earnshaw, Chairman of the Planning Committee reported that there are 9 members of the e-planning committee who consider the applications as they come in each month. Over the last year there have been 38 applications. I visit most of the sites and talk to the applicant and neighbours where I think it appropriate.

There has been nothing particularly contentious although some applications have depended on a majority vote to get our support. Last year I reported on the Pier Entertainment Centre receiving permission for external doors which would open onto the public footpath. This hasn't happened yet as their concentration has been on enlarging the Ice-cream Window with associated advertising boards and 3D cones. We continue to object to all the external and commercial alterations but the Boro Planners say they comply with National Planning Policy Statements. We also objected to the advertising on the 2 roundabouts at the top and bottom of Oasis Way as they are neither discreet nor in keeping with the flower beds. Sometimes we have to recognise that the Boro Planners have their hands tied by policy too.

However on all the other applications the Town and Borough have been in agreement. The Boro Planning Officers are very approachable and helpful to us.

Since last year we have seen the development of the Marston's pub/restaurant, and the affordable housing in Chiltern Avenue and Melton Drive. What is locally known as the Sheepfield now has planning permission to build 15 more affordable dwellings which will start shortly. But we have not yet seen planning applications for the Kit Kat site or the Tesco extension. McCarthy and Stone are interested in the old garage site if they get planning permission. They have already consulted widely with stakeholders and there is to be Public Consultation on Wednesday April 24th in the Y & CC. We will discuss this in Council in May. You will probably have read about the large development planned for Heacham which includes 355 houses a pub, residential home, a skating rink among other things with main access from a roundabout off the A149. If it goes ahead it will undoubtedly have implications for Hunstanton so we will monitor events and I shall attend the open meeting in Heacham on Saturday 20th April.

Since last year the Town Clerk has opened a link on the Town Council website for Planning which makes it easier for everyone to see what applications are in the pipe line – please have a look and make a comment if you want to. Additional constructive support or opposition may be welcome.

To conclude I would like to thank my fellow E-planning Councillors for their help and opinions during the year and Lisa for her supporting role.

(c) Finance

Cllr G Smith, Chairman of the Finance Committee reported that lettings for the Town hall were approximately £11,200. The other main source of income was rent from PAYE for Nannies for the Annex £5,786 (net after agent commission). We were also in receipt of grants and donations for the Jubilee celebrations amounting to some £2,552.

The main expenditures for the year were as follows:-

Insurance of the building with the liabilities necessary £5,695.

Renovations to the Basement and surrounding areas, which have now been completed, amounted to £21,064. This includes the fitting of the kitchen. Anyone who's had an opportunity to visit will I'm sure agree that the improvements have made this building look so much better.

Rates £1,827, & loan repayments £8,233.

The cost of the fireworks for the Jubilee were £2,000.

The other main expenditure was renewing the Annex windows at a cost of £2,606 and weather vane repairs £2,475.

All of these items are exclusive of VAT.

HTC at it's estimates meeting at the beginning of the end of last year unanimously voted a new precept of £103,800 a reduction of over £3,000 on last year.

There have been several appointments to the staff during the year. Early in the year HTC took control of th TIC and now is fully in control of the whole building.

That resulted in the employees now coming under the umbrella of HTC.

Consequently a Town Hall manager was appointed, namely Angela Green, later in the year a Town Hall caretaker was also appointed being Kevin Green.

You will have noticed major refurbishments going on in the TIC and costs to the end of the financial year amounted to £5,740 plus planning costs.

Various items are now sold through the TIC as well as commission received from event tickets.

As of 1.4.13 the Town Councxil took control of the Community Centre. A caretaker was appointed for this building. Accounts figures will obviously be prepared for the current year and reported upon in a year's time.

I would like to thank Lisa, Chris and all other staff for all their efforts during the past year in helping the smooth running of this council.

Finally, of course, all the fellow councillors for their efforts over the last twelve months.

(d) Quality Council

Cllr B Devlin, Chairman of the Quality Council Committee reported that there are 5 Working Parties which report to this Committee these being the Community centre W/Party which came into being prior to HTC taking over the Centre on 2nd April 2013 on a 10 year lease and already the list of forthcoming events is growing. I would like to thank this hard-working group for a very successful outcome for us.

The Youth W/Party attempts to fulfil the urgent need for the provision of a Youth Club somewhere. A Youth café has been set up at the bus café, it is manned and has funds to run it. I wish it well.

The Freedom W/party was set up to look into the possibility of granting the Freedom of the Town to USAF 67th Special Operations Squadron and Kathy Leming, the widow of Reis Leming. The matter is being progressed.

The Markets W/Party has an open ended agenda to look at all sites within the town where a market might be placed and its viability.

The Regeneration W/Party is to examine where any money that might come forward might best be spent. There is certainly a need for it.

Tow W/Parties have been disbanded, these being the Land Development AP and the Localism Bill WP. Eric pickles was sent a very strong letter regarding Localisation of Council Tax Support as the Government had done a very sharp U-Turn on the matter and explaining that the views and concerns of the overwhelming majority of respondents to its recent consultation appear to have been ignored. A reply was received from Michael King and Henry Bellingham.

(e) Town Hall Management

Cllr N Godfrey-Cole, Chairman of the Town Hall Management Committee reported This is the report for The Town Hall Management Committee for 2012/2013 including TIC Development Working Party.

This past year has seen an increase in the use of the Town Hall facilities. These facilities now incorporate the Town Hall, Basement, Council Chamber and Tourist Information Centre.

The number of bookings being 255 in The Town Hall, 211 in The Basement and 82 in the Chamber with a total usage of 548 times.

The bookings have been for various purposes from Children's Events, Charity Events, Private Parties, Town Events, Meetings, The Town Pantomime and Mayoral and Civic Events, to name but a few.

The working parties have progressed with a number of improvements including external work on the weathervane tower and the refurbishment of the windows in the annex.

The Basement has seen the completion of the kitchen area allowing for youth activities to now commence. Currently The Basement is being used for Zumba and dance classes also Ballet classes and in May, youth activities of Cheerleading, Tang Su Do, and Musical Theatre will start. The IT Suite is now running with computers and with Wi-Fi connection.

The Chamber now has new chairs in its public area, these are more comfortable for our visitors and guests who attend meetings.

Hunstanton Town Council are now overseeing the running of the Tourist Information Centre since April 2012. With ongoing work which will be completed by May 2013, The TIC will be more welcoming with a brighter atmosphere and will be more user friendly for the disabled and buggies. The TIC is a hub of information and is being run extremely well with dedicated staff. Being possibly the first port of call for visitors, the information and service the staff offer, in all forms, from where to visit, eat, stay, park, etc. It now has its own range of clothing with a unique Hunstanton logo and also calendars that are produced in house. They are also looking at a range of Insignia merchandise using the revamped town crest. We, as a town, should be thankful that we have this facility for visitors and townsfolk of our great town.

With the increase of bookings, Hunstanton Town Council has employed a Facilities Manager, Mrs Angela Green. Angela's enthusiasm and hard work and that of our Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Caretaker have seen the smooth workings of the aforementioned facilities. On behalf of all Councillors, I would like to thank Lisa, Chris, Angela and Kevin for all their hard work. There is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes when anything is going on in the Town Hall and without the great team, events, in whatever form, would not be able to take place.

Lisa, Chris and Angela have worked on promoting The Town Hall facilities by producing a brochure and have developed The Town Council website www.hunstantontownhall.co.uk. These are in place to promote The Town Hall and all that it has to offer.

(f) Allotments

Cllr C Dunbar, Chairman of the Allotments Committee reported

“We continue to be well supported by the Town Council” is the comment received from our Allotment Chairman, Keith May. But equally many allotment club members have been very supportive of the Town Council and projects within the town, such as the Community Orchard and In Bloom.

The allotment waiting list now stands at 19. The last persons put on to Plots have only waited since March 2012 so we have been reasonably successful in keeping plots turning over. There are now 71 plots under cultivation. Full plots continue to be split as they become available. We welcome all those newcomers and wish them every success.

It is, however, always sad to say goodbye to allotment holders when they have to give up for whatever reason. Richard Sellick has had to give up his plot after 20 years, and I am sure his friends and neighbours from the allotment community will miss him.

We had a very successful Open Day last summer with stalls, teas and cakes and children's activities. There was also an excellent Xmas Function, which unfortunately I was unable to attend.

Working parties of committed volunteers continue with general maintenance of the site and the programme for the year ahead includes Road and Gate repair, and some tree surgery, which is needed as the trees in Glebe School are now overshadowing the plots on the western edge of the site.

Last summer was rather wet and this spring is rather late and so Allotmenters continue to be challenged by the weather. At least it has meant that the water bill has been minimal.

We look forward with anticipation and determination to some kind of weather for this coming growing season, and hope, as ever, for some bumper harvests.

3. Open Meeting

The Mayor invited questions and comments from the public.

Cllr A Murray asked where the McCarthy & Stone presentation was to be held and was informed that it was to be in the Community Centre.

BCllr E Watson reported that there were attempts to have more allotments put into the LDF.

Mr P Richardson asked when the A149 crossing to the Recreation Ground was to be made and was informed that it would be during the current financial year.

Mr M Ruston thanked the Town Council for its devotion to looking after the town.

Cllr C Bower reported that the fireworks display had not cost £4,000 but £2,600 and grants had covered the cost.

There being no further questions, the Mayor thanked everyone for attending and explained that they were welcome to attend the Full Council meeting which would take place shortly in the Council Chamber.

Meeting closed 6:31 pm