

**HARPENDEN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

**HELD IN PARK HALL,
ON MONDAY 30 MARCH 2015**

Present: Councillors Mary Maynard, Chairman (Town Mayor), Chambers, Chichester-Miles, B. Ellis, M. Ellis, Rosemary Farmer, Mrs Kent, Mrs Linacre, Pawle, Thomas, Mrs Vincent, Weaver and Williams

Also in Attendance: District Councillors Daly and D Heritage
Mr J McGown, Deputy Lieutenant

36 Members of the Public, Press

Apologies: Rt Hon Peter Lilley MP, Cllrs Dr Frosh, Dr Leadbeater and Newns
County and District Cllr T Heritage
There were several other apologies presented which were duly noted

The meeting was chaired by the Town Mayor, Councillor Mary Maynard.

1. WELCOME

The Town Mayor opened the Meeting and welcomed those present.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON 31 MARCH 2014

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 31 March 2014, previously circulated, were proposed by Councillor Weaver and seconded by Councillor Mrs Pat Kent and duly signed as a correct record.

3. PRESENTATION BY GRAHAM WESTWELL, HARPENDEN TRUST

3.1 Mr Westwell from the Harpenden Trust made a presentation on volunteering in the community.

3.2 He gave a background to the Trust which was formed in 1948 and was later described as a "social experiment without parallel in this country"- the better off helping the less well off.

3.3 He stressed the importance of volunteering in the local community and that the Harpenden Trust would not survive without its volunteers. *Volunteer for Harpenden* is a new initiative which is being promoted to bring together groups looking for volunteers. It is designed to signpost individuals to volunteering opportunities.

3.4 *Volunteer for Harpenden* would be up and running in April 2015, with the launch planned for the 22 April. It was anticipated with the interest being shown in supporting the initiative that *Volunteer for Harpenden* would prove to be a successful medium for promoting volunteering in the community.

4. PRESENTATION OF THE 2013/14 MERIT AWARDS IN RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING WORKS IN THE COMMUNITY OVER MANY YEARS

The Mayor presented awards to:

Mrs Pam Morris for voluntary services with the Harpenden Seniors Forum since the organisation was founded in 2008. In addition to her voluntary role with Harpenden Seniors Forum she volunteers for the Ambulance Trust User Group and the Air Ambulance Trust.

Mr Andrew Catton who has served as a retained fire fighter in his role as Crew Commander for over 30 years at the Harpenden Fire Station.

Mr Larry Neal who has served as a retained fire fighter for over 30 years and is recognised as one of the best fire service drivers and pump operators in the county. Mr Neal is also a well known local scout master with over 30 years of volunteering service to the scouting movement.

5. PRESENTATION OF THE TOWN MAYOR'S CHARITY CHEQUES

5.1 The Mayor was delighted to announce that £5,826 had been raised for her chosen charities with some additional funds coming from Waitrose Community Matters which had already been received by the relevant charities.

5.2 The Mayor presented cheques to her two chosen charities, Community Meeting Point and Home Start St Albans City and District, for £2,700 each representing the balance of the funds.

5.3 The Mayor hoped the meeting would agree that her chosen charities were extremely worthy beneficiaries. She had thoroughly enjoyed working with everyone on raising funds to help them in their cause. She was grateful for the hard work put in by her Charity Committee in helping her organise a series of fund raising events which proved to be very successful. She congratulated all of them on their crucial role in ensuring the events went smoothly and were enjoyable. She went on thank everyone, friends and businesses, in the wider community for supporting these events without whose support she would not have been able to generate the funds presented.

6. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL FOR YEAR 2014/2015

6.1 The Mayor began by thanking Graham Westwell for his presentation. She commented that volunteering is the corner stone to Harpenden's success as a town and a community. Many of the points and issues raised by Graham were very relevant and she hoped they would inspire a new generation of volunteers to keep Harpenden a caring and sharing community with ambitious goals and high standards.

6.2 The Mayor's theme for the year has been 'Helping Your Neighbour'. She considered that both her charities represented this ambition. It was also consistent with Graham's presentation on volunteering and the focus that a vibrant, selfless and successful community must hold in high regard.

- 6.3 The Town Council had been busy delivering services to the community, working in partnership with Principal Authorities and seeking to engage with other agencies for the benefit of the town. During the year the Mayor has been party to a number of significant acquisitions. This had included land at Marquis Lane, opposite the Marquis of Granby Public House. The purpose of the acquisition was to integrate the land into the highly regarded nature reserve and riverside walk that is Batford Springs. The land had been used informally for a long time by walkers and other visitors for leisure and recreational purposes. The Town Council wanted to preserve and protect this use of the land.
- 6.4 A pocket of land in Southdown between Fovant Close and Broadstone Road had been purchased by the Town Council from the Treasury for £1. Following public consultation it was agreed that the land would provide a community orchard. Whilst these negotiations have been successfully concluded the devolution of the Batford Springs Volunteers' HQ are still being finalised. The Mayor was aware that papers had been submitted to draw this matter to a satisfactory conclusion and the Council were progressing plans to replace the crumbling premises with something both structurally sound and appropriate to meet the needs of the volunteers and the community.
- 6.5 The biggest asset that the Town Council owned is Harpenden Common. At the invitation of Natural England, the Council had entered into a higher level stewardship scheme which included: the Hayfield, the picnic area, roughs on the golf course, the grass area in front of East Common cottages and Eastmoor Park Common.
- 6.6 The Council constantly looked to improve the ecology and diversity of the areas of land under its control. In 2014 an area of land along the Lower Luton Road was trialled as a meadow. It has been agreed to trial the area again in 2015 and also include some of the Common land between West Common and the St Albans Road.
- 6.7 The Mayor went on to mention that the Common is also an area where many events take place for the enjoyment and benefit of local residents. Fairs and a circus visit the town and take up position on the Common opposite the Silver Cup or on the triangle, opposite the Harpenden Public Halls. There are town events such as the Discovery Day, Classics on the Common, organised by the Village Rotary Club and Armed Forces Day, organised in conjunction with the Legion. The Mayor thanked the other community organisations that provide entertainment throughout the year for residents such as the Lions who organise the Highland Gathering and the Roundtable who organise the summer carnival.
- 6.8 The annual events this year included the St Albans and Harpenden Food and Drink Festival. The event represented the launch of the festival at the Farmers Market held at the end of September. Food and drink stalls were erected on Church Green and a stage provided for celebrities to demonstrate cooking. The event proved very popular. A lot was learnt from the success of that event and the Council were able to re-think the layout for the Christmas Carnival stage and events in that location. This was a huge success with large crowds enjoying the market stalls the Christmas atmosphere and the seasonal charm.

- 6.9 Church Green was the focus for another significant event during 2014 which was the World War I Commemoration. The Mayor thanked the British Legion for helping to coordinate and organise the event at the War Memorial which was poignant and moving.
- 6.10 The Mayor had been privileged to attend numerous events in the town over the last 12 months. It has been richly rewarding, interesting and educational. She wanted to mention the celebrations associated with the 100 years of Brownies with the planting of a tree on the Hayfield and the flying of the Commonwealth Flag and the single commemorative act in respect of World War I
- 6.11 The Mayor made a special mention and a big thank you to her secretary, Linda Haynes who has worked so hard throughout the year on the Mayor's behalf. It had been a great pleasure working with her. She went on to thank all the voluntary organisations that operate in Harpenden for the unstinting, selfless contribution that they make to the community. She had the privilege of meeting many of them during the year.

7. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

- 7.1 The Mayor invited questions from the floor:
- 7.2 Mr John Davis asked about two sites in Harpenden: The redevelopment of the former Rose and Crown Public House, the railway embankment wall at this location and the rubbish strewn entrance to Station House in Station Approach. The Clerk responded that the redevelopment of the Rose and Crown was set to proceed with new developers. The wall at the rear of the old pub had stalled because the previous owner of the pub had objected to the materials being used. With the sale of the site and a new developer keen to move forward the repairs by Network Rail to the embankment would now progress.
- 7.3 Regarding the rubbish issue, the Clerk responded that it was understood the condition of the property had been reported to the owner. If there were no changes to the current situation then it would be reported to environmental health as it was a health hazard.
- 7.3 Mrs Rosemary Ross thanked the Town Council for their support of the town twinning associations and for their help with the Our Place project in its bid for Harpenden to provide a hub for arts, culture and heritage. She commented on the Council's renewed commitment to Fairtrade products but noticed that often non Fairtrade products were served at Council events. She also enquired if the Highways Together project could include blocked drains. The Clerk explained the Highways Together project for those attendees who were not familiar with it and responded that drains were included in the scheme.
- 7.4 Mr Chris Gray asked the meeting about the status of derelict garage sites in Batford. The Mayor responded that this was not the responsibility of the Town Council but asked Cllr Brian Ellis who was the Housing Portfolio Holder at the District Council to respond to the question. Cllr Ellis responded that he had visited the site in question, Noke Shot. It was a difficult site to access with existing rights for various adjacent properties, as well as a public footpath running through. There

has been some development of garage sites for housing but it was a complicated process involving public procurement legislation.

- 7.5 Mr David Wright commented on the development of the Rose and Crown site with 24 flats approved for the site but only 14 parking spaces. Parking in Southdown was an issue and he was concerned that not enough consideration had been given to this requirement. The Mayor responded that there were guidelines for parking spaces in relation to the number of proposed properties. Cllr Pawle commented that he had sat on the Plans North Planning Committee meeting the night the application had been heard and that the committee had refused the application on these grounds, however, the plans had subsequently been approved on appeal.
- 7.6 Mr John Davis enquired about how the plans for the site could be viewed and the Mayor responded that all plans are available to view on line on the District Council's website.

There being no other questions or statements at this time the Mayor called the meeting to a close at 8.28 pm.

Chairman.....

Date.....