

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on Wednesday 20th April 2016 at 7.30pm
in the Town Hall**

Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Council

Present: Cllr Connolly, Town Mayor
Cllrs Hale, Earth, Wilson, Perkins, Lewendon & Paton

In Attendance: Mrs H Richards, Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, Responsible Finance Officer
Cllr E Heron, Hampshire CC
Cllr R Bellows, New Forest DC
Ruth Croker, Footpath Officer
Rev Gary Philbrick
5 Members of the Public

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Anstey, Adams, Fulford and Price

2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on 22nd April 2015 and to report any matters arising.

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on the 22nd April 2015 be signed as a true record.

Cllr Paton entered the meeting.

Matters Arising

Minute no. 6 – Issues raised during Mr Newman’s presentation have been addressed.

Minute no. 7 – Burgate Fields parking issues – meeting held today (20/04/16) and parking restrictions put in place today. – Further consultation uncertain.

3. To receive the Annual Report from the Town Mayor

The Mayor, Cllr Connolly reported that it had again been a difficult year which saw a decline in services provided by the principal authorities with some disappearing such as youth services and Neighbourhood Planning. The expected shift in responsibilities brought in by the Localism had not appeared.

Liaison with the Neighbourhood Police Team had deteriorated with the closure of the Police Station and no public access being provided.

Life for residents has become confused and there has been a change with an aging population. Residents have increasingly raised concerns over issues such as potholes, speeding and parking issues.

The area has retained the benefit of 3 active local councillors, with Cllr Heron, Hampshire County Council and Cllrs Sevier and Bellows as District Council representatives.

We must all now look at the bigger picture for the future.

The Pavilion re-build project has not progressed as the original scheme was too grand and costly and the Council will now look at other options including possible refurbishment of the existing building. Council works do bring rewards and it is always good to receive thanks.

The refreshment kiosk in the Recreation Ground has now been operating for 18 months and the Council now need to look at refurbishment of the Memorial Garden.

Discussions have taken place regarding rejuvenation of the Business Forum, however, this has not been progressed by business representatives.

The enhancement of the Town Centre is also another key issue which must be undertaken. Although the Motto Guzzi Club are unfortunately not returning to the town this year, other key events are planned including:

- Queen Elizabeth's 90th birthday celebrations (Flowers and bunting in the Town Centre, a Picnic in the Park and litter pick)
- Plans will get underway for the 150th anniversary of the Turks Football Club (taking place in 2018)
- Plans will also be made shortly for the 35th anniversary of the Twinning Association with Vimoutiers in France (May 2017)

The Mayor then gave thanks to the following:

- County and District Councillors for their support over the past year and our goals for the common good of the community
- Fellow Town Councillors
- Fordingbridge Rotary Club for their support and assistance with events in the town (Remembrance Parade, Christmas Event) and fundraising to support the Christmas Lights
- Avon Valley Partnership for their support and again working together for the common good of the community
- A special thank you to Cllr Ann Sevier for her work regarding WW1 research and website administration
- Officers and staff of the Town Council
- Special thanks to the Finance Officer, Martine in understanding and complying with Financial Transparency
- Thanks to the Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Finance officer for the extra time worked and particularly the Clerk in managing the staff and bringing them together as a team

Finally in summary, the Mayor stressed that the way forward must be with decision being made for the common interest and the town must pull together.

4. To report on finances for 2015/16 (un-audited accounts) and the budget for 2016/17

The Finance Officer reported on the council's financial activity over the past year including the monies received and spent from developer's contributions (Section 106) which included Play Area Enhancement – now need to complete fencing works to improve safety. The budget for 2015/16 is overspent due to works to the Kiosk.

The new budget must include funds to undertake additional pitch maintenance due to the increased usage of the pitches; the potential need for roof repairs to alleviate the leak at the Town Hall and other conservation work.

The precept has not been raised this year, although next year may see the grant from New Forest District Council disappear.

The S137 grants are underspent this year and more applications from local groups are needed.

The Finance officer reported that the Council have complied with statutory requirements under the Transparency Code and now publish financial information on the website. The Finance Officer finished her report by advising of the importance of financial forward planning with priorities set for what to spend money on.

5. To receive any matters raised by members of the public

- Concern was raised over the low attendance (at this meeting) by members of the public and this was blamed on lack of advertising.
- A query was raised regarding what plans there are for the Memorial Gardens – The Mayor responded that a new Royal British Legion memorial would be investigated.
- Concern was raised regarding the paving in the town – particularly in Salisbury Street - Cllr Heron responded that he would take the matter back to Hampshire CC
- Rev Philbrick informed the meeting that the next WW1 commemoration would be on the 1st July followed by a further commemoration in September for 3 brothers (Witt).
- Thanks were received for the provision of the Christmas Lights and summer flowers which were considered marvellous.
- Concern raised over lorries travelling through the Town Centre

6. Presentation by the Clerk on behalf of Fordingbridge Community First Responders

The Clerk gave details of the CPR (Call, Push, Rescue) training Initiative (with the British Heart Foundation) recently launched and advised that the Responders would be holding training sessions at the Town Hall and also at the fire station.

The Clerk also reported that the responders were looking to recruit new members and gave contact details for anyone interested.

7. Presentation by the Clerk – The Town Council

The Clerk gave a short presentation about the Council, what it is, how it works, what it does and how it needs to move forward. The clerk stated that there is a need to refresh it's approach with members being active members taking on a wider role and not just attending meetings. Challenges would be faced over the next few years with more responsibilities and services being passed to town and parish councils from the principal authorities.

As the Mayor and Finance Officer have already stated, a stronger business approach must be taken with business or forward plans and realistic budgets set. Priorities must be identified and challenges made to what and how we do things.

8. Any other relevant parish business

No other business raised.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm