

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on Wednesday, 23rd April 2014 in the Town Hall, Fordingbridge

Present:

Cllr. Connolly (Town Mayor)
Councillors Adams, Anstey, Fulford, Hale, Lewendon, Perkins, Price, Buchanan,
Paton, (A) Wilson & (G) Wilson

In attendance:

HCC Cllr. E Heron
NFDC Cllrs R Bellows & A Sevier
Mrs H Richards, Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, Finance Officer
5 members of the public

1. To receive apologies for absence

Cllr P Turner, Chairman Breamore PC

2. To welcome the speaker, Cllr Mike Buchanan.

Cllr Buchanan addressed the meeting on his draft proposal for the Fordingbridge Guided Town Walk. Cllr Buchanan outlined the aims and purpose of the project to develop the Walk. The project was created in an effort to stimulate further historic interest in Fordingbridge, which will indirectly provide financial gains and other new revenue streams as a resultant thereof. Domestic Tourism, Day Visits, are the largest part of the tourist industry and Fordingbridge needs to be part of this income pie.

The Guided Walks should focus on increasing revenue and enhancing the visitor experience. Walks would be between 45-60 minutes in duration around the Town, with stop off points at places of interest. The walks should be locally managed and captivating guided by well briefed volunteers from the local community. Volunteers would need to possess particular qualities to ensure that participants are captivated and the information delivered in the right manner. Consideration should also be given to any facts conveyed to ensure that "the right story is told"; research work is time consuming and a working group or committee would be required.

An option for the route was presented together with interesting facts regarding the extensive history of Fordingbridge, it's environment and people.

Reference documents used for research purposes were noted as Government2 Tourism Policy 2011 and Fordingbridge Time Line by Rosemary Fulford together with a working document prepared by Cllr Buchanan.

The audience was asked to consider the feasibility of this proposal together with how the walks could be managed and run.

It was AGREED that this item be discussed at the May meeting of the General Council.

3. To confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Assembly on 24th April 2013 and to report any matters arising.

It was proposed by Cllr Lewendon and seconded by Cllr (A) Wilson that the minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 23rd April 2013 be signed as a true record. All in favour, Carried.

Matters arising

Sports Facility – the meeting was advised that Planning Permission had been granted and that fundraising options are to be investigated shortly.

Concession Building - the meeting was advised that the building works for the new Concession Building (Kiosk) commenced on the 22nd April 2014, with anticipated completion later in the summer.

The Breamore Railway Line Path – successful project and well used pathway.

Fordingbridge Junior School – Works carried out and improvements to footpaths

New Forest Community Routes – this is an ongoing project

4. To receive the Annual Report from the Town Mayor

The past year has once again been a period of continuous change. The emphasis on Localism continued with more financial responsibility and less income. Together with New Forest District Council and Hampshire County Council, the Council have strived to provide services with reduced income. Members wishes to continue to subsidise the Christmas Lighting and summer flowers has been expensive but localism and support from Members has been strong. Members have agreed to support the continuation of the Summer flowers. Agreement has been reached with the Rotary Club regarding contribution towards funding of the Christmas Lights for 2 years, but a long term solution must be sought.

I would like to give thanks to Helen and Karl, the Rotary Club and Ian Newman and his staff for their continued help and support throughout the year. I would also like to give thanks, as the 3rd tier of Government to both our District Councillors, Cllrs Sevier and Bellows and County Councillor, Cllr Heron.

A main focus of the year has been the application for a Gypsy Traveller site in Marl Lane on an area identified in the NFDC Local Plan which should be preserved for recreation and NFDC had been instrumental in stopping unlawful planning. Whitsbury Road set precedent. At this point Cllr A Sevier updated the meeting that NFDC had received an email withdrawing the appeal for the Traveller Site, however confirmation was awaited from the Planning Inspectorate.

Works have started this week on the Concession Building at the Recreation Ground. I also confirm that further planned enhancements funded by Development Contributions not Council Tax Income include enhancements to the play area, with new equipment and also the provision of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). It is hoped that the MUGA would attract more youth to the recreation ground, providing more activities.

I would like to thank Members for their involvement with outside bodies, which is undertaken on a voluntary basis. My thanks also go to the Staff of the Town Council; Andy & Derek on Amenity Areas and the Recreation Ground, Ann for the cleaning of the Town Hall & VIC, Kathy & Sue for their invaluable service provided at the Information Office, Martine for her outstanding work on all Financial Aspects and lastly thanks to Debbie as Assistant Town Clerk, particularly through this year of massive change with Kate's departure and the increased Health & Safety requirements. I would like to welcome Helen Richards to the role of Town Clerk.

Looking ahead to the forthcoming year, there will be further financial change requiring the Council to spend prudently with additional funding sources required. The focus of Council spending will be on provision of the Christmas Lights and Summer Flowers, The Sports Pavilion and potentially the Guided Walks.

5. To report on finances for 2013/14 (un-audited accounts) and the budget for 2014/15.

Martine Coatham, Finance Officer, presented the un-audited accounts and invited those in attendance to view them at the end of the meeting. With reduced income this year and additional expenditure required during December in relation to flood prevention plus higher staff costs due to pension contributions, wiser spending is now required. The Mayor thanked Martine for her report.

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

Congratulations and thanks were given from the public for the provision of the Christmas Lights and Summer Flowers.

A question was raised over the positioning of the Concession Building as it was being built in a different position than originally planned. The Mayor responded by informing the meeting that the building had been repositioned following professional advice from the Architect employed that the new position would offer greater safety and accessibility.

With regard to the proposed Guided Walk, it was suggested by the Chair of Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley PC that participants may like to have a leaflet to read at leisure following the walk. It was acknowledged that the Walks would help other revenue streams within the Town but concern was raised with how all the various elements would tie up. The Hawkhurst Smugglers Trail connection should be highlighted and the organisers have agreed to links between respective websites.

It was suggested by a Member of the Public that the date of the Annual Parish Meeting should be more widely published and that one channel of advertising could be via the Viewpoint Magazine.

7. To receive any other relevant parish business

There was no other parish business.

The Mayor, Cllr Connolly, thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.30pm