



MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING held in the NEW MILLENNIUM CHAMBER, MANOR HOUSE, CHURCH STREET, LITTLEHAMPTON on THURSDAY 19 MARCH 2015 at 6.00PM

Present: Forty nine members of the public and the Town Mayor, Cllr Long, Cllrs Ayres, Belchamber MBE, Buckland, Caffyn, Millam, Neno and Squires.

2014/2015

1. EVACUATION PROCEDURES

The evacuation procedures were noted.

2. FILMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The procedures were noted.

3. MOBILE PHONES

Members were reminded that the use of mobile phones (other than on silent) was prohibited at Town Council and Committee meetings.

4. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Bowyer, Emberson and Dr Walsh KSt.J; Nick Gibb MP; Simon Vickers, Chairman of the Littlehampton Town Traders; Nigel Lynn, Chief Executive, Arun District Council; Chief Inspector Justin Burtenshaw, Sussex Police and David Warne, East Beach Residents Association. Councillor Northeast also sent his apologies as he had to attend a meeting at Arun, but hoped to join the meeting later.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 24 April 2014 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

6. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT and presentation of TOWN MERIT AWARDS

6.1 The Mayor Councillor Long, welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Meeting and proceeded to deliver her report on the work of the Town Council over the last year. Recalling the difficulties that had characterised her predecessor's year in office, she stated that would she endeavour to keep her report brief and upbeat. She went on to present an update on the major issues effecting the Town and to reflect on other developments during her term of office.

- 6.2 As chair of the Town Council's Planning and Transportation Committee, she had been very much involved in putting together the Neighbourhood Plan. Having overcome a number of obstacles and having finally reached an understanding with Arun District Council, the Plan went on to a public referendum that gave it a ringing endorsement. The only challenge going forward was to ensure that the planners give it due regard.
- 6.3 Discussions with the District Council over the phased withdrawal of the Localisation of Support for Council Tax Grant had been fraught. She emphasised that the Town Council did not want to be dependent on Government Grant. The Town Council considered that the continued delivery of efficient and relevant services to the Town was paramount and now that the unwelcome steps of cutbacks and Council Tax increases had been taken, she expressed the hope that the two Councils could move on.
- 6.4 Another battle that appeared to have been lost during the year was the District's desire to build Council houses on the car parks and green spaces in Wick. The people of the Town had clearly stated that whilst new council housing was needed, this was the wrong location, and proposals for the next phase of this scheme remained to be seen. Until recently it appeared that Littlehampton had largely bucked the trend and retained a vibrant town centre. However, commenting on the recent decision of Waitrose to withdraw from the Town, the loss of the Oxfam shop and the possible loss of the Morrison's local store, she stated that the Town would need to work hard to overcome these setbacks.
- 6.5 Last year it was reported that the future of the swimming pool and theatre hung in the balance. The District Council would be considering options for the possible relocation of the swimming pool in the late spring/early summer. The loss of Waitrose had opened up speculation once again about the St. Martin's site and the Town Council would be monitoring this closely.
- 6.6 On a more positive note, the East Bank flood defence works were now close to completion providing many residents with much improved protection from flood making their houses and businesses easier to insure. The development should also greatly increase the attraction of the town to residents and visitors alike.
- 6.7 For some years the possibility of two urban extensions to the Town had been at the forefront of discussions and the Courtwick development, known as Kingley Gate, was now progressing. It was hoped that the new residents would join in with the strong community that was Littlehampton. Noting that the first detailed planning application for a section of the North Littlehampton development was currently under consideration, she stated that this would have a significant and hopefully positive impact on the area. Referring to proposals for a new bridge over the railway line, the Lyminster by-pass and the possibility of a by-pass for Arundel she commented that these represented a big step forward for the Town over the next two / three years.
- 6.8 Looking forward, other issues that would need attention included Arun's Local Plan; the West Bank and the impact of the new arrangements for running our parks and gardens. The Town Council also hoped to see a successful outcome to the work being led by the Police to reduce the problems of the street drinkers in the Town Centre and in Wick.
- 6.9 Turning to the highlights of her mayoral year, the Mayor welcomed the return of the annual Bonfire event after the unfortunate cancellation in 2013. She

added that the Carnival, Armed Forces Day, the Town Show and Family Fun Day; Pancake Olympics; Christmas Lights switch on; Seafront Festival and Screen on the Green were all superb. Commenting that these events were what helped keep the Town special, she expressed her thanks to everyone involved in delivering them.

- 6.10 The Mayor went on to pay tribute to the largely unseen work of many of the local community groups that did so much for the Town. It was impossible to list everyone, but as examples she mentioned the Enable Me Volunteers event and the Look and Sea Centre D-Day +70 event and Veteran's Tea Party. These illustrated what held together the fabric of the town and were often led by supremely talented and hardworking individuals. One of those was Mike Cullern who sadly had just passed away. Mike had been the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Watch Association and had worked with a committed and determined attitude, until the end, to promote a positive and cohesive approach to enhance the Town. Last year the Town also lost a great friend in Glyn Allen. Glyn served the Town in many ways including as Chair of the Town Show Committee and Littlehampton Allotments Leisure Gardens Association. Also, the Town had lost former Mayor Leslie Hutchins, a great servant to the Town, and Tom Harrison who for many years organised the Royal British Legion Remembrance Sunday event and Poppy collection.
- 6.11 The Mayor stated that all these individuals would be sadly missed and a minute's silence was held in respect for them and others who were no longer with us.
- 6.12 The Mayor updated the meeting on her Charity, the 4th, 5th and 7th Littlehampton Scout Groups. She explained that during her mayoral year she wanted to raise money for groups based in Littlehampton so that the funds would stay within the Town and benefit the community. She was pleased to announce that to date, £1,000 had been raised.

Merit Awards

- 6.13 The Mayor stated that it was a privilege to present the Town Merit Awards which included presentations recognising the work of one individual and two community groups. The first award was presented to Mrs Margaret Baker who had dedicated many years of service to the Girl Guide movement and was a hardworking fundraiser to support the building of the Guide Hall in Duke Street. She had also given her services to St James Church as a Sunday School Teacher and was a staunch member of the Scout Fellowship. Mrs Baker expressed thanks and was pleased to accept the award.
- 6.14 The first Group Merit Award was presented to Jan and Roger Elliman of the Arun Youth Aqua Centre. The Mayor stated that the group had been established for over forty years and had given many young people an opportunity to learn to sail and canoe in a fun and safe environment. The group also provided access to water sports for all young people and enabled personal development through this activity. In accepting the award Mr Elliman thanked the Town Council for the grant support that the group received. He also expressed his thanks to the children who participated in the group and to the many volunteers who had supported their activities during the past thirty years.
- 6.15 The Second Group Merit Award was presented to The Littlehampton Civic Society. The Mayor stated that the Society had worked extremely hard and

dedicated many years focussing on issues that required fighting and/or supporting for the betterment of the Town. These included supporting the establishment of a Flood Action Group, the Neighbourhood Plan and the Community Charter. In accepting the Award, Diane Bayley, the Chairman of the Society, reflected on thirty years of community action. She welcomed the good relationship between the Society and the Town Council and she also paid tribute to individual residents, especially Mr Wilf Daggett, who had supported the Society in its many campaigns over the years.

6.16 Finally, the Mayor thanked everyone in the Town for making her Mayoral year something to remember for all the right reasons and for making Littlehampton such a wonderful Town.

7. TO HEAR QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC OF WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY GIVEN

7.1 Annamarie Bayley, a Bayford Road resident, asked a question regarding the residential area that surrounded the 03 Club, 90/91 South Terrace, adjoining Bayford Road. She wished to know, could the Littlehampton and District councils help the residents to turn the area into a much more family friendly place for what was a main artery from the town to the seafront for visitors and local people. She stated that the area had become a noisy, hostile and unpleasant place particularly throughout the summer and every weekend late at night. The situation would be further exacerbated if the 03 Club were allowed to extend its licence even later, effectively turning it into a nightclub in a highly residential area.

7.2 In response the Mayor stated that the Town Council had checked with the Licensing Team at the District Council who had advised in respect of the 03 Club that "*The application for the change to conditions and late night refreshment has been considered and granted. Complaints about any licensed premises are dealt with by Arun District Council to whom any evidenced complaint should be directed.*" In respect of the wider question about the area being family friendly, she went on to say that there were a number of excellent family friendly events in and around the town, including on the Green and seafront. The Green, particularly the picnic area with the BBQ stands, was also well used by families. She was however keen for the new District and Town Councils to look at this matter and would ensure that Ms Bayley's comments were passed on.

7.3 Elouisa Bayley, a Bayford Road resident, asked a question regarding the gap in the East Bank flood wall. She stated that as a local house owner her household insurers had withdrawn flood cover until her insurance company could reassess the completed east bank flood wall. She understood that one riparian owner was unable to finance the wall on their land, rendering the recent works in-operational as there was a hole in it, which she had been told might be the case for the next four years. She therefore asked what were the authorities going to do about what was in her view a highly embarrassing situation, especially as the completion date of the wall was June 2015. In her case this meant the loss of value and protection for her house and everybody else living in the area.

7.4 In response, the Mayor stated that the Town Council had referred the question to the Environment Agency who had advised that they were "*currently commissioning a contractor to undertake repair works to the defect*

in the privately owned flood defence at the Riverside Autos site on River Road. We expect these important repairs to be conducted within the next three to six months and that these repairs will reinstate the existing standard of protection provided by the existing wall”.

7.5 John Morris, Maltravers Road, reflected upon the sometimes fractious relationship that appeared to exist between the Town and District Council. Referring to the recent re-opening of Pier Road and the absence of representation on behalf the Town Council, he asked if this was a reflection of the state of the relationship between the two Councils.

7.6 In response, the Town Clerk referred to the recent meeting of the Town Council’s Policy and Finance Committee where members had discussed the latest correspondence from central government regarding Localisation of Council Tax Support Grant. Reflecting on the stance adopted by the District Council in this matter, the Committee had concluded that there was a need to move on. The Councils would need to find ways of working better together if they were to deliver efficient and effective solutions to the problems facing the Town in the future.

7.7 Derrick Chester, Worthing Road, referred to a recent statement from central government which acknowledged the role local councillors as democratically elected representatives in determining the future of their neighbourhoods. He considered that Town and Parish Councils were a vital part of the process and commended the Town Council on the inclusive and transparent manner with which it conducted business on behalf of the Town. In his opinion, the District Council had failed to adapt. However he agreed that the local authorities would need to find ways of working better together in the future if front line services were to be protected. With this in mind and in light of the impending elections, he therefore put forward the following Notice of Motion for consideration by those present:

‘This Town Meeting believes it is important for Littlehampton that the Town Council and Arun District are able to work together for the good of our town and its people looking forward to the future.

This Meeting notes with concern the disputes over budgets between the Town and District and notes that the District is to withdraw a substantial sum of funding from the Town Council. Notwithstanding that this meeting calls on both Town and District to do what they can to ensure frontline public services such as CCTV, public conveniences, youth facilities and others are protected and enhanced.

Further this Meeting calls on the administrations to be formed in May at both Town and District to engage constructively and fully with each other and residents and businesses on proposals for Littlehampton. To aid in this we ask that consideration be given to the reforming of the Regeneration Committee as a partnership committee between Town, District and County to allow maximum opportunity for consultation and minimum duplication and to widen the pool of ideas. Finally, this Meeting welcomes initiatives such as the devolution of householder planning applications and the successful adoption of a neighbourhood plan and in the spirit of localism calls on the consideration of further decision making powers to be devolved to the Town Council.”

7.8 There was widespread support for the proposal and the following points were noted from ensuing discussion:

- There was a perception that Officer advice carried too much weight at the District Council.
 - Dissatisfaction was expressed regarding the manner in which the District Council were conducting the leisure services review and the lack of community engagement.
 - The Cabinet decision making process was considered undemocratic and the current Arun District Council Cabinet lacked representation from Littlehampton.
- 7.9 The motion was duly seconded and the meeting voted by a show of hands and unanimously **RESOLVED** that:

The Motion be approved.

8. TO HEAR QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC OF WHICH NOTICE HAS NOT BEEN GIVEN

- 8.1 The Mayor outlined the protocol for speaking at the meeting. Where possible the Town Clerk would attempt to answer questions or record the point for further consideration or action by the Council.
- 8.2 Diane Bayley, Chairman of the Civic Society, stated that they also had concerns about the Cabinet decision making process and expressed support for the Notice of Motion.
- 8.3 Edna Farrier of the Rope Walk Residents Association stated that the threat of flooding continued to hang over this area and also expressed concerns about the effect of the East Bank flood defence works on the West Bank. She also stated that residents were finding it impossible to insure their homes and asked what could be done to assist residents seeking a resolution.
- 8.4 In response the Town Clerk stated that the Town Council would continue to bring pressure to bear on the relevant authorities on behalf of those residents most effected to address this issue. It was noted that the District Council's Draft Local Plan envisaged development in the area in the future. The Town Clerk informed the meeting that the need for new development to deliver adequate protection for existing and new residents in the area alike was paramount in the Town Council's eyes and in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 8.5 Noting the concerns expressed regarding the impact of the flood defence works on the river and the West Bank, Billy Johnson, Littlehampton Harbour Master reported that the Harbour Board was monitoring the speed of the flow in the river and offered to share the outcomes of this work in due course.
- 8.6 Terry Ellis of the Littlehampton Community Charter Group drew the meeting's attention to the recent announcement by the District Council of a scheme called "Nine Big Ideas for Littlehampton". The aim was to improve links between the town's three main assets – the river, beach and High Street – by phasing in nine schemes to upgrade parts of Littlehampton. The Group was extremely sceptical about the initial suggestions and had formulated a list of 12 alternative ideas which were circulated during the meeting. He encouraged those present to support the Group and invited feedback on their alternative list.
- 8.7 In view of the impending elections, Mr Ellis agreed to forward this information to the Town Clerk for inclusion in the discussions under the new administrations.

- 8.8 Commenting upon the need for affordable housing in the area, Wilf Daggett of Barn Close expressed concern that developers were becoming more successful in negotiating reductions in the provision of this much needed housing.
- 8.9 In response the Town Clerk stated that the Town Council had commented similarly and would be looking closely at the provision to be made in the forthcoming proposals for the new development at Elm Grove Road. The Town Council would continue to press the planning authority on the need for this provision as part of the planning consultation process.
- 8.10 Tyndall Jones, High Street asked if the content of the Neighbourhood Plan could be enforced on the District Council's Local Plan.
- 8.11 In response the Town Clerk explained that this situation should not arise because the Neighbourhood Plan had been drafted to conform to both the existing and emerging Local Plan documents. It was also noted that in cases where site allocations were contradictory, the Neighbourhood Plan had won the day.

9. REPORT FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

- 9.1 Angela Tester, Littlehampton Civic Society, outlined the aims of the group and gave an update on their activities. Membership was open to all and the Society held a monthly meetings where members received presentations from guest speakers. She highlighted the recent work of the Society to raise awareness and coordinate action regarding flood protection, the Neighbourhood Plan, the leisure strategy and the development of the Community Charter. Last year the Society secured £3000 a grant of to help support residents in Rope Walk at risk of flooding. The Society had also recently been awarded grant funding to assist in the production of a magazine which would be published shortly. The Society had been able to attract speakers on a wide range of topics and residents were encouraged to come along to the monthly meetings.
- 9.2 Danny Savage, Treasurer and Joint Secretary of the Littlehampton Flood Action Group, explained the background to the formation of this group which was affiliated to the National Flood Forum. The group comprised of volunteers from the local community who worked with the relevant authorities to raise awareness of and coordinate action to alleviate flood risk in the area. With support from the County Council's Operation Watershed scheme work was underway to assess ground water levels using boreholes. All information would be recorded as evidence of the stability of land for development. The Group was also working with the Littlehampton Academy to create a Rain Garden on their campus. The Group had also recently benefitted from a grant from the Mayors Discretionary fund which had been used to fridge magnets containing details of emergency flood contacts for householders. The Group would welcome additional volunteers and he thanked the Town Council for its support.
- 9.3 David Johnson, Vice Chairman Windmill Cinema Supporters Group gave an update on the Cinema. Last year, having identified an independent operator, the Windmill was now able to offer a varied and improved programme. There was some anxiety about the future as the District Council was in the process of re-tendering the leisure service contract, particularly in light of the failure of Inspire to make it through to the tender stage. The efforts of the Supporters

- Group would therefore be focussed on ensuring that whoever took over was experienced in providing this type of leisure facility. Mr Johnson thanked residents, local community groups and the Town Council for their support.
- 9.4 Tyndall Jones, Littlehampton Bonfire Society, reported that after the weather problems that had beset the 2013 event, 2014 had been an excellent year for the Society. £7,746 had been raised for local good causes, some of which had been used to supply a new ultra-low bed to St Barnabas House in memory of the late Dorothy Clevitt MBE. The Society continued to support other societies across the region and had been placed second in the best dressed visiting society in Sussex competition. On behalf of the Society he thanked the Town Council for its continuing support and arranging for the Society to have a presence at the Friday Market which enabled it to raise funds towards the cost of staging the event. This year's event was scheduled to take place on Saturday 31st October and hoped everyone would join the society who were keen to break the £10,000 barrier for the annual collection.
- 9.5 Margaret Boulton, a member of the Council of Governors of the Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust spoke about the "safety huddle" initiative. This was where hospital teams came together on a daily basis to assess patient needs thereby improving communication and outpatient care. Having been successfully piloted at Worthing and St Richards hospitals the scheme was going to be rolled out across the Trust. Commenting on the lack of a replacement for the hospital in Littlehampton itself and the lack of progress with the proposals for a new medical facility and pharmacy on the Morrisons site, Mrs Boulton asked if the Town Council was able to provide the meeting with an update.
- 9.6 In response, the Town Clerk reported that a recent NHS review of land holdings had concluded that the old hospital site should be preserved to provide a medical facility. Regarding the proposed new medical facility and pharmacy, it was understood that the business case had yet to be approved.
- 9.7 Edna Farrier of the Rope Walk Residents Association explained the history behind the Association which represented residents on the West Bank. The Association worked with the relevant authorities with the aim of improving and safeguarding the environment. The Association held regular meetings and has recently undertaken work to provide a number of planters in the area. Their discussions were mainly focussed on flood issues and they meet regularly with elected representatives to ensure that the views of residents are heard.
- 9.8 Phil McErlain of The Arunners running club explained that the Club catered for ordinary people who wished to run. They organised leisurely runs for members, currently 150 in number and raised funds for local charities. Distances varied from 4 to 12 miles and residents were encouraged to support them at the next fun run on 20th May in aid of the Arun Sunshine Club.
- 9.9 The Mayor thanked everyone for their contribution and brought the meeting to a close.

The meeting concluded at 7.30pm.