

Oundle Town Council – Annual Town Meeting 2017 Report

A Report from the Annual Town Meeting held at 7.30pm on Thursday 27th April 2017 at the Queen Victoria Hall, Oundle.

Present:

Councillors:	Cllrs Chesser (Mayor), Chapple, Sparkes, N Oakes, S Oakes, Glen, Humphreys, Peel and Best.
Clerk:	Emma Baker
Council Staff:	Hanneke Soans, Deborah Saxby, Tina Sereno
Visitors:	Mr Steve Harvey PWS Headmaster, Rachel Vicary Director of Communications for Oundle School, Harry O’ Hare Oundle School and Alex Haidar Oundle Community Speed watch
Police:	Sgt Paul Mitchinson
County Councillor:	Cllr Heather Smith
District Councillors:	Cllrs R Reichhold, P Stearn, J Vowles
NCC Highways:	Sarah Barnwell
Apologies received from:	Tom Pursglove MP, Janet McMurdo (Head Teacher of Oundle Primary School) and Emily Taylor (Oundle Church Clock Fund)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. Minutes of the 2016 Annual Town Meeting

The minutes of the meeting were reviewed and it was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the 2016 Annual Town Meeting are approved and accepted as an accurate record.

3. Oundle Educational Matters

Mr Steve Harvey reported on positive things that are happening at the school. There has been an upward trend in the results and the progress the school is making. Mr Harvey gave an overview of the sporting and musical activities that the pupils have been involved in. There is to be a new Principle at the school from September 2017. Mr Harvey was unable to answer any questions from the floor but was more than willing to answer any questions he received via the school. He would send a copy of his report to the Clerk.

4. Oundle Town Council

- **Mayor’s Report**

The Mayor started by introducing the new Clerk, who had been appointed at the end of 2016 and started in January 2017. She reported on events that she had attended during the year, the move to Fletton House and some of the snagging issues that the Council and staff had to deal with and informed the meeting that there had not been any news on the Fletton Field enquiry yet. The Council currently has four vacancies which they are trying to fill. If anyone is interested in becoming a Councillor please speak to a Councillor or contact the staff at Fletton House.

- **Finance Report**

Cllr Sparkes gave an overview of the income and expenditure for the financial year 2016/2017. Both income and expenditure were well inside the projected budget of approximately £700,000. Income had risen by encouraging performances from the Hub catering and room hire which should be expected to increase. The Precept for 2017/2018 increase had seen an increase on last years by 2%. The Council remains confident of achieving its targets within budget for the Financial year 2017/2018. The figures will be in the next edition of the Oracle.

- **Neighbourhood Plan Update – Cllr David Chapple**

Cllr Chapple gave an update on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group presented the draft plan to the Council at a meeting at the beginning of April. The Council decided to spend some time going through the plan and listing any questions to be put to the steering group prior to adopting the document. This has now been carried out and the plan has been sent to NPIERS for inspection. The plan will be presented to the Council at the May Full Council meeting. Once it has been approved a public meeting will be arranged.

The following questions were raised:

Have the public in Oundle been consulted?

There have been three consultation questionnaires of which were results were analysed prior to the plan being drafted. There will be further consultation leading up to the referendum.

Are the minutes from the planning meeting on 6th April on the website yet?

The plan is not public yet and the minutes are not on the website yet as they have not been approved.

Will there be a cost to the residents for the NPIERS health check?

There is a cost for the health check.

There was a discussion about the number of people in Oundle who are on the Electoral roll. The population of Oundle at the 2011 Census was 5,735. The population does change during Oundle School term time as 6th form students are included on the Oundle electoral roll.

There have been 3 consultations was there any results on how effective they were?

We are hopeful that when we hold a public meeting it will be well supported.

- **Estates Report – Cllr Roy Sparkes**

Cllr Sparkes gave an overview of progress throughout the year. Following the decision not to sell part of the Courthouse a number of new tenants are in the process of moving in and for the first time, income at the Courthouse will exceed expenditure in 2017.

Plans are underway to increase room hire at Fletton House by increasing corporate bookings. Similar plans are also in place for the Queen Victoria Hall.

An extensive survey has been carried out on the causeway at Snipe Meadow and as a result instead of the previous thought to replace the walkway it looks as though the current one can be repaired.

The War Memorial has been cleaned and repaired in time for the Armistice Service in November and, most importantly, the 100th anniversary of the WW1 armistice on 11th November 2018.

5. **Police Update – A/PS Paul Mitchinson**

The introduction to the rural intervention team where the Police Service and fire Service have been working together has been a successful initiative in the area.

East Northants Police have also been involved in a Cross Border Team which has lead to 200 arrests and over 500 criminal disruption visits conducted. 51 warrants have been executed and our team has been involved in 150 Planned Police/partnership operations. The Cross Border Team has supported police response teams at 200 crimes in progress / incidents and in excess of 400 offenses detected. 25 drink/drug wipe procedures conducted with 3 arrests and in excess of 10,000 hours of targeted patrols covering our key areas.

Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Police have joined up as part of Operation Galileo to tackle the issue of hare coursing. The Police have found that it is linked with organised crime groups and has been extremely successful.

We currently have 1 PCSO on horseback in East Northants the area of cover has been extended to the whole of East Northants which will impact on the time spent in the North area.

The following questions were raised:

Can we have mobile CCTV cameras in areas of anti-social behaviour in the Co-op car park?

The camera is currently being used in Northampton as soon as we get it back we install it in the areas identified.

What is the mechanism for local residents with community safety issues and do the Police share information they receive?

The policing structure is being reviewed and going through major change. The Police share what they believe to be the priorities for our area.

It is very dangerous crossing on Glaphorn Road what do the Police do with the information they received on near misses?

Police feedback any reported issues to the central team and they then target the hot spots. Rumble strips are used to monitor the speeding issues.

The Community Speed watch group has just been set up in Oundle and the group are still waiting for approval on all the routes in Oundle. They will be targeting Glaphorn Road and Benefield Road.

6. County Councillor and District Councillors Update

County Councillor Heather Smith read a report on the past 12 months. It has been the most challenging period she has had to face in 10 years since becoming leader of the County Council in May 2016. There has been huge growth from 5000 to 6000 in her area. Two thirds of the County Council budget is absorbed by social care for children and adults in Northamptonshire.

They are continuing to improve the conditions of our roads and have been granted over £1 million in additional funding for improvements.

A number of villages have taken over the responsibility for verge cutting. The lighting upgrade has been completed which will reduce energy bills considerably.

The change from a 3 tier to 2 tier education system in Oundle is now complete.

Extensive works have been done to convert the old middle school into a primary school on Cotterstock Road and the Secondary School, Prince William in Oundle, is currently having a new science block.

There have been upgrades made to the paths at Barnwell Country Park and the Women's Tour cycle race will be coming through Oundle again this year.

Cllr Reichhold gave an overview of what has been achieved during the year. He has been involved in Central Government negotiations regarding Business rates. The District Councillors have been able to assist the tennis club, rowing club and Oundle Chat with funding.

7. **Oundle Community Speed watch** – Mr Alex Haidar

Mr Haidar updated the meeting about the Oundle Community Speed Watch group which he has set up with help from Oundle Town Councillor Charles Best and former Councillor Mr Stephen Ellis. They joined the tail end of the 2016/2017 scheme and will be part of the 2017/2018 scheme.

The scheme was started in October 2016 monitoring key areas. Further areas of concern can be added but need to be approved before they can be included. 8 police warning letters have been set out. Mr Haidar thanked the Council and the Police for their help. If anyone would like to volunteer to help contact details will be published in the next edition of the Oracle.

The following questions were raised:

There has been a proposal to increase the speed near the bridge. Is this still a proposal or has it been stopped?

This has been stopped.

Are there any plans to put in 20mph speed limits throughout the whole town?

A former Councillor explained that this had been addressed previously but would not be viable as the cost would run into millions and the Government criteria required the cars to be already travelling much slower.

Mr Haidar suggested that they may be able to position the speed camera to monitor both the 20mph and 30mph areas.

8. **Questions from the floor on Oundle Issues**

- When will the council will be able to fulfil its commitment to publish a clear statement to explain fully: what went wrong within the council at the beginning of 2016, the issues that led to the breakdown in trust between councillors and the resignations in January 2016; and, more importantly, the lessons that have been learned from mistakes that were made, and how council protocols have been reviewed and revised so as to prevent a recurrence of similar events in the future?

A response from the Council was read out at the meeting and it was agreed that a statement responding to the question would be printed in the next edition of the Oracle.

- There were concerns raised regarding traffic speeding on Glapthorn Road near the zebra crossing and some cars not stopping. Sarah Barnwell from Northamptonshire Highways responded that the zebra crossing has been raised and is on the list to see if it can be improved this financial year.

- What is the process for removing a zebra crossing that is not being used? Now that the school is no longer on Milton Road the zebra crossing is not being used. Sarah Barnwell agreed to add it to the list to be considered.
- Why are the road in Northamptonshire is a much worse state than other counties? Is there an issue for funding for our roads in Northamptonshire? Sarah informed the meeting that it is not just Northamptonshire the problem is much wider spread as there is an issue nationally. There were concerns with Rock Road and Springfield Road. Sarah is aware that they are poor and will ask the Inspector to look at both the roads. Cllr Heather Smith confirmed that Northamptonshire has been very poorly funded in the past, however the County Council are optimistic they will get better funding in the future.
- Who decides the cost of a road closure as it is very expensive? There is a cost to a road closure of £1750.00. The fee is to cover the administration costs.

9. Closing Remarks

A resident expressed thanks on behalf of the residents for the time and effort the Council has put in this year it is appreciated.

The Mayor thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.