



Oundle Town Council

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Oundle Town Council – Annual Town Meeting 2011

Minutes of the meeting of the Annual Town Meeting of Oundle Town Council held at 7.30pm on Thursday 28th April 2011 at the Queen Victoria Hall, Oundle.

Present:

- Councillors:** Cllrs Campbell, Chapple, Chesser, King (Mayor), N Oakes, S Oakes, Ormrod, Radcliffe, Rose and Round.
- Clerk:** Debra Raper
- Council Staff:** Hanneke Soans, Paul Smith, Jasmine Jamieson, Deborah Saxby
- Police:** PCSO Tim Butters
- County & District Councillor:** Cllr R Reichhold
- District Councillors:** Cllr D Bateman and Cllr P Stearn
- Members of the public:** 103 attendees, which included 11 non residents
- Apologies from the public:** Eric Reeves

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm with Cllr Radcliffe leading a tribute to the late Mr Reg Sutton MBE during which he and his many achievements and activities within the community were fondly remembered.

Welcome and Mayor's Introduction

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed various housekeeping matters. He commenced the meeting by inviting Sharn Mathews, Executive Director of ENC to address the meeting regarding the work that ENC have been doing to support the development of Oundle.

Sharn confirmed that ENC were working in conjunction with Oundle 2020 both in terms of funding and resource support. As a result work was underway by an external consultant, Elizabeth Wilson, to review the information needed to inform the plans so that the evidence base required for the documentation to be accepted as a planning document is satisfied. Sharn Mathews also confirmed that Transport Planning Practice Ltd (TTP) had been appointed to look at the transport options for the town in order to offer solutions to resolve some of the problems being faced. She also advised that a bid had been sent to the DCLG for the Neighbourhood Planning Vanguards, which will be needed to help move things forward in the future. She stated that this had been successful with Oundle being confirmed as being on the shortlisted status and allocated to Phase 3 with the result of a request for funding being known by the end of May. Sharn confirmed that in order for a Neighbourhood Plan to be successful it has to be examined by a Planning Inspectorate and a referendum held at which 50% of the community must vote for the plan.

Sharn also advised that the preferred option document for the Core Spatial Strategy for North Northamptonshire for the next 20 years was being reviewed and that now is the time to ensure everyone's views are included. She concluded by stating that ENC had plans to work with the six market towns within the District to help with tourism and vitality. One idea is a festival on the theme 'Best of British' which would run from St Georges Day to the end of the Olympics. Sharn confirmed that any initiatives and ideas for inclusion would be welcomed and that these should be sent to Oundle Town Council.

Cllr King thanked Sharn Mathews for her input and then introduced members of Oundle Town Council, members of the Council staff, the District and County Councillors and Police and then confirmed the agenda. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Elliot due to business commitments and Cllr Johnson due to holidays. Cllrs Cox and Purser were not in attendance.

Minutes of the 2010 Annual Town Meeting

The minutes of the meeting were reviewed and it was then proposed *'that the minutes of the meeting of the 2010 Annual Town Meeting are approved and accepted as an accurate record'*.

Proposed: Mrs M Rose **Seconded:** Mr S Radcliffe **Resolved Unanimously**

Mayor's Report on 2010/11

Cllr King provided an overview of the past Council year advising that the main focus had been to try and constantly improve the Council's service to the town. He advised there had been personnel changes due to retirements and that the new team was settled and offering value for money and excellent service. He also confirmed improvements had been made to the reception area within The Courthouse to enabled improved access and service delivery. He also advised that the Council had been recommended for Quality Status and thanked Cllr Radcliffe and the Clerk for their tremendous efforts on this.

Cllr King introduced Oundle 2020 and the work that was being done to ensure the strategic development of the town and advised that whilst the Council was facing financial pressures, this was being carefully managed whilst still ensuring service delivery. He also advised that the Council's property portfolio was being reviewed and managed to achieve the best for the town and noted that whilst planning matters had dominated the year, the Council continued to stress that the town needs infrastructure to support any development. The Mayor's report concluded by Cllr King thanking all the staff and Councillors for their work and stating that it had been an honour and pleasure to have served as Mayor.

Agenda Topics Raised by Residents

Road Signage in Springfield Road

Mr T Larkins of Springfield Road raised the issue of inadequate street name signs for the cul-de-sacs in Springfield Road, resulting in problems for deliveries and recently ambulances. It was confirmed that this matter would be dealt with through the office to establish if NCC could make improvements.

The Future of the Drill Hall site

In his absence, Eric Reeves asked that this item be discussed.

Residents present were asked for their views and various themes were discussed including making the entire site a large car park and selling the site and re-using the capital for the greater good of the town. There was a general feeling that retaining the hall in the present state was not an option.

Cllr King confirmed that the Council had given the situation much consideration and were continuing to debate this, although they recognised that the findings from the Oundle 2020 work would have an influence on the final decision.

Localism and what it will mean for Oundle

Lyn Buckingham asked a question on the Localism bill and the impact this will have on the town, in particular in respect of the Community Right to Buy. Sharn Matthews advised that in order for this to have affect, the community have to nominate any community facility buildings that they want to have on the register and that this then needs to be accepted by the owners. If a building on the register then subsequently comes up to sell, the community is offered the Right to Buy.

Ms Buckingham also asked how the Council will do things differently as a result of the Bill. Engage with community but as yet unsure how this will be progressed. Cllr King responded by confirming that at the present time no-one was sure how the bill will translate into action and the detail of the Bill was not yet known but that it would be considered by the Council when more clarity and information was available.

Financial Observations – How We Spend Your Money

Cllr Chapple provided an overview of the Council finances, confirming that the precept had been £232,700. He gave an overview of the sources of the Council's income and advised that this was slightly down on budget in some areas which was a reflection of the economic climate. Cllr Chapple stated that parking contributions from ENC in the amount of £14K had been budgeted for but were not forthcoming and that this had also impacted income. Expenditure was reviewed with Cllr Chapple confirming that the office and staffing costs were a significant part of the budget but necessary for service delivery including the maintenance of the buildings and open spaces. He also spoke about the income from the Queen Victoria Hall and confirmed that a grant is made by the Council to help subsidise the hall as it is not self financing and that costs were being scrutinised to ensure they were well managed.

Cllr Chapple then set the scene for the 2011/12 budget process advising that important decisions would need to be made about areas such as CCTV, grants, publications/tourism etc. in order to balance service provision against a reasonably precept request.

A question was raised about the future of the Public Conveniences and the best way for these to be serviced to which Cllr Chapple confirmed that the Council were currently considering the options available for the town.

The option of charging for car parking was also raised as was prosecuting people who exceeded the 2 hour limit. Cllr King advised that this was being reviewed; however the costs for installing equipment for charging is high and it can have a detrimental impact on the vitality of a town centre.

To conclude this section, confirmation was asked as to the amount of money in Capital Reserves to which Cllr Chapple confirmed that some was earmarked and he would provide a full breakdown after the meeting and a question was asked as to whether it would be financially advantageous to outsource the Council's maintenance function. Cllr Chapple confirmed that this had been considered before and is continually looked at but that the current set up delivers value for money.

Property Matters – How We Manage Your Estate

Cllrs Campbell and Round provided an update on the Council's property portfolio. They confirmed that the Drill Hall been already been discussed and whilst it was hard to know what to do for the best the debate held had been valuable and that since the last Annual Town Meeting Cemetery Lodge had been transformed into a lovely home.

It was confirmed that the disposal of the Cemetery Chapel was progressing with a change of use being put forward to sell it as a dwelling with strict covenants. This followed market testing to sell it as a small quiet business which had been unsuccessful possibly due to the covenants that had to be applied.

The success of the Queen Victoria Hall refurbishments were noted, with all the snagging issues resolved and the successful implementation of a hearing loop and sound system together with new tables and chairs in the bar area.

It was confirmed that there are exciting proposals for the refurbishment of the Pocket Park and that plans relating to this were on the display boards.

The report concluded with confirmation that a meeting was to take place with the Co-Operative Society to improve lines and signage in the car park. This was in response to a question raised at the meeting.

Planning Matters & Development

Cllr N Oakes led this part of the meeting, providing an overview of the planning process and planning outcomes from the Council year.

He advised that the application for 145 dwellings at Creed Road dominated the year and that objections against inadequate infrastructure had been submitted. He confirmed that s106 negotiations had improved the final amount agreed and that the Council was now trying to minimise the impact of the building as planning permission had been granted.

Cllr Oakes stated that the planning application for Herne Rd/Ashton Road was on two phases and that outline planning permission had been submitted and would probably be

considered by ENC in June 2011. He advised that the Council would be continuing to question issues regarding the transport assessment even though this had been approved by the Highways authority.

Whilst not in the parish of Oundle, Cllr Oakes mentioned the Riverside Hotel and confirmed that the plans for renovation of this had been approved and that the Town Council would welcome action to improve this site.

This section concluded with a question as to what impact the Localism Bill would have on the planning process to which Cllr King stated that he believed it had the potential to enable local decision making rather than at District level but no legislation had been passed.

Oundle 2020

Cllr King introduced this section by confirming the purpose of Oundle 2020 and the vision that has been developed and that as a result the outcomes would be a Town Design Statement and a Town Plan. The governance of Oundle 2020 was explained and the members of the Steering Group and authoring groups were confirmed.

Cllr Rose, Chairman of Oundle 2020 then shared some initial thoughts and concepts and confirmed that all ideas would be tested with the town residents. Various ideas were then shared about recreational facilities and traffic and parking options to provide an insight to the work being done.

David Smith, a member of the Steering Group and Cllr Philip Stearn both spoke about the need for a plan and the validity that this gained through feedback such as the questionnaires that had been distributed.

Cllr Rose concluded by confirming that the group would solicit ideas from all members of the town and organisations within it so that a plan can be developed with the best interests of the town reflected within it and that Oundle 2020 would keep everyone informed of progress.

Question & Answer Session

Various questions were asked about where the Oundle 2020 plan could be viewed and how input could be given to which Cllr King confirmed that it was all on the website and available via the Council Offices and that any comments and contributions would be welcomed.

Concern was also expressed as to how the villages surrounding the town could be included within the Oundle 2020 process. Cllr King confirmed that as Oundle will be a service hub for the villages, any plan would consider the impact to them. A debate about some of the ideas followed and was concluded by confirmation that everyone would have an opportunity to make their views known.

Issues regarding drainage and sewerage as a result of development were raised. Cllr Stearn responded by stating that Anglian Water has a statutory requirement to ensure this can be managed and that they would be looking at this issue.

Concern was expressed that Benefield Road was very dangerous and that more developments would not assist this. Cllr Ormrod concurred that welcoming developments

without infrastructure improvements should not be encouraged. Cllr Reichhold advised that he and his NCC colleagues were aware of the importance if this.

Closure of Meeting

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.00pm with thanks given to all attendees and post meeting drinks and an informal chat offered to all.

Signed: *J. Round* Dated: *26/4/12*

Note: Copies of the presentation slides used at the Annual Town Meeting are available for review at Oundle Town Council offices.