

Oundle Town Council – Annual Town Meeting 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Annual Town Meeting of Oundle Town Council held at 7.30pm on Thursday 26th May 2016 at the Queen Victoria Hall, Oundle.

Present:

Councillors:	Cllrs Chesser (Mayor), Butler, Chapple, Sparkes, Chesser, Oakes, and Piercy - Hughes
Clerk:	Hanneke Soans
Council Staff:	Trish Baker, Paul Smith, Joanna Butterworth and Paula Prince.
Visitors:	Mark Taitt PWS Headmaster
Police:	Sgt Paul Mitchinson & PSCO Steve Ryan
County Councillor:	Cllr Heather Smith & Jonathan Lewis from County Council
District Councillors:	Cllrs R Reichhold, P Stearn, J Vowles
NCC Highways:	Sarah Barnwell
Apologies received from:	Gwen and Stephen Radcliffe

Minutes of the 2015 Annual Town Meeting

The minutes of the meeting were reviewed and it was then proposed *‘that the minutes of the meeting of the 2015 Annual Town Meeting are approved and accepted as an accurate record’*.

Proposed: Cllr Oakes **Seconded:** Mr David Wood **Resolved Unanimously**

▪ **Mayor’s Report – Cllr Val Chesser**

The year has been dominated by our move to Fletton House, the great day being last August 21st 2015. Soon after, the Pre-School moved back in and the Hub opened for business.

Having known the building since the old Save Fletton House days of 10 years ago, I am absolutely thrilled with the light and attractive look of the ‘new’ building – a miracle performed by the sheer hard work of Ann Fitzgerald and the Working Party. I must also mention here the amazing Up-cycling group led by Ann, whose combined talents have been responsible for the transformation of redundant furniture into a bang-on-trend environment in the hub. Many thanks must also go to our maintenance team John and Martin for turning their hands to pretty much any job which came along and to such a high standard.

I am delighted to see not only well-established town groups using the building, but also the birth of totally new groups like the ‘yarn bombers’ using our facilities. The Town itself has had an eventful year with the 3 Arts and Literature Festivals, the Women’s Cycling, the Classic Car Event and our usual Christmas Market, plus a

number of Town Council promoted events, all of which have contributed to the vibrancy and prosperity of the Town.

In spite of the upheavals of the last few months, we have been working hard to bring to fruition some long-awaited projects like the installation of defibrillators, and cycle racks. We have also had a comprehensive Tree Survey done. In recent months we have seen the retirement of Maxine Groves who has looked after the Queen Victoria Hall for over 30 years, has done a brilliant job and we shall miss her greatly but do wish her a happy and relaxed retirement.

We also extend our good wishes to Paul King (former Mayor) who retired from the Council in February and would like to thank him for all his hard work over the years and the dedication and vision he has shown to the Council- thank you Paul.

We are also say good bye to Trish Baker, who moves on to pastures new and leaves the Council tomorrow. She will be hugely missed and we wish her well in her exciting new job and thank you for all your hard work and dedication all done with a smile.

In my role as acting Chairman I have recently attended the 'Topping-out-Ceremony' of the new innovative Science block and Oundle School and more recently at the installation of Cllr Rupert Reichhold, our District Councillor, as Chairman of East Northants Council.

Cllr Sparkes gave an overview of precept figures and an overview of the budget. The budget was reviewed by council in May when it was agreed to reduce income figures by £400k, as there are currently insufficient resources to realise a part sale of the Courthouse. It was also agreed to reduce The Hub income from £150k to £60k as this is a much more realistic target.

Cllr Sparkes showed slides on the Hub's income and trading account. A question had been submitted by a resident about the Clerk's salary which was also shown.

An explanation was given on the Profile 4/3 paper and how it is used as a tool to negotiate Town Clerk's salary only.

A new assessment has been carried out by Danny Moody, Chair of NCALC which puts the council at a Profile 3 substantive.

A question from the public "why has he changed his mind?" This new report is based on the new figures presented to Danny Moody by Council.

An explanation slide was shown of the election process and because a By-Election was duly requested by the town, all councillor vacancies from now until the next Full Election in May 2019 have to be filled through By-Elections.

There was also a slide showing the movements in council vacancies since December 2013.

- **Questions & Answers on Oundle Town Council**

Public question "would it be £6,000 for each person to be elected?" If there is an election, there is a cost of £6,000 for each election.

Public question "why didn't the elections take place earlier this month?" There was a problem with the process, an up to date electoral register was not received by Oundle Town Council. Cllr Reichhold advised that candidates did not get their papers in on time.

Public question "did that election cost us £6,000?" No, it didn't as it was shared with the Police Commissioner election.

Public question "we are paying significantly more to the town council than we did in 2010? Reflecting on the precept, it has gone up by 15%." As a town council we provide a wide range of services, more than most other councils.

- **Police**

Sargent Paul Mitchinson gave an overview of policing in Oundle and he stated that the town is very fortunate to have had the Futures Programme which provides the town with seven PCSO's and two PC's.

The current police initiatives are:-

Farm Watch

Business Watch

Mounted volunteers

Lorry Watch

Operation Ramble

A cross border team has also been set up to operate from Oundle and the results of this have been brilliant.

- **Police Questions and Answers**

"How do we start speed watch in Oundle?" The Police can advise on who to contact to get this up and running and have been trying to contact any interested resident about this.

"Is there anyone at Oundle Station nowadays?" Yes, PCSO and the cross border team.

There is also a Clinic every Wednesday afternoon at Fletton House.

"Is there a plan to provide more parking for the police as they are parking everywhere?"

Because of the joint police and fire teams and cross border force there are now seven cars at the Oundle Station and they cannot park on the roads so they have to park on the grass.

- **Oundle Education Matters**

- **Prince William School Development Plans - Mark Taitt**

Mark Taitt, the headmaster of Prince William School gave an overview of the school now that it has become an academy and the move from three tier to two tier education provision.

The school currently rests in top 44% of the country and hopes to move into the top 25% following its next set of exam results. The school's aim is to be in the top 5% of schools.

There are still some weaknesses with homework, supply teachers and communication with teachers.

Mr Taitt requested that the community support the school and provide feedback about the school via phone, e-mail.

The County Council have confirmed that the proposed building work will continue during the summer holidays.

▪ **Education Questions & Answers**

“Oundle Public School have invested heavily in technology, are you focusing education on any of those areas? So you gave us figures for intake and the catchment area seems to have grown.” the catchment area has not changed.

Jonathan Lewis who accompanied Cllr Smith from the County Council answered the following questions:

How many extra school buses will be coming into Oundle from out of town?

We have an obligation to provide children an education in this area and the priority will be the Oundle catchment first which should keep bus numbers down.

“How much investment is going into the infrastructure of all these increased buses?” We will look at parking near the school and the school have to provide a travel plan.

“Please give a simple explanation of academy status and NCC funding”

Academies are independent from local authorities, however funding is still routed through the local authority.

“You showed us plans for buildings but this has been held up” County Cllr

Smith explained “we have changed ten schools in the area, six million pounds coming from Council, also money from section 106 contributions, we have sold surplus land in the area. There is a degree of risk in where the money comes from. We have to apply to Secretary of State for section 77.

We will fully committed to delivering the science project at this stage of the building project. If we can't get money from government funding we will look elsewhere. We hope to complete the whole scheme by 2018 and I am conscious of the green space application.”

“You have to give up Cotterstock road scheme to order to proceed, you don't need to sell the land at Cotterstock?” After the towns petition last year NCC did agree to leave one acre.

A letter has been sent by Tom Pursglove our MP to Lord Nash about school funding in this area. “ Did you make an application to this funding or not?”

We looked at the criteria and we did not bid for funding for any schools in this area.

Our funding has been targeted towards Primary Schools as every child in the county deserves a primary place.

Cllr Smith then gave an update on South Bridge and advised that she had agreed to fund the re-surfacing and repair of the paths on North Street in Oundle.

- **Oundle Neighbourhood Plan Update**

Cllr Phil Stearn and Neil Fraser gave an update on NP and following recent events, had requested from Oundle Town Council that they take the plan back to the town to continue progress.

We will have an evening in September for the town to view the plan and hope by the end of the year that the plan will be in place.

This plan will come to you for referendum for agreement from the town.

- **Questions from the floor on Oundle Issues**

“Which profile is the Council now? and what will OTC do to prevent a recurrence of this unsatisfactory state of affairs in the future?”

Cllr Chapple explained that the Council are profile 3 now. “We were originally advised we were profile 4 based on the data given to Danny Moody, this was then recently reviewed.”

Danny Moody was given inaccurate information in December. A capital receipt for the sale of part of the Courthouse was added to income. This information was incorrect and it is unfortunate that it has taken so long to receive the correct information.

Once Mr Moody had the correct information he revised his opinion and hence the new profile.

Cllr King, former Mayor gave an explanation of what happened when the Council moved to Fletton House, a paper went to Council in November which was written by two independent experts advising the Council as a profile 4.

A resident then said they wished to congratulate the Town Council on the work done to Fletton House.

The meeting closed at 10.15pm