

Oundle Town Council

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Oundle Town Council – Annual Town Meeting 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Annual Town Meeting of Oundle Town Council held at 7.30pm on Thursday 25th April 2013 at the Queen Victoria Hall, Oundle.

Present:

Councillors:	Cllrs Higgins (Mayor)
Clerk:	Debra Harper
Council Staff:	Trish Baker, Hanneke Soans, Paul Smith
Police:	Sgt Andy Hunt
County & District Councillor:	Cllr R Reichhold
District Councillors:	Cllr P Stearn and Cllr J Vowles
Members of the public:	60
Apologies from Councillors:	Cllr Philip Rose and Cllr Terry Stagg plus Cllr Vowles from District.
Apologies from the public:	Eric Reeves

Welcome and Mayor's Introduction

The meeting was opened by the Mayor, Cllr George Higgins, welcoming everyone to the Queen Victoria Hall for the 2013 Annual Town Meeting. Following housekeeping matters, introductions were made and an overview of the agenda was provided.

Minutes of the 2012 Annual Town Meeting

The minutes of the meeting were reviewed and it was then proposed *'that the minutes of the meeting of the 2012 Annual Town Meeting are approved and accepted as an accurate record'*.

Proposed: Mr S Radcliffe **Seconded:** Mr N Buckle **Resolved Unanimously**

Oundle Town Council Reports

Mayor's Report

Cllr Higgins spoke briefly about ceremonial events, noting various highlights including the ten year anniversary of the Farmers Market, the Queens Diamond Jubilee picnic and the town Jubilee celebrations and the official opening of the play area within the Recreation Ground. Cllr Higgins also highlighted the re-opening of the Talbot Hotel and the Nene Valley Brewery enhancing the gateway to the town. Cllr Higgins advised that there were many future challenges facing the town and Council and that work was being done to revitalise the Market Place to encourage trade and tourism in the town. He also stated that there was continued pressure on the town and taxpayer plus increasing workload in all aspects of Council business and concluded by thanking the professional staff and Councillors for their hard work.

Finance Report

Cllr Chapple advised the meeting that the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2012 and the budget for 2013/14 for income and expenditure were available for inspection and that income and expenditure had met and exceeded budgets. He confirmed that Oundle had the most expensive Council tax in East Northamptonshire; however also operated many more buildings, land and services than others which had associated costs in delivering them. Cllr Chapple advised that when possible the Town Council was saving services cut by County and District Councils but that this was not always possible as the finances would not allow. Examples of this were the Public Conveniences and the Recycling Centre. Cllr Chapple advised that the latest challenge faced was to retain both Fletton House and The Courthouse ensuring that the buildings were preserved but also developed into new and better facilities whilst managing costs. Within the finance report, costs relating to the newly appointed Town Centre Manager, the Oracle and grant supports were noted. Cllr Chapple concluded his report by noting the change to the Council Tax base and a grant from central government to lessen the impact of this. He advised that Oundle Town Council had received this from East Northamptonshire Council but as the precept had already been submitted, the funds would be ring-fenced to benefit the town.

A question was received from the floor regarding funding for Fletton House and how the monies would be raised. Cllr Chapple advised that this would be raised through the capital receipts from the sale of the Drill Hall, Cemetery Lodge and Cemetery Chapel and that Cllr King would cover this within the next agenda item.

Estate Management Report

Cllr King advised that it had been a solid year in managing the Council's estate and confirmed that the buildings that are in use are well maintained and the open spaces well looked after, with a highlight in 2012 being the successful installation of the new Pocket Park which had been designed following consultation with parents and users. He also stated that the capital transfer of Fletton House to Oundle Town Council had been agreed and that whilst the original thoughts were that the Town Council may have to dispose of the Courthouse to manage this, the Due Diligence and Public Meeting demonstrated that both could be retained. He also advised that the disposal of the Drill Hall had not taken place as the sale fell through at the contractual stage but that the Council was now at the end of a sealed bid and believed that the Council was disposing of this building for good value and that whilst the Cemetery Chapel was difficult to dispose of, this was being progressed. Cllr King stated that the coming year would see the refurbishment of Fletton House get underway and the redesign of the Thursday market.

Questions were taken from the floor regarding whether a Recreation Centre was needed in addition to Fletton House and if anything could be done about the Riverside Hotel. Cllr King advised that the work done on Fletton House should resolve the need identifies for additional recreational facilities and that whilst the Council understood the concerns regarding the Riverside hotel that it is in the parish of Ashton and that Oundle Town Council has little influence if any on the matter but would actively try and ensure action is taken.

Oundle 2020/Neighbourhood Planning Report

Roger Sturman, Head of Neighbourhood Planning Working Party provided an overview of the Neighbourhood Plan, Community Plan, Town Design Statement and Portas

Implementation Group which had stemmed from the work done on Oundle 2020. He confirmed that there was a great deal of work to be done and that it relied on people getting involved and communication and consultation. A brief summary of the status of each aspect of work was given which noted that the Neighbourhood Planning team were looking at land use issues for both domestic and business use, the Community Plan was looking at non-planning matters such as parking zones and cycle way improvements, the PORTAS Group were progressing 13 of the published recommendations at a local level and the Town Design Statement was being developed to provide guidance for planners and developers i.e. adopt certain styles/materials. He stated that the final draft should be available soon for viewing and submission to ENC for adoption. Roger Sturman concluded by stating that the area covered was the parish boundary.

Questions received from the floor following the presentation were regarding whether surrounding parishes could become involved in the development of the plans and what the 13 recommendations being considered by the PORTAS Group were. Roger Sturman advised that the Boundary had been set but that improved working with the neighbouring parishes would be beneficial as there is a recognition of Oundle as a service centre for the villages and that the PORTAS recommendations were available for viewing but included areas such as the development of markets, communications and encouraging footfall to the town which the Town Centre Manager role would be looking at.

Other Authorities Reports/Updates

Police

Sgt Hunt provided an overview of the crime figures and work being done within the District and Town. He stated that being new to role he already had a real sense of community here and that there was a very strong team in place with a positive relationship with the Council. Overall the crime figures were showing a 29% reduction in Oundle which confirmed that Oundle remains a safe and pleasant place to live and visit.

A question was raised regarding CCTV in the town and if this was being retained as funding for this was being stopped by ENC. Cllr Elliot responded on behalf of the Police stating that Oundle Town Council were going to take on this responsibility but were doing so with a new more cost effective system. A further question was asked regarding the impact of large lorries going through the town centre as a result of the closure of South Bridge and if this was allowed. Sgt Hunt confirmed that there was a weight restriction of 7.5K but they can come through for access. He advised that this is something that they would keep checking.

District Councillors

Cllr Reichhold and Cllr Stearn took the floor and confirmed that Cllr Vowles had given his apologies as he was away. Cllr Reichhold provided an overview of the office held and grants that he had paid out from his District Councillor Empowerment Grant. Cllr Stearn stated that he was heavily involved in Planning matters as ENC are authority responsible for this and that the last year had seen some significant planning applications such as Waitrose, Creed Road and Herne Park. He stated that whilst the housing growth numbers for 2021 had in theory been set in reality this can be different due to government pressures. He advised that localism and areas such as the Neighbourhood Plan that he was also working on were influential within the planning framework.

A question was raised regarding the impact of Waitrose to the town and traffic and that the significant challenges raised at a local level did not seem to be taken into account and a further question asked about the timing of the transport study and whether this had given an incorrect view of what the town could take. Cllr Stearn responded by confirming that a lot of meetings had been held to ensure the planning application would work and that polls showed most people were in favour. He also advised that the transport study had been certified as valid and that NCC Highways make the judgment on roads and ENC take their recommendations.

NCC – Highways and County Councillor

Cllr Reichhold spoke in his capacity of County Councillor, providing an overview of the areas covered by him and confirming he had secured £3510 in grants for the Oundle Community. He was asked to confirm the future of Mason House and the Police Station to which he responded that Mason House would be sold for residential development and that the County Council were currently in talks with the Police regarding their requirements. He was also asked what would happen with the service provided at Mason House. Cllr Reichhold confirmed that the NHS was being reorganised and that whilst he was unsure where people will be deployed the services will continue.

Sarah Barnwell addressed the meeting in her capacity of Transport & Highways Liaison Officer, NCC. She confirmed that the Transport Assessment conducted via Oundle 2020 had highlighted improvements to parking signage and changes to the town including a cycle way on Glapthorn Road, a 20 mph zone and parking restrictions in the town centre and on Glapthorn road. She confirmed that a review would be conducted in May and then would go to consultation for possible implementation. Sarah Barnwell advised that NCC was in discussion with English Heritage regarding South Bridge but there was no end in sight for this yet and the issue of HGV's was being looked at.

A question was raised regarding the proposed improvements such as the 20mph limit and how this would be implemented and managed. Sarah Barnwell advised that in principle this was supported and the scheme needed to be self enforcing or suitable traffic calming introduced. She confirmed that other areas such as a cycle way would be dependant upon funding as such proposals are very expensive.

Oundle Transition Town Group

Camilla Sherwin provided an overview of the Oundle Transition Town Group (OTTG) and their aims of being a proactive voluntary organisation. She confirmed that they are four main areas of work: energy, work and lifestyle, food and transport and provided a brief summary of what each of these areas covered. She concluded by confirming that OTTG's ambitions for the future were to help ensure that all new housing stock is energy efficiency, that local businesses are supported and the town is active and involved in cycling. Oundle on your bike week was mentioned and everyone was encouraged to join the Oundle Transition Town Group which is free and fun.

A question was raised regarding the availability of more cycle racks. Cllr Fraser confirmed that the Town Council was looking at this and a proposal was being put together for more than 60 additional cycle parking spaces.

Mayors Charity: Nongoma Friendship

Peter Waddup confirmed the friendship between Oundle and Nongoma and advised that last year the Mayor chose this as his charity to help grow awareness and funding and to help realise the vision. He stated that he felt compelled to tell the story of the people of Nongoma and how the charity was helping. He highlighted how 82 of the most vulnerable children now had food and in return they went to school in a 'Food for learning' scheme and how HIV testing had commenced enabling drugs to be given to prevent it becoming AIDS. Peter Waddup concluded by asking everyone to register for the newsletter and help to build the friendship with support and donations.

Fairtrade

Eleanor Rayden expressed thanks to Oundle Town Council for their continued support of Fairtrade, for which an overview was given by Cllr Higgins.

Question & Answers

Following the presentations, Cllr Higgins invited questions from the floor. The following was asked:

Disposal of ENC assets at Herne Park Road

Clarification was sought as to what would happen to the car park when ENC sells off this land. Cllr Higgins confirmed that the Town Council was working hard to preserve the parking.

Electoral Boundaries

A question was asked as to what the forthcoming changes to the electoral boundaries would entail. Cllr Reichhold advised that changes been made and the Oundle division has been expanded to include some villages that were in the Prebandel division.

Flooding at Elmington A605

Sarah Barnwell confirmed that works being done should solve the issue.

Blocked drains in the town

Concern was raised that issues were reported on Street Doctor but no action appeared to be taken. Sarah Barnwell advised that work is prioritised but confirmed that she would check the status of this.

State of footpaths and pavements

Concern was expressed about the poor state of the pavements and footpaths in the town. Sarah Barnwell advised that a programme of repair is put in place when defects are reported or on inspection; however a reduction in funding does have an impact on this. She encouraged everyone to report faults on Street Doctor to help ensure all issues are logged.

Bus Shelters

A request was made for seating to be placed in the bus shelters. Sarah Barnwell advised that she would refer this matter to the transport team.

Infrastructure

Cllr Stearn was asked how if the town could not influence housing growth in the next 15 year, how could infrastructure such as school places, doctors surgery etc. be influenced. Cllr

Stearn advised that whilst building cannot be prevented, the fight for infrastructure is made although many battles are lost. He advised that S106 payments are made to cover this and whilst it is never enough ENC tries to do the best they can. He advised that in the future s106 payments will be made under the new Community Infrastructure Levy.

Waitrose

A question was asked as to the implications on the road layout for the Waitrose store. Sarah Barnwell advised that there would be a mini roundabout, a new bus stop and road widening although the timing of this was as of yet unknown.

West Street – Boarded Up Premises

A request was made to resolve the long standing issue of the negative impact had on the town by the boarded up windows on West Street (the old Hewitts premises). Cllr Stearn advised that enforcement notices had been served and that action was being taken.

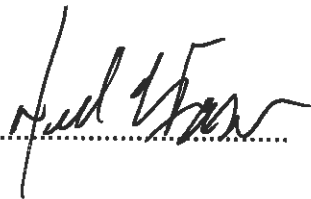
Summary & Close

Cllr Higgins closed the meeting by thanking Cllr Reichhold for his time as a County Councillor 12 years (3 terms). He also expressed thanks to Cllr N Oakes for compiling the presentation and for Cllr S Oakes for keeping the meeting on track. Thanks were also expressed to the Town Councillors for working for the betterment of the town and to the members of the Neighbourhood Planning Working Party, in particular, Roger Sturman for the hard work and voluntary time they put in to the delivery of this Plan.

The meeting was concluded by Cllr Higgins thanking everyone for their attendance.

There being no further business the meeting was closed.

Signed:.....



Dated:.....

24th April 2014