

WIMBORNE MINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING held on TUESDAY 4 APRIL 2017 at 7.30 pm in the Town Hall, West Borough, Wimborne Minster.

THOSE PRESENT AT THE MEETING

Cllr Mrs S A Cook - Town Mayor & Chairman of the Council (in the Chair)
Cllr S K Bartlett
Cllr Mrs S A Bell
Cllr J Burden
Cllr R D Cook
Cllr Mrs P A Hymers
Cllr Mrs D J March
Cllr Mrs A E Roberts
Cllr T F Wheeler

24 Local Government Electors

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the 2017 Annual Town Meeting for electors of the parish of Wimborne Minster. I am Cllr Sue Cook, Town Mayor and Chairman of the Council.

The meeting this evening will follow the usual format with myself and each Chairman of Committees or their representative reporting on issues of particular importance.

We shall then take questions from the floor.

1. ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON 5 APRIL 2016

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 5 April 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Before I open up this item to the floor may I refer to the question asked by Mrs Wood last year on page 8 regarding the iron railings at Julians Bridge. These are owned by Dorset County Council but as they were not prepared to fund the railings being repainted, the Town Council arranged for them to be done. It is unfortunate that a car decided to demolish one section of the railings earlier this year. No other matters were raised.

3. ANNUAL REPORT BY THE TOWN MAYOR AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL – Cllr Mrs S A Cook

Before commencing my report I would like to mention that sadly we have lost two Members of the Council. Firstly Cllr Henry Bartlett who represented the Wimborne East Ward and passed away in February and Cllr Les Harvey who represented the Wimborne Town Ward and has had to resign due to ill-health. They will both be very much missed with the wealth of experience that between them they brought to this council.

Elections in both Wards have been called and if a poll is necessary it will be held on Thursday, 4 May 2017.

It has been a really busy year again this year with the Town Council involved in a wide ranging number of issues. The most significant event was the decision by the majority of Dorset's District, Borough and County Councils to apply to the Secretary of State for him to introduce two unitary authorities to cover Dorset. Consultations were carried out during the summer and the result from those who responded to the consultation suggested a unitary council comprising Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and another comprising East Dorset, North Dorset, West Dorset, Purbeck, Weymouth and Portland and Dorset County Council. The Secretary of State's decision is awaited.

Perhaps in some way linked to this, is this council becoming proactive, and forging closer links with Dorset County Council's Highways department, and we are particularly well served by the local Community Highways Officer who responds positively to issues raised. This can only benefit the local community in the future as we will have more control over the way that council tax monies are spent.

Wimborne Minster continues to be a vibrant, thriving place for residents, businesses and visitors.

It also has a reputation for long life evidenced by the visit recently by 20 South Koreans who although long-lived themselves as a nation wanted to see on what our success was based. The council hosted a reception for them, and we spent a delightful morning with them. I believe they were impressed with the Town and its history.

Some other notable events which happened over the last year:

The History Festival in June

Commemoration of the Battle of the Somme in July

The switch on of the Christmas lights had the largest crowd seen for some time, and there was much complimentary feedback of this event.

My Civic Service this year will be held on Sunday 7 May 2017 in The Minster and everyone is very welcome to attend.

Before we move on, I would like to thank the staff, we have excellent groundsmen, but particularly the office staff. There are only three of them, and they are part-time, they achieve a great deal in the time that they have, so thank you.

4. REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF RESOURCES COMMITTEE

My name is Cllr Terry Wheeler and I am Vice-Chairman of the Council and have been asked to present this report on behalf of Cllr Mrs Kelly Webb who is Chairman of Resources. She is unable to attend this meeting as she is not an elector of the Parish.

The Resources Committee is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the Council's buildings and office accommodation as well as for lettings and leases. It also manages and monitors the Council's accounts and recommends grants to local organisations on receipt of their applications.

The accommodation at the Town Hall is available for hire for meetings and is utilised for Civil Ceremonies. Together with the privately rented office on the ground floor, the income raised was approximately £13,100 in the last year.

Annual Grant awards for 2016/17 totalled £27,030 from which 22 local organisations benefitted. The figure includes grants made this year from a new fund for 'events' and for a one off amount paid to the Allendale Centre of £4,000 for the refurbishment of the communal area of the Allendale Centre.

The Town Council and Wimborne BID jointly funded the £24890.92 cost of the Christmas arrangements in 2016, which in addition to lights, included the stage and other costs associated with Christmas events. We were delighted that the BID was re-elected last year meaning this arrangement can continue in future years.

The Town Council once again supported the Priest's House Museum by contributing £8,500 to help with the employment costs of an assistant to the Manager.

The Town Council has also agreed to provide financial support for a youth project intended to replace The Planet. A Steering Committee has been set up and work has started to implement the project.

Finally, the Town Council's portion of the Council Tax increased from £108.45 to £120.80 a year for this financial year for a Band D property.

We are very aware that changes to District and County Council budgets may have an impact on the services that they provide and that this could have a negative impact on the town. We are working closely with those Councils to monitor what those impacts could be and making representation to them on behalf of all residents. We have however set aside £20,000 in this year's budget in case we are in a position of needing to provide a service or town improvement that we would not otherwise have done in the past. The Town Council has already agreed to a programme of necessary gully and slotted drain cleansing no longer being carried out by Dorset Highways but there may be other services yet to be considered which this money will fund.

We understand that residents will want to ensure that we are managing the finances as carefully as possible and to this end we have already embarked upon a Spending and Resources Review. This project will look at the operation of the Council and how it spends money, including the Grant process. It will also look at reviewing income generation. We feel we are in a positive position and are being proactive with regard to managing our finances moving forward.

5. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – Cllr Mrs P A Hymers**

I am Cllr Pat Hymers Chairman of the Planning & Environment Committee. Cllr Carol Butter is my Vice-Chairman.

There are a number of issues to report.

Firstly I would like to give residents an update on the three major developments in the Town.

Land North of Wimborne Minster

The Outline Planning Application for residential development, a new local centre, a replacement Wimborne First School, public open space and new allotments and associated infrastructure on land to the east and west of Cranborne Road has now been issued by the District Council now that the Section 106 Agreement has been signed. This Agreement sets out what infrastructure and open spaces the developer will provide and pay for as part of the development. This includes a new first school which is expected to begin being constructed in January 2018. We are discussing with Dorset Highways traffic control and traffic calming measures for the approach roads to the site including additional waiting restrictions.

The detailed ‘Reserved Matters’ applications are awaited including the Construction Management Plan.

Land at Cuthbury

The full planning application to build 72 flats and 131 houses together with offices, a café and open space on the land at Cuthbury allocated for development in the Core Strategy has still not yet been determined by the District Council. There have been a number of amendments to the layout and design since last year.

The Town Council has asked Dorset Highways to look again at the impact of this development on traffic movements in the town and County Councillor Cook has discussed the issue with leading members and officers at County Hall.

Construction of the replacement allotments has commenced and we are told that they should be ready for use at the end of May this year.

Land South of Leigh Road

Because the planners still only want one access to both Wyatt’s and Gleason’s developments for which a planning permission has already been granted these applications have still not been determined by the District Council. It is possible that as the developers cannot agree that both access routes will be permitted temporarily so that progress can be made.

New Bus Shelter St John's Hill

At the request of residents and as Dorset County Council is providing only a few shelters per year, the Town Council has paid for a new bus shelter to be installed in St John's Hill near St John's School. Dorset County Council normally meets the cost but has a long waiting list of requests and it was unlikely that a shelter in this location would come to the top of the list any time soon. We are intending to ensure that a litter bin is installed near the shelter as soon as possible.

Working Together

In view of the reduction in its highway budget, Dorset County Council will in future only be carrying out routine maintenance of highways and drains on the strategic highway network.

The County Council invited all Parish and Town Councils to finance additional non-essential highway maintenance work in their parishes. As mentioned by the Chairman of Resources Committee the Town Council has decided to put aside £20,000 in this year's budget for this purpose and as a first priority the Town Council has identified various gullies and slotted drains on estates and in the Town Centre which need cleaning. Other areas of highway maintenance which the Town Council could consider funding will be considered throughout this year.

St John's Hill/Cranfield Avenue Junction

Following a number of complaints received from residents about the dangerous situation of vehicles being parked at this junction the Town Council has asked Dorset County Council to introduce suitable waiting restrictions. The Town Council agreed to meet the cost of making the Traffic Regulation Order so that the proposal could go ahead as soon as possible.

East Borough (North)

It is hoped that this year the County council will implement the changes to the traffic flow in East Borough requested by the Town Council.

Litter/Dog Fouling

Dog fouling on footways in the Town appears to be on the increase and a letter has been published in the Stour & Avon magazine pointing out the penalties for dog walkers not picking up after their dogs. General littering is also a problem but our partnership with Wimborne in Bloom helps to keep our streets clean.

Town Centre Maintenance

The Town Council continues to be pleased with the outcome of the scheme jointly funded with Wimborne BID to keep the town centre tidy.

Can I thank all Members of the Committee for their input during the past 12 months.

6. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE**

I am Cllr Sally Bell, Vice-Chairman of the Recreation & Leisure Committee. The Chairman, Cllr Harvey, has resigned from the Council due to ill-health.

This Committee is responsible for managing the Town Council's Sports & Recreational Activities at Leigh Park and Redcotts Recreation Ground.

Grass Tennis Courts

The grass tennis courts are expensive to maintain and relatively little used given that they can be used only during the summer months when dry. Therefore, the Town Council has set up a working party including representatives from nearby residents to look at options for their future use.

Wild Flower Beds

The wild flower seeds planted in 3 areas of Redcotts to supplement the existing daffodils and 2 areas of Leigh Park Playing Fields last year did not germinate. The Town Council has enlisted the advice of the officer from the District Council who has had good results with wild flower planting in East Dorset and Christchurch, so we hope that this year wild flowers will bloom in abundance.

Bat Interpretation Boards

The River Allen Bat Roost Network Group which installed bat boxes in Redcotts Recreation Ground has installed boards to provide users of the recreation ground with information on the bat species which use the area. We thank them for all that they have done.

Replacement Tree at Redcotts

The cedar tree in front of the Pavilion which was damaged in a storm in February 2016 has been replaced with a Red Oak. The 'Human Sun Clock' mentioned in last year's report by the Chairman will be installed in the triangle in front of the Pavilion before the summer.

On behalf of the Town Council, I am proud to say that Redcotts Recreation Ground was again awarded a Silver Gilt Award in the South and South East 'In Bloom' competition for 2016.

Land at the rear of 57 High Street/Glassblowers and Riverside Recreation Area

The Town Council has agreed to accept from East Dorset District Council the ownership of the two small areas of amenity land next to the river together with the commuted sums for their future maintenance. The transfer will take place once the area has been fully laid out.

The Town Council has also agreed in principle to accept from the District Council the transfer of ownership of the Riverside Recreation Area near the Water's Edge development. A final decision will be made when the amount of the commuted sum for future maintenance is known.

Leigh Park Playing Field

The Adventure Playground was refurbished at the end of last year as well as the fencing around it.

The 68 lime trees surrounding Leigh Park Playing Field were pollarded at the beginning of this year.

On a depressing note the Rugby Club continues to suffer vandalism to the Pavilion and there is a particularly bad litter problem at Leigh Park.

Dog Fouling

As mentioned by the Chairman of Planning & Environment Committee in relation to the Town Centre, dog fouling is also a growing problem in the recreation areas. I would urge all dog walkers to pick up after their dogs and be particularly vigilant when walking their dogs at dusk to ensure that they can see when and where their dog is defecating so that they can poop scoop appropriately.

My thanks go to the Recreation and Leisure Committee for their support suggestions and debate in the past year and also to the ground staff who work with us.

7.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC RELATING TO TOWN MATTERS

Peter Cooper, 48 East Borough – asked why there were no dog bins in the town centre. Cllr Mrs Cook informed him that any bin could be used for dog waste and Mr Cooper suggested that a sticker on normal bins informing people that they could be used for dog waste would be helpful.

Mr Cooper also commented on the fact that there seemed to be a diminishing police presence, including community officers, in the town, despite the fact that the police element of the council tax had increased by 2%. At the same time there seemed to be a mini crime wave in Wimborne with several shops having been broken into recently. He queried whether criminals had come to know that the CCTV was only manned during

certain hours and were taking advantage of that knowledge. He wondered whether more volunteers were needed to man the CCTV.

The Town Clerk responded that the CCTV system was operated by the police together with a full quota of volunteers. Despite the fact that the equipment was only manned during certain hours, images were recorded and retained for a period of time when they could be reviewed if a crime had occurred. In the past they have had success in identifying perpetrators. He further added that the cost of manning CCTV 24 hrs a day would be prohibitive.

Victoria Sturgess, 24 West Borough – two questions, firstly she referred to the number of cigarette butts outside the Man in the Wall premises despite there being a bin located there specifically for them. She felt that the licensee should be held accountable and requested to keep the area tidy. The Town Clerk agreed to contact the Licensing Officer the following day to discuss the problem.

Secondly Mrs Sturgess referred to the planning application that had been made to convert the Infinergy building into a 200 seat restaurant. She felt that there were enough licensed premises on West Borough and that residents were already subjected to enough noise and anti-social behaviour. Cllr Mrs Hymers confirmed that the Town Council had objected to this planning application.

Arthur White, Cromwell Road – Mr White expressed his thanks to the Town Council for installing the bus shelter on St John's Hill.

Don Lonsdale, 9A Westfield Close – raised the question of the Core Strategy and the houses to be built. He felt there had been complete silence on traffic and road infrastructure. He referred to an accident on Sunday on Julians Bridge which had caused complete chaos on Oakley Hill and Gravel Hill. The Town was now looking at about 800 new houses to be built to the west and north of the town which could bring a further 1,200 additional vehicles through the town. He felt that none of the plans so far addressed the increase in traffic volume such as extra road capacity to free the town of this traffic. He did not see how the Council could possibly agree to this huge development taking place without an increase in roads to deal with the problem. He felt the Town Council should have some say in the matter and that the strongest possible objections should be made. Cllr Mrs Cook sympathised and agreed it was a matter of grave concern which the Town Council was raising with the Planners at the District Council and also Dorset County Council.

Cllr Mrs Hymers referred to a recent meeting that the Town Council had had with the County Council's Traffic Management Liaison Officer. She also said that she would arrange for Mr Lonsdale to receive a copy of a letter that the Transport Development Liaison Manager had written to the Town Council. The bottom line was that the computer modelling undertaken during the traffic assessment had found no cause for concern in the increased traffic and that the existing infrastructure could cope. There

were some proposals to alleviate problems on the Cranborne Road. Whilst the Town Council had concerns about the delays on Julians Rd there were no figures to back up that a major change was needed.

Cllr Robin Cook agreed with Mr Lonsdale's concerns and stated that the Town Council had been very aware of problems likely to arise which were a major concern. People had grudgingly accepted that houses needed to be built but wanted the process of putting them in place managed effectively, including traffic management. Recently the Town Council had written to the Director for the Environment and Economy at the County Council requesting further investigation to be made and Cllr Cook had then facilitated a meeting with DCC traffic engineers. Notes from that meeting had not yet been put into the public domain but he was happy for it to be made available.

He further confirmed that Dorset Highways was a statutory consultee in the planning process and had to provide details of traffic management on the basis of the planning presented. Any representations should be directed at the planning authority, East Dorset District Council (EDDC) as they would be the final decision makers. The County Council would also have discussions with the developers to see what mitigation could be implemented. However, at the moment some of this information was commercially sensitive. In principle the road infrastructure seemed acceptable but there was still a lot of work going on. Ultimately the decision would be based on the information supplied by all the consultees. If the Wimborne community felt strongly about this then representations should be made to EDDC.

Mr Lonsdale also raised the issue of when the Olympics were held, several millions could be found to improve the road network as this was seen as a national priority. However, because the proposed developments were being dealt with at a local level no such priority was being given. He felt that the town should be shouting about this and elevating it to the next level. He referred to the town of Lymington which had one single exit road out north of the town and this had led to the degradation of the town. He felt that Wimborne would become an absolute bottle neck and not the thriving town residents wanted. He had no confidence at the moment in the noises being made about solving the congestion. He referred to Water's Edge which was a lovely development but without any infrastructure to cater for several hundred houses. There was a creep of houses generally; villages to the north were increasing in size and would use the Cranborne Road to come into Wimborne.

He felt that representation should be made to the MP, Michael Tomlinson. Cllr R Cook thanked Mr Lonsdale but said there was a limit as to what the Town Council or County Council could do.

Anthony Oliver, 34 Park Lane also referred to a road traffic accident that morning on the bypass and said that the radio station was saying Wimborne was at a standstill.

Carole Chedgy, 13 Redcotts Road – referred to the passageway between the scout hut and public toilets at Redcotts becoming overgrown. She asked if representations could be made to the owners as the path was narrowing. There were many broken fence posts and old railings. The Town Clerk would raise the matter with the Community Highways Officer. The hedges were the responsibility of Westfield Court or Moray Court.

Mrs Chedgy also asked about the way the electoral system worked, specifically why someone could stand as a Councillor in a town that he did not live in. She wanted to know who made the rules and whether they could be changed.

The Town Clerk responded that it was set down in statute and that an elector who lived within three miles of the parish could stand for election. This was primary legislation and could only be changed by Parliament. He said he would let Mrs Chedgy know which statute it was.

Patsy Glazier, 11 Cornmarket – reported on increasing problems with motorbikes parking in the Cornmarket and causing noise nuisance by revving up outside her premises late at night. She had spoken to a traffic warden but had been told there were not enough staff to deal with this. She had tried to talk to the community police but no one had turned up to meet with her. She also thought that the King Street car park had no motorcycle spaces. The Town Clerk agreed to look into the problem.

Mr Oliver referred to the matter of who was entitled to attend the Annual Town Meeting and why town councillors who did not live in the parish could not attend regardless of where they lived. He felt there was confusion over this issue. The Town Clerk disagreed and referred to Section 13 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cllr Mrs Diann March, 26 West Street, referred to a letter she had received which stated that from 6 April 2017 the Town Council would be responsible for roads and streets of the town. This was not the case and she thought it would confuse people. Cllr Mrs Cook requested that she let the Town Clerk see the letter.

Mrs Sturgess, 24 West Borough, on behalf of another resident, Mrs Susie Gatrell, stated that rumours continued to circulate about the Town Council's involvement in Wimborne Cemetery and asked what the financial implications were for the Town Council.

The Town Clerk responded that there were on-going legal proceedings which were confidential. He could not say what the financial implications would be at this stage.

Mrs Jaques, 40 Grove Rd – asked whether the Town Council was involved with the strategy for the choice of shops in the town. She was informed that this was not the responsibility of the Town Council.

Martin Tidd, 24 West Street – said that as a result of the meeting last year there had been a Freedom of Information (FOI) request made and that this had shown that £13,500 had been paid for solicitors’ fees for the Anthony Sherman case. This further showed that the CPS were called in to investigate. The money was spent to cover legal costs and had been recorded as general expenses. He disagreed and said this should have been recorded as exceptional expenses. Mr Tidd understood that Anthony Sherman was thought to be an employee but when it came to the crunch and the committee sacked him he sued all three councils for breach of contract. The Anthony Sherman case had been settled in such a way that it had been hidden from the town’s people. He asked on what basis the Town Council decided to settle. He felt that it had brought the town into disrepute. He further stated that Cllr Shane Bartlett had dared to challenge this and had been the subject of a witch-hunt. At the last Town Council meeting Cllr Mrs March continued to pursue the code of conduct investigation against Cllr Shane Bartlett jointly with Cllr Henry Bartlett’s widow. He asked why these complaints had been made and why those councillors who stood for election in 2015 did not tell the electors about their removal from the Cemetery Committee. The councillors involved in that committee were not allowed to be elected to the Cemetery Committee again. He was annoyed that this fact had been hidden as he himself had voted for those councillors in 2015.

Mr Tidd believed there should be a public meeting and he wanted reassurance that as soon as the Minster Stone case was settled that such a meeting would take place.

The Town Clerk stated that due to the confidential nature of the case that he would not comment on it but that the £13,500 had been recharged to the Cemetery.

Mr Tidd asked for clarification as to whether this meant a third of it had been charged to the Town Council. He further wanted to know why the Councillors concerned had refused to explain why they felt that they had not done anything wrong.

Cllr Mrs Cook reiterated that the Councillors were not removed – the Cemetery committee was changed.

Mrs Chedgy mentioned that the Tribunal judgement was in the public domain and dealt with the FOI request to the Cemetery Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.26 pm.

Signed Date
Town Mayor & Chairman of the Council