



MINUTES OF THE BUNTINGFORD ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD AT THE SETH WARD COMMUNITY CENTRE, BUNTINGFORD ON THURSDAY 26th May 2022 AT 7:00PM

Present: Councillors G. Waite (Town Mayor), S. Bowman, D. Wallace, B. Lemay, J. Ling, Mrs T. Bonner, G. Bonner, M. Furness, Mrs P. Furness, Mrs S. Coote, Mrs J. Danagher and S. Bull
District & County Councillor J. Jones.
Town Clerk - Jill Jones
24 Residents of Buntingford.

1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies.

2. TO APPROVE AS A TRUE RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON 27TH MAY 2021.

Minutes approved.

3. WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF COUNCIL YEAR FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM WAITE - TOWN MAYOR

Good evening, everyone and welcome to the Annual Town Meeting for this year 2022. It is so nice to see everyone again considering what the last 2 and a half years has thrown at us as a society. First the slow but sure ending of the pandemic, all credit to our scientists for the development of a vaccine and the hard working and dedicated staff of the NHS for the efficient and speedy administration of the vaccine.

Then latterly, the invasion of the Ukraine by Russia, but more of that later.

As mentioned in my round up of the year last year, the pandemic temporarily put an end to civic duties outside of the town and stopped face to face council meetings, however we were able to resume Full Council meetings in May 2021 utilising the extra space afforded by using Bunters Suite upstairs, socially distanced of course. Other committee meetings have continued remotely but that may change and return to face to face meetings in the near future.

What have we been doing as a group of councillors during the year 2020 to 2021?

Following the sad passing of Cllr Surjit Basra, we were able to co-opt a new Councillor to the Council, Cllr Jackie Danagher. Welcome Jackie, all of us hope you enjoy your time as a councillor.

Mention must be made of the recent sad loss of Janet Noades, the wife of ex-Mayor John Noades. Although not a councillor, Janet played an active role in supporting John during his terms of office as Mayor.

You will remember that in 2019 the Council embarked on a project to improve the state of the River Rib through the town. The project was delayed by roughly 6 months but began again in summer 2020. The project is now at the point where we have a fully detailed plan of what is required to bring the river back to a proper state as a chalk stream, one of only 200 in the world. Part of the system to get the plan implemented is the issue of licenses by the EA to carry out the work. The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust have applied on our behalf for the relevant licenses to carry out works on Reach 2 and Reach 4 and have also managed to get funding for the project from the Environment Agency. I will leave Councillor Lemay to answer any questions on this project and encourage anyone who wants to help to join the Friends of the Rib and Quin as a volunteer. We can give you the detail after the meeting if you are interested. HMWT have already chosen a contractor to carry out the work and it is hoped to begin in late September early October.

Two new CCTV systems have been installed to replace the old systems at Seth Ward Community Centre and Norfolk Road Pavilion which were becoming unreliable and not of good quality. The new systems use the latest technology and have improved coverage. Both systems can be accessed remotely.

The Town Centre CCTV system has been a help to the police in detecting any criminal or anti-social activity that has occurred.

The Cemetery is now fully functional, and the landscaping is being assessed and any plants that have not survived the initial growing period will be replaced.

The Chatter Tables have resumed ably run by Cllrs Pat and Mick Furness.

The Film Club and the Drama group have now made the Seth Ward Centre their home and we are very pleased to welcome them.

It was pleasing that the Classic Car Show, the Remembrance Day Service, Lights of Love Ceremony and Late-Night Shopping were able to take place and special mention must be made of the Unsung Hero Award which had two winners in 2021, 19 and under, Poppy, Mylo, Felix and Willow Saynor and the over 19 award, to Kevin Power.

I must make special mention of Cllr Graham Bonner and his family who every year take a very active role in organising these events.

The small but beautifully proportioned S106 working party have continued to work tirelessly to improve the outdoor sports provision for the town. A survey was carried out in early 2021 and the results of that survey are still actively being worked on.

Norfolk Road Playing Field.

We have been able to completely replace the old and corroded skate ramp with a custom-built concrete facility which we are pleased to say is being well used by different age groups of differing abilities.

The old concrete football kick up wall unfortunately fell down a few years ago but has now been replaced with an interactive wall that is completely electronic and is programmable from a laptop. It is hoped that we can hold a series of training sessions with schools and football teams so that they can get more out of the facility.

We have been able to replace the run up and batting area of the cricket practice nets with a new surface which meets the requirements of the ECB.

A planning application was submitted last November to East Herts Council for the construction of a pump track and we await a decision from them as to whether or not we can progress this project.

A ground level trampoline will be installed during the coming weeks in the Young Persons Play Area.

Seth Ward Community Centre

New outdoor gym equipment has been installed at the northern end of the playing field.

Hare Street Road Playing Field

New outdoor gym equipment has been installed to the area just outside and to the east of the Young Persons Play Area and we have received some recommendations from different suppliers / installers on upgrading the existing play area.

We have also been working with Freman College to realise their aspirations to install a 3G facility and have offered financial support.

All the above projects have been or are being funded from developer S106 contributions. It must be understood that these monies cannot be used for anything other than improvements or additions to outdoor sports in the Town.

It has been an honour and a pleasure to hold the office of Mayor for 4 years and to represent the town at various civic functions over the past 4 years. My last civic functions were both in Hertford, the Mayor making last Thursday night and their Civic Service last Sunday morning.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their support, encouragement and help over the last year, Jill Jones our Town Clerk and Alex in the office for the work they do. Lastly but by no means least my wife, Jill, who has supported me through a turbulent but enjoyable year.

Does anyone have any questions.

The Mayor then handed over to Councillor Jones to give a brief presentation on his two recent humanitarian aid trips to Poland and Ukraine.

4. QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR.

MOP asked how the Council was going to maintain the new sports facilities. The Mayor responded that maintenance will be budgeted for.

MOP asked what a 3G pitch is.

MOP asked where the Council is on the proposed pump track.

The Mayor responded that we await a decision on the planning application. EHDC have received everything they asked for. The MOP asked if the Council were going to compensate him for building the pump track close to his property, the Mayor responded that the Council will not be compensating anyone.

MOP asked why school buses were not using the turning circle on the Redrow site. Councillor Jones explained the current situation.

MOP asked the current status of Nevetts. Councillor Jones explained that HCC has decided the building is no longer needed and will be developed in some form. There has been discussion with the development company regarding mixed used - commercial/community.

MOP thanked the Council for help to move the Film Club and Drama Group to the Community Centre. The MOP went on to state that HCC will not share the results of a feasibility study on the Library, the Library is not big enough to host a Tier 2 Library, eight years later HCC is still procrastinating.

The Mayor responded that Cllr Jones had submitted a report which included details of progress at the Library. The feasibility study is to see if the building can be modified to do what is wanted. The County Council intend to match existing S106 contributions.

Councillor Jones further explained that the structural survey will indicate whether the £650k budget is sufficient. Tenders will then be sought and hopefully work will start late Autumn, more information will be passed on when it's available.

In response to a question the Mayor explained that an application for land west of Buntingford has not yet been submitted, when and if it is, the public will be consulted. The District and neighbourhood Plans both state no more development outside of the town boundary, which this site is. Nothing has changed policy wise since the application was withdrawn previously.

MOP asked Police if they could police young people cycling on the footway.

MOP asked Police if they could monitor vehicle movements at the top of Church Street.

Councillor Ling stated that he had been a Councillor since 1976 and during that time many things have changed. The Phoenix Project is just about to get going again, the purpose is to look at all roads in the town, to make them attractive. Suggest Buntingford Journal should have an ongoing discussion about what is going on in Buntingford.

MOP asked if the Summer Arts Festival was still going ahead following concerns raised by the Town Council, the Mayor responded that yes, it was going ahead.

The Chairman stated that following a ten minute break other Council meetings would take place, all were welcome to stay.

The Chairman thanked all those present for attending.
Meeting closed 20.21pm