

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 10th May 2016 at 7:00pm in the Guildhall, High Street, Shaftesbury

Present:

Councillor R Tippins (Chairman)
Councillor Proctor (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Austin
Councillor Francis

Councillor Taylor
Councillor Hall
Councillor K Tippins

In attendance:

Mr Stephen Holley (Town Clerk)
Mrs Claire Commons (Committee Services Officer)
20 members of the public

MINUTES

1. Chairman / Town Mayor's Opening Remarks

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited anyone who wished to record the meeting to do so.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Town Councillor Mark Jackson, District Councillor Gary Jefferson and County Councillor Mervyn Jeffery

3. To receive the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 19th May 2015

The minutes were received and adopted as a correct record.

4. Shaftesbury Town Council Annual Report 2015/16

- (a) The Mayor of Shaftesbury, Councillor Richard Tippins highlighted the key elements of his report.
- (b) Representatives of the following Town Council Committees also presented their reports:-
 - Councillor Phil Proctor, Chair of the General Management Committee
 - Councillor Karen Tippins, Chair of the Recreation, Open Spaces and Environment Committee
 - Councillor Lester Taylor, Vice-Chair of the Planning and Highways Committee
- (c) The Town Clerk drew attention to the summary Budget Report for 2016/17 within the Annual Report and explained that the detailed Budget Book was available.
- (d) Councillor Richard Tippins presented a report as Chair of the Neighbourhood Planning Group.

Note: The Annual Report contains the full text of the above reports and is available on request from the Town Hall Offices. The Budget Book is also available on request.

5. Reports from County and District Councillors

District Councillor Francis provided an overview of District Council matters, with particular focus on financial affairs. Additional attention was given towards support provided to community projects. Reference to the establishment of a Tri-Council agreement and restructure was given and the benefits that it brought.

Questions were put in relation to the future of North Dorset District Council, the likelihood of Unitary Authority status for Dorset and the possible impact on the Town Council.

No written reports had been received.

6. Feedback from Local Organisations in Receipt of Grants and Support from Shaftesbury Town Council:

Rotary Club - A report was received on the activities of the Rotary Club during the past year including its fund raising events and the community groups to which it provided funds totalling in excess of £13,000.

Shaftesbury Arts Centre - A report was received on the activities of the Arts Centre during the past year and outlined the extent of arts covered by the facility.

Shaftesbury Scouts - A report was received on the activities of 1st Shaftesbury Scout Group including the funds received from the Town Council and the subscriptions paid by members. The success of the group was highlighted in many aspects of its activities.

Shaftesbury Snowdrops - A report was received on the history and activities of the Shaftesbury Snowdrops Group including special snowdrop planting events and plans for a heritage collection of rare snowdrops and educational opportunities. It was highlighted that the snowdrop specialist from RHS Kew had attended the Snowdrop Festival in 2015 and was expected again in 2016. The Festival had brought additional footfall to other key tourist locations in the town.

Shaftesbury Youth Club - A report was received on the activities of the youth club over the past year and the number of children that they catered for. Special mention was given to the Little Giants group for special needs children.

Open House - A report was received on the activities of Open House and Store House covering all the support elements provided to the community including networking with other agencies and services in the community.

Home Start - A report was received on the activities of Home Start covering the number of families and children supported and the range of support provided.

Shaftesbury Abbey and Museum - Thanks were given to the Town Council for the grant received in 2015 used for preservation, improvements and cataloguing of elements of Shaftesbury Abbey. Future plans for the Abbey were touched upon indicating the importance of Shaftesbury Abbey in history.

North Dorset Rugby Club - A report was received on the activities of North Dorset Rugby Football Club, including future plans for expanding the club.

Chamber of Commerce - A report was received on the activities of the Chamber of Commerce and its future plans.

Read Easy - A report was received on the activities and successes of Shaftesbury and Gillingham Read Easy.

Shaftesbury Club for Visually Impaired - A report was received on the activities of the Shaftesbury Club for the Visually Impaired.

Royal British Legion - A report was received on the activities of the British Legion and the support provided to ex-service men and women and British Legion members as well as affiliation with youth associations such as the Scouts and Guides.

Trinity Trust - A report was received on the activities of Trinity Trust and a further written report was provided for people to take away at the end of the meeting.

7. Questions from the Floor

It was asked who owned the land approaching the British Legion Hall. It was explained that that negotiations were in progress on the land (with the disused public toilets) with North Dorset District Council and Tesco as the landowner and leaseholders respectively. The Town Council owned the other car park land and it had aspirations to combine the two.

It was asked who was responsible for the upkeep of the access road between Bimport and Castle Hill. It was understood to be a County Council highway and that the lack of maintenance was probably due to it not being regularly used as a 'road'. There was common agreement that it functioned as a footpath and the uneven surface posed a danger to users. The Town Clerk offered to remind the County Council of its poor condition and to relay the concerns.

It was commented that the year just past had been the best the Town had seen in recent years and thanks were extended to the Mayor and Mayoress.

8. Topics and Questions by Members of the Public Previously Received

Seven questions were received for future response. In view of the late hour the member of the public stated that he would withdraw some of them for later consideration by the Council, but he would put the following questions|:

Town Council's accounts for 2015/16 – In response to a question on when the accounts would be available to inspect, it was explained that the External Auditor had written with dates but they were not to hand at the present meeting. If a request to view the accounts was submitted in writing the Finance Officer would relay the dates and arrange an appointment.

Accounts for Shaftesbury Community Swimming Pool Ltd - It was asked when the accounts for the operators of the Swimming Pool in 2015 would be available to the Town Council and the public. It was responded that the accounts were currently with Companies House.

Rifles Monument – In response to questions on the installation of the Monument in Mampitts Cemetery, it was responded that installation was scheduled for 16th May 2016, and that a legal document was to be drawn up transferring ownership to the Shaftesbury Charitable Trust. A dedication ceremony was being arranged for 28th July 2016.

Customer Code of Best Practice - It was asked if the Council would agree to produce and publish a Customer Code of best practice in common with many of surrounding County Councils and if this code would include the requirement for all councillors to declare all interests including membership of political parties and other clubs and societies. In response, the Town Clerk stated that (i) it was likely that the questioner was mixing a Customer Code with the Register of Members' Interests; (ii) the present Town Meeting was not a meeting of the Town Council so, even if Town Councillors wished to take up the suggestion, they were not in a position to do so; (iii) even the best practices and procedure of the County Councils referred to were not always appropriate for the Town and Parish Council sector; (iv) the Town Council was awaiting the result of its application for the Foundation Award under the Quality Scheme and expected to work on the next level up. The criteria in that national Award scheme were probably a better indicator of the efforts the Council would make to provide service to its customers.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending. There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.15pm.

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