

HENLEY ON THAMES TOWN COUNCIL - NOTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON 4 APRIL 2019 AT 7.30PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, HENLEY ON THAMES.

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Glen Lambert, Deputy Mayor, Councillor Ken Arlett, Councillor Julian Brookes, Councillor Donna Crook, Councillor Dave Eggleton, Councillor Will Hamilton, Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak, Councillor Lorraine Hillier, Councillor Laurence Plant, Mrs Janet Wheeler, Town Clerk, Ms Helen Barnett, Town & Community Manager, Mrs Nicci Taylor, Minute Taker, 48 Members of the Public and 2 Members of the Press.

1. WELCOME

The Mayor of Henley on Thames, Councillor Glen Lambert welcomed organisations and members of the public to the Annual Town Meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from John Howell MP and Councillors Sam Evans, Ian Reissmann, Jane Smewing and David Nimmo Smith.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 5 April 2018 were received, approved and signed by the Mayor as a true record.

4. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor, Councillor Glen Lambert reported that the four Council committees met at least once every 8 weeks this year, but will be moving back to a 6 weekly cycle next year. All sub committees and working groups report in to the four primary committees and recommendations of these committees are ratified by the Full Council which meets after each 8 week cycle.

The Finance, Strategy and Management Committee is responsible for managing and controlling the Council's finance and resources. It recommends the annual revenue and capital budgets, and the precept (the Town Council's share of Council Tax) to Full Council which makes the final decision.

Henley Town Council's investment funds are currently valued at £4.5 million. The income generated from these investments is expected to be approximately £170,000, which is higher than forecast. This annual income helps us keep the precept, Henley Town Council's share of Council Tax, low. Indeed, Henley Town Council has the lowest precept of the South Oxfordshire towns.

Approximately £50,000 in large grants was paid to 10 local organisations doing great work in the community including NOMAD, Riverside Counselling and the new Family Centre. Smaller grants have been paid to 15 organisations including the Berkshire MS Society, the Air Cadets and the Town & Visitors Regatta.

In order to maintain standards of service to the community of Henley and its support for local charitable organisations and community groups, the Town Council needs to ensure that its income keeps pace with inflation. For this reason the Finance, Strategy and Management Committee has recommended a 3% increase to Henley's share of Council Tax next year, which means an increase of £2.79 a year for a Band D home.

Councillor Lambert thanked the Responsible Financial Officer, Liz Jones, and Chair of the Finance, Strategy and Management Committee, Councillor Jane Smewing, who is standing down in May, for their expertise and professionalism this year.

The Planning Committee's remit is to debate Planning Applications, and send HTC's 'observations' to South Oxfordshire District Council, who are the Planning Authority and who make the final decision. The Planning Committee also has the Neighbourhood Plan Committee reporting to it.

The Planning Committee meets more often than all other committees and will have held 16 meetings and considered over 200 planning applications this year. In addition to this, the Neighbourhood Plan Committee, which meets every 6 weeks, reports into the Planning Committee. Its remit is to ensure that the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan is being adhered to and also to ensure our Neighbourhood Plan is kept up to date.

With that in mind, a detailed review of the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan has been running for a year and a tremendous amount of work has been done by staff, Councillors and members of the public. HTC plan to set up exhibitions for the public to come to the Town Hall and offer their views on the Neighbourhood Plan review.

Councillor Lambert thanked Councillor Ken Arlett for his experienced chairmanship of these committees this year and to Cath Adams for her tireless efforts.

The Recreation and Amenities Committee looks after all our open and green spaces and has had a very busy year with the opening of the new Makins Playground and the outdoor gym, also at Makins. In response to a rise in anti-social behaviour reported by the Scouts and Headway, new Security Fencing was arranged.

The Council also saw the opening of the Community Orchard off Paradise Road, the Wishing Tree, improvements to Northfield End, enhanced fencing & pedestrian access at Waterman's Allotments and a new hedge around Singer's Park to help deal with the rat problem.

Henley has also achieved a Green Flag award for Mill & Marsh Meadows and accreditation by Walkers are Welcome as a destination for hikers. This is an exceptionally busy committee and more details can be found in Councillor Kellie Hinton's report.

Councillor Lambert thanked Becky Walker, Karl Bishop and the Parks Staff for their hard work this year in exceptionally difficult circumstances after the tragic death of Parks Manager, Gareth Bartle. Also to Councillor Kellie Hinton for her Chairing of this committee and her passion for all things green.

The Town and Community Committee has responsibility for all aspects affecting the Town and its Residents and has also had a very busy year with the successful launch of the towns new bus service, getting to grips with waste blighting our streets and parking issues at Townlands.

This Committee has agreed new street cleaning contracts for staged cleans throughout the year, overseen the upgrading of the Sound, Vision & Light system in the Town hall to increase bookings for conferences, concerts & weddings – all of which generate revenue for Henley Town Council.

This Committee has a number of sub-committees and working groups reporting into it, including the Events & Townlands Sub-Committees and the Bus working group lead by Cllr Sarah Miller, Cllr Ian Reissmann & Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak respectively.

Councillor Lambert thanked those Councillors and Cllr Lorraine Hillier for Chairing this Committee.

Finally, Councillor Lambert extended thanks and appreciation to all staff and Councillors for the busy and successful year we have had.

5. i) COMMUNITY MATTERS

John Green – Royal British Legion Advised that Henley had won the Duncan Cup for the most improved numbers in a branch but stated that the Legion met on the 3rd Monday of the Month at the Christ Church Centre and that younger members were still needed.

Patrick Flemming – Henley Leichlingen Twinning Association Spoke to his submitted report and also stated that this year was the 40th Anniversary of the Association and invited Councillors to attend.

Dave McEwen – Henley in Transition Spoke to his submitted report.

David Dickie – Clean Air for Henley Spoke to his submitted report and stated that all vehicles should be banned from the centre of Henley.

David Dickie – Café Scientifique Spoke to his submitted report.

Susan Edwards – Henley Choral Society Reported that there are now over 60 members of the Youth Choir, she requested that the Christmas Festival remains on the advertised date at the end of November as if it moved to December would clash with rehearsals for the Christmas Concert and members would not be able to get through the road closures.

Dr Sarah Posey – River & Rowing Museum Spoke to her submitted report and thanked Councillors Arlett and Lambert for their support as trustees over the

past year and Henley Town Council and Henley Municipal Charities for their awards and grants. She stated that the Museum was bidding for the Child Friendly Museum of the Year and encouraged people to vote at www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk.

Richard Parham – Eyot Centre Spoke to his submitted report.

Joan Bennett – Henley Bell Ringers Spoke to her submitted report.

Kate Crossland – Be Well Reported that since 2010 they had been providing a variety of therapies on a Monday morning for a suggested £5 donation in the Kings Arms Barn.

Andy Jones – CAB Spoke to his submitted report.

John Tabor – Be Free Young Carers Reported that they are the only organisation for young carers in Oxfordshire to offer support to young carers aged between 8 and 25. Many young carers he stated experience stress and anxiety as a result of their caring role and Be Free helps reduce these feelings by providing practical and emotional support, social opportunities, training events and befriending. Volunteers he stated are always required.

Sally Daniels – Henley Bowls Club Thanked the Mayor and the Town Council for their support and encouraged new members to join for companionship, fitness and fresh air. The Bowls Club is she stated situated in a wonderful setting next to the river. The Membership is currently 80 and there is an open day on 19 May to which all are invited to attend to have a go. Refreshments and coaching will be available.

Tim Prior – NOMAD Spoke to his submitted report and thanked the Town Council for their continued support.

Charles Whittaker – U3A Reported that membership is up from 155 last year to 195 this year. Current groups he stated included Spanish, Italian, Bridge and Wine appreciation.

Julia Yeo – St Johns Ambulance Reported that they are happy to carry out defibrillator training if required.

Helen Barnett – Town and Community Manager encouraged people to vote for their Henley Hero on the forms that were available, advised that she was happy to promote any of Henley's organisations on the visit-henley.com web site.

ii) QUESTIONS AND COMMENT FROM ELECTORS ON ANY MATTER WHICH AFFECT THE TOWN.

Susan Edwards questioned the proposed traffic calming on Gravel Hill was questioned and what was happening with regards to the narrow pavements.

Councillor Gawrysiak advised that there would need to be a pedestrian count and a speed count before a consultation could take place.

John Morrow commented that the Community Orchard was beautiful and a brilliant idea.

Louise Pegley suggested that following an article in the paper a demonstration by concerned parents and teachers should take place to raise awareness of cuts to school funding.

6. CLOSING REMARKS

In closure the Mayor thanked Mrs Janet Wheeler for her three years as Town Clerk, thanked his fellow Councillors for the hundreds of hours of voluntary service they give to the town and to all the staff for their support.

The Mayor then invited everyone to stay once the meeting had finished and join him for light refreshments.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.