

HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 13th March 2014 at 7 pm in the Corn Exchange, Hungerford (Approx 90 people present)

1. Welcome and Mayor's Report - The Mayor introduced the 3 new councillors Rob Brookman, Paul Whiting and Sarah Leach. We now have the full requirement of 15 councillors. The Mayor mentioned the horrific state of the Co-op Queen Anne building. He is pushing for start dates of the refurbishment of the building. He thanked the HEAR group for their input on the Education Consultation. He also welcomed the Town & Manor and recognised the benefits they have given to Hungerford over the last 600 years and introduced Susan Hofgartner both a business woman and 'The Constable'.

2. Hungerford Market - Constable of Town & Manor (T&M), Susan Hofgartner asked what can be done to improve the market. Most people present thought it was a good idea to support the market. A good amount of those present had bought from the market in the last month. On Tuesday (ahead of the Wednesday market) photos are posted on facebook (which has 90 likes) and information is given about what is selling at the market and special deals. Susan gave an overview of all the stalls which includes: Mr Bagri (clothing) has had a stall for a long time, Bertie's Bread stall is new, Kez (Little Miss Piggy) sells cheese, eggs etc. Tony sell antiques, Richard (the new market manager) sells flowers and plants, Cullum sells fruit and veg has had a stall for many years, Paula (Mawers' fishmongers), Mark (Christalli) occasionally visits selling glass jewellery, and Andy has a sock stall. The market is good fun, come and spend your money!

Questions from the floor – It was confirmed there are 2 advertising boards. Can signs be put further afield? Is parking for market vans available? This can be investigated. The market comes under T&Ms remit although it is not their land. Yes the bus service runs on a Wednesday which is market day.

3. Thanks and intro to Thames Valley Police were given by the Mayor.

4. Thames Valley Police Sgt Andy Matthews gave Inspector John Donachy's apologies as he is unwell. Sgt Ward has now moved back to Newbury and Andy's post is temporary for 6 months until a replacement is found. There are 3 Police officers assisted by 3 PCSOs. Residents are welcome to attend the 'Have your say sessions'. PC Drewitt keeps the website updated. They are trying to engage with as many people, clubs, and associations as possible. Top priorities are addressing: speeding on the A338 and A4, ASB and theft from garages and sheds. They liaise with surrounding police forces using Automated Number Plate Recognition. There has been a significant reduction in burglaries since last year. Colin is available to speak to regards victim support. Back up is available for rural areas for instances such as raves. PC Lee Frost will be joining the team from 17th March from Newbury and the priority will be to reduce violent crime.

Questions/comments from the floor: The Hungerford station is not open enough. Andy advised there is a yellow phone outside that can be used in this instance. He will feed this back to Inspector Donachy. The area they need to cover is vast but Newbury police will assist Hungerford and have a dedicated car. Valuables should not be left in your car.

5. The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 14th March 2013 were proposed by Cllr Thompson, seconded by Cllr Small, all in favour.

6. Reports by Committee Chairmen

i) Finance & General Purposes - Cllr Colin Bumbieris – The precept has remained the same for 4 years with Band D contribution around £78. This will be going up next year and the precept will be rising from £177K to £212K. The reasons for this are that West Berkshire Council (WBC) has handed down the cost of the Public Toilets to the Town Council and these cost £14K to run. The bus service H1 was going to be withdrawn by WBC which is costing HTC (Hungerford Town Council) another £6.5K. Another grant of £15k was to be withdrawn and HTC had to take £15k from reserves last year. This adds up to an additional cost of £50k required just to stand still. HTC has since received a £9.2K grant from WBC and has earmarked this for the toilets in the future. A bar chart was displayed showing the precept band D rate which will increase to £94. HTC accounts remain healthy.

ii) Environment & Planning - Cllr Margaret Wilson explained most planning applications received have been for conversions and extensions. Cobbs amended their original planning application and the E&P committee carried out a site visit and were impressed. After a site meeting at Garden Art, HTC and WBC agreed their planning application. Co-op has not started the building renovations. The Vodafone mast towards Marlborough is shrouded by trees. The Marina Site application has been in limbo since 2003 and we have recently received an amendment to these plans regarding floor space. HTC's comments were not taken on board regarding an application in Fairview Road. Margaret requested that poppies and red flowers are planted this year for Hungerford in Bloom to commemorate the centenary of the Great War.

iii) Recreation, Amenities & War Memorials - Cllr Dennis Benneyworth announced the Triangle Field plans are on display on the noticeboards and are almost ready to start. The current changing rooms are inadequate and drainage needs to be linked to the mains. The cost of the project is £122K and HTC has worked hard to secure funding obtaining £50K from Greenham Common Trust, £4K from Englefield and £30K from Leadbiters. S106 money will be used for the remainder. This will not impact on tax payers. Dennis thanked all the contractors for the high standard of maintenance work in St Saviours Cemetery, the playgrounds and war memorials. There are many benches around town which are also maintained. Town & Manor and HTC are trying to secure the Croft Field for continued use by the Town by way of freehold or long lease and are in negotiations with WBC. HTC are looking to improve play parks for toddlers.

iv) Highways & Transport - Cllr Roger Thompson values meetings with M Edwards, Head of Highways at WBC. Flooding has been a priority at WBC and Wales and West digging holes in the road has slipped under the radar. There has been a missed opportunity of getting pavement in place on the opposite side of the road to the new Catholic Church. A very successful resurfacing programme was in place but pot holes have appeared in the bad weather. Please report these pot holes to WBC. Paul Frances has kept focussed on the bus services and thanks to him the bus route will be changed to include a stop at the new development at Lindley Lodge and Redwood House. Brown signs are now in place along the motorway. A parking review has taken place and it has been agreed the Church St car park will provide short term parking. The donations received have made the Christmas Lights first class. Electrification in this area will not be going ahead in the first round of the project. There are new bike racks at the station. The hold-up stopping development in the station area is down to Network Rail. HTC would like to see a pedestrian crossing to the north of the town and thanks to DC Podger for the offer to donate some of his land to achieve this. York stone is available to replace the broken paving slabs in the High St but legal issues are holding this up. HTC are trying to do a de-cluttering of signage. Pressure is needed on WBC to pay for the improvement of the road surface at Sanden Close and Homefield Way. This is expensive as the surface is concrete with tarmac overlay. Parking improvements at Cold Harbour Road are needed and speeding problems on the A4 could be addressed with warning signs and pressure is needed on WBC. Roger thanked the office staff for chasing up issues. When plans for Redwood House and Lindley Lodge were drawn up we were promised adequate transport. This will be in place from 30th April.

v) Tourism & Economy - Cllr Martin Crane advised this is a new committee and following a brainstorming session with Anthony Buckwell and other councillors, issues to address were

identified, such as improvement to the Station area along with new ideas for a piazza and display of works of art. This committee contributed to the Town Plan Refresh which has since been adopted and he thanked Chris Scorey for his work on the plan. Town Team Hungerford (TTH) received a grant from the Mary Portis Scheme which is being used to encourage tourists to Hungerford 'in the Heart of the North Wessex Downs'. Hungerford should become a destination town and TTH wish to convert visitors into tourists. TTH work with shops and need to include industry. T&E are working with Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce to place Hungerford on the Inward Investment Map for the benefit of employment. Hungerford already has some international companies in the town.

vi) Community Centre - D Gaines/Cllr Thompson – The Wired Rock took over from WBC two years ago and the centre is now run by a management committee. Members include representatives from HTC, T&M, and the Theatre Co. HTC oversees the lease, which is about to be signed for a further 3 years and with T&M provide funding. Greenham Common Trust also provides funding which is coming to an end. The youth club has 240 members and is the largest in West Berkshire. It runs on a Wednesday and Thursday evening. A visit was made to the centre by an Olympian. Some training is provided to help with certain skills, such as presentation skills. The Theatre club use the premises for rehearsal. Wired Rock has been running for almost 6 years and Ladybugs playgroup also uses it. The Tennis Courts were deemed unsafe by WBC (due to H&S) last summer. Work will be carried out to get it refurbished hopefully in the Easter holidays. £13K has been received for this from the Gerald Ward Trust. Kit will be moveable if they had to relocate. £2,900 has also been promised from WBC. They hope to turn a room in the community centre into an internet café. Donations are needed. The centre has been decorated and more volunteers are wanted.

vii) New SHLAA and Housing Survey - Cllr Richard Hudson – A Housing Needs Survey was carried out in the autumn with a 17% response, identifying 33 households with a local need. The greatest need was for one bedroom properties. The report provided by Community Council for Berkshire (CCB) is very thorough. HTC has appointed a professional consultant to try and minimise the risk of WBC putting too many houses in Hungerford. WBC identified up to 2000 houses across the whole of the AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural beauty), some of which have been built leaving 700. 83% of those that completed the Town Plan refresh survey wanted no more than 250 houses for Hungerford which is a 10% growth. Ashburn Planning are carrying out a house growth review study for HTC. There is a need to identify another 170 houses as 80 have been built already. Considerations are; housing need, traffic, landscape and education. HTC felt that WBC was listing to them following the SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) consultation recently. There will be a formal consultation and an Examination in Progress to follow. Finally there will be a local plan adopted in 2016. Richard mentioned the new temporary car park which has been gained at the station.

7. District Councillor's Reports - District Cllr James Podger (JP) gave apologies from DC Paul Hewer (PH). He is enjoying his post. PH has obtained a members bid for just under £3k for the community centre. JPs bid was not successful however WBC has funded the Resource Centre anyway for the sum of £3.5K towards mobility improvements. The proposed education plan has been rejected which shows that consultation works. £500k has been spent on a new classroom for the Primary school and £1m will be invested into the JOG school. WBC needs to work with Hungerford to find out what the answer is. WBC provided some funding support for the bus route and some of the council tax support grant has been reinstated. WBC is providing £1m countywide from reserves for the emergency repair of roads following the flooding. There is huge support for a pedestrian crossing in Bridge St. A crossing to the south of the Bear is supported and he is willing to give up some of his land to help with this. A plan for the crossing will be available in the next few weeks. The case for electrification to Bedwyn has been proven and whilst not available in the 1st round he is pretty positive it will come.

8. Questions and suggestions from the floor – JP confirmed the £2.75m for the education plan was for that particular plan so will go back in the pot. He confirmed £1m will be spent on JOG school this year and in addition they will underwrite their deficit. The next step is to work out the answer to the JOG underfunding and the oversubscription at the Primary school. Then Gordon

Lundie will find the funding. Potentially money is available if the right plan can be found.

Qu – What is happening to the derelict shop in Bridge St and will other buildings be allowed to get into this state? The mayor advised that the Jewellers next door are working hard to get details on this. WBC has a charge on the shop.

Qu – From a year 6 dad; HTC suggest a middle school and the Head teachers are not in favour of this. He wants people's confidence in JOG to improve. We should all get behind and support the school. The mayor voiced his support.

Qu – J Podger said £1m is to be spent on JOG school in addition to writing off the deficit. Can you confirm this? J Podger confirmed this was correct.

9. **Announcing of Freedom Award Nominations** - Cllr Martin Crane There was a much greater participation this year. 17 nominations were put forward. Votes were taken on the nominations by the clerk and Mayor and 6 independent residents. It was a difficult decision and the Mayor urged those that weren't successful to be nominated again. The 3 awardees are Mr Robert James, Dr Hugh Pihlens and Mr Ron Tarry. The date of the presentation will be announced as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm