

HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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**DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on
Thursday 14th March 2013 at 7 pm in the Corn Exchange, Hungerford
(Approx 80 people present)**

1. The Mayor welcomed everyone and introduction the 3 new councillors Carolann Farrell, Gillian Holmes and Alana Wilson after which he introduced the CEO of WBC Nick Carter
2. **Nick Carter (NC), CEO West Berkshire Council** – NC advised the need for WBC to save £6 million annually for the next few years. Hungerford is slow growing (4% annually), has an average age of 42.2 and a low number of young people aged 20-34 but increasing number of children aged 0-5. Regarding service provision we need to be aware the population is changing and that there is a need to increase services for the vulnerable. NC applauds the Town Council for continuing with the Town Plan refresh. NC is keen to develop the passing of assets from WBC to HTC and the Right to Bid process.
Questions from the floor – Nick Furr (Chairman of Hungerford Nursery) asked for support for the Croft Field to be kept for community use in view of NC's comments on the increase of young children, the vulnerable and his support of transfer of assets. NC responded that value for money needs to be sought on transfer of assets so money can be ploughed back into other services.
3. Thanks and intro to Thames Valley Police was made by the Mayor
4. **Thames Valley Police Inspector John Donachy (JD)** – JD has 20 years' experience in the police force and has been with Hungerford Police one month. The budget at present is their main challenge. The team consisting of 7 cover a 100 square miles area up to Lambourn and have 2 vehicles dedicated to Hungerford. They have made an improvement to response times to instant. They attend the monthly Full Council meeting and 'have your say' meetings at the roadside. Priorities are speeding, theft from outbuildings, theft of metal and ASB in Lambourn. Reduction targets are in place which includes 28% target for burglary. There has been an 8.8 reduction in all crimes.
5. **The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 15th March 2012** – Cllr Small proposed the minutes, seconded by Cllr Wilson with an amendment to item 11 to (Qu: From Mrs Bossom), all in favour.
- Matters arising [where not subsequent agenda items] - none
6. **Reports by Committee Chairmen**
 - i) **Resource Centre - Cllr Roger Thompson** – The day care centre in Ramsbury Drive is one of the 3 left in West Berkshire following cuts. There are currently 5 vacant spaces a week and cost is £60 per day. HTC have written to many organisations to obtain support and there is a need to improve marketing and admin. It is expensive because it is under-used. We need people to register and individuals can self-refer. A meeting will take place on Monday 25th March at 7.30pm at the Resource centre and leaflets are available this evening for further info.
 - ii) **Wired (Community Centre) – Denise Gaines** – WBC withdrew funds and the now called 'Wired Centre' took over the running from April 2012. Some funding has been promised for the next 2 years and more will be sought. Thanks to Sue Da Cost and Verity Radmore without whom the centre would not run. Youth workers are all CRB checked and H&S trained. There are 170 members and due to success Hungerford have been asked to help Kintbury promote their youth club. Other users of the centre include Wired Rock (music group), Ladybugs, Theatre Group, Jo Jangle and a baby sensory group. More users

are required particularly for parties. Since the centre has been thriving, the police have noted a reduction in Youth Crime and ASB. The tennis court is not fit for purpose and they hope District Councillors will support the much need repair of this by a members bid. An open Day will take place on April 27th 2-5pm.

iii) Highways & Transport (including Speeding) Cllr Roger Thompson (RT) RT thanked Cllr Hudson for his work on the Station project, Cllr A Wilson for organising an e-petition which obtained 800 signatures and Cllr Crane for his work improving the look of the High St. We need to continue to lobby our District Councillors for the necessary resurfacing work and public need to report problems as only 10% of reinstatements from road works are inspected. The pedestrian crossing petition has been presented to WBC and RT would urge District Cllrs to pursue infrastructure funding. Any speeding concerns need to be reported to WBC. Oakes site at the station will become a car park temporarily and WBC is reviewing parking charges. HTC requested Church St becomes more of a short stay car park. Hungerford User of Rail Transport (HURT) has been set up by John Willmott as a user's group to lobby for electrification to the west and the continuation of direct services to London. Paul Frances has produced a plan of the bus routes in Hungerford which is on display and HTC will be considering new bus shelters. The budget allows for the Xmas lights but help in donations is needed by the traders and public by way of the purchase of Grand Draw tickets again later this year. Entries are required again this year to support Hungerford in Bloom. Any suggestions for improvements to the town should be written on the display board.

iv) Environment & Planning (E&P) - Cllr Margaret Wilson – E&P deals with policies relating to conservation, settlement area, employment zones, AONB and town needs. It has been a quiet year with mainly plans for conversions and extensions. Site visits are arranged for any controversial plans and plans are available to view on the WBC website and in the Town Council office. Decisions are made by WBC but HTC's views are important. WBC and HTC agree the Tally Ho! should not be developed into housing. It has been registered as a community asset. Plans were turned down for housing and change of use. Retrospective planning applications received attract particular scrutiny. Amendments to the SHLAA are invited and anyone interested in the Folly Dog Leg Field plans can attend the E&P meeting on 15th April 7pm Town hall. This is not a formal consultation.

v) Town Survey Results & Town Plan Refresh - Chris Scorey – This was an opportunity for the public to have their say and a huge response was received to the town survey. The plan was ready to be published last summer but in order for WBC to adopt it some points of difference had to be worked through. A copy was due to go out to residents in 2 weeks but a Hungerford resident has used the FOI act to stop the publication saying that HTC should have a run a consultation on the public consultation! 80 additional homes were built between 2005 and 2012 and permission for a further 90 have been granted as at 31st March 2012. The household survey showed 83% of residents wish to see fewer than 250 extra built between 2011 and 2016. With 90 already granted this means a further 160 would be acceptable to most Hungerford people. Thanks were expressed by the Mayor to Chris Scorey for his huge amount of time spent collating the data.

vi) Recreation, Amenities & War Memorials – Cllr Bumbieris thanked all the contractors for their hard work. HTC have embarked on a programme to refurbish all the 70 benches in the town on an annual basis. Allotments gardens have a full take up with a waiting list and there is a need to secure a site for a further 4 years when Marsh Lane lease expired March 2014. A re-dedication of the Tragedy Memorial Site by Lord Lieutenant Mary Bayliss took place. Site meetings are being carried out at the play parks and skate park to obtain suggestions from the public for improvements. A maintenance programme is in place for the Triangle Field playing fields however work is needed on the Sports Pavilion. The drainage is insufficient and funding will be sought to maximise the use of the premises and to include a colt side. There are simply not enough changing rooms as present. It is hoped management can be put in the hands of the users. The TAG tournament was well attended with 20-25 teams playing.

vii) Tourism & Economy - Cllr Martin Crane. HTC are working with the Chamber of Commerce to develop Town Team Hungerford. The continuation of Rail Electrification through Hungerford is vital for the economy. Encouraging visitors to stay overnight will boost tourist trade. The HTC logo now includes 'Heart of the North Wessex Downs' and

this will be incorporated in the railways signs. New pedestrian signage will be in place soon.

- viii) Finance & General Purposes** - Cllr Martin Crane welcomed new staff Alison Blake (Deputy Clerk) and Jeff Ford (RFO). Much of the reserves have been earmarked for replacement of assets which only leaves £50,000 free reserves. Due to changes in the Government calculation of the tax base WBC have paid £15,000 to HTC to offset the shortfall however this is not guaranteed next year. HTC has had to increase the precept by 5%. Income has been boosted by Access money from Leadbitters which is temporary.
- 7. District Councillor's (DCs) Reports – Paul Hewer.** Building at The Priory should finish in September and will produce 28 apartments for the 'over 55s' and 46 'high dependency' apartments. The need for a one way system will be considered when the apartments are filled. The Tally Ho! Group put in a realistic bid for the pub above what the developers paid for it. Garden Art are in the process of submitting a plan of small work units which complement the antiques trade giving much needed employment. Priory Avenue resurfacing has been brought forward and will be done in May. The flooding problem there will be solved with soakaways. Bollards will be installed on the High St to stop the HGVs breaking the paving slabs. A footpath is needed opposite the Catholic Church site and will be funded by S106 money. The Pedestrian Crossing will be considered but no parking should be lost. The DCs will lobby for the Croft Field to remain a community asset. Nothing has been heard on the Marina site for the last 5 months.
- 8. Housing & Impact of WBC Core Strategy - Cllr Richard Hudson (Including Station Regeneration).** A professional Planning Consultant has been appointed to try and improve the gateway to the town and improve the transport interchange, design and access of the station. A brief has been adopted which will help Network Rail and the landowners have confidence to invest. HTC have met with SW trains and Network Rail. Additionally due to this HTC have secured funding for the rail bridge to be painted in April. Temporarily Oakes site will become a car park. Our MP is on the case to pressurise landowners to agree on who owns the access strip. There is pressure for Hungerford to have more houses. WBC Development Plan Document will identify sites for developers to 2026. This process will take a further 2-3 years. 600 houses have to be found sites for in the AONB. HTC have appointed professionals to produce a housing study and all potential development sites are being reviewed.
- 9. Questions and suggestions from the floor – Qu: Peter Harries** – The drainage of the Triangle Field Pavilion was originally passed by WBC, so why are there costs now? Will there be costs to the Town for the Freehold? The Mayor replied that the drainage cannot meet the demand of all the showers being used simultaneously. The Freehold terms are still being negotiated. **Qu: Sue Da Costa** – 170 are registered on the Community Centre books and the young badly need use of an outside area. Sue presented a compilation of many of the childrens' comments in support of this. The tennis courts which they previously used are no longer suitable due to H&S. The renovation is not happening and Parkwood wish to change it into a car park. The Mayor and DC replied that they support the renovation and hope a members bid will provide money to allow an outside play area. **Qu: Kathleen Walker** – The building in Bridge Street has deteriorated. What is to be done about it? The DC replied that he will speak to the David Holling in the legal team at WBC to pursue. Greg Furr (Town & Manor) advised that a charge was put over the property so that if it changed hands the money would be recoverable. The owner was prosecuted but borrowed back the money to rebuild it. Nothing has been done. Why has he not been charged? DC will follow up. **Qu:** The WBC SHLAA refresh will put red/green light on development sites. Will development to the north of the town be restricted due to the bridge bottleneck? The Mayor replied he couldn't answer this and all potential sites are being considered by a housing brief. **Qu: Janette Kersey** - When are the slabs being replaced in the High St? The Mayor replied that tarmac has been used as a temporary fix. HTC are avidly chasing WBC. It is a cost issue and involves contractors. DC advised that the bollards need to be in place by the 3 Swans first. Both DCs and HTC will renew efforts to get this done.
- 10. Closing Remarks by the Mayor** Martin Crane thanked the staff of HTC.
- Announcing of Freedom Awards:** Those awarded this year are **Bill Acworth, John Hollister and Jack Williams** and the presentation will be made by High Sheriff Charles Brims on Friday 22nd March, 12 noon in the Magistrates room
- Meeting closed 9pm.

(NOTE: HTC (Hungerford Town Council), WBC (West Berkshire Council) DCs (District Councillors)