

HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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**DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on
Thursday 31st March 2016 at 7 pm in the Corn Exchange, Hungerford
(Approx 80 people present)**

1. **Welcome and Mayor's Report** – Mayor's Report – the Mayor gave an overview of the town events from the past year including the establishing of defibrillators around the town and beautiful Christmas Lights. The new Deputy Clerk, Philippa Adams was introduced.

2. **Thanks and intro to Thames Valley Police was given by the Mayor.**

3. **Thames Valley Police - Anthony Stansfeld (AS), Police Commissioner** explained his work covers a huge area from Hungerford to Heathrow and from Milton Keynes to Banbury. The Thames Valley despite large cuts is in very good condition. It was rated outstanding in one category and good in the rest. £72 mill in cuts have been made and another £12mill will follow. Household burglary is down and at a 43-year low in the Thames Valley. Rural crime is down. Vulnerable people is not such a large issue in Hungerford. Cybercrime is not dealt with efficiently though and he is concerned about terrorism and serious organised crime of which a huge amount is coming across from Eastern Europe and this will be more of an issue in the future.

Inspector Warren McKeown- compared the figures from 2014-15 to 2015-16. There is a 6% reduction in West Berkshire overall in crime and a 4% reduction in Hungerford.

48% reduction in house break-ins in this area

39% increase in rural crime

25% and above, increase in assaults generally which is partly due to how crimes are recorded however

Hungerford has seen a reduction of 10%

11% reduction in domestic violence

53% reduction in drug crime

22% reduction in shoplifting

43% reduction in public order offences

6% reduction in theft from motor vehicles

Theft for cycles increased from 3 to 7

Qu: What are conviction rates like?

Ans: AS – In Berkshire convictions in Crown Court are good but not so good in the Magistrates Court. It is a great mistake to close Newbury Court causing a waste in time and expense.

Qu: What is happening to the Police Station?

Ans: AS – It won't be sold for another year and half. They are moving in with the fire station.

Qu: Left turns towards Portdown would be made easier using a slice of land from the police station – possible?

Ans: AS – How would we pay Police? He will look into it.

4. **The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 18th March 2015** were proposed by Cllr Benneyworth, seconded by Cllr Brookman, majority in favour.

5. Reports by Committee Chairmen.

i) **Finance & General Purposes (F&GP)** - Cllr Bumbieris – The price for a band D property is £109 which shows a 15% increase this coming year. HTC are subsidising the H! bus service which we took on a couple of years ago and are also still paying for the Public Toilets. CCTV is being paid for by HTC this year and number of office staff has increased to deal with extra workload. HTC pay £29K towards the Leisure Centre annually and £14K in grants to local groups. The Christmas lights cost 10% of the Precept. Under Recreation & Amenities we

fund St Saviours cemetery £10K, St Lawrence graveyard, Triangle Field and the newly acquired Croft Field Activity Centre. The £15k grant received from WBC is reducing to nil over 3 years. 13% of the precept is spent on Playgrounds. We also receive income for the Xmas lights and welcome ideas to increase this.

ii) Environment & Planning Cllr Farrell – Last year was very busy and it is good to see extensions to properties. Hope to see visible progress to the Gardens Art application soon which will be bringing Artisan business to the town. The Marina development should be underway in the near future. HTC are hoping for a cohesive design of the Station Area which needs development and improvement. The outcome of the appeal for Eddington will be heard in June

Qu: Why has the Primary school funding been withdrawn?

Ans: DC J Podger advised there has not been a bulge in the pupil numbers as anticipated so the buildings programme has been postponed. £2.25mill has been spent on schools in Hungerford in the last few years.

iii) Recreation, Amenities & War Memorials - Cllr Benneyworth – Noted a special thanks to Tony Lavers who worked at the Tragedy gardens but has now retired. HTC has recently purchased the Triangle Field and accommodated storage units for the Theatre Company. The Triangle Field is run by the Triangle Field Management Committee. The Triangle Field will be the venue for the Lighting of the Beacon at 7.30pm on 21st April in hour of the Queens 90th Birthday. THC are trying to secure a longer tenure for the Allotments at Marsh Lane. Croft Field Activity Centre is for hire along with the Triangle Field. Speak to the clerk for bookings. Sue Da Costa will be stepping down from the Youth Centre from the summer so if you know of any volunteers who would like to help please speak to the clerk.

iv) Highways & Transport – Cllr Brookman – Last year there was an incident where a cow was hit on the common. A speed limit survey was carried out but the majority of speeds recorded weren't excessive. WBC will be marking roundels on the road to emphasize the 40mph. WBC has agreed to put a speed counter in Eddington and HTC has asked for a camera on all approaches to Hungerford to survey the traffic. Some parking restrictions have been put in place at Priory Road near the church. Parked cars are obscuring the view from De Montfort Place. Work to create the new pedestrian crossing in Bridge St is due to start this April. The delay is due to the utility companies. Improvements will be made to the pedestrian route from the high St to the Station. The proposal includes a new pedestrian crossing by the level crossing and improvements to the lighting on the footpath by the Cuttings. HTC will take over the CCTV using a different contractor and it will be much more cost effective. A new footpath is going in outside the JOG school which will improve visibility when crossing to the school.

The net cost of the Xmas lights is £23K thanks to Rod for collecting donations of over £4k. We need to look at how we keep the effect of the lights but reduce the costs. One way is to take on volunteers or do the public have suggestions, perhaps sponsors or regular contributions. The weather was foul for the switch on but the crowds still came. The bus now stops outside JOG school which offers public transport for those at Lindley Lodge

Qu: Do you think 40mph is the right speed limit for the common?

Ans: RB – WBC feel it is the right speed limit for the road however personally RB thinks it should be 30mph.

v) Tourism & Economy - Cllr Crane – Wants to encourage tourism and for visitors to stay more than one day. Hungerford is being promoted as heart of the North Wessex Downs. A new map of NWD is to go on the library wall. HTC are contributing to the promoting of the A4 as a tourist route through from Hungerford to Bath. Chamber of Commerce deals with retail and hospitality but doesn't address main employers. There are several hi-tech software companies in Hungerford that employ over 400 people. The Mayor is visiting these companies and they are responding favourably to being part of a small exposition at JOG school. HTC are developing links with the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce. WE are not on their map at the moment but should be. The mayor stressed the need for inward investment.

vi) HTC's response to WBC Housing & Budget proposals – Cllr Hudson – HTC has been involved with considerations over the number of new houses and where they will go in Hungerford. A meeting in November identified HTC's response to the consultation which represented the view of the town. There will be an Examination in Public in June and the final decision is due to be made at the end of the year. (Cllr Hudson displayed maps of the preferred WBC development sites and the HTC preferred sites in his power point). HTC has identified a series of objectives. Development should have a minimum impact on the AONB and on the High St. The amount of housing should be proportionate to the town. Around 100 houses has been agreed. HTC is keen for development to be pepper-potted around the town rather than one large development. Cllr Crane – Hungerford has demonstrated its feelings on the budget cuts. (Power point displayed cuts to services affecting Hungerford)

Qu: Cllr Thompson – What level of support does WBC give to HTC's view on preferred development sites?

Ans: There is a difference in opinion.

Qu: When Oakes temporary car park goes what will happen with the parking?

Ans: it is an issue and we will have a parking problem. Cllr Hudson has suggested a lower ground area used a car park and building above but this is expensive.

6. District Councillor's Reports -

District Councillor James Podger: Initially WBC were faced with £10mill of cuts. They have had to find another £9 mill of cuts. WBC legally need to provide some services. The short consultation period was needed as WBC had to produce a balanced budget by 1/4/16. £5mill of cuts will be made to staff and a £5mill increase to income will be made through increase to Precept and parking. 46% of their budget is spent on care to the elderly. £8mill cut to services has been made. He has been asked why WBC didn't increase their council tax in previous years and he answers it is due to the effect it would have on the vulnerable. Transitional funding of £1.4mill per annum over the next 2 years will be given to soften cuts to government. £400k has been allocated to frontline services, £475K to libraries, £56K to theatre, £337K to Public Transport and £50K to Children's centres.

Nick Furr confirmed he met with the Director of Education at WBC, Ian Pearson, who advised him that Hungerford Children's Centre would continue in its present pattern and way of working. The budget would reduce from £107K to £97K.

District Councillor J Podger stressed that whilst the library has been given a reprieve, as the original proposal was for it to close, a different way of working will need to be found within the next 2 years. It will be 6 months to a year before anything happens at the Marina. Surprisingly there was not one single objection to the planning application this time. Redevelopment has improved Fairfields and Northview Heights is nearly done. There were no responses to the Chestnut Walk Closure consultation. District Councillor Paul Hewer advised they spent a long time getting a 40mph speed limit on the Common and Sovereign housing might install some parking. Regards the parking at the station, Oakes car park will be there for another 18 months. It is very attractive at £3 a day. DC P Hewer would like WBC to buy it and put a multi storey car park there.

7. Questions and suggestions from the floor

Qu: Janette Kersey – The loss to CHAIN of £3500 as they are not able to use bus passes has not been mentioned. It is mean to take money from a charity.

Ans: DC J Podger has lobbied hard and got 100 houses instead of 250.

Qu: Mayor – Can it not be put in the Adult Social Care Bracket where there is funding?

Ans: DC J Podger will look into. DC J Podger meets with Conservatives not in public so decisions are made beforehand.

Qu: Peter Harries (Friends of Hungerford Library) stated that WBC are required to make a Needs Assessment and Equality Assessment and Legal requirements are not being met.

Ans: DCC James Podger - We have funding for Hungerford Library for next 2 years.

Mayor – We must have a direct line with WBC to ensure we move forward correctly.

Qu: Didn't the Army do some labouring for the Xmas lights?

Ans: Yes but the majority is done by contractors

Qu: Do HTC have substantial reserves that can be used?

Ans: Mayor – Earmarked reserves are in place. We may need reserves for rural bus services, or to help the Children's centre.

Qu: Were WBC consulted about the closure of the Police station in 2013 because HTC weren't?

Ans: DC P Hewer - yes they were

Qu: What level of support are the District Councillors giving HTC in the DPD?

Ans: DC J Podger – His preferred option was to pepper-pot within the town boundary. The Traffic Assessment Wasn't mentioned. The Town planners WBC used are experts and not biased in any way. He now understands their view. A number of sites in Hungerford are employment protected sites.

Qu: Mayor – Why when these sites have been empty for 10 years are WBC not looking at this?

Ans: DC P Hewer – he said last year this will be looked at in 2 years, so this time next year WBC will know if they are ok with the current employment areas.

The Mayor expressed thanks to the Town Councillors for their work and also to the office staff.

8. Announcing of Freedom Award Nominations –

Freedom of the Town – The Mayor advised that all nominations including those from previous years are now considered. The 3 awards to be made in 2016 are:

Janette Kersey, Neale Marney and David Clayton.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm