

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting – 24th May 2017 (Meeting commenced at 7:00 pm)

Before the meeting commenced Mayor, Alec Crombie proposed a minutes silence following the terrorist attacks in Manchester. Following the minutes silence the Chair advised the meeting that it wouldn't be recorded.

039/17 **1 - Attendance Register:**

Present: Alec Crombie (Chair), David Casewell, Claire Crowley, David Ainslie, Christine Edwards, Sam Findlay, Miranda Jones, Stephen Rozak, Mark Shaw and Ian Salt.

040/17 **2 - Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies were received from Peter Rees, Lindsay Cooper, Richard Reeve and Ron Simpson. Cornelius Vincent-Enright had advised the Clerk by email he would be late arriving. These were noted.

041/17 **3 - Declaration of Members Interests:**

Members were reminded by the Chair that if any matters came up which they felt warranted a disclosure of interest, they should make it known.

042/17 **4 - To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20th April 2016.**

Proposed by David Casewell that these be received, seconded by Stephen Rozak and unanimously agreed.

Cornelius Vincent-Enright joined the meeting at 7:10pm.

043/17 **5 - The presentation of the Annual Report 2016/17 by Alec Crombie:**

This has truly been a year of evolution for Uppingham and its Town Council.

In making studied recommendations to our County Council for development sites, we have been looking at the period 2026-2036. With the constraints of the Town's topography this is challenging; yet we must continually have regard to the mix of homes, jobs, and educational facilities to avoid the label of "dormitory".

There is thus an imperative to maximise use of our space and the needs of all, young and old, able and less able.

Your Council is undertaking a review of all our open spaces to build on our work on Tods Piece and in harmony with the inspirational work of Uppingham in Bloom. Meanwhile the skate park, new toilet and new cross-park path are all giving value.

Ever since the relocation of our doctors' surgery the crossing of Ayston Road has been much on my mind as a hazard to the elderly and infirm. Rutland County Council has now determined an intelligent crossing will be installed opposite the Surgery at no cost to Uppingham. Hopefully this will happen this year.

Traffic of course equates to parking, something that is taking up more and more of our time on the Council. Spring Back Way is a particular hot-spot. Having profiled the views of residents we have submitted recommendations to Rutland Highways and will rely on that Department's expertise to realise our West-East prioritisation option. Attention will also be given to parking provision and traffic calming as part of the overall solution.

On a related theme I plan a Mayor's Walk, a modern version of Beating the Bounds, which will double as an audit of possible new parking areas as well as noting litter hot-spots and the state of our pavements. My fellow Councillors and I will set off from Uppingham Market Place at 10.30 am on Sunday 25th June, returning to our starting point in time for our annual Feast. A plan of the route will be published. Do please join us.

Summing up this part of my report and echoing my correspondence in the Rutland Times of last September, we as your Council maintain a keen interest in Cllr. Simpson's ideas for a Town

Centre and Business Zones plan.

An early draft of this Plan was published in the Autumn. That draft contained some far-reaching ideas of a "blue-sky" nature although certain operational proposals, especially related to our Market Place, proved something of a distraction.

Version Two of the plan should be made public by the time this Report hits the streets, and we are looking forward to debating it in the Town Council and in public session at the Town Hall.

Moving on, a further element of evolution has featured governance, the process of running your Council for the good of our Town. Uppingham's Neighbourhood Plan, one of the first in the country, has set us on a dynamic path and indeed work to refresh the Plan is already in the offing. To compliment this we are widening the franchise of townfolk to serve on our prestigious Neighbourhood Planning Committee and look forward to the benefits that should result from this reform.

Reform has also been the object of our efforts to rationalise partnerships with community organisations in Uppingham, hitherto the subject of much confusion. These efforts are going well.

Similarly we put a premium on being accessible to you all, and that includes plans to install disabled access to the front of the Town Hall.

During the year our Council has run surveys to gain your views, each of which elicited heavy responses:--

- * Continuity of the 747 bus service to and from Leicester;
- * Location of the Chartered Fair; and
- * Views on the nomination of an asset of community value.

Which prompts me to mention in passing that the number of hits on our website increased during the year from 45,000 to just under 100,000, surely a prompt for the new "Love Uppingham" site which I hope will come on stream in the next few months and features the very popular heritage trail.

Add to this our monthly Councillor Surgery, plus our Clerk's "open-door" approach to life, and we have I believe a recipe for vibrant communication.

And talking of our Clerk, I cannot overdo my appreciation for the skill and effort that Mr Neil Wedge has invested in his role. Now halfway through his third year in the job, Neil continues to engage with all sectors of the public as well as providing statutory guidance to me and my fellow Councillors. In particular Neil is now qualified with the Certificate in Local Council Administration, which means we have regained the General Power of Competence referred to in the last Annual Report, enabling your Council to undertake a broader range of activity.

In conclusion I have during the year represented our Council at something approaching 50 events and meetings apart from meetings of Uppingham Town Council and its committees. During the year I have been fortunate in coinciding with numerous people around the County, not least of these being our inspirational High Sheriff, Dr Sarah Furness.

I thank all of these folk for their help and good fellowship, not forgetting my fellow Councillors and especially my Deputy, Cllr. Stephen Rozak and of course my ever-supportive wife Caroline.

The Clerk then outlined his update on income and expenditure to 31st March 2017:

Income: 31/3/16 - £227,095 and to 31/3/17 - £151,796 (down 33.6%)

Most significant differences are;

1. Town Hall Lettings up year on year 28.6% - £17,165 to £22,074
2. Market Stall Rents up year on year 10.9% - £13,779 to £15,280
3. Allotment Rents down year on year 20.3% - £1,852 to £1,475
4. RCC Contribution to cemetery costs – no longer receive a contribution from 2016/17 and received £1,971 in 2015/16

5. Christmas lights income from sales of trees to businesses - £510 (no budget)
6. Received grant monies from;
 - a. RCC S106 towards Tod's Piece Toilets - £23,606 in 2015/16
 - b. RCC Hawksmead Agreement - £62,500 in 2015/16

Costs: 31/3/16 - £186,028 and to 31/3/17 - £173,316 (down 6.8%)

Most significant differences are;

1. Photocopier (£2,095 v budget of £1,100) as a result of the overlap of two leases at 2015/16 year end. Overall costs are cheaper as the total expenditure in 2015/16 was £2,997.
2. Subscriptions (£1,149 v budget of £900) should level off as we should have accrued for some in 2015/16 and have two lots of some subs in 2016/17.
3. Audit Fees (£1,990 v budget of £1,500) should level off this year as I accrued to get the audit costs in the correct years having been out of sync for some time.
4. Internet (£1,891 v budget of £1,600) maybe an element of overlap of billing from one year to the next.
5. Electricity (£4,256 v budget of £3,600) overlap of year end and increase usage.
6. Maintenance (£36,876 v budget of £20,200). Increased maintenance needs specifically in relation to the Town Hall (replace security lighting and internal lighting units, repairs of heating system, asbestos survey, drains unblocking, plus several issues relating to Tod's Piece toilets). This figure also includes £11,135 for grounds maintenance by BIFFA.
7. Christmas Lights (£7,154 v budget of £6,500) – purchase of trees due to issues illuminating High Street West. The overspend was recouped from businesses.
8. Electric car charging points (£846 v budget £550) Software upgrade costing £500 including in this figure. The first upgrade since installation.
9. Section 106 Grants (£25,410 v no budget) the spends on the path on Tod's Piece and UCC tennis project. These have been taken ultimately from earmarked reserves for the Uppingham Town centre Fund but need to be shown as expenditure.

Sam Findlay provided additional clarity that even taking into account the expenditure from S106 monies the Council had returned a small surplus during the course of the year.

6 - Opportunity for members of the public / electorate to speak and ask questions:

- Q1 From Marc Oxley:** Raised two points in relation to the allotment gates at Tod's Piece and asked for them to be looked at urgently. He then congratulated Uppingham Town Council on the progress being made and conveyed how highly council were thought of by members at Rutland County Council.

The Clerk confirmed that the gates would be looked at and re-instated and locked.

Q2 From Pam Dalby Chair of Uppingham in Bloom via email on 23rd May 2017 at 11:13am:

Neil,

We have been given our judging date of July 4th.

I am not available for tomorrow's town meeting, I would appreciate if you could pass on to the Mayor our sentiments.

Uppingham in Bloom provide a huge effort in Uppingham in keeping the weeds down and tidying many areas that are not addressed by RCC contractors. We are such a small group that we are unable to sustain the level of weeding that the town is left with.

The contractors have pushed the first of their two spraying sessions back until June this year, which means that the weeds have been allowed to grow to several feet in some areas before they are tackled.

This is unacceptable. The Town pays for a level of service that we are not getting. Many areas are not mowed.

Spraying is done from a quad bike and therefore areas not reached from the bike are left.

Clearing of car parks is only done if RCC get complaints!

We urge the Town Council to consider employing their own contractors and not paying for a substandard service, with no control over the quality of the contractors.

Please can you pass this on to Alec Crombie for discussion, as we are struggling to keep Uppingham looking great. The Town would soon look terrible if the efforts of the Bloom were not sustainable, which would have an effect on trade, tourism, and the draw of people wanting to live in our fabulous town.

We cannot stress enough how the level of service from the contractors affects the amount of work we have to do in the Town.

Regards

Pam Dalby

Uppingham in Bloom

Members discussed the above note and discussed various activities and ideas that may support Uppingham in Bloom. It was suggested that the maintenance of open spaces be looked at urgently and should be discussed at next full council and that a meeting be convened with Pam Dalby as soon as possible before judging to see what practical help can be provided..

Meeting closed at 08:04 pm.