

THESE MINUTES NOT YET APPROVED

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on Wednesday 19th March 2008 in the Murray Hall, 106 Borders Lane, Loughton.

Chairman: Councillor S M Harper, Town Mayor of Loughton Town Council

Also present: Town Councillors: R Barrett, J Benjamin, R E Brookes, M R M A Chalk, J Davis, R J Pennington, S Pewsey, C C Pond, C P Pond, D J Wixley, J L Woods

Approximately 27 members of the public.

Officers: L R Fuller (Town Clerk), E K Walsh (Deputy Town Clerk), T J Hudson (Senior Finance Officer), J Innis (Administrative Assistant), M Oliver (Assistant/Relief Caretaker)

1 Introduction of Councillors

The Councillors introduced themselves and the part they play in the Council.

2 Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 27th March 2007

These were approved as a correct copy.

3 Matters arising from the last meeting

There were no matters arising.

4 Reports on Council's Activities

The Town Mayor opened her report by saying the one thing that had given great joy to the whole council had been the signing of the lease with Epping Forest District Council for the Roding Valley Recreation Ground which had been an agenda item for most of the first 12 years of the council. She also reported she had had great pleasure in declaring open the refurbished playground on the recreation ground.

The council's quarterly "Think Loughton" newsletter, had been awarded first prize in the Local Council Review/Cooperative Bank Communications Award 2007 for Newsletter of the Year for which a trophy and a cash prize of £350 had been received.

She reported on a staffing review and that a number of recommendations had been suggested.

She reported that during the past year the council had continued to make representations to the appropriate organisations regarding the concerns of local people about the state of the roads, provision of youth facilities and policing matters. The police had been invited to the meeting to make a presentation and answer questions from the public.

She reported on a very enjoyable year and the many activities she had attended including the Stroke Club, opening a therapy room at Limber in Church Lane, attending a youth concert organised at the Methodist Church and Coram Boy at one of our secondary schools, judging the Christmas card and best dressed window

competitions and representing the town at district wide events. She wanted to encourage those in the adult category to enter the next Christmas card competition. Finally she thanked members and officers for their support over the past year.

Planning and Licensing Committee Report 2007-08

Councillor S M Harper, the Town Mayor, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year in the absence of Councillor P S Sheen, Chairman of Planning and Licensing Committee. The Committee had been consulted on many hundreds of local planning applications. The knowledge of the area they possessed as local residents assisted them in judging whether an application would be suitable for Loughton and their comments are passed on to Epping Forest District Council, before it made the final decision. Members of the public had always been welcome to attend the meetings, which were usually held every fortnight on a Monday night. Anyone wishing to endorse or object to a specific application could make their views known by either writing to the town council or by giving a verbal statement, in person, at the meeting. People were strongly encouraged to contact the town council as soon as possible if they wished to comment on applications, and many local people had exercised that right.

Apart from planning applications the Committee was also consulted about other issues that could affect the area, including District and County Council strategy documents, and licensing applications. The Committee tried to be diligent regarding all planning issues that might have affected the character of the area, without unduly hindering the progress and development of Loughton.

With elections in May 2008, a new Planning and Licensing Committee will be formed, and no doubt this will bring some new faces and perhaps a fresh outlook to the Committee. With many changes in planning laws likely to occur in the near future, and with the constant pressure of new building developments in the area, the new Committee will have to be ready to tackle new challenges.

He had enjoyed his term as chairman of the Committee and had been fortunate to have had such supportive colleagues. He thanked all members of the Committee and the staff of Loughton Town Council for their hard work and help over the past four years.

Recreation Committee Report 2007-08

Councillor D J Wixley, Chairman of the Recreation Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year. He started his report with a reference to the Murray Hall which was now eighteen months old. Further improvements had continued during the past twelve months which included a landscaped garden at a cost of £22,400 with a contribution of £2,000 from Essex County Council's Community Initiatives Fund, and security fencing. Bookings had increased mainly from community groups and Loughton residents (attracting a concessionary rate) but there had also been some commercial lettings. Favourable comments about the hall had been received from hirers and were quoted in the Spring edition of "Think Loughton". They were enthusiastic in their praise of the garden and facilities as well as value for money. The Council's other hall, Kingsley Hall, had benefited from renewed plumbing at a cost of £2,000.

He reported the Town Council had obtained a 125 year lease of the Roding Valley Recreation Ground from Epping Forest District Council after many years of negotiations. The Town Council had maintained the recreation ground since 1997 without the benefit of a formal legal agreement. Improvements to the recreation ground had continued, old benches replaced with new ones and new fencing near the

Roding Road car park. A grant of £2,425 from the Football Foundation towards the total cost of £4,850 enabled the goalposts on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground and Willingale Road Playing Field to be renewed.

The Council is responsible for eight playgrounds. Two of these playgrounds, at Colebrook Lane and on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground, had been refurbished in recent months and new and exciting equipment had been installed. Grants totalling £23,500 were received from the Community Initiatives Fund to help pay for these improvements. A special opening ceremony was held on 23rd February 2008 at the Roding Valley playground attended by councillors from Buckhurst Hill, Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council and that most important ingredient, namely “children”.

He reported on the council’s area of land adjacent to Willingale Road Allotment and plans to turn this into a nature reserve, a recent visit by pupils from Thomas Willingale Primary School to the site and the problems in finding a suitable location for a skateboard park, although using part of the Willingale Road nature reserve site could be a possibility. Other issues were cattle grazing in Epping Forest and the pollution last summer of the lake on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground.

Finally he thanked the Clerk and officers for their work over the past year.

Environment and Heritage Committee Report 2007-08

Cllr C C Pond, Chairman of Environment and Heritage Committee reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year. He reported on Loughton Cemetery and the amended regulations in the lawn section; the possibility of re-using long-disused graves would be explored as an alternative to the substantial commitment of a new cemetery in Debden Lane. He also reported on the delays in installing hanging baskets in the High Road, the disappointment due to lack of Christmas lights in the High Road, although there were small displays in The Broadway and Brooklyn Avenue, the high standard of Christmas window displays in local shops, the Street Museum in Staples Road, Heritage Open Days event in 2007, the state of the local roads and footpaths and the negotiations with Essex County Council regarding a dedicated “search and repair team”, salt/grit bins, the alleyway nameplates installed, heritage plaques to Ron Greenwood, Gladys Mills and Everard Calthrop, the enhancement works planned to the war memorial on Kings Green, the installation of a pedestrian crossing in Borders Lane, community W.C’s and bus passes for the elderly. He also thanked the Town Clerk and officers of the town council for their hard work over the past year.

Resources and General Services Committee

Cllr J L Woods, Chairman of the Resources and General Services Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year.

The precept for 2008/09 had increased to £613,000, which represented an actual annual increase of £1.77 for band D properties, i.e. just over 3p a week and a below inflation rise of 3.8%. The Council was able to offset any larger increase by using £89,960 from General Reserves.

In addition to regular commitments, the precept included an allowance for:

Increased funds for the development of our new cemetery in Debden Lane, provision of hanging baskets, refurbishment of the War Memorial, resurfacing of the tennis courts, improvements to our eight children’s playgrounds and provision of heritage plaques and alleyway names.

She reported on the high standard of entries in the Christmas card competition, financial assistance pledged to local organisations, and the Think Loughton newsletter winning first prize in the Local Council Review/Cooperative Bank

Communications Awards for 2007, with the prize money going to two community projects.

She reported on the grant from Essex County Council Community Initiatives Fund which will pay for playground equipment and more alleyway nameplate signs, adding the council logo on appropriate signage and the first increase in four years of the Members' Allowance to £104 p.a.

Terry Hudson had been appointed Senior Finance Officer and Michael Oliver, Relief Caretaker. Replacements are awaited for the Planning/Administrative Assistant and a caretaker for the Murray Hall.

Thanks were expressed to the Town Clerk and officers for all their hard work without whom the councillors would find it extremely difficult to fulfil their role.

5 Questions

Questions from the public were invited and discussion took place on the following issues:

Roding Valley Recreation Ground:

- Forming a Management Committee and a public consultation with the users;
- Encourage young people to be more active;
- Review bye-laws;
- Canada Geese causing pollution;
- Ownership of the lake and recent pollution.

Murray Hall:

- More use of the hall to be made by young people
- Encourage the Youth Service to make more use of the hall
- The hire costs were discussed.

Loughton Hall

6 Addresses by Chief Superintendent Tim Stokes, Western Divisional Commander, and Chief Inspector Ivor Harvey, Epping Forest District Commander, Essex Police on police matters in Loughton.

The Town Mayor welcomed the speakers. Acting Inspector Simon Werrett, Essex Police, was also present with a power point presentation.

Chief Superintendent Tim Stokes stated that there had been a 7½% reduction in crimes committed, young men were victims of crime and 1/3rd of young people commit crime. There were 900 people a month arrested.

Chief Inspector Ivor Harvey had served for 26 years reducing crime, the roads had been safer over the past 12 months and more arrests had been made. Anti-social behaviour had reduced by 11% in the same period. Independent observers had been taken out in patrol cars in the "ride along" scheme to witness for themselves how police tackle crimes. There were now more police on patrol on Friday and Saturday nights.

Discussions between the public and the police included the use of mobile phones by drivers, "dodgy" number plates, the treatment of prisoners, parking on grass verges, the use of Park Guards with dogs and more use of CCTV.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending and invited them to stay for refreshments.

Signed.....

Date: