

THESE MINUTES NOT YET CONFIRMED

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

**Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on
Wednesday 24th March 2010 in the Murray Hall, 106 Borders Lane, Loughton**

Chairman: Councillor D J Wixley, Deputy Town Mayor of Loughton Town Council

Also present: R Barrett, R E Brookes, M R M Chalk, A Copland, T Frankland,
B Glassman, S M Harper, L Howe, R Law, S W Murray, K Nicholson,
T G Owen, S Pewsey, C C Pond, C P Pond, P Richardson, R Thomson

Approximately 26 members of the public.

Officers: E K Walsh (Town Clerk), S Haynes (Deputy Town Clerk),
P J Hoy (Services Manager), J Innis (Administrative Assistant),
D Taylor (Assistant to Services Manager), S Wemyss (Caretaker)

1 Introduction of Councillors

The Councillors introduced themselves and the role they played in the Council.

2 Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 1st April 2009

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

On behalf of the Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor, Cllr Wixley welcomed everyone to the 15th annual meeting and introduced the speaker, Quentin Buller from Epping Forest College. Cllr Wixley presented the Town Mayor's report.

The Town Mayor had taken a keen interest in the fortunes of Loughton's two main shopping centres, the High Road and Debden Broadway. As a District Councillor, he had worked with others in persuading Epping Forest District Council to reduce rents for Broadway traders as compensation for loss of business resulting from the disruptive work on the Broadway enhancement scheme.

Both shopping centres benefited from having Town Centre Partnerships which exist to promote the interests of traders. The public face of these voluntary organisations is seen each year with the provision of Christmas lights and associated "switching on" ceremonies. In addition they play a big part in organising the Howzat Loughton Festival and Debden Day in the Broadway. As part of the Debden Day events, the Town Mayor had made a special presentation to local resident, Sapper Jake Luton in recognition of his bravery while engaged in mine clearance work in Afghanistan.

The Town Mayor thanked both Peter Sheen and Dave Stannard for all their hard work in chairing the Loughton and Broadway Town Centre Partnerships respectively. Also congratulations to Dave whose service to the community had been recognised by Epping Forest District Council with an award under its Citizen of the Year scheme. Mention of the Afghanistan conflict lead me to think of Royal Marine Georgie Sparks who was tragically killed in action in 2008. Although not resident in Loughton,

Georgie was a former pupil at Debden Park High School and the Town Council was pleased to contribute to the funding of a memorial bench which is now situated in the School's grounds.

November saw our 10th annual "Light up a Life" ceremony, which as usual took place on Kings Green following a torch light procession from the Methodist Church. Our continued collaboration with St Clare Hospice at this event enables them to raise valuable funding.

It is always nice to recognise voluntary community work and in December informal presentations were made to two residents who, independently of each other, have taken it upon themselves to clear litter on a regular basis and over a number of years from the Roding Valley Recreation Ground.

A more formal event was our second Annual Civic Service and Citizenship Awards presentation. Youth was very much a theme with awards going to Girl Guide Katy Short for bravery in coping with health problems and Keith Campen who had spent 45 years providing football for young people since he founded Loughton Football Club

Thanks must go to Staples Road School choir and Epping Forest Youth councillor, Duncan Haslam and Cllr Katie Nicholson for the parts they played in making the event a success, which also raised £485 for Haven House Children's Hospice. We are grateful to the Revd Tony Morling for his hospitality in providing the Methodist Church as a venue.

Meetings, led by the Town Mayor, had taken place between the Council and Epping Forest College. As our speaker tonight, Quentin Buller, is from the College and so I will just mention three points; we were

- (i) heartened by the encouraging OFSTED monitoring inspection in November.
- (ii) disappointed that any proceeds from the sale of the Sports Hall would not, because of the College's financial position, be channelled back to provide funding a new sports hall to be built at least not in the immediate future.
- (iii) grateful for the help the College is providing with the Town Mayor's charity Fun Run.

An innovation this year had been the formation of a Town Mayor's charity which will take the form of a Fun Run on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground on the 18th April. We are receiving support in organising this from a number of organisations including the Loughton Athletic Club. The chosen charity is the "Dream Factory" which offers valuable support to seriously ill children.

Looking ahead to 2012 will see the coming of the London Olympics and national celebrations to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. A small committee of councillors has been formed to explore ideas for how these events can be celebrated in Loughton.

Finally I would like to thank the Town Clerk and her staff for all their hard work during the last year and in particular for obtaining grant funding totalling £80,100.

Planning and Licensing Committee report 2009/10

Cllr C C Pond, Chairman of Planning and Licensing Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year. The Committee had met every fortnight to consider the planning applications and decisions relating to Loughton that were sent to the Town Council by the local planning authority. There have been 21

meetings and 302 applications so far in this municipal year and the Committee has endeavoured to conduct business briskly and efficiently.

Recognising that the Committee members had the greatest demands on their time of any Town Councillor, Cllr C C Pond thanked them, and their very diligent and able Planning Clerk, Vivienne Messenger, for the effort they put into the process. Each plan was produced and examined in detail, written submissions read, and persons interested (for or against) listened to if they wished to come to the meetings. This can be in marked contrast to what happens at District Council planning meetings, when written representations are summarised, and no paper plans examined, measured and calibrated by the members.

Town Council members are involved early on in the process, and do not have the benefit of a planning officer's report on the application. But in contrast, they brought local knowledge to the process, and were not affected by an officer recommendation to judge the application in a particular way. So this is really local. The Chairman welcomed the recent innovation to provide internet access to Google Street View at meetings of the Committee which had enabled members to consider the impact of an application on the street scene.

The Committee had pursued three initiatives outside the run of the application cycle this year. A slot has been introduced at meetings to allow members to report to and through the committee possible infractions of planning controls. With the Environment and Heritage Committee, new Conservation Areas had been proposed for Loughton, to afford protection to parts of the town the character of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance. The unenthusiastic response of the District Council had been very disappointing, especially given that the initiative is in direct response to a campaign headed by the Chief Executive of English Heritage, Simon Thurley.

The Committee had decided to institute a Loughton Design Award each year. There are many examples of unsympathetic new build and extension, and cases where the character of a building had been destroyed through unsympathetic adaptation. But there are also examples of good design in new buildings and alterations. The new awards would be in two categories, new build and refurbishment, and would reward the very able work of some architects, owners, and designers. It is hoped this will spur on our local architects to greater efforts.

An important task in 2010-11 may be the development of the EFDC Local Development Framework. The Committee hoped to be partners for good in this exercise, particularly in relation to sustainability, which is always a major concern of its members.

Recreation Committee report 2009/10

Cllr D J Wixley, Chairman of Recreation Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year and began by thanking his fellow members of the Committee for the commitment they had shown during the last Council year. In addition to the usual round of meetings, members had ventured out of Loughton on fact finding missions to look at skateboard parks and outdoor gyms. They had also attended a number of public consultation events. He commented that extra work for Councillors meant extra work for Council officers and was grateful to them for their efforts.

The main items of interest dealt with by the Committee were as follows:

Roding Valley Recreation Ground

Following a public consultation held in January it is intended to install an Outdoor Gym on the area known as "The Mound". A grant of £12,100 had already been obtained for this and further grant applications would be made.

In the next few months work should begin on the tennis courts to provide three refurbished courts and a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA). In 2004 the Council agreed that two courts could be set aside for the Loughton Athletic Club track to convert into an all-weather running track. This arrangement was subject to legal negotiations between the Club and Epping Forest District Council. Astonishingly legal negotiations were still ongoing six years later. However, it is not intended that this will deflect the Town Council from commencing work on the other facilities.

There were long term plans to improve the appearance of the football changing rooms and car park area at the end of Roding Road. A budget of £2,200 had been set for architectural plans to be drawn up.

Willingale Road Open Space (adjacent to the allotments)

Work continued on this site for its dual use as a nature reserve and possible skateboard park. Skateboard enthusiasts facilitated by the Loughton Youth Project had visited the site with a view to drawing up plans for use at a future public consultation event. Work on the nature reserve was undertaken by local residents and councillors under the auspices of Epping Forest Countrycare on two days during the Autumn and Winter.

Playgrounds

The Council has a rolling programme for the refurbishment of its eight playgrounds and this year saw the refurbishment of the Westall Road playground funded by a £50,000 government grant. However, the grant was conditional on the playground conforming to principles set out in Play England's publication "Design for Play". This meant that the old tarmac surface had to be removed and replaced with grass. Regrettably this appears to have led to drainage problems but plans are in hand to rectify this. Despite extensive public consultation on the choice of equipment for the new playground some complaints were aired after completion; more recently there had been some very positive comments. The official opening of the playground would take place on 14th April 2010.

A grant of £5,000 had been obtained to replace equipment at the Colebrook Lane playground.

Unfortunately some playgrounds had suffered from vandalism and theft and Cllr Wixley asked residents to be vigilant and report any incidents.

Murray Hall

Community use of the hall continued to expand with Tea Dances and Dance lessons added to the variety of activities. The latest venture is the formation of the Loughton Film Society with Cllr Pewsey and the Deputy Town Clerk playing a prominent role in this. The first film show is planned for 9th July 2010.

Tickets for the Claire Harper Jazz Trio event sold out six weeks in advance, an encouraging sign that the Council is in tune with the entertainment preferences of local people.

The Committee's remit also covers policing issues and youth services. Police Inspector Tom Simons had attended two of the Committee meetings to provide informative reports and answer questions. Cllr Wixley congratulated

Inspector Simons on his promotion from Acting Inspector and thanked him for obtaining funding in order to provide events for young people during half-term in October.

Cllr Wixley also reported on a recent visit, with Cllr Harper and the Town Clerk, to the Loughton Centre for Young People (adjacent to the Murray Hall), the Loughton Youth Project (at Loughton Library) and Ignite (the youth club attached to St Mary's Church). He commented that in combination these three centres offered much to cater for the varied needs and interests of Loughton's youngsters.

Environment and Heritage Committee report 2009/10

Cllr C P Pond, Chairman of the Environment and Heritage Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year and presented her second report for the Committee. She explained how it had carried out its usual work and responsibilities in encouraging the environmental well being and heritage of the town and provided more details on the following areas.

Green spaces – The process of collecting evidence to register six open spaces, as commons and village greens to protect them from development, was continuing. Local residents had been appointed in each of the areas to help in this process.

War memorial – We were very pleased with the renovations carried out to the war memorial during which the stone was carefully cleaned, and the paving reset. Graham Tite, the former Listed Buildings Officer at Essex County Council, gave us very helpful advice. New names of those who gave their lives would be added in due course.

Summer and winter flower baskets - These would be also be installed in the Broadway now that the enhancement had finished.

Salt and Grit Bins – The Town Council's rolling programme of installing salt and grit bins certainly came into its own this past winter. There is a long waiting list, and the Committee would consider new sites in the summer.

Heritage plaques – Two plaques to notable past residents were installed. Four more have been approved by the property owners.

Heritage Open Days – The Town Council opened the Cemetery Chapel to support this on 13 September and assisted the bus rally on the same day.

Allotments – A Best Kept Allotment competition was instituted. The winner was Rosie Partridge of The Potato Ground. We hope all three sites in the town will take part this summer when there will be a well-known local gardener as a judge.

Best dressed shop window competition – This Christmas competition was again well supported and winners were for the Independents – Ches Boutique, for the Multiples – MacKays and in the charity shop section – St Clare.

Walking and Cycling route – Discrete signage for a cycling route along existing quiet roads, and walking routes from the stations to the Roding Valley fields received funding from the County Council, and would be installed soon.

Litter Pick Day – Councillors and residents helped clear neglected areas in the town.

Conservation Areas – The Committee supported a review of the three existing areas – York Hill, Baldwin's Hill and Staples Road that the Hills Amenity Society and the

District Council were carrying out and, jointly with Planning and Licensing, asked the District Council to give consideration to having more Conservation Areas in Loughton. The Staples Road Conservation Area now had a small Interpretation Board, funded by the County, and installed by the Town Council in the school grounds.

The Chairman commented that much of the committee's work was concerned with keeping an eye on matters affecting Loughton, that others are responsible for, but which the Town Council can only try to influence. Councillors attend meetings of the Local Highways Panel, and with the waste and road cleaning team from EFDC.

The Chairman thanked her fellow councillors and the officers for their hard work and support during the year.

Resources and General Services Committee report 2009/10

Cllr S Pewsey, Chairman of Resources and General Services Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year. The main work of this Committee was to look after the Town Council's finances and take a strategic overview of the Council's goals. Every year the Committee reviews the spending plans of all the other Committees and draws up the final recommendations for expenditure, which translates into the precept or rate for the next financial year.

Since becoming Chairman in 2008, my priorities have been:

- value for money – ensuring that the Council was as efficient and effective as possible within its budget.
- making the best use of the Town Council's assets for the benefit of townspeople, ranging from our playing fields and playgrounds to our Christmas lights
- supporting our first-class team of staff, who were looking after the interests of Loughton day in day out
- promoting Loughton as a place to be proud of, a great place to live in, work in, and enjoy yourself in.

All Councillors had been very aware of the hardships facing many families in the town caused by the global financial crisis and I had been particularly keen not to add to the financial burdens of those families, which has meant being very careful about every pound we spend and keeping any increase in the annual precept to an absolute minimum. This is why the increase for 2010/11 is only 0.9% - well below inflation – for a Band D property this represents an increase of only 42p a year, or less than a penny a week.

With careful management of our resources and drawing on our "rainy day" reserves, we had been able to keep our town precept much lower than comparable towns and some of the towns around us, while still delivering a wide range of improvements around the town; better playgrounds, honouring the memory of our war heroes by refurbishing the war memorial, and giving grants to local groups who can deliver real change in people's lives, particularly young people who were the future of the town.

Cllr Pewsey thanked fellow committee members and, in particular, the Deputy Chairman Jill Angold-Stephens and the hard working staff.

5 Questions

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

- Parking in Oakwood Hill and damage to the verges near its junction with Rectory Lane.
- Parking in Traps Hill.
- Fencing at the Willingale Road allotments.

6 Address by Quentin Buller, Head of Partnership Services at Epping Forest College

The Deputy Town Mayor welcomed the speaker.

Quentin Buller thanked the Council for the invitation to address the meeting. He reported that the College had gone through some challenging times with the completion of the new building in 2008 and the receipt of an unsatisfactory Ofsted inspection at Grade 4 level. The College had worked hard to address the issues raised by Ofsted and he was pleased to report that there had been significant improvements particularly in the areas of student success, achievement and retention rates. This improvement was reflected in the number of applications received from 16 to 19 years olds, with 5,000 students applying for the college's 2,000 places. However, the challenges brought about by cuts in further education funding included the indefinite shelving of phase 2 of the development, the sports field.

A full re-inspection had just ended and, although the Ofsted report would not be published for a further six weeks, achievements were up and the inspectors' initial comments were more favourable. The College was aiming for Grade 1 status by 2015.

The College was committed to the local community and would like to encourage more local residents to take advantage of the facilities on offer. It had showed this commitment by working with the local councils and police and by supporting local events such as Debden Day and the Town Mayor's Fun Run.

Mr Buller concluded his report by inviting everyone to the college open evening on 29th March 2010 between 6pm and 8pm.

Mr Buller responded to issues raised by the public that included:

- An increase in the number of local students attending the college
- Closer relationships with local secondary schools
- Direct access for members of the public to the Debden library
- Loughton Hall and the closure of the sports hall used by the Debden Community Association
- Special Needs courses
- Use of the college's gymnasium facilities

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

Signed.....

Date: 23rd March 2011