

THESE MINUTES NOT YET CONFIRMED

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

**Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on
Wednesday 23rd March 2011 in the Murray Hall, 106 Borders Lane, Loughton**

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

Also present: Town Councillors: J W Angold-Stephens, K E Angold-Stephens, R E Brookes, M R M Chalk, T Frankland, B Glassman, S M Harper, P House, L Howe, R Law, K Nicholson, T G Owen, S Pewsey, C C Pond, C P Pond, P Richardson, T Thomas

Approximately 48 members of the public

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

Organisations: Alzheimer's Society, Citizens Advice Bureau Epping Forest Branch, Essex Savers Credit Union, Emergency Planning Epping Forest District Council, Loughton Festival, Loughton Film Society, Loughton Folk Club, Loughton Radio Club, Loughton Stroke Club, Loughton Tree Strategy, New Vistas, Redbridge Samaritans, Royal British Legion Loughton Branch, West Essex Ramblers.

The Town Mayor, Cllr Wixley welcomed everyone to the 17th annual meeting and introduced the guest speaker, Max Houseago, Olympic Regeneration Officer.

1 Introduction of Councillors

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

2 Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 24th March 2010

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

Cllr Wixley presented the Town Mayor's report and began on a personal basis by saying how much he had enjoyed his term of office. He had performed many duties and attended events which to date numbered 57 with still a few weeks left before his year as Mayor concluded in May.



What struck him most was meeting so many people who gave up their time to do voluntary work, often to help run local clubs and societies or to raise funds for charities. These people's efforts were rarely widely recognised but at the annual Civic Service and Citizenship Awards presentation the Town Council was able to honour two such people - Joyce Barclay who had spent many years working for the Brownies and Girl Guides and, in the under-25 age category, Taylor Baldwin for his work at the Loughton Youth Project.

The Town Mayor once again thanked Revd Tony Morling for allowing the Town Council to use the Methodist Church for the service and all those who helped to make the event a success - a good example of teamwork.

Another example of teamwork was the Debt of Honour exhibition on display in the hall foyer. This resulted from ideas and research by several of the Town Councillors and was formally opened in November to coincide with Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday. The exhibition will continue but the exhibits will change in June when other servicemen will be honoured.

Although it would be difficult to select a single highlight from all the events that he had attended Cllr Wixley considered it was worth mentioning just two, both were 100th birthdays, although they were quite different in nature. On 3rd July last year he had attended the 100th birthday of the Loughton Club in Station Road and on 29th December was honoured to be invited to the 100th birthday party of Mrs Edith Shellibeer at The Mellows, also in Station Road. Well done to both!

One of his duties had been to compile a monthly report for the Town Council's website. The Town Mayor's "blog" provides detailed reports of all the events he had attended, but Cllr Wixley had also used it for another purpose, namely to give publicity to some of the many organisations and societies that help enrich the social and cultural life of Loughton. His visits to these organisations had been done entirely on an unofficial basis and to date he had submitted eleven such reports.

The Town Mayor commented that there was plenty to do in Loughton with many events listed in the Town Council's quarterly magazine "Think Loughton", the 50th edition of which was published last autumn.

In these difficult economic times there were many reports of council cut-backs and job losses from various parts of the country. However, the Town Mayor was very pleased to say that good financial management for many years meant that this Council's finances were in good order and that the precept would not be increased for the year 2011-12 while at the same time there would not be any dramatic reduction in Council services or projects. This situation was very much to the credit of present and past management.

The Town Mayor thanked all councillors and officers for their efforts during the last year and in particular Joan Innis who had acted as his secretary and had assisted him in his duties as Mayor.

The Town Mayor concluded by paying a tribute to Cllr Roy Thomson who died on 25th November 2010. Roy served on the Recreation and the Planning and Licensing Committees. We will all miss Roy who particularly enjoyed working on Planning and Licensing Committee where knowledge gained during his working life was of great value.

As there was no request from residents under statutory regulations for a by-election to replace Cllr Thomson, co-option procedures were now in place. Anyone wishing to be considered for co-option had until 31st March 2011 to apply and applications would be considered at the next Council meeting on the 27th April 2011.

Planning and Licensing Committee report 2010/11

Cllr C C Pond, Chairman of Planning and Licensing Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year. This had been another busy year, with 361 planning applications, up from 320, and 10 licensing issues dealt with so far, with 3 meetings to go, a total of 24 in the year.



In one week in early November, 36 applications were to be dealt with, so the Committee negotiated a derogation from the usual time limit, and reconvened the following Monday to deal with the 12 for which they had no time. If anyone wished to comment on a planning application to the Committee they were advised to do so quickly as the deadlines were very short and so time was of the essence.

There had been several contentious planning applications, including those for a care home near Loughton Hall on the site of the Debden Sports Hall, a retail park at Langston Rd, the demolition of a locally listed building in the High Road, all of which the Committee opposed, and three contentious licensing issues, a burger van near the college, a sex shop in Borders Lane, and the night club in the former Royal Standard public house. All these the Committee opposed with appropriate reasons, and for the last, the Chairman was deputed to make oral representations to the District Licensing Committee.

This year, the Committee had many more instances of residents for or against an application attending a committee meeting in exercise of their right to speak for three minutes. This was welcomed, though of course it does mean meetings can get rather long. The Committee does not very often exceed the 105-minute standing order relating to duration of meetings, and Cllr Pond was glad to report member contributions were mostly short and to the point. There had been no further action on conservation area appraisals following the public meeting in September last year.

An innovation first reported last year had been the use of Google Street View in the Committee meetings when considering applications that affect the frontage of any property. The Committee adopted this the week after the mapping service became available for Loughton. It is much clearer than any plans for giving context and streetscene information. Over this year it has become more comprehensive and the Committee more familiar with its facilities.

The Committee greatly missed the late Roy Thomson, whose knowledge of building work and plans was invaluable but welcomed his successor on the Committee, Cllr Tracy Thomas.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked the Committee's indefatigable Planning Clerk, Vivienne Messenger, the other officers, and of course, councillor colleagues who were so assiduous in their attention to detail in this hard working Committee.

Recreation Committee report 2010/11

Cllr S M Harper, Chairman of Recreation Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year. There had been 5 meetings of the Committee this year, 19 May, 14 July, 29 September, 19 January & 16 March. The attendance sheets on the back of the agenda did not cover the latest meeting on 16th March at which all Committee members were present. During the year the Committee lost Roy Thompson, a stalwart



member for 2½ years and gained Tracey Thomas, the co-opted member for St Mary's Ward. At their meetings the Committee had been ably supported by the Town Clerk, Enid Walsh and the Services Manager Paul Hoy.

Roding Valley Recreation Ground

Outdoor Gym – this was being installed in an area near the changing rooms at the bottom of Roding Road in the week beginning 3rd May 2011 and work should take less than a week. There would be about six items of equipment which would be suitable for everyone apart from the very young. There will be no charge, residents can just go and use any item for as long or short a period as they wished.

Improvements to the Changing Rooms and surrounding area – the Chairman hoped all had taken the opportunity to look at the display with the outline plans. A consultation had recently been held at St Michael's Church hall and the views of young people would also be sought. Plans included a café between the two changing room blocks with planting to discourage vandalism, and alterations to the car parking area.

Park Warden – an assistant park warden had been in post during the past year and the Chairman was pleased to report that this post was to be made permanent giving a greater visual presence on the recreation ground and helping to keep the area in tip top shape.

Events by other bodies were to be held on the fields and included Park Ranger events, a family fun day, fitness classes and a ladies running group.

Tennis Courts & Multi Sports Court – the tender process was in hand and hopefully there might be progress on the ground in the not too distant future.

Murray Hall

Entrance Foyer Display – there was a photographic display in the foyer, opened by Lord Petre in November 2010 with members of the Royal British Legion present and a relative of one of the people featured. The display was to commemorate local war heroes and would be changed every six months.

CIF projector screen – the Council had been successful in its bid for £1,200 towards the cost of a projector screen for this hall, so watch this space.

Playgrounds

The refurbishment of the playgrounds was continuing. The works at Hillyfields were due for completion shortly and changes to the Westall Road area with the removal of the tunnel and mound and the installation of a one-bay swing with 2 bucket seats were scheduled to take place during the week of 9th May 2011. The Committee was in the initial stages of looking at the small playground at Monksgrove to ascertain what improvements could be made.

At the first of the twice yearly RoSPA inspections of our playgrounds, the Council had been praised for its high standards of maintenance of all our play areas.

Skateboard Park

The Council had hoped that an old allotment site would be ideal for a skateboard area, but it seems we were to be defeated yet again, this time by slow-worms. The Committee is to look at two alternative areas in Roding Ward, which will be brought to our next meeting. A young people's group had drawn up plans which the Committee will be viewing shortly and would be suitable for any area.

Millennium Remembrance Grove

Trees were still being replanted in this area in line with the original design, but the trees would be larger specimens and at the moment the Committee was waiting for the district tree officer to prepare his recommendations as to future species.

Queens Elizabeth II Fields Challenge

The Committee had agreed to put forward areas;- Hillyfields Open Space, Roding Valley Recreation Ground and Willingale Road Playing Fields. This would give the areas greater protection from development in future years.

Loughton Film Society

The Committee had been instrumental in setting up this society which appears to be flourishing.

Essex on Tour

Funding would continue for another series and plans are in place to hold an event in 2012, so watch the notice boards for details nearer the time.

Youth Forum

The initial decision to set up a youth forum had been made and discussions were ongoing.

In conclusion, Cllr Harper thanked the members of the Committee and the supportive staff for all their hard work in the past year.

Environment and Heritage Committee report 2010/11

Cllr C P Pond, Chairman of the Environment and Heritage Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year. She was pleased to present her third report for this Committee. The Committee had carried out its usual work and responsibilities, to encourage the environmental well being of the town, and interest in its heritage.

**Salt & Grit Bins**

Essex County Council changed their policy this year, and only guaranteed to fill the bins once a season. Instead they supplied a ton of grit to the Town Council, and council staff had to go round putting some in each. Following the bad weather in the 09/10 winter the Committee had decided to install six instead of its usual three new bins, but these were also cancelled by the County. The Committee has written to the county with their grave concerns about the new policy, in which they had been supported by our County and District Councillors. It is understood that the policy will be looked at again next winter. The Chairman thanked the staff for their extra work, and also a volunteer.

Green spaces

The process of collecting evidence to register six open spaces, as commons and village greens to protect them from development, was still continuing.

Summer and Winter Flower baskets

These were installed in the Broadway when the enhancement was completed and more added on lamp posts in the High Road. The summer replanting would be carried out soon.

Heritage plaques

Three plaques to notable past residents were installed – D W Gillingham, author, Ethel Haslam, Suffragette, Rupert Brabner MP who died serving in the Second World War, and his sister Dr Jean Brabner who died in an air raid while working as a doctor, and Rowland Hill and Francis Stevens who were thought to have invented the postage stamp. One more has been approved by the property owners for Sir Frank Baines, a Government architect. Thank you to property owners for letting the Council install these - thirty odd now, for which the Council had been commended by English Heritage.

Allotments

The second Best Allotment competition was instituted. The winner was Neil Jackson, of the Debden Horticultural and Allotment Society, which manages the Willingale Road allotments. There were two Highly Commended gardeners, Lesley Church from the Roding Road site, and Rosie Partridge from the Loughton Potato Ground. The Willingale Rd and Roding Rd sites were owned by the Town Council, but managed by the allotment associations.

Best dressed window competition

This Christmas competition was again well supported, and winners were for the Independents – Geraldine's Hair Fashions, Zee and Co for the Multiples/Chain stores, and in the charity shop section St Clare Hospice. This year the procedure was changed so that traders did not have to actually enter, and the judges looked at all the shops in the town.

Town signs

We have received some funding from the County Council Community Initiatives Fund for town signs - one to be installed near the High Road, and one near the Broadway.

Bus shelters

Funding had also been received for two extra bus shelters- Jessel Drive/Colebrook Lane and outside the Spinney in Borders Lane.

Alleyway name plates

Six alleyways received new name plates this year – four sites were to replace vandalised signs and two new ones have been installed, Wauchope Path, which commemorated the family who lived nearby in Goldings House, and Jackson Alley, named after Edward Jackson, a well known local character.

Cemetery

Forty four new plots have been made available for ashes interments. A rolling programme of works to repair paths had started.

Much of our work is concerned with keeping an eye on matters which affect Loughton, which others are responsible for. This year we have often commented on changes to bus services, in particular the direct service to Epping. Although ECC have ended Route H1 (Saturdays only) there is now a new commercial route (X5) six days a week.

The Chairman thanked the Councillors who attend meetings of the Local Highways Panel, the Town Centre Partnerships, and with the Waste and Road Cleaning team from Epping Forest District Council.

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

Resources and General Services Committee report 2010/11

Cllr S Pewsey, Chairman of the Resources and General Services Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year.



The Resources Committee has three main roles. It looks after the Town Council's finances and statutory obligations, it works with local organisations which support and build the community, and it takes a strategic overview of the Council's staffing, policies and goals.

The Resources Committee co-ordinates the financial plans of the other committees and sets the precept, that is, that part of the council tax which is raised in Loughton specifically for Loughton.

The good news headline is that in 2011-12 there will be no increase in the precept. The District Council, Epping Forest, will be rewarded by government with an extra grant for keeping its council tax rise down this year – the Town Council gets no reward, so it has kept the precept down by running an efficient and cost-effective operation offering residents really good value for money. The Town Council will still provide the same level of service, but Loughton is now a low-tax town – with a precept lower than Buckhurst Hill, Epping, North Weald, Ongar, Theydon Bois and Waltham Abbey.

Working with community groups is an important part of the Committee's work. Every year it made grants available to organisations ranging from the Citizens Advice Bureau to Loughton Festival, and these grants directly benefit Loughton residents. These grants support projects working with children, young people, older residents, sports teams and arts groups, people with mental and physical health issues, and allotment associations.

Our aim is to make our community stronger, and every year it is a pleasure to see new groups springing up and new initiatives to make our town a better place. This year it has been great to work with the new Loughton Film Society, which aims to bring the magic of the movies back to the town and also with the Royal British Legion, to create the *Debt of Honour* display in Murray Hall that honours our war heroes, those who did not return from the battlefields.

As elected councillors, members are lucky to work with a first-class staff team, all working hard on residents' behalf around the town, keeping playgrounds safe, litter picking, preparing the town magazine *Think Loughton*, looking after Murray Hall, and all the many other things the Town Council staff are asked to do.

The Chairman thanked the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk, his Deputy Chair, Jill Angold-Stephens, and all his fellow Councillors who sit on the Resources Committee, for the non-partisan way in which they all have worked over the past year to make Loughton a better place to live for the residents.

4 Questions

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

- Planning matters in the town including the future of Loughton Sports Hall.
- Parking in Oakwood Hill near the junction with Chigwell Lane and damage to the verges.

5 Address by Max Houseago, Olympic Regeneration Officer

The Town Mayor welcomed the speaker.

Max Houseago thanked the Council for the invitation to address the meeting. As Olympic Regeneration Officer, he explained that he was employed by Epping Forest District Council, Borough of Broxbourne and Hertfordshire Councils. He reminded everyone that the 2012 Olympics would be underway in just under one year and four months and they were billed as the greenest games ever. He reported on the pre-games opening of the White Water Centre at Waltham Abbey in April 2011. This centre is located within the Lea Valley Regional Park and will provide a world class facility, which after the games will continue to attract both local visitors and tourists, so raising the profile of the area.

LOCOG (The London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games) is keen to discourage spectators from driving to the Olympic venues in order to protect local residents and businesses from nuisance. Visitors to the games would be encouraged to use public transport and arrive by train or coach, or take advantage of the Park and Ride to be located at North Weald airfield. The Transport Plan for the games will be available for public consultation in May 2011.

Mr Houseago also outlined some of the key opportunities for Loughton, i.e. tourism, accommodation, etc. An economic development study is being carried out to maximise the benefits to the wider tourism destination including Loughton.

To end his presentation, Mr Houseago reminded the audience of the list of values associated with the Olympics and Paralympics – respect, excellence, friendship, courage, determination, inspiration and equality.

Members of the public raised their concerns on the need to encourage young people to participate in sport, the availability of free tickets for local school children and transport and parking issues.

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

Signed.....

Date: 2012