

THESE MINUTES ARE NOT YET CONFIRMED

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

**Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held at
The Murray Hall, Borders Lane, Loughton IG10 3SB
on Wednesday 15 March 2023**

Chairman: Councillor Barbara Cohen, Town Mayor of Loughton Town Council

Also present:

Town Councillors P Abraham, R Brookes, C Davies, T Downing, S Fontenelle, L House, N MacKinnon, S Murray, M Owen, C C Pond, C P Pond, K Rainbow, J Riley, M Stubbings, K Valentine, G Wiskin and D Wixley

Approximately 60 members of the public.

Officers: M Squire (Town Clerk)
K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer)
P Bryce (Community Manager)
D Taylor (Community & Services Officer)
J Glynn (Administrative & Finance Assistant)
S Wemyss (Caretaker)
J Bailey (Assistant Caretaker)
T Horton (Cemetery Attendant)

The Town Mayor, Cllr Barbara Cohen welcomed everyone to the 29th annual meeting.

1 Introduction of Councillors

The Councillors introduced themselves, the wards they represented and their respective roles within the Town Council.

2 Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 16 March 2022

These were approved as a correct copy and signed by the Town Mayor.

3 Matters arising from the last meeting

No questions arose.

4 Reports on Council's Activities

Cllr Barbara Cohen presented the Town Mayor's report.

"Good evening, everyone, welcome to Loughton Town Council's Annual Town Meeting.

The purpose of this meeting is to update you on what we, as your Town Council have been up to in the last twelve months. We also make the presentation of awards to our Citizen of the Year and our Loughton Building Design winners and finally we present the recipients of the Financial Assistance Award Scheme with their certificates.

As Mayor I chair the full Council Meetings, involving all 22 Town Councillors, where all communication comes through the Chair. Over the year, some important strategic matters have been reviewed, including the Local Plan modifications, and ward boundary proposals.

Deputy Town Mayor, Mick Stubbings has been a constant support throughout my term as Mayor. We listen to local people with their complaints and try to put them right. To all the town councillors and district councillors here, thank you for your continual support and for coming here today.

To the officers at Loughton Town Council, who work tirelessly to action our decisions, thank you all for their support during my year as mayor and all the hundreds of hours that are spent assisting us as elected Councillors. A special thank you to Pippa Bryce, who must be the most organised efficient person ever and to our Town Clerk, Mark Squire for being solid, safe and dependable.

So how on earth did I get here? Firstly, by joining the right party! The Loughton Residents Association LRA is an independent local party run by local residents who enjoy contributing to the quality of life in Loughton. Trying to stop building on green spaces, trying to stop high rise blocks being built but also understanding the need for more housing that young people can afford to buy. Opposing payment of road use and to get yellow lines located where local people want them. Trying to retain diverse shops in the high street and Debden Broadway. We maintain our precious green spaces. We pass on requests for repairing potholes, replacing street lighting, providing salt bins and keeping rubbish bags collected regularly. The LRA hold 21 seats of the 22 seats available at the Loughton Town Council, and the other seat is held by Cllr Stephen Murray supporting a total independent party with many of the same ideals as the LRA.

What a year it has been. It started with our Queens Platinum Jubilee, celebrating 70 years of service, where the Lord Deputy Lieutenant lit the beacon on Hillyfields, one of our green spaces in Loughton. Tea parties and cutting cakes were many! Then the death of our dear Queen Elizabeth II where during the period of mourning, I was to wear black clothing for a week together with a black ribbon. I read the proclamation at the library to local Loughtonians proclaiming the new King and shouted 3 cheers for his majesty.

Altogether I of have attended about 40 events so far and photographed by David Jackman for Everything Epping Forest at most! Of course, I only wear my chain when on official visits, but I welcome the friendly recognition smile that I receive when walking around town.

The staff at Loughton Town Council organise major events in which I am guest of honour. Jessel Green Fun Day, for families, with Punch and Judy, deck chairs, inflatables, and charity stalls is an extremely popular fixture which attracted a staggering 3000 people last year.

We are looking forward to, Loughton Day this September this year, an event that is taking place at Loughton Cricket Ground where local charities and business can showcase what they do.

We give a Building Design Award and Citizenship Award to a worthy person and decide amounts of financial assistance to local charities. We have an allotment competition with a quite magnificent cup being awarded to the winner. Prizes for the best Christmas Window Competition which the shop keepers are competitive with each other and me being one of the three judges. Christmas cards where children produced by local children with the winning card being the one submitted to print for distribution. We maintain the safety of our playgrounds and outdoor gyms, playing fields, tennis courts at Roding Valley Recreation Ground and hire out our two function rooms, the Murray Hall and Kingsley Hall. We order street furniture, produce heritage plaques, organise flower baskets, maintain the War Memorial and maintain the drinking fountain.

At the war Memorial there were floral tributes laid following the death of the late majesty Queen Elizabeth II; wreaths on November 11th at the 11 hour for annual remembrance day. However, the most memorable one for me was when I lead the procession from The British Legion to the War Memorial being followed by a marching band and laying the Loughton Wreath in memory of those that gave their lives in both world wars. And then stood on a podium where uniformed personnel marched past us and saluted me

along with Dame Eleanor Laing and Mrs Caroline Pond, as past chairman of Epping Forest District Council (EFDC). It was one of those moments where I had to pinch myself to know it was real.

Of the Jewish events in Loughton, of which I was very at home, the menorah lighting on Standard Green and the Holocaust Memorial Day where my heartfelt thoughts were expressed.

As mayor I can choose a charity that benefits local residents. A walking treasure hunt is to be held on Sunday Morning 23 April in Loughton High Road to raise monies for Lopping Hall, our multi-purpose community venue.

My term as Mayor ends in May, which will incorporate the coronation of King Charles III with all the invitations this will bring. Street parties on Sunday 7th May are planned for this weekend and hopefully Church Lane, the street I live at, will be hosting one. We encourage Loughton residents to join in the celebrations and more information on street parties, and the application form to hold one, can be found on the Epping Forest District council website”.

Planning and Licensing Committee 2022/23

Cllr Carol Davies, Chairman of the Planning and Licensing Committee, reported on the activities of her Committee over the past year.

“In the last year Loughton Town Council’s Planning and Licensing Committee has held 21 meetings.

Chaired by myself and with the support of my deputy Cllr Will Kaufman and experienced Planning Committee members, (Cllr Stella Murphy, Cllr Phillip Abrahams, Cllr Kevin Rainbow, Cllr John Riley and Cllr Graham Wiskin and our very capable Town Council Planning Clerk Debra Paris and Jonathon Glynn, we have considered 268 planning applications, of those we objected to 158 and had no objection to 108.

There were just two applications that the committee made no comment on - one application being duplicated and entered in error by EFDC. The other being an application by the Town Mayor Cllr Cohen.

There were 22 appeals - of which 6 were for information only. The 16 others the committee objected to and our appeal comments were lodged with the Inspector. As well, we considered 5 licensing applications. The committee objected to 3 applications. And submitted no objection to one application. One further application was a variation, which the committee did not comment on as it had previously objected to the original application.

The Committee has also had to deal with 16 amended applications or re-consultations - Of these the committee objected to 12 - the remaining 4 we commented on but had no objection.

Owing to the sad death of HM Queen Elizabeth II, the Planning & Licensing Committee meeting for the 12th September 2022 was cancelled and the applications on that agenda were therefore dealt with under delegated powers. This was so that those applications could be submitted to the Local Planning Authority in time.

With regard to the new local plan, it has now been accepted by the Inspector. We are pleased that Jessel Green and the two London Underground sites, at Loughton and Debden Tube stations have been successfully removed from the local plan.

Also, with regard to the recent proposal for 38 flats at Loughton Library - I can confirm that the District Council objected to the application, with the key issue that the 38 flats exceeds the 20 flats allowed for in the draft Local Plan, and that there would

be an adverse effect from pollution on the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation as well as on the York Hill Conservation Area as well.

With regards to the SAC Epping Forest, EFDC have devised a so called pollution mitigation strategy. This consists of charging developers of new houses to make an unspecified financial contribution. They are also likely to institute a clean air zone (CAZ) to charge motorists for driving through the forest. However, as the effectiveness of both the mitigation strategy and CAZ are completely unproven, we will continue to object to planning applications that create pollution, impact the forest and negatively affect the health and wellbeing of residents.

The Committee was consulted by EFDC on the Statement of Principals under The Gambling Act 2005 and EFDC made two new TPO's or Tree Preservation Orders in Loughton this year.

Currently there is unfortunately a large development of 48 properties proposed for the EFDC ex nursery site. Situated next to Hillyfields Open Space and bordering the Grow Community Garden, the plans include a 4 storey block of flats, large car park and the removal of most of the plots mature trees. As this site is elevated this will increase the negative impact and overbearing effect on the amenity of the surrounding neighbouring properties and street scene. This committee objected most strongly to this application. However, it will ultimately be decided by EFDC's Development Committee rather than going to be voted on by the EFDC Plans South Committee.

For the 2023 Loughton Town Council Building Design Award, Cllr Barbara Cohen the Town Mayor, Cllr Chris Pond the Chairman of The Environment & Heritage Committee and myself have considered 2 applications.

The first is in an ex local authority house, part of the original Debden Estate situated at the bottom of Newmans Lane. This property is one of the post war permanent prefabricated British Iron and Steel Federation Houses. Since it had become quite dilapidated over time, it has been given a complete yet sensitive makeover,

The second is a new development adjoining a 1920's Renaissance house in Church Lane by renowned firm of Wallis Gilbert and Partners. This development has paid such attention to the detail and styling of Limber, situated next door, that it blends in perfectly.

Although both quite different, importantly each properties refurbishment adds considerably to the street scene in their respective settings. And it's for this reason my fellow judges and I decided that both are worthy of note, with the award going to 49 Church Lane and the runner up being Newmans Lane.

I am delighted to be able to congratulate both architects * and developers who I am very glad are able to join us this evening."

Cllr Carol Davies

* Unfortunately the architect was unable to attend

Recreation Committee 2022/23

Cllr David Wixley, Chairman of Recreation Committee, reported on the activities of his Committee over the past year.

"I start by saying that I'm pleased to announce that work on building a new playground on the Roding Valley Recreation is due to start in early April and expected to be completed by the Summer.

On the subject of playgrounds, the Council was approached by a mother whose young son suffers from food allergies. We were made aware that someone touching food and then playground equipment can result in a child suffering an allergic reaction as allergens can remain on surfaces. We have responded to the mother's request and put-up warning notices.

The basic message is:

1. Not to eat near play equipment.
2. Dispose of litter responsibly.
3. Wash/clean hands after eating.

As in previous years we received awards from the Essex Playing Fields Association with the Roding Valley Recreation Ground (RVRG) and Willingale Road Playing Field both receiving Certificates of Merit as well as the playgrounds at Traps Hill, Newmans Lane and Westall Road receiving runner-up and silver awards respectively. In achieving these awards, we recognize the efforts of our staff and the District Council's Ground Maintenance team in making this success possible.

In August the Town Mayor, Cllr Barbara Cohen, and myself took part in a hedgerow survey on the RV Rec. This was organized by the District Council's Countrycare team and stemmed from an initiative by "The People's Trust for Endangered Species". The scheme is probably aimed at the farming community with the objective of demonstrating the benefits of healthy hedgerows to farmers. A short report on the survey can be found in the agenda for the Recreation Committee meeting of 7.9.22. via the LTC website.

For reasons of tree safety and management, the Council commissioned a tree survey in 2021. The survey recommended work to be carried out which included the removal of dead Cherry trees on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground. It is proposed to plant replacement Cherry trees over a period of time as funds permit.

At our November meeting the Committee received a presentation from Mr Fabrizio Luca Ferrari who is the Epping Forest District Council's Public Health Improvement Officer. His presentation outlined EFDC's Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26 which was well received with members' questions being answered.

The Willingale Road Nature Reserve continues to benefit from volunteer workdays held on 6.10.22. and 5.1.23. and organized by EFDC's Countrycare team. There are plans for a moth survey in April or May.

The Committee is responsible two community halls. The Murray Hall where the Council is looking into whether or not it is viable and cost effective to install solar panels and the Kingsley Hall where essential repairs and improvement have been made to the rear garden area.

It was good to see the return of the Jessel Green Family Fun Day after a break of 3 years because of the Covid pandemic. The event seemed more popular than ever and this year's event will be held on Sunday 25th June.

Finally, I thank officers and Committee members for their contributions throughout the year."

Environment and Heritage Committee 2022/23

Cllr Chris Pond, Chairman of Environment and Heritage Committee, reported on the activities of his Committee over the past year.

"As usual, the committee has met roughly 6-weekly.

Among the topics covered have been

Thames Water

The water infrastructure in Loughton has continued to deteriorate, and members of the committee have tried to bring TW to discussions on this. Unfortunately, they are accountable to nobody on this, save their distant shareholders. Although they did agree to a couple of video link meetings, mains continue to burst frequently. Remedying this would require action at a national government level. We do what we can but beyond moaning, that is nil.

Benches York Hill Green

A major issue at the beginning of the year was the question of returning these benches, with their view into Kent, which had been removed by order of the Head Epping Forest constable – as they sit on City of London land. Eventually, the committee (on a most unusual vote) decided to have them replaced.

Allotments

The three sites in Loughton all contributed to the successful Horticultural Show, which the Committee facilitated. At present, this part of the committee work is going without incident.

Wombles

There have been litter picking expeditions at roughly 6-weekly intervals, where a team of 6-10 people patrol and remove litter from two or three beats. It is a great pity this is necessary, but the improvement is great.

Signage

Jointly with the Forest, we got funding for pedestrian signage to guide people who arrive at the station towards the Forest, which is not as straightforward for a visitor as one might think.

St Johns Churchyard

We were notified by the Church that they intended to apply for the Ministry of Justice that they intended to close the churchyard. This process is governed by a rather cumbersome statutory process; we held a useful preliminary meeting with them, but the Order has not yet been applied for. This would mean the Church no longer maintained their churchyard, and that LTC would have to decide if it wished to assume the responsibility, or passport it to Epping Forest District Council.

Alleyways

I obtained some funding from Essex County Council for naming some further alleyways within Loughton. The aim is to encourage walking and develop shortcuts for pedestrians, e.g., to shops, bus stops, and stations, and to provide an alternative to car use.

Claybury Hospital War memorial – which was found in Loughton – was returned to Redbridge Museum after we had cared for it for the time the Museum was closed.”

Resources and General Services Committee 2022/23

Cllr Michael Owen, Chairman of the Resources and General Services Committee, reported on the salient activities of his Committee over the past year. Full written report below.

“The Resources and General Services Committee bears the responsibility of overseeing the finances of the Town Council and ensuring that it conducts itself with utmost openness, transparency, and ethical standards. The committee carries out the day-to-day financial transactions necessary for the smooth running of the Town Council and oversees staff salaries, insurance, bill payments, banking arrangements, admin for the whole Council, personnel and employment matters, staff management, IT and office equipment, Members' expenses, management of Buckingham Court, and maintenance of the Kingsley and Murray Halls. Furthermore, the committee is responsible for

producing the quarterly Town Council Magazine, "Think Loughton," managing the Town Noticeboards and Website, and administering the Financial Assistance Scheme. The committee is also responsible for organising Civic Celebrations, such as the Christmas Card Competition and the Citizenship Awards, and undertakes policy reviews, contract reviews, training strategy, internal audits, and banking and investment reviews on an annual basis. I am pleased to report that the Council received a clean audit report from the External Auditors.

Each year, the committee reviews the Council's insurances, Council-wide priorities, and policies, such as the Essex Pension Fund Administration Strategy, Investment Strategy and Policy, Members Remuneration Scheme, Procedure to fill a Casual Vacancy, Laptop Policy, Staff Absence Policy, Data Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaints procedure, Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, Health and Safety, and Training Strategy. This year, the Town Council faced significant challenges due to the fallout from the Covid pandemic and global inflation issues, which hindered our ability to plan for the longer term. Despite these challenges, we have tried to keep the increase in council tax to an absolute minimum, given that RPI was at 13.7% and CPI at 10.7% as of November 22. To achieve this, we have made savings, reduced expenditure on certain projects, and postponed other projects. There will be no increase in the Councillors' Parish Allowance. This year the tax base which will be used to calculate the 2023/24 Band D Council Tax for Loughton Town Council is 12,667.9 (12,732.8 last year) and will mean Loughton Town Council's annual council tax for a Band D property will be £71.39. An increase of approximately £6.23.

Awarding grants to local groups and organisations is a critical function of the committee, and we ensure that these awards benefit people living in Loughton and provide a positive impact on the local community. This year, we are supporting 17 organizations (up from 14 last year), and the full list is available on the February 2023 minutes from the resources committee. The committee for the grants consists of three members and we have increased this to four for next year to include the previous cycles Mayor, who brings a better insight into the decision-making process due to their involvement in local organisations during their mayor tenure. Additionally, there is a separate grant provision of £8,500 to Citizens Advice Epping Forest.

On December 15, 2022, Cllr Murray visited the Office and undertook a financial check on purchase orders and receipts for the Financial Year 2022/23. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Town Clerk, Mark Squire, who continues to do excellent work, our Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Kim Lumb, our Community Manager/Assistant Town Clerk, Pippa Bryce, and all our hard-working officers. Lastly, I thank all the members of the Resources Committee for their commitment and dedication to the welfare of the residents of Loughton by scrutinising the Town's finances carefully and conscientiously.

In January 2023, the committee passed a resolution to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge for local councils and requested that this protocol be included in the Councillors induction pack. Looking ahead, the committee has been tasked with supplying bunting for both Loughton High Street and the Broadway for the King Charles Coronation Celebrations in May 2023 which we are pleased to support".
Cllr Michael Owen

5 Presentation of the Citizenship Award

The Town Mayor presented Heidi Chow with the Citizenship Award in recognition of her dedication and voluntary work with GROW Community Garden and the residents of Loughton.

In her speech Cllr Cohen said that Heidi has been volunteering for GROW Community Garden at Pyrles Lane for over 6 years, in more recent years taking a lead role. The Community Garden project brings many benefits to a variety of local residents. The

garden brings people together, combating social isolation and provides an outdoor activity promoting health and wellbeing. This is a particularly important project for adults or children with learning difficulties to participate in. A Town Councillor recently stated that 'whenever I visit the GROW Community Garden, I leave feeling that the world is a better place than when I arrived!'

Loughton Town Council support this nomination and congratulate Heidi on her deserved win!

Heidi received the presentation of the Silver Rose Bowl which she will keep for a year. A glass engraved award and a scroll for keeps and a cheque for £250 for her chosen charity.

A Certificate of Recognition was also presented to Mohan Panesar, for his exceptional work, above and beyond for the benefit of Loughton residents for over 30 years as his work as a pharmacist in the Broadway.

6 Presentation of the 2023 Loughton Building Design Award

An engraved plaque was also presented to the winner of the 2023 Loughton Building Design Award.

The Town Council is keen to protect and preserve the architectural heritage of Loughton. The winner of this year's award unanimously chosen by the judges was 49 Church Lane. A fine job has been done with the detailing, particularly the bold extension of the modillion cornice. Everything is right, it all looks in keeping and makes a worthy addition to the varied streetscapes of Church Lane and adds interest to the scene at the crossroads. The awards were presented to the owners and developers, Mr & Mrs Wheeler unfortunately Mrs Laurence Becker, the architect was unable to attend.

7 Financial Assistance Grant Awards

Representatives from local organisations who will receive financial assistance from the Council in 2023/24 totalling £35,441.00 were presented with a certificate and a group photograph was taken with the Town Mayor. Certificates will be posted out to all recipients who were unable to attend.

8 Questions

There were no questions from the public.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending the meeting and were invited to stay for refreshments.

Signed.....
Date: March 2024