

THESE MINUTES ARE NOT YET CONFIRMED
LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

**Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on Wednesday 14 March 2018
in the Murray Hall, 106 Borders Lane, Loughton**

Chairman: Councillor P Abraham, Town Mayor of Loughton Town Council

Also present:

Town Councillors J Angold-Stephens, P Beales, R Brookes, T Cochrane, B Cohen, M Dalton, C Davies, T Downing, J Jennings, K Latchford, S Murphy, S Murray, A Omer, S Pewsey, C C Pond, C P Pond, M Stubbings and D Wixley

Approximately 50 members of the public and 1 member of the press.

Officers: E K Walsh (Town Clerk)
P Hoy (Services Manager)
L Gibson (Town and Community Development Officer)
D Taylor (Services Assistant)
P Bryce (Administrative Assistant)

The Town Mayor, Cllr Philip Abraham welcomed everyone to the 23rd annual meeting.

1 Introduction of Councillors

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

2 Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 15 March 2017

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 Philip Abraham presented the Town Mayor's report.

"The Town Council had a very busy year filled with discussions on how to deal with the Local Plan and how to save Loughton's green spaces. When the Local Plan was published in December 2017, the Town Council reacted swiftly to submit its official representation. To ensure that the representation was presented with a clear planning case, the Town Council sought professional advice from a specialist consulting firm

The Town Council also successfully completed its strategic move to the Loughton Library from the offices at Buckingham Court in July 2017, to make it more easily accessible to the public and help secure the future of the Library. The move went ahead smoothly and the Town Council is now well settled in its new home on the first floor of the Library.

In May 2017, I was honoured as well as humbled to be elected as the Town Mayor. I feel privileged to have been given this opportunity to serve the community and I have been delighted to help raise valuable funds in support of a number of local charities.

I have had a wonderful year so far. In my official capacity as Mayor I have attended about seventy-five events to date. I have received a warm welcome wherever I went. I was amazed by the number of people who came up to me or stopped me to have a selfie with me. In Chinese terms, I would like to name this year as 'The year of the Selfie'.

My first Town Council event was the Community Fun Day at our precious Jessel Green. Around 2,000 people gathered for this summer event. The day was blessed with glorious sunshine and it was a great day out for the whole family. The event was organised by the Loughton Town Council, in partnership with Epping Forest Community Church, Restore and the Red Balloon Family Foundation. The fun aspect of Jessel Green turned serious later in the year when Jessel Green was formally included in the local plan to build 154 homes. The community got together on social media with action to Save Jessel Green and Save Loughton's Greens. This battle still continues.

The most solemn occasion during my term was the Remembrance Sunday parade with some of the war veterans and laying the wreath at the War Memorial, organised by the Town Council in association with the Loughton branch of the Royal British Legion and Churches Together in Loughton.

This year's Civic Celebration & Citizenship Awards Ceremony was held at the Murray Hall in February. The theme for the celebration was "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted". The recipient of the 2018 Citizen of the Year Award was Janet Woods who has been volunteering with the Epping Forest Citizens Advice. Janet led this organisation with dedication as chairman of the Board of Trustees for many years. A Special Award for Community Service went to Paula Fairlamb and the Loughton Park Run team. Paula and her team work so hard and sacrifice such a lot to keep the event open even during the worst of the winter weather.

It was a pleasure to have in attendance the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Lady Rosemary Ruggles-Brise to present the awards. I was delighted that the Chairman of Essex County Council and Epping Forest District Council as well as several mayors and deputy mayors from our neighbouring towns were some of the other dignitaries present.

It has been my pleasure to attend some of the performances organised by the Loughton Amateur Dramatic Society, Loughton Operatic Society and the National Jazz Archive.

The Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth, now in its fourth year, was also celebrated by the council, in order to commemorate friendship and co-operation with fellow Commonwealth citizens around the world. 'Towards a Common Future' is a fitting theme for this year's Commonwealth Day.

I would like to thank Deputy Mayor Cllr Stephen Murray for stepping in whenever I was not available, previous Mayor Cllr Carol Davis for her assistance and all my fellow councillors for their support during my term.

May I end my report by expressing my sincere thanks to Town Clerk Enid Walsh for the support at meetings, Pippa Bryce for diligently keeping my diary and all the other staff for the smooth operation of the council – a real quality gold service from a Quality Gold Council".

Planning and Licensing Committee 2017/18

Cllr Jill Angold-Stephens, Chairman of the Planning and Licensing Committee, reported on the activities of her Committee over the past year.

"Once again the committee has had a very busy year with some 20 meetings and 362 applications considered of which 14 have been for amended plans. With some applicants seeking our comments we have managed to get applications amended so that they fit in better with their surroundings and neighbouring properties. We have speakers at most of our meetings either for or against applications and sometimes both. We always bring these applications forward in the meeting so that speakers do not have to sit through the whole meeting.

There have also been 9 planning appeals on which we have commented. Some have been rejected and some upheld so we feel that our input has been worthwhile.

There have been 17 licensing applications, some for a change of opening hours and some for the sale of alcohol or extended hours for the sale of alcohol. There have also been 2 appeals at which a member of the committee attended to put our objections forward.

We take each application be it planning or licensing on its merits and if we object this means that the application is likely to be considered by the EFDC Area Plans South Committee of councillors instead of being decided by council officers.

Our really important work this year has been around the EFDC Local Plan and our response to this. It was finally published just before Christmas with responses having to be returned before the end of January. The hearing in public before an inspector is proposed for this autumn. In order to ensure that we put the best possible case for the town we have sought legal advice and propose to do this again in preparation for the hearing at which we expect to be represented. In order for the inspector to make changes to the plan we have to show that parts of it are not soundly based. This is really important as it will affect how the town develops up to 2033 and it could be of benefit or disadvantage to Loughton's residents. The PLC has asked the council to provide extra funding for this work and this has triggered a small increase in the community charge for Loughton Town Council.

Before I finish I should like to pay tribute to our new planning clerk, Debra Paris who has settled well into the position and provides all the applications for us to consider, and patiently guides us through our work. I would also like to thank my vice-chairman, Cllr Carol Davies, Cllr Philip Abrahams who despite his duties as town mayor has managed to be present to carry out the projection of plans for our consideration and my fellow committee members of their carefully considered contributions to our meetings”.

Recreation Committee 2017/18

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

“At the time of presenting this report we have held four of our five scheduled meetings for this Council Year. The Committee has supported the following **community events**: The Town Mayor's Annual Charity Fun Run, the Jessel Green Family Fun Day, Teens Unite Charity Warrior Race, Light up a Life and Countdown to Christmas.

I estimate that approximately £4,500 has been collected at these events for the benefit of the following charities: Chigwell Riding Trust, Breast Cancer Now, Essex & Herts Air Ambulance, Redbridge Samaritans, St Clare Hospice and Teens Unite.

Health & Safety

The Council's 8 playgrounds and 2 outdoor gyms receive regular inspections by both staff and external qualified inspectors. Specialists have been employed to provide an inventory of the Council's tree stock and to advise on any resulting safety issues. Concern for the wellbeing of staff has led to the introduction of the lone worker Skyguard system. Plans for four defibrillators to be installed at various locations are progressing.

Essex Playing Fields Association Awards

The Council has again been successful in winning the following awards: Roding Valley Recreation Ground – Class 1 Winner, Willingale Road Playing Field – Class 1 Certificate of Merit, Traps Hill playground – Class 3 Runner-Up and both Westall Road and Newmans Lane playgrounds received Certificates of Merit.

In achieving these awards we are grateful to Paul Hoy, the Services Manager and his team, and the EFDC Grounds Maintenance staff for their excellent work.

Roding Valley Recreation Ground

We have continued to promote children's tennis coaching sessions and the Saturday morning Park Run remains popular. A major issue to be tackled in the coming months will be the refurbishment of the football changing rooms.

Willingale Road Nature Reserve and Community Orchard

A volunteer day was organised by the EFDC Countrycare team in September with a large crop of apples being donated to the Loughton Food Bank.

Jessel Green

Despite concerns about the future of the Green, the annual Jessel Green Family Fun Day will be held on Sunday 15 July 2018. The Green, like the Roding Valley Recreation Ground, will also host the Play in the Park events during the Easter and Summer school holidays.

Memorial Rose Garden, Roding Road

Diseased Box hedging has had to be removed and replaced with Hedge Germander as recommended by the Royal Horticultural Society. Local residents contributed to cost of this work with donations amounting to £250.

Kingsley and Murray Halls

Bookings have remained buoyant but it has been decided not to renew the Wedding Licence for the Murray Hall.

The Committee enjoyed a presentation from EFDC's Community Health & Wellbeing Officers who gave details of the wide range of activities available to all age groups. They plan to meet with local GPs to promote these activities.

I regret to report on two serious cases of vandalism to play equipment. One damaged item has been removed and will not be replaced, while the other one will be replaced with a different, but less vulnerable, piece of equipment.

On a more positive note I am grateful for the work of four volunteers litter pickers who help keep the Roding Valley Recreation Ground, Hillyfields Open Space and the Willingale Road Playing Field tidy.

Finally I thank my fellow committee members and members of our Community Centres Working Party, the Town Clerk and her staff for all their hard work during the last year".

Environment and Heritage 2017/18

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

"This report is a partial one only, as the Winter meeting of the Committee was replaced by an emergency Full Council needed to finalise the Council's objection to the Local Plan.

The Local Plan has the potential to seriously impact on the quality of life for Loughton's residents. The Committee's views on air quality were progressed through the Essex Association of Local Councils, and endorsed by a large majority at the AGM in Dunmow in September. This was followed by a motion at Essex County Council, whose Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee is currently considering the matter. Air quality has been the subject of numerous high-level reports nationally, and is now generally held to be a

serious health and environmental problem, so the Committee is pleased, even if only a small way, to have set the ball rolling on this topic.

On heritage matters, a further blue plaque was installed on the former bus garage Church Hill. and one to the Oriole Hospital was agreed. No action ensued from the Committee's having pressed EFDC to have the Local List revised, even though the Committee, in effect, offered to do the work. It was agreed to repaint some of the white-on-black Chigwell UDC street nameplates, but sanction for this from EFDC is awaited. The Committee's Community Initiatives' bid for illustrating the residence of Sir Jacob Epstein in Baldwins Hill was agreed and is awaiting implementation.

Routine work on allotments was agreed, and the Committee noted with approval the success of the GROW project and better lettings on the Willingale Road site.

The flower baskets in the High Road and Broadway were much appreciated this year. Christmas displays were again low-key, but with the contract coming up for review, it is hoped to provide more impact in 2018.

I thank my fellow Committee members, the Town Clerk and her staff for their work throughout the year”.

Resources and General Services Committee 2017/18

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

“This Committee manages the Town Council’s finances and also makes sure that the Town Council acts openly, transparently and ethically.

Loughton is a low-tax town. This helps hard-pressed local families and businesses. A low-tax town means a town where it’s easier to live and bring up our children, and a place that attracts new business and enterprise.

However, the financial outlook for local government is becoming bleak, and inflation is taking its toll on all our services. Most importantly, Loughton faces the challenge of over-development, the threat to build on our green spaces. We do not want our open spaces concreted over. To defend the town from this threat over the next twelve months will cost money and so we are increasing the precept by around 5p a week for most households to £53.67 for a Band D property. For around a pound a week, Loughton Town Council continues to invest in a wide range of services which make our neighbourhood a better place; our playgrounds, our allotments, our family events, our community halls, our bus shelters, our street nameplates, our grit bins, to name but a few. Of all the towns in Epping Forest District, Loughton has by far the lowest precept.

While our tax is low, our standards are high. We are answerable to you for the money we spend and for the resources we use. Loughton Town Council sets the standards in audit and accountability. Our books are open and all our actions are in the public domain, and reported online, in our magazine *Think Loughton* and in the local press.

We believe in our town and the people in it. It is our privilege to work closely with local voluntary groups and charities to make life better for those who need a helping hand. We help fund their projects, ranging from equipment for scouts and guides to days out for the elderly housebound. We support community events such as Loughton Festival. We are proud to be partners of bodies like Citizens Advice Bureau and Loughton Youth Project which are making such a difference in our town. This year, our new apprenticeship scheme shows in a practical way how we invest in Loughton’s young people.

We have a wonderful and hard-working team of officers and councillors, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all, especially our Town Clerk, Enid Walsh, and the Deputy Chairman of my committee, Jill-Angold Stephens”.

5 Presentation of Certificates

The Town Mayor presented certificates to representatives of some of the local organisations and charities that will receive financial assistance from the Council in 2018/19.

6 Address by Heather Scholer from Epping Forest Foodbank

Heather addressed the audience and spoke about the importance of the Epping Foodbank in Loughton.

7 Questions from the public were invited but no further issues were raised.

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

Signed.....
Date: **13 March 2019**