

THESE MINUTES ARE NOT YET CONFIRMED

## LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

### ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

**Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on Wednesday 13 March 2019  
in the Murray Hall, 106 Borders Lane, Loughton**

**Chairman:** Councillor Stephen Murray, Town Mayor of Loughton Town Council

**Also present:**

**Town Councillors** P Abraham, J Angold-Stephens, R Brookes, T Cochrane, B Cohen, M Dalton, J Jogia, J Jennings, K Latchford, J Mahoney, S Murphy, T Owen, C C Pond, C P Pond, M Stubbings and D Wixley

Approximately 53 members of the public.

**Officers:** M Squire (Town Clerk)  
B Smith (Assistant Town Clerk)  
P Hoy (Services Manager)  
L Gibson (Town and Community Development Officer)  
J Graham (Bookings Administrator)  
P Bryce (Administrative Assistant)

The Town Mayor, Cllr Stephen Murray welcomed everyone to the 24th 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 14 March 2018**

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

**3 Matters arising from the last meeting**

No questions arose.

**4 Presentation of the Citizenship Award**

The Town Mayor presented the Citizenship Award to Peter Medway in recognition of his dedicated service to the community. Paul Pingagli accepted the award on behalf of Peter as he is currently out of the Country. The Town Mayor reported that Peter will receive his award at a presentation which will take place before the Council meeting to be held on Wednesday 24 April 2019.

**5 Presentation of certificate to Roding Valley Recreation Ground Volunteer**

The Town Mayor presented a certificate to Alan Wintle for exceptional voluntary work on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground.

**6 Reports on Council's Activities**

Cllr Stephen Murray presented the Town Mayor's report.

"This has been another busy year for your town council. It is my intention to say only a few words in general about our work this year, as I am certain that the chairman of each committee will fill in the details and I will then go on to say a little about my civic year.

As regards our work as a council:

It is my strong belief that as a town council we deliver the services that we are responsible for in an effective and cost efficient manner.

The feedback we receive from Loughton residents is very nearly always positive and our many community events are well supported. Like last year we have also spent time on issues which are hugely important to our town for which we have no direct responsibility. I mention two here this evening. The safeguarding of our green open spaces from development particularly Jessel Green and Marlescroft Way green have continued to be an important part of our discussions.

The local plan inspection stage has started and we have ensured that as a town council we are properly represented at all the relevant sessions. This will not be cheap but we felt as a town council we need to do our utmost to save Jessel Green for as they say in the adverts, 'once it's gone its gone'.

The second issue that quite correctly took our attention away from our direct responsibilities was the issue of rising crime and the inadequate level of policing:

Following two very well attended public meetings we have kept the pressure on our local police to maximise the police presence in our town – this is something that we will continue to do.

Lastly I would like to say a few words about my civic role as mayor. I regard it as a great and unexpected honour to have been appointed as mayor for this last 12 months. Loughton is the community I have lived in for very nearly 60 years and my time as mayor has confirmed what I already knew that despite all the high profile issues confronting our town, Loughton is a wonderful place and community in which to live.

Every event I have attended, of which by mid May there will have been very nearly 110. I have found strong community groups making a difference to our town in so many wonderful different ways and it is so good to see many of these groups present here this evening.

I would like to mention them all but will just pick out some important highlights

- My first engagement was the initial meeting of a new group called Open Door which meets weekly at St Michaels and supports residents with mental health issues – it is great that this group has continued to grow
- I have attended all the wonderful productions of Loughton Amateur Dramatic Society, who along with other groups in our town ensures that Loughton has a flourishing arts and drama scene
- The Jessel Green community fun day in July was again very well attended and once again demonstrated the importance of this living green in the centre of one of the more densely populated parts of our town
- I met with the new principal of the college Janet Smith to discuss issues affecting our town and I am happy to answer any questions on this issue during item 8 later in the meeting
- I attended the fifth anniversary event for our local food bank and would like to pay tribute here this evening to the crucial work this organisation and their volunteers do, helping to ensure that all local families in Loughton can put food on their table
- The most solemn occasions of the year were the events on 11th November to mark 100 years of remembrance - our town was one of many across the country who held a Battles Over Tribute with the lighting of a beacon at Hillyfields

- I am sure that we would all agree that it is important that we continue to remember the sacrifices made by previous generations of Loughton residents

There are many more events and groups I would like to mention here this evening but obviously cannot do so, suffice to say everywhere I have been this year I have been struck by the volunteering spirit and I would like to say thank you to all the community and faith groups that help make Loughton the wonderful place it is – thank you for all you do in and for our town.

I would like to thank all my fellow councillors for their support this year, particularly my deputy Stella Murphy who has kept me on my toes and been a great support to me this year.

Loughton Town Council has a dedicated hard working staff team who often go well beyond their contracts to deliver our services, particularly in ensuring the smooth running of our community events.

I would like to conclude my report this evening by welcoming our new clerk Mark Squire and putting on record our thanks to our former town clerk Enid Walsh for her many years of dedicated service to Loughton and the Town Council, Enid has now retired to a well know holiday destination within the UK.

I don't think she has started doing bed and breakfast or at least not yet, perhaps we should update you at next year's annual meeting".

### **Planning and Licensing Committee 2018/19**

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

"This year we have had less applications to consider; only 293, down from 362 last year; but some have been more complicated such as those for 12-15a Alderton Hill and the rear of 256 High Road, both providing apartments for the elderly; the latter currently being built. We have objected to 62 applications and this now sometimes involves a member of the committee going to Epping to voice our objections at the Plans Area South meeting. Raising a concern relating to an application highlights this to the officers of EFDC; but doesn't necessarily mean that the application is discussed by councillors at their meeting. Of the applications there are usually some relating to pruning or felling of trees either in gardens or on the street. We always object to the felling of trees but are prepared to waive our objection if the Arboriculture Officer at EFDC deems it an appropriate action, through disease or decay. We usually ask for a new native tree in place of a felled tree. Where an application is for front walls, railings and electronic gates we always ask that applicant plants a hedge of native shrubs behind to soften the look of the frontage. Before some of our meetings we have had a talk from a member of the EFDC team to bring us up-to-date with changes and this is very useful.

There have been 22 planning appeals on which we have commented. This is considerably up on previous years. Of these a recent one, for 12-15a Alderton Hill was a Public Inquiry lasting some four days. I spoke to this on the first day and discovered that we are unlikely to hear a result until the Autumn. This means that the application for a smaller development (down from 105 to 89 units) will not be submitted unless the appeal is rejected so no new building on the site any time soon. Some appeals have been rejected and some upheld so we feel that our input has been worthwhile.

We have also considered 14 licensing applications, including two successful re-applications from street traders to which we had no objections. We did object to 7 applications.

As the Mayor has told you the new EFDC local plan is now in the phase of the hearing in public so there is nothing more we can do about this at present. LTC has engaged experts to speak on our behalf using the extra money we raised when we increased the community charge last year. 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 residents.

Before I finish my report I should like to pay tribute to our very efficient planning clerk, Debra Paris who 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 Kevin Latchford; Cllr Philip Abrahams who as well as being a member of the committee operates the projector showing the plans for our consideration, and my fellow committee members of their carefully considered contributions to our meetings.

This year we have not awarded the Building Design Award as none of the buildings submitted for our consideration met all the criteria for this”.

### **Recreation Committee 2018/19**

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

“As in previous years the Committee has dealt with a wide range of issues including the following:

#### **Flood Alleviation Scheme**

Essex County Council has identified some properties in the Pyrles Lane area as being at risk from flooding due to water run-off from the Hillyfields Open Space. A bund is to be constructed on land belonging to the City of London immediately adjacent to Pyrles Lane with the objective of holding back flood water and gradually releasing it into the drainage system. The scheme has involved discussions between Essex County Council, City of London, Epping Forest District Council and Loughton Town Council. Public consultation and a presentation to the Committee has also taken place. An archaeological survey has uncovered a piece of pottery which is being examined to see if it is of historical importance.

#### **Roding Valley Recreation Ground**

Partnership working with the EFDC Health and Wellbeing team has provided tennis and athletic coaching for youngsters and walking football for an older generation. The venue also hosts Parkrun and Junior Parkrun.

The committee was pleased to support the Teens Unite Cancer Charity whose obstacle race raised almost £2,000 with over 100 children taking part.

The biggest issue facing the Committee is the refurbishment of the football changing rooms currently closed because they have become uneconomic to run due to plumbing and electrical problems. It is proposed to retain the existing buildings but to infill the gap between them.

Meetings have taken place with the Essex FA, EFDC and an architect has provided drawings of the improved facility.

The project will be funded by a combination of earmarked reserves, grant funding and a low interest loan from the Public Works Loan Board.

The scheme will be subject to public consultation and planning permission.

#### **Essex Playing Fields Association Awards**

I'm pleased to report that Loughton Town Council has again received awards for its playing fields and playgrounds. The Roding Valley Recreation Ground was the overall

winner of the Best Kept Playing Field and there were Gold awards for the playgrounds at Newmans Lane and Westall Road with a Silver for Traps Hill.

The Committee is grateful for the efforts of Loughton Town Council staff and volunteers, who help with litter picking to keep these facilities looking tidy. However, much credit for awards received over several years is due to Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Grounds Maintenance Team and it was felt that this should be recognised. I was therefore pleased to be present when the Town Mayor presented the Team with a framed certificate last July.

### **The Jessel Green Family Fun Day**

Will be held, as normal, on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Plans to build on the Green have yet to be decided.

### **Community Safety**

During the summer there was much concern about local youngsters being intimidated or attacked by other youngsters from outside the District. At two public meetings it was suggested that the Town Council could help with this problem. Various options were considered but most of these were both very expensive and not entirely practical. However £10,000 has been set aside with a view to employing, if necessary, a private security company that is approved by Essex, Hertfordshire and Metropolitan Police Forces.

While not an ideal solution to having more police on the beat it could prove to be a flexible and cost effective option.

Finally I would like to thank members of the Committee and Loughton Town Council staff for their contributions and work throughout the year.

I also take the opportunity to thank our former Town Clerk, Enid Walsh, who retired in January for her work and support to the Committee. I'm now very pleased to be working with her replacement, Mark Squire and welcome him to Loughton Town Council".

### **Environment and Heritage Committee 2018/19**

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

"This report is on the basis of 3 meetings only, as the January meeting was postponed and instead we said our corporate goodbyes to Enid Walsh former Town Clerk on her retirement.

The committee noted an improvement in the cultivation and letting of **allotments**. There are still a few available, but the response to the inaugural horticultural and allotment show on 1 September had been very heartening. Thanks to all the members of staff for their work on this.

During the year, **heritage plaques** to Lionel Murray and Josiah Oldfield/ the Oriole Hospital were installed, reflecting Loughton's illustrious past at 42 locations.

The committee supported the Hills Amenity Society request for a 20mph **zone** in the Conservation areas. This has not been progressed as we are waiting for documentation from the Hills Amenity Society.

A **bus shelter** was installed opposite the Library and Town Hall following public request and I am very pleased to report that this is being used.

New **Christmas lights** were provided in the High Rd and the Broadway. These were well received, but had to be replaced at the suppliers' cost, as blinking lights had been erected, contrary to specification.

The **Heritage Open Days** were very well supported in particular the Classic Car Display organised by District Councillor Howard Kauffman, a very successful event where there were between 2,000 – 3,000 visitors. Loughton Town Council take part in the Heritage Open Days event every other year, the next event will be September 2020.

New **signage** was provided on the Oakwood Hill Estate, in a joint ECC /EFDC/LTC scheme. It was reported in last year's minutes that it was agreed to repaint some of the white-on-black Chigwell Urban District Council street nameplates, it is nearly 50 years since CUDC existed. These will take place in the course of the year ahead.

Pleased to report that EFDC has withdrawn an application to build a car park on Marlescroft Way green.

The committee responded to public concern on the Broadway Area **Parking Review** by suggesting the parking permit area zone be limited to those streets where commuter parking was already causing nuisance, with all the outer areas being held back, so as not to cause unaffected residents unnecessary expense, but to relieve those who suffer parking stress already. We are waiting the outcome of the consultation.

The committee asked EFDC to take action in the case of two areas of **untidy/littered land**: they seem reluctant to do so. EFDC have been requested to increase the resources of their Environmental Team.

We thank all the staff, and particularly Enid Walsh for her wise and sympathetic guidance of the committee over the last decade. She was presented with an antique map of Essex dated 1782 as a retirement present”.

#### **Resources and General Services Committee 2018/19**

Cllr Judy Jennings, Acting Chairman of the Resources and General Services Committee, reported on the activities of his Committee over the past year.

“The Resources and General Services Committee is the committee that looks after the Town Council's finances.

Staffing, services and projects are all carefully scrutinized by the Committee to make sure that the Town Council is open and transparent in its business.

The committee also oversees the day to day financial transactions that are necessary for the smooth running of the Town Council, overseeing such items as staff salaries, insurance and payments of bills, maintaining the Kingsley and the Murray Halls and producing the Town Council Magazine and Website.

To keep increases in council tax to a minimum we have had to postpone some of the committee's projects such as installation of town signs and we have managed to reduce staffing costs without losing jobs.

To help offset costs and keep the precept as low as possible we have taken £25,000 from our General Reserves this year and made several reductions in budgets and made savings in many areas in order to fund the vital and growing range of local council services that our community depends on. Of all the local towns in Epping Forest District, Loughton still has by far the lowest precept.

The annual council tax for a Band D property this year is £57.15 a small increase of less than 7 pence a week. Out of this money we support a wide range of services such as

Banking and administration for the whole Council Personnel and employment matters, staff training Civic celebrations and Citizenship awards, providing Town Noticeboards and the popular Christmas Card competition. We also support Community events such as the Loughton Festival and the Fun Day on Jessel Green.

While other councils have had to close playgrounds we ensure that our playgrounds remain safe and available for use.

In response to residents' concerns about low police cover we have put an extra £10,000 into resources for community safety.

A key priority this year has been our response to the Local Plan. The challenge of overdevelopment and the threat to build on our green spaces are a great concern. We put aside money to pay for legal representation at the hearing that took place in February.

We work closely with local voluntary organisations and we provide grants for projects that provide a positive benefit to local residents and help improve life for the people of Loughton.

In 2019 we have supported - the Loughton Youth Project;  
The "Sportability" Club for children with special needs;  
Loughton Voluntary Care;  
The Grow Community Garden project;  
Revitalise, which is Respite care for disabled people;  
and the Samaritans amongst others

We also provide vital support for Citizens Advice (CA) whose advice and help in the community has been needed more than ever since Universal Credit was introduced in Loughton in December last year.

Finally, I would like to thank our new Town Clerk, Mark Squire, our new Finance Officer, Brent Smith and all the council officers and acknowledge their hard work on behalf of the residents of Loughton.

I would also particularly like to thank Jill Angold-Stephens whose knowledge and expertise has greatly assisted the committee. The constant vigilance and attention to detail of the Resources Committee means the members are always working for the best for the town and I thank them for their dedication and commitment over the last year".

## **7 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 2019/20.

## **8 Questions** from the public were invited and a number of issues were discussed:-

- An advert in the latest edition of 'Think Loughton' relating to the Epping Forest Youth Council EFYC Drugs Project Report.
- A concern over disruption that the building/maintenance works caused in the vicinity of the brook by Alderton Hill near Loughton Underground Station during the summer of 2018. Further' North footway deck replacement works are due to ensue this summer 2019. It was reported that Essex Highways (EH) engineers will be attending the Town Council meeting scheduled for 24 April 2019 to make a presentation on the proposed works. Town Councillors will strongly advocate a more efficient and organised programme of works this time around and request that EH are better prepared.
- The Town Council is robustly defending areas of green space (including Jessel Green) which have been designated by the EFDC Local Plan for development. The Town Council has employed a very competent barrister and planning consultant to

attend some of the Local Plan hearings. Whilst this is an expensive process, it is worthwhile in order to secure the best possible outcome for local residents.

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

**Signed**.....  
**Date:** **11 March 2020**