

THESE MINUTES ARE NOT YET CONFIRMED

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

**Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on Wednesday 11 March 2020
in the Murray Hall, 106 Borders Lane, Loughton**

Chairman: Councillor Stella Murphy, Town Mayor of Loughton Town Council

Also present:

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

Approximately 58 members of the public.

Officers: M Squire (Town Clerk)
B Smith (Assistant Town Clerk)
P Bryce (Administrative Assistant)
D Taylor (Administrative Assistant)
T Horten (Caretaker)

The Town Mayor, Cllr Stella Murphy welcomed everyone to the 25th 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 13 March 2019

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 Stella Murphy presented the Town Mayor's report.

"This has been yet another busy year for the Council which saw the saving of Jessel Green, a project close to the hearts of everyone in the community and a wonderful achievement for all those involved.

Much effort, time and resources was put into attending the Local Plan Hearings at the District Council and defending the green space in Loughton. Ultimately it was good news for Jessel Green, the well-being of local residents and common sense in general. We are proud of Loughton Town Council's role in securing this valuable green space. Thanks again to the highly effective 'Save Jessel Green' campaign and a host of other groups and individuals. Together we have shown great community spirit and with an abundance of hard work, we have made a real positive impact.

In May 2019 it was an honour to be elected as Town Mayor. It has been a privilege to serve the community I have spent my whole life in and to raise funds for my chosen charities; CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young), Oakview School, Essex Air Ambulance, Yes Partnership, Local Food Bank and Restore. All of these charities are hugely important to our local community and it has been incredibly rewarding to be able to support them and learn more about what they do. I thank Cllr Wixley for introducing me to the Cardiac Risk in the Young charity.

My duties as Mayor have seen me attend 53 functions and events thus far. Each has been a fantastic occasion and it has been great meeting so many of our local residents of all ages. My first engagement was at Sainsburys to celebrate their 150th anniversary.

I was also invited to the lighting of the Menorah Candle and was made to feel so comfortable and welcome by our Jewish friends.

I was especially moved by the Holocaust memorial event at Waltham Abbey and it was touching to once again see the community out in force for the Remembrance day parade in Loughton. It was an honour to lay a wreath amongst war veterans. This is always a well organised event by the Loughton branch of the British Legion, the Town Council and with the Churches of Loughton coming as one to remember the sacrifices made for us.

I have also enjoyed performances organised by LADS (Loughton amateur Dramatic Society, The Loughton Operatic Society and the National Jazz Archive.

The Jessel Green community fun day was yet again successful and well attended and highlighted the great community spirit and importance of this space in our town.

Not forgetting the Horticultural Show and Awards to the Best Allotment Winner, we had so many great entree's, it was a wonderful community event. The standard for both was high so hopefully both competitions will produce high standards again this year, despite all the rain we have had and how sodden the ground is all over Loughton.

Our community was shaken in December 2019 by the tragic event at Debden Park School which resulted in the loss of one of the students, Harley Watson. The decision was made to cancel the annual Christmas festivities in the Broadway out of respect for Harley and his family. My thoughts are with Harley, his family, friends and everyone affected by this tragedy.

I would like to thank my deputy, Tessa Cochrane for her support this year and attending many events with me.

I would also like to thank Pippa Bryce for the smooth running of everything and keeping the diary so well organised. Thanks for all your help and support this year.

A special mention to Mark Squire who has done an excellent job in his first year as clerk and has been a great help to me.

Finally thank you to my fellow councillors for your support in what has been a truly incredible year.

I look forward to the presentation of awards which will take place at the end of the Council Reports".

Planning and Licensing Committee 2019/20

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

"We have, as usual, had some 20 meetings throughout the year but this year there have been fewer applications at each meeting with a total of 278 new applications and 14 amended ones. This follows a decrease in planning applications recorded nationally.

We have looked very carefully at each application before recording our comments for EFDC. These often include suggestions for change where we have objections or concerns. We have objected to some 74 applications and some of these have re-appeared with changes.

EFDC Area Plans South Committee, now held at Epping, only considers those Loughton applications where there are several objectors including LTC or where a town councillor registers to speak against an application. Council officers decide all other applications.

There have been fifteen appeals brought by applicants this year; 7 have been dismissed, 3 were allowed (with conditions imposed) and the rest are awaiting decisions, so I feel that we are doing something right. We always need to balance the need for more housing, including extensions, against the need to protect the environment. This has been particularly pertinent of late with Epping Forest being declared a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) both in relation to pollution and damage caused by increases in visitor numbers and frequency. Three of the appeals that were dismissed gave the effect on the SAC as one of the reasons for dismissal.

There have been 17 licensing applications, relating to new or changed opening hours; the sale of alcohol or extended hours for the sale of alcohol. We try, so far as is possible, to be consistent throughout the town in the matter of licensing hours as we feel this is fair both to residents and applicants. Of the seventeen applications, four have been for street trading licenses, usually renewals, and as there have been no complaints about these we have not objected to them.

The town council spent a large amount of money on advice and representation in relation to the hearing in public before the inspector last summer. This resulted in us being successful in saving Jessel Green from development to the advantage of Loughton residents. This involved a great deal of hard work and we are grateful to all those who contributed to this.

I could not conclude without first thanking all those who have worked throughout the year on the committee; our Planning Clerk Debra Paris who steers us through the applications; my vice-chairman Kevin Latchford who is leaving Loughton in the next few weeks and who will be a great loss and my fellow committee members, including the Town Mayor who has managed to attend our meetings as well as all her other commitments.

Finally, I wish draw your attention to the Building Design Award for which we had some seven applications this year. Each property was viewed by the Town Mayor, the Chairman of the Environment & Heritage committee and myself before we pooled our comments. The award will be presented later this evening”.

Recreation Committee 2019/20

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

The Committee’s attention has been focussed on three main issues:

1. The Flood Alleviation Scheme on the Hillyfields Open Space which was completed in December. The Scheme has a lifespan of 50 years with the purpose of protecting approximately 100 properties from the risk of excessive water run-off from the hill.

Four bodies have been involved in this: Essex County Council who identified the potential risk and designed the Scheme. The City of London on whose land most of the Scheme has been constructed. Loughton Town Council, who own most of the Hillyfields Open Space, and will have responsibility for routine maintenance assisted by Epping Forest District Council.

The Scheme is designed to collect water and release it gradually into the existing drainage system for eventual discharge into the Pyrles Brook.

2. A second flood alleviation scheme concerns the River Roding where it flows alongside the Roding Valley Recreation Ground: The District Council has received a grant from the Environment Agency to tackle issues associated with this stretch of the river. The grant will provide funding for tree planting to reinforce and help stabilize the bank from erosion. The bank will also be restored in some places. Parts of the footpath will be repaired or relocated further away from the bank. The native trees that will be planted are also intended to slow down flood waters and so help protect properties downstream.
3. As mentioned in last year's report the football changing rooms on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground are no longer fit for use. Talks with an architect and a grant funding consultant have been ongoing and it is anticipated that a public exhibition outlining proposals for the revamped changing rooms will be held this Summer.

The Committee has supported a number of community events held on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground. These included the Loughton, Buckhurst Hill & Chigwell Rotary Club's Wellbeing Festival, the Doggie Dash Parkrun which raised funds for the Dash Dog Shelter charity, and the Town Mayor's Fun Run.

In conjunction with the District Council we have supported Play in the Park activities (also held on Jessel Green) as well as tennis coaching for youngsters.

We will again be supporting the Family Fun Day on Jessel Green to be held on the 28th June and were relieved and delighted to learn, last August, that following the Planning Inspector's intervention Jessel Green had been removed from the District Council's Local Plan, thus saving it from development.

A new initiative, proposed by the Town Clerk and supported by the Committee, is to hold a "Loughton Day" at the Loughton Cricket Club ground on Saturday 19th September. Invitations to local organisations have already been sent out.

Mention of the LCC ground gives me the opportunity to report that the freehold title of the ground has been transferred to the Town Council and the process of applying for Fields in Trust status for the ground is underway.

I am pleased to report that we have received Essex Playing Fields Association awards for the Roding Valley Recreation Ground and the Traps Hill playground. We are indebted to LTC staff, volunteer litter pickers, and EFDC's grounds maintenance team for their efforts in making this possible.

At our September meeting we received a presentation from Della Tudisca about her support for CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) charity and the importance of 14-35 year olds being screened for undetected heart conditions.

The Murray Hall continues to be a popular venue and we hope to improve facilities by having a Wi-Fi connection in the near future.

Finally I thank Committee members and LTC staff for their work and contributions throughout the year.

Environment and Heritage Committee 2019/20

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

“The Committee has had its usual quota of routine and project work.

A good deal of time has been devoted to green issues.

We have been much involved in saving bus route 87; and we are pursuing an attempt via a LHP scheme to renew signage on the by-pass cycle route, and to designate new cycling routes, as suggested by the cyclists themselves.

We have been greatly concerned with air quality, where EF has recently been shown to be the worst district in Essex for particulate pollution. Green spaces and good air were two of the major themes behind the evidence LTC gave to the Local Plan Examination in public last summer, which we hope has relieved Jessel Green from development.

We held our second ever Horticultural Show at The Murray Hall. The afternoon proved to be a delightful and successful community event, with double the amount of entries from last year’s inaugural show.

We have purchased and installed habitats for solitary bees. All our own trees have been surveyed, and those within EHC responsibility given a clean bill of health.

A re-greening strategy has been discussed and set in train. An allotment improvement scheme was adopted. The Town Clerk has originated a Loughton Wombles scheme of litter picking; 30 people have volunteered, and training is under way.

We protested, to no avail, at the reduction of Central Line services to Debden.

We have raised at Local Councils Liaison why EFDC are not members of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit, at a cost of under £5000 pa. This means that if we get an unauthorised encampment, we have to pay costs rather than the ECTU. Satisfactory answers are awaited.

On the heritage side, a blue plaque was installed in January to Loughton benefactor, William Dawson, and two more (Barbara Harmer; Stanley Baldwin/ Rudyard Kipling) are on order. We are participating in a project by the EFDM to commemorate the resettlement in 1945 of Jewish refugees at Holmehurst, Manor Rd; this is lottery funded.

A new Loughton Day has been arranged for September, to incorporate the Heritage Open Days”.

Resources and General Services Committee 2019/20

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 responsible for the Town council’s finances and ensures that the Town Council acts openly, transparently and ethically.

In doing so, we undertake an annual review of the Town’s banking and investments. We review all of our insurances. We review our Town Council policies, such as the Reserves Policy, the Loughton Town Council Complaints Policy and the Social Media Policy, the Code of Conduct, The Grant Awarding Policy and the Training Policy and we agree a budget for the coming year.

Our Income comes from several sources. These include the precept, charging for services, renting out venues, allotments and cemetery fees, pitch hire, achieving grants from other bodies, and finally the meagre amount of Bank Interest.

The tax base for 2020/21 is 12,719.6 and the precept has therefore been set at £756,445. This will give the Loughton Town Council's proportion of the annual council tax for a band D property as £59.47, an increase of about 4 pence per week for this year.

This amount is far less than other major towns in the area such as Buckhurst Hill (£68.89), Epping (£93.79) and Waltham Abbey (£111.49).

Elections are a big expenditure this year and will be paid for out of the Council's earmarked funds.

We deal with Staff and employment issues staff handbooks and recruitment.

We run Design Awards, and Competitions such as the popular Christmas Card Design award, The Christmas Window Award, the Loughton Horticultural Show and Awards for the best allotments.

An important award is the Loughton Citizenship Award in recognition of voluntary work or bravery in the community.

We help to fund charities and local voluntary groups that make such a difference to the lives of people living in Loughton. This year grants have been awarded to 21 different organisations that benefit local residents including the Food Bank, Restore Community projects, Loughton Voluntary Care, the Samaritans, Voluntary Action Epping Forest and Loughton Club and we also provide separate financial assistance to the Citizens Advice-Epping Forest District who are now based next to our Office in the Library.

We look after assets which include open spaces, playing fields, and recreational areas and we believe these are essential for the health and wellbeing of our community.

We fund street furniture, the War Memorial and Memorial Garden, eight award winning playgrounds and their play equipment and outdoor gyms.
We operate three Allotments, the Loughton Cemetery, Office premise, Community Halls and the Youth Centre.

We put on community events such as the Fun Day, Heritage Open Day and for this year a Loughton Community Day on September 19th at the newly acquired Loughton Cricket Club.

We support Community Events such as The Remembrance Day parade and Service, the Loughton Festival, the Fun Run and Light up a Life.

We produce the quarterly Think Loughton Magazine to provide residents with information about the Council and which is distributed to all homes in Loughton. We also run an up-to-date Council Website.

Our expenditure includes staff costs, IT costs, transport, town signs, bus shelters, allotments, Christmas lights, flower baskets, defibrillators and a drinking fountain, an Apprenticeship scheme and new projects for improving the environment.

We are very conscious of climate change and are committed to caring for our environment by such measures as protecting local green spaces, bee and insect hotels, managing road verges, aiding flood protection and increasing tree planting.

My very grateful thanks go to our wonderful team of hard working officers, to the Town Clerk, Mark Squire, to my Deputy Jill Angold-Stephens for her advice and support and all the members of the Resources Committee for their careful and conscientious scrutiny of

the Town finances and for their unfailing commitment to making life better for the citizens of Loughton”.

5 Presentation of the Citizenship Award

The Town Mayor presented the Citizenship Award to Judy Lovell in recognition of her dedication and tireless work on the Debden Broadway Estate through her roles within the Restore Community Church and the Oakwood Hill Community Centre. “Judy has a huge impact on those who are in need, lonely, vulnerable, suffering from mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse. She is compassionate, empathetic, professional and extremely caring. She is hands on and has set up coffee mornings, games afternoons, senior citizen events, Christmas dinners, social events, creative art courses for women and so much more – Judy is extremely active and goes above and beyond to assist the community whether they fall into her remit or not”.

Judy was presented with a silver engraved rose bowl, scroll and cheque for £250 for her chosen charity – ‘Restore Community’.

6 Presentation of the 2020 Loughton Building Design Award

The Town Mayor was pleased to announce “that we decided to award a certificate of commendation to 83 York Hill which being in a conservation area, has had the ‘out of character’ windows replaced by wooden ones plus a wooden picket fence thus matching what was built originally but sadly changed some years ago”.

The Town Mayor presented the 2020 Loughton Building Design Award to the house owners, Kim Hardy and Peter Steer and Architect, Abbie Whitehead from Abbie Whitehead Architects for 1 Hillcrest Road. Cllr Murphy commented that “the award was given as this is a new house replacing a bungalow on a very difficult corner site that slopes in two directions. Some innovative and sustainable designs and materials have been used to make best use of the site and I congratulate the architect”.

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 2020/21.

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

- A concern over the building development Playing Fields Site, Epping Forest College, Borders Lane, where there is proposed 285 dwellings.
- A concern regarding the terms of appointment for the Cemetery Attendant vacancy recently advertised.
- A concern regarding the plans for Loughton Library, Traps Hill being demolished and a smaller library and apartments replacing it.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending the meeting and wished them a safe journey home.

Signed.....
Date: