

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 21 April 2016

Present Councillor Mrs R Hopkinson (Chairman)
Councillors S Abbott, P Anstey, Ms L Bray, N Farmer, J Fraser,
D Jarman, D Jones, Mrs A Lock, Mrs I Thompson, Mrs M
Wakeman

PC Mrs H Anderson (Wiltshire Police)
Mrs L Clapton (Dorothy House Hospice)
Mrs S Eskins (Dorothy House Hospice)
Mrs M Jones (Head of Finance and Administration, Corsham
Town Council)
Sgt R Lungu (Wiltshire Police)
D J Martin (Chief Executive, Corsham Town Council)
Miss C O'Sullivan (Tourism and Events Officer, Corsham Town
Council)
Mrs J McDermott (Corsham Neighbourhood Plan Steering
Group)
S Scott (Head of Technical Services, Corsham Town Council)
Mr A Sellens (Chairman, Corsham Youth Council)
Mrs S Thomas (Head of Community Services, Corsham Town
Council)
Councillor P Whitehead (Wiltshire Councillor)

In Attendance 54 Townspeople and others

ATM 01/16 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors C Fuller, M Jackson,
J Mitchell, P Pearson, N Pocock, M Simpkins, R Taylor and P Whalley.

**ATM 02/16 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 16 April
2015**

The Minutes were confirmed as a true record and signed by the
Chairman.

ATM 03/16 Matters Arising from the above Minutes

There were no matters arising.

ATM 04/16 Introduction by the Chairman

The Chairman highlighted a number of activities and achievements over the past year and introduced the speakers.

Corsham Youth Council – Adam Sellens, Chairman of Corsham Youth Council, presented a report on the activities of the Youth Council during 2015/16. It had been a busy 12 months which had included: helping design the new Springfield Play Area and burying a time capsule within it; running stalls at the Summer Street Fair and Christmas Lights Switch-on; helping promote the ‘Keep Corsham Tidy’ poster competition; being briefed on the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan; having a talk from Corsham Neighbourhood Policing Team; organising a photo competition, and producing a youth sports survey, which received over 250 responses.

The Chairman introduced a number of presentations and reports on areas of work related to the Strategic Plan:

(i) Transport and Highways

Wiltshire Council Cabinet Member Philip Whitehead gave a presentation on the key areas currently under discussion or review. These were: the public transport review, which had received over 11,000 responses; a new highways contract with Ringway, which had commenced on 1 April 2016; steps to tackle the highways maintenance backlog; delegation of services to town and parish councils, and heavy vehicle routes.

Councillor Whitehead answered a question on dog fouling.

(ii) Local Policing

Sergeant Ronnie Lungu presented a report on behalf of the Corsham Neighbourhood Policing Team. Sergeant Lungu explained changes to local policing which included sharing resources between Corsham and Calne.

The report included staff changes within the NPT including joined up working with Calne NPT. Sergeant Lungu stated that his priorities were to provide visible and accessible policing and responding to community needs; reducing anti-social behaviour; making sure the vulnerable were protected and brought to justice. Other matters contained in the report included:

- Police information point at Springfield Campus
- Reclassification of anti-social behaviour as true crime
- Improvements in crime recording
- An increase in detections
- Use of the Town Council’s CCTV system
- Support for Community Speed Watch schemes
- Use of Special Constables

- Bluez n' Zuz youth discos and the Youth Zone
- Use of social media via the Corsham NPT Facebook page and Community Messaging
- Visits to local schools and presence at community events

Sergeant Lungu reminded people that Corsham was still a very safe place to live and visit.

Sergeant Lungu answered a question on anti-social behaviour at Springfield Community Campus and steps being taken to tackle it. This included banning certain individuals and working with Wiltshire Youth Services.

(iii) Corsham Neighbourhood Plan

Jane McDermott presented a report on progress with the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan. She explained that the volunteers were working hard to produce the Plan and had recently carried out Character Studies of 22 areas around the town and surrounding settlements. The results of this study would be compiled for consultation in the summer. The aim was to draft policies and complete the Neighbourhood Plan for adoption as planning guidance in 2017.

(iv) Dorothy House

Louise Clapton and Sue Eskins presented an overview of Dorothy House Hospice which was celebrating its 40th Year in 2016. The charity provided care and support for those with life-limiting illness. It was explained that services provided by the charity included: specialist nursing, day patient services, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, complementary therapy, and palliative care. Care was also provided for families and carers across the 700sq miles covered by Dorothy House. The charity has over 1,000 volunteers carrying out a very wide range of activities.

Mrs Clapton explained that challenges for the future included: people living longer; increasingly complex care; an increase in dementia and frailty, and the impact of people working until older.

The Chairman thanked all the speakers for their informative presentations.

ATM 05/16 Charity Accounts

The accounts for the Pickwick Educational Foundation, Madam Alexander's Wheelchair Charity and Madam Alexander's Almshouse Charity were received.

ATM 06/16 Annual Reports

(i) Chairman of the Council (Councillor Mrs R Hopkinson)

The Chairman reported the Town Council's achievements and plans for the year as follows:

Councillor and Staff Developments

Since the previous Annual Town Meeting, Corsham Town Council has been pleased to welcome the following new Councillors: Julian Mitchell, who replaced Andy Newman and, just recently, Neville Farmer, who replaced Nick Holder. I will remind everyone that the whole Council is up for re-election next year and I would urge those who have the time, inclination and skills to put themselves forward as candidates.

The overall staffing has remained stable; we have had two members of staff who have taken maternity leave: Kirsty Gilby and Rachel Avent - both absences have been covered by Colette O'Sullivan, who has done a fantastic job.

Committee Structure

Following the adoption of the Council's Strategic Plan the staffing was revised in 2014. In 2015 the Committee structure was adjusted to reflect the ambitions of the Council and align it more closely with the staffing structure.

Planning

We are all aware of the number of major planning applications which have been received and, in some cases, approved. Some of these applications have been welcomed, others strongly resisted. Corsham is not the planning authority and therefore has little control. However, the formulation and adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan seeks to wrest control back locally. We have heard about the progress made and I would urge everyone to engage with the process.

Wiltshire Council has been obliged to undertake a Community Governance Review, looking at parish boundaries and their relevance today. As part of this we agreed with Chippenham that the small part of the parish which lies on the other side of the A350 should transfer to Chippenham.

We also proposed that the part of Rudloe which lies in Box along with stretches of the land adjacent to Westwells Road be transferred to Corsham; the reason being that they fell within the influence of Corsham, reflected community reality; would rationalise the existing boundaries, and would enable easier implementation of the Local Neighbourhood Plan. This suggestion was met by fierce opposition from Box Parish Council and prevarication by the Wiltshire Council Working Party. The current position is that no decision has been made about the Westwells proposal and the resolution of the working party is that the Corsham part of Rudloe should transfer to Box. We await

developments but are lobbying hard that Corsham residents should be consulted and that the Town Council's concerns are addressed.

Many of you are aware that the Council has passed a resolution to sell Arnold House. I can understand that some people are concerned about this. The building was gifted to Corsham Parish Council without any caveats on its use but with the onus on the clerk to use "good discharge". Currently the property contains two flats, the Made in Corsham shop, the TIC and the weekly Pictor Club. What is known as the "guide hut" is home to the Council's grounds maintenance team.

The estimated cost of maintenance of the building over the next five years is £100,000. The ground floor is underutilised. The provision for staff is inadequate. The resolution of the Council reflected a belief that the Council could not afford the upkeep of a property which does not meet any of the needs of the Council. It is not the intention to sell immediately, but to look for suitable alternative accommodation for the staff, whilst allowing time to work with the current occupants to find alternative accommodation and ways of providing the service which more closely meets the needs of the town.

Strategic Plan

The Town Council has been working with various stakeholders/partners to further the plan. The strands of the plan are:

Managed Development - hence the Neighbourhood Plan;

Destination Corsham - we are undertaking a Public Realm Study, working with Visit Wiltshire and coach operators to increase tourism numbers, as well as the work on opening the station.

Open to Business - we worked closely with the Chamber of Commerce in putting on a second, very successful, Corsham Means Business event in March. We also continue to liaise with the Corsham Institute on their digital initiatives. We are increasingly engaging with major employers and have a forum to assist the local retailers.

Safe and Healthy Community - we are starting engagement with the local health providers. We actively support sporting activities through our grants programme.

Integration - we are building up strong links with the MOD, Bath Spa University, local businesses and community groups.

Other Issues

Railway Station - As hopefully you are now aware a "Town Team", which includes Town and Wiltshire Councillors, MPs, Transwiltts and local businesses, has been assembled in order to drive the initiative forward in a practical sense. Although this group is only a few weeks old it has made significant progress.

The town's Fairtrade and "Walkers are Welcome" status has been maintained, which is a credit to the volunteers who have worked so hard. Thank you to all involved.

The Town Council is committed to open governance and community engagement. Residents are encouraged to attend and participate in

Council meetings. For those that cannot attend, Corsham, I believe, is the only town or parish council in Wiltshire that broadcasts its Full Council meetings live (thanks to KIK Radio). A Chairman's surgery is held monthly on a Friday. The newsletter has a comments and suggestions section which residents are encouraged to complete. Any enquiry or concern received is answered in a timely fashion. Information about the work of the council is available on its website, Facebook and through Twitter.

*(ii) Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee
(Councillor P Anstey)*

The Committee Chairman reported the achievements and plans of the Finance and Administration Committee for the year as follows:

During the year the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations have been updated in line with best practice and the auditors have approved the accounts for 2014-15. Under the guidance of the Chief Executive and Head of Finance and Administration, all the Council staff are aware of budgetary constraints and spending is controlled effectively. We thank them for their industrious support throughout the year.

Last year, 2015-16, there was no increase in the Town Council's part of your Council Tax. This year the Council Tax Support Grant, funded by Central Government and distributed by Wiltshire Council has been reduced. The Town Council wished to maintain its project work and take responsibility for the public conveniences that Wiltshire Council were going to close. As a result it was felt necessary to increase the Town Council's element of the Council Tax. This increase equates to £7.71 per Band D equivalent property for the year - or just under 15p per week.

One of our longstanding projects has been to find a site for a new cemetery. Having reached agreement with a local landowner I am pleased to announce that a suitable site has been found and, once the legal aspects are finalised, we will move forward with a planning application. I would like to thank all involved for their patience and co-operation throughout this process.

Contrary to expectation, the number of requests for grant funding and the number of grants awarded fell during the year from 30 in 2014-15 to 10 in 2015-16. This resulted in an underspend of the grant budget. The Council is committed to supporting organisations that are helping meet the needs of the community and would welcome more applications for grants.

*(iii) Chairman of the Property and Amenities Committee (Councillor
Mrs M Wakeman)*

The Committee Chairman reported the achievements and plans of the Property and Amenities Committee for the year as follows:

An asset management plan has been created and approved for Corsham Town Council. During the year, development of the Public Realm Study continued, including several public consultations. Plans are now being produced for some of the ideas from this study.

The new play area next to Springfield Campus opened last July and is hugely popular with both children and their parents.

The Town Council have taken over the operation of a Speed Indicator Device which will be available for use around the town shortly.

Following the decision by Wiltshire Council to transfer public conveniences to local councils, Corsham has taken over the management of the toilets in Newlands Road car park.

The Town Council has also agreed to fund the rest of the repaving of the High Street, with Wiltshire Council doing the work.

Wiltshire Council has proposed that they remove the recycling facility in Post Office Lane Car Park in four to six weeks. As recycling facilities and/or fortnightly collections are now available to all and fly tipping occurs at the recycling site, this seems a sensible move. Should any member of the public have strong views regarding this, please let us know at the Town Council.

(iv) Chairman of the Community Services Committee (Councillor S Abbott)

The Committee Chairman reported the achievements and plans of the Community Services Committee for the year as follows:

The Summer Street Fair took place on 28 June to mark Armed Forces Day. It was a hugely successful event, as was the Christmas Lights Switch-On which was bigger and better than ever.

Despite the disappointment of *Poldark* not returning, the two photography exhibitions that ran at the Town Hall and Tourist Information Centre were both hugely popular and encouraged a number of visitors to the town.

The Town Council's Destination Management Plan and Destination Marketing Plan were produced and approved, giving a framework for tourism and increasing footfall, and thus helping local businesses in the town centre. As part of this, local artist Susie Brooks was commissioned to produce a new town map which met with great approval. There has also been an increase in advertising the town both locally and nationally, and we continue to work with Visit Wiltshire in promoting the town.

As part of the Safe and Healthy Community theme of the Strategic Plan, research has begun on healthcare provision in the parish and Town Council officers are now part of the regular Integrated Team Meetings at The Porch Surgery.

Walking Festival - The Corsham for Walking group held a hugely successful three-day festival, from 12-14 June, supported by the Town Council. The event runs again this year, from 17-19 June.

ATM 07/16 Town Council Accounts (Subject to Audit)

The unaudited draft balance sheet was received by the meeting.

ATM 08/16 Question time for Townspeople

The Chairman was asked if Corsham Youth Council could consider discussing litter as a topic during the year. It was explained that the Youth Council sets its own agenda but the suggestion would be put to the Youth Councillors.

ATM 09/16 Community Awards Ceremony

The Community Awards Ceremony took place. Special mention was made of Andrea Garrihy, who had sadly passed away in March 2016. She had done a great deal for the Arts in Corsham from the 1960s onwards.

Community Awards were presented to the following:

Jackie Stanley – For her commitment and dedication to Corsham Hockey Club;
Eileen Mitchell – For her valuable contribution to Corsham Bowls Club;
The Scoop the Poop Group – For the work they have done to Keep Corsham Tidy;
Ben Hayday – For all he has done for The Corsham School and the local community.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and closed at 9.15pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATE