



CHIPPING NORTON TOWN COUNCIL

THE GUILDHALL, CHIPPING NORTON, OXFORDSHIRE OX7 5NJ

TEL: 01608 642341 Fax: 01608 645206

Email: cntc@btconnect.com

Office Hours: Mon – Fri 9am – 1pm

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

THURSDAY 24th APRIL 2008

IN THE LARGE HALL, TOWN HALL, CHIPPING NORTON

AT 7.30 P.M.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 26th April 2007.
2. Apologies for absence.
3. Report on year's activities by The Mayor.
4. Any Other Business.

CHIPPING NORTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

At the Annual Chipping Norton Town Meeting held on 26th April 2007 at 7.30 pm in the Large Hall, The Town Hall, Chipping Norton, pursuant to notice the following persons were present:

Town Council

Cllr. Mrs. G.M. Burrows (Town Mayor)

Cllr. G. Alcock

Cllr. Mrs. E. Coles

Cllr. M. Dixon

Cllr. R.LI. Evans

Cllr. B. Galbraith

Cllr. J.J. Grantham

Cllr. Mrs. J. Graves

Cllr. K. Greenwell

Cllr. M. Jarratt

Cllr. P. Lake

Cllr. Mrs. S. Wilkes

Officer: The Town Clerk

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

160 The Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27th April 2006 were approved by the meeting and signed by the Mayor.

161 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. D. Davidson, Cllr. Mrs. P.A. Simmons and Cllr. Y. Qadir.

162 Annual Report

The Mayor presented her Annual Report which had been circulated to Councillors and was available at the meeting to everyone attending.

The following were the subject headings of the report: - Attendances of Councillors at Council Meetings, Numbers of Committee meetings.

Changes – Vanessa Oliveri had become Town Clerk and Michael Fletcher was now her Deputy. Sarah Brown had been appointed Town Clerk's Secretary and Terry Palmer was now the Town Hall Keeper.

Major Issues

The future of the Hospital and Castle View

The poor air quality

The proximity and response of police and ambulance services

Provision of facilities for children

Maintenance of the balance of employment, housing and services

Balance of services

Council property

Town Hall

Cemetery, Pool Meadow and Town Gardens

Civic Pride – 400th anniversary of its Charter

163 Issues raised by those present at the meeting

1. Police Presence

There was general concern with the lack of police presence in the town especially after several incidents which had happened.

Cllr. Mrs. G.M. Gurrows stated that the police had been invited to the meeting to help answer any questions raised.

The members of the public present were concerned with the amount of incidents over the last year and they were also concerned about the call out times before anybody got to the incident.

Threshers window had been broken three times recently, Corbetts had been ram raided, the Co-op food had been broken into, some of the allotment sheds on the Burford Road had been broken into and The Lido had suffered vandalism. A question was raised, "Why couldn't there be more police patrolling the town, especially in the evenings."

The policeman present answered that there was twenty four hour coverage in the area and at any one time there were two police officers covering the OX7 area.

There was a police plan in action and the police would be more than happy to discuss this with Town Councillors.

Mr. Osmond asked why the Town Council was not engaging with the police and talking about the issues raised. He also asked if anybody had seen the police plan.

2. Crossings

The provision of crossings in London Road/Albion Street was raised.

Two zebra crossings, one pelican crossing and four bus stops were to be provided when the new hospital was built in London Road.

3. Town Partnership

Mr. Graham Birks asked if it was true that the Town Partnership was folding.

County Cllr. Mrs. H. Biles responded that this was not true.

A question was raised, "What was happening with the employment land on the Parker Knoll site." The employment land was actually going through the process of the lawyers and finalising contractors.

An Enterprise Centre was to be built on the employment land

4. Chain of Office

Mrs. C. Maunder raised concerns with the chain of office leaving the country and asked if the chain was insured.

Cllr. Mrs. G. Burrows stated that the chain was insured and when visitors came to England they wore their chain of office.

5. Provision for Youth of the Town

An application had gone in for a Multi-Use-Games Area on the common and a Teen Shelter.

Hailcorns Tenants Association were going ahead with providing new play equipment in Cornish Road.

The Recreation Committee are planning for a bigger budget in the next financial year to upgrade the playground facilities in the town.

6. Toilets

Plans to have the public toilets at the Town Hall renovated had been distributed.

Cllr. Mrs. E. Coles requested an additional toilet to be provided instead of such a large storage area. This matter was to be discussed at the next Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Date of Next Meeting: 24th April 2008.

CHIPPING NORTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE TOWN MEETING

24 APRIL 2008

1. Meetings of the Council

Eleven meetings of the Council have been held since the last Town Meeting on 26th April 2007.

Cllr Mrs G M Burrows, Mayor	9
Cllr G Alcock	10
Cllr C J Butterworth	10
Cllr Mrs E Coles	11
Cllr M J Dixon	11
Cllr R LI Evans	10
Cllr J J Grantham	8
Cllr Mrs J M Graves	7
Cllr K Greenwell	10
Cllr P M Jarratt	11
Cllr P A Lake	9
Cllr J Osmond	7
Cllr G T Watkins	10
Cllr Mrs S J Wilkes	10
Cllr Mrs H J Williams	8
Cllr Ms K Withers	10

2. Meetings of Council's Committees

The following number of meetings of Council's Committees have been held since 26th April 2007.

Cemetery	4
Finance & General Purposes	4
Grants to Voluntary Bodies	1
Health & Safety	1
Planning	13
Recreation & Greystones	6
Town Hall	4
Traffic Advisory	1

3. Town Mayor to report on Year's Activities.

Chipping Norton Town Council – Report for the year 2007-8

New Council

Following last year's Town Council elections we have now a new Town Council consisting of 11 continuing Councillors and 5 newcomers who have fitted themselves well into the ongoing tasks as well as bringing new ideas and expertise to the Council. We began the year with a Town Council Awayday-at-home in which the whole Council met for an evening unshackled by the constraints of a meeting. We engaged Janet Eustace, Town Clerk of Carterton to facilitate the evening during which we identified many of the challenges that face us and thought through ways of resolving them. Many of the ideas brought up on that occasion have taken root.

Our Town Clerk, Vanessa Oliveri, has continued with the help of Sarah Brown and support from Michael Fletcher but they have been under considerable pressure due to the continued absence on long-term sickness of Janet Griffin. Janet is however on the mend and soon to return. Terry Palmer continues as our Town Hall Keeper and Roy Watson has been engaged on a part-time basis to carry out a number of useful tasks.

It seems crazy that the Town Council should only come up for scrutiny at this meeting after its final meeting of the year. Consequently in November we held a Town Council and Town Hall Open Day in which chairs of committees set up stalls to demonstrate the issues they face, Councillors were on hand to answer questions and the Town Hall itself was on show with regular users being invited to have stalls and demonstrate their activities. Over 'tea with the Mayor' and other Councillors we were able to discuss and record a number of issues that concerned people.

Major Issues

New Council or old, some of the issues carry over and it is always necessary to re-assure the public that things are not forgotten but that the wheels of local authorities do sometimes grind very slowly.

- Planning permission for the new hospital and care-home has at last been passed and we await with bated breath the sight of yellow diggers in the London Road
- The Air Quality Action Plan which is to reduce the pollution caused by heavy lorries was put on public display and discussed and voted upon at this week's Town Council
- Concern about community safety and policing has continued to be an issue but we have now a regular up-date on current crime incidents and follow-up. There remains anxiety about the ability to apprehend those who undertake mindless vandalism.
- Provision of improved facilities for youth has engaged both the Planning Working Group, the Town Partnership and the Recreation Committee
- Planning and the increased densification of new building within the town gives us cause for concern.

HGVs and Pollution: this week's Town Council meeting discussed proposals put by WODC and OCC and considered the options outlined in their Action Plan. Since receiving this it is understood that signage has at last gone up at the Wolvercote Roundabout in Oxford suggesting an alternative route and increased enforcement of the existing weight limit is to begin. It is to be seen what differences these will make.

Police and Community Safety: the District Council's Community Safety Partnership has undertaken some tasks this year – a public workshop on Community Safety was cancelled but potential participants were invited to the Community Partnership meeting to express their concerns. Cllr John Osmond was appointed as a link-person between the Police and the Town Council and he has kept in touch with issues. Meanwhile the Who's My Bobby website www.whosmybobby.co.uk and regular up-dates have filled some of the knowledge gap about what is happening. Inspector Sarah Myatt, the newly appointed member of the local team, came to the Town Council meeting to answer questions. Police are keen that members of the public should report all instances of crime and nuisance direct to them rather than that they should hear by indirect means. There have been some distressing cases of criminal damage and vandalism which have not been able so far to have been sorted out due to lack of evidence (the Crown Prosecution Service will not proceed with cases unless there is substantial evidence which is very often hard to establish). A number of PCSOs have been engaged who are helping to spread the policing load and establishing relationships with local people. There has also been a drive to recruit Special Constables and Operation Juice has taken place to cut down on underage drinking and the sale of alcohol to minors.

The issue of CCTV has been addressed and was discussed at a recent Town Council meeting. At Monday's meeting an 'in principle' acceptance of the need for it was passed but negotiations about the siting and revenue costs have to take place.

Youth facilities: a number of initiatives have taken place during the year. The Planning Working Party has taken on a project to look at the feasibility of establishing a new youth club in the hospital building once it is vacated. Cllrs Alcock and Greenwell did an extensive survey of all the possible sites but it was the hospital building that was the choice of the Council.

The Recreation Committee, who are also part of this, began the year by learning that the funding had been agreed for the MUGA on the Common. This project has not moved as fast as we would like for bureaucratic reasons but we are hopeful of seeing a result before too long.

Our ageing play equipment has been the subject of some serious inspections and it is imperative that work is done to improve safety. We now have a team of 4 accredited inspectors and have engaged contractors to carry out some of the most pressing tasks. A major consideration has been the replacement of safety surfaces which is a costly undertaking. Some of our equipment is no longer acceptable by current standards and so moves are underway to remove the big slide on the Common.

The Youth Forum, set up by the Town Partnership under the guidance of Cllrs Evans and Williams, has continued to meet and has now been granted funding to enable them to hold

a Chill-out session for young people in the Town Hall on a weekly basis. They recently gave a presentation to the Sixth Form at Chipping Norton School.

The play equipment at Hailcorns is now in situ but not in use yet as the grass has to be allowed to grow. This is an amazing achievement by a small number of dedicated residents and we hope that this site will soon be available for the children of the area.

Grants to a whole range of youth activities were given by the Town Council's 'Grants to Voluntary Bodies' but as ever there is always a call for new leadership and volunteers to work with youth and others alike. A much larger proportion of the precept was allocated to Recreation this year in addition to Cllr Dixon organising another beer festival for funds.

Council Property: the Council is in negotiation with the Rugby Club about its lease as well as deliberations about the future use of Greystones House. The Nortons and Silver Band are still using it for storage but are holding their rehearsals elsewhere.

Negotiations have also taken place to increase the rental paid on the Manorial lands (Q8 garage).

Further Town Hall improvements could not be financed from this year's precept and so plans to replace the floor in the Upper Hall have been put on hold. However we retained enough from last year to have the back of the stage decorated. Cllr Watkins has produced a brochure for potential hirers and Cllr Lake has done an analysis of bookings which indicates that the greatest use is made by local organisations, then commercial firms and finally charities. New notice boards and sound equipment have been purchased.

The public toilets were finally opened last summer and have had their share of difficulties but are currently in use.

We at last have a 'proper' notice-board outside the Town Hall with an indication of What's On week by week.

Cemetery and Pool Meadow

Clearance days have been held in addition to the town Spring Clean and we are always grateful to those who volunteer. Work has been carried out at the Cemetery to clean more space and also to consider the safety of some of the gravestones. As a result some were laid down by the Cemetery Committee as they constituted a danger though sadly some people misunderstood this as vandalism. This indicates yet again the need for us to keep our citizens informed of what is going on.

The Millennium Garden is now being tended by Richard Taylor on a contract from the Town Council. Last year's flower beds were not a great success but Toparius who had carried out the work offered to completely re-plant and maintain the main beds for the year as long as they could put up an advertising sign. Much good comment has since been received.

The Town Gardens Project therefore decided to invest the money they had collected in tubs of flowers. These are in evidence and more are planned.

The Green Gym has carried out good work on Pool Meadow.

Putting Chipping Norton on the map

The existing town leaflet had run out and since WODC tourism was not prepared to fund it some money was raised via the Town Partnership and local businesses to allow a reprint, this time advertising our Town Hall.

With the appointment of Ken Norman in charge of marketing the town for the Town Partnership, an excellent leaflet was produced for the Christmas shopping period and a new one is in process with a longer shelf-life.

Meanwhile the monstrosity of the Scenic Maps edifice on Bottom Side has at last been resolved and we have purchased it as a Town Council. Plans are now in process to replace the map and to offer up the surrounding slots to local businesses who will benefit from finding themselves literally 'on the map'.

While WODC expresses its value in tourism as a vital part of the economy, their closure of the Visitor Information Centre has not helped this. While some facilities are available through the WODC office in the Guildhall in the week, there is no provision at weekends which is when visitors most often come. As a result we have now set up a volunteer Visitor and Community Information Office in the Town Hall, run by a team of over 20 volunteers and offering a wide range of publications (some specially produced by former councillor Peta Simmons). This office ran as a pilot last summer and has this year been open since the start of the Easter holidays. We have managed to make a small profit through sales of our publications but have received nothing from the District Council.

Planning

While we are not the Planning Authority issues do come to the Council for consultation. There was concern at the tendency to use up gardens and every available green space for further housing and so there was hot debate on the plans to build a number of flats on the site of one residence in Churchill Road. Further anxiety was demonstrated at the Public Meeting held last week to consider the application to build flats and houses on the burgage plots.

Meanwhile the Council has set up a Planning Working Group to consider a number of planning issues. This group produced a plan for the development of the town which the Council endorsed. As a result of this the Mayor has had a discussion with MP David Cameron and meetings have been, and will be held with various planning and other officers and elected members of both WODC and OCC. One of our major projects has been to secure, if possible, the hospital building for a youth centre but, as has been known through the hospital/care-home deliberations, it is extremely hard bring together a number of public bodies.

This group (Cllrs Alcock, Burrows, Evans, Grantham and Greenwell) also engaged in exploratory discussions with planning consultants which were immensely helpful and also guided us towards the Local Development Framework (successor to the District Plan) about which the Council is soon to meet to consider the options. Much of this has been covered by the submission we made last October to WODC about the Council's view of the future development of the town and which we discussed with the planners last December.

Taking pride in our town: as part of the celebrations for 1000 years of Oxfordshire we were fortunate to secure Symphonie Conique, a sound and light show from France which in collaboration with The Theatre, the Town Council, the Town Partnership and the Schools put on an ambitious event to launch the late night shopping event in December. Sadly the rain fell heavily but in true British (or French) spirit we carried on and though wet, enjoyed the spectacle and the restorative beverages in the various pubs and cafes afterwards.

Two of the best features of the town in winter are the pantomime at The Theatre and the Christmas lights. These two were brought together on that night when the panto dames attempted to 'switch on' the lights. As before the little Christmas trees had gone up the previous weekend thanks to Cllr Lake and the band of willing volunteers.

Last year we celebrated the awarding of our first Honorary Citizen medal to John Hannis but sadly John died earlier this year and a huge attendance in the Parish Church testified to his memory and his life-long contribution to the town. We have now nominations for a further award, details of which may be available soon.

It is good to recognise those members of our community who give so much. Some give a lifetime of service and there are others who respond to requests for help or who see something needing doing and get on with it. I would like to applaud all those who do this and it was never more evident than the other weekend when people signed up for the Town Spring Clean. This was collaboration between ourselves and WODC officers who provided all the equipment and whistled round afterwards collecting rubbish. Stalwart members of the community washed bus stops and road signs, picked up litter, identified fly-tipped rubbish, dug out weeds, cut back brambles and generally smartened up whole bits of the town. Sadly there is much more to do and also litter recurs but many who undertook this saw it as an ongoing challenge which they would engage in with their neighbours whenever they had time.

This sense of community is one of the most valuable things in our town and we must cherish it. I have had several remarks suggesting 'isn't this something we pay our Council Tax for?' to which I would answer, yes, probably, but it can't cover everything and if it isn't going to get done by another public authority in the short term then we have to get on with it (though it doesn't prevent us lobbying for improvements). Talking of which, our precept, our contribution to your Council Tax demand, rose this year by only 3% so I hope you will see we are doing our very best to give you good value. This town has a great many people who 'get on with it', we benefit from huge amounts of time, effort and expertise from people whose services we could never afford to pay for but who do things out of goodwill – whether they are youth leaders, carers, councillors, local charities, sports clubs and organisations – they are what makes this a good place to be and I want to offer them all thanks and encouragement.

Gina Burrows – Town Mayor

24th April 2008