

Houghton Regis Annual Town's Meeting
Minutes of the meeting held
on
15th May 2023

Present: Cllr Farrell (Town Mayor)
Clare Evans (Town Clerk)
17 Parishioners

WELCOME BY THE TOWN MAYOR

Cllr Farrell welcomed all those present to the meeting.

It was explained to attendees that the Annual Parish Meeting was different to the Annual Meeting of the Town Council as there had been some confusion highlighted.

The *Annual Parish Meeting* was a meeting that the town or parish council was required to call and facilitate. Legally only the Town Mayor and the Clerk had to be present.

The *Annual Meeting of the Town Council* was, in effect, the AGM of the council. It was a formal meeting of the Town Council where the Council considered and adopted its governing policies, set its meeting dates and allocated duties to councillors.

MINUTES

The meeting was requested to confirm the accuracy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th April 2022.

The Minutes of the Annual Town's meeting held on 11th April 2022 were approved as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

It was advised that Tithe Farm Sports Project was progressing well, contractors had been onsite for the pavilion and the contract was due to be signed for the pitch. It was hoped that construction was to be completed by the autumn, however there may be a delay to opening due to the power connection required to the site. The project had been 70% externally funded, with thanks to the Football Federation, Youth Investment Fund and Central Bedfordshire Council. The YIF funding opened new doors to enable the council to enhance its youth work.

It was advised that the start of the year saw regular monitoring taking place at Grendall Lane with a view to assess suitability for use as cemetery ground, but part way through the consultants advised of significant ground water initiatives which would have

made the establishment of a cemetery in this location extremely problematic and costly. The council made a very difficult and contentious decision to cease investigation of this land on this basis, however the council remained keen to establish a new burial ground in Houghton Regis but it continued to prove a difficult project to bring forward. It was advised that suitable land was still being sought.

A petition was handed in to the council from residents requesting Grendall Lane be put back onto the agenda to re-establish the continuation of monitoring the site for cemetery use.

The council had continued to provide a full and varied programme of community events, some larger some smaller, some for all, some more targeted. The events had proven popular with residents including the Coronation which saw some very poor weather conditions, however there was still a good turnout and the event was enjoyed by those who attended.

It was advised that the Neighbourhood Plan work had continued throughout the year. The draft plan was being presented for approval to Town Council on Wednesday 17th May 2023 to go to Central Bedfordshire Council. It was hoped that the Neighbourhood Plan was close to the point for referendum.

The Town Council was delighted to open the Terra Croft Leisure Gardens in April this year after aspiring to be able to offer an allotment site to residents for many years. The plots were completely oversubscribed by applicants. We were now into a period of settling in, the site certainly always seemed to be busy. The Council was hopeful that a second site would become available in 2024.

It was advised that work had begun on a new website for the Town Council, which would be user friendly.

Updates from Not for Profit Groups operating in Houghton Regis

Friends of Windsor Drive Community Open Space were in attendance and advised they were growing strong in numbers and interest was increasing, several events had been enjoyed including a Coronation Event.

A website had been created to work alongside social media.

Support had been gained from Houghton Regis Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council had made the decision to postpone development of the site. Support had been gained from Andrew Selous who had offered some suggestions moving forward, and fitness sessions had been attended and litter picks supported, many more events were planned for Windsor Drive Community Open Space.

Friends of Windsor Drive Community Open Space pledged to continue in their proactive approach to support residents in using the recreation land effectively.

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Matters raised by register electors of the parish of Houghton Regis

It was suggested that Windsor Drive have a 'No Mow May' drive which would see Windsor Drive having an increase of bio-diversity by allowing pollinators to thrive. Also suggested was a piece of land on Windsor Drive be dedicated as a wild flower patch, which would also aid the increase of bio-diversity.

It was requested that the Town Council support the request for the support of the growth of wild flowers on Windsor Drive.

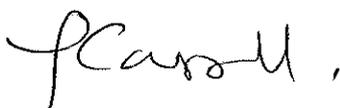
The suggestion of a green task force was made, it was advised that the staff structure had been reviewed and would be assessed once the new staff structure was in place.

It was queried whether the petition that had been handed in was going to be ignored. It was advised that the petition would be taken and processed in accordance with Town Council procedures, however, attendees were assured that the council was keen to provide a cemetery, however the council had made the decision not to pursue the land at Grendall Lane.

The Town Mayor thanked all attendees for attending the Annual Town's meeting.

The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 7.33pm.

Date: 15th April 2024.

CHAIRMAN 

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