

DURSLEY TOWN MEETING

22nd May 2018

MINUTES of the PROCEEDINGS at the ANNUAL ASSEMBLY of the DURSLEY TOWN MEETING held at The Chantry Centre, Long Street, Dursley at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, the 22nd day of May 2018.

PRESENT

Councillor N Grecian, Town Mayor in the Chair

46 people were present and the names of 23 Local Government Electors are recorded on the attendance sheet.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting held on 23rd May 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings at that meeting.

2. MATTERS ARISING

In relation to the minute dated 23rd May 2017, item 5 (page 2), a resident confirmed that Rosebery Mount had been resurfaced; this follows the original request made to County Councillor Patrick at the 2017 Annual Assembly.

3. REPORT OF THE TOWN MAYOR

The Town Mayor reported upon the activities of the Town Council during the past year (outlined in the Annual Report 2017/18), including the engagements that he had attended as Mayor; welcoming new Councillors onto Council; the many community events that had taken place; purchasing the Reliance House site and embarking on a major project to create a new car park, the continued improvements at Highfields Play Area and in the town centre; the 2018/19 budget, project work and partnership working.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone involved for all their hard work over the year and expressed what an honour and a privilege it had been to serve as Town Mayor.

It was noted that Councillor Neil Grecian had been re-elected to serve as Town Mayor and Councillor Mandy Woodward had been elected to serve as Deputy Town Mayor for the 2018/19 period. Both were very much looking forward to continuing to serve the community of Dursley.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Suzi Abraham for her service as Deputy Mayor and also Fiona Firth who stepped down as a Town Councillor in 2017.

The Town Mayor announced that, for the first time, Dursley had been selected to host Cotswold Hares as part of the 2018 Cotswold AONB Hare Trail. The Hares, of which there are 9, would be present in the town from today (22nd May) until 9th September 2018. Those present were encouraged to visit the Council's website to find out more www.dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk and also www.cotswoldsharetrail.org.uk.

4. RESIDENTS FROM OUTSIDE DURSLEY

It was resolved to allow residents from outside Dursley to speak at the meeting.

5. REPORTS OF COUNTY COUNCILLORS

The Town Mayor welcomed Councillor Patrick to the meeting.

Councillor Patrick explained that she had provided a full written report for the meeting which was available in the 2018 'Councillor & Community Group Reports' document. The work relating specifically to Dursley was outlined at the bottom of the report (page 1).

Residents were encouraged to make Councillor Patrick aware of other small roads in need of work by the end of the month, so they could be considered for inclusion in a plan of works being prepared.

In response, it was highlighted that the top of Hill Road was in a poor state with several pot holes; the curbs along Long Street had been broken in many places, due to large lorries mounting the pavement to pass.

Councillor Patrick agreed to check who would be responsible for the broken curbs, given lorries are causing the damage.

6. REPORTS OF DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

The Town Mayor welcomed District Councillors Cornell, Fryer and Hayward to the meeting.

Councillor Cornell explained that full written reports had been provided by the District Councillors and were available in the 2018 'Councillor & Community Group Reports' document.

In addition to the reports, Councillor Cornell took the opportunity to announce that the 'Pulse' had exceeded planned income by approx. £250,000; this achievement was down to high usage by the community and a fantastic team of staff.

Councillor Patrick raised concerns that since the charges for bulky waste had been introduced, the area had seen a rise in fly tipping incidents; staff are good at removing waste when reported but this removal is costing the district money.

In response Councillor Cornell explained that Stroud District Council identify problems and monitor fly tipping closely, when compared against national statistics the district is not that bad, in other areas it is a lot worse; fly tipping is always a worry and the Council continue to monitor it closely.

Councillor Fryer reported on huge financial constraints, with the loss of the central government grant and the £500,000 amount that Stroud District Council would be required to pay back in the future.

Councillor Fryer also reported on the district's commitment to social housing and that Stroud District Council are one of only a few councils that actually build houses.

7. PRESENTATION FROM MR DAVID HAGG, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Town Mayor welcomed Mr David Hagg, Chief Executive of Stroud District Council.

Mr Hagg outlined his background and the 17 years he had been at the Council, sharing his thoughts on Stroud and Dursley during this time. He informed those present that he would be retiring in the Autumn.

Mr Hagg noted that a few years back Dursley had been quite down and now, after a period of significant investment, Dursley is very much thought of as one of the premier towns in the district.

Mr Hagg's presentation covered the following points:

- Rising resident satisfaction across the Stroud District (93% are satisfied or very satisfied), against declining trends nationally. There are many factors that could feed into this result e.g. council's performance, positivity about the area.
- The big issue of affordable housing. Overall the district has been successful in obtaining 30% contribution of units for developments, however there are the odd sites where this has not been the case e.g. the Bymacks/Crest Nicholson site.
- The new road connection and layout through Littlecombe and the Crest Nicholson site.
- The adopted Local Plan and the 436 units that must be delivered each year; Cam and Stonehouse are seeing large scale housing developments.
- The Government's calculations for the affordability index and a 40% increase to 635 units a year for the district in the future, over the Local Plan period; the highest index rating of anywhere in the country. The next review of the Local Plan (for 2020), will have to consider more housing sites, which are unlikely to be in Dursley because of constraints relating to the availability of housing land.
- The success of the Sainsbury's development and the positive impact this has had on the town as well as other developments incl. the Fire Station and relocation of the Ambulance Service, Rednock School and the Library.
- Stroud District Council's investment in Kingshill House and plans to complete a transfer to the charity running the property.
- Stroud District Council is under huge financial constraints. There is a need to generate funds to cover the loss of the central government grant, which in previous years was £3 million and to cover a £500k pay back to Government; Council Tax is capped at 2.99%, unless agreed at a referendum, which would cost £150k to administer. The Secretary of State has agreed to review the situation.
- Stroud District Council needs to become a self-financing authority in order to cope with the financial challenges it faces; finance can only be raised via Council Tax and generating income. The Council needs to make £3.5 million savings over 4 years, £2 million has been identified so far.
- The success of the Littlecombe housing and hospital development and use of flexible space for units for let which, as well as provide new facilities and jobs for the community, generate an income for the Council.

- The Pulse has been a huge success, exceeded income targets by ¼ million pounds; it is the district's southern leisure centre and very well managed.
- The pressure on the Council's services to reduce staffing costs and as a result, there is a 4 year plan to reduce staffing by 20% which will unfortunately involve redundancies.
- The Council's desire to work with the Town Council on the new car park development at Reliance House.
- The forthcoming consultation on public car parking charges. It is felt by the district that the introduction of charges would be in the best interest of the town, the evidence is not there that it will kill trade, it should actually generate shopper turnover.
- Dursley has benefited from some very positive developments and investments, it has 'upped its game' and has a very active Town Council.

Questions were raised about possible future development of Tricorn House and Newport Towers, both outside of Dursley, and why they had been empty/unused for so long.

In response Mr Hagg confirmed that they are both in private ownership and the Council had been pushing to get both developed; a planning application is close to being submitted for Tricorn House, to create an extra storey and 30 units (of 2 bed apartments, priced at approx. £160k,).

Mr Hagg highlighted that there are 5,000 outstanding units in the district which have planning permission.

Councillor Patrick noted Mr Hagg's forthcoming retirement and thanked him for his service to the District.

A question was raised about the possibility of making Long Street traffic one-way.

In response Mr Hagg and the Town Clerk explained that, while it had been raised with the Town Council before, there were no plans in place to make the road one-way, the issue would be a matter for Gloucestershire County Council highways; the town needs to first see how the planned new road layout and resulting flow of traffic at the bottom of Long Street, performs.

A question was raised regarding the low rate of planning applications successfully being called to the Development Control Committee by Town and Parish Councils and their poor experience of the process.

In response, Mr Hagg explained that the Council's policy and scheme of delegation had not changed, if there are good justifiable planning reasons for the request i.e. related to a material planning consideration and linked to policy, then they are called in to committee; 95% of applications are dealt with and decided by Officers.

The news story of the day published by the Gazette, relating to Stroud District Council's 'budget crash' was highlighted, Mr Hagg explained that the story was not correct.

In response the Gazette Editor present at the meeting, highlighted that the story had come in from a BBC Local Democracy Reporter; before publishing, the Gazette had

contacted the Stroud District Council press department 4 times for comment and also spoke to the Leader, Councillor Cornell, no comment was received. The Gazette had felt that they had done everything they could to communicate with Stroud District Council; the Editor was happy to discuss it further outside of the meeting.

The Mayor thanked Mr Hagg for his presentation.

8. TO RECEIVE PRESENTATIONS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

The Mayor introduced the Annual Assembly of Dursley Town Meeting 2018 'Councillor and Community Group Reports' document, distributed at the meeting.

Those groups present were invited to add any key points not already included in the published document.

Stroud District Council's new Youth Worker, Jemma Grieve, introduced herself and explained that she would be facilitating the local Cam and Dursley Youth Forum, a forum that gives young people an opportunity to express views and be heard by decision makers.

Kate Baldwin from the Great Western Air Ambulance took the opportunity to thank Dursley Town Council for grant support; the charity and service is independent and not part of the NHS so fundraising is paramount. A report is included in the 'Councillor and Community Group Reports' document.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for contributing, highlighting the great amount of positive work in the town that is down to hardworking, committed volunteers.

9. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE CAR PARK COMMITTEE

Councillor Ackroyd gave an update report relating to the Car Park and Reliance House site.

It was noted that an asbestos survey was being undertaken and, subject to this, demolition work was expected to start in June.

10. TO DISCUSS TOWN MATTERS GENERALLY

The following issues were raised by the audience:

i) At the bottom of Whiteway, close to the gateway planter, would it be possible to create a safe footpath from the woods to the town? There is a 20m stretch of this popular route which is on the road and very risky for pedestrians.

The Town Clerk agreed to look at this request with Gloucestershire County Council Highways.

ii) The Cam & Dursley Transportation group is looking at bus connections and the train station, could the Town Council look at the state of the May Lane Bus Station to see

if anything could be done to improve its appearance/welcome?

The Town Clerk agreed to liaise with Stroud District Council (the owner) and Gloucestershire County Council (the lease holder) to see what improvements could be made.

iii) There has been a number of acts of vandalism in the town recently (e.g. smashed windows, plants taken) which would indicate that such incidents are on the increase, this is a concern.

The Town Clerk referred to recent Police investigations and a period of anti-social behaviour in the town, which had had a huge impact at the time but had since settled down; the Town Council had agreed to introduce a new CCTV system this financial year which would cover black spots around the town, the War Memorial Recreation Ground and new Long Street Car Park. (see v) below).

iv) The Town Council recently raised concerns about the future of the Kingshill Pub and the possibility of registering it as a community asset, there has been recent activity on site, what is happening?

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Town Council had written to the brewery about the future of the pub but received no response, within 10 days of the letter being sent a 'for sale' sign went up; the property was sold and the new owner is keen to operate it as a pub and also sell mobility vehicles from the site.

v) PC Lay responded to the earlier question raised about vandalism and anti-social behaviour iii):

PC Lay confirmed that the incident regarding the smashed windows in the town centre was a random act carried out in one night by a 42 year old male and not connected to the town's recent ongoing anti-social behaviour problem; the police incident statistics for the town over the last month are now going in the right direction and the anti-social behaviour situation is under control.

The Town Clerk highlight how shocked the town was by the level of recent anti-social behaviour by a small group and how difficult the situation was.

On behalf of the Council, the Town Clerk thanked PC Lay and the local Police team for the work they undertook, often behind the scenes, to deal with the problem, he also thanked The Door youth team, who also contributed significant support.

vi) Will the new CCTV system monitoring station be based in the town?

The Town Clerk confirmed that the system data will be held by the Town Council and be monitored from the town on a reactive basis; the specification of the system and cameras used would be a good enhancement to the existing system and compatible with that currently in use and monitored at the CCTV Headquarters in Quedgeley.

The Town Mayor encouraged people to contact their local councillors if they had any issues or questions regarding the town at any time; everyone is welcome to attend monthly Council and Committee meetings which are open to the public. Full Council

meetings are held at the Fire Station and Committee meetings at the Library check the Council website for dates www.dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk .

11. LESLIE D GALE AWARD

The Town Mayor explained that the Leslie D Gale Award was instituted in 1994, as a tribute to the late Mr. Gale, who was the last Chairman of Dursley Parish Council and the first Mayor of Dursley, and who served the community in so many ways. The Leslie D Gale Award not only recognises longevity of service to the community but also impact.

The 2018 awards were announced as following:

The Leslie D Gale award for **Outstanding Service to the Community of Dursley** is awarded to **Councillor Jane Ball** in recognition of her long service and commitment to the town not only as a Councillor, but also with the Dursley & District Community Association, Hospital League of Friends and Royal British Legion. The award was accepted at the meeting.

The Town Mayor announced that the Leslie D Gale award for **Outstanding Service to the Community of Dursley** is awarded jointly to **Mr Chris Cherry and Mrs Linda Cherry** in recognition of their commitment and contribution to the town, Vale Vision and Dursley Welcomes Walkers activities. The award was accepted at the meeting.

The Town Mayor announced that the Leslie D Gale award for **Outstanding Service to the Community of Dursley** is awarded to **Mr Tom Arnold** in recognition of his commitment and support to fundraising activities for the town including Festive Dursley. The award was presented at the meeting.

The Town Mayor announced that the Leslie D Gale **'Unsung Hero'** award for **Outstanding Service to the Community of Dursley** is awarded to **Kate Reynolds** in recognition of her continued volunteering efforts, with the Royal British Legion, Remembrance activities and Festive Dursley. The award would be presented at the next available Royal British Legion meeting.

The Town Mayor closed the Assembly at 8:35pm and invited those present to join him in some light refreshment

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Town Mayor

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Date