

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of Ellesmere Town Council held on Wednesday, 6th May 2015, at 6.30pm at Ellesmere Town Hall.

Present: The Town Mayor, Cllr A Clarke.

Attendees: Cllrs J Frost, G Elner, M Harris, R Hartley, S Thornton, I Ward, Mrs L Davies, MRs C Chenery, Mrs J Clayton and Mrs J Williams, Town Clerk – Mrs M Evans and Assistant Clerk - Miss J Butterworth.

1. Apologies for Absence – No apologies were received.
2. Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interest. To receive declarations under consideration on this agenda in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 s32 and The Relevant Authorities (disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012. RESOLVED: to note.
3. Grant Dispensations. RESOLVED: to note none received.
4. Minutes. To read and confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Council Meeting held on: Tuesday, 6th May, 2014. RESOLVED: that the minutes were approved, confirmed and signed as a true copy.
5. Guest Speaker Mr Goulbourne, Founding Member of Dementias Action Alliance. Mr Goulbourne sent apologies on behalf of Mr George Rook who was due to speak but had a prior engagement. He then went onto explain that himself and Mr Rook have been trained to give Dementia Awareness Sessions and that they are with the Alliance trying to create Dementia friendly Communities, 1,200,000 people have signed up to be Dementia Friends in the last 12 months. Dementia is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease or a series of strokes. The specific symptoms that someone with dementia experiences will depend on the parts of the brain that are damaged and the disease that is causing the dementia, ¼ of people that get Dementia are over 65. Courses are being run locally to raise awareness, nationally different organisations are all doing things to make themselves Dementia Friendly such as improving signage and making facilities more user friendly, at RAF Cosford the staff are even taking out Artefacts to help people with their memories. Ellesmere Library are running the next Dementia Friends session presented by Mr Goulbourne on Monday, 11th May, 2015 at 10am, the course will last approximately 45 minutes, anyone wanting to attend please contact the Library. Cllr Elner asked if the awareness work is funded to which he was told that it is not but all the Alliance are looking for is volunteers not funding. Cllr Ward asked if under 65's are also effected and the answer is yes they can be.
6. Town Mayor's Report and Thanks.

Looking back over this last year my thoughts are immediately drawn to the sad loss of our fellow Councillor Brian Knight who served on this Town Council for 40 years. His opening remarks" the people of Ellesmere need, want, expect" reverberated around this chamber on many occasions and will be sorely missed. I was privileged to pay tribute to his years of service at his funeral.

This year was also overshadowed by the resignations of 3 Councillors: Sharon McMullan, Rod Harrington and Barry Phillips. They each in their own way brought something different to this council. I believe their departures were, in part, due to misinformation which resulted in misunderstandings that made their service to this council difficult to sustain. Their resignations

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added to the workload of those of us who were left and I thank you all, officers included, for coping with the extra workload.

The extra work was compounded by developers trying to take advantage of the uncertainty of planning regulations before SAMDEV agreement becomes firm policy. However the good news is that the Canalside development has overcome the restrictions placed by English Heritage and should therefore be approved for planning in the near future. The reduced size of the Hotel complex from 120 rooms to 80 should not have a detrimental impact on the long stay needs of the tourists to the town and all the other facilities offered, the marina, caravans, cabins, leisure centre, housing and footbridge linked to the Heritage centre across the canal are all additional complimentary attractions to our tourist trade. These offer many advantages for the local community; not least bringing increased employment opportunities and the new link road onto the Oswestry Road should reduce congestion in the town centre.

One of the key benefits of this development is that it brings all our housing needs together into one area. It also reduces infrastructure disruption but more importantly solves the need for more housing on the other side of town protecting the ambiance and natural habitat of the Mereside which ensures the area remains the main attraction for the recreation of the people of Ellesmere and visitors alike.

Part of my duties as Mayor has involved attending Borderlands Executive meetings and Tourism Destination Partnership meetings. Whilst it might be true that many other towns are slightly envious of our natural benefits of the Meres and Canal, as well as our local shops, the annual Carnival and the many festivals we hold attracting many visitors to our town there are many that seek to make their own town the main attraction. We must be vigilant and constantly seeking to maintain and improve on the "Ellesmere Experience".

As a result of the combined contributions from the Heritage Lottery Parks for People, the European Regional Development fund and the National Lottery along with much local effort and involvement in the restoration of the promenade, gardens and Boathouse visitors centre, the Mere side experience has been recognised nationally as Ellesmere's jewel in the crown. Achieving the Green Flag, such a prestigious national award, was an amazing step in the right direction. We must try not to lose it.

The town was also acknowledged through the Queen's Birthday honours list when retired Cown Councillor Pat McLaughlin received the MBE for her services to the town.

The "Experience" continues. As a result of Heritage Lottery funding, grants and £15,000 from the people of Ellesmere, well done to all involved, the work carried out at St Mary's church resulted in newly tuned bells and replacement of the old cradle that held them firmly in place. The new sound is something for us all to look forward to during Friday night practice and the call to many services.

Also at St Mary's, it is worth noting that as part of the commemoration of the 100 years since WW1, work will soon be undertaken to clean up the cenotaph and improve the pathway surrounding it.

In addition and in recognition of the fallen from Ellesmere during 1914 -1918 the town is involved in the production of a bronze plaque to be secured to the Town Hall wall and to be unveiled on Armed Forces Day 2015.

This Council has already planted a black poplar tree in the Birch Road recreation ground to commemorate the sacrifice of our soldiers in that conflict and I am sure that many more events will take place over the next four years in recognition of their bravery.



Both Bob McBride representing the British Legion and I have been able to produce certificates for each individual fallen soldier and hopefully these will be displayed on Remembrance Sunday at a special service.

The 3rd August 2014 saw a consecration service being held at the newly refurbished Cemetery Chapel. Grateful thanks must be given to our Honorary Towns Person Ann Harris who directed the work and acquired some additional furnishings.

Last August I joined the Town Twinning Association on a most eventful visit to Diksmuide in Belgium coinciding with the start of their WW1 commemorations. The Burgomaster of Diksmuide laid on a special guided tour for me which included the main war time sites, (Diksmuide was raised to the ground during both world wars) plus a civic dinner and a special church service conducted partly in English for our benefit. Part of the programme included a visit to Ypres where I was introduced to an elderly bugler who had not missed a single rendition of the last post. An even more thought provoking experience was a visit to Passchendaele where some of the horrors of war were visible and will leave a lasting impression on those who attended.

Over the past year excluding Town Council and Committee meetings I have been privileged to represent the Town on 109 different occasions throughout the County. Currently I am the longest serving Councillor having represented the people for over 22 years and the joy of serving so long has meant I have witnessed so many changes and been able to recognise that the Town is blessed by a small army of volunteers whose sole aim is to make the lives of their fellow citizens more enjoyable. At one point I counted 85 different charities, 2 Community Interest Companies, care for the elderly, youth, scouts, guides and cadets a seemingly endless roll of honour. An example of this is shown in our Honours Board where last year we were able to Honour 3 volunteer firemen who had served over 100 years between them.

4 years ago I was slightly ridiculed by some for using the word TEAM as an acronym for "Together Ellesmere Achieves More" but we only have to look around to find perfect examples.

The Railway Day on the 29th March this year is one of them.

Another example is this Council working together with our police force sharing our facilities to ensure we have a continuous police presence in our town.

Another is the Shrewsbury Drapers Guild founded in 1204 held for the first time this year a young textile designer competition open to all Shropshire schools but only 2 participated. i.e. Adams School Wem and Lakelands Ellesmere. I was asked to present the awards and was delighted to present Lakelands with the Gold, Silver, Bronze and commended awards with Adams receiving a highly commended award. What accolades to our young Talent and an indication of the high standards of education here.

Just recently we have learnt that Ellesmere has the highest business start-ups per rata in the whole of Shropshire with 51 in the last 5 years. This has to be an indication of how vibrant Ellesmere is and a reflection in the success of our chamber of commerce.

This town will continue to thrive for as long as we maintain the ideal....."Together Ellesmere achieves more".

This Council continues to flourish with an unwavering target for improved services. Thanks to Mandy our Clerk we have the strongest financial base that I have witnessed whilst I have been on the Council. Together we have been able to produce a neutral budget for the last 4 years but I suspect that we may be forced to increase our precept in future years. This has been



compounded by Shropshire Council keeping the £511,000 government grant instead of distributing it among Shropshire Towns and Parish Councils but we remain buoyant.

We have also recognised the need to replace the town hall roof whilst maintaining an adequate contingency fund to protect us from the unexpected.

Our drive for efficiency has involved producing 20 policy procedures and staff appraisals.

Mandy has gained her CILCA enabling us to take the first step to achieving the Local Council Award Scheme which replaced Quality Council Status. Her diligence has also ensured that the recent burst pipe which could have cost us over £7,000 has been mitigated by receiving £5,000 from our insurers. The difference saved equates to what would have been our normal water usage.

This year will see a completely new display of Christmas lights which will herald the opening of the festive season along with the successful tree of light and illuminated trees in the town centre. This year we have been able to purchase equipment that will allow the lights to be turned on simultaneously.

Jo our Assistant Clerk has the local knowledge and keen control of Town Hall bookings.

Together Jo and Mandy form an invaluable team which makes our job as Councillors that much easier to perform. We mustn't forget our Town Hall staff who have recently taken on extra duties. Their contribution is also invaluable. I thank them all.

Our targets for the future are:

Extend the Business Park

Doctors Surgery/ Medical Practice....I would like to see this as an all-inclusive practice incorporating Doctors Surgery, Dentist, Optician, Pharmacy and basic A and E facilities.

Burial land.

Clear boundaries that protect our mere from future developments.

Finally with the influx of our 4 new Councillors I am sure that they will bring fresh ideas to our Council that will enhance our ability to achieve the Local Council Award Scheme. In all I believe this Council can look forward to continued success that will benefit the people of Ellesmere.

Councillor Alan Clarke

Town Mayor 2014/2015.

7. Elector's Issues or Concerns. RESOLVED: to note, none received.

Alan Clarke
4/5/2016