

ELLESMERE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held in Ellesmere Town Hall on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2017.

<u>PRESENT:</u>	Town Mayor:	Cllr Ian Ward
	Councillors:	J Frost, P Goulbourne, R Hartley, G Elner, Mrs J Williams, Mrs J Clayton.
	Clerk & RFO:	Mandy Evans
	Temporary Assistant Clerk:	Phil Smith
	Unitary Councillor:	Cllr Mrs A Hartley
	Members of the Public:	13
	Press:	1
	Police:	0
	Guest Speakers:	0

ATM 1/17 Minutes. To read and confirm the minutes of the last Annual Town Meeting held on: Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2016. Proposed by Cllr P Goulbourne, seconded by Cllr R Hartley and agreed by all Members that: RESOLVED: the minutes were approved, confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record

ATM 2/17 Honorary Freeman. Certificates were presented to Mr John R Davies, Managing Director & Manager, Lakeside Coaches and Mr Brendan J Wignall, Headmaster, Ellesmere College. The Town Mayor, Cllr I Ward presented both certificates giving reasons why the certificates were awarded to both Gentlemen due to their achievements and what they give to the local community.

ATM 3/17 Town Mayor Report on the Civic Year 2016/17:

It is an honour and a pleasure, as Town Mayor, to present my annual report for the people of Ellesmere.

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The key themes for the Council during the year have been to continue to work towards improving communication and preparing to move on to the next stage, the Quality Level of the Local Council Award Scheme.

A review to update the Council's website has been completed and is ready to be launched.

In this, my second year as Mayor, I continued to undertake series of visits to a range of community groups and events within the town and beyond. I would like to thank all those made myself and my wife so welcome during these visits and events.

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Planning issues have continued to be a dominant issue for Council business and the concerns of the local community during the year.

The Town Council was very pleased that Shropshire Council's SAMDev, covering development to 2026, was fully in place during the year. However, within months of its adoption the process of consultation for a partial review of the Plan to cover the period to 2036 was launched.

Whilst sites near the Mere have seen some respite from the threat of planning applications during the year, the future of the former Estate Yard at Swan Hill at the entrance to the



Cremorne Gardens is still in the balance. It is very much hoped that proposals by Shropshire's Outdoor Partnerships Service will see this area retained as a relevant facility to appropriately complement and enhance the facilities at the Mere.

We are also currently awaiting the Planning Inspector's decision regarding a second appeal at land off Grange Road for 68 Houses following a successful challenge in the High Court by Shropshire Council to overturn the original Appeal decision. The plans for development at this site have been consistently opposed by the Town Council.

The detailed planning application for 130 houses off the Hawthorns, Elson Road, which had already been granted outline permission against the wishes of the Town Council and local community, was submitted during the year. The Town Council has continued to express concerns regarding the development and there have been revisions made to the plans reducing the number of houses to 114 and modifying the layout.

During the year the preferred site for mixed residential and commercial development of the Town adjacent to the Canal, which is the preferred site for development within the SAMDev, was granted outline approval. Progress with this site is essential for the town to meet its share of housing development and reduce the risk of undesirable speculative applications elsewhere in the town. As a balanced development it also brings with it benefits to the local economy through jobs, visitors, etc.

Apart from the former Railway Station site, which is windfall infill development, any applications involved development outside the Shropshire Council SAMDev plan pose sustainability concerns.

The Town Council is determined not to simply rely on the SAMDev to ensure planning and infrastructure within the area is effectively planned and managed. The Town Council and Ellesmere Rural Parish Council have confirmed that they will jointly develop a Neighbourhood Plan to improve and strengthen local control over various aspects of development and the environment for the area. Detailed work on this will be commencing shortly now that both new Councils have been elected. There will be a significant opportunities and encouragement for local residents to get involved with the Neighbourhood Plan process.

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The Town Council's finances continued to remain healthy and again an unqualified external audit approval was received.

The Council's reserves were further strengthened to make provision for the future major expense of the replacement of the roof and other improvements to the Town Hall. After nearly 50 years the Town Hall is in need of significant repair to ensure that it continues to serve the needs of the local community for a further 40 -50 years.

In continuing to keep under review the changing demands on its finances for future years, the Town Council agreed to increase its precept by 1.24% for 2017/2018, equivalent to £1.78 per year for a Band D property. This action is made necessary, in the main, due to the need to maintain a strong position to support services currently provided and supported for the local community. It also enables the Town Council to be able to make a contribution of £10,000 towards the town library service relocation to ensure that it retains its current level of service through a contract with a new provider.

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Centenary events to mark World War 1 continued during the year.

The cleaning of the War Memorial and the name plaques was completed. Also, an additional name, from World War 1, has been installed on the memorial. Much of the work was organised and arranged by Mr Bob McBride and the Town Council is very appreciative of all his efforts.

In October I accepted an invitation by our Twin Town of Diksmuide in Belgium, as Town Mayor, to attend a ceremony of rededication of a First World War German War Cemetery nearby. During my visit I also laid a wreath at the Tyne Cott Cemetery nearby where a significant number of those from Ellesmere who lost their lives in the War are either buried or commemorated.

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In the Autumn last year there was concern about the possible loss of the Plantation Wood as a site with community access following the decision by Shropshire Wildlife Trust to end its lease with the land owners, the Grosvenor Estate.

As Town Mayor, I discussed the future of the Wood with the Grosvenor Estate which very kindly offered to gift the site to a community group if such a body was able to take on the ownership and guarantee future community access.

In November, I facilitated a public meeting to assess community support to establish a Group to take forward and secure the future of the Wood. The response from the community was excellent and shortly afterwards the Plantation Wood Ellesmere Group was established under the Chairmanship of Paul Goulbourne and this has gone from strength to strength in progressing towards Charitable status.

I would like to express my appreciation for all those members of the local community who have enthusiastically taken this forward and we should during the next few months see the ownership of the Wood transferred.

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Highways issues are a further area where the Town Council has continued to press for change and improvement.

The areas where local priorities have been proposed include speed limit problems. The development of a local community speed watch has been proposed and continues to be pursued.

The Town Council has for some time advocated the introduction of a 30mph speed limit by the Mere and this is now also being supported by more groups, including Shropshire Council Departments. The continuing increase in pedestrian activity by the Mere throughout the year makes this an important issue to see resolved.

The challenges of increasing traffic, as a consequence of proposed housing developments, affecting the Trimpley Street, Cambria Avenue and Brownlow Road areas in particular, although not exclusively, continue to be of concern.

Over the past two years there has been major road resurfacing schemes in Willow Street and Scotland Street which, despite short term disruption, have greatly improved road surface quality in the Town.

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The Town continues to benefit from the work of Ellesmere Chamber of Trade and Commerce and its diverse range of small traders and businesses, which make a significant contribution to making the Town such an attractive and vibrant place for people to visit and also through support for local community events.

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The Town Council continues to financially support the running of the weekly Tuesday Market in the Market Hall.

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During the year there have been discussions and progress with developing Public Realm schemes funded from money set aside as part of the planning obligations by Developers developments around the Canal Wharf and Former Dairy.

Earlier this year, after extensive public consultation, £20,000 worth of new recreational equipment for children and adults was installed at Beech Grove Playing Field.

There are currently continuing discussions to develop proposals for a range of community projects and these will be subject to public comment within the next few months.

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Some of the many other issues affecting the Town during the year have included the recurring problems with dog fouling.

The Town continues to benefit from the local policing team having access to the Town Hall as a local base, which enables excellent liaison with the Town Council in dealing with many issues.

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I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for all their support and giving their commitment to the ever increasing demands and responsibilities being placed upon the Town Council. I think that it is important to restate the fact that Town Councillors receive no payment for the responsibilities they take on in this role which is undertaken in a purely voluntary capacity.

I would like to thank the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Stacy Thornton, for his much valued support throughout the year, before his recent relocation.

Following the, uncontested, elections this month, unfortunately we now have only eight serving Town Councillors, leaving four vacancies to fill by co-option. I very much hope that it is possible to quickly return to the full complement of twelve Councillors.

During the year our local Shropshire Councillor, Ann Hartley has continued to maintain excellent links with the Town Council in order that the Town and its issues can be effectively represented. Congratulations are also due to her for her re-election to Shropshire Council this month. We look forward to the strong link between the two Councils being sustained.

The Town Council is also extremely fortunate to have the services of our Town Clerk, Mandy Evans, Assistant Clerk, Jo Butterworth, who is currently on Maternity Leave and Temporary Assistant Clerk, Phil Smith. Their considerable experience, dedication and commitment to the Council continue to be invaluable in ensuring that it meets the ever changing challenges with which we are presented.

The strength of the team is enabling the Council to continue to move forward from the Foundation Level of the Local Council Award Scheme, received early last year, to achieve the



General Power of Competence and apply for the Quality Level of the Local Council Award Scheme.

As ever, there will be many challenges for the year ahead, but I believe that the Town Council is well placed with dedicated staff and Councillors to meet these and to make the difficult decisions which will be required to ensure that the Town prospers.

Finally, I would also like to thank my wife, Karen, for having continued to meet the challenge to support me in undertaking the numerous official commitments locally and elsewhere throughout my second and final year as Town Mayor.

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ATM 4/17 Elector's Issues and Concerns. No issues were raised.

The Meeting ended at: 7.05pm

Town Mayor: .....

Date: .....

