

**Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of Ellesmere Town Council held on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2014 at 6.00 pm at Ellesmere Town Hall.**

Present: The Town Mayor, Cllr A Clarke, Deputy Mayor, Cllr J Frost, Cllrs I Ward, B Knight, Mrs J Williams, Mrs S McMullan, R Hartley, Mrs L Davies, R Harrington, B Phillips and G Elner.

In Attendance: Mandy Evans, Town Clerk, Jo Butterworth, Assistant Clerk. Neil Wilcox, Local Commissioning Manager, Shropshire Council & Sue Thomas, Community Action Team, Shropshire Council.

Public Present: Mr Peter Davies.

Press Present: S. Staples - Advertiser, J Pugh - Shropshire Star.

Police Representation: None

1. Apologies for absence. RESOLVED: none received.

2. Minutes to approve and confirm the minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2013. RESOLVED: that members approved the minutes and were signed as a correct record.

3. Guest Speakers – Neil Wilcox, Local Commissioning Manager, Shropshire Council & Sue Thomas, Community Action Team. The Town Mayor, Cllr A Clarke proposed to change items 3 and 4 around. RESOLVED: to note members were in agreement.

4. Town Mayor's Report and Thanks.

Having been on this Town Council for over 20 years and serving the last 3 years as your Mayor I have witnessed many positive changes in our town and this year more than any other has flown by quicker than a blink of the eye. As a result of a very busy programme of events here and throughout the County.

Last March I signed 3 leases on behalf of the Town Council and now 12 months on we are starting to see and appreciate the benefits:-

- The Boathouse, Richard and Kate have expanded the range of food and facilities, extended the opening hours and have increased the number of visitors making the Boathouse one of the most idyllic eateries in Shropshire with a new perfect blend of food and beautiful scenery.
- Ellesmere Rangers Football Club are making positive progress in securing grant aid to develop the ground to insure it meets the highest required standard to satisfy the Football Association, thus ensuring their ability to take advantage of any promotional opportunities.
- All Together Ellesmere, Community Interest Company of which I am proud to be a Director has with the help of this Council secured the Market Rights first Chartered in 1221 and again in 1598 to develop the market and market hall facilities with the interest of the people of Ellesmere central to its core strategy. The number of traders has grown beyond the original business plan and the market shares equal praise from traders and customers alike.



It is good to see the Town so vibrant with new businesses locating into our town centre as recently as the 15<sup>th</sup> April when I had pleasure in officially opening the new pharmacy and on the 17<sup>th</sup> April opening the refurbished Co-op.

Earlier this year the new barber shop won the Christmas Window Competition highlighting the positive impact of new business in the town.

This vibrancy is uncaptured by the continued success of our seasonal events, the Triathlon, Regatta, Carnival, Food and Drink Festival, Winter Festival all dependant on local volunteers and continued support of our townspeople, and the many visitors. Many of these visitors become enraptured by the natural beauty of Ellesmere and the friendliness of its people, and I guess many of them tempted to settle here. Fortunately the second stage of Bloor Homes and Persimmon development are nearing completion, and the McCarthy & Stone and phase 1 of Bloor Homes are available for demand.

Myself and the Chamber of Commerce, this Council and the vast majority of people are most excited at the proposed plans soon to be approved by Shropshire Council to develop a new marina, hotel complex, leisure centre, log cabins, caravan park and 250 homes all in one area with a new road gaining access onto Oswestry Road, securing employment and our future housing needs beyond 2020. Also building a footbridge across the canal linking the new development with our historical heritage workshops.

The development of the piece of land rear of Berwyn View owned by this council is under continued review and is dependent on a proper access and the removal of existing covenants which we have been advised could be rather costly.

November, 2013 was a special month for 2 special ladies who celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> Birthdays, Mrs Hilda Hall on the 16<sup>th</sup> and Mrs Mary Jones on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. I had great pleasure delivering cards and flowers arranged by my Wife, Ruth and further joined in their celebrations sharing wonderful memories of bygone years.

This is an ideal opportunity to recognise the achievements of our new Town Freeman, Mr Lincoln McMullan for his contributions to the town through his chairmanship of the Chamber of Commerce and Community Interest Company, All Together Ellesmere, the Food and Drink Festival and many other charitable works. Town Freewoman, Mrs Ann Harris for all her Christian work ethic in managing and refurbishment of the Cemetery Chapel and ensuring it is readily available for anyone wishing to share a quiet moment or personal prayer.

Congratulations to Matthew Harvey who received an award for Young Good Citizen of the Year by West Mercia Police and a certificate from this Council recognising his commitment of good works in the community.

Local resident, Mrs Diana Flint brought honour to Ellesmere by being selected as the High Sherriff of Shropshire her commitment to the roll was exemplary, as has Mrs Patricia McLaughlin who received the MBE honoured for tourism and community work in Ellesmere and Shropshire. Here in the Council we are able to recall her commitment when as a fellow councillor she served for many years.



Since the closure of our Police Station the Police Officers have shared office space and other facilities here at the Town Hall, the arrangement is working well with easier access to CCTV monitors and being here ensures we have a continued visible police presence in our town.

I hope during the Christmas Festival you noticed the improved LED garlands and new Christmas trees and lights, the Council is looking to continually improve these celebratory lights over 3 phases as the budget allows.

We have received tenders to update the CCTV equipment in the town which will improve the camera's capacity and to phase in a system which will bring greater safety and security to our staff with the introduction of a camera within the town hall and a system enhancing coverage of the town centre with plans to monitor the system at Oswestry Police Station for speedier reaction.

The Town Clerk, Mandy has overcome a most difficult year both stressful and with an ever increasing work load, yet at the same time completed her Certificate in Local Council Administration (2013) Portfolio which is the first step to Ellesmere Town Council gaining Quality Council status, her vigorous control over our finances has insured we will be moving into the new financial year in the strongest financial position of the 20 years of my experience, many of them as Chairman of Policy & Resources now for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year running achieving a 0% increase budget with sufficient reserves to stride confidently forward to achieve our aims.

The Assistant Clerk, Jo as Mandy's right hand helper has helped to ease some of the strain of this year having moved into her new office gaining the freedom to manage her duties more successfully having already confirmed 75% of the bookings for the Town Hall for 2015. I would like to record that all 6 of our Town Council employees have served with distinction and their efforts should not pass un-noticed.

2014/15 brings other challenges; the commemoration of the First World War, the activities to be led by Shropshire Archives will probably consist of a range of activities spread over the extent of the war which touched the lives of every family in Britain and the Commonwealth, we have allocated £1,000.00 towards recognition of this event.

Many local organisations benefited from funding from the Local Joint Committee, it is regrettable that funds have been removed which has been a great disappointment to us all. However, the public responding to questions and answers regarding the future of the Local Joint Committee's decided the organisation provided awareness and common interest between the Public and the Councillors, Police, Fire Service and Guest Speakers the let's talk public participation being an essential element. Sue Thomas from Shropshire Council will be the support officer for future meetings, it is hoped Shropshire Council will be able to produce funding for room hire and agenda's etc.

It only remains for me to make special thanks to Mandy for whom I have depended on for impartial advice and guaranteed support in a year of ever increasing responsibilities, to Jo for her abundant local knowledge and enthusiastic assistance. To our other employees in the Town Hall who's efforts are recognised not only by ourselves but by the frequent users of this wonderful facility.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ian Lewis', located at the bottom right of the page.

I thank John my Deputy Mayor and all my Council colleagues for their invaluable contributions in the continued success of this Council and finely to Ruth my wife for her understanding especially when I attend meetings when she is on college holidays.

We will always have challenges to face which appear ever more difficult with reduced resources, devolved commissioning and re allocation of responsible controls from Shropshire Council.

We have a duty to safeguard the standards set by this Council and must concentrate on the unfinished business that lay ahead:

- Marina development
- Extension to the Business Park
- Burial Land
- Town Plan
- New Town Hall Roof
- CCTV Improvements
- Christmas Lighting
- Tourism

I believe as I did last year the way forward is to form strong partnerships with County, Town, Parishes and all the vital community organisations that we are well blessed with because together Ellesmere will always achieve more.

### **Councillor Alan Clarke**

### **Town Mayor 2013/2014.**

3. Guest Speakers – Neil Wilcox, Local Commissioning Manager, Shropshire Council & Sue Thomas, Community Action Team. Sue Thomas, Community Action Officer, Shropshire Council was introduced and welcomed to the meeting. Sue will cover Wem, Shawbury and Ellesmere and has been helping Neil Wilcox commissioning new pilot schemes in Wem to help the unemployed and people to live independently. In the Town Hall, Wem they have recently appointed a coordinator for the elderly who deals with concerns they may have within the town. The Town Mayor, Cllr A Clarke introduced and welcomed Neil Wilcox to the meeting. (Hand outs were tabled). Mr Wilcox explained that Shropshire Council have taken a long look at service provisions and the diminishing budgets cuts and services that have been to tender, ie. Waste Management and Highways together with looking at local solutions, organisations which exist locally and how these services can work in partnership with Shropshire Council to produce best outcomes and results.

Mr Wilcox continued with explaining how he was involved to help with All Together Ellesmere and the Town Council to transfer the Market Rights from Shropshire Council which took long discussions to establish a business plan. Local commissioning will look at resources in localities and will support structures for any projects to be completed successfully. Local Joint Committees (LJC's) can be developed and used to support the development of Town Plans, Place Plans and hold an important role engaging conversations with the public.



Cllr G Elner asked if it was the case that Local Joint Committees were duplicating the work of the Town Councils. Mr Wilcox replied that town/parish councils value the Local Joint Committees to have the chance to meet and network. LJC's need to have delegated budgets/decisions to engage annually with the public.

The Town Mayor, Cllr A Clarke explained that the LJC has 3 Shropshire Councillors on the board representing the town council and rural council and the "Let's Talk" section has helped formulate policy to give a better service and was pleased to hear that there may be possible funding in the future.

The Town Mayor, Cllr A Clarke thanked Sue Thomas and Neil Wilcox for attending the meeting.

5. Elector's Questions and Answers. Mr P Davies highlighted concern about housing which does not go to local residents and the need for a new medical centre. The Town Mayor, Cllr A Clarke responded that the Town Council are aware of these needs and they are currently looking at a piece of town council owned land adjacent to Lakelands School for local housing and that the town council are very mindful of these issues.

Handwritten signature or initials in the bottom right corner of the page.