

## ELLESMORE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held in Ellesmere Town Hall on Tuesday 6th May 2025.

<u>PRESENT:</u>	Town Mayor (Chair):	Cllr G Hutchinson
Councillors:		Cllrs P Goulbourne, G Elner, A Weeks, P Jones, Liz Woodbridge, A Wignall, N Proffitt, M Hancock, M Forshaw, J Howard
Town Clerk and RFO:		Jo Butterworth
Deputy Town Clerk and		
Deputy RFO:		Gemma Whitley
Admin Assistant		Vicky Martin

### **ATM 05/25/01 Welcome**

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **ATM 05/25/02 Presentation**

An error was made on the agenda and no presentations were made.

### **ATM 05/25/03 Honorary Freeman / Freewoman 2025 Awards**

The Mayor presented the award of Honorary Freewoman and Honorary Freeman to Sue and Geoff Ardill in recognition of their involvement with many of the towns volunteer groups, and their editorial work with Mere News.

The Honorary Freewoman award was also presented to Ismay Evans for her services in running the unofficial box office for town events and her coordination of many of the town groups.

### **ATM 05/25/04 Mayor's Charity Awards**

During his time as Mayor, G Hutchinson raised money for two charities, Swan Mere Day Centre and Ellesmere's Memory Café.

Esme Roberts came forward to collect the cheque on behalf of Swan Mere Day Centre and Mike Gearson came forward to collect the cheque on behalf of the Memory Café.

### **ATM 05/25/05 Mayor's Awards**

Mayoral Awards are made each year to honour the work done by volunteer groups and individuals over a number of years.

Alan Barker collected the award on behalf of Men in Sheds who have assisted many individuals within the town with repair works.

A special award was made to a former member of Men in Sheds and a personal friend of G Hutchinson in recognition of the many things that he did in support of the groups within the town. Beryl Gilbert came forward to collect the posthumous award for Steve Gilbert.

The League of Friends charity shop may be small, but it supports many projects and individuals within the town with their fundraising activities. Ruth Bridgewood came forward to accept the award on behalf of The League of Friends.

Sheila Williams and Sally Poynton have both been prominent in saving the library in Ellesmere and organising events in the town. Sally has also recently produced an illustrated publication on the life of Eglantine Jebb. G Hutchinson presented them both with awards.

Chris Jobson was recognised for his contributions to bringing local history to the town's residents with his talks and for his promotion of Ellesmere.

Amanda and Edward Bevan launched the successful Crowdfunding £35,000.00 to renew the 10 cameras of the Heron Watch scheme at the Boathouse and for their work with the Ellesmere Branch of Shropshire Wildlife. G Hutchinson thanked them on behalf of the people and wildlife of Ellesmere.

**ATM 05/25/06 Town Council**

**Minutes**

It was moved by Cllr G Elner, seconded by Cllr L Woodbridge and,

**RESOLVED: - that the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, be approved and signed by the Town Mayor as a true record.**

**ATM 05/25/07 Town Mayor Report on the Civic Year 2024/2025**

Cllr G Hutchinson, Town Mayor, presented his annual report for the people of Ellesmere, as follows:

It is my pleasure and honour to present this Annual Report to the electors of Ellesmere.

Sir Austen Chamberlain (elder half-brother to Neville), who won the Nobel Peace Prize in the 1920's and then subsequently supported Winston Churchill's call for rearmament in the 1930s, famously misquoted an old Chinese curse – "May you live in interesting times". Well, we do. The people of Ellesmere feel this directly through the impact of world events on retail prices, changing priorities for public finances and public services, plus continuing uncertainty regarding accommodation and housing availability in the locality, despite the completion of more new homes and flats within our boundaries in the last twelve months.

Against this background your Town Council has worked hard to both maintain and improve the life that we all enjoy as residents of Ellesmere with its beautiful Mere and many lovely and historic buildings. On your behalf I would like to thank the three hard working Council Officers, who beaver away diligently in their cramped working space keeping on top of a myriad of matters and responsibilities that a local authority must attend to at all times, whilst being ever prepared to zoom out to inspect some problem that occurs about the Town – a bollard wiped out by a turning lorry, a tree being blown over, a bus shelter demolished by a car, a traffic jam caused by the late removal of a road block. I am also grateful to the conscientious caretaking team who do so much to keep Town Hall operating smoothly as the

primary Functions venue in the Town for the very many clubs and societies that need it for the activities that make our communal life so rich.

Ellesmere Town Council has a joint responsibility for the maintenance and running of the Swan Hill Cemetery with Ellesmere Rural Parish Council. This is overseen by the Cemetery Working Group that meets every two months. On behalf of you, and that body, I offer a big thank you to the Cemetery Co-ordinator, Andy Chatting. In addition to ensuring the upkeep of the grounds themselves, including applying coats of paint to the fencing himself, in the last year he and the Town Clerk have become qualified to safety check all the Cemetery Memorials. Such periodic checks are a legal requirement for the continued operation of a cemetery by any Authority. Also, Andy has scoured the archives and burial records to put them in good order and make them more easily accessible electronically, enabling a more accurate and speedy response to requests by succeeding generations of Ellesmere families who wish to research their forbears. We are very grateful for his diligence.

On the Council itself two of our number resigned this year, with Holly Anderton-Schofield deciding not to return after maternity leave, and Joan Mowl needing to have more time for her many other interests in the Town. I thank them both for their input and achievements over the years. Amanda Weeks decided not to stand in the recent local election, and I also thank her for her valuable contribution over the last two and a half years. We were very glad to welcome Malcolm Forshaw to our number last August, as there were a plethora of Committee and Working Group spaces that needed filling. I would like to express my gratitude to all Councillors for the hard work that they have put in this year. Much of this work is unglamorous but it is nevertheless vital to the efficiency with which civic business is carried out. Their help in putting on events to fund raise for the Mayor's charities has also been invaluable. I would particularly highlight the work done by Councillor Geoff Elner in his role as a member of Shropshire Council also. This has enabled him to emphasise issues affecting Ellesmere at a higher level.

Amongst many other things that needed updating one important area that was adjusted after scrutiny by the Policy and Procedures Working Group is the process by which the Civic Year and the transition between Mayoralities is handled, giving more impetus to the setting of both annual and long-term goals at an early stage, before the August break.

Much progress has been made in a variety of other areas. Residents will have noticed that much of the street furniture owned by Town Council has been refurbished, whilst children's play areas have had safety checks and any necessary work done on them promptly to keep them in use. Cross Street promenade has new furniture awaiting installation once Shropshire Highways have dealt with the uneven surface caused by tree roots. Around *The Mere* much work has been done by the Shropshire Outdoor Recreation Team, partly funded by ETC, and this is ongoing. In addition, the jointly owned Mere Cottage is currently being refurbished ready for occupation by a suitable business this coming Summer. Various works have been carried out in the Town Hall, and again this work will be ongoing. Discussions continue about how Town Hall will be managed in the future, but residents can be sure that its continued role as a function venue is not in doubt, and it will remain an ETC asset. Careful management by the financial team has also made it possible to put some money into a development on the Berwyn View play area. After

consultation with residents about possible uses the Berwyn View Working Group, chaired by Councillor Paul Goulbourne, confirmed that a Pump Track was by far the most preferred option. Previous Mayors have long wanted to provide our youngsters with this sort of amenity and proof that this was also the wish of residents was evidenced by the exciting and heart-warming crowdfunding campaign to cover the shortfall in available money. Without the very many donations large and small from local societies, clubs, businesses and individuals to add to public funds we would not have been able to announce that our children will have a pump track for use by the Summer School Holidays of 2025. All of us should be proud to be residents of Ellesmere. I have heard it rumoured that Paul, and my successor Liz Woodbridge, will be the first to stage a race at the opening. Liz leads on Tourism and Council has responded positively to a recent grant application that is designed to advertise the Town's attractions to a much wider audience.

And what attractions there are. Wherever we turn in Ellesmere refurbishment is going on. Back in September 2024 we were given a reminder of what Eglantyne Jebb achieved on behalf of children with the publication of a booklet about her life, wonderfully illustrated by Sally Poynton. On 1<sup>st</sup> of February this year Council visited the Ellesmere Boatyard, which is undergoing extensive renovation. Later that month Heron Watch launched its new interactive camera system at The Boathouse after its own successful crowdfunding campaign. Ellesmere Antiques Emporium opened on 15<sup>th</sup> of March at Fullwood House. Very recently new management has reopened a refurbished Black Lion Hotel. The Market Hall has increased the number of market days as footfall increases, and its reconfiguration is ongoing. All of this has been going on as our usual programme of events has taken place and I have been honoured and privileged to be invited to many of them. Rotary Regatta in July, Carnival in August, Mere Melodies Concerts in September and again in December, a Tower Day at St Mary's in September when we were treated to some excellent singing by a guest soprano, the Winter Festival in late November, plus a memorable Ellesmere AmDrams production of "A Christmas Carol" in December. On 1<sup>st</sup> of February Ellesmere College held its Winter Festival in support of Age Concern, when the music and singing were truly sublime. I apologise for my absence at some events and thank Liz for deputising for me when necessary.

In addition to the recurring civic events such as the Civic Service and Remembrance Sunday my year as Mayor has also included the passing of some important milestones in recorded history, sometimes reminders of past follies, but sometimes more happy occasions. The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day was marked on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2024 with a service at St Mary's followed by the lighting of a beacon in honour of the fallen. This year we will mark the end of the slaughter in Europe on Thursday the 8<sup>th</sup> of May in a similar way, once again at St Mary's - starting at 7.30 pm. We celebrate the end of WWII on Armed Forces Day, Saturday the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, which falls between VE Day and VJ Day on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. If my uncle was still with us, I could tell him that Ellesmere does remember "The Forgotten Army" in which he served. A happier anniversary came on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2024, when we celebrated 175 years since the consecration of St Mary's Nave.

April 2025 also brought the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the day I married the Mayor's Consort for 2024/2025, my wife Suzanne. Despite being constantly busy for the second half of the year organising and driving for Ellesmere Community Cars and

being active in the Repair Café, she has sustained and reinforced me through this very eventful year. I thank her with all my heart.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to the whole Town Council Team, fellow Councillors, the Caretaking Team, the Cemetery Co-ordinator and the three wonderful ladies in the Offices, Jo, Gemma and Vicky who have guided me through the year. Ellesmere is very lucky to have their combined experience, skills, creativity and initiative at its service. For the people of Ellesmere, they are Civil Servants in the true sense of the word. Finally, I would like to thank the people of Ellesmere for allowing me the privilege of being their Mayor for 2024/2025. It has been a great honour to represent a Township that has responded so full heartedly to two crowdfunding appeals within a twelve-month period, raising a total of over £100,000. What an effort! I wish Liz all success during her time as Mayor of this splendid Community.

**ATM 05/25/08 Grant Recipients**

A grant application had been received from Project SY12. No recipient was present to collect the award.

**ATM 05/24/09 Elector's Issues and Concerns**

No issues or concerns were raised.

The meeting ended at: 6.48pm

Town Mayor: .....

Date: .....