

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 24 April 2007, in the Salvation Army Rooms, Commercial Road, Shepton Mallet.

Present: Chairman - Councillor R.R Champion.

Cllrs: Mrs J.D. Bartlett, Champion, Mr M.M. Cann, Mr K.J. Hurrell, Mr C.C. Inchley, Mr M. Lovell, Mrs J.M. Marsh, Mr T.S. O'Connor, Mrs M.R. Robinson, Mr N. F. Shearn and Mr A. Taylor.
District Cllrs; Mr S. Robinson and Mr J Parham.

Mr Dan Bramwell (Bramwell Associates) Paul Frampton (Chairman) and Zena Pollard (both Shepton 21).

There were 45 members of the public and one member of the press in attendance.

The Chairman opened the meeting, welcomed the members of the public, persons providing presentations and Councillors. Emergency evacuation procedures and requests to switch mobile phones to off or silent was made.

A presentation then took place from the Town Council to Envoys Doug and Josie Horler who were to retire in July following over 20 years service in the Town. A replica antique Amulet brooch and a framed print of the Sheep on Cannards Grave roundabout were presented. Josie received the presents and thanked the Council for their loyal support over the 20 years.

1./07 Apologies for Absence – Cllr Manvill and Mark Witham (Spenhill Developments).

2./07 Townsend Retail Development Update – Dan Bramwell

Dan Bramwell confirmed his position as responsible for Public Affairs on behalf of Spenhill Developments who were a subsidiary of Tesco's. He explained the layout of the development site and that Tesco's envisaged that they would open in late September / early October 2007 subject to resolve and completion of highway matters. He intended to provide fortnightly public information notices of progress and these would be promulgated on both the District and Town websites. He explained that the highway matters were being delayed due to approval of technical specifications relating to highways which were being encountered with Somerset Highways. They were currently working week to week and he then explained the reason for road closures and the method of phased working to Station Road, Townsend Roundabout and then the main entrance roundabout. Townsend was expected to be complete by early July 2007 and the main entrance by late August 2007. However these were estimated and subject to many issues being resolved. Dan then undertook a question and answer session with the public. Questions and Responses included the follow;

Q – Why had they not achieved full approval of all matters relating to highways before commencing works and why was work not taking place over longer shifts and more continuous.

A – As explained earlier they were undertaking work by approval week by week, main reason was delay in signing off technical issues by SCC.

Q – Why were they not using access off the main huntsman roundabout in lieu of congestion at Townsend?

A – Site planning and health & safety reasons.

Q – Why was the site not redesigned with access for both the public and deliveries all through the main entrance? The restaurant could have been moved.

A – The site has planning permission and construction is now well advanced.

Q – There are health and safety implications and no facility for disabled access or information for members of the public coming into town from Station and Cannards Grave Roads. There also appeared no control of traffic within the road closure zone at Townsend.

A – Dan will review the matter and report back through the town Clerk.

Q – Was it true that the highways worked commenced under temporary permit?

A – Works were started with approval of highways although as explained earlier there was some delay within SCC as to signing off of technical issues.

Q – Has Spenhill purchased additional land to the rear of the site.

A – Not aware of any purchase.

Q – Is there anything that can be done to alleviate the traffic congestion during the highway works which are set to run for a further 19 weeks?

A – It was expected that the road would not be closed for this full amount of time. They were working hand to mouth with approval of technical issues due to SCC problem. Dan informed one instance where technical plans had been submitted in March 2007 and was still awaiting response / approval from SCC.

Q – Are you having, to put in further retrospective planning applications due to changes on site?

A – No, only current planning application was for a temporary site display board.

Q – Why has the pedestrian route been designed to take a curved route rather than a straight line as this is how people will use the footpaths?

A – The planning application went through the full consultation process and was approved by MDC.

Q – Is it true that the bus shelters have been scrapped and could not one have been relocated to the temporary bus stop in Old Market Road?

A – Not aware, will check and report through the town Clerk.

Q – Is the town being held to ransom with the road works and are they being hurried through just to satisfy Tesco's date of opening for business.

A – No, as stated earlier the problem is approval of technical drawing and issues by SCC.

Q – Why was the Town Councils flagpole removed and just thrown on site without any consultation with the owners.

A – Dan apologised on behalf of the contractor and confirmed that the matter had now been rectified.

The Chairman thanked Dan Bramwell for his 35 minute presentation. Dan then left the meeting.

3./07 Shepton 21 Regeneration Partnership Update – Paul Frampton

Paul used the Tesco problems highlighted earlier in the meeting as an example of what Shepton 21 was doing which was to stop future problems arising and ensure inclusion of all and that the correct outcome for the town and its community was achieved. Shepton 21 had spent considerable resource time and approximately £15,000 in professional studies to look at planning and traffic issues regarding the Tesco Retail application. This included taking the main highway behind the development thereby integrating Tesco's with the existing Town Centre. They had submitted a report to MDC and SCC but had unfortunately lost the argument. Due to the decision being made the town now had a split retail centre.

Shepton 21 was about looking to the future for the community to alleviate this sort of thing happening again. One of their visions was to bring the railway back into the town albeit at a different location. While at this time it might seem like a wild dream, the future implications of global warming increased traffic congestion and road charging it may well be right in the future. Their office was now established in the TIC in the Town Centre where their Administrator Carol Dauncy and their Development Officer Tanya Lawler were both contactable. He hoped for full inclusion and support of the community in the three main and focused projects which were Regeneration of the High Street which was evolving and signs of improvement with the Academy, Links with all modes of transport and the hinterlands which also included the Bath and West Showground. The other project was the Community Centre and CATEC building where Shepton 21 was working with the Town Council and many stakeholders. Although these were their main projects, many more were still be worked up one of which included making the Downside junction into the Town a safer road junction and appropriate main entrance to the town much as has been developed at Cannards Grave. He encouraged all members of the public to get involved and thanked the Town Council for their fantastic support and the support of the District Council for the long term expected gain.

Paul then undertook a question and answer session with the public. Questions and Responses included the follow;

Q – We do not read much about your organisation in the media.

A – We have found it difficult to release positive information that would be reported correctly.

Q – Is it possible to relocate the old Station building to the proposed new site before it gets demolished?

A – Yes would like to see, however the plans for a new Station was only part of a wider plan. This plan may well include a visitor's centre, a museum and possible new entrance for the Bath and West Showground which would alleviate problems in Prestliegh and Evercreech and

join up the Bath and West with the town. Paul considered that the community should be concerned at what may happen to the existing Tesco site.

Q – Should the CATEC / Civic Hall proceed at Old Market Road then the dangerous Commercial Road roundabout should be reviewed / upgraded.

A – The location of the Civic Hall was still under review and that any decision would need review of the entrance and serving of the site to be taken into account.

Q – Concern was raised as to the balance of retail within the existing town centre and the amount of fast food and refreshment units being opened.

A – This was down to private enterprise and for private commercial decisions, which Shepton 21 would not get involved in.

Q – How do we get the proposed Civic Centre /Community Hall to come about, we do not want the project to be driven into the buffers like the indoor swimming pool did.

A – The project is well advanced, the RDA required several matters to be reviewed and then hopefully the go ahead and possible funding would be achieved to go forward.

Q – Would the Civic Hall proposals include a traffic flow census prior to the final decision being made as to its location?

A – The location at Old Market Road made the current project commercially viable as the land was in public ownership and could possibly be gifted and nil costs. They would have to consider traffic and site servicing issues. However other locations where land was in private ownership may well make the project non-achievable.

Congratulation was provided to Paul and the Shepton 21 group for focusing on several main projects and for their work to date. The Chairman thanked Paul Frampton for his 45 minute presentation. Paul Frampton, Zena Pollard and approximately 25 members of the public then left the meeting.

4./07 Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 25 April 2006 were considered for accuracy and content.

Resolve: Proposed by Mr Clive Pearson, seconded by Cllr Shearn, that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of 25 April 2006 were approved and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

5./07 Matters Arising – No matters were raised.

6./07 Chairman's Report

Election

Cllr Champion was elected as Chairman of Shepton Mallet Town Council on the 2nd May last year along with his Vice Chair, Cllr Mr Martin Lovell, who has very ably assisted and he thanked Martin and all of his portfolio leaders, and fellow councillors for all their hard work. He thanked the Clerk for dealing with all the appropriate flags on the appropriate day and also thanked the members of the public for all their questions and statements during the last twelve months, which he considered shows they care. He thanked the Clerk, for dealing with the flags and flagpole and for making this year of office interesting.

Planning Applications

The number of application considered this year was 149, a considerable reduction on the previous year. During this period however several large planning applications had received consideration, including Brothers Drinks Expansion, Tesco's relocation, the new Haskins shopping complex along with housing schemes in Little Ostry and Hitchen Lane. Of the total of applications considered throughout the year only 4 recommended for approval by the Town Council were refused by the District Council and only 7 recommended for refusal by the Town Council were granted permission by the District Council; he considered this to be acceptable partnership working.

Regeneration Schemes

Throughout the year several presentations had been provided by Mr Paul Tomlinson who is Mendips 'Conservation Project Officer' not only on the HERs project but the Market Cross as well, with the prospect of it coming under the care of the Town Council as trustees. Looking to the future Paul would now be involved with (THI) Townscape Heritage Initiative, running up to 2011. Shepton 21 Partnership with a range of local community members and groups, businesses and

voluntary agencies and the SWRDA through the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative to which a update had been provided earlier in the meeting. This group has the full support of the Town Council and indeed the public at previous meeting where the presentation was provided by Mr Paul Frampton [Chairman of Shepton 21]. Their community booklet was launched on June 7th last year which has brought forward much community minded volunteer members that are helping, but more would be good.

The swimming pool, now not only a Lido but called 'The Lido' was opened to the public late last year after a long refurbishment but that is history and it will open officially towards the end of May 2007 for the normal 16 week season. On behalf of the Town Council he thanked the townsfolk for their long-suffering wait and that the Town Council would soon pay out a sum of £377,000 towards this refurbishment.

Collett Park

Improvements to the Park have included, the Mural in the Shelter done by the youth of our Town, Bedding Upgrades, Resurfaced paving, new Welcoming Signs around the park entrances. The Chairman thanked several residents of the Town for donating Memorial Trees, Guards and Benches. The 'Alcohol Restriction Order' was now in place, which is exactly as it says; it is not a ban on alcohol.

The Trustees and our Park contractor have looked at and we are now working through a programme to work towards a 'Green Flag' status in the future; this will improve our 'Jewel in the Crown' even more. The Chairman informed that the Town Council had brought new Bunting for the Town Centre and more will come in the future.

Saturday June 10th 2006 was the annual 'Collett Day' which as always was held in Collett Park, this event was baked in glorious sunshine where all the local charities took part, with some of them using it as their annual fund raising programme, yet again a very successful day for all. So what was special about this Collett Day, it was almost to the day, a hundred years ago, since John Kyte Collett gifted to the Town this fantastic park. The Council and the Town, had the pleasure of having all the Collett Family, including a direct descendant, starting off in the Market Place with a parade up through the High Street and into the Park, the reason being was that was how they did it a hundred years ago and the Collett family also used the occasion as a family reunion. The Chairman recorded his gratitude to John & Esme Collett for attending from Australia and for undertaking the official opening ceremony in the Park. After the opening ceremony the Collett family had a walk around the park, talking to most of the stallholders, which included parents and the children. A tree was planted; the Charlton Road Entrance Archway was opened as was the new railings around the Band Stand and the New Gates in Park Road, with plaques either side in the pillars, which were opened by members of the family being descendants of the late John Kyte Collett. The Park Trustees by way of a Thank You gave one hundred or so invited Guests a luncheon in St Paul's School which was where John Kyte Collett was thrown out when it was private property and where he is reported as stating to himself, never again for the Children of Shepton Mallet. The Chairman mentioned three names, although there were many others, but he considered that Pat Jeremiah and Gill Davis deserved a special vote of thanks for their efforts on the day, re the Victorian / Edwardian theme throughout the Town and shop window displays. The Chairman also recorded a big Thank You on behalf of the Town and the Town Council to Cllr N Shearn for his 13 years as the Chief Organiser of Collett Day,

Supporting the Community

The Town Council over the year period have supported groups, events and projects within the community to the level of over £16,000, which equates to some 13% of our annual precept. Of this sum £6,900 was made by way of grants to local organisations and clubs with 3 awards being over a £1,000. The Council had given continued financial support to valued organisations of the Citizens Advice Bureau, Tourist Information Centre, Mendip Community Transport and Shop Mobility operating in the drop in centre at the Age Concern shop. In conjunction with the Police and Mendip, signs are just about to be erected for an 'Alcohol Restriction Order' within the Town Centre. There have been several general grants given and a 50% grant, of total cost, towards the Crossing Patrol, to Shepton Mallet Community School in Waterloo Road. The Council had invited Robin Smith CE MPCT re our local Community Hospital and Alison Barkshire re the Maternity Unit, to listen to the Town and our concerns and rumours about the Local Health Care Review to give us an insight into the future, which from their point of view was going to be good but with some changes.

The Town Council would like to thank Mr Terry Marsh and Mr Don Clifford for their continued efforts to keep the Town Clock running, which this year has, involved repairs, access and the weekly winding process. Thanks also to the Fire Service for their help in putting up and taking down the bunting all along Town Street and the High Street when required.

Allotments

The Town Council operates and manages 80 allotment plots on four sites within the Town at Hitchen Lane, which was rented and Whitstone Road, along with two sites just off Allyn Saxon Drive, which the Town Council held ownership. He considered that the holders that are on them must be eating some very good food while at the same time giving them-selves a good workout. The Chairman was pleased to report that there is a small queue for the waiting list and that the Council was currently investigating the possibility of expanding the Hitchen Lane site and on the Whitstone Road site some improvement had been made tidying it up and bringing some of the plots down to a reasonable and workable size. Maintenance on both of these sites has been contracted out for the next four years at a cost of just over £200.00 per year. On the 5th September 2006 he had the pleasure of presenting the Allotment Awards to some very good gardeners and because of the quality of plots and quality of growth within them the prize list had to be extended. He congratulated all the prize winners and wished all plot holders good luck for the forthcoming year.

Footpaths & Rights of Way

Limited maintenance was continued in partnership with the District Council and the Town Council has this last year produced a booklet, 'Walks around Shepton Mallet' which he considered very good and that there are still a quantity available for sale from the Council offices and many other local outlets such as the TIC, Library etc.

War Memorial

The Cenotaph is now a listed monument and therefore protected, at the same time the Town Council, as Trustees, has a 'Duty of Care' to the memorial with a desire for the long term safety and maintenance of this fine structure. With the help of 'Friends of the War Memorial', an Architect, English Heritage and Mendip District Council a Historical Research had been completed and was now near to the end of a full Structural Survey and 'Condition Report'.

The new elected Town Council will have full details as will the community in the early summer, with proposals to leave in situ or move some 15 feet into the centre of a dedicated environment. Currently there is £40,000 earmarked for relocation and a further £45,000 for landscaping, when all facts are known a final decision will have to be made.

Partnership Working

Because we are a small, but progressive Town Council we have had several meetings with different departments of Mendip District Council and the County Council as regards to Pedestrian Safety and comfort along with future enhancements within the Town; this has also included the Police and Police Community Support Officers, with Inspector Paul Richards coming to inform us of his changes to the local policing. We as a Council are committed and support the CCTV programme, now with the added advantage of the 'Safer Business Award' with the Accreditation given to the Town on Wednesday 4th April 2007. He thanked the Chamber of Commerce for their partnership around the Christmas Lights and the traditional tree in the centre. He also wished to mention 'Mendip in Bloom' and 'Shepton Mallet in Bloom' winning the silver gilt award the Town received for the 3rd year on the run and also Gaymer's Cider Special prize.

Administration

There has been a continuation of Ecommerce and Information Technology to aid communication to the public as well as the working structure of the council, this has meant two meetings per month, all transacted and worked well. There has been a reduction in the staffing levels which has put a lot of work on to our Clerk with some very tight timescales. The Quality Council Status has given us the opportunity to produce Newsletters to the community while at the same time finance has been kept under tight control with the same tight control wanted for the forthcoming year. We as a Council have looked at and have proposed a new way of working and structure for the newly elected council to consider.

The Frank Richards painting continues on loan to Christchurch Council and on display at Highcliffe Castle. The Street Trading Licence has been transferred to the Town Council from the District Council but it is still under review. We have also tackled a difficult problem relating to Restrictive

Covenants applicable to Collett Park. Over the next few months the public will have the opportunity to have say on the Local Government Review with SCC Unitary Authority bid being accepted.

Events

The Town has had several events in and around the area, mostly excellent, with things like; Royal Bath & West Show, Mid-Somerset Show, the Carnival but a severe flood in January 2007 caused problems for a few families. We also now have the amalgamated Fire Service with Devon.

Future Projects

In the pipe line is a 'Pedestrian Crossing' in Charlton Road outside Whitstone College, also a 'Community Woodland' project at Gold Hill and to the Millennium Way. Also in the pipe line is the possible extension to the 'Strawberry Line' into Shepton Mallet, at the same time East Somerset Railway is looking at proposals to come into Cannards Grave.

Shepton 21, the Town Council, Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council are working together to build a Civic Hall, Council Offices and a CATEC building for Shepton Mallet.

As Chairman he reported as having travelled far and wide throughout Somerset, representing Shepton Mallet to several events and places such as Bath, Burnham on Sea, Frome, Glastonbury, Street, Taunton, Wells, Wookey Hole and the local prison to name just a few, some of which were used as a fund raising exercise for a particular charity, or a civic charity event, while others being used to recognise and reward hard working volunteers.

7./07 Financial Report – Audited Accounts April 2005 – March 2006 – The Clerk presented the audited Accounts, a copy of which had been supplied with the Agenda. Substantial differences in totals of previous year's accounts were explained to both Income and Expenditure. The Clerk confirmed that the Councils usable assets were now at a reduced but satisfactory level and they should not be reduced any further in future. No questions were raised regarding the Accounts or their supporting notes.

Resolve: That the Audited Financial Accounts for the Year Ending 31 March 2006 are noted.

8./07 Recreational Ground Trust Collett Park – Annual Report Year Ending 31 March 2007 – The report for the year ending 31 March 2007 was presented as required by Section 45 of the Charities Act 1993. No questions were put.

Resolve: That the Recreational Ground Trust Annual Report (Appendix B) as attached to these Minutes for the year ending 31 March 2007 be approved.

9./07 War Memorial Charity – Annual Report Year Ending 31 March 2007 – The report for the year ending 31 March 2007 was presented as required by Section 45 of the Charities Act 1993. No questions were put.

Resolve: That the War Memorial Charity Report (Appendix C) as attached to these Minutes for the year ending 31 March 2007 be approved.

10./07 Public Forum

War Memorial – Mr Will Dunscombe apologised to Council for his outburst at a previous meeting. The Chairman informed this was not the correct place. This was a Town meeting and not a Town Council meeting. Mr Dunscombe had written to and received a return telephone call from the MP who supported that the War Memorial should not be moved. He hoped that the MP could assist. Mr Stride enquired latest update with the War Memorial and highway works. The meeting received the latest update which included emails sent and received to date. The Town Council were still progressing with its project to complete a structural survey, gather all factual information which would be presented to the community for them to make a fully informed decision at a future referendum. However it was confirmed that this resolve could be reviewed by the newly elected Council. As for the highway works it would seem that this would proceed, the kerbing and pedestrian / buffer zone in front of the structure reduced without any further consultation. It was expected that proposals or plans to position wooden posts around the structure would be consulted.

It was also confirm that should the Council proceed to relocation of the structure then Planning Permission which would also require the support of English Heritage would have to be obtained.

Tesco Retail Development – Mr Clive Pearson enquired when it would be known who the other main retailer / agents were going to be on this retail site. This had already been covered under Dan Bramwell presentation and that no announcement would be made until all commercial and legal matters had been fully concluded.

Cllr Champions Chairmanship – Cllr Inchley proposed and received the full applause of all at the meeting, to record a thank you to the Chairman for his work throughout the year. He considered that he had carried out his duties fairly and very well.

There being no other matters raised the Chairman then concluded Public Forum and thanked all members of the public for their attendance.

The meeting then closed at 8.45pm.

Chairman Cllr

Signature_____

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