

# **Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 25 April 2006, in the Salvation Army Room, Commercial Road, Shepton Mallet.**

**Present:** Chairman - Councillor J Bartlett

Cllrs: Mr R. Champion, Mr J. Gilham, Mr C.C. Inchley, Mr M. Lovell , Mrs L.A. Manvill, Mrs M.R. Robinson, Mr N. F. Shearn and Mr A. Taylor

District & Somerset County Cllr. Mr S. Robinson; MDC Area Regeneration Officer Mr G. Braga, Mr Kevin Newton (Coxley Developments), Mr Lee Wright (Lee Wright Associates) and Mr Andrew Hambly-Smith (Principal of the Performing Arts Society). There were 27 members of the public and one member of the press in attendance.

## **1./06 Apologies for Absence**

Cllrs: Jeremiah, Marsh and O'Connor.

## **2./06 Presentation of Future Use for The Amulet building**

Mr Kevin Newton provided a presentation which confirmed that he had purchased the building known as The Amulet and wished to develop with a view to starting a sustainable business in the building. He informed the meeting that the building, as from tomorrow, would be known as "The Academy" of which the Principal of the Performing Arts Society would be involved. They already operated one building within Bristol and would run The Academy on an educational and commercial basis with the possible use of education during the day and commercial during the evening.

Mr Andrew Hambly-Smith provided a presentation on the Academy of Performing Arts which were currently working at the Old Tobacco factory in Bristol which had been part of the regeneration of that area, although there were other Arts-based companies working within the same building. However they had outgrown their current facility and were looking for a new home. They had viewed, on numerous occasions, the building previously known as The Amulet in Shepton Mallet and considered that it was a wonderful building well-suited for their needs with a great amount of space and they were really excited about the project. He had also brought down his staff and students and they were all of the same positive attitude and very eager. He confirmed that the current Academy operated at degree level, his team was outstanding and at the very pinnacle of their career and his intention was to start training in the building in September 2006 with a view to bringing it back to life and to provide a much-valued facility for the community.

Mr Lee Wright provided a presentation on the architectural value whereby he had been looking at both the exterior and interior of the building. There was certain internal work and reorganisation of ancillary space to be done. On the outside, the proposal was that the entrance would be upgraded and the whole of the building adjacent to Boots would be regenerated and refaced back to a traditional mode making a three-bay retail trading building with traditional design above. The actual Academy building would be of a more modern design whereby the entrance would be level and a large glass structure would be built. This, together with the traditional design, would break up the bulk of the building. The planning application would be submitted shortly.

Mr Kevin Newton completed the presentation and informed that this was indeed a two-year plan and he hoped for true regeneration of the town, and to release an artists' impression of the building within the next few weeks. He already owned four retail units which were currently being developed at 10 Town Street and also to the rear service area which currently was in a very run-down state.

There then followed a question-and-answer session with members at the meeting. The Principal of the Performing Arts Society confirmed their requirement for a variety of spaces which were flexible and they would be teaching singing, dancing and the arts. He considered that it was a very special building, was very well-built and it had the best dance floor he had seen for some time. He wanted Shepton Mallet to be proud of the Academy and that the Academy and the theatre wished to be part of the town. Indeed it would provide a top

entertainment and culture facility. Students would be part of the community with many of them being residential as there was a requirement for students to work hard during mornings, afternoons and evenings. One member of the public mentioned the cost involved in bringing the building up to standard, however Mr Newton replied that the building would open in September 2006 and, over the next two years, there would be substantial development. His whole group were thinking positively and he wished the town to do so also. Several members of the public thanked them for their positive stance, of which the town was very appreciative, and they were all looking forward to the facility. A vote of support was proposed and this was confirmed by unanimous applause.

The Chairman thanked all three for their attendance and presentation, following which the three presenters then left the meeting along with approximately 10 members of the public.

### **3./06 Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 26 April 2005 were considered for accuracy and content.

**Resolve:** Proposed by Mr Clive Pearson, seconded by Cllr Lovell, that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of 26 April 2005 were approved and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

### **4./06 Matters Arising – No matters were raised.**

### **5./06 Chairman's Report**

The Chairman informed her intention not to talk for long as the meeting had been issued with the Council's diary of achievements for the past year. "Tonight we have had a fascinating insight into the future of the Amulet. I fervently hope it will come to fruition – at least it will not be at the expense of the Council Tax payer.

It is going to be an exciting year with the completion of the improvements at High Street South, the huge development of the Tesco site with additional retail outlets and a new pub and restaurant as well as more housing. We have received the plans for the redevelopment of the Haskins site and it promises to be a much-improved scheme further enhancing that particular area of the town. It is imperative that we work towards the future and embrace the increased prosperity, vitality and opportunities for the residents of Shepton Mallet. I understand the fears and concerns of the genuine opponents of these developments but I hope that when these schemes come to fruition they will be pleased with the results. We need to encourage our residents to shop locally rather than travelling to the other Mendip towns to spend their hard-earned income.

I don't think anyone needs reminding that this year is the centenary of Collett Park. I hope everyone will give it their full support and help to make it a successful event for the town. I, for one, look forward to seeing our splendid new gates and bandstand railings.

On behalf of the Council I would like to thank Josie and the members of the Salvation Army for making this hall available for the Annual Parish meeting. It is greatly appreciated.

I would like to thank all the councillors, who work on a voluntary basis, for their continuing hard work for the town and their support to me during my chairmanship.

Graham, the Town Clerk, has given me unfailing support and advice during the last year for which I heartily thank him. He has also worked steadfastly for the betterment of Shepton Mallet and its residents. Thank you Graham.

My thanks also extends to my husband who has supported and encouraged me, not only in my year as Chairman but for all the years I have been a councillor.

Finally I would like to extend my best wishes and support to my successor and hope that they will enjoy their chairmanship as much as I have. Thank you everybody."

**6./06 Financial Report – Audited Accounts April 2004 – March 2005** – The Clerk presented the audited Accounts, a copy of which had been supplied with the Agenda. No questions were raised regarding the Accounts or their supporting notes.

**Resolve:** That the matter be noted.

**7./06 Recreational Ground Trust Collett Park – Annual Report Year Ending 31 March 2006** – The report for the year ending 31 March 2006 was presented by the Clerk as required by Section 45 of the Charities Act 1993.

**Resolve:** That the Recreational Ground Trust Annual Report (Appendix B) as attached to these Minutes for the year ending 31 March 2006 be approved.

**8./06 War Memorial Charity – Annual Report Year Ending 31 March 2006** – The report for the year ending 31 March 2006 was presented by the Clerk as required by Section 45 of the Charities Act 1993. Mr Clive Pearson raised concern that derogatory remarks had been made against the Town Council at their last meeting and he thanked the Town Council on behalf of the Royal British Legion who were extremely happy about the way War Memorial was being cared for. The meeting was also informed that the Council had received notification that the structure had now been "Listed" as Grade II by English Heritage.

**Resolve:** That the War Memorial Charity Report (Appendix C) as attached to these Minutes for the year ending 31 March 2006 be approved.

## **9./06 Public Forum**

**Swimming Pool Project** – Mr Stride raised concern that, having viewed the work, it appeared that the length of the Pool had been reduced and that work appeared to be far behind schedule. Cllr Lovell, as the Project Chairman, confirmed that the contract was only some two days behind schedule. The Pool had been shortened to provide a 25 metre facility with a much-valued Starter Pool of some 8 metres in length. The Clerk confirmed that the Council had received requests from swimming clubs for a 25 metre Pool which was to competition length.

**War Memorial** – Mr Taffy Stride considered that the £45,000 allocated for funding by Tesco, by way of a 106 Planning Agreement, may well be insufficient to fund the works and he enquired whether, if there was an overspend, it would be down to the tax-payer to pay. Mr Will Dunscombe raised much concern that Tesco appeared to be "running the show" and that Tesco were the main reason for the War Memorial to be moved. The Chairman reaffirmed that estimates had been received for the works and that the £45,000 from the 106 Agreement would appear to be more than sufficient to cover the costs and that there would be no cost to the tax-payer. Mr George Bartlett raised concern as he was a CCTV volunteer and viewed the area of Townsend and the War Memorial on a regular basis, and sometimes his heart was in his mouth with the HGV lorries mounting the pavement. He considered that it was only a matter of time before an accident occurred in this area and the War Memorial was damaged or even demolished.

The Clerk was requested, and confirmed, the current situation with the War Memorial, and explained that meetings were taking place with stakeholders which included representatives from Tesco, Haskins, County Highways and Mendip District Council and the proposal was to relocate the War Memorial structure approximately 10 metres from its existing position in to what is now Station Road. Station Road would then be moved over to approximately where the current bus shelter is situated. This would provide a pear-drop section of land for the central location of the War Memorial and concept drawings had already been considered. However, now that the structure had been "Listed" the full co-operation of all the stakeholders was required, and that, if any one stakeholder should drop out, then Tesco would continue their development as they had received planning permission, without any improvements to the highways at Station Road or the Townsend roundabout. This would also mean that the War Memorial may stay in its present location. Several members of the public raised concern that it appeared to be Tesco who were "running the show" and that they were fundamental to the requirement for the War Memorial to be moved. The Chairman confirmed that she had attended all the stakeholder meetings and that the only involvement with Tesco was with their funding of the cost by way of a Planning 106 Agreement.

County & District Cllr. Stephen Robinson also confirmed that he had attended all the meetings with Tesco and stakeholders and that Tesco had never mentioned once the requirement for relocation of the War Memorial.

**Air Pollution** – Mr Will Dunscombe raised much concern that asthma within Mendip was one of the highest in the country. Given all the additional developments of Little Ostry, Haskins, Tesco along with housing at Hitchen Lane, Field Farm and Tadley Acres this would indeed be a problem for the health of the community, especially children, and wondered if anyone had considered the consequences. He also enquired why Mendip District Council was again proposing to amend the Local Plan to accommodate the Haskins development. He requested that the Town Council put these questions to Mendip District Council on behalf of the community, which the Chairman confirmed would take place.

**Town Council Matters** – Mr David Selway congratulated the Town Council and considered that people used to blame the Town Council, however the Council had achieved Quality Status and the last meeting of the Council he had attended was indeed an excellent meeting. He congratulated the Clerk on his work for the Council and the Chairman for her good work throughout the year. He also congratulated Cllr Shearn for his work in Collett Park and he considered that last year's event was "spot-on", making almost £1000 profit. This year may not produce as much profit but it was indeed a very special centenary occasion and he wished Cllr Shearn, and the Council, well for this event.

Mr Taffy Stride enquired as to the reason why the St George's Flag was not flying on St George's Day, to which the Chairman confirmed that the person to erect the flag had unfortunately been indisposed. Sandra Pennyfather of the Scouts Group confirmed that, if requested, the Scouts may indeed be able to help with putting up and taking down flags.

The Chairman then concluded Public Forum and thanked all members of the public for their attendance. Cllr Shearn wished the Minutes to record and congratulate the Chairman on doing a very good job in a very trying year.

The meeting then closed at 8.00pm.

**Chairman**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
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