

HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Annual Town Meeting of Huntingdon Town Council was held in the Commemoration Hall, High Street, Huntingdon, on Wednesday 5th May 2010.

These minutes are subject to approval at the Annual Town Meeting in 2011.

Present: Councillor S Akthar (Mayor, Presiding)

Councillors B J Luckham; B C Dutton; C G Doyle; J Sarabia & S M Mulcahy.

In Attendance: Malcolm Lyons, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and Huntingdon & Godmanchester Twinning Association; Stuart Hassell, resident; Nicola Rule (FSB) and Huntingdon Community Radio FM; Graham Buck (FSB); Mavis Monahan, Huntingdon & District Caledonian Society; Kevina Haycock, resident; Angela Owen Smith, Hartford Conservation Group; Pat Wells Johnson, Taoist Tai Chi Society; Peter Clark, resident; Katy Sismore, Huntingdon Town Partnership; Richard Meredith, Huntingdon & Godmanchester Civic Society; Gareth Ridewood, CPRE Huntingdonshire; Charles Cullen, Huntingdon Bowls Club & resident; Dudley Simons, Riverside Users Group & resident; Paul Waldron, resident; and Pauline Jones, resident.

1. **MAYOR'S WELCOME**

The Mayor, Councillor Saeed Akthar, welcomed everyone present to this year's Annual Town Meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Town Councillors T Sanderson; P Shrapnel; D Adams; & M Turnbull; Michael Black, Huntingdon Drama Club; Dawn Morgan, Booterscooterz; June Griffin, Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital; David King, Huntingdon & Godmanchester Twinning Association; District Councillor Mike Shellens; Val Ford, St Peter's School; CFO Graham Stagg, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire & Rescue Service; Sqn Ldr D Barltrop, RAFA; Rt Hon Sir John Major; Howard White, Churchmanor Estates; Erika Brown, Huntingdonshire Society for the Blind; Mike Gledhill, Huntingdon Youth Theatre; and David Monks, Huntingdonshire District Council. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Luckham.

3. **MINUTES**

Copies of the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 6th May 2009 (M1) had been made available to the meeting and in response to a proposal from the Mayor that the minutes should be approved as a correct record it was

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 6th May 2009, whereupon they were duly signed by the Mayor.

4. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MAYOR 2009-2010**

The Mayor presented a report on the Council's activities during the year, a copy of which is attached to the original minutes of this meeting. Councillors B J Luckham; C G Doyle and B C Dutton reported on behalf of the Council's main Committees for Finance, Planning & Leisure & Community Services respectively.

5. **HUNTINGDON COMMEMORATION HALL CHARITY**

The Mayor then invited Trustee C G Doyle, Vice Chairman of the Commemoration Hall Charity Trustees, to address the meeting. A copy of his report was passed to the Clerk and is attached to the original minutes of this meeting.

6. **HUNTINGDON FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES**

The Mayor welcomed Malcolm Lyons, representing the Federation of Small Businesses, who addressed the meeting. Those in attendance heard about the objectives of the Federation, which were to support small businesses and the self employed; a sector accounting for 50% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product and the largest employer in the UK. The organisation was already working in partnership with the District Council as the authority responsible for economic development locally, but he was keen that more partnership working opportunities could be exploited with town and parish councils. The meeting heard that small businesses weren't just part of the local community, they were the local community.

Questions were invited and Mr Lyons was thanked for his presentation.

5. **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The Mayor invited questions and comments from those electors of the town of Huntingdon on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the town.

5.1 **Section 106 Contributions**

In response to a statement of understanding by resident, Mr Peter Clark, that Section 106 Funding in Huntingdonshire was retained in one large fund and had to be applied for by town and parish councils, District Councillor Dutton told the meeting that competition was high among all the local stakeholder groups keen to attract Section 106 funds. Councillor Luckham expressed the view that monies obtained via Section 106 from developers had to be allocated to specific purposes and areas as defined in the agreements.

Mr Clark considered that Huntingdon Town Council should be involved early on in Section 106 negotiations, particularly in the case of larger developments, to ensure that future local needs were adequately met.

In reference to the name cards displayed for Councillors and the Town Clerk, Peter Clark, of Tawny Crescent, suggested that names could be displayed in full.

5.2 A14 Improvements – Ellington to Fen Ditton

Gareth Ridewood asked whether the Town Council would have legal representation at the forthcoming Public Inquiry, since an objection had been registered by the Members with the Secretary of State. Cllr Doyle confirmed that the Town Council would be represented by an appointed Member at the Inquiry.

5.3 Allotments

In reference to publication of costs of provision of the service in a recent "Allotments News", Mr Waldron asked why the costs of administration had doubled between 2008/9 and 2009/10. In response, the Town Clerk explained that the percentage of administration costs allocated to allotments had been revised from 1.5% to 6%, as this reflected more realistically the level of Officer time and other administration costs involved in providing the Allotments Service.

Mr Dudley Simons asked later in the meeting what provision the Council was making for future allotment land and expressed concern that more could be lost in future, once newly extended cemetery capacity had been exhausted. He urged forward planning in favour of reaction once a shortage of capacity became an issue. Councillor Doyle responded that in his view, the Council would need to look outside the town for land required for cemetery and/or additional allotment provision.

Mr Ridewood expressed the view that the Town Council might work with the District Council on Core Strategy Development and Section 106 Negotiations to ensure that allocation of this nature was secured for the future of the town.

5.4 Traffic and Parking

Kevina Haycock, a resident, suggested that a Town Traffic Survey was necessary to establish the reasons why so many vehicle users were choosing to drive to the town and ultimately cause difficulties to local residents by parking in areas such as Primrose Lane, Priory Road and Hinchingsbrooke. Public transport was inadequate and needed improving, she suggested and a survey would indicate how. In response, Councillor Luckham referred to the high cost of parking at the railway station, which encouraged commuters to use the town's longer stay car parks. Double yellow lines on Primrose Lane had assisted in keeping the cemetery entrances free from parked cars, though it was acknowledged that as a measure these had shifted the problem elsewhere.

The Town Partnership Manager, Katy Sismore, suggested that a Park and Ride Option should be considered seriously in the longer term and that car park signage locally could be improved to alleviate parking at Sainsburys. Mr Ridewood suggested that "District Wide" and "About Town" Magazines might encourage car sharing and alternative transport use as a traffic reduction measure.

Mr Charles Cullen expressed the view that multi-tiered local government organisation was to blame for the lack of influence exercised by the Town Council over the development of local transport and expressed support for a unitary authority representing the best interest of the town. He considered that improvements to the transportation system and Huntingdon's development as a serious business centre were severely hampered under existing arrangements.

5.5 Guided Bus

Mrs Angela Owen Smith expressed the view that in the longer term, users of the Guided Bus would require parking in the town and that this need was currently not met.

Mr Peter Clark criticised bus stop arrangements at Hartford, saying that passengers waiting for a bus at Owl Way had a confusing choice of two stops and that the direction of buses down the Old Houghton Road was impractical and indeed was often avoided by bus drivers, when the existing roundabout afforded less waiting time than the junction onto the main St Ives road.

5.6 Town Centre Partnership

The Town Partnership Manager, Katy Sismore, thanked the Town Council for support to the Partnership during the year, the result of which was a benefit to all locally. She expressed congratulations on the outcome of negotiations on the Town Hall and to the service of Councillor Akthar as Mayor during the previous two years. She also paid tribute to recent successes of gymnasts resident at the Huntingdon Olympic Gym Club and highlighted the need for support in the run up to 2012.

5.7 Huntingdon & Godmanchester Civic Society

Mr Richard Meredith praised the Council and particularly the Grounds Staff for their work in maintaining the town's parks and other open spaces. He also referred to future plans for the Town Hall, which he hoped would house the hub of Huntingdon's tourist information service in future years.

5.8 Huntingdon Town Hall

Following on from the previous comments about the Town Hall, Mrs Wells Johnson spoke in favour of a lift installation to the building and suggested that local fundraising initiatives might meet the cost of such an improvement. Councillor Luckham referred to the Council's organisation of a Brainstorming Session and Working Party to drive improvement projects at the Town Hall forward.

In response to a question about ownership of the paintings in the Assembly Room, the Town Clerk confirmed that ownership of the paintings remained with ownership of the building, currently registered under Huntingdonshire District Council.

Mr Simons asked for clarification of future costs of maintenance of the Town Hall and the likely impact on local taxation. Councillor Luckham explained that increased expenditure was unlikely, taking into account a £600,000 contribution received on assignation of the lease, plus expenditure which was equal to the existing outlay by the Council on both the Town Hall and the Offices of the Council at 1 Trinity Place, since it was the aim of the Town Council to relocate its Offices to the Town Hall in February 2012.

5.9 Hartford Village Sign

Mrs Angela Owen Smith thanked the Council for taking responsibility for the sign, previously looked after by the Hartford Conservation Society.

5.10 Quality Status/Best Value/Council Tax

Mr Peter Clark congratulated the Council on its reaccreditation as a Quality Council. He suggested that as Best Value was no longer a statutory requirement, the Council might consider a new name by which its annual performance plan might be known, such as The Annual Report. Finally, in reference to information published by the District Council for local taxpayers on local tax resulted from the precepts of local market towns, he suggested that the Town Clerks might coordinate their submissions to ensure that meaningful comparison was possible across the District.

5.11 Open Space for Recreation

Mr Dudley Simons praised the Town Council's use of the Riverside Park and Meadows for the Huntingdon Heritage Festival in June 2010 and emphasised that continued use of the Riverside Park was essential to prevent the risk of its loss to development.

The Mayor closed the meeting at approximately 9.00pm, thanking those who attended and encouraging attendance at any of the Council's meetings, where Councillors welcomed ideas and suggestions to enable them to best serve the needs of the town.

TOWN MAYOR

Annual Report of the Mayor of Huntingdon, Councillor Saeed Akthar, to the Annual Town Meeting on 5th May 2010.

Hello and welcome to this year's Annual Town Meeting. This is your opportunity to hear about what we've been doing these past 12 months and for you to ask us questions about the services we provide or to raise any other matters that affect the town.

It is my pleasure to present the Annual report on the activities of Huntingdon Town Council for 2009/10. The Annual Meeting was held on May 14th 2009 and re-elected myself, Cllr Saeed Akthar, as Mayor of Huntingdon, with Councillor Helen Mallett appointed as Deputy Mayor. My thanks go to the Reverend Andrew Milton and Tim Alban for their service as respectively Mayor's Chaplain and Macebearer this year.

The Council's services continue to be provided by core administrative staff at the Town Council Offices, 1 Trinity Place and by teams of groundstaff and caretaking/cleaning staff located at the King George V Field Depot St Peter's Road, The Cemetery Chapel in Priory Road, The Medway Centre, The Commemoration and Town Halls. This year we recruited a Deputy Town Clerk, Claire Kane, who joined us on a temporary basis in June as Committees' Manager. Our new Medway Centre Manager, Shilpa Desai-Sakaldip, joined the Council's staff at the beginning of the year, following the retirement of former Manager, Derek Adams, in July 2009. One of the Manager's first tasks has been to develop a Business Plan for the Centre, adoption of which is expected towards the end of this summer.

There were some changes to membership of the Council during the year. Councillor Maggie Wheeler's resignation in May was followed by the election of Councillor Trish Shrapnel in July. More recently, in February and March this year, Councillors Gina Cruickshank and Helen Mallett resigned and an election in respect of vacant seats in the East ward will be held on 27th May 2010. Co-opted Members from Huntingdon in Bloom, the Huntingdon Youth Town Council, the Huntingdon & Godmanchester Civic Society and the Huntingdon & Godmanchester Twinning Association were also appointed by the Council, which further appointed representatives to 31 local organisations, reports from which have been lodged with the Clerk.

As a result of electoral boundary review, the number of electors in the town of Huntingdon increased as of 1st April 2010 by around 500 as the parish now includes households in the Hinchbrooke area of the town previously included in the Stukeleys' Parish.

The Council's work is effectively discharged by three main committees under the Chairmanship of Councillors Doug Adams, for Finance; Chris Doyle, for Planning; and Tom Sanderson, for Leisure & Community Services. Councillor Adams and Councillor Sanderson are represented here this evening by their Vice Chairmen, Councillors Brian Luckham and Claire Dutton.

I am grateful to them and previous Chairmen for their stewardship as indeed I am to all my fellow Councillors for their continued commitment to serve the town as your elected representatives in what remains an unpaid voluntary position. Members of this Council receive no allowances for their services to your community as Town Councillors.

The Leisure & Community Services Committee met seven times during the year and received regular reports from the Newsletter and Leisure Development working parties. A new sub committee, responsible for community aspects of the Town Hall and Medway Centres was also established this year. Our quarterly newsletter publication, About Town Magazine, receives regular praise from readers and is still distributed free to every household in the town. Our Committee received regular reports from the Huntingdon Youth Town Council, Huntingdon in Bloom, the Parks Manager, the Artistic Director and from the Medway Community Centre.

Improvements to play areas were overseen by the Committee. A new roundabout was installed at Sapley Road and the Council contributed towards the cost of provision of two small areas for play on "The Birds" estate in Hartford. Following a very positive consultation exercise at the Town Park, plans to install play equipment there have been put on hold owing to a failure to secure Pathfinder Funding from the Cambridgeshire County Council. Play equipment at Devoke Close & Great Northern Street was removed and replaced with some, which is hoped will attract less anti-social behaviour. Plans for play equipment for the under-fives at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park have been postponed whilst the Council continues to try to secure Section 106 funding from the Huntingdonshire District Council for this purpose.

The Town Park received a facelift during the year; where the trees were thinned out; new picnic tables were installed; and opportunities for play were improved by the installation of some trim trail equipment and a "snakes and ladders" board. We hope that the recent establishment of a "Friends of the Town Park" group will help to protect the park, to continue this work and enable further improvements to be carried out.

In November, the Council accepted responsibility for maintenance of the Hartford Village sign, previously cared for by the Hartford Conservation Society.

The Council has been maintaining the Skatepark at Stukeley Meadows this year and has been approached by the District Council with the suggestion that similar maintenance arrangements are

agreed for a planned multi-sports games area at Sallowbush Road, some funding for which was secured by a group of young people via the "Voice Your Choice" participatory budgeting scheme.

Thanks to the hard work of too many people to mention individually here, Huntingdon won a Gold Certificate Award in the Anglia in Bloom Competition this year, collected on behalf of the town by the Huntingdon in Bloom Committee at the awards ceremony at the end of the Summer. The town has been entered as a large town in the Regional "In Bloom" 2010 competition and we look forward to continued success, reflecting the high environmental standards maintained locally in our town.

The Leisure Development Working Party has continued to work on the Council's behalf, directing the organisation of the Huntingdon Heritage Festival planned for 26th & 27th June 2010. The weekend will comprise a two-day event featuring a living history encampment, historic re-enactment, entertainment and jousting at the Riverside Park, with a Mediaeval Banquet on the Saturday evening and Schools History Workshops on Friday 25th June at the Commemoration Hall.

The Council continues to manage the land dedicated to the King George V Field Trust at St Peter's Road, Clayton's Way and Sapley Road, Hartford for outdoor recreational use.

Summer Outdoor Performances, Annual Pancake Races & Annual Pensioners Lunch were all organised once more by the Council and we added a Pensioners' Christmas Tea to our portfolio of community events. We were pleased to support the Huntingdon Town Partnership once again, both with core funding and to support the Big Switch On of the Christmas Lights in November. This year the Council took responsibility for installation & management of the town's Christmas Lights and there are plans to purchase some new and more energy efficient displays next year thanks to the continued fundraising efforts of the Christmas Lights Sub Committee.

The Council is partnering the Rotary Club of Huntingdon Hinchingsbrooke and the Huntingdon Boat Club to provide the Riverside Gala on 5th June this year again.

At the Council's meeting on April 29th, we were very pleased to receive Huntingdon's Certificate of Award of Fair Trade Town Status.

The Finance Committee met ten times during the year and received regular reports from its sub committees dealing with staffing, best value, grants, lettings, mayoral matters and twinning. The Committee also established a working party responsible for financial aspects of the Town Hall & Medway Centre. The Council's spending and receipts were monitored closely and the Committee oversaw a comprehensive process of budgeting expenditure & income between November and January, resulting in an application for precept to District Council in the amount of £735,934.

The Council's Financial Accounts and Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2009 were approved and adopted by the Finance Committee in June and submitted to Accountants, Moore

Stephens, for external audit. Completion was effected at 30th September 2009 and the External Auditor's comments were favourable. Local Accountancy firm Kinnaird Hill have continued to act as internal auditors to the Council and audit recommendations in the form of adoption of a Risk Management Policy and a Policy for Minimum Reserves have been implemented this year.

The Council continues to support and work closely with the Huntingdon Commemoration Hall Charity, providing an annual financial award of £37,000 for at least the next five years and management & administration services, for which the Charity pays agreed fees reflecting the Council's actual cost.

Thanks to the work of the Best Value Sub Committee, the Council continues to develop and publish a Best Value Performance Plan. Having set a target of completing strategic reviews for four services this year, Members are currently busily engaged in the process of challenging the way in which the Council delivers International Twinning, Community Facilities, Parks, Gardens & Open Spaces and Highways, Footpaths & Lighting.

The Lettings Sub Committee Members are to be thanked for their work regarding the Town Hall, the Huntingdon Leisure Centre Management Committee, and development of land at the Medway Centre in addition to their usual work to review and revise the Council's charges and fees.

Thanks to the Council's decision earlier in the year to talk directly to HM Magistrates Services regarding the future of the Town Hall, we have been able to ensure that this historic and prestigious building in Huntingdon's Town Centre will continue to be available for use by the local community. We will continue to work with local key stakeholders to develop a strategy for the building's future, whilst investing in essential repairs to the building and planning the relocation of our offices at 1 Trinity Place when the current lease expires in February 2012. Having signed an agreement accepting responsibility for the building, together with a £600,000 consideration in March this year, we look forward to receiving confirmation of the Cambridgeshire County Council's and Clerk to the Justices approval for the Deed of Appointment and Retirement by September 30th of this year, when the transaction will be completely finalised. Members are currently negotiating the terms for a lease of land to the Huntingdonshire Football Association at the Jubilee Sports Fields, where the organisation plans to site its new headquarters.

Work on the Council's properties during the year included the installation of flooring in the former non-conformist chapel, now used as a cemetery workshop, to ensure protection for the flooring tiles. A new fire alarm system was installed at the Medway Community Centre and improvement works at the King George V Field Depot included a lighting upgrade and safety improvements to the stairs. The Huntingdon Olympic Gym Club was extended by the Gym Club Trustees, during which time the Council funded repairs to the flat roofing costing around £12,000. At the Sallowbush Road Allotment site, we have constructed a composting facility to enable on-site processing of green waste, avoiding the costs of disposal and reducing the need for compost deliveries to our sites.

The Twinning Sub Committee continues to work in partnership with the Huntingdon & Godmanchester Twinning Association to plan and deliver cultural exchange activity. In February we hosted the annual Twinning Business Meeting, involving delegates from all the twinned towns and including representatives from Gubbio in Italy.

The Grants Sub Committee awarded £10,400 in financial assistance to local community groups during the year.

The Planning Committee met fourteen times during the year and considered a number of key strategic planning matters, among them the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan; Section 106 Agreements for the proposed Northbridge Development; the new link road between Ermine Street and Brampton Road; The Ageing Well in Huntingdonshire Strategy; East of England 2031; Core Strategy; the Chequers Court Planning Brief; and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. Committee's work also included consideration of traffic matters; including Bus Lanes on Old Houghton Road; the A141 Junction with Kings Ripton Road Improvements; A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton Improvements; and Footpath to Cyclepath conversions. The Council is opposed to the loss of green space implied in proposals to de-trunk the A14 and will play an active role to mitigate this loss in the forthcoming Public Enquiry.

A successful bid for Jointly Funded Minor Improvement Schemes finance will result in traffic calming at the north end of Sapley Road, development of a scheme for which is being overseen by the Council's Working Party.

The Town and County Councils are currently in the legal process of transferring land to enable to construction of a new bus stop at Sallowbush Road recreation area.

Repairs to the St John's Passageway footpath have been delayed owing to pressure on the County Council to address a larger than expected workload repairing potholes after severe winter weather. This year the Council purchased grit bins for residents' use at various locations on the Oxmoor and at Hinchingsbrooke, though a grit shortage later in the season resulted in these not being filled.

The Planning Applications Panel met fortnightly throughout the year to ensure the continued participation of this Council as a statutory consultee in the planning process, considering local planning applications, planning decisions, notices & outcomes of planning appeals, traffic orders, advertisement consents, tree preservation orders and street naming matters.

(MAYOR)

The Town Council welcomes reports from District & County Councillors at its meetings and we are grateful to our fellow elected representatives for their regular attendance and news.

Our traditional Civic activity has continued this year with Mayor Making, the Annual Civic Service, Remembrance Sunday, the Civic Carol Service, the Annual Civic Ball and a large number of Mayoral Engagements both locally and in the surrounding parishes. We also supported our Armed Forces by

flying the designated flag from the Town Hall between 22nd and 27th June 2009, following which it was presented to Mr Douglas Smith OBE. In January of this year, the Council resolved to grant the freedom of the town of Huntingdon to the Royal Anglian Regiment and this will be concluded in a ceremony, on 14th June 2010, at Huntingdon's Market Hill.

We continue to offer our public sessions at meetings, providing an opportunity for residents to make representations on matters on the agendas. At our meeting on 29th April, confirmation of our status as a fit for purpose Council was re-affirmed when we received our Quality Status Certificate as a result of re-accreditation by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Association of Local Council's County Quality Panel.

My year of office ends on 13th May 2010. It has been an eventful year to say the least, one that I have enjoyed immensely as your Mayor. I wish to thank my family for their unstinting support and loyalty throughout my Mayoral period. My thanks also for a long and dedicated service to local government, to former Deputy Mayor Councillor Helen Mallett and her escort and to THE Town Clerk and all of the Town Council Staff for their assistance, help and support throughout the year.

I have been fortunate in receiving generous support for my Mayoral charities, and I will be reporting to Council at its Annual Meeting the outcome of those fundraising efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes my report on the activities of the Town Council for the Local Government Year 2009/10 and I commend it to you for your acceptance. If any elector of the town has any questions on the report, then we will do our best to answer them.

Commemoration Hall Charity

Report to the Annual Town Meeting, 5th May 2010

The Huntingdon Commemoration Hall Charity Board of Trustees continues to provide the Commemoration Hall for the benefit of the inhabitants of Huntingdon. Our twelve member board currently numbers ten and we therefore have two vacancies for individuals interested in supporting the town's main community hall. Our Annual Meeting takes place in September, when the current term of existing Trustees ends and a new Board will be elected.

Since we last reported to you, the Board has continued to meet monthly for the purpose of managing the hall. During the early part of the year, we were able to benefit from the employment of a temporary Premises Manager, Gavin Walsh, who managed a number of improvement projects for us and was able to provide us with regular reports on bookings activity at the hall. We are currently in the process of recruitment of what we hope will be a permanent Premises Manager, whose main focus will be to promote and market the hall's availability as a prime venue for hire in the centre of Huntingdon.

Huntingdon Town Council continues to provide us with services at cost for which we are invoiced monthly. These include the service of the Clerk, Bookings Manager, Accounts Administrator and two Caretakers.

Redecoration of the building's front façade has been a very worthwhile project as we received a good number of very favourable comments following completion of this over the summer of 2009. Banners for the front are currently in the design stage. Recent installation of heating controls for the building will result, we very much hope, in energy cost savings. We've seen our energy bills increase dramatically in the last 2-3 years and hope that the £4500 investment in controls will soon be paid off.

Funding applications made in support of improvement projects to Biffa and Woodford Waste Management were unfortunately not successful. We were extremely pleased, however, to receive an award of £10,000 from the Huntingdon Freeman's Charity this year and will receive a further £15,000 in instalments over the next three years to support our improvement projects. We are very much aware of the need to attract external funding if we are to continue our programme of improvements to the hall and will be putting some energy into securing funds in this manner in the current year ahead.

Marketing & promotion opportunities in the form of A3 frames in Literary Walk are not being utilised in our view and we are currently seeking the assistance of local photographers and graphic designers to help create posters that will increase awareness and increase our bookings levels. We currently display a list of "What's On" at the Hall using the boards in the hope that this will encourage more people to visit the premises.

We put a good deal of effort this year into developing and improving our Business Plan, which we hope will assist us to attract more funding from external bodies as well as maintain our focus on targets to increase income and bookings levels. We have identified that lack of parking facilities is a significant weakness for the Hall and will be looking at ways to overcome this in the coming year. Copies of the Business Plan are available from the Clerk for anyone interested in reading more.

This year we decided to introduce a minimum hire charge for the hall, which equates to that of a minimum two-hour booking, to ensure that our costs are met on bookings of a short duration. Hirers interested in summer bookings will be pleased to learn that we will no longer close for maintenance during August and we hope this will encourage bookings for holiday activities, particularly for younger people.

This year our financial accounts were independently examined for the first time before submission to the Charities Commission and I'm pleased to report a clean bill of health from the auditors. Our budget for the current financial year predicts that income from lettings will exceed expenditure. Our final accounts for the year ended 31st March 2010 will be presented at our AGM, but expenditure & income reports currently available show that just £1000 more income from lettings would have allowed us to break even this year.

Our website is increasingly becoming a valuable means by which we receive enquiries for bookings about the Hall. In March 2010, we recorded 890 visits to the site and this figure consistently increases from month to month.

We are grateful to the continued voluntary fundraising effort of Performing Arts at the Commemoration Hall (PatCH) and to their Treasurer and Chairman for their recent attendance at Board Meetings. Funds raised this year will purchase new crockery, a glasswasher and dishwasher for the kitchen, as well as provision of soundproof doors for the Minerva Room. Our thanks go, too, to Huntingdon Town Council, for its continued support of an Artistic Programme for the Hall.

That concludes my report on behalf of the Trustees of the Commemoration Hall Charity and I welcome any questions you may like to ask.