

**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 7<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

*These minutes are subject to approval at the Annual Town Meeting in 2009.*

Present: Councillor J Sarabia (Mayor, Presiding)

Councillors D A Adams; S Akthar; C G Doyle; L Kadic; B J Luckham; J T Morgan; A J MacKender Lawrence; S M Mulcahy; C J Osborn; T D Sanderson & M Wheeler.

In Attendance: 26 members of the public, including representatives from local community organisations and voluntary groups.

1. **MAYOR'S WELCOME**

The Mayor, Councillor Jennifer Sarabia, welcomed everyone present to this years' Annual Town Meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from representatives of the organisations Addaction & Carers UK; The Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire; Councillor P Swales; Mr Howard White; Mike Taylor; Grp Cpt G J Bruce; Mr S Mason; Sir John Major; Mr David Monks; Drs Angela & Michael Owen Smith; Squ Ldr Dav Hill; Jonathan Djanogly MP; Richard Kingston; Helen Bosworth; J Watkin Tavener; Sir Peter Brown; and Councillors H S Mallett; G M Cruickshank & D Dransfield.

3. **MINUTES**

Copies of the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 12th May 2007 (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 12th May 2007, whereupon they were duly signed by the Mayor.

*District & County Cllr J Dutton passed to the Town Clerk a copy of his address to the meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> May, which he asked be attached to the original minutes, since this was different to that published.*



#### **4. MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2007/8**

The Mayor presented her report on the activities of the Huntingdon Town Council for the local government year 2007/8 to the Annual Town Meeting. (A copy of The Mayor's report is bound with the original Minutes of the Meeting).

#### **5. HUNTINGDON COMMEMORATION HALL CHARITY**

A report was presented to the meeting by Mr Terry Downing, Chairman of the Huntingdon Commemoration Hall Charity, who began by calling his report the first to the people of Huntingdon on behalf of the Management Board of Trustees for the Hall. He referred to changes in the Governance arrangements implemented in August 2006 and the continued generous support in finance and management of the Hall provided by Huntingdon Town Council.

Trustees faced a number of challenges and had appointed working parties to address these, which included obtaining grants for both capital and revenue investment in the Hall; promotion of the Hall; and the practical day to day management and finance of the premises. Mr Downing was confident that the Trustees' strong skills set was robust enough to meet these challenges and encouraged local people to approach him for a copy of the Board's Business Plan. He mentioned the performing arts programme, which he considered a valuable tool for bringing people into the Hall. Funding had been obtained to improve facilities to help the Hall compete as a community venue with other premises locally and hiring fees had been re-structured for community and commercial use. Booking levels were healthy and had increased by 27% between June 2006 and June 2007. He ended by saying "Live theatre brings communities together. Arts are key to the soul of our community. Why should arts only be available to people who can only afford to travel to Cambridge & London?," which was met with a round of applause.

#### **6. 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.

##### **6.1 Public Speaking at Meetings of the District Council**

District Cllr J Dutton told the meeting that they were now encouraged to attend and speak at Council Meetings. He thanked all the Town, District & County Councillors for their help and support during the year.

##### **6.2 Car Park Strategy**

The Council was asked what measures were to be implemented following consultation on a local car parking strategy. An imminent increase in parking charges and changes to lengths of stay was expected. Opening of the new car park at the Bridge End on the former Godmanchester Depot site was welcomed to increase capacity. The Council was asked for a view on the need for a park and ride service.

Whilst the principle of park and ride was supported, it was suggested that demand locally was not sufficient to ensure the sustainability of such a service and that without a major change in attitude shift regarding car use, car parking capacity

would continue to be required. This Council had indicated to District Council the need for car parking provision on green space somewhere on the outskirts of the town.

Cllr Hyams mentioned that he was one of a working group at District Council level concerned with a need to provide longer stay parking for car owners working in Huntingdon. He took the opportunity to remind those present that the footbridge over the River Great Ouse was not for use by cyclists. Once the current changes had been implemented, it was the remit of the working group to assess effectiveness and make any further recommendations.

### **6.3 FUSION**

The meeting was addressed by four young people representing FUSION, a holiday scheme for young people run by the County Council's Youth Service from the Huntingdon Youth Centre in Sallowbush Road. Thanks was due for community support for FUSION's activities to date, but further support was necessary if the scheme was to continue. The Council was asked how much was being spent on youth services annually locally.

The Chairman of Finance said that of around £14000 budgeted for financial awards to local groups, approximately 50% was spent on youth organisations. Community Halls such as the Medway Centre and the Commemoration Hall, funded by the Council, hosted activities by a number of groups whose membership was young people and therefore a substantial portion of the Council's expenditure benefited young people. The meeting also heard that the Council's current issue of "About Town" would carry an item about FUSION's activities.

In response to a comment that the Town Council was no longer contributing funds towards organisations providing activities for young people in the holidays, reference was made to £5000 budgeted specifically in support of such activity. An application from FUSION had not been received in time for consideration by a meeting of the Grants Sub Committee in March 2008.

### **6.4 Huntingdon Outdoor Bowls Club**

Mr Cullen, a resident and Chairman of the Bowls Club, addressed the meeting, thanking the Town Council for their support with improvements to the Bowling Pavilion.

### **6.5 Town Centre Development**

Mr Cullen also expressed concern about the amount of infill development in the town and how this was causing a direct adverse impact on the existing shortage of car parking space in the town. In his view, the car park at the station provided a perfect site for developing increased capacity which needed only a willingness by the local councils to invest. He added that there were too many card shops and estate agents in the town and a lack of quality retail opportunities and suggested that more could be done to preserve the green areas of the town, such as the Riverside Park.

In response, Chairman of Finance Cllr Doug Adams referred to planning guidance being at odds with a need to restrict the number of cars in the town centre, since there was no requirement to provide parking spaces for infill development, the assumption being that people would not use cars if they lived in the town centre. He



also referred to this Council's strongly worded objections in respect of local bus lanes being apparently ignored by District and County Councils. Regarding the retail offering, Cllr Luckham assured the meeting that whilst the Council was influencing where it could, it was ultimately the economic choice of retailers as to whether to locate in Huntingdon. The Chequers Court re-development provided opportunities to increase the quality of the local retail offering and this Council would do what it could to support that aim.

Cllr Hyams assured the meeting that there were no plans to increase the size of the car park at the Riverside Park. Cllr Dutton mentioned his support for the Riverside Users Group and his strong opposition to the Guided Bus.

#### **6.6 On Street Car Parking**

A resident asked what was being done by the Council to alleviate on-street parking and the adverse impact this was having on emergency vehicle access. Cllr Sanderson mentioned unsuccessful attempts to implement a Residents Parking Scheme at Avenue Road. Reference was made again to planning policy, which ignored the fact that most people have cars, not bicycles and which was therefore contributing to the problem of on-street parking.

#### **6.7 Hartford Bus Lane**

In response to a question on whether the Council would oppose this development, Cllr Sanderson indicated that it was not possible to say whether the Council would support this or not before sight and consideration of the development proposals.

#### **6.8 Brian Smith**

The meeting sadly noted the recent sudden death of Mr Brian Smith, who had campaigned tirelessly on local and global environmental issues and who had been a regular attendant at the Town's Annual Meeting.

#### **6.9 Allotments**

In response to a question about the capacity of land set aside as statutory allotments, a resident was advised that the existing provision was considered adequate for at least twelve years hence. The Council had begun a policy of letting plots half the size of a standard full sized plot of 10 poles and this had increased tenancy capacity. Residents were interested to know what was being done to secure land for future provision.

#### **6.10 Huntingdon Town Partnership**

Partnership Manager, Katy Sismore, commended Councillors on their service to the community as unpaid volunteers. She referred to Huntingdon's rapid growth and the strategic importance of the local railway station, which could be considered a curse in the light of parking problems in the town.

#### **6.11 Migrant Workers**

In response to a question about what the Council was able to do to support migrant workers who were the victims of abuse, a resident was encouraged to come to a

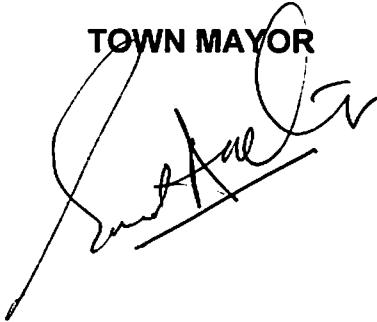


Leisure & Community Services Committee meeting. Mr Malcolm Lyons mentioned that the "Migrant Gateway" might be of help.

**6.12 Sallowbush Road Bus Stop**

Mr Richard Meredith spoke about the risk of accident posed by the absence of a suitable bus stop on Sallowbush Road and asked if the Council was prepared to devote a piece of land from the Sallowbush Recreation area to improve matters. Cllr Sanderson mentioned that he had raised this as a possibility with the District Council.

**TOWN MAYOR**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Meredith", written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

**Annual Report of the Mayor of Huntingdon, Councillor Jennifer Sarabia, to the Annual Town Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2008.**

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 affects the town.

It is my pleasure to present the Annual report on the activities of Huntingdon Town Council for 2007/2008. Elections in early May 2007 brought ten new Members to the Council and the Annual Meeting held on May 17<sup>th</sup> 2008 elected myself, Cllr Jennifer Sarabia, as Mayor of Huntingdon, with Councillor Saeed Akthar appointed as Deputy Mayor. The Council subsequently appointed its three main Committees for Finance, Planning & Leisure & Community Services, each of which elected its Chairman, who were Councillors Doug Adams, Helen Mallett and Tom Sanderson respectively. The Council also appointed representatives to 28 local organisations and reports from these have been lodged with the Clerk. The Reverend Andrew Milton and Tim Alban have served respectively as Mayor's Chaplain and Macebearer this year.

Several changes occurred in staffing at the Council. Town Clerk of five years, Mike Kennedy, left to take up an appointment at Ware Town Council. The post was advertised externally and the process of recruitment which took place between October and December resulted in the appointment of Karen Cameron to the post. Having been Deputy Town Clerk, Karen's appointment created a vacancy for which we are currently recruiting and we hope to have a new Committees Manager in post by late June. Five members of staff qualified for long service awards, Jenni Jones for 25 years and Dennis Smith, Chris Cowles, David Page & Lesley Rayner for 20 years each. The fixed term contract for an Artistic Director at the Commemoration Hall was renewed for two years in February.

The Council's membership has remained at sixteen Councillors throughout the year, with representatives co-opted from Huntingdon in Bloom, the Huntingdon Youth Town Council and the Huntingdon & Godmanchester Twinning Association.

The Leisure & Community Services Committee met seven times during the year and received regular reports from the Newsletter and Leisure Development working parties. Our quarterly newsletter publication, About Town Magazine, receives regular praise from readers and is still distributed free to every household in the town. Reports were also received from the Youth Town Council, Members of which attended occasionally and from the Medway Community Centre.

The Leisure Development Working Party has worked hard to identify play areas in need of refurbishment locally and in partnership with the Huntingdonshire District Council, produced some proposals for improvements at Sapley and Nursery Roads. We continue to provide our parks and gardens and maintain these to a high standard as evidenced by the town's Silver Gilt Award won in the Anglia in Bloom competition this year. A special award for outstanding contribution to Anglia in Bloom made to Mr Peter Jackson, the Chairman of Huntingdon in Bloom is recognised as deserved praise for his efforts.

The Council has responded to complaints about anti social behaviour from residents neighbouring the Council's Parks and Gardens, particularly the Town Park, St Johns Closed Churchyard & Sapley Road Play Area and solutions are being explored on an ongoing basis in partnership with the local Community Safety Partnership and the Cambridgeshire Constabulary. Our Allotment Holders Annual Meeting in July was well attended. Prizes for the best kept allotments were awarded and allotment holders were provided with an opportunity to comment and question on the Council's service. In November, the Council obtained confirmation of permission by the Secretary of State to remove from statutory use as Allotments land the Sallowbush II site at Redwongs Way. The Primrose Lane Cemetery Extension has been a project developed throughout the year and will reach completion in the next two weeks, ensuring sufficient traditional lawn cemetery burial capacity in the town until 2021.

Summer Outdoor Performances, Annual Pancake Races & Annual Pensioners Lunch were all organised once more by the Council and we were pleased to Partner the Huntingdon Town Partnership once again, both with core funding and to provide the Big Switch On of the Christmas Lights in November. The Council is also partnering the Rotary Club of Huntingdon Hinchingsbrooke and the Huntingdon Boat Club to provide the Riverside Gala on 7<sup>th</sup> June this year following a very successful Raft Race in June 2007 to raise funds for the Mayor of Huntingdon's Charities.

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 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 £597,464.

Local Accountancy firm Kinnaird Hill were appointed internal auditors to the Council in October and the Council's external auditors gave an unqualified opinion on the Council's financial accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 in September, when the Council formally approved and adopted these. Donations totalling £14,600 were awarded to local groups throughout the year.

The Lettings Sub Committee undertook a review of the Council's hire and lease arrangements and charges for sports and community halls in October, which led to our adopting a strategic aim to redress a huge imbalance in our Council's income and contingent liabilities. A round of negotiations was carried out by a small working party headed by Cllr Doug Adams, which has had some very successful outcomes already, not least of which has been to establish a dialogue and a forum for mutual respect and understanding between the Council and the sports clubs and user groups concerned.

The Planning Committee met fourteen times during the year, which began with an emotive plea for support from the Warren Hay Action Group. This followed the teenager's tragic death as a result of a road traffic accident at the junction of the A141 and Kings Ripton Road on May 13<sup>th</sup> 2007 and resulted later in the year in our agreement to contribute £50,000 to a £260,000 scheme proposed by the County Council to improve road safety at the junction.

The Council was consulted on local strategic planning matters such as the West Area Action Plan; the Core Strategy 2007 and the Development Control Strategy; Developer Contributions towards affordable housing; the dual-use pedestrian and cycleway on St Peter's Road; various Design Guides; On Street Parking Policies; the Car Parking Strategy; changes to the planning system; the future of the local health authority site on Primrose Lane & the development of Northstowe. A small working party, led by Councillor Luckham, worked hard to make recommendations on these and other traffic calming proposals in Hartford for which the Planning Committee members are grateful. Bus Lanes on Old Houghton Road and Hinchingsbrooke Park/Brampton Roads were strongly opposed by the Council.

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.

The Town Council welcomes reports from District & County Councillors at its meetings. This Council has campaigned consistently and strongly this year, to encourage the District Council to invest in areas of need the section 106 funds gained from larger local developments, such as at Thames Road & Sapley Park & the "Birds" Estate in Hartford. We are pleased to be able to report some very successful outcomes to this effective partnership working with other local authorities, resulting in match funding for play areas; cost savings in waste disposal; contributions towards maintenance and restoration projects; and traffic calming measures. The Council continues to work with the District Council on the development of Coneygear Park and improvements at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park; will undertake maintenance for a new Skatepark at Stukeley Meadows provided by the District Council; and will enter into a creation agreement with the County Council to ensure a footpath link between existing paths at Portholme and on Castle Hills via the Watersmeet Development and the Riverside. As a Quality Council consulted about the District Council's Model Parish Charter earlier this year, we look forward to the establishment of a structure for better liaison between the tiers and the sharing of good practice. Representatives of the Council have attended regular meetings of the Inter Towns Forum this year, where there has been some discussion about the possibility of services of the larger Councils being made available to smaller local councils in the surrounding parishes.

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. A Mayoral Handbook has been adopted, the aim of which is to underline the tradition and principles of the Mayoralty in Huntingdon and to provide guidance for future Mayors, ensuring continued respect and support for the Office of First Citizen.

The Council adopted the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 in June and now allows Members with an interest in matters on meeting agendas to make representations in the public session. We continue to offer our public sessions at meetings, providing an opportunity for residents to make representations on matters on the agendas. In June Members supported a move increasing information availability to a wider audience, to publish agendas, minutes & reports on the Council's website and to download these, saving administration costs. Members received training on the Model Code of Conduct from District Council Officers in November and one Member agreed to undertake training in Councillor Professional Development Training organised by our County Association of Local Councils.

Changes in legislation this year mean that we are no longer obliged to continue with the Best Value model as a performance management system, but until a suitable alternative is adopted, we have decided to maintain current arrangements to ensure effective service monitoring, delivery and improvement. The Best Value Sub Committee and Leisure Development Working Party are currently looking at our performance against objectives this year and are working on the establishment of aims and objectives for 2008-9 and the next 3-4 years. We look forward to publishing our new plan at the end of June.

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 and the Town Clerk has continued to act as Clerk to the Trustees of the Huntingdon Commemoration Hall Charity, to which the Council has continued to provide financial and administrative support.

My year of office ends on the 15th May. 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 to my Deputy and his wife and to 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 2007/2008 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.