

HUNTINGDON TOWN
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Annual Town Meeting of Huntingdon Town was held in the Town Hall, Market Hill, Huntingdon, on Thursday 4th March 2021 at 7.00pm via Zoom Video Conference Call.

In attendance; Councillors M Baker; A Beevor; A Blackwell; J Cole; C Doyle; S Gifford; V Hufford; P Kadewere; P Kennington; B Luckham; A McAdam; S McAdam; P Pearce; T Sanderson; T Shrapnel; S Sweek and K Webb (Mayor).

Mayor's Chaplain, Reverend J Randall; S Orme, Cromwell Museum Curator; District Councillor J Morris; County Councillors M Shellens and G Wilson; C Doody, Office for National Statistics and three members of the public.

1. **MAYOR'S WELCOME**

The Mayor, Councillor Karl Webb, welcomed everyone present to the 2021 Annual Town Meeting. Before the meeting proceeded, the Mayor advised the meeting that although Political Purdah had not yet commenced for the elections on 6th May 2021, political positioning, electioneering, and campaigning would not be allowed or tolerated at the meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies tendered to the Town Clerk included Councillors P Brown and A Diaz.

3. **MINUTES**

Members had before them copies of the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 5th March 2020 (M1). It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve and adopt these minutes and they would be duly signed by the Mayor at a later date.

Clerk's Note: Under usual circumstances, the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting would have been approved at a subsequent Town Council meeting and would be available to review and note at the following Annual Town Meeting. In light of Covid-19, the meeting schedule of the Council had changed, and the minutes of the 2020 Annual Town Meeting hadn't been presented for approval.

4. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MAYOR 2020-21**

The Mayor's report on the Council's activities during the year was presented by the Mayor, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

5. **COMMITTEE REPORTS 2020-21**

- i) The Mayor invited the Chairman of the Finance Committee to give his report. Councillor Phil Pearce gave a brief overview of financial activities of the last 12 months. A copy of the report is attached to these minutes.
- ii) The Mayor next invited the Chairman of the Leisure and Community Services Committee to provide his report. Councillor Tom Sanderson delivered a brief overview of the committee's activities of the last 12 months. A copy of this report is attached to these minutes
- iii) The Mayor then invited the Chairman of the Planning Committee to provide his report. Councillor Chris Doyle delivered a brief overview of planning activities of the last 12 months. A copy of this report is attached to these minutes.
- iv) Finally, the Mayor invited the Chairman of the Environment Sub Committee to give his report. Councillor Samuel Sweek gave a brief overview of financial activities of the last 12 months. A copy of the report is attached to these minutes.

6. **PRESENTATION FROM EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- i. Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

Christine Doody thanked Members for inviting her to the meeting. Christine gave a presentation to help raise awareness, and to equip Members to give residents help and support when completing their Census 2021.

Christine told Members that the date for Census was 21st March 2021 and that she had been working in conjunction with the Census team, holding weekly meetings with Huntingdonshire District Council since October 2020 in order to make sure that Huntingdonshire was best equipped to complete the Census.

Members were told that there had been initial debate as to whether the Census 2021 should take place due to Covid-19, but that the House of Commons permitted it to go ahead in a safe and secure way, to ensure that the Country's Census data was accurate.

Christine informed Members that for Census 2021, 90% of the population would receive a code to complete the Census online, as opposed to only 17% of the population completing it digitally back in 2011. The questionnaire was available in over 200 languages and was an accessible document for those requiring additional support to complete their Census. Hard copy versions of the questionnaire could be requested if preferred.

Members were advised that there was a call centre available for any queries, and that there would be a field team sending help to people's doors who hadn't completed their Census by 21st March. Everyone across the nation would be able to complete their Census questionnaires during the months of March, April and May 2021.

Christine explained to Members that it was imperative for residents to complete their Census questionnaire to ensure national data was up to date, so that it

could allow funding to be allocated correctly, based on what the Census data identified.

Christine suggested that Members could be emailed a copy of the presentation slides to equip them in promoting and helping with the completion of the Census 2021.

The Mayor thanked Christine for her presentation and thanked Members for their questions and discussion.

Clerk's Note: A copy of the presentation slides was emailed to Members after the meeting had taken place.

7. **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 had powers or duties or which affected the town.

A resident asked whether Huntingdon Town Council had submitted an official objection to the recent planning application for a gambling venue to open on Huntingdon's High Street. Councillor Doyle, Chairman of the Planning Committee confirmed the objections voiced by the Town Council and advised that the objection had been formally submitted to Huntingdonshire District Council that week.

The resident moved on to ask the Council's opinion on a recent presentation on Parklets for Huntingdon's town centre. The Town Clerk advised that this concept was being presented at a forthcoming meeting of the Strategy & Corporate Plan Committee on 11th March 2021.

Finally, the resident queried the ownership of the brook running alongside Bloomfield Park, within the park railings. The resident reported that the brook was often full of litter, including shopping trolleys, causing it to become flooded. It was also suggested that tree roots were causing problems. The Town Clerk advised that the brook and the banks either side fell under the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council and that the issues of litter should be reported to them. One Member suggested that the Alconbury Drainage Board was responsible for the water course and that he could report the issues as a Member of the board.

A Member asked the meeting if there were concerns that Huntingdon no longer had a manned Police Station. The Member suggested that the intercom system was ineffective and rarely manned, and thought it was concerning to encourage residents to report incidents online, when this might not be an option for some people.

The same Member also queried public conveniences in the town and expressed concern at the lack of facilities for residents and visitors to Huntingdon. A resident advised that the Business Improvement District (BID) team had agreed with the landlords of the former Waitrose unit to open their public conveniences for use, and that there was a disabled toilet at the Bus Station and public toilets in Sainsbury's. The Town Clerk told Members that there were ongoing Market Town Initiative meetings taking place and that public conveniences were on the agenda, in particular the facilities at Riverside Park, but confirmed that they would not fall under the responsibility of Huntingdon Town Council. A Member

advised that there were also facilities available to the public in the Library when it was open. Another Member raised their concerns about an increase in rough sleepers in Huntingdon and the impact it would have on the town not having public conveniences for those who need them.

Finally, a Member queried whether anything could be done to introduce clearer shop numbering along the High Street, and if this was something BID could look into. The Member explained that the numbering system along the High Street was confusing to those who weren't aware of the set up, and that barely any shops actually displayed their shop numbers.

With no further questions, the Mayor gave thanks to those in attendance.

MAYOR