

Minutes of the  
**THIRTY SEVENTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY**  
of the  
**BERKHAMSTED TOWN MEETING**  
Held in the Great Hall, Berkhamsted Town Hall,  
on  
**THURSDAY 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010 at 7.30 p.m.**

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**PRESENT:**

**MEMBERS:**

Councillors	D.J. Collins	Town Mayor
	Julie Laws	Deputy Town Mayor
	S.A. Bateman	
	R.M. Cowie	
	Lindy Foster-Weinreb	
	P.G. Gibbs	
	Mrs C. Green	
	Dr. L. Handy	
	J.D. Lythgoe	
	Fiona Macdonald	
	Dr. I.M.Reay	
	G. Stevens	

**OFFICER:** Mr. C.R. Westwood - Clerk of the Town Council

**Presentation of Awards**

Prior to the start of the meeting Town Mayor Councillor David Collins and Rotary Club President Geoff Budd presented the Berkhamsted Rotary Club Centenary Civic Awards.

The Adult award was presented to Colin Garrett in recognition of the initiative and enterprise he has displayed in establishing and organising a team of Berkhamsted residents to undertake regular and systematic litter clearance in their neighbourhoods. From small beginnings in August 2009, Colin has masterminded the development of this simple concept into a network of over 50 volunteers covering over one-third of Berkhamsted streets.

It is a sad feature of modern life that littering and dog fouling are viewed less seriously than in former times. Thanks to the efforts of Colin and his hard-working team a growing proportion of the population of Berkhamsted is now spared the eye-sore and inconvenience of these anti-social and eco-unfriendly practices.

The Award also recognises Colin's all round contribution to the civic life of Berkhamsted which includes his roles as Secretary of the Graham Greene Festival and Treasurer of the Dacorum Neighbourhood Watch Association.

The Young Persons Award was presented to Benjamin Chambers in recognition of his all round contribution to the civic life of Berkhamsted as expressed through his role as a student at Ashlyns School and his active participation in community and service organisations.

He has proved himself to be an outstanding ambassador for Ashlyns and a role model for younger students by dint of his organisation of and participation

in a wide range of school events, particularly through the provision of technical support for highly successful shows and concerts. His skills in lighting design and filming have been deployed to assist other local schools' concerts and he has assisted in running a Science Club for Year 6 students in another local school.

In 2009 received the Dave Thompson Award for Greatest Contribution to the School.

He is Assistant Scout Leader of the 1<sup>st</sup> Berkhamsted Scouts Group and in 2007 was selected to represent the West Herts Scout District at the 21<sup>st</sup> World Scout Jamboree in Chelmsford to celebrate 100 years of Scouting.

Benjamin has completed both the Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

He, along with his family, gives unstintingly to the work of numerous local community groups and charitable organisations in recognition of which he Benjamin was the recipient from Ashlyns of the Vivian Jones Award for community service in 2008.

The Town Mayor also made a presentation to the Town Clerk, Colin Westwood, who had indicated his intention to retire from his post at the end of July 2010 after eleven years service.

#### **1/10 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Allen and A. Fairburn, Mr R. Turner, Mr and Mrs C. Morris and Hazel Ward of Berkhamsted Arts Trust.

#### **2/10 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2009 were agreed and signed by the Chairman

#### **3/10 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM THE TOWN MAYOR, COUNCILLOR DAVID COLLINS**

The Town Mayor, Councillor David Collins, welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the programme for the evening. He said there was much to celebrate in Berkhamsted and made mention of the half marathon which had raised record funds, Berkhamsted Football Club which had achieved promotion in its first season, and various other concerts and events. He thanked all those involved in volunteering and organising Community Projects, and for responding to articles in the Town Council newsletter.

#### **4/10 GUEST SPEAKER – JOHN COOK – A HISTORY OF THE BERKHAMSTED CONSERVATION AREA**

Mr. John Cook gave an interesting and informative slide presentation on the history of the Conservation Area in Berkhamsted. At the end of the presentation he answered questions from the audience and was then thanked for his presentation by the Town Mayor.

There was then an interval during which refreshments were made available.

#### **5/10 BERKHAMSTED YOUTH TOWN COUNCIL – REPORT ON RECENT ACTIVITIES**

Ella Joiner, Chair of the Berkhamsted Youth Town Council provided information on the 3 Cultures 1 World fund raising initiative for water supplies in Wamba, Kenya and trip undertaken by members of the Youth Town Council who had given presentations to local Schools to inspire others to get involved.

Molly Crozier, Vice Chair of the Youth Town Council referred to the Town's Fairtrade Status and encouraged the Town Council to support it, and informed the audience of the Mad Hatters Tea Party to be held on the 1<sup>st</sup> May.

Jim Armitage, Treasurer of the YTC gave information on the proposal by Swan Skaters to extend the skate park in Canal Fields which was overused and overcrowded. BYTC was spearheading the extension campaign with £45000 being the target for funding. The Youth Town Council would be working closely with the Town Council in respect of all its activities.

The Town Mayor thanked the members of BYTC for their reports.

#### **6/10 REPORTS FROM CHAIR OF COMMITTEES:**

Finance and Policy - Councillor Mrs. C. Green  
Councillor Mrs. C. Green referred to her annual report which had been circulated with the agenda. She highlighted the fact that the Town Council's element of Council Tax had not increased but more money had been allocated to the grants budget to give help to local groups.

Public participation

Brian Atkin referred to the draft budget and said that he was disappointed that the emphasis was on keeping the Council Tax down. This was a wealthy town and its wealth should be reflected in the Council Tax.

*Councillor Green said that in the current economic climate people were losing their jobs and expenses like travel costs and utility bills had all increased. The Town Council's attitude to its Council Tax was helping people through the current financial situation.*

John Waller said that toilets and a car park at Berkhamsted Castle should be provided by English Heritage. He was glad that the Visitors Centre was open and events were being planned. The Castle should be used as a facility for the people of Berkhamsted. As an elected body the Town Council should make overtures to English Heritage. It was a disgrace that no toilets were available for young families.

*Councillor Green said that a letter would be sent from the Town Council.*

### **Action Town Clerk**

Transport & Environment - Councillor Ron Cowie

Councillor Ron Cowie spoke to his report which had been circulated with the agenda and made particular reference to the following issues:

#### **Transport**

- The Berkhamsted & Northchurch Urban Transport Plan.
- The Wish List of transport related issues to be included in the plan.
- Proposed extension to the Station car park.
- The high cost of parking in the Station car park which deters commuters who look for other places to park.
- The mitigating effects agreed by London Midland Trains.
- The negotiations to ameliorate the high costs of parking at the Station.
- Car park charging on Sundays and Bank Holidays and concessions for local events.
- The Town Council initiative to investigate Residents Parking Zones which would continue over the next two months and which would be supported by ring-fenced funding.
- The success in finally getting lighting installed in Church Lane.
- The potential installation of tourism signs on the A41 in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce.
- The review being carried out by Hertfordshire County Council with regard to improving salting and gritting procedures in the town.
- Changes to bus services introduced by Arriva.

#### **Environment**

- Thanks to Mrs. Patterson for her work in maintaining the Millennium Garden.
- Gossoms End flower beds and High Street hanging baskets now being maintained by the Town Council.
- The newly appointed Warden of Birtchnell's Copse, Andrew Calderwood, and thanks to the volunteers from the Countryside Management Service and the Sunnyside Allotment Society for their assistance.
- The work of the Canal Fields Liaison Group.
- Overlapping initiatives being undertaken by the Principal Authorities and the need for some measure of consolidation.
- The welcome work being undertaken by Fairtrade and Transition Towns.
- Gratitude for the work undertaken by the volunteer litter pickers under the guidance of Colin Garrett.
- The work of the Castle Liaison Group in exploring ways in which the Castle grounds can be used for the greater benefit of the town.

## Public participation

Christine Lea asked if the gritting of High Street pavements came under the remit of the Town Council. Mrs. Lea also said that she understood that the car park extension at the Railway Station would be constructed in 48 hours and she suggested the same could be done in Water Lane and Lower Kings Road to increase parking capacity.

*Councillor Reay said that the gritting of pavements was the responsibility of the County Council. In respect of the car park the extension at the Railway Station did not require planning permission as a Certificate of Lawful Development had been issued. If the same thing was to be done anywhere else in the town it would require planning consent and as the car parks in Water Lane and Lower Kings Road were in the Conservation Area, planning consent would be unlikely.*

Mrs. Susan Johnson, Chair of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association, said that the Association supported the Town Council regarding the extension to the Station car park and the effect that commuter parking is having on local streets. The introduction of Residents Parking Zones had previously been unaffordable. She suggested that the survey of residents extended beyond the areas to be covered by the schemes to include streets where displacement might occur.

Mr. Ian Johnston asked a question regarding the proposed high speed rail link as to where the route was intended to be and suggested that the pressure for the link was coming from Europe. The existing line had been greatly improved and this new proposal needed thorough investigation.

*Councillor Reay said that the route through Berkhamsted was not the preferred option and was only third on the list. There was a weak business case for it and no evidence of carbon emission reduction.*

Mr. Kevin Gladwell said that commuter parking was taking place at the lower end of the Ashlyns Estate which was also used by people attending the cinema. He asked if the Town Council would look into the parking problems in that area.

*Councillor Cowie said that no area experiencing parking problems would be excluded.*

## Town Planning - Councillor Dr. Ian Reay

Councillor Dr. Ian Reay spoke to his report which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained the role of the Town Planning Committee in the planning process and made particular reference to the following:

- The Town Council's successful opposition to applications for housing infill in Ellesmere Road, flats to the rear of 121-127 High Street and an application to demolish The Pines, North Road, and build 12 houses in the garden.

- The Town Council's opposition to the proposals for the development of New Lodge, London Road.
- The reduction in planning applications in recent years due to the recession.
- The Town Council's opposition to garden in-fills.
- The increase in applications for small extensions and loft conversions, many of which are deemed to be Permitted Development.
- The Town Council's objections to proposals from Dacorum Borough Council to remove the rights of Town and Parish Councils to automatically refer an application to the Development Control Committee if they object to the application.
- The Town Council's opposition to a Borough Council trial for a paperless planning system which would require the Committee to view all the information on-line.
- The Town Council's response to the consultation on the Emerging Core Strategy.
- The Town Council's response to the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy by the East of England Regional Assembly.

Councillor Reay then introduced Graham Partridge, Chairman of the Save Your Berkhamsted Residents Association, who said the Association was established in August 2009 as a direct result of proposals published in the Emerging Core Strategy Consultation issued by Dacorum Borough Council for the years 2011 – 2031. The aim of the Association is to represent residents' interest in the development initiatives with a view to preserving the character of the historic market town of Berkhamsted and the surrounding countryside. The Association had a shared vision with the Town Council and opposed the suggestion that the town needed an extra 1200 homes (plus 2000 mentioned in the Regional Spatial Strategy) over the next 20 years. Its main activity was to galvanise opposition to the scale and nature of these plans and to that end it had recently presented a petition with over 1500 signatures to Dacorum Borough Council. Mr. Partridge went on to explain more about the work of the Association and drew attention to its website at [www.saveyourberkhamsted.co.uk](http://www.saveyourberkhamsted.co.uk).

#### Public participation

Christine Lea congratulated the Town Planning Committee on the job that it was doing for the town, in particular mentioned its opposition to its proposed development at 121-127 High Street.

Sylvia Jones thanked the Town Planning Committee for its help in preventing the construction of five houses in back gardens of Ellesmere Road.

Colin Garrett thanked the Town Planning Committee for its help on various applications and appeals, and in particular, The Pines, North Road.

Chris Graebe asked if there was a problem with loft conversions.

*Councillor Reay said that there was if the external appearance did not coordinate with its surroundings especially in the Conservation Area.*

Allotment Management - Councillor Julie Laws  
Councillor Julie Laws spoke to her report which had been circulated with the agenda and in particular thanked the volunteer site representatives for their work both on site and at the Allotment Management Team meetings which was essential to the smooth operation of the Town Council allotments.

Public participation  
There was no public participation.

Canal & Riverside Partnership - Councillor Lindy Foster Weinreb  
Councillor Lindy Foster Weinreb spoke to her report which had been circulated with the agenda. She particularly mentioned the second refurbishment of the towpath and the new production of the Canal map. She said that the Partnership would like to carry out more improvements but were restricted by lack of funds.

Public participation  
Chris Graebe asked if there was any possibility to repairs to the towpath near Ravens Lane bridge.

Patsy Blackmore said that people enjoy walking the towpath and she hoped the refurbishment could be extended so all could benefit.

## **7/10 OPEN FORUM**

There were 42 members of the public present at the meeting.  
The following matters were raised during Open Forum by residents of the town and answered by Town Councillors:  
Sheila Newland drew attention to the disgusting state of the rubbish behind Fitness First and what was Magoos Wine Bar. The Town Mayor said that the Town Warden would investigate.  
**Action Town Warden**

## **8/10 CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.20 p.m.