

Minutes of the
THIRTY EIGHTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
of the
BERKHAMSTED TOWN MEETING
Held in the Great Hall, Berkhamsted Town Hall,
on
THURSDAY 7th April 2011 at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Councillors Julie Laws - Town Mayor
RM Cowie
Lindy Foster-Weinreb
Dr L Handy
Fiona Macdonald
Dr IM Reay
G Stevens

OFFICER: Mr A Kemp – Town Clerk

Presentation of the Centenary Civic Awards by the Town Mayor and President of the Rotary Club of Berkhamsted Bulbourne

Prior to the start of the meeting the Town Mayor, Councillor Julie Laws, and Mr Adrian Wollacott of the Rotary Club of Berkhamsted Bulbourne, presented the Berkhamsted Rotary Club Centenary Civic Awards.

The adult award was presented to Bob Millard and accepted on his behalf by his daughter, Sally Taylor.

Bob Millard retired as a lecturer at Aylesbury College of Further Education and Agriculture 20 years ago and since then has been Horticultural Superintendent/Consultant to Sunnyside Rural Trust (SRT) based in Northchurch and Berkhamsted.

Initially SRT provided day care and horticultural training to people who had been persuaded to leave the shelter of their homes and hospitals and enter the wider community. Its aim was to give them life skills and encourage them to develop the practical and rural skills associated with land based activities, appreciate the need to work and give them a sense of achievement.

In 1989 Bob started from scratch the horticultural side of the Trust at Northchurch. With very little help and money he brought back derelict allotments into production, built polytunnels, greenhouses and installed an irrigation system. Latterly he has established a laying flock of hens and built a small shop to sell the surplus produce.

Bob has a great empathy with his clients and their problems and they think the world of him. He chivvies them along gently and as a result their horticultural and social skills improve beyond recognition. His success can be measured by the fact that over the 20 years the number of weekly clients has built up from 12 to 60 and through his involvement with SRT Bob has helped many people have a better way of life and make a useful contribution to the local community.

This award is a 'thank you' to Bob Millard for all the unsung work that he has done in the Community.

The junior award was presented to Sam Sommerfeld.

Sam launched his own orchestra, Berko Big Band, in October 2009. Since then he has organised a number of concerts that he has arranged and conducted himself. He is the driving force behind the orchestra's success and is a fantastic ambassador for young people. His orchestra has also appeared at the Berkhamsted Festival of Lights.

He is Deputy Head Boy at Ashlyns School and has appeared in all of the school's own performances including the school's productions of 'We Will Rock You' and 'Return to the Forbidden Planet'. He is a very talented musician in his own right.

In addition, he successfully integrates his school life with an outstanding contribution to the culture of the local community; this has been formally recognised over the last two years at the school's annual Presentation Evening and in the local community, where he was awarded the Berkhamsted Lions 'Youth Community Service Award'.

Sam's ambition is to study music at university and then to work as a composer/arranger. He has already made contacts with musical directors in the West End. Sam's energy and love of music has inspired many and recognition of his talents is richly deserved.

1/11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bateman, Gibbs and Green.

2/11 TO RECEIVE AND CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON 29TH APRIL 2010

The minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on the 29th April 2010 were proposed by Mrs Philippa O'Shea and seconded by Mrs Susan Johnson and agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3/11 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM THE TOWN MAYOR, COUNCILLOR JULIE LAWS

Councillor Julie Laws welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the programme for the evening. She thanked those present for taking the time to

attend and referred everyone to her formal message attached the agenda papers.

4/11 GUEST SPEAKER – MR MICHAEL NIDD FROM THE CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND (CPRE HERTFORDSHIRE) – SPEAKING ON HIGH SPEED TWO (HS2)

Mr Michael Nidd began by introducing and explaining the role of the Campaign to Protect Rural England. He explained that his presentation on High Speed Two would be the same as that presented by CPRE anywhere else in the country. He then gave an interesting and informative computer presentation on the history and potential impact of High Speed Two across the country. He concluded by explaining how people could respond to the current consultation.

Mr Nidd was thanked for his informative presentation by the Town Mayor.

Interval

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

5/11 BERKHAMSTED YOUTH TOWN COUNCIL – REPORT ON RECENT ACTIVITIES

Miss Ella Joyner, Chair of Berkhamsted Youth Town Council, updated the meeting on their recent activities. They had been studying their role in more depth and had recently attended a Youth Town Council training day at Dacorum Borough Council. They had identified key areas of improvement one of which was intergeneration collaboration. The Youth Town Council are intending to host an elderly persons' tea dance arranged by the youth in the town. The Youth Town Council was also working to improve relationships between Ashlyns and Berkhamsted School and now had Youth Council members from Berkhamsted School. As with all organisations the Youth Town Council was having problems with funding and the project to extend the skatepark had been put on hold due to finances. However, the Youth Town Council had been given a wonderful opportunity by Dacorum Borough Council to lead in a devolved capital project of £50,000 for sporting activities for the local community. The Youth Town Council would be coordinating this project and were looking forward to the current year.

Miss Joyner was thanked by the Mayor for taking the time to attend the meeting midway through her studies and with an exam the following morning.

6/11 REPORTS FROM CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES

Finance and Policy

Councillor David Collins referred to his annual report which had been circulated with the agenda and specifically thanked all those involved with the Festival of Light which was going from strength to strength. He highlighted

the fact that for the fourth year running there was no increase in the Council Tax from Berkhamsted Town Council and that the Band D rate had fallen 5% over the four years of the Council whilst supporting many voluntary and charitable organisations.

Public participation

Pam Dunsby asked that as the Town Council was funding a PCSO post, was the Town Council able to dictate their hours of duty as they were rarely seen when needed.

Councillor Collins replied that the Town Council part-funded one PCSO post in the town and were regularly informed of the shift patterns. The PCSO also supplied a regular detailed report to the Town Council of the work undertaken.

Pam Dunsby stated that she was concerned that Town Council money was being put into projects that only benefited small sections of the community rather than the community as a whole. Further the Town Council was also supporting projects, such as The Swan, on a continuing basis, rather than such projects becoming self supporting.

Councillor Collins replied that The Swan Project had been a tremendous success and that it would be wrong not to support the youth in the town and that for every pound put in by the Town Council The Swan Project raised even more.

Pam Dunsby said she was disappointed that the use of Gable Hall was no longer available as it had been the last remaining hall within the town centre.

Councillor Collins replied that a huge investment was needed to bring the hall to the necessary standard and the funding was not currently available.

Transport and Environment

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

- Residents Parking Zones
The reason the schemes were taking so long was due to the work involved, namely two surveys, and the diverse nature of the replies. The current situation was that measurements had been completed for two zones and was in the process of being mapped. The Town Council were determined to see this through to a conclusion.
- Railway Station Car park
The Town Council were in further discussions seeking to obtain additional concessions.
- The Yellow Lines – New Road & Brownlow Road
These had now been implemented.

- Revised Salting Routes
There had been an improvement over the previous year.
- Buses
The Town Council had no power to compel Arriva but were in discussions as to improvements to the routes.
- Volunteers
The Town Council wished to thank the huge number of volunteers across the town and for the information they were passing to the Town Warden so that action could be taken.
- Birtchnell's Copse
A huge thank you to Andrew Calderwood for his hard work and the improvements made.
- Gravel Path Action Group
The Town Council has supported these initiatives aimed at controlling speed.
- Brown Tourist Signs at the entrance to the town
The Town Council is still negotiating on this matter and one day this may be brought to a successful conclusion.

Mr Phil Cruse made the following observations:

- That despite the yellow lines around New Road/Brownlow Road the parking was still chaos.
- That commuters were still parking in the parking bays directly outside the Castle entrance and why weren't there parking restrictions there?
- During the period of snow refuse collection had been as bad as the previous year. That he had had no collection for five weeks despite numerous calls and emails. It appeared that collections had been taking place in Hemel Hempstead but not Berkhamsted.

Councillor Cowie replied that dialogue with Hertfordshire Highways would continue with regards to the parking around New Road/Brownlow Road and the effectiveness of the measures already in place. The Town Council would look into the matter of parking at the Castle entrance. With regards to refuse collection, Dacorum Borough Council had done its best and believed that overall its service was better than the previous year. However, this matter would continue to be discussed with the Borough Council.

Town Planning

Councillor 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 the planning application at The Pines where the developer's appeal had been dismissed. However a fresh application had now arrived.
- The successful opposition to the planning applications at The Grey House which is currently subject to an appeal that is to be heard on Wednesday 13th April 2011.
- The Town Council's successful opposition to the proposed development at The Chilterns, Cross Oak Road.
- The Town Council's objection to 50 new dwellings at New Lodge, London Road which however was allowed by the Planning Inspector on appeal.
- The Town Council had responded to the Borough Council's consultation on the Draft Core Strategy which will eventually replace the Local Plan. The Town Council had opposed the release of Green Belt land unless absolutely necessary. Has restated the position regarding the infrastructure in and around Berkhamsted and commented upon design within the Conservation Area and opposed the proposed number of new dwellings put forward by the Borough Council.
- The Town Council has responded to a consultation by Herts County Council on a proposal to extend Greenway and Westfield First Schools. The County Council has listened and postponed any expansion to Greenway School and a broader approach is now being considered making greater use of Ashlyns School.

Public participation

Mr Brian Johnson asked if the Town Council measured its success by the number of projects refused and if in the Town Council's view Berkhamsted was full.

Councillor Reay replied that the Town Council did not measure success by the number of projects refused but had to consider the infrastructure problems when responding. Further they were seeking the right developments in the right locations of an appropriate design. The housing density at the proposed development at Egerton Rothesay was not in keeping with the surrounding area.

Allotment Management

Councillor Julie Laws spoke to her report which had been circulated with the agenda and in particular thanked the volunteer site Representatives. Councillor Laws stated that the Council was fully committed to fulfilling its duty in respect of allotments and referred to a recent article in the Gazette over access to Sunnyside Allotments which the Town Council felt was misleading. Councillor Laws stressed that the Town Council had taken legal advice and then read the Finance & Policy Committee meeting minutes as follows:

1. That the Town Council refutes any claim to a prescriptive Right of Way across Sunnyside Allotment site.

2. That the Town Council have no objection to residents whose properties abut the boundaries of the allotment site from accessing the rear of their property by foot, but that this does not amount to the granting of a Right of Way.
3. Where there is a reasonable need for a delivery by vehicle to be made across allotment land, the Town Council are prepared to consider this but permission must first be sought from the Council on each occasion before doing so and again this does not amount to the granting of a Right of Way.

The Town Clerk was asked to satisfy himself that a precedent has already been set because vehicle access has been granted in the past.

Councillor Laws confirmed that the minute had been ratified by Full Council and reiterated that Sunnyside Allotment would not become a highway.

Public participation

Mrs Freda Earl (Chairman of Sunnyside Allotment Society) made the following comments:

Member of the Sunnyside Allotment Society objected strongly to the permitted vehicle access on three main grounds:

- An overgenerous offer to neighbouring property owners had been made as a result of threatened legal action, regardless of the detrimental effect of such an offer would have on the tenants.
- The plan had not been put to the Allotment Management Team for consultation and had been kept secret until the last Finance & Policy meeting. The next Finance & Policy which was due to take place next Monday had been cancelled for lack of business which indicated the low priority the Council puts on the matter.
- Even if such a scheme were desirable it was not workable because the Council had no estimate on how many times permission would be sought and no provision in the budget for extra staff hours to cope if the demand is large or extra insurance costs, nor an appeals procedure. There was no definition of reasonable need for delivery and if planning permission is sought for backland development could the developer quote the possibility of access through the allotment as part of his application. There is was no method of policing the Council's refusal or checking vehicles granted consent and no mechanism for recovering cost of damage to roadways.

Mrs Earl asked if the Council would revisit the proposals.

Councillor Laws replied that she wished to make it clear that such permission for access would be occasional and each application addressed on merit. Further that at the last Full Council meeting it had been agreed to refer the matter back to the Finance & Policy Committee for review.

Canal & Riverside Partnership

Councillor Lindy Foster Weinreb spoke to her report which had been circulated with the agenda and in particular the need for the Canal towpath to be resurfaced. It had last been completed in 1995 and was now in need of urgent repair. The Berkhamsted Community Partnership which had been clerking CARP for the past four years was researching the possibility of Euro funding to the sum of £50,000. However, this was match funding pound for pound and there was concern as to whether it was possible to raise the additional money required. CARP was dependent on Berkhamsted Community Partnership continuing to seek funding for this and other projects. Councillor Foster Weinreb concluded her report by saying how delightful it was to see the daffodils out that had been planted as a result of such projects and a request for residents to continue to support CARP.

Public participation

A question was asked by a resident from Chesham Road as to why within the Budget there was no specific funding for CARP.

Councillor Collins replied that within the budget was a heading "Youth Centre and other projects" some of which was designated for CARP. However, the Town Council could not commit to match funding, although the reserves were reasonably strong.

7/11 QUESTION & ANSWER – OPEN FORUM

There were 28 members of the public present for the meeting

Mr David Richard asked if the Town Council could explain why there were only 20 members of public present for such a meeting.

Councillor Laws replied that the meeting had been well advertised on the Town Council notice boards, the Town Council website and in the Gazette newspaper.

Mrs Susan Johnson announced that the Berkhamsted Citizens Association were hosting a "hustings" for the local government elections, on the 20th April 2011 at 8.00pm in the Great Hall, Town Hall and invited all potential Town Councillors to participate.

Pam Dunsby thanked the Town Councillors and Town Council staff for their hard work throughout the year.

8/11 CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9.27 pm.