

RAUNDS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE TOWN MEETING

Saxon Hall, Raunds, on Thursday 21st April 2016

MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting held on Tuesday 19 May 2015, be taken as read and agreed.

REPORT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Cllr Helen Howell welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave an annual report of the Town Council.

The Town Council consists of 12 Councillors, elected for a four-year term with the next ordinary elections due in May 2019. Councillors are not paid for their work on the Council with all members of the Council giving their time on a voluntary basis.

The Councillors are supported in their work by a team, led by the Town Clerk, Kate Houlihan and employs 8 staff including administrative staff, site supervisors and an office apprentice. The staff implement the decisions of the Council and manage the day to day running of council facilities.

The Council operates with five principal committees – Policy & Resources; Finance; Planning, Environment, Leisure & Recreation (ELR); and Personnel. This report outlines the work of each committee, with the exceptions of the Personnel committee whose work is mainly confidential and the planning committee whose work is to make comments on planning applications. The report of the Finance committee has been updated since its first presentation at the Annual Town Assembly.

In addition, the Council has a number of working parties to look at specific projects. These are informal groups but many councillors are members of these groups and attend regularly.

The positions of Mayor and Deputy Mayor, together with the membership of the various committees, are decided each year at the Annual Meeting held in May.

The Council owns and operates the Town Hall which provides office space for the Council's administration. Surplus office space is leased to a number of local businesses, and recently the Town Hall has been licensed as a wedding venue. In addition to the Hall, the Council owns and manages the Saxon Hall, which is an ideal venue for parties, weddings, other social events, fitness classes and corporate meetings. This facility is regularly used by a number of community groups.

REPORT OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources committee, Councillor Lance Jones, gave a report informing of the challenging objectives that had been set by the committee members for the year.

The Committee had immediately set themselves the opportunity to build a medium term strategy and business plan for the council. The medium term strategy uses the National Wellbeing definitions to guide our actions and policies. Over time the Council's initiatives will aim to deliver a town that is increasingly desirable as a place to work, rest and play.

The committee will set about to have a list of all land registered to the Town Council in order to create and review our management plan.

The Committee have sought to engage more actively with the community and this is being driven by a new Communication strategy, which includes the use of websites, social media as well as print media.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr Helen Howell read the report on behalf of the Chairman of Finance, Councillor Richard Levell, informing that this committee was a new committee created in May 2015 in order to have a separate body to focus on financial matters.

The Finance Committee recommend to the Town Council an appropriate level for the Council Tax precept after approving the budgets from other committees. Members monitor the Council's ongoing expenditure to ensure everything remains within budget.

The long term plan for the Saxon hall is that it will be upgraded to make it more attractive to potential users. The Council expects to use some of the money received from certain grants to improve the inside and the garden around it. Ongoing works include the installation of French doors which will lead to a patio area.

Future plans include refurbishment of the kitchens to allow hot food preparation and to rebuild the reception area that will include a key pad access for some of our regular hirers.

REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE AND RECREATIONAL COMMITTEE

Cllr Lee Wilkes, Chairman of the Environment, Leisure and Recreational (ELR) committee advising that this Committee has responsibility, in broad terms, for everything that the other Committees do not look after, including issues such as how we can improve and look after Raunds and the town's services and facilities.

In June 2015 a triennial tree survey which identified a number of issues which required urgent attention along with other recommended works have been or are being completed in priority order.

The entrance to Amos Lawrence required urgent attention and a specification was agreed, quotations rapidly sought and the area was repaired in time for last year's carnival.

The Town Square was jet-washed, the children's area at the cemetery has been marked out with sympathetic fencing and the old cemetery gates have been replaced.

The Saxon Hall children's play area have some new play equipment that was added in December 2015 and we are pleased to see the area being really well used. We have costed schemes to improve the Bassfords and Webb Road play areas and are looking at a long term plan for the improvement of the well-used Skate Park facility

A new Memorial Bench was installed in the Memorial Gardens and the War Memorial was listed as part of Heritage England's project to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War.

A temporary dog park will be created on land at the rear of London Road Cemetery to give dog owners in Raunds somewhere to excise their dogs off the lead. We will work with the ENC dog warden to encourage residents to use the new facility once up and running.

We started detached work in February 2016 through our partners Service Six, a respected youth work provider. This project is designed to engage with harder to reach young people and those who may simply not enjoy more formal activities. The group moved to the Saxon Hall in March and meets every Wednesday.

Our current CCTV system is no longer fit for purpose so a working party was formed to make a recommendation to Council. A revised specification has been created and we are currently obtaining quotes.

Councillor Howell thanked the Chairmen for their reports and reminded all that the Committee meetings are all open to the public to attend.

OBSERVATIONS OF THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr Dudley Hughes took to the floor, he had given a written report that was available for all and summarised items that Northamptonshire County Council had accomplished during the year and let the audience know that he has funding available via his Empowering Councillors and Communities Scheme. He ended by congratulating Cllr Howell being re-elected as Mayor the forthcoming year.

OBSERVATIONS OF THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

District Councillor Peter Wathen stood and informed all that ENC are due for a Governance Audit. Collection of money was still a big issue, there is a process to prosecute those who do not pay which has so far been successful. He spoke about fly tipping and how it costs tax payer's money to remove the waste illegally dumped and advised that there is a prosecution process in place for anyone caught fly tipping. There is a procedure in place to omit the risk of the Council being the subject of a fraud matter and in financial planning, ENC plans sensibly in order to manage the risk accordingly.

District Councillor Glenvil Greenwood-Smith stood and informed all that the Nene Centre required a new roof and Pemberton Centre and Splash pool are in need of improvements. The current contractors contract was coming to a close and a new contract will be going out to tender to take on these facilities. The process will be completed in time ready to take over in March 2017.

District Councillor Lance Jones stood and informed all that being a newcomer this year he has had lots to learn and digest, especially the planning rules. He was pleased that Warth Park had expanded more to include an Asda and other quality developments and knows there should be a balance in providing jobs and opportunities and protecting the environment and leisure of the Town.

The Mayor thanked them for their reports.

PRESENTATIONS FROM LOCAL GROUPS

The Principal of Windmill School, Mr Matt Coleman with the Head Boy, Luke and head Girl Rebecca, took to the floor and informed all that Windmill had been rated a 'Good' School by Ofstead. They have 8 values that are core and key for the school and its members. The school will be looking into taking part in more community events and trips. Rebecca explained that In July pupils from year 5 & 6 will be going to France to visit battlefields and look further in the wars and Luke explained that year six will be also concentrating on their SATS. Both agreed that the trips that they take enhance their learning at the school and they enjoyed going.

Mr Nick Amis from the Community Café stood and told all that he runs a café from the St Peter's Enterprise Centre opposite the Spar on the High Street that started about 15 months ago. Volunteers from the church and community supply tea, coffee and a bacon roll. It is an ideal location for the public to come and chat and a great point of access for people to talk about financial difficulties as the volunteers may be able to inform them of help available to pay off the debts they may have incurred. They also help arrange food parcels that help and support families in financial difficulties.

Mrs Pauline Ellis from Raunds Youth Action Group told all that the Carnival was on 10th September this year and the theme was 'Cartoon & Anime Characters'. Cllr Dudley Hughes' trophy will be awarded to the 'Best Float', but there will be no Carnival Court from Raunds. Volunteers are still needed for the event so please check out the Facebook page and website.

Mr Nick Amis stood and advised of 'Kidz Lunch'. The levels of child poverty in Northamptonshire is staggeringly high and teachers are saying that kids are not eating properly during the half term and returning to school underweight. During school time there is the opportunity for families in need to have a free school meal that is hot and healthy and Kidz Lunch hope to continue to offer a lunch for these children in order to help during the half term. Contact your school to find out information to see if your child can qualify for a free lunch.

Saxon Bowlers member Mr Bob Tyman informed all that they played short mat carpet bowls at Saxon hall on a Tuesday and Thursday from 14:00 – 16:00. They sometimes play matches and have refreshments after. The first 12 months membership is free with a £3 charge per visit and then an annual fee of £15 is required. New members are welcome so come along with flat comfortable shoes or trainers and join in the fun.

Mrs Stephanie Hall addressed the group highlighting that Raunds Library are celebrating 40 years this year. A lot has changed in the 40 years including the services that are provided and the technology now available. The library is a hub for the community and services provided can help people from the under 5's to the over 60's. Activities include an adult colouring group, coffee mornings, play and learn mornings for infants among a whole range of others held during the year. The Friends of the Library help the Staff run and organise events which help to bring people and much needed funds to the library. This year they are pleased to install a buggy / bicycle shelter using, their own money raised, funding received and money granted from the Co-Operative Society. It will be installed later this year. Many other libraries are closing and so they are helping to keep ours open longer. It is free to join and they need your support in order to continue.

Friends of St Peter's Church informed everyone that they are raising money to help with the smaller items the Church need. Please come along and become a friend of St Peter's Church.

Mr Nick Amis stood again for Raunds Community Church and explained that the Church met at the Saxon Hall on a Sunday. They focus on children and young people during various activities on a Friday evening at the Saxon Hall.

The District Commissioner of all units involving Rainbow's, Brownies, Guides and Rangers Sharon Priest, addressed the group and let all know that they are celebrating 100 years of the Senior Section. The Senior Section members help with the other groups and they have over a 100 members. Raunds have 7 members in their own group and they are set challenges starting small working up to much larger tasks. Tasks have included litter picking at the Mayor's Show, help feed the homeless at White Chapel and completing the Duke of Edinburgh Award. It is a growing unit for the girls that want to stay on after the Guides and they are doing well. Raunds have 1 rainbow unit with a second opening up in September, 3 Brownie units, 1 guide unit and 1 Rangers unit.

Mrs Mary Harber took to the floor as the president of the Raunds Women's Institute and told the group of the Raunds WI that has 35 ladies who meet on the second Thursday of the month in the Saxon Hall at 19:30. Each month is different and can include hand bell ringers, flower arrangers, speakers on topics and belly dancers. They also arrange outings, afternoon tea or an evening meal. They support other events so far including the carnival and the Mayor's Show. They will celebrate a 90th Anniversary by having a Party at the end of the year. It is lots of fun, they are very friendly and are always looking for more members including younger people to come along.

Jamie Duff from Photography by Jamie informed all that his main aim is to offer his service professionally at an affordable price. He can come out to charity and community events, take family portraits, and attend family functions to capture the moment. There is a website that you can view with more information.

Councillor Lance Jones stood to talk about the Business Forum. Branching off from the Vision for Raunds and together with Cllr Lee Wilkes, they will be establishing a new Business Forum with the first meeting on 9th June. They have help from Mr Brian Bramson and the support of Raunds Town Council to carry out a form of speed networking with relevant speakers that will benefit local businesses in the town. They will meet from 7:45am for an 8:00am start, it will have a show case for promoting the speaker with hot news and will be finished by 9:00am. A business Directory will be devised that will be put onto the Town Council's website. If you would like to be included please call the Council office.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

None received.

The Mayor, Cllr Helen Howell, closed the meeting praising the tremendous amount of events and groups in Raunds and thanked them all for coming.

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 7:30 pm.