

RAUNDS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN ASSEMBLY

Saxon Hall, Raunds, on Thursday 27th April 2023

COMMUNITY EXHIBITIONS

The evening opened with a range of tabletop exhibitions from local groups and organisations and a slide show on the projector screen showcasing the Town Council's achievements during the past year.

WELCOME FROM TOWN MAYOR

Cllr Richard Levell welcomed attendees to the Town Assembly.

PERFORMANCES FROM LOCAL SCHOOLS

Performances were delivered by:

Raunds Park Infant School – 'Let's Go Fly a Kite' and the 'Raunds Park Infant School Song'.

Windmill School – 'Rise' and 'We Are Unstoppable'

St Peter's School – 'Rockstar' and 'Sing From Your Heart'.

Manor School – Classical trio 'Triplicato'.

MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on Thursday 5th May 2022, be taken as read and agreed.

TOWN COUNCIL REPORT

The Mayor of Raunds, Cllr Richard Levell presented his report:

It's been an eventful year, starting with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee last June and ending with the Coronation next weekend. You will recall I am sure the Jubilee Big Picnic which was held on Bassfords on Sunday 5 June. Despite the overcast weather, hundreds joined in to make the event a great success. Three days earlier on Thursday 2 June, we screened the Trooping of the Colour in Saxon Hall and lit a beacon outside the Town Hall that same evening. The town was suitably decorated, and I think it's fair to say that the celebrations were well received by residents.

As for the Coronation, the town will be decorated this weekend with flags and bunting to compliment the 'Decorate your Window' competition for our businesses, and residents have been encouraged to hold street parties on Sunday 7 May. The Town Council will not be organising a big event next weekend, but the Mayor's Show two weeks later on 21 May will have a Coronation theme. The Show had been arranged before the announcement of the date of the Coronation and could not be moved, but

it does mean that the royal celebrations can be continued throughout the month of May.

Last year's Mayor's Show had to be cancelled because of the death on 8 September of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The town came together to mourn the death of the Queen and scores of residents signed the Book of Condolence which was open in the Council Chamber until after the State Funeral. As I said, the year has been an emotional roller-coaster between joyful celebration and sadness.

The other large event which the Town Council put on this year was the Christmas market and lights switch on in November. In terms of attendance, it was the best Christmas event that I can remember, with the square packed with people. Possibly due to the perceived end of the Covid pandemic or perhaps the result of the reasonable weather, the turnout was huge. Thanks to the Council staff and the Events Committee under the leadership of my wife for making all these events the successes they were.

Away from events, perhaps the most notable addition to the town's facilities has been the planting of the Community Orchard on Amos Lawrence, part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative. It's early days and the trees are still small, but in time they will grow and produce fruit, and look wonderful at the west end of the town.

The Saturday markets restarted last year and they continue to attract shoppers from both within and outside the town. The market held earlier this month had the best ever attendance, which bodes well for the future.

The Town Council has continued to support the old and the young. After a lengthy break for the pandemic, the film and coffee afternoons restarted, and while it appears that people were initially cautious, attendance numbers are now consistently at, or very close to, full capacity. I opened a number of them, and it's always been a joy for me to hear how people who are less mobile look forward to them as a chance to get out and meet other people.

We haven't neglected the younger generation either. The Council continues to support The Den, about which we will hear a little more later and, with the assistance of North Northants Council, we provided Santa on a Tractor (AKA Brian Kettell) with presents to distribute to children as he and his two elf helpers chugged their way around Raunds one cold Sunday in December. In the process, they collected a car-load of donations, both money and food, for the Foodbank.

Which brings me nicely to my charities. Many of you will know that each Mayor selects one or more charities to raise funds for. This year, I chose the Foodbank and the East Northants First Responders. In addition to selling mulled wine at the Christmas Market, I held a quiz in Saxon Hall last autumn and a murder mystery dinner in Jester's Bistro last summer. Both were successful in raising hundreds of pounds for the charities, and Mark and Andrea in Jester's gave us a splendid meal, which attendees continued to talk about many weeks afterwards. I will be presenting cheques to both charities at the Town Council Annual General Meeting on 9 May, which is open to anyone to attend.

I reckon I have spoken for long enough, so let me close by thanking on your behalf the Council staff for their hard work during the year. You may not know that Nicola Joy, who has been with us since 2020, was recently appointed Assistant Clerk, so well done to her, and in October we appointed a new Town Clerk – Steve Tucker – who will now introduce the grant recipients.

GRANT FUNDING REPORT

The Town Clerk provided a brief overview of the grant funding application process, following which recipients of grants during the previous twelve months were invited to deliver presentations about how the funding was used and their future aspirations:

East Northamptonshire First Responders (ENFR) – Charlie Cooper explained that the funding received by ENFR had enabled the purchase of four rescue training manikins used to train first aiders for different scenarios, such as choking and CPR. Additionally, the group have organised four AED workshops with a further four planned, and they are supporting local youth groups and other organisations.

1st Raunds Scout Group – Vikki White explained that the funding received by 1st Raunds Scouts had enabled the purchase of new tents, a washing station, lock box, sensory aids and autism awareness training for Leaders. The group have five camping trips planned for the coming year.

2nd Raunds Scout Group – Martin Harvey explained that the funding received by 2nd Raunds Scouts had enabled the purchase of two event shelters and three camping cookers.

Kiera Exall – Kiera explained that the funding she received had been put towards the purchase of a new piccolo and membership of the National Youth Orchestra. Kiera provided the audience with a performance of 'Spanish Dance' using her new instrument.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

- 1) How is the new garden waste collection scheme operating for residents in East Northamptonshire?

Cllr Howell replied stating that the service has now been harmonised across the North Northamptonshire unitary area. Existing subscribers resident in the East Northamptonshire area receive a first year discounted rate of £20 if they sign up before the end of December 2023. Residents already paying by direct debit will automatically receive the discount.

- 2) What can be done to improve street lighting and footpath access along Brick Kiln Road?

Cllr Howell replied, stating that North Northamptonshire Council could be asked to look into these matters, however provided that housing developers had met their minimum obligations there was limited scope for further improvements, particularly as there is no statutory requirement for local authorities to provide public lighting. Any additional upgrades would therefore have to be based on an assessed risk to public safety.

CLOSING REMARKS

The Mayor thanked all attendees for coming and reminded everyone to visit the tabletop displays and to help themselves to refreshments.

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 19.32pm.