

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT of the ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

Held on THURSDAY 15TH MAY 2014 at 7.00pm

There were 38 persons present at the meeting.

Apologies:

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting held 16th May 2013

The Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 16th May 2013, having been made available to those present, it was agreed that they be taken as read and were duly signed as a correct record.

2. Presentation of Poppy Wreath to family of Sergeant John Patrick Murray RAF

The Town Mayor, Ms A Hack, was honoured to welcome relatives of the late Sergeant John Patrick Murray to the meeting.

Sergeant Murray was born in Braunstone and served as a Wireless Operator during WWII. In June 1944, Sergeant Murray's Squadron, took off from RAF Binbrook to attack railway facilities near Paris, but sadly of the five aircraft that took off for the raid, his aircraft, Lancaster Bomber ME696 did not return. The seven man crew made up of two Airmen from the Royal Australian Airforce, two from the Royal Canadian Airforce and three from the Royal Air Force have their war graves in Viroflay Cemetery, France. In 2013 the Town Council was contacted by the Elancourt Association who was trying to trace the surviving relatives of Sergeant Murray as, seventy years after the loss of the ME696 the Association intended to commemorate the event by unveiling a memorial at its crash site.

The Town Council had been able to help by tracing some of the relatives of Sergeant Murray and his sister, Mrs Patricia Spence had therefore been invited to the meeting to accept a wreath which she had kindly agreed to lay on behalf of the residents of Braunstone Town at the commemoration event in June 2014.

3. Town Mayor's Report

Ms A Hack presented the Town Mayor's Report on the activities of the Town Council during 2013/2014 (copy filed with Minutes).

Ms Hack took the opportunity to thank everyone for their support during her term in office, in particular her Consort. She had enjoyed having the opportunity to meet with a wide range of people, seeing what work they do in the community. She noted that the number of proactive community groups in the Town was particularly apparent when she attended the Summer Fete in July.

Ms Hack was delighted to host the Awards of Merit evening on 19th May to recognise those local people who contribute to the strong sense of community in Braunstone Town and also thanked the collaboration of local groups that helped raise £2,135 towards local good causes through the Programme of Events. The Town Council had also worked closely with local groups throughout the year and helped them source a total of £5,890 in external funding.

Throughout the year Ms Hack had been invited to a wide range of events. She had attended the Golden Anniversary of the Shakespeare Park Bowling Club at which Members of the Town Council had taken part in a friendly bowls match. There had also been the Silver Anniversary celebrations of St Crispin's Church.

The Town Mayor had been particularly proud to attend events in remembrance of the brave service men and women that had sacrificed their lives during past and current conflicts, for the first time hosted at the Civic Centre, the Armed Forces Services Day'.

Finally, the Town Mayor took the opportunity to thank everyone for their support in helping her raise £4,525 for her chosen charity, Wishes 4 Kids. With local people's support she had been able to host events such as her Fashion Show and Pantomime to raise funds towards the Town Mayor's Charity. She had also been proud that she had successfully completed the Leicester Half Marathon.

4. Statement of Accounts 2012/2013

Mr N Brown, Leader of the Council, presented a report on the previous year's financial position of the Council.

The Council began the year with a balance brought forward at 1st April 2012 of £410,860. Total income was £837,015. This included a precept of £493,434 with the remaining income of £343,581 including further development contributions for the maintenance of the open spaces at Thorpe Astley. Expenditure amounted to £876,448. There was a balance brought forward of £343,581. This included £113,427 in earmarked reserves.

5. Estimated Expenditure 2014/2015

Mr N Brown reported on the Estimated Expenditure for 2014/2015. He reported that progress had been made with the maintenance of the open spaces at Thorpe Astley, and that the Council's groundstaff had made real inroads into getting the newly adopted open spaces in a tidy order. The more established open spaces in the Town continue to be well used by residents and football clubs. With regard to Holmfield Park, the Council had been able to relocate the football team from there to another pitch which would now enable the Council to embark on an improvement scheme to Holmfield Park. Consultation had already been carried out with residents and users of Holmfield Park, and it was anticipated that options for improvements would be available for comment on during the coming year.

Continuing with the open spaces and parks services, it was noted that again there had been a successful Apple Day event in October last year. The Franklin Park Working Group was aiming towards the official opening of the Community Orchard site to coincide with this year's event after which it will then be permanently open for everyone to enjoy.

Mr Brown reported that the Town Council continued to attach great importance to its community development initiatives with an aim to create a stronger sense of community in the Town. The Town Council will continue to support the annual Summer Fete and there has been an increase number of events agreed as part of the Programme of Events. Grants will continue to be available to local groups. As part of the Crime Reduction services, the newly purchase Speed Activation Sign would continue to be used within identified areas within the Town and in the longer term the information captured from the sign would help the Council and its partners decide priorities with regard to enforcement.

The Council's Plans & Environment Committee continued to represent local residents' views. There had been a number of controversial applications during the year and Mr Brown took the opportunity to congratulate the Committee in effectively articulating local residents' views on these applications. He noted that the Town Council would need to continue to be vigilant during the construction of the Lubbesthorpe Access Bridge over the M1. The Plans & Environment Committee had objected to the District Council's decision to discontinue the Air Quality Management area that covered Fosse Park and Narborough Road South. The Town Council would continue to try and persuade the District Council to undertake further Air Quality monitoring tests before any Air Quality Management area was withdrawn.

Mr Brown reported that both Community Centres continued to provide good quality rooms for hire at competitive rates and for use by local community groups. The Centres were continuing to receive high levels of satisfaction levels and income generated was improving.

Mr Brown reported that Parish Councils did not receive support grants directly from central government. Last year there had been changes in the way Council Tax is calculated which had resulted in reduction in the Council Tax Base Figure. The Town Council had been fortunate that the District Council had decided to pass on part of the government grant to the Parish and Town Councils in order to bridge the gap. Mr Brown reported, however, that there was no guarantee that this grant would continue in the future. Combined with the introduction of the government's auto-enrolment Pension Regulations, had the potential to put the Town Council in financial risk in the future. The Town Council had therefore decided to undertake some longer term financial planning, with the aim to safeguard existing services whilst building up reserves. The Town Council therefore proposed to increase the Council Tax required over a five to ten year period which would be carried out in a planned and proportionate manner rather than a large increase should the Council Tax grant be reduced or pension costs rise.

Mr Brown reported that the total requirement for 2014/2015 was £515,327 of which £52,046 was made up of Council Tax Support Grant. This had resulted in a net requirement of £463,281. The average Band 'B' Council Tax Payer in Braunstone Town would pay only £76.20 per annum for the services provided by the Town Council which was an increase of only 2.8% on last year.

Despite the difficult and financially stringent times, the Council had been able to continue to maintain its level of services and it was hoped that, with the measures set out previously, the Council would be better placed to face the financial challenges ahead, without the need to cut existing services.

6. Braunstone Town Library

Mr N Brown reported on Leicestershire County Council's proposals for possible closure of 36 of its Community Libraries. It was currently carrying out a consultation process with a view to transferring the running of those Community Libraries to partnership bodies, to be run by volunteers or Parish Councils. The County Council had indicated that it expected to save around £870,000 by transferring this service.

Mr N Brown stressed his concern about the possible loss of the Braunstone Town Library Service. It was a much valued service within the Town, particularly for young people and for those that made use of its IT facilities. He noted that the Braunstone Town Library covered the largest community in the area, which should be a strong case for the County Council retaining it as a Library, however, he did not support the closure of any of the Community Libraries.

Mr N Brown was proposing a Resolution that primarily objected to the County Council's proposals for transfer of the Braunstone Town Library but also acknowledged that action would need to be taken should the County Council pursue with its proposals for transferring the Community Library services.

Councillor Mr N Brown therefore proposed the following Resolution, as Seconded by Councillor Mrs J Fox:- It was:-

RESOLVED

38 in favour, non against and no abstentions to approve the following resolution as requested by Councillor Mr N Brown:-

"We, the residents of Braunstone Town, hereby express our dismay and regret at the decision of Leicestershire County Council to withdraw financial support for the operation of our library and to threaten Braunstone Town's library with closure. We ask that the County Council review this decision and withdraw the closure threat.

We request that Braunstone Town Council work with the community, other partners and stakeholders and uses its offices, powers and influence to keep the Braunstone Town Library open and also provide a better service that is more responsive to the needs of local residents."

7. Heritage Warden Report

The Heritage Warden's Report for 2013/2014 produced by Mr J Dodds was circulated to the meeting. Those present took the opportunity to thank Mr Dodds for his continued dedication as role of Heritage Warden.

8. Termination of Meeting

The Town Mayor thanked those present for attending and with no further business the meeting closed at 7.42pm.