

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

Held on THURSDAY 14TH MAY 2015 at 7.00pm

In the Chair, Councillor Shabbir Aslam, Town Mayor.
There were 27 persons present at the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sam Fox-Kennedy and from Mr. John Dodd.

2. Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting – 15th May 2014

The Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 15th May 2014 were circulated with the agenda, which was made available to all persons present, and were taken as read.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 15th May 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

3. Town Mayor's Report 2014/2015

Councillor Shabbir Aslam, Town Mayor for 2014/2015, reported on activities during his Mayoral year:

“Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our Annual Meeting. This meeting gives us all an opportunity to reflect on the activities in our Town over the past year and look ahead to the forthcoming year. Later this evening, the Full Council will consider the Annual Report of the Town Council which details our services and sets out our achievements over the past 12 months”.

“For myself as Town Mayor it has been a very memorable year. It is a privilege and an honour to be chosen to serve as Town Mayor and experience first hand the hard work and dedication of many in our community who serve and support the needs of others. I have been amazed at the wide variety of activities and the number of proactive community groups there are in Braunstone Town. It has been a real privilege to meet so many people who are so committed to making our Town such a vibrant place in which to live”.

“Throughout the year I have attended many events that have taken place to celebrate, honour and recognise achievements of our residents. I was proud to sponsor a race at the Braunstone Swimming Club's open meet and present a prize to one of the winning young contestants. I also attended the parade of the young people of the TS Cutlass Navy Training Corps based at Winstanley School. In August I attended a Community Picnic to commemorate the anniversary of the outbreak of World War One which incorporated a mixture of community spirit and reflection on those who lost their lives during the war. Later in the year I was pleased to attend an open day at the Braunstone Town Library that celebrated its

50th Anniversary last year. In March I was also privileged to host the raising of the Commonwealth flag for the first time in Braunstone Town and which takes place throughout the Commonwealth countries”.

“The Franklin Park Orchard continues to flourish as a community asset with the hard work of enthusiastic volunteers and which this year will see the permanent opening of the Orchard to the community following extensive work to prepare the area for the opening. Our summer fete was, again, a huge success with plenty of activities going on for all the family to enjoy and a larger number of residents attending and again, we had glorious weather”.

“This year I have been particularly proud to attend events that remember the brave service men and women who have sacrificed their lives during past and current conflicts. Again this year the Council was proud to help mark Remembrance Day with a service at Saint Crispin’s Church and commemorating the ‘Armed Forces Day’”.

“I was delighted to host the recent Town Mayor’s Annual Awards of merit evening. It was an opportunity to recognise the deserving unsung heroes of our community, and to acknowledge the groups who had joined me in putting on the Programme of Events which this year raised funds of £2189 for local groups and good causes. I hope that the Town Council will continue to play such a central role for many years to come in helping to bring people together and promoting the strong sense of community spirit that I have encountered”.

“On a personal note, I am grateful that my year as Town Mayor has given me the opportunity to raise the profile of my charity, Leicester Charity Link – which helps provide essential everyday items such as a bed to sleep in, a cooker to prepare food on and, in emergencies, food parcels. These may be very basic items and cost little to provide but can be a lifeline to people in need. The charity runs a food bank and during my year as Mayor a collection point for food donations has been established at Braunstone Civic Centre which has been well supported by local residents. The generous people of Braunstone Town have helped me in raising a total of £4,510 for this good cause and many events were held including a Fashion Show, a family pantomime and Christmas Craft Fair to help raise funds. I wish to thank everyone for supporting these events”.

“I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to everyone for their support over the year, in particular my consort and wife Shaneella and also my children”.

“I would also like to take this opportunity to wish Braunstone Town’s next Town Mayor a most enjoyable and successful year”.

4. Statement of Accounts 2013/2014

Councillor Nick Brown, Leader of the Council, reported on the Town Council’s previous year’s financial position:

“The Accounts and Statement of Assurance prepared in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations were approved by the Council on 26th June 2014. The Audit was completed on 5th September 2014”.

“The Council began the year with a balance brought forward at 1st April 2013 of £371,427”.

“Total income was £735,235. This included a precept of £440,778 - the remaining income of £294,457 included developer contributions of £11,015 for the maintenance of open spaces at Thorpe Astley”.

“Expenditure amounted to £718,519”.

“There was a balance carried forward of £382,301”.

“We have been able to increase our working balances to help guard against uncertainties and future financial risks facing the Council”.

“A copy of the Statement of Accounts can be inspected during the opening hours of the Customer Service Shop at Braunstone Civic Centre”.

5. Estimated Expenditure 2015/2016

Councillor Nick Brown, Leader of the Council, reported on the Town Council's spending proposals and priorities for the forthcoming year (2015/2016):

“We will shortly be publishing our spending proposals and details of the Council's services in the Braunstone Life community newspaper. Our Annual Report, which will be considered at the Annual Council Meeting later this evening sets out our spending and achievements in 2014/2015 and will also shortly be published on our web site and will also be available at the Civic Centre”.

“Having engaged local residents and developed improvement proposals for Holmfield Park, the Council is now finalising arrangements for the works to commence. Once completed the play and recreation facilities will include equipment for all ages from toddler to teenager”.

“The Town Council continues to attach importance to its objective “to provide quality sports facilities to meet identified needs” and following the reopening of the second adult football pitch at Mossdale Meadows, our football pitches across the Town continue to be popular and for the forthcoming season we will be hosing 26 teams. It is important that we not only meet capacity but ensure quality, therefore we have invested £5,000 in new equipment to maintain our football pitch playing surfaces to a high standard to reduce the likelihood of waterlogged and damaged pitches through the winter months”.

“The Town Council has also produced, in consultation with the Franklin Park Orchard and Meadow Working Group, a plan of works to ensure that the Community Orchard and Meadow can be permanently opened to the public. Significant parts of this programme have already been completed with the assistance of community payback volunteers. Further ground works along with

signage and gateways will be completed over the summer in preparation for the grand opening at our annual Apple Day event in October. Following all the hard work and commitment to this project by Councillors, staff and many members of the public, let's hope the weather is better than the gale we had last year".

"This year the Council will be working with our partners at Shakespeare Park Bowling Club and with users of the sport, play and recreation facilities at Shakespeare Park to develop and seek funding for improvements to facilities on the park. The facilities are well used and appreciated by the local community; however, the pavilion and changing rooms are in much need of modernisation. Our initial proposals for redevelopment of these facilities are ambitious but nonetheless essential if we are not only to provide services to our residents today but also ensure that we are able to pass on to future generations high quality and fit for purpose facilities".

"Through our Town Mayor we continue to attach importance to our events programmes, significant anniversaries such as remembrance and civic events such as armed forces day. With arrangements for our annual Summer Fete progressing, we will continue to provide a wide range of activities for all in the community. Such events and recognition of anniversaries are important as we celebrate and recognise who we are as a community and continue to build a vibrant and socially inclusive Town".

"Equally we attach great importance to listening to the concerns of the people of our Town, representing these and working with other public agencies to find solutions. This played a significant part in our activities last year following the County Council's decision to hand over Libraries to be run by communities or face closure. 63 concerned members of the community attended a public meeting in June last year and expressed concerns about the important role the Library played in the community for reading, learning and social inclusion and that with the best will in the world, such a service would be difficult to retain solely dependent upon volunteers. The Town Council, in recognising increasing social change in our community along with the pressures of funding on public services, has developed detailed and ambitious proposals to meet local needs by combining the Council's Customer Service Shop with the Library. These proposals represent to both the County and District Councils a revenue saving over 50%, while increasing opening hours and providing for further social inclusion activities to be based in the facility. There is however some way to go to ensure that we can translate our plans into reality and this year the Town Council will be working hard to ensure that the opportunity to safeguard important public services to our Town by providing a more efficient and effective service delivery model alongside our partners is delivered".

"Both Braunstone Civic Centre and Thorpe Astley Community Centre provide a focus for community activity and access to public services. We continue to have active dialogue with NHS England to ensure that this year we finally see the opening of the Medical Facility at Thorpe Astley Community Centre, a long awaited service by the residents of Thorpe Astley. This facility along with the Library and Customer Service Shop will support the work of the Local Area Coordinator who is due to start work in our community this month. Local Area Coordination is an 18 month trial project which the Town Council is proud to be supporting along with both principal Councils and the NHS. The Local Area Coordinator for Braunstone

Town will work in the community and be based at both our Centres focusing on identifying and supporting people who need help before they reach crisis, and working towards building an inclusive resilient community around them”.

“We have a strong track record in this area and the work of the Local Area Coordinator will build on our community development initiatives aimed at bringing people together and helping to create a stronger sense of community in our area. Grants will continue to be available for community groups this year and free use of community rooms during the day at our Centres for voluntary and community groups in the Town will continue. The Town Council sees the work of community and voluntary groups as underpinning a vibrant and inclusive community and we will continue to provide capacity support and signposting for funding to assist groups with their work and initiatives”.

“The Council’s Plans and Environment Committee continues to represent local residents’ views. There have been a number of controversial applications and members of our Plans and Environment Committee should be congratulated on effectively articulating local residents’ views. As the Lubbesthorpe access bridge over the M1 is constructed we will continue to be vigilant and ensure that the concerns of local residents are conveyed to the local planning authority”.

“Town and parish councils receive no support grants directly from central government. I reported over the last couple of years on the changes in the way council tax is calculated and a reduction in our council tax base figure. We are fortunate that Blaby has decided to pass on part of the government grant to towns and parishes in order to bridge this gap. There is no guarantee however that this grant will continue in the future. Combine this with the reductions in services by both the County and District councils and the increasing pressures on the Police, Fire and health services, the Town Council will be under increasing pressure to find local solutions to the provision of public services which could expose us to serious financial risks in the future. We have therefore decided to undertake some longer term financial planning, with the aim of trying to safeguard our existing services whilst building up our reserves. We have already provided two long term financial forecasts and have increased the council tax required over a five to ten year period. This year we will update our long term financial forecast alongside using the money we have invested to implement real efficiency measures. Let me be clear, we seek to implement efficiency measures to safeguard and improve public services and not implement cuts to public services. This year will see the Council consider measures such as investing in the installation of LED lighting in our buildings, car parks and on our footpaths. We will also be investing in a new roof and insulation of the Millfield Hall at the Civic Centre”.

“This year our total revenue expenditure requirement is £527,590”.

“We received £49,786 (compared to £52,046 last year) in Council Tax Support Grant (via Blaby District Council)”.

“This resulted in a net council tax requirement of £477,804. The average band ‘B’ council tax payer in Braunstone Town will end up paying only £77.88 per annum for the services provided by this Council. This is an increase of only 2.2% compared to last year”.

“Despite these difficult and financially stringent times, we have been able to continue to maintain our services and in some cases improve upon what we are doing. We hope that with the measures set out earlier we will be better placed to face the financial challenges ahead – without the need to cut our existing services”.

6. Braunstone Town Heritage Warden Report

The Heritage Warden’s Report for 2014/2015 was circulated with the agenda, which was made available to all persons present, and were taken as read.

7. Termination of Meeting

The Town Mayor thanked those present for attending and with no further business the meeting closed at 7.25pm.

SIGNED: _____ (Chair)

DATED: _____