

BRAUNSTONE TOWN

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

Held on THURSDAY 16TH MAY 2019 at 7.30pm

In the Chair, Councillor Sharon Betts, Town Mayor.
There were 19 persons present at the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Roger Berrington, Deputy Town Mayor, and from Councillor Bill Wright.

2. Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting – 10th May 2018

The Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 10th May 2018 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 10th May 2018 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

3. Town Mayor's Report 2018/2019

A report had been circulated with the agenda summarising the following:

- Community Activities;
- Community Achievement;
- Programme of Events;
- Summer Fete;
- Anniversaries/Civic Events;
- Curry Night; and
- Town Mayor's Charity – RSPCA Leicestershire Branch, Woodside Animal Centre.

Councillor Sharon Betts, Town Mayor for 2018/2019, reported on activities during her Mayoral year:

“Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our Annual Towns Meeting. This meeting gives residents of the Town 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 achievements over the past 12 months and sets out our proposed activities for the next 12 months and the Leader of the Council will highlight some of these in his report”.

“For myself as Town Mayor it has been a privilege and an honour to be chosen to serve for the second time as the Town's First Citizen and experience first-hand the hard work and dedication of many in our community who serve and support the

needs of others and are committed to making our Town a vibrant place in which to live”.

“I was invited to attend many events to celebrate, honour and recognise achievements of our residents and these are detailed in the report, which you have as part of your agenda for this meeting”.

“The 23rd Town Mayor’s Annual Awards of merit on Friday 26th April was an opportunity for me to thank the groups who had joined me in putting on the programme events which this year raised funds of £600 for local groups and good causes”.

“The event was also an opportunity to recognise the deserving unsung heroes of our community, whose efforts and service has made a real difference to people’s lives and the life of our community. Through the Town Mayor’s Award of Merit I recognised the work of seven individuals:

- Betty Power, Vi Steele and Jean Storer – in recognition of their work in the community of Braunstone Town undertaking litter picking and planting bulbs;
- Bryan and Betty Copson – in recognition of their work in the community of Braunstone Town and St Crispin’s Church; and
- Lin Burrows and Debbie Kenney – in recognition of their hard work in organising the Poppy Cascade and Remembrance Parade to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the end of the First World War”.

“I hope that the Town Council will continue to play 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, RSPCA Leicestershire Branch, Woodside Animal Centre, which takes in and cares for stray and unwanted pets, aids recovery and return of injured wildlife to their habitat and rehabilitates animal victims of cruelty. The Centre also finds homes for unwanted cats, dogs and small pets”.

“Throughout the year, the generous people of Braunstone Town have helped me to raising £2,340.17 for Woodside Animal Centre and I wish to thank everyone for supporting the events during the year”.

“I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to my consort Bill who has been there chauffeuring me to engagements and supporting me in this important role every step of the way”.

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

4. Town Council Accounts and Budgets

Councillor Nick Brown, Leader of the Council, reported on the Town Council’s financial position. The Town Council’s Accounts and Budget Report was

circulated with the agenda, which was made available to all persons present, and were taken as read.

5. Leader's Report – Achievements 2018/19 and Priorities for 2019/20

A report had been circulated with the agenda, which was made available to all persons present. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Nick Brown, reported on the Town Council's achievements during 2018/2019 and looked ahead to the Town Council's priorities for 2019/2020. A copy of the draft Annual Report for 2018/2019, due for consideration and adoption at Annual Council, was also circulated.

Shakespeare Park – Improvement & Development

“Following planning permission being granted for our ambitious proposals to enhance the sporting, recreation and play facilities at Shakespeare Park, we appointed a contractor to undertake the improvement works to the site and pavilion”.

“The Town Council has been working hard with the local sports clubs to obtain funding and also on the future management arrangements for the new Pavilion facility”.

“In addition to our own funds, and Section 106 funding, on 11th March 2019, notification was received that Sport England's Community Asset Fund Review Panel had considered the Town Council's application for grant funding and had awarded the project £100,000. This is a significant sum towards our funding efforts and we hope will give a boost to similar applications for funding we have with the Football Foundation and Leicester City Football Club's Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha Foundation. Positive discussions are ongoing with the County Football Association and we currently anticipate a response from the Football Foundation next month”.

“In the current financial climate, it is proving difficult to access external sources of funding as quickly as we would have liked and this has resulted in delays to the timescales for delivery of the project. However, the Town Council continues to work hard with its partners to move the project forward to the delivery stage and we remain confident that work will commence on the site in the late summer”.

“With an anticipated construction of around 12 months, once complete, the site will host improved play facilities, including provision of sensory play equipment, improved tennis courts, extended car parking and a new sports pavilion facility including modern changing facilities and a multi-function, multi-purpose club room, meeting room and social facility”.

Access to NHS General Practice Services

“The year began with the opening of the NHS facility at Thorpe Astley Community Centre, which the Town Council had been trying to bring about since 2010”.

“Kingsway Surgery’s branch at Thorpe Astley offers patients registered at Kingsway Surgery GP appointments, practice nurse clinics and a minor surgery clinic”.

“I, along with many residents, am delighted with the opening of the branch GP surgery in Thorpe Astley. Residents have consistently told us about the difficulties they face in accessing GP services and the Thorpe Astley Community Appraisal identified that provision of a Doctors Surgery and Health Facilities was the top priority, supported by 93.3% of respondents. Since Thorpe Astley Community Centre opened in 2010, the Town Council has put considerable effort in terms of time and resources working with the NHS to achieve the delivery of health services from the Community Centre. Since the autumn of 2016, the Town Council had been working on behalf of concerned local residents representing their concerns to the NHS about issues of access and availability of General Practitioners at local GP surgeries across the Town and the area more widely”.

“In September, the surgery at Thorpe Astley extended its opening hours from two days per week to five. In addition, the Town Council has worked with the surgery to provide additional space at the Centre for a second GP consulting room, which potentially doubles the number of GP appointments available at Thorpe Astley”.

“While there has been understandable frustration over the years that there was no GP provision in Thorpe Astley, having been able to work closely with Kingsway over the past couple of years to enable services to be provided, it is good news that the community are making full use of these facilities to the extent that a five day service and a second GP consulting service can now be provided only a year after the service first opened”.

“The Town Council is grateful to Kingsway Surgery for their positive and sensible approach in expanding their provision to meet increasing demand and we will continue to work with them to ensure that this service is both successful, sustainable and meets local need”.

Braunstone Town Library

“At the beginning of last year, having accepted our Library proposals represented the most pragmatic way forward, we have been working with the County Council to enable the transfer of the service to the Town Council’s management, ensuring improvements to the Library while avoiding additional costs for the Town’s taxpayers”.

“The process is taking some time since the legal arrangements need to be specific and in alignment with the current long term lease agreement the County Council has with the Town Council for the premises”.

“I am confident that these discussions will be concluded shortly with the aim of transferring the service to the Town Council before the end of the year”.

“I know the future of our Library is important to many residents and I will keep you updated with progress. However, I ask residents to be patient while the legal agreements and detailed arrangements needed to ensure that the transfer is successful are finalised”.

“This is good news for the Town since this decision at last secures the future of our library after years of uncertainty”.

Capital Projects

“We have invested this year in improvements to our CCTV system, which has been expanded at both our community centres as well as being installed at Mossdale Meadows, Thorpe Astley Park and Franklin Park”.

“Due to financial pressures (see below), many of the capital projects have been put on hold, however, in the forthcoming year we plan to refurbish the toilet facilities at the Civic Centre, while making improvements to the kitchen and storage facilities at the Civic Centre bar to enable it to also operate as a café providing a social and meeting place for the community on weekdays”.

Thorpe Astley Open Spaces

“During the year we completed the legal transfer and took possession of public open space at Thorpe Astley from Barrett Homes. Currently the transfer documentation for the open space owned by David Wilson Homes and Wilson Bowden Developments is with the land registry and we expect confirmation of the legal transfer shortly. Therefore, we hope to be in a position during 2019/20 to complete the legal transfer of open spaces at Thorpe Astley to the Town Council in order to enable future investment and improvement to the facilities, including ensuring improvements are implemented to the Culvert at Thorpe Astley Park”.

100th Anniversary of the end of World War 1

“November 2018 marked the 100th anniversary of the armistice at the end of the Great War (World War 1) and saw the marking of it by the Town with a magnificent poppy cascade at the Civic Centre, a parade and act of remembrance”.

“It has been a pleasure to have worked with the Community Life Group throughout the year on their plans to mark this important anniversary, which saw numerous volunteers and community groups come together to make over 14,178 hand-made unique poppies each commemorating the life of a Leicestershire man lost during service in World War One”.

“For the Town Council, the hard work of the community on these commemorations has provided for an opportunity to refurbish the Garden of Remembrance at the Civic Centre and to install a permanent memorial to those who lost their lives in all recent wars. I am grateful to members of the local community who have been growing plants for the refurbished garden. The memorial garden will provide a focal point in the years to come for acts of remembrance and dedication to our service personnel through Armed Forces Day and other events”.

“My sincere thanks go to all those involved with Community Life who not only had the vision but have worked hard to put their vision into practice”.

Public Footpath: Watergate Lane to Staplehurst Avenue

“Residents who use the footpath between Watergate Lane and Staplehurst Avenue will be delighted that our application for this path to be a “Right of Way” was successful and I would like to thank those residents who provided supporting evidence. We can now enjoy the walk safe in the knowledge that future generations will be able to do the same”.

Financial Risks and Pressures

“In January, the Town Council met to approve its priorities, capital plan, budget and share of the Council Tax for the forthcoming financial year”.

“Following Blaby District Council’s decision to end the payment to parish and town councils of the parish share of Council Tax Support Grant and New Homes Bonus from April 2018, which for Braunstone Town Council equates to around £50,000 cut per annum, we enter the second year of a three year period where we draw on our reserves and monies allocated to capital projects in order to plug the financial gap while minimising the impact of Blaby’s decision on local tax payers”.

“We continue to work hard to identify ways to protect the services which many in the Town value, while finding ways to deliver these services and run our operations more efficiently, an approach supported by the Town’s Citizens’ Advisory Panel at its December meeting”.

“Our approach has enabled us to protect all of our front line services while identifying £3,500 per annum of ongoing savings, and using £18,000 of our reserves, which has enabled us to keep the increase in our share of Council Tax bills for 2019/2020 to £4.58 for a typical band B property”.

“I would like to thank residents for their understanding and support for our approach which strikes a balance between protecting services, making savings and increasing Council Tax. Nonetheless, the use of our reserves to spread the impact on residents following Blaby’s decision will impact upon the Council’s finances and ability to deliver capital investment over the next 3 to 5 years”.

Update Reports

“Updates on the above matters are published in a regular Leader’s report in the Braunstone Life and on the Council’s website”.

6. Braunstone Town Heritage Warden’s Report 2018/2019

The Heritage Warden’s Report for 2018/2019 was circulated with the agenda:

“There have been two significant heritage events over the last twelve months:

1. Commemoration of the end of World War One,
2. Celebration of 850 years of St Peter’s Church”.

“The commemorations to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the first world war, saw the wider community come together to remember not only the terrible loss of life in WW1 but also to remember all people killed in conflicts since then”.

“Braunstone Town commemorated the event by establishing a War Memorial in the grounds of the Civic Centre culminating in the dedication of the memorial stones, followed by a service of remembrance on the 11th November with a magnificent backdrop display of a poppy cascade on the end of the Civic Centre. The whole event organised and coordinate by the Community Life Group and attended by several hundred residents, civic dignitaries and Central ITV”.

“Braunstone Heritage Archive Group (BHAG) provided a WW1 display for the whole of 2018 in the display cabinet located in the reception area of the Civic Centre. They also provided displays in the Library during October and November”.

“An equally spectacular and informative display was provided for the celebrations of St Peter’s 850th anniversary last June. The displays were a joint venture between Braunstone Heritage Archive Group and the Braunstone History Group. The event was publicised in local media and prompted several former members of the congregation to get in touch some of whom came to the two-day event with photographs and memories”.

“The development of new housing in Lubbesthorpe has stimulated research into the history of Lubbesthorpe and a small group of new residents have attended a “History Walk” along with members of BHAG. Hopefully this history research will provide heritage information to new residents”.

“BHAG continue with the regular changing of the displays in the reception area of the Civic Centre and in the display board in the library”.

“Still no definite news on the takeover date for the library service by the Town Council”.

Natural Heritage.

“It’s good to see that the Wildlife Group still meet on the first Sunday of the month and that some of the youngsters who came to the early meetings in 2011 are now helpers for the group”.

“Sadly, this last twelve months have not seen any winter or summer pruning of the apple trees in the community orchard at Franklin Park, the trees are now a bit leggy and we should make every effort to prune them this coming winter. Despite some rainfall the pond is very low on water and we have had to postpone a request by Kingsway North School to go pond dipping. The pond still attracts some mindless vandalism”.

“Let’s hope that the next twelve months are positively bent on providing more interesting facts on our heritage and perhaps, just perhaps we might have a suitable museum!”

7. Termination of Meeting

The Town Mayor thanked those present for attending and with no further business the meeting closed at 7.50pm.

DRAFT