

BRAUNSTONE TOWN

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

Held on THURSDAY 13TH MAY 2021 at 7.30pm

In the Chair, Councillor Parminder Basra, Town Mayor.
There were 25 persons present at the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ajmer Basra, Councillor Dipen Nathwani and Councillor Marion Waterton.

2. Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting – 16th May 2019

The Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 16th May 2019 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 16th May 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

3. Town Mayor's Report 2019 - 2021

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

- Community Activities;
- Community Achievement;
- Programme of Events
- Library Launch
- Summer Fete
- Anniversaries/Civic Events;
- Town Mayor's Charity – Life Links.

Councillor Parminder Basra, Town Mayor for 2019 - 2021, reported on activities during her Mayoral years:

“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 community over the past year and look ahead to the forthcoming year. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, last year's meeting was not held, therefore tonight we are reflecting on the last two years”.

“Later this evening, the Full Council will consider the Annual Report of the Town Council, which details our achievements over the last two years 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, due to the pandemic my term didn't end in 2020 as expected but I continued in my role through to tonight. Nevertheless, it has been a privilege and an honour to have been chosen to serve 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”.

“In particular, during the Covid-19 pandemic this included some exceptional acts of compassion, caring and the coming together of the community to support our more vulnerable residents”.

“During 2019 and early 2020 I attended 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”.

“Since March 2020, activities have of course been severely restricted due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Unfortunately a dinner and dance evening I had planned for March 2020 to raise money for my charity was cancelled and I was unable to rearrange the event”.

“However, in Spring this year I organised a Walk & Talk Initiative aimed to help raise awareness of Life Links’ work given the challenges faced with the Covid-19 pandemic. Residents planned a walk and talk session and got people to sponsor them. I am delighted that this initiative raised over £1,100 for my charity, Life Links”.

“Unfortunately I was unable to hold the normal Town Mayor’s Awards Evening either this year or in 2020. However, I was able to get together on Zoom on 7th May to recognise the Kingsway Flower Club, Braunstone Wombles and Braunstone Town Community Food Bank for the work they have done in our community; particularly during the very exceptional recent times we have all experienced”.

“The evening also gave me the opportunity to thank the Council’s Deputy Executive Officer & Community Services Manager, Pauline Snow, for reaching 25 years of service with Braunstone Town Council. Unfortunately Pauline was not able to join us due to sickness and on behalf of the Council I wish to send our love and best wishes to Pauline for a speedy recovery”.

“On a personal note, I am grateful that during my term as Town Mayor I have had the opportunity to raise the profile of my charity, Life Links. Life Links provide mental health wellbeing and recovery support through a number of different support networks, offering those it supports the flexibility to choose how they receive support dependent on their own personal needs”.

“Despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions in organising fundraising events, the generous people of Braunstone Town have helped me to raise a total of £5,015 to help Life Links with its vital and important work and I wish to thank everyone for their donations and for supporting my events”.

“I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to my consort and husband George who has been there 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 2019- 21 and Priorities for 2021/22

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 2019 - 21 and looked ahead to the Town Council's priorities for 2021/2022. A copy of the draft Annual Report for 2019-2021, due for consideration and adoption at Annual Council, was also circulated.

“The Town Council's Policy & Resources Committee on 22nd April 2021 finalised the draft Annual Report for 2019 – 2021, a copy of which is attached as an appendix. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, last year's Annual Towns Meeting was cancelled, therefore this Annual Report summarises our achievements since 2019 and sets out our plans for the forthcoming Council year (2021/2022). This report will be received by the Annual Meeting of the Town Council, which meets following the Annual Towns Meeting, for consideration and adoption”.

“Despite the difficulties faced since March last year, the Town Council continues its work to protect, enhance and improve services for the residents of the Town and below is a summary of our work and achievements over the last couple of years and priorities for the coming year”.

Braunstone Town Library

“In my report to the Towns Meeting in 2019, I reported that Leicestershire County Council had accepted our Library proposals represented the most pragmatic way forward and that we were 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”.

“This work was completed in the summer of 2019, when both Councils reached agreement on the legal text, which was signed on 26th September 2019. Transfer of the management of Braunstone Town Library to the Town Council took place on 1st October 2019 with a successful launch event a month later on Saturday 2nd November”.

“I know that Library service is important to many residents and I am delighted that the agreement secures the Library's future along with the County Council's ongoing financial commitment. I would like to thank the community for supporting our proposals and for their patience while complex and detailed legal agreements were negotiated”.

“Given there had been uncertainty around the Library’s future for nearly 6 years; the Town Council decided to let the dust settle following the transfer and keep the existing arrangements in place for 6 months. Unfortunately, as the Town Council was beginning to look at options for improving and enhancing the Library service, the Covid-19 pandemic closed the service for several months”.

“As the Library reopens, I am pleased to advise that we were successful in getting a grant for £5,000 for activities to involve the community in our Library and this coming year there will be many ways to get involved, such as volunteering for one of the new initiatives or sharing your ideas through our Citizens’ Advisory Panel”.

Shakespeare Park – Improvement & Development

“After 5 years in the planning and design stages, in December 2019 the Council approved a borrowing application to secure the remaining funding required to deliver our ambitious proposals to enhance the sporting, recreation and play facilities at Shakespeare Park. The contractor commenced excavation works early in Spring 2020, with phase 1 of the works a new multi-purpose Pavilion, demolition of the old clubhouse and improvements to the car park due for completion this month”.

“The new facility includes modern changing facilities and a multi-function, multi-purpose club room providing a meeting room and a social facility. The pavilion and site is able to support lawn bowls, pétanque, football and tennis providing for both sustaining and encouraging growth in sport participation”.

“Contractors have been appointed for Phase 2 of the works to improve the tennis courts and play facilities”.

“Funding has been secured for the improvements to the tennis courts, which will include new perimeter fencing and gates and newly constructed foundations with a geotextile membrane surface. The work is due to commence shortly and completed this summer”.

“Consultation is currently being undertaken on using the Lawn Tennis Association’s Tap4Tennis bookings service at both the refurbished Shakespeare Park Tennis Courts and at Thorpe Astley Park Tennis Courts. The use of a pre-booked court entry system will give certainty around court availability, as well as providing funds to invest in court facilities and provide training sessions, all with the aim of increasing participation in tennis and sport”.

“Funding for the playground improvements is being sought, which is proving difficult in the current financial climate. This has resulted in delays to the timescales for delivery of this part of the project and once funding has been secured, works will commence”.

“The Town Council is working with both the bowls and football clubs on the future management arrangements for the new Pavilion facility. The preferred option is for the teams to take a lead in managing and running the facility for the benefit of sport and recreation”.

Covid-19 Community Support Initiatives

“At the end of March 2020 as Covid-19 spread and it became clear that many in our community would need to stay at home and shield, the Town Council launched the Covid-19 Community Response initiative”.

“The simple aim of the Community Response was for local residents who need support with day to day living as a result of the Covid-19 advice and restrictions to be matched with a volunteer from the community who would be able to help them. The scheme provided non-professional support (i.e. not the kind of support offered by agencies and/or carers) and included:

- collecting medicines, prescriptions etc.
- collecting shopping;
- dog walking or taking a pet to the Vets;
- chatting with an individual by phone, video link or email who has to stay at home due to shielding”.

“The Town Council provided a co-ordination and facilitation role, including a central point of information and contact information for those seeking support and those who wished to offer support. The Council coordinated the Website and Facebook Group which provided a range of information and resources for both residents and volunteers; and in the case of the Facebook Group the opportunity for residents to share information and ideas”.

“Effective working links were quickly established with Blaby District Council’s Community Hub, Leicestershire County Council, Voluntary Action LeicesterShire and various local charities and support organisations to ensure that the scheme complimented the wider offer and that residents and volunteers were directed to the most appropriate scheme for support”.

“In addition, links were established with local shops and organisations to assist volunteers who were helping residents undertake shopping or collecting medicines on their behalf”.

“By Easter 2020, there were 64 volunteers registered with the Community Response Scheme with 30 households being supported. At the height of the scheme in May 2020 there were 97 volunteers registered and 55 households receiving support in some form”.

“I would like to thank our residents who have and continue to help others through these difficult and unprecedented times. The Community Response is still available for Braunstone Town residents to access support whatever the situation and will continue to do so as long as the current Covid-19 pandemic continues in some form. It is monitored on a continuous basis to ensure that it meets the needs of residents and is operating within the risk assessments set up to protect both volunteers and residents”.

“In addition to the Community Response, the Council provides support to the Community Foodbank by providing a base for it to operate at the Civic Centre. We have worked with our partners at Kingsway Surgery to facilitate the roll out of the Covid-19 vaccine at Thorpe Astley Community Centre. The Town Council has also

provided additional grant funding to support community groups during and after the pandemic and this scheme remains in place until October 2021 for Groups to access as they return to meeting in person again”.

“Thank you to all those who volunteered their time to help and support their community and neighbours through these very difficult times”.

Civic Centre Improvements

“This year the Council is looking at long overdue improvements to the facilities at Braunstone Civic Centre. The proposals include refurbishment of the toilets, including the provision of a brand new Changing Places Toilet Facility”.

“Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of all people with a disability. People with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well people with other physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. Changing Places toilets meet these needs and although these specialist facilities have a significant cost, it is right that we make the investment to ensure that all in our community can access, enjoy and benefit from the services we provide at the Civic Centre site”.

“The internal reorganisation of the building also provides an opportunity to improve the kitchen facilities for the Civic Community Lounge to enable the provision of a café service, utilising the Bar Lounge more effectively and providing a wider community social space”.

Thorpe Astley Open Spaces

“During 2020 we completed the final legal transfer of the public open spaces at Thorpe Astley with David Wilson Homes and Wilson Bowden Developments. All that remains to be completed are the improvements to the Culvert at Thorpe Astley Park and work is due to commence on this before the end of the year. Once completed, the park will be transferred to the Town Council’s ownership”.

Climate Change

“In recent years the impact of climate change has become increasingly visible. During the coming year, the Town Council will develop a Strategy and an Action Plan to address the impact of its own activities on the climate, as well as setting out how it will provide leadership in response to the climate change agenda. This will include a programme for ensuring the activities of the Town Council become carbon neutral; promoting and encouraging awareness and action on climate change; moving to the use of renewable energy sources; and ensuring the protection and enhancement of the town’s Green spaces, promoting and encouraging tree planting, and seeking to increase and enrich biodiversity”.

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. Climate Change – Proposed Resolution submitted by Councillor Nick Brown

A report had been circulated with the agenda, which was made available to all persons present to consider a proposed resolution, submitted by Councillor Nick Brown, in respect of Climate Change.

RESOLVED

18 in favour, none against and no abstentions to approve the following resolution as submitted by Councillor Nick Brown:-

“Braunstone Town recognises that:

- 1. Human influence on climate has been the dominant cause of observed warming since the mid-20th century. Global temperatures have already increased by 1° Celsius from pre-industrial levels. Atmospheric CO2 levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm). This far exceeds the 350 ppm deemed to be a safe level for humanity. The IPCC’s Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, published in 2018, describes the enormous harm that a 2°C rise is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise. The report informs us that limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector and local communities;*
- 2. the UK has, at international level, signed into the Paris Accord 2015 and to the commitments agreed in 2018 at the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) which amongst other things recognise the need to limit by 2030 temperature rises to between 1.5° C and 2° C above the internationally recognised preindustrial baseline. As a consequence the UK has set targets into law under the Climate Change Act 2008;*
- 3. individuals cannot be expected to make the required changes on their own. Nations and society need to change their sources of energy, laws, taxation policies and infrastructure to make low carbon living easier and the new norm; and*
- 4. a ‘Climate Emergency’ has been declared and we all have a part to play”.*

“The Town Council therefore resolves to produce a Climate Change and Environmental Strategy by November 2021 to:

- 1. Pledge to make the activities of Braunstone Town Council carbon neutral and embed climate and environmental awareness in all our decision making;*
- 2. Promote and encourage awareness and action on climate change, environmental protection and recycling by local residents, businesses and community organisations;*
- 3. Put climate change at the heart of our procurement policies including moving to the use of renewable energy sources for its activities and encourage its customers and suppliers to do likewise; and*
- 4. Protect and enhance the town’s Green spaces, promote and encourage tree planting, and seek to increase and enrich biodiversity”.*

7. Braunstone Town Heritage Warden's Report 2020/2021

The Heritage Warden's Report for 2020/2021 was circulated with the agenda:

"The activities of the Heritage Warden have been almost nonexistent due to the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic".

"The proposed development of the farmyard of Manor Farm on Braunstone Lane (Main Street) with affordable dwellings has cause for concern over the protection of the setting of the Grade II listed Manor Farm. This site is in the core of the villages and although the current building was first recorded in the 1660's the site would have been occupied with earlier buildings which date to the 12/13 century. Their foundations should still exist under the farmyard. Sadly from a heritage point of view, central government have "updated" the planning regulations which are now similar to those of the 1960's! A shining example of the 1960's planning can be seen by the modern brick house, butting right up to the original timber framed village shop, also a Grade II listed building".

"Sadly my request to Blaby DC to have the Main Street area included as a conservation area has not been taken up despite Leicester City Council's recent re-appraisal of their side of Main Street's conservation area created in the 1970's. It seem quite ridiculous where one side of the Main Street has the protection of a conservation order, yet all the oldest timber framed buildings opposite their conservation area, are not in any sort of conservation order apart from their Grade II listing status".

"The Braunstone Heritage Archive Group continue to help with the development of our library services albeit in abeyance with Covid19. Hopefully as restrictions are lifted we can play a more active role".

"The research project to discover the location of the early 13 century Manor House in the Church Field is still on hold waiting for a geophysical survey and funding prior to the main community "dig" over subsequent years".

"Our heritage involvement with the Lubbesthorpe development is a "Watching Brief" as Lubbesthorpe has now its own Parish Council which presumably can now nominate their own Heritage Warden".

"During the lockdown a few members of BHAG and one in particular, Jack Haselgrove, has published a book on the "Humble2 Residents of Braunstone based on research of over 200 copies of wills and inventories held in the Records Office. They have illustrated how "humble" peasant stock managed to improve their lot and leave "substantial" goods and cash for their descendants. It appears the most "treasured" item was the bed! Copies are available from Jack or myself, cost £8".

"Our heritage of Flora and Fauna: Like all of us, besides Covid19, we have been affected by climate change. Seasonal weather is no longer seasonal and plants and animals are battling to come to terms with the changes. We have not seen many fruits in our community orchard last year and it appears that any fruit which matured was very quickly picked within a day! Vandalism has also been too frequent with the pond the central figure, all sorts of items have been thrown in. It might be time

for an effective management plan for the three parts of the community orchard area of Franklin Park, one for the orchard area proper, one for the wild flower meadow and one for the pond. I understand that groundsman resources are stretched but based on previous responses for help with pruning of the orchard fruit trees, I am sure we could get together a good support group not only to help with pruning twice a year but also to rake away the meadow cuttings in the autumn”.

“I would like to thank the support of the members of BHAG and of course to the Civic Centre Staff who appear to be changing over the past 12 months”.

8. Termination of Meeting

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

Signed:

Dated: