

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
**HELD IN THE CORN EXCHANGE, ST IVES**  
**On Wednesday 15 April 2015**

**Present:** Town Mayor, Councillor B C Luter (in the Chair)  
Town Clerk (Alison Melnyczuk)

**In Attendance:** 8 Members of St Ives Town Council  
Representatives of 8 local community groups  
Approximately 38 Members of the Public  
Committee Clerk (Sue Rawlinson)

**1.0 Welcome and Introduction**

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The format of the Meeting had been changed from previous years and representatives of eight local organisations would be making presentations about their work and events. The Town Mayor invited attendees to provide feedback on whether they preferred this new style Meeting.

**2.0 Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 16 April 2014 were accepted as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

**3.0 Mayor's Address**

The Town Mayor provided a brief report on Town Council activities throughout the past year:

**Local Plan**

The Council had now submitted its substantial comments on the Local Plan, based on comments received from residents at Planning Committees and the Public Meeting held in March. Grave concerns had been expressed at the impact the proposed development of 4,500 houses at RAF Wyton would have on infrastructure and traffic.

The Council had rejected the proposal for housing development on the Football field site in Westwood Road as that area simply could not handle the increased traffic which would inevitably result.

**Travel and Transport**

Discussions on the A14 continue. The Council had requested a parking survey on the Guided Bus route prior to, and following, the implementation of parking charges at the site. Speedwatch had been invited back to conduct their traffic surveys.

New bus shelters were planned, especially at the exposed top of Houghton Hill and steps had been taken to improve the dual safety of cyclists and pedestrians on the Thicket Path and across All Saints' Churchyard.

## **Hinchingbrooke Hospital**

Naturally, the Council has given its full support to the preservation of Hinchingbrooke Hospital including its A&E and Maternity facilities.

## **Council-owned properties**

Quite a lot of work has been carried out on the Town Hall following a comprehensive Condition Survey in 2013 and there is still more to be done internally.

The Council owns the Corn Exchange, Burleigh Hill Community Centre, the Norris Museum, Warner's Park Pavilion and a privately rented property in The Broadway, York House.

There are plans for a re-fit of the Pavilion to improve its amenity and proposals are currently being put together for a new Grounds Maintenance Depot at the Hill Rise Allotments site. The Council decided that the Octagon would be totally unsuitable for that purpose.

Fund-raising for expansion of the Norris Museum is going well but please do make a donation to the fund if you possibly can.

## **Staff Changes**

Several members of staff have left the Council within the past year and thanks are due to Helen Giles (former Norris Curator) and Ann Enticknap and John Morris (former Deputy Town Clerks) for their contribution to the work of the Town Council.

## **Street Furniture/Lighting/Play Parks**

You will certainly be aware of the new street lighting but the heritage lights still have to be worked on together with the lights on the town bridge. The two floodlights currently there are temporary.

It is hoped that residents like the new sign on The Quay depicting the Old Riverport of St Ives. Tourists coming in from Cambridge on the guided bus have been impressed with the area as a heritage site of considerable interest.

The four new WWI benches are now in place and look very appropriate with their military design and Flanders poppies. Their placement was organised by our Amenities Committee. The Committee has also arranged for new play equipment in five of our eight play parks.

## **Council Tax**

The Council had to increase its portion of the tax this year as we did not receive the Rate Revenue Support Grant from the District Council. Had we received the same level of funding as two years ago our tax this year would have equated to minus 4 percent.

## **Events**

Finally, some information about forthcoming events. 8 May is the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day and there will be a Service at the Cross of Sacrifice at 3.00 pm which will include a two minute Silence.

On 13 May, a new Town Mayor will be elected and I shall stand down from my post. The Mayor of our twin town in Stadtallendorf, Germany will be attending the Mayor Making ceremony on that evening and we look forward to showing him around the town – possibly even taking him punting in Cambridge to meet the ASBO swans!

I will now hand over to the groups making presentations this evening, beginning with St Ives Carnival and Music Festival Committee.

#### **4.0 Presentations from Local Groups**

##### ***Carnival and Music Festival Committee – Cllr David Hodge (Chairman)***

This years' Carnival would be held on Saturday 11 July and would follow the usual format - a Parade to Hill Rise Park where various activities would take place until 7.00 pm.

The Music Festival on Sunday 12 July would begin at 2.00 pm and continue until 9.00 pm.

If any charities or groups would like a stall they should contact him to arrange. The Carnival was a very popular event and had approximately 5,000 visitors on each day last year.

Any volunteer help which could be offered for either or both days would be very greatly appreciated.

##### ***St Ives In Bloom – Marney Hall (Chair)***

Anglia In Bloom has changed its ethos from previous years. Instead of the competition being just about floral displays it now looked at environmental, social and ecological aspects of the towns entering.

They are particularly keen to observe involvement within the community, with schools, residents, allotment holders and garden clubs.

Last year St Ives was only 2-3 marks short of a Gold Award. This year's Committee has worked very hard to make up those few marks. They plan to paint more benches in the town centre.

The biggest project they have undertaken this year is the clearing and replanting of the large two semi circular beds at the Park and Ride site. Mick George kindly sponsored plants and topsoil for the new beds which are drought tolerant.

There had also been lots of work on the cemeteries which were now included within the judging criteria. There are proposals to make the closed cemeteries more wildlife and wildflower friendly which are being discussed with the Town Council at the present time.

The In Bloom group are currently seeking consent to put hanging baskets in the bus station to provide a brighter greeting to the town's visitors. The tubs which the group bought for around the War Memorial will be planted and in place in time for VE Day.

Anyone wishing to help In Bloom with its projects should contact her and would be made very welcome.

### ***Festival Events St Ives FESSt – Gilly Jackson (Chair)***

FESSt was a not for profit voluntary group now in its seventh year of operation. It had organised over 100 events for the town during that period, such as the Riverside Gala, SportsFESSt, the Regatta, Flashmob, StreetFESSt, DanceFESSt and various concerts in and around the town.

Its largest event, Killer Queen, had been held at the Football ground. The Illuminated Boat Parade would now be held on alternative years. The Santa Grotto in the Corn Exchange had proved popular with parents and children and FESSt was pleased that they were able to offer the attraction free of charge.

During the forthcoming year, planned events were:

- Concert by Chamber Orchestra of St Ives on 6 June 7.30 pm at the Free Church
- Picnic in the Park 1.00 pm until 7.00 pm in Warner's Park which will feature music, a beer tent and free children's activities
- Music on the Waits from 5 July through to 23 August, free concerts with new bands this year 2.30 pm until 4.00 pm. Refreshments available at Methodist Church.
- ArtsFESSt in November and December, there were still a few spaces available for exhibitors
- 28 November, Santa arriving by boat to take up residence in his Corn Exchange Grotto
- 29 November, free Christmas Concert outside the Corn Exchange
- 3 September 2016 would be the date for the next Illuminated Boat Parade

Mrs Jackson thanked the many volunteers and sponsors for their support with FESSt events and looked forward to welcoming people to this year's events.

### ***Save The Octagon – Lissie Wright (Chair)***

At the last Town Meeting discussions were underway about the future of The Octagon.

It had been found that people either knew the building very well or not at all. The Octagon was originally the cattle auction room and was one of the few remaining buildings from the days of the cattle markets in St Ives. The original ring of the sales floor was still visible on the ground.

The Group had been formed following a Licensing Application made to the District Council for use of The Octagon as a bar/restaurant. That application and the associated planning application had now been withdrawn. The Save the Octagon Group would like to see the building restored to use as a community asset. They were currently fund-raising for its restoration and were negotiating to obtain either a long lease or freehold from its owners HDC.

The Group had looked at how similar spaces were put to use in other towns and some of the possible uses being considered were:

- Indoor market
- Art/pottery studios
- Plant market
- Craft and other fairs

Use of a refurbished Octagon would be complimentary to other venues in the town and not competitive. The Group was keen to forge firm links with the Norris Museum and other community groups in the town.

If it were possible to obtain lease/freehold of the building and refurbish it into a usable state it would contribute well to the vibrancy of the town centre.

### ***St Ives Town Team – John Souter (Chairman)***

The Town Team had been formed out of the Town Plan and the bid for Mary Portas monies. The latter had been successful and St Ives had received £10,000 which the Council matched.

The Team, which comprises volunteers with a strong interest in community, aims to carry out tasks the Town Council cannot do. It has focussed attention on promoting the town and has placed a large display in the Cambridge Tourist Information office.

Mr Souter than showed a video which featured views of the Old Riverport.

An Old Riverport Discovery Day was currently being planned for 25 July. Events would be held at the Corn Exchange and on Holt Island. Further information would be put onto the website in due course [www.theoldriverportstives.co.uk](http://www.theoldriverportstives.co.uk)

### ***Civic Society of St Ives – Peter Baker (Chairman)***

The Society had 450 members from St Ives and the surrounding villages. It was a registered charity and held monthly talks from September to May. Its next talk was 'In and Out of the Workhouse', that coming Friday in the Free Church.

The Society was formed 50 years ago to fight proposals to route the St Ives bypass down Ramsey Road and across The Waits and Holt Island. The group works closely with the Town Council.

Funds are retained sufficient to mount a legal challenge, should circumstances dictate, to fight proposals considered to the detriment of the town.

The Society's legacy statement was that St Ives remain instantly recognisable from 100 or so years ago and, whilst accepting inevitable change, that the character of the town be kept safe for future generations.

The Society, in association with the Town Council, had placed heritage plaques on prominent buildings around the town. Ten had been placed to date but with over 200 possible sites worthy of note it wasn't possible to cover all of them.

St Ives Archaeological Society was currently trying to track down the location of the Old Priory and was working closely with the Society on this.

One major achievement had been the restoration of the War Memorial. Thanks to the generosity of residents, sufficient money was collected together for the names on the monument to be 'repointed'. The monument is now listed, securing its position in the very centre of the town. The next project will be to clean the memorial and advice from the War Memorials Trust is being sought on this.

Books of Remembrance and Honour commissioned by the Society were now held in the Museum for people to enter their family wartime details into. Identical books were in All Saints Parish Church.

The Society was also engaged in seeking to retain the town centre heritage lighting and was working with the County Council and Balfour Beatty towards this aim.

National Heritage Open Days this year would be between 10 to 13 September. St Ives' events would start on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Details of which buildings would be open to the public would be published on the Civic Society's website.

### ***University of the Third Age (U3A) – Peter Baker (Chairman)***

U3A St Ives had been formed less than four years ago and already had 500 members. No academic degrees were awarded and members learned from each other and had a lot of fun in the process.

The Group held monthly open meetings with speakers and had over 50 lively activity groups with new ones being created all the time full details of which could be found on the website.

Some examples of the new groups were:

- Bus Pass Safari Group which travelled to lots of different places via bus, of course
- Country Walking
- Sketchbook Art
- Digital Photography

Many members joined to revisit their previous interests after many years of not engaging in them and finding renewed enjoyment in doing so. The skills being learned or re-learned were almost secondary to the enjoyment of the chosen subjects.

The Needlework Group had worked with the Norris Museum on their 'Make Do and Mend' project and examples of its work were currently on display there.

There were also frequent trips to places of interest, theatres etc. which all Members were welcome to attend.

### ***Friends of Holt Island – Ian Jackson (Chairman)***

A display showing many aspects of the town centre nature reserve had been placed at the rear of the room to illustrate the work of the Group.

Most people knew of Holt Island (once referred to as the 'best kept secret in St Ives'). The Group was working hard to change that perception.

The Island was owned by the District Council and the Friends was formed to assist them in promotion and management of the Island and to improve the visitor experience.

The Island comprises 3 acres of woodland which floods. The conditions are ideal for a special mix of flora suited to marshy conditions.

The island was once privately owned and used by three generations of the same family for the cultivation of osiers for basket making. Ownership passed to the District Council following local government reorganisation. Originally named Ingle Holt, the island was re-named as Holt Island.

Holt Island attracts a lot of wildlife – Reed Warblers nest at the southern end each year; the island has a resident fox, sometimes with cubs and muntjac deer and a mink have all been observed there. Insect life is abundant, especially dragonflies.

The Friends Group formed in 2007 and its first project was the replacement of the rotting boardwalk for which the District Council provided materials and the work was done by the Group itself. The project was completed in 2011.

The Group has improved the visitor experience by providing information boards, picnic tables, bicycle stands and benches on the nearby Thicket Path.

A comprehensive Education Pack has been compiled for schools which contains many projects which can be carried out on the island.

There are bird feeding stations, bird and bat boxes, also some hives which produce Holt Island Honey. The Adopt-a-Box scheme had been very successful with almost all of the available boxes having been adopted already.

The Friends Group works closely with the Norris Museum to hold a Family Fun Day each Spring.

The Island has twice won the Anglia In Bloom biodiversity award and a Green Hearts award for best nature reserve initiative.

Access to the Island is available between Easter and September on weekends and Bank Holidays. The key can be borrowed outside of those times from the Norris Museum or One Leisure. A newsletter 'The Islander' is published twice a year.

The Town Mayor thanked all those who had made presentations and asked if there were any questions on the presentations or general matters.

## **5.0 Questions and Answers**

### ***Delays near Wyton***

Concern was expressed about traffic tailbacks on the Wyton Road near to Hartford Marina and how any new development at the RAF Wyton site would only make this much worse.

The Town Mayor stated that the Town Council had responded to the Local Plan consultation with equal concern about such traffic matters. The next element of the consultation would be available in June and hopefully more information would be available at that time.

### ***Public Toilets***

Last year the Amenities Committee report referred to replacing floors and drains in the toilets. The gents toilet near to the bus station was frequently awash. What was the Council doing to address this problem?

The Town Clerk responded that a new gulley had been placed in the floor of the gents toilet but there were constant problems created by users blocking it up. The situation was monitored constantly. A new cleaning company had recently been appointed and discussions were underway on possibly increasing the number of cleaning visits per day.

### ***Pavement, East Street***

Compliments for 'The Bridge' magazine were received. There was some concern about the poor quality of the pavement opposite the Welcome Chinese Restaurant in East Street which was difficult to walk along.

The Town Clerk agreed to raise the matter with the County Council Highways Section.

### ***Oliver Road raised crossing***

Following resurfacing works the County Council had not reinstated the level of the raised crossing in Oliver Road to its previous height. As a result vehicles were able to drive much faster along that stretch of road.

The Town Clerk agreed to raise this matter with County Council Highways.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending the Meeting.

Meeting closed at 9.30 pm.