

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD IN THE CORN EXCHANGE, ST IVES
On Wednesday 2 March 2016**

Present: Town Mayor, Councillor I N Jackson (in the Chair)
Town Clerk (Alison Melnychuk)

In Attendance: 9 Members of St Ives Town Council
Representatives of 3 local community groups
Approximately 23 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 would be a repeat of the previous years'. The Town Mayor would provide an overview of the work of the Town Council during the preceding year and then presentations would be given by some of the town's community groups.

2.0 Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 15 April 2015 were accepted as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

3.0 Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor aided by the Chairmen of the Council's Standing Committees, provided a brief report on Town Council activities throughout the past year:

Property Committee (Chairman - Cllr P M Pope)

The Committee meets quarterly. It monitors all Council-owned properties and ensures that regular safety checks are carried out as well as any necessary remedial works. The Town Hall is currently undergoing external repainting which is the reason for the scaffolding on Market Hill. There are plans to renovate Warner's Park pavilion and grants are being sought for this. Contractors were recently appointed to provide Display Energy Certificates for the Corn Exchange and Burleigh Hill community centre.

Norris Museum Trust (Chairman – Cllr M M Collier)

The Norris Museum had recently been changed into a Trust and it was no longer managed by a Committee of the Council although the Council continued to provide financial support to the Museum.

The recently acquired Heritage Lottery Fund grant would enable the Museum to enter a new phase and provide much improved facilities. The Museum would be closed until Spring 2017 although several mobile exhibitions were planned across the county.

The Town Mayor expressed his appreciation to the director and staff, together with Friends of the Museum and many volunteer helpers for their hard work in assisting the temporary removal of exhibits to the Town Hall. He also welcomed the newly appointed

Outreach Officer.

Promotion and Publicity Committee (Chairman – Cllr D Rowe)

The Council's newest Committee with some great new projects on the way. The new website was up and running as part of the Old Riverport hub. The Committee was looking at new ways of marketing St Ives as the destination of choice using social media, the Bridge and the new Town Guide.

The Councillor surgeries held over the past year had proven a great success and new banners promoting them were on order.

The Welcome Packs were proving popular with new residents and visitors alike and a guide to businesses in the town was to be published shortly.

A good relationship had been established with Cambridge Tourist Information centre and the Town Team hoped to gain more exposure for the town utilising the busway in collaboration with Stagecoach.

Amenities Committee (Chairman – Cllr P Smith)

The Committee manages eight play areas, Warner's Park and Slepe Hall field, allotments, cemeteries and the town centre public toilets.

The Burleigh Hill play area had recently been upgraded with a new tarmac path and a programme of maintenance was in place to reduce the need for expensive replacement parts for play equipment.

New WWI and WWII benches had been installed in several areas around the town.

Security at the allotments site had been of concern in the past year and the Council was working with allotment holders to find a solution. To apply for an allotment contact the Town Hall. There was currently a short waiting list only.

Improving the smell at the bus station toilets was an ongoing project and the Committee was exploring further options with this in mind.

Planning Committee (Chairman – Cllr N Dibben)

The Committee meets every two weeks and makes recommendations to the District Council's Planners, although the final decision rests with HDC.

The Wetherspoon application had now been approved and account had been taken of the conditions recommended by the Planning Committee.

Matters ongoing were the A14 and new housing at RAF Wyton, together with the new Local Plan when received.

Paper plans would no longer be supplied to the Council and a laptop and projector had been purchased to display plans at meetings.

Personnel Committee (Chairman – Cllr T Drye)

The new staff performance framework was now in place and providing true costs of service delivery.

Independent advice was being sought in light of the new regulations regarding pensions.

Highlights of Last Year

- The Town Mayor congratulated the Town Team on the Old Riverport initiative which was proving very popular.
- The Council had been very proud to be the recipient of the Farmers Market of the Year Award 2015.
- The Council's new strategic five year plan was in place.
- The Precept had been kept as low as possible with an increase representing less than 1% this year.
- The Council had no intention of abandoning the Christmas Lights but wished to enhance them, the only difference to previous years being a different use of the budget and plans to improve decorations in more areas of the town centre.

The Town Mayor paid tribute to the many volunteer groups in St Ives and the incredible work they did to improve the lives of residents.

Three groups were in attendance this evening and he invited them to address the meeting with information about what they did.

Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre (Representative – Mrs Ann Bunting)

Mrs Bunting stated that the Centre's key focus was on supporting volunteers. They had four offices in Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots and promoted volunteering opportunities online.

Amongst the many facilities the Centre provided were organising the Christmas Day Lunch held at the Free Church each year and managing the Volunteer Car Scheme. The Centre helped people to find work and improve their skills. Good training was provided.

Volunteer drivers had completed 63,000 miles in total and the Centre had 2,376 users in St Ives and surrounding villages.

The group had received cuts to its funding from various sources. The District Council had kept its funding at the same level which was greatly appreciated but with increases in expenses, costs were rising above inflation and the funds did not go as far as in previous years.

The group had reorganised as far as possible but needed to generate further income.

There was now a Volunteer Centre charity shop which ran a 50:50 scheme in that if something worth more than £5 second hand value was donated, 50% of the price achieved would be paid back to the donor. The shop also accepted surplus food and vegetables which would be redistributed.

Anyone seeking further information about the Centre should contact Natalie in the St Ives office in the Free Church.

The Town Mayor thanked Mrs Bunting for her presentation and congratulated the Centre on its hard work for the community.

Memory Lane Singing Café (Representatives – George Smerdon, Jen and Samantha)

The Singing Café began out of concern at the lack of facilities for people with dementia and their carers.

The group meets on the second Monday of each month at the Crossways Centre at 10 am.

Encouraging singing makes a huge difference to those attending and brings back memories. Volunteer helpers are vitally important and new people are always welcomed. The group was grateful to the Volunteer Centre which provided a lot of valuable information to them when they first started.

The Town Mayor stated that the Singing Café was one of his chosen charities and he urged people to go along and join in because as well as highly therapeutic to dementia sufferers and their carers, it was also tremendous fun.

He thanked the group for their presentation.

Dementia Café (Representative – Pauline Leakey)

Ms Leakey apologised that Wendy Dunn, the support manager who had set up the Café had been unable to attend that evening.

The Café was set up in 1979 by two volunteers who found there was no support for them while caring for members of their families. The aim of the group was to share information and offer support. Back then, much less was known about dementia and there was a certain stigma attached to the illness.

2,200 people now worked for Dementia Cafes, with 7,500 volunteers and 3,000 services across England, Wales and Ireland.

They faced huge challenges. An estimated 850,000 people were living with dementia and the numbers were only likely to increase.

The Café in St Ives had been running for one year and meetings were held at the Free Church on the third Tuesday of each month between 10 am and noon.

The group provided advice on many issues affecting sufferers and their carers and could call on lots of professional advice from many sources.

The Town Mayor stated that he wished St Ives to become a Dementia Friendly community and believed a lot could be done to help groups such as this.

He thanked Ms Leakey for her presentation.

4.0 Any other business

Issues raised by those present:

How was the Corn Exchange doing?

The Corn Exchange was run by a Community Interest Company. In the last two years the venue has been run more or less at break even and by the end of this financial year was expected to have a modest surplus which would be reinvested in facilities and supporting the community groups who used the building.

Over 100 different groups used the building in the first six months of the current financial year. A large volunteer body supported the venue which, it was fair to say, was in good health.

Could meetings be suspended prior to discussion on specific items so that points made in public participation could be reiterated prior to discussion of those items?

The Town Clerk responded that the matter of public participation at meetings was a decision which Council would need to make. The suggestion would be placed on the agenda for discuss at a future Council meeting following the elections.

Could anything be done to improve the poor state of bus shelters in St Ives.

The Town Clerk responded that the only shelter in the town which was the responsibility of the Town Council was the one outside the Shell garage on Houghton Road. The District and County Councils were responsible for bus shelters.

Does the Volunteer Centre consider that there are any services which will be at risk of not continuing due to lack of funding?

Mrs Bunting replied that they had looked across the board at which services might possibly be stopped. If the group did not receive the HDC grant they would be in serious trouble and possibly face the closure of an office.

They had one year's grace with the current funding and it was hoped the shop would become better established and generate more income. The group continued to look at ways in which to raise funds and improve efficiency year on year.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending. The Meeting closed at 8.30 pm.