

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting**held at the Flexi Rooms, The Corn Exchange, St Ives on Wednesday 1 March 2017****Present:**

Chairman: Cllr Mrs D Townsend, Town Mayor
 10 Members of St Ives Town Council
 14 Residents of St Ives
 A Witherick, Town Clerk

In attendance: 4 Representatives from outside the town

001.00 Welcome and Introduction from the Town Mayor.

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

002.00 To agree the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 2 March 2016 (attached).

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 2 March 2016 were accepted as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

003.00 Presentations

A series of presentations were given:

003.01 Local Authority Gold Award

Cllr Henry Clark, Chairman of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC) introduced the scheme and how it had three levels, with Gold being the highest awarded through a peer assessment process. He explained how this showed that the council helps to act as an example of best practice to others in the sector as well as an innovator.

Details of the scheme can be found at:

<http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/improvement-and-development/local-council-award-scheme>

The award was presented to St Ives Town Mayor Cllr Mrs D Townsend and the past Town Clerk Alison Benfield by Cllr Henry Clark on behalf of NALC, the National Association of Local Councils.

003.02 Norris Museum

A presentation was given on "Huntingdonshire's Heritage The Norris Museum redevelopment project".

The Museum Director explained how the project will reinvigorate The Norris Museum and all the services it provides, creating an accessible and fascinating environment where the local community and visitors to Huntingdonshire can engage with and enjoy the rich heritage of this area.

This included a photographic presentation behind the scenes of the activity at the site explaining how the museum was being changed to both be in-keeping with it's history but also to take advantage of the opportunity to improve the facilities which would be on offer.

Sarah Russell, Museum Director

003.03 Smart Energy Grid

Representatives of the County Council gave a presentation on the Smart Energy Grid which is being designed for the St Ives Park & Ride location.

They are currently looking at potential buyers for the energy which will be generated at the Park & Ride and options include selling renewable energy to local businesses.

As a carpark the site has roughly 50% occupancy, this includes people looking for easy parking with people heading in both directions to work and visit both Cambridge and St

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Ives. The bus route itself is also used by cyclists. The aim though is to maximise the use of the site.

The mini-grid that they are looking at has a substantial amount of solar PV over the car parking spaces themselves as this has a minimal impact on the number of spaces. This will include battery storage at the site so that it can be used overnight as well. It already powers everything at the site including lighting and parking meters to the extent that they are looking at whether they take the entire site “off-grid” as well as supporting the infrastructure to power Electrical Vehicles.

The increased reliability and range of electrical vehicles is now reaching the point where it's more viable. With the lighting there is also a shift towards LED lighting which will allow them to reduce glare and make it more energy efficient in the process. The final stage is then looking at who the energy will be sold on to, most likely to a wholesaler. As such proposals will start to appear on planning portals soon.

They've already taken into consideration concerns raised by St Ives Town Council such as the impact on A1096/Harrison Way and so the County Council are seeking to only move vehicles involved in works when it will cause minimal disruption.

The security on site includes CCTV

The major structural work and ground investigations are being undertaken at the moment. 1MW of solarPV would power 200 homes in a year is being installed, or to put another way 900,000 miles worth of travel by car.

Q: Why was St Ives chosen?

Cambridgeshire County Council Energy Investment unit investigated seven different sites and felt that this was perfect to act as a demonstrator.

For maximum revenue the idea is to sell to a single major client as a Power Provider. This is because the cost of infrastructure would otherwise be too high and Cambridgeshire County Council would then become a supplier.

European Union Funding is being sought and there's one more stage to go to secure it, however the signs are positive and the schedule is the same as set out in The Bridge Magazine February 2017. It's just fine tuning the individual propositions to the “end clients” who might purchase the power.

Q: There's disappointment that the bio-bus was rolled back on.

The unit within Cambridgeshire County Council are looking at this themselves with a decision being made on the provider in 6-8 months and looking at how they can support different options. This might include electric buses.

Q: What about Solar panels over road surfaces?

At the moment Cambridgeshire County Council are looking to make the changes with minimal disruption to users. Unfortunately the planning etc means that the layout and design specification has made it difficult. If it's successful then it could be looked at again. The technology is developing and may lead to future possibilities including panels which generate power as they're driven over, but at the moment they are too expensive.

004.00

Mayors Address

It's been a busy 12 months since the last Annual town meeting. Town Council elections were held last May, resulting in seven new members joining the Council to compliment the 10 re-elected members. I welcome our new councillors, along with their enthusiasm to make St. Ives a better place for everyone.

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Last August, the Town Council heard first-hand from the Leader and MD of HDC, details of the devolution proposal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Town Council, in principle, supports devolution, but did question the need for the title of Mayor for the new leader of the CA and whether the structure supporting the new Mayor would be able to deliver what is required to ensure Cambridgeshire receives the financial support it requires. The Election of the new Mayor will take place this May.

In light of devolution, it has been indicated that St. Ives will have a Master Plan to capture a series of actions and interventions in the short, medium and long term, to support the process and set the spatial, infrastructure, housing, public safety, social and health strategies for the area. The leader of HDC has informed me that he wishes to meet the Town Council in the summer, with a view to beginning the consultation with all stakeholders in earnest towards the end of this year. Later on, Cllr. Nick Dibben, will give you the latest up-date on the status of the Local Plan. It is imperative that as a community we get our views heard. Both the Local and Master plan will play a pivotal role in the future of St. Ives and so we must be ready to take on the challenges facing our town, but ensure our voices are not lost or ignored.

The town council responded to the Local Government Boundary Commission on two electoral boundary reviews – one for Cambridgeshire and one for Huntingdonshire. The boundary commission proposed a change to the parish electoral arrangement for St. Ives, with the introduction of a fourth ward known as “Beech” located in the area of Beech Drive and Oak Tree Close and to be represented by one councillor of this council. The town council did object to the proposal of a fourth ward on the grounds that it does not reflect the democratic representation of the town in a positive manner, but will only increase elections costs for an additional ward and polling station. Unfortunately, our voice was not heard and the boundary commission have introduced this new ward from 2018.

Also, as a result of the District Council’s decision to move their elections to whole Council elections from May next year, the town council election cycle will no longer coincide with the District Council. Last week, HDC decided that all parish and town councils elections will fall into the same election cycle as the District Council, resulting in SITC elections now being held in 2018, rather than the anticipated 2020. The Town Council did object to this proposal.

The Council welcomed a presentation from Healthwatch Cambridgeshire regarding the proposed merger of Hinchingsbrooke hospital with Peterborough and Stamford Hospital and our desire to keep hospital services in the local area. Since that presentation, the merger has been formalised and the new Trust will come into operation on the 1st April. The new Trust will be called the North West Anglia Foundation Trust.

We are pleased that the Council has been able to continue to support a wide range of local groups and organisations. Due to the continuing current climate, it has become noticeably difficult for voluntary organisations to find financial support. HVC, who gave a presentation last year at this meeting, has unfortunately, lost its funding from both CCC and as of 1st April, HDC. I’m not sure at this stage the impact this will have on our volunteer centre in St. Ives, but as a Trustee, I know we will try and keep as many services available to our community, such as the volunteer drivers scheme who help the elderly and vulnerable to visit their GP, the hospital, their loved ones in care homes and the visit to the local shops. The Volunteer Centre provides invaluable support to so many in our town.

The Town Council has agreed to increase its portion of the council tax from this April by 1.43%. This equates to an increase of £1.71 for the year on a Band D property in St. Ives. The Town Council has produced a treasury management policy to ensure that town council funds are invested to ensure a good return, but remain secure.

Street-lighting - this time last year, the Town Council objected strongly to the County Council's proposed reduction in street-lighting between the hours of 2am to 6am. Only a small number of parish and town councils in Cambridgeshire took up the offer to pay the County Council to keep the street lighting on during this period. We were not one of them. The Town Council continued to work closely with our County Cllrs informing them of the continued problems being experienced by our residents, so we were delighted to hear late last year that the County Council decided to rescind on their decision with immediate effect.

In the continuing long saga between the County Council and Balfour Beatty on who was going to fund the replacement heritage lights in our town centre, this came to a final conclusion, when funding was finally agreed on a like for like replacement. I can only thank the perseverance of the Civic Society in fighting St. Ives's corner on this matter, which could have resulted in us losing an important part of our town's character.

We welcomed the Mayor and Mayoress of Stadtallendorf to St. Ives last summer along with thousands of bars of Hanuta chocolate for the Town Team's Merry Wives Play. Such was the influx of chocolate from Ferrero, they were also distributed to children attending Holly Ward at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital and the primary schools in St. Ives with much excitement. An invitation has been sent to the Burgermeister to visit St. Ives this year to participate in October's Michaelmas Fair.

I cannot finish my report without mentioning the St. Ives In Bloom team for their hard work over a number of years and finally receiving a well deserved Gold award – congratulations. That concludes my report and I will now invite the Chairmen of each committee to present their own reports.

Cllr Mrs Debbie Townsend, Town Mayor

004.01 Amenities Committee

The Amenities committee is the great workhorse of the Town Council, taking direct care of the services and facilities that it provides to the people of St Ives. With responsibilities ranging from public spaces and parks, to cemeteries and allotments, the actions of this committee are more immediately visible to the public eye than some of the others. Since the Council engaged in its new Strategic Plan, the way that the costs for these facilities have been calculated has shown a greater accuracy in what is being spent in various areas, due to the allocation of administrative overheads that contribute to it. Taking these into account, the past year has been focussed on making improvements, in order to reduce their cost to the public purse – while simultaneously ensuring that these essential services are not reduced in any way. Following audits of our various areas of responsibilities, new methods are being introduced, such as paperless billing, to make the administration of these facilities much more efficient.

But reducing costs is not the only aim of this Council, and so the committee has also spent money to help make improvements within the town. The introduction of new benches and bus shelters, new methods of cleaning to help attempt to tackle the odour issues of the public toilets, and a new memorial in Westwood Road Cemetery to remember the people of the St Ives Workhouse, whose graves are sadly unmarked, are just a sample of the ways that we are trying to spend our money wisely to the benefit of all.

This town is a gem to live and work in, and we look forward, as a committee, to helping it to improve even more over the next year.

Cllr Dan Rowe, Chairman Amenities Committee

004.02 Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee deals with a lot of the background things which are sensitive but we're always conscious of how important it is that we remain a good employer. This is particularly the case in a period where after many years of stability, it has been a year of change.

Changes in staff has included the Town Clerk, Alison Benfield who was here for the Local Council Gold Award presentation was involved in many great changes during her time including the Corn Exchange which we are currently sat in.

The new Town Clerk, Allan Siao Ming Witherick, has hit the ground running.

As such I would like to record a huge thank you to all of the staff who keep the place going every day and am pleased to hear that the performance framework should be helping the Amenities Committee and the Town Council as a whole to identify the real cost of services.

Cllr Tim Drye, Chairman Personnel Committee

004.03 Planning Committee

The Planning Committee meets every two weeks. Our main role is to consider planning applications and provide comments to Huntingdonshire District Council(HDC) who make the final decision. We sometimes disagree. For major applications we have the opportunity to speak at HDC's own planning committee called the Development Management Panel. The Committee also considers various strategy documents relating to planning and transport issued by HDC and Cambridgeshire County Council. I want to highlight some of the key issues that the committee has covered in the last year:

A revised planning application for Morrison's supermarket was submitted last year, which included a smaller store but also included a separate large non-food retail unit. We raised concerns that the extra shop had not followed the guidance set out in national planning policy. If you are not aware HDC approved the application including a condition suggested by the Town Council that the retail units cannot be sub-divided last week.

On the other side of the road, an application has been submitted for a drive thru Mc Donald's and other food stores. Like many applications, this one has divided opinion with views for and against the scheme. Supporters of the scheme noted new job opportunities and providing a place for local workers on the industrial estate to go to. Local residents raised concerns about the noise, litter, traffic and possible food smells. Having considered the details provided by the applicant, the conclusion was that these concerns had already been included or could be provided with suitable planning conditions and the committee narrowly supported the application 4 to 3. HDC have yet to formally decide on this scheme. Looking back and what I have said at previous Annual Town Meetings, for the past few years I have noted that the next version of HDC's Local Plan to 2036 is due out soon. This year is no exception. The document has to be issued in 2017 or the Government will intervene, and nobody wants that.

We recently had an update by the developers regarding the RAF Wyton proposal. The transport assessment is being reviewed and the phased delivery of infrastructure being the key issue. This week a letter has been received from HDC stating that the infrastructure needed to support this development could not be delivered in a timely way so the scheme would be excluded from the Local Plan until these issues had been resolved.

There is now pressure to select other sites for new housing in the area. Possible sites around St Ives include; building on the lower part of the old golf course on land identified

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for green space. Other Two sites that have been identified are north of Marley Road adjacent to the David Smith factory and on Gifford's Farm to the east of St Ives. Your thoughts on these would be most welcome and our next meeting on 8th March will include a short presentation on the Gifford's Farm proposals.

Like all our meetings, there are opportunities for members of the public to address the committee giving us your views on planning applications. These have provided us with valuable information to help us make our decisions and I would like to thank you for this input.

Cllr Nick Dibben, Chairman Planning Committee

004.04 Promotion & Publicity Committee

The Promotion and Publicity Committee has been a busy one for the last year, continuing on its excellent work in promoting the town and the people who help to make it the place we see today. Its responsibilities are numerous, including the production of The Bridge Magazine and the annual Town Guide, selection, design and printing of various leaflets about the town and holding valuable surgeries with the public, in order to gather the feelings and thoughts about the people it represents, using them to influence our ideas. With new councillors added from the May elections, combined with the experience of those who have served the committee before, this year has shown the dawn of a new age for promotion and publicity. Embracing the ever-growing medium of online communications, such as social media and the website, new means and methods of promoting the town are being formed and used, with the effects already beginning to show. In the autumn, the council hosted a survey to canvass the views of the public, which came both from The Bridge, and using an online version via our website – giving great insight into the current status of the town, and we hope to make this the start of many such ventures to give the people of St Ives of all ages and backgrounds a greater voice with which to speak to us.

Looking forward to the new does not, however, mean the abandonment of the past. Physical media remains an important part of what the Council does and, in co-operation with the Town Team, new leaflets are being commissioned to help promote the town – both to the people who live within and to the many tourists that help to energise our economy.

With all of these initiatives in place, we are looking forward to an exciting year to come!

Cllr Dan Row, Vice-Chairman, Promotion & Publicity Committee

004.05 Property Committee

The St Ives Town Council Property Committee meets quarterly and is made up of eight Town Councillors with myself as Chairman and Cllr Pallant as Deputy Chairman. The committee controls the functions and services relating to the Town Hall, York House, Warner's Park Pavilion and the Old Mortuary located at Broadleas Cemetery, as well as property matters relating to our other properties, Burleigh Hill Community Centre, the St Ives Corn Exchange and the soon to be re-opened Norris Museum.

We began the Council's year by streamlining the Property Maintenance Schedule to try and save money, time and effort and to make our Rolling Programme easier to understand and follow for both Councillors and the public. We have also focused a lot of our time this year on the Town Hall and we are going to redecorate the Council Chamber later this year as well as adding in an overhead projector to aid us with meetings (especially handy for the Planning Committee) and we will be installing an audio loop system so that those with hearing issues will be able to follow our meetings with ease. We plan to begin these works following the exit of our temporary tenants, The Norris Museum, once their expansion project is complete in July. We are moving forward with the new Maintenance Depot at the Hill Rise allotments to add security to the site and give our hard working Ground Maintenance team a proper base with which to operate from.

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All in all, it has been a year of putting things in place and working out the logistics of these changes in order to have a smooth run when the time comes to put our ideas into practice. It will be a very different story this coming year when we look forward to storming ahead

and putting plans into action to make sure that we keep our properties in the best possible condition for the public wishing to use them and the Councillors and staff working within them.

Cllr Phil Pope, Chairman Property Committee

005.00 Any other business

The following issues were raised by those present:

- **Is it possible to make the Planning Committee meetings more open meeting rather than the public being limited to just the first 15 minutes of a meeting?**

The Town Mayor responded that we are flexible and we will look to hold larger public meetings where it is appropriate. For example when they present the final version of the Local Plan we will look at what Huntingdonshire District Council are planning on consultation and how we can feed into the process.

- **There are concerns about the funding of Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre (HVC). In the past St Ives used to be autonomous, but a few years ago they were amalgamated together. What can St Ives Town Council do to help support them? It acts as a pillar of the volunteering community.**

The Town Mayor noted that they are a trustee and that St Ives Town Council are looking at what we can do as each office is pivotal. The volunteer driver scheme alone is hugely beneficial, helping people with thousands of miles a month and reducing isolation for many. We are lobbying Huntingdonshire District Council who removed their £37k grant recently. St Ives Town Council is already giving £1k and looking to increase this if possible to £2.5k. HVC will keep St Ives Town Council fully informed.

- **There are concerns about the possible moving of the Monday Market to Bridge Street. The Civic Society report highlighted this and there has not been any consultation with residents.**

The Town Clerk reported that St Ives Town Council have been in contact with Huntingdonshire District Council who run the market and confirmed that if there are changes there would have to be consultation with residents. Currently though there is nothing written down. Cllr I Dobson raised issues as many businesses do not have rear access and noted that moving to Bridge Street could actually double costs due to the number of closures required.

- **It appears that the constraint on RAF Wyton is the need for a new bridge. How does it affect other proposals as they would also need a new bridge crossing.**

Cllr N Dibben, Chairman Planning Committee responded that there are a number of scenarios. We have been asking for details such as where people think people will work but are reliant on the planners.

- **Could the Planning Committee be more pro-active dealing with issues such as cars parked where they're not supposed to be. For example by moving the planters and there are issues around the Cromwell statute and an accident is bound to happen, there are also billboards and a-frames all over the place. You need a ladder or something to put them in one place where it won't cause an obstruction.**

Also feel badly let down by Huntingdonshire District Council about the use for the Pumping Station London Road as a temporary depot with 78 vehicles movements a day. It will make congestion in London Road worse and more dangerous.

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The Town Mayor agreed that parking was an issue and had been meeting with Sgt Street raising issues such as this. We understand that Huntingdonshire District Council did look at decriminalising to allow the use of traffic wardens but have not seen any movement. A representative of the Town Team spoke to add that they are contacting the shops to try and have a display board as they now have gates in some locations and are offering to contribute towards it if it's designed to be sympathetic to the area.

Cllr N Dibben, Chairman Planning Committee stated that the pumping station is in our spatial planning area, but not within our parish. Planning is a legal process so it's the type of issue, rather than the number which Huntingdonshire District Council planners look at.

• Cyclists coming over the chapel bridge are often not visible to people in Wellington Street, The Quay and turning right at the bridge is dangerous.

Cllr I Jackson stated that he had spoken to both Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council as the Highways Authority about a mirror being placed to improve visibility however the chapel bridge is Grade I listed.

The Town Mayor noted that 15-20 years ago it used to be a one way system.

• A representative of the Town Team stated that speaking to manager in St Ives Waitrose about the Master Plan, we need to work to keep what we have. We know others, like the Huntingdon one, is being closed. They have previously made an offer to extend in to the library which is owned by Cambridgeshire County Council which could have been a real benefit for the community. With the proposed out of area food retailers it's a real risk as if it went it would have a real impact on the centre.

The Town Mayor responded that this was an area of concern which the St Ives Town Council was working on but had had little information on the Master Plan process.

• Cllr I Jackson stated that he believes the attendance was pitiful in number. We need to work harder to advertise this event. Whilst it's nice to recognise most of the faces that's not the point.

A number of the issues raised are not the responsibility of the Town Council and we should look at how we promote it and invite the councillors from the other layers of local government.

The Town Mayor responded that this was already being discussed with the new Town Clerk about how St Ives Town Council could do this and he has ideas which we will look to implement for next year.

• What's the view of Hollywell-cum-Needlingworth Parish Council with regards to the large proposal at Gifford's Farm (to become Gifford's Park)?

Cllr N Dibben, Chairman Planning Committee responded that they were unhappy with the proposals, as were Bluntisham Parish Council due to the infrastructure impacts.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Signed:

Dated: 3 March 2018

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