

Haverhill Annual Town Meeting

Minutes of a Town Meeting

Held on Tuesday 17th May 2016 at 7.00pm at Haverhill Arts Centre, High Street, Haverhill



HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

Chair: Cllr B McLatchy, Town Mayor

Present: 73 members of the public, invited guests and press

MINUTES

T16/ Apologies for Absence

001 15 Apologies for absence were received.

T16/ Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th May 2015

002 The minutes were approved by a show of hands. The Mayor advised that all matters arising had been addressed during the course of the last year.

T16/ Town Mayor's report

003 The Mayor gave the following report:

“Firstly I would like to say thank you to all who elected me into the role of Mayor last May. It has been a huge privilege to wear the wonderful and much admired Haverhill Chain. I could not have done it without the incredible support of Ivor; my husband, best friend and Mayors Consort.

We have endeavoured to help change the image of Haverhill after years of unfair and unwarranted bad press by promoting the town as not being stuck in a corner but actually a valuable gateway to three counties and ready for expansion and investment.

Wearing our chain of office has allowed me to become one of the “Chain Gang” which is the group of Mayors and Council Chairmen who are elected to represent and promote all that is good and great about their towns. Ivor and I have travelled thousands of miles in and outside of Haverhill attending venues in Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex and Suffolk and with combined efforts of David Roach our Deputy Mayor have covered more than three hundred events. You become very aware just how many good people are out there running voluntary groups, selflessly giving their time to help others. Haverhill has a huge amount of talent, skill and goodwill which is evident in the many groups we have here.

Vicky Phillips, Mayor's Secretary and Assistant Town Clerk has taken good care of me this last year and many other mayors before me, all this while at the same time studying for her CiLCA which I am delighted to say she has passed and I am sure you would all like to join me in congratulating her.

Colin Poole our Town Clerk, Nick Keeble and the whole Art's Centre team run an amazing venue here and I find the team members very versatile in that at a

moment's notice they can cover each other's jobs with ease when necessary. On Friday I had the pleasure of presenting long service awards to four members of staff; it says a lot about the quality of the team here.

Since last May's election the attendance at the Council meetings has been excellent and it is very heartening to see so many residents attending and participating in the meetings. Haverhill is undergoing great change and we need to work together. That we have listened to you is apparent in the changes successfully achieved this year; Councillors worked hard at saving Flint Cottage, the adoption of the Youth Strategy, and the Town Council Handyman has made a good start getting jobs done that have been neglected for a long time. The Council took over the Community Ambassador project to support those volunteers in reporting issues to the Borough and County and you will have seen organised litter picks around town recently. Our school children have been particularly good at this and worked very hard and very willingly to tidy up the area, and I am not surprised at all by this as our schools here in Haverhill have a wonderful reputation in producing top-grade talented youngsters.

The Art's Centre has undergone a £125,000 improvement programme with new sound and lighting systems in the auditorium and a full makeover of the café, bar and studio, there are also plans for further changes such as upstairs toilets and much more needed expansion to the building.

At last year's meeting people expressed concern about the state of the old Corn Exchange building. You will know that the Town Council has proposed various ideas for using the building for community use and we have now started the process of exercising the Community Right to Bid, to potentially acquire the Corn Exchange. I know that a number of people are concerned about the cost of this but it is the responsibility of the Town Council to spend money wisely and specialist surveys and researchers are expensive. If the plan shows it to be a viable project then that will allow us to go forward to try and save this once proud old building.

The wonderful pictures and history of the building so well published in the Haverhill News this week really makes you want to rescue it for the future, but if that plan shows it a not viable proposition then the money spent on it will prevent many hundreds of thousands of pounds being wasted. There is concern that the project would delay the plans for the Arts Centre but we would like to reassure those concerned that this building is the cultural hub of the town and will always be put first.

Concerns were also raised that ONE Haverhill meetings were held in secret. Well on becoming Mayor I took my seat on the board and looked forward to hearing some juicy secrets but found there were none; what I did find was a bunch of hard working people from groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and other groups in the area all giving their time freely to help Haverhill prepare for the future with meetings being Chaired by Sarah Howard MBE. The Council has worked with ONE Haverhill partnership so that meetings are now being held in public.

One of the things to come out of these meetings was the Town Masterplan. Much time and research has gone into this plan and it promises a special future for our town centre which I am sure will attract larger retail chains, and to help with this the Borough Council has taken a significant financial hit delivering the Poundstretcher

store to the town on a short term lease to ensure the site can be unlocked to allow the building site to be adapted for the Masterplan.

Haverhill is heavily dependent on its industry but with industry comes lorries and there have been numerous concerns about the number of these parking overnight, particularly around the Day's Inn area. Councillors have worked with County to get the Holland Road/Duddery Hill junction re-aligned to prevent so many lorries parking there. I spoke with the Management of Culina very recently and was told that every lorry driver had been given a letter asking them to try and resolve the parking problems by giving consideration to our residents and telling them to park on industrial area roads only.

Concerns have been raised over the heavy traffic congestion in Withersfield Road, I find that it can take about 20 minutes to drive from Howe Road to the Cangle in the rush hour; this is mainly caused by the number of cars parked nose to tail all along the road, then if the bus and lorry come along at the same time everything can gridlock. I feel very sorry for the residents along that road; the noise and inconvenience must be awful. The Planning Committee of Haverhill Town Council has made it very clear that no work should be undertaken on the proposed new housing developments until the infra-structure for the bypass to Wrating Road is in place.

There are many health concerns in Haverhill and our local GPs are overwhelmed with sheer numbers of patients and a shortage of doctors. People tend to think of the last population census of 27,000 residents being catered for when in reality our GPs have 32,000 on the lists due to the new houses having been built since the last census, this is an increase of 5,000 residents on the lists and they were struggling due to the retirement of doctors.

The West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group is constantly trying to recruit new doctors but there is a national shortage and this is causing problems country wide. They have tried various types of appointment systems but one of the reasons these do not appear to work is due to people making appointments and then not turning up. Last month alone 232 patients did not turn up for their appointment. This meant that 232 other needy patients could not get an appointment. Reminder systems are expensive to run and tie up staff. It is our own responsibility to keep or cancel appointments.

My mother used to run the local Friends of the Hospital scheme and these groups have been active all over the country for many years, I feel it would be a good idea to have friends of our local health teams group and in a way Haverhill has already started this in that so many of you have helped me raise over £20,000 to purchase an Ultrasound machine, this is currently on order and because our GPs at the moment are unable to go on the necessary training course. A very kind and generous man has stepped in to help us. He is Nigel Beeton, Head of Imaging at West Suffolk Hospital and he is setting up an annexe to his Diagnostic Dept here in Haverhill. He will bring in his sonographers up to four days a week to run his clinics. In twelve months 2,032 patients from Haverhill had scans requiring them to travel out of the area so this is good news.

The equipment will have to be renewed approximately every 5-6 years so I will continue to raise money for this and the bits that go with it. This is a Centre we can

build on; we already have out of hours First-Aid as Claudette Lyons and myself covered weekends from last May up to December by kind permission of the Burton Centre manager who allowed us to be based there.

In October I met with the Head of East Anglia Ambulance Service and asked him to consider basing two paramedics in Haverhill to treat and advise the walking wounded, he agreed to approach Dr Ed Garratt on this and Ed and Matthew Hancock our MP recently made the announcement that this would be done. We are gradually building up a useful centre and if any of you would like to work with our Haverwell Community Well-being Fund team and become a friend to the health teams of Haverhill please contact myself, Peter Wilkens Treasurer, or Claudette Lyons Secretary; you would most be welcome.”

T16 Mayor’s Community Excellence Award

/004 The Mayor introduced the new Community Excellence Award.

“It has been very difficult to single out particular groups because we have so many selfless people in Haverhill giving freely of their time day in day out and all year round, however I eventually chose three groups who do so much for this area in different ways.

Haverhill First Responders

This group is run on a voluntary basis and not only have they raised money for a large number of defibrillators for the area but in the period from January 1st to 30th April were on call to support the East of England Ambulance Service for 1,696 hours, that is an average of 424 hours a month. During that period they attended 227 patients in the Haverhill area amongst those were 6 cardiac arrests. We value this group very highly so please show your appreciation with a good round of applause.

Town Pastors

Town Pastors again all give their time freely dealing with quite a varied and difficult range of problems. Not only do they offer Pastoral support but help with crime prevention often caring for someone following an incident involving crime. There are 15 Town Pastors who work in pairs covering every Friday and Saturday night between 10pm and 3am, so while we are tucked up safely in our beds these kind, brave people are out there supporting vulnerable and upset souls, listening to problems and where necessary administering first-Aid or calling an ambulance and they all take the time and trouble to attend First-Aid courses. They also pick up bottles left lying around to make the streets safer for us. They are often called to incidents involving CCTV, they carry water and chocolate and listen to people who feel no one cares about them, in the last year they have handed out 100 bottles of water and 750 freddo bars. They are truly Good Samaritans and deserve this recognition and I am sure you will agree with that.

Haverhill Hygiene Facilities Team

This is a group of ladies who take great pride in our local hygiene and toilet facilities, when visitors come to Haverhill particularly members of our town twinning groups from Germany and France they always praise our wonderful local facilities and are even more amazed when they find they are free. It is rare for them to get a thank you and they deal with all sorts of problems and help visitors in many different ways. They thoroughly deserve this award and I am sure you will all again

agree with me.

T16/ 005 For Haverhill Residents to Discuss Any Matter Relating to the Town of Haverhill

Councillor J Flood	1 – Road pollution is increasing at Cangle Junction. We need the bypass to be built and pressure should be put on the LEP.
Mayor	<i>Following a recent planning application for Brickfield Drive the Town council had requested that the requirement for a bypass be triggered.</i>
Mayor	2 – We need improvements to disability access throughout the town, such as dropped kerbs. Please would the public report issues to Councillor Flood or the Town Council. <i>Thank you for your work on this.</i>
Mayor	3 – I have recently contributed from my Locality Budget funds for the ATC to buy a flight simulator and to Sue Ryder for the Synergy Café 4 – Parkway Residents Association are a very good pressure group and I would like to commend the work they do. <i>We are pleased to echo your comments.</i>
Councillor J Burns	Thank you to Betty and to Ivor for the work you have done on behalf of the town in your Mayoral year

T15/ 005 Closure
The meeting was closed at 7.45pm.