

# **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF OAKHAM TOWN HELD AT THE VICTORIA HALL ON WEDNESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2018 AT 6.30PM**

## **Councillors in attendance:**

Cllr Michael Haley (Chairman)

Cllrs, Peter Ind, Mrs Anne Skipworth, Miss Sally-Anne Wadsworth, Martin Brookes, Joyce Lucas, David Romney, Paul Buxton

43 members of the public were also in attendance

## **01/18 OPENING REMARKS BY THE MAYOR OF OAKHAM**

Oakham Town Council provides a number of services that complement those provided by Rutland County Council. These include:

Management of Cutts Close and Royces playing fields, Willow Crescent and Barleythorpe Road open spaces and the provision and maintenance of the associated fixed play equipment. The Barleythorpe Road open space is now part of the Centenary Fields remembrance programme. Allotments in Kilburn Road, Burley Road, Elm Close and Willow Crescent  
Street furniture in the town centre and Cutts Close  
Public toilets in Church St Car park  
Maintenance of All Saints Church churchyard  
Unmetered energy for community street lighting

Other recreational facilities include the Bowling and Tennis clubs grounds. A building in Princess Avenue, and land in Willow Crescent which is leased to Rutland House Community Trust, all of which produce income that off-sets other costs.

Council now has a full complement of 12 Councillors. For part of the year the locum Clerk provided support and mentoring for the former assistant Clerk who was promoted to the role of Clerk during May last year. Since this time Council has appointed a part time office assistant. This has provided a cost effective and efficient solution in the provision of office services.

With regard to Governance, once again Council received an unqualified External Auditor Certificate for the year 2016/17. This means that Council's Internal Auditor was fully satisfied that the 10 facets of internal control are fully complied with and that the accounting statements are correct and that the External auditor is satisfied with our governance and controls. We are currently preparing documentation for the last year (2017/18) for the External Auditor and are well on track to do so before the dead line of end June, having already satisfied the internal Auditor who has signed off the annual internal audit report.

The Town Council has a statutory right to be consulted on planning applications and is so by Rutland C.C. However the Town Council has no powers concerning planning and this includes RCC's town centre improvement initiative. RCC has set up a task and finish working group with a Town Council representative and a representative from the Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It should be remembered that the Town Council is not a pressure group. The N.P.S.G. is currently carrying out a character assessment exercise within Oakham and Barleythorpe for local information and further evidence in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. Full details of the progress being made by the NPSG together with the accumulating evidence base can be found on the Oakham Neighbourhood Plan web site.

What else have we done during the year?

Our building in Princess Ave has been empty and periodically vandalised for about 2 years. During that time Council actively sought to lease the building. After a few false starts and much negotiation I am pleased to report that a lease has been taken out by Oakham Studios, an Oakham dance studio. This company has completely renovated the building, making it very fit for purpose and are now open and thriving.

We have also:

Organised and managed 7 Sunday band concerts, two fun days and an Easter egg hunt in Cutts Close.

Provide Christmas street decorations and Christmas tree and street decorations during the spring and summer

In coordination with Oakham in Bloom, Provide summer floral displays in the town centre

Supported the High Sherriff's fundraising Hue and Cry event held in the High Street.

Conferred the Freedom of the Town on the retiring Lord Lieutenant of Rutland. This is the first time OTC has conferred this civic honour on an individual and is in recognition of his many years of service to Rutland and in particular Oakham.

As well as the above, this year we are increasing the number of events held in Cutts close both arranged and managed solely by OTC and by collaborating with other local organisations such as Oakham Town Partnership.

Work will shortly commence to widen and resurface the main footpath through Cutts Close and a traffic barrier will be installed at the lower entrance to control vehicular movement within the park, increasing safely for users of the park.

In addition, OTC agreed to pay for the unmetered energy for community street lighting (most street lights outside of the High St , main arterial roads and the bypass) in return for RCC agreeing to upgrade all inefficient lights with LED units and continue to maintain the same at their cost.

All of these incur costs and this is reflected in the budget that Council has set for the current fiscal year. As was reported during last year's meeting, Council no longer receives any financial grant support from RCC and this together with the cost of unmetered energy for community lighting amounts to a circa £29,000 deficit. Council ia also mindful that the equipment it owns, such as park play equipment, skate park, band stand, street furniture, etc, has a finite life and will eventually need to be replaced. To ensure that a future Council is not faced with huge costs, Council's budget now includes ear marked reserves that are added to annually to allow for these.

Finally I would like to thank members of the N.P.S.G for all of their time and continuing hard work with this important initiative. Also fellow Councillors and in particular the Vice Chairman, for all their efforts and commitment during the last year.

#### **02/18 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON MAY 9<sup>TH</sup> 2017**

It was unanimously agreed that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 be signed by the Chairman as a true record of that meeting

#### **03/18 TO CONSIDER ISSUES RAISED BY THOSE ATTENDING RELATING TO THE TOWN OF OAKHAM**

- Many questions were raised regarding the Neighbourhood Plan. If the public are not happy with certain issues, should they contact the Council directly to express their views?
- Will the Council still continue with the towns hanging baskets and floral displays?

- Can there be a review of the street lighting? The lighting may be more cost effective but there is a lot of low lighting in certain areas and some members of the public do not feel secure.
- What is the actual purpose of Oakham Town Council?
- Do you agree it's important to have a fully qualified Clerk?
- What would you like to see your successor achieve?

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 6.57pm

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairman**  
**7<sup>th</sup> May 2019**