

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF OAKHAM  
TOWN HELD AT THE VICTORIA HALL, HIGH STREET, OAKHAM ON  
WEDNESDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2019 AT 6.30PM**

**Councillors in attendance:**

Cllr Adam Lowe (Chairman)

Cllrs, Sally-Anne Wadsworth, David Romney, Paul Buxton, Joy Clough

**Residents:** 15

*Councillor Lowe welcomed everyone to the meeting*

**01/19 OPENING REMARKS BY THE MAYOR OF OAKHAM**

Oakham Town Council is a Parish Council consisting of 12 Councillors and two paid Officers.

The 12 volunteer Councillors are elected by the people of the Town. Over the last year the Council has been stable with little or no movement as regard to vacant seats, however this May 2019 we have seen new Councillors join the Council. I welcome you to the Council and thank you for your commitment. Some Councillors chose not to stand this May, some of these Councillors have been in public office for years and I extend the sincere thanks and appreciation from the Council.

The Councillors, I have stated who all give their time for free, meet once a month at the main Council meeting and many attend another monthly meeting as well as other committees, working groups as well as being representatives on outside organisations. Their report and agenda writing, preparation and administration is all conducted in their own time when not at meeting.

So as a Councillor if you attend the two standard meetings per month, you are on one committee, one working group and one outside organisation that is around 60 hours of their time per year, you can double that for agenda and report reading, and administration. If all Councillors do this as a ballpark figure that means the Councillors are contributing 36 weeks of volunteer work to this town as an organisation per year. Based on an MP's pay that would equate to £55,000.

Councillors are encouraged to undertake training, some training is now becoming mandatory, like the General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR.

In 2018/19 there were only six Councillors that attended any form of training, however as the Council have adopted a more pragmatic and structured approach the expectation is that all Councillors will undertake Councillor Training, GDPR and where appropriate Chairman Training in 2019/20.

Councillors can undertake additional training outside of the Council, for instance I undertook the Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA), this I might add is at their own expense and only cost around £120, as well as their own time again, you are given 12 months to complete the course and this is a nationally recognised Council qualification.

I should point out that having done Councillor and Chairman training is not the end, I have also attended both of these training requirements twice since becoming a Councillor in 2010 as the rules, legislation and guidelines do keep changing and all Councillors should remain up to date.

The Town Council also employ two staff, a Part Time office Assistant who works up to 18 hours per week, this contract has incorporated flexible hours of working to accommodate the busy family life of working parents. The Office Assistant is managed and trained by the Clerk to the Council.

The Clerk to the Council, Ms Greaves, carries out all the duties associated with the running of the Council Administration, ensuring the Council operates and performs all of its statutory legal requirements, having joined the Council in 2009 as an Assistant Clerk, Ms Greaves became Clerk to the Council in 2016 and in line with the Council requirements undertook and achieved the qualification, Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA), this was confirmed by the Society of Local Council Clerks, (SLCC) in May 2019, the qualification provides a broad knowledge of all aspects of a clerk's work - roles and responsibilities, the law, procedures, finance planning and community involvement, being a level 3 foundation qualification for local council officers and other working with local councils.

As a result of this qualification and the Council having the required elected number of Councillors, the Council can continue to adopt the General Power of Competence.

This states that a Parish Council has the power to do anything that individuals generally may do as long as they don't break other laws. It has wider powers to deliver more for their communities. Looking back over the last year, the Chairman reported at the last Town meeting, "I am pleased to advise that the Council received an unqualified External Auditor Certificate, 2016/17."

An unqualified External Audit means we have fully satisfied audit requirements, backed up that the internal audit, the external auditor have no concerns.

This evening I would like to echo in part the words of that Former Chairman and Mayor by saying, I am pleased to advise that the Council received an unqualified External Auditor Certificate, 2017/18.

The Council's income from Council taxpayers, last year's demand was £273,990. This year it is £265,180, which is a reduction of £8810.

The adoption of a Strategic Plan was undertaken in 2018, the high-level document is under constant review, along with all the Councils Policies, Procedures and Regulations.

The Town Council owns and maintains three open spaces within the town.

These are Cutts Close, Royce's Recreation Ground and the open space off Barleythorpe Road. It also has a long lease on the Willow Crescent Play Area. In addition, it owns four areas of allotments, namely Kilburn Road, Burley Road, Elm Close and Willow Crescent. These are managed on the Town Council's behalf by two Allotment Societies who each pay an annual rent.

The Town Council also owns the land at the Vale which is occupied by Oakham Tennis Club and Oakham Bowls Club as well as a Community Centre on Princess Avenue.

All of these community assets contribute to the wellbeing of the Oakham people offering recreational activities and compliment the open green spaces already mentioned.

Rutland House Community Trust Limited leases an area of land of Willow Crescent and provides a residential home for people with learning disabilities. Recently the Council agreed to further development of that facility and is currently working closely with the RHCT, the discussions are ongoing and there is actually opportunity now for the Town Council to be able to demonstrate by their actions through support of an essential community asset by reviewing the whole package associated with this development, in plain speak, the Council I feel could now offer a reduced rent and or fees as the facility directly supports Oakham and Rutland residents. I believe the Council would appreciate any feedback from residents who share this vision.

The Council is also responsible for the management and maintenance of the Public Toilets in Church Street car park, two car charging points at the same location and currently the Town Council leases its offices and chamber situated here in the Victoria Hall, the arrangement helps support the Victoria Hall as an important community asset.

The Town Council contributes to the grounds maintenance of the closed All Saints Churchyard and in the last two years undertook the transfer of community lighting un-metered energy costs from the Rutland County Council at a cost of £11499.97 per annum, subject to an annual increase.

In the last year 2018/19 the Town Council as a whole have made significant improvements, to the path on Cutts Close that runs from Burly Road to Church Street, the path was uneven, breaking up and in places less than 400mm wide. The project was accomplished by utilising community levy money which was specifically earmarked for Town improvements. Equally a Task and Finish Work Group of the Council saw a revised Christmas Lighting offering which was well received.

Even what appear less significant projects, activities or just general maintenance go very much unnoticed on a day to day basis, the benches do not maintain themselves and the annual painting programme and replacement of old and damaged benches ensure again the green spaces are geared towards a leisurely approach, 2018 saw the repainting of the railings around Cutts Close and the Centenary Field, it is suspected the first time this has happened since the railing were installed. The installation of a vehicle barrier at Cutts Close was a long overdue replacement and helps ensure that vehicular access to this prominent well utilised green space, complete with goal posts being purchased in 2018, is controlled.

The Town Council continued with its programme in 2018 of Band Concerts, Family Fun Day and other activities, one Councillor, Cllr Sally-Anne Wadsworth has really taken ownership and I am sure my fellow Councillors will agree that Cllr Wadsworth commitment deserves a mention.

The green spaces continue to be utilised for other events, the Circus, the Fair, The Proms Concert by the Rutland Concert Band and a Candle Lit Walk to mention the main activities, all of these types of activity are welcome, encouraged and will continue.

The Council continued to support Oakham In Bloom with money from the precept used for Town Centre floral displays that enhance the Towns appearance and again generate a feeling of wellbeing for residents and visitors alike.

In 2018 the Council supported the national 100th commemoration of the Great War, 1914-1918. The support included a Grant to Arts 4 Rutland who commissioned the WW1 Community Play, it is hoped that this play will soon become a Radio Play. The Council also supported the Centenary Fields scheme and granted permission and completed the registration covering the legal fees for this significant green space, they also allowed the installation of two remembrance benches and an information board, the cost of £4K being met by other sponsors.

One of the largest undertaking the Town Council have been involved in is the Oakham and Barleythorpe Neighbourhood Plan, currently the Plan is now at a point where public consultation should follow and that it is expected the Plan will be adopted subject to the all the feedback.

The commitment that has gone into the NHP, it should be noted, has been by members of the Community, not Councillors, there have been representatives from Oakham and Barleythorpe Councils, however, the Chairman and main committee are all volunteers. The cost of the NHP has, in my own opinion, been kept to a minimum, where available NHP Grants have been accessed.

Looking forward, the Town Council still have to land the NHP, so I would ask that when it comes to the Public Consultation get involved, after all it is your plan, the Council are really just facilitating it.

We cannot ignore the extensive tree survey and subsequent works which should be undertaken over the next 12 months along with the recurring playground reports, both need to be actioned using the appropriate earmarked budgets from the precept.

The completion of the Rutland House Community Trust facility already mentioned, I believe we should support in a way that we are no longer just the landlord but a sponsor and partner.

Every Councillor should be prepared to complete the required training in order to fulfil the role they have chosen to undertake as Town Councillors, equally there is an expectation that as Councillors we will continue to have representatives on the Citizens Advice, Trustees of the Victoria Hall, Parish Forum, Memorial Institute, Oakham United Charities, Rutland Together, Oakham In Bloom, Rutland Access Group, Military Commemorations Committee, the Parish Forum Working Party, the St George Barracks and the Oakham Partnership Board which replaces the Oakham Task and Finish group.

Toward the end to the year the Twinning of our Town with Barmstedt, Germany was re-established with visits now having taken place by both Towns to each other, where the Town Council do not have a specific representative, working group or committee in place, it is beneficial to both communities and their wider regions to maintain this friendship as it links in with tourism, I would welcome the Council helping this friendship to continue to grow.

My time as the Chairman and Mayor of Oakham this last year has been very rewarding and both myself and my wife consider it a great honour and privilege to have been asked to represent the Town, it was a good year with only highlights, my chosen Charity, Out of Hours Club Rutland was an excellent organisation to support because of what they themselves do for the Community, which is what makes the role so rewarding, meeting and supporting such organisations. On saying all of that, yes I am looking forward to passing the Chain on at the AGM to a new Chairman and Mayor, the only words of advice and support I can offer, enjoy the role, throw yourself into it and you will reap the rewards of fulfilment and satisfaction of what is a dream job, just without the pay.

I will be staying on the Town Council, however I am planning on taking a step back, partly because I have occupied very high profile roles on the Council for several years, time to let the rest, maybe the best, be put to the test, also I have recently changed my job and I am learning a new role with that. My focus on the Council is to understand more about the working of a Council and my personal focus will be the financial procedures and regulations as this is an area where I feel I should understand more.

#### **02/19 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

It was unanimously agreed that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018 be signed by the Chairman as a true record of that meeting

#### **03/19 TO CONSIDER ISSUES RAISED BY THOSE ATTENDING RELATING TO THE TOWN OF OAKHAM**

Cllr Lowe opened the floor to questions. If unable to give an immediate response, they will be followed up in writing if that is agreeable.

Q1. This question was raised during the previous year's meeting regarding the fact that the town Council did not debate the 'one-way system'?

A1. It was not within its remit. Potential redevelopment of the town centre infrastructure lies with the County Council. The correct time for OTC to comment would be when a planning application is made. The proposed scheme did not reach this stage.

Q2. What about the Neighbourhood Plan Steering group?

A2. The NPSG, under the direction of OTC, was in the process of consulting with residents and by this time had the results of a robust survey that every householder and business within Oakham and Barleythorpe had been invited to complete. This included

views on the improvements to the town centre. This evidenced information was published and is in the public domain.

Q3. I am concerned that five members of the Council are also County Councillors and their political involvement.

A3. The Town Council is not political, and most Councillors sit as independent members of the council. I do not think there is a problem with members acting as representatives for both.

Q4. Thank you very much for answering that question. I am more than satisfied with the answer.

Q5. I am disappointed with the turnout tonight particularly by the newer members and even more so, that the South Ward was the only ward that was contested.

The Chairman felt it would have been inappropriate to speak on that matter and declined to answer.

Q6. As former member, may I give a vote of thanks to Mrs Julie Lowe for supporting the Mayor through his term of office.

Cllr Lowe thanked everyone for their attendance and support.  
The meeting was closed at 18.41.

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

**Chairman**  
**4<sup>th</sup> May 2021**