

**TOWN COUNCIL
PRINCES RISBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 21st APRIL 2016 INCLUDING
THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
THE PRINCES CENTRE, CLIFFORD ROAD, PRINCES RISBOROUGH AT 7.00PM**

Welcome and Introductions by the Town Mayor and apologies for absence

The following councillors were present:

Cllr A Turner (Chairman)

Cllrs G Hall, J Coombs, I McLauchlan, P Summerbell, M Walsh, M West, A Ball, K Wilkins and I Churchill

Susanne Griffiths – Clerk, Kirsty Pope – Deputy Clerk, Caroline Page and Jayne Mylchreest – Clerical Assistants, Kevin Locke – Maintenance Team Leader

Apologies were received from Cllrs A Rolfe and D Roper

23 members of the public were present.

Prior to the agenda, a minute's silence was held for Councillor Wally Woolf, who died on 15th April 2016.

Chairman's Report

Cllr Turner opened the meeting, introduced the Councillors and thanked the parishioners for attending. The Chairman began his report by stressing that it had been a very busy and hugely challenging year for the Council. Cllr Turner outlined some of the work undertaken during the past 12 months:

The Town Council has taken on further devolved services, so that we now carry out work for both the County and District Councils, not just for Princes Risborough, but also for several other local Parishes. We were one of the first councils to take on devolved services, some years ago now, so we really have been "trailblazers" and are proud of our proactive stance. A real success story.

In November the Town Council petitioned the Government Select Committee at Westminster, protesting against HS2 construction traffic passing through the Town and suggested an alternative, more suitable route. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful with our argument, but did manage to negotiate HS2 Ltd funding of approximately £500,000 for road safety measures on the A4010 to help mitigate the adverse effects of over a 100 HGV movements a day through the Town.

The Town was very successful this year with bids for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding dispensed by Wycombe District Council.

The Market House renovation project received - £30,000

A much needed new bus for the Princes Centre, received - £40,000

The Community Centre improvements project received - £150,000

BCC town parking review received - £25,000

Local extension to the Phoenix Trail - £15,000

A grand total for Princes Risborough as a whole of £260,000.

As part of the "Clean for the Queen" campaign, three Town Councillors and two local residents carried out a clear-up of the Ragpit in Whiteleaf, removing 22 sacks of waste along with an assorted collection of rusting scrap metal items.

The main issue that has been occupying the Council is the progression of the Town Plan/Local Plan. The Steering Group have been working extremely hard, within a very tight timetable, alongside WDC planning officers to scope a Town Plan that will assist in how we cope with housing growth in the Town of circa 2,500 properties. This amount of growth will almost double our current size bringing huge

challenges and changes to our Community. Experts and consultants have been involved, with much technical work ongoing. The biggest single issue still to be resolved is the routing of a relief road for the Town. The Steering Group's preferred option is for a proper ring road to take the growing volume of through traffic away from the Town Centre and other residential areas. However, there is an issue over funding for such a road and this is still to be resolved. There will be opportunities to revamp the Town Centre and increase the retail offering. Other infrastructure will also need to be provided, such as more school places, more playing fields/sporting facilities and possibly a new doctors surgery, etc.. There is still a lot of work to be done and all the while developers are trying to get planning applications pushed through before we are able to get a formal Town Plan in place. It is the biggest challenge our community has faced in a generation.

Councillor Turner having ended the Chairman's report took a number of questions from members of the public.

Finance Committee

Cllr I McLauchlan gave an overview of the budget–v–actual figures displayed on the screen and confirmed that for the 7th year running the Town Council has managed to freeze the precept. This is due to generating more income and finding savings in the budgets. Despite this, the Town Council is still investing in the town. As examples he cited LED lighting (£ 80,000), the refurbishment of the Market House (£130,000) and the refurbishment of the Crescent Park (£ 20,000).

Following requests from residents a path will be made along the bottom of the King George V Park. The fact that the Town Council is able to provide these services without increasing the budget is the result of years of sound management and Cllr McLauchlan thanked the Clerk, who is the Responsible Financial Officer.

Admin & HR Committee

Cllr A Ball presented the report. He outlined the budget and expenditure and staffing levels. The apprentice is due to complete his 2 year apprenticeship with the Maintenance Team in June and has been offered a 6 month contract with the Town Council with a view to extending this if all goes well. The Town Council is currently advertising for an additional apprentice, to join our Maintenance Team on a 2 year apprenticeship scheme, starting at the end of the school term. This is a fantastic opportunity for a youngster living in the town to learn a trade whilst attending college once a week.

Public Relations Committee

Cllr J Coombs presented the following report:

In the past year there have been some major changes to the role of the PR Committee, in that the responsibility for organising events and meetings on behalf of the council now falls on the Events Committee.

However, this committee is still responsible for the production of our newsletter, Crosstalk, and the maintenance of our web site.

In regard to Crosstalk, our aim is to produce at least 4 copies per year and to include up to date progress on matters affecting the town and its inhabitants. It is sometimes necessary to issue a copy devoted to one major topic, such as the Town Plan or the long awaited Parking Review, but on the whole we try to include as much news as possible to keep you, our constituents, as up to date as possible and to ensure that you receive the best possible information we constantly review our material.

When possible we like to include articles from other organisations in the town, especially if they have major news to impart.

We hope that should any article in Crosstalk grab your attention and you wish to have your say, then please do not hesitate to either write, phone or email us and put your point of view, I can assure you that every letter, phone call and email is listened to or read and that we aim to reply to all enquiries and comments, even if the subject is somewhat out of our jurisdiction for action.

The committee would like to put on record our thanks to our Deputy Clerk, Kirsty, for all the work that she does, not only in the final design of the newsletter, but also in ensuring that contributors make the final deadline for publication.

We feel that Crosstalk just gets better with every issue and the feedback that we get suggests that you think so too.

The Town Council website, Princesrisborough.com, also reflects the policy of the Council and is constantly updated to reflect what is happening in the town.

If you need any information regarding the Council and its activities, you need look no further than the website. On the site we publish up to date minutes of our committee meetings and the decisions taken therein and these also include the many planning applications that pass through our hands, as well as information about local amenities and of course who to contact should you wish to make a point and how to make that contact.

There are very useful contact and report forms available on the website and we are pleased that these are being well used.

We also have presence on social media with a Twitter feed and retweet any article or information that we feel may be relevant to the town.

The committee meets about 6 times a year to reflect on what has gone to pass and to decide on future strategy for both the newsletter and the website, and the editorial group assesses each Crosstalk before publication.

As with all other committees we aim to get best value for your money and hope that you appreciate our efforts.

Town Committee

Cllr J Coombs presented the following report:

For the Town Committee this has been a very busy year as we have constantly strived to make improvements to the town through the maintenance of our own and other authorities grounds.

We have taken on more Devolved Services both from Bucks County Council and latterly Wycombe District Council, and now maintain the majority of the grass verges and open areas around the town and also for other authorities for whom we operate under contract.

This means that our Maintenance Team was kept extremely busy during the grass cutting season, which seems to get longer every year, but they still manage to keep all our own parks in tip top order throughout the year.

I am happy to report that a majority of the comments received at the office have been positive, with many expressing satisfaction with the standard that we are able to achieve, compared to that of the last BCC contractors. As well as grass cutting the team also ensure that road signs remain legible and clear of growth of bushes and trees, along with a number of additional responsibilities that are not always obvious to the general public.

Last year we took the decision to allow the flower beds in the town to lie fallow for the winter to enable the ground to recover and the team are now actively involved in digging in organic material to improve the soil quality and soon they will be planted in a red, white and blue colour scheme to celebrate the 90th birthday of the queen and to fit in with the Town Festival theme of 90 years of the best of British. We have also decided to establish a number of wild flower areas around the town such as under the town entry boxes and in Mill Lane where a new bed is being prepared with the help of the local scout group.

Following a joint exercise with Wycombe District Council, we are pleased to confirm that over 60 trees have recently been planted in and around our town. This project was taken on by our Town Council tree working group, and with the expertise of WDC, we were able to identify various locations in our town that we considered suitable sites. We would like to thank WDC for funding this wonderful project for our town.

The Town Council received planning permission to go ahead with the storage facility on Wades Park. This unit was established on the run down garage and so did not encroach on the recreational area. The establishment of this facility was required to provide the Council with a safe and secure area where we can store all the equipment that is necessary to keep the town looking good and also provides space for the storage of equipment previously owned by the Town Festival committee and the Market Group.

All our parks and recreation grounds are regularly inspected for damage to equipment, graffiti, etc. and a litter pick is carried out every day, and most especially during the summer period when the parks are used a lot more. Any problems that are identified by these inspections are dealt with in accordance with our Health and Safety policy.

During the next few months we will be going out to Public Consultation to finalise the requirement for the upgrading of the play equipment in the Crescent Recreation Ground, which is now in dire need for replacement.

We still have that perennial problem with dog fouling but we are not able to fully control what goes on in the parks due to a lack of available staff, although we have the will to do so.

As part of our residents' survey is in relation to the establishment of allotments in the town, we approached local landowners to seek a view as to whether they would be willing to sell/lease the Council some land but so far to no avail. The cost of obtaining land is as you might imagine very high and along with making the land secure and maintaining it to our required standard the cost would outweigh the benefit. The survey established that the vast majority of the residents were not in favour of increasing the precept to provide allotments for so few applicants.

The plans for the restoration of the Market House are now well underway as we have identified areas that need urgent attention as well as those refinements that will make the building both more attractive and ultimately more accessible for public use and we have now accessed a sufficient funding stream which includes a substantial grant from Wycombe District Council and hope that work will soon be underway.

The lighting working group is working to deliver the changeover from our present lighting stock to energy efficient LED heads which could significantly reduce our energy costs. Again we hope that the replacement project will get underway soon and we have identified a trial area to assess their viability. Our aims for the next and future years are to keep the town looking as good as possible throughout the year and maintain all our building assets and play equipment to the highest possible standard keeping the costs of maintenance as low as possible whilst ensuring the best value for money.

Planning Committee

Cllr A Ball presented the report. He explained that the 6 members of the committee meet monthly to make observations on all planning applications; however Wycombe District Council makes the final decision. The Town Council has taken the view to object to any large developments and feels that if these piecemeal developments get permission they will not be required to provide sufficient infrastructure, as opposed to what would happen under the Local Plan, which is currently being consulted on. The first phase of the Picts Lane development has been approved.

Events Committee

Cllr M Walsh presented the report. This is a new committee at the Town Council which looks after the Town Festival, Britain in Bloom and Art in the Park. The theme of the Festival will be 90 Years of the Best of Britain. Lots of events have been organised, including a Risborough Bake Off and local businesses have supported events.

There has also been record sponsorship this year. Cllr Walsh congratulated Kirsty Pope and Jayne Mylchreest for doing a phenomenal job with organizing the Festival.

A lot of feedback has been received about the Christmas lights and the Town Council has persuaded Wycombe District Council to supply new ones again this year. It is also planned to reintroduce a Christmas Tree outside the Market House this year, for the first time in 50 years.

On 11th June the Town Council will be helping with the Queen's 90th Birthday celebrations.

Cllr Walsh ended by exhorting residents to support the Festival and local shopkeepers and market stall holders.

Thames Valley Police

PC Andy Ralph presented the report. There are Sergeant James Benfield, 4 PC's, 2 x part time PC's and 2 x PCSO's based at the Princes Risborough station. They all know the area well and cover as far as Terrick, Widmer End and Hughenden.

In the next few years extra housing in the town could mean retention of a police station in Princes Risborough in December 2018.

This is a low crime area – an average of 22-23 crimes per month including anti-social behavior and burglary, but few serious crimes. There was a series of house burglaries in Monks Risborough and Whiteleaf in March. Four arrests were made and the young men are now on bail. A young man found guilty of 2 violent GBH's is now in jail for 7-8 years.

A monthly newsletter is sent out.

A resident asked why Risborough doesn't have speed restriction signs when other local villages do.

Cllr A Turner replied that more will be on the way as part of the mitigation of HS2 traffic and will be funded by HS2. A resident reported speeding in Monks Risborough after vehicles pass the speed

camera and there is the possibility of an accident. PC Ralph said he would speak to Lee Turnham, the Traffic Officer and new indicators will be put in place. Community Speedwatch are also aware of the problem.

Cllr A Turner explained that 12 years ago, prior to CCTV, he was given the task of looking into anti-social behavior. The cost of anti-social behavior and damage to property was running in excess of £ 100,000.00 per year. After the installation of CCTV this dropped dramatically. He thanked the police for all their excellent work.

Presentation of Princes Risborough Citizens Award

Cllr Alan Turner presented a new Community Group Recognition Award to Risborough Good Neighbours for their many years of providing transport to the community. The Award was presented to Mr Geoffrey Young., who explained that the organisation has been in operation for 30 years and has taken in excess of 20,000 people to appointments.

Cllr Turner presented a Citizen's Award to Dr Sandy Macfarlane in recognition of his long service to the community as a local GP and past president of the Heritage Society.

Finally, Cllr Turner presented a Citizen's Award to Mr Jim Stevens, who stepped forward when the town was faced with the problem of HS2 construction traffic being routed through Risborough and it was decided to petition government. The base cost of employing a solicitor was £ 5000.00. Mr Stevens offered his services as retired Head of Highways and put in an enormous amount of time and effort. He is also on the Town Plan Steering Group, a volunteer driver on the community bus and a volunteer adviser to the Citizens Advice Bureau. The Petitioners Group put the case to the Select Committee. It was not possible to re-route the construction traffic but the group succeeded in obtaining £500,000.00 to be given to Bucks County Council to spend on mitigation measures to slow traffic and improve safety on the A4010. These will be installed before construction starts.

Cllr Turner presented Cllr Gary Hall with a long service award certificate for 25 years services.

Public Open Forum

Many questions were asked by the members of the public, mainly on the impact of HS2 traffic and the Local Plan.

- A resident asked what solutions would be put in place regarding the ambulance service. Cllr Turner replied no extra measures have been put in place other than HS2's commitment to look at the impact on blue light journeys.
- A resident raised the issue of pollution levels at rush hours and the effect on house prices. Cllr Turner replied that the question of pollution levels was raised during the petitioning process. The effect of house prices is unknown but the project has a finite life of approximately 7 years so it shouldn't have a lasting effect. The figures given to the select committee was 140 HGV movements per day.
- A resident expressed concern about what people could do if the construction traffic damages their property. Cllr Turner explained that HS2 is reluctant to accept responsibility and therefore it is unlikely that it would be possible to claim.
- A question was raised about the outer bypass and Cllr Turner replied that this is still a preference in the Local Plan and is still under discussion.
- A resident gave details of the new community bus, which has been purchased with an award from the Department of Transport with help from Bucks County Council and Princes Risborough Town Council. The old one did almost 160,000 miles. The resident thanked all the volunteers and pointed out that the bus is for everyone, not just the older generation. Under 16's can travel free during school holidays.
- Concerning the Local Plan, a resident asked if the amount of house changes does the process change, and if there has been any feedback from meetings. Cllr Turner replied that the results of the review won't be known until June and then there may have to be a re-think. Responses to the consultation and the steering group's meeting with planning officers should be known in 2 weeks time. 422 responses to the consultation have been received.
- A resident asked for an update on the parking review. County Councillor Bendyshe-Brown replied that money is now available to conduct the review from WDC CIL monies. The steering group is meeting in mid May to look at the plans. There will be a formal consultation by the end of June, then the administrative process. This should be implemented by the end of

December. BCC will then go on to Phase 2, to look at issues raised by Phase 1. Phase 2 will take place next year.

- The question of free parking was raised and Cllr Turner explained that there will be an opportunity within the Local Plan to try to obtain one hour's free parking and also to increase parking in the town centre.
- A resident wished to know the latest situation on the proposed Morrisons store. Cllr Turner explained that Morrisons had signed the lease but are still prevaricating. It is most likely that they will want to sell on the lease to the Co Op, but they would have to take all the stores of a certain size. The developers have taken Morrisons to court.
- A resident observed that the Leo Laboratories site has been given permission with planning obligation and asked how this fits into the Local Plan. Cllr Turner replied that this has been fed into the planning officers' brief. The number of houses will be taken into account in the total number required for Princes Risborough. Until the Local Plan is in place it is difficult to fight off speculative applications,

The Mayor thanked the public for attending and the meeting closed at 8.45 pm