

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting
held on Thursday 14 April 2016 at 7:00 pm
at the Olney Centre

Present: Councillors Steve Clark (Mayor), and 30 members of the public.

In attendance: Liam Costello (Town Clerk) and Debbie Eason (Assistant Town Clerk)

1. Chairman's report

Cllr Clark welcomed everyone to the meeting, and gave a brief report on some of the key activities and events of the council over the past year:

The council is keen to improve communications with the public and has set up a Facebook account.

This is the end of his 5th year as Mayor, and informed all that he would not be seeking re-election as Mayor. Chris Shaw, Ben Brock and John Sharp will be standing down at the May election, and he thanked them for their service. There were twelve candidates for the 15 places and so the council would be seeking to co-opt 3 councillors.

Sandra Grummitt has retired from the position of Deputy Town Clerk after 21 years' service, and has been replaced by Debbie Eason. The Mayor thanked all the staff for their work over the year.

There has been a bit of a crime wave in Olney over the past year, and we will be hearing from Thames Valley Police later.

Concerns locally about the planning aspirations of MKC, who wish to designate Olney as a satellite town of 10,000 residents. Phil Ayles of Castlethorpe PC is leading the opposition to the plans.

2. Guest Speaker – Phil Ayles (Chair of the Plan:MK Action Group) to speak about Milton Keynes Council plans for expansion.

Phil Ayles spoke about the emerging plans from MKC which could see significant development in the rural part of the borough. Parish and town councils in the area have formed an action group to oppose the plans. MKC have published a strategic direction consultation following on from last year's topic papers. There is a new Head of planning at MKC, who organised a series of vision workshops, out of which the latest proposals emerged. There are 4 options for the direction of growth; (i) west / south west of the city (ii) east of the M1 motorway; (iii) satellite

settlements in the rural area, (iv) intensification and redevelopment in the urban area. Their population forecast is for MKC to double in size.

15 parishes have called in the consultation for procedural reasons. 6 local councils have contributed to a fighting fund, and legal representatives have been engaged to represent the parishes.

In response to questions, Phil Ayles said that their preferred option is the intensification of Milton Keynes and expansion towards Aylesbury Vale.

Neighbourhood Plans are proposing limited growth for villages, with Olney planning for an additional 300 dwellings.

3. Chairman of the Town Council's Finance, Recreation & Services, Planning and Olney Centre Management Committees will report on their committees' activities of the past 12 months.

- **Recreation and Services**

Cllr Evans gave the following report on behalf of the committee:

Recs & Services covers a wide area of activity for the council.

All the recreation grounds, open spaces and landscaped areas, the Cemetery and Churchyard, the allotments, the Market Place and the Thursday and Farmers Markets. The ground staff and all the equipment they use, the flower beds and maintaining the hanging baskets, the Christmas lights all come under this committee.

I will just highlight some of the more notable things from the past year. We took over the landscape areas from Milton Keynes 2 years ago and with a third albeit part-time member of staff we have managed to cope with the extra work and I am sure the town looks better for it.

It is good to see the Churchyard looking so much better since we took it over – the condition had been heavily criticized in the judging for the best kept small Town in Bucks that we enter every year.

Allotment demand is not as great as it has been although we do still have a small waiting list. The new Community Allotment is thriving and gaining much local support.

The bathing steps on the Recreation Ground have been causing concern over safety but I am glad to report a contract has been agreed for remedial work to take place this summer.

We are pleased that Milton Keynes have been able to give the children's Play Area on the Rec a major refurbishment and Council have just recently agreed for a skateboard area to be established just beyond the play area but there will have to be some serious fund raising done for this to become a reality.

Sport in the town is flourishing and it is good to see so many adults and young people participating and we are proud of the quality and extent of our recreational facilities which the Council with the ground staff maintain to a very high standard.

Car parking is a problem in Olney as with many towns and the Council were disappointed the Milton Keynes Planners refused permission for an extra car park between the football pitch and East Street.

The Markets in Olney, like all open markets struggle to compete with the supermarkets, but we do still have both the weekly Market and the monthly Farmers Market and if we want them to continue we must use them.

The flower beds on the Market Place look particularly colourful at the moment and will again brighten up the town this summer. The council and the town are very fortunate to have three members of Ground Staff – Bob Marshall our head groundsman along with Richard Mynard and John Nichols, who are all very enthusiastic about their work of looking after the town.

Sandra Grummitt who retired in February had been Deputy Clerk for 20 years and in that time had worked very closely with the Recs and Services Committee, we are pleased to welcome Debbie as our new Deputy Clerk and I can tell you she is getting her head round all the aspects of the job extremely well. Liam our Town Clerk oversees all the activities of this committee and I want to thank him for all his helpful advice, professionalism and support.

In response to a question from Lesley Viney, Tony agreed to ask the sport clubs if they could do more to clear up litter after their games.

- **Planning**

Cllr Clark gave a verbal report on behalf of the planning committee:

Most of the applications are modest extensions to dwellings, although there had been 1 or 2 major plans.

Sainsbury's had proposed a store to the north of the town. MKC officers recommended approval, but the committee refused the application. Modified application has been submitted along with an appeal against the original application.

Westlands closed at short notice and concerns in the town that it would be used as a house in multiple occupation (HIMO).

In response to questions Steve Clark said that it would be for the planning inspector to decide who pays the costs of the Sainsbury appeal.

- **The Olney Centre Management Committee**

Cllr Bethune gave the following report on behalf of the committee:

This is the first full year that the centre has been under the control of Olney Town Council after taking the whole of the premises over from Milton Keynes at roughly this time last year.

This means that we are now fully accountable for all the upkeep and payments for the building. To this end we are looking at creating efficiencies in terms of energy savings. We had already changed our lighting from halogens to LED's, but these then didn't give as much direct light as previously and various of our users couldn't function as well. So we now have much better lighting in the centre while still being able to use the softer lighting system we had previously.

In the last year we have updated the toilets, which I hope you would agree are much pleasanter to use; and more compliant to the health and safety regulations, especially for the disabled.

Our head grounds man, Bob, volunteered to take over the maintenance of the plants inside the centre as well as those in the garden, which will be a considerable cost saving and an improvement on was becoming less of a satisfactory maintenance contract that we had.

The centre remit covers the upkeep of both the library and the pre-school. The pre-school is running very successfully but has had a few problems with the fabric of the building, which caused some of the flooring to need replacing.

The library, along with other libraries in Milton Keynes, is suffering from cuts, and is now being supported by FOLIO a group who are trying to maximise the use of the library and increase footfall. OTC has been financially assisting this and also making space available for educational groups to use at no charge. We are also looking at ways of improving the signage to the centre for all users.

One of the worst things that has happened recently was, of course, the break in at the centre using the Pre-school as the point of entry. Not a great deal of value was taken but with it came the inevitable feeling of violation of space and also the realisation. While replacement of articles stolen will be covered by insurance it has highlighted a few deficits on our part. We will be increasing lighting internally, as a deterrence, and we will be ensuring that our staff do not place themselves in danger by responding to alarm calls without back up.

I can't let this report pass without mentioning Sandra on whom we all relied for all thing 'Centre'. She was wonderful and is of course missed. That said we now have Debbie who in her short time here is already proving herself to be a valuable asset. So to that I add my thanks to Peter and Rob for their work in cleaning and caretaking.

Thanks also to Liam Costello and to the rest of the Centre Management Committee.

- **Neighbourhood Plan**

The consultation edition of Olney Neighbourhood Plan was approved by the Town Council at its meeting in March and the consultation period began on the 4th April. Among the many activities required to produce the document were:

- 1) The commissioning of Community Impact Bucks to produce a housing survey. The same consultant prepared an analysis of the original questionnaire
- 2) The preparation and issue in August of a Site Allocations Plan- Consultation in order to obtain more of the public's views on the number and location of dwellings and the location of employment sites.
- 3) A total of 13 meetings were held with the developers of the various sites.
- 4) Meetings were held with the head teachers of the three schools and with the doctors and practice manager of Cobb's Garden Surgery.
- 5) The production of about 14 drafts of the document as it was being developed
- 6) The assembly or production of the 19 documents that comprise the supporting evidence including the analysis of the original questionnaire and the Site Selections Report which builds on the responses to the Site Allocations Consultation.

The policies in the Plan are based on the evidence and follow closely the views expressed by the people of Olney so it is hoped that, once any comments on the current consultation are taken into account, it will be approved by the official Examiner and go forward to a successful referendum.

The development of Olney over the next few years will produce significant amounts of money from Section 106 levies that can be spent on infrastructure and other improvements in the town. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is being absorbed into the new Olney Development Group which will prioritise define and progress the many actions that are required to implement the various policies in the Plan and will negotiate to obtain the Section 106 monies that will provide much of the finance. This will be a big workload for Olney Town Council to handle but it is also a great opportunity both to make improvements across the town and also to provide the infrastructure that an expanding Olney will need.

4. Thames Valley Police report

PC Andy Hipkin gave a report on policing. He has been a PC for 15 years, lately working in the Fishermead area. The Neighbourhood Policing team consists of 4 officers and a sergeant; Tina Lewington is till the PCSO for the area.

There has been 45 burglaries over the last year compared to 19 the previous. One offender had recently been charged and sent to prison for 3 years. Motor vehicle offences were down to 14 from 29. Minor assaults were 16 as opposed to 20 last year. CCTV system installed at Market Place by OTC and NAG.

5. Brief reports from the following charities and organisations in the town:

- **Ann Hopkins Smith Almhouse Trust**

The nine Trustees manage the 12 Almshouses in Weston Road. Our secretary Ruth Whitehouse is retiring in May after 15 years as one of our Quaker Trustees and Secretary. Jane Roberts our second Quaker Trustee has agreed to take on the job as Secretary. We also have a new trustee from the town Lee Leyton, with his professional experience in Property Management, will be a great asset.

All the Alms-houses are occupied and we have a small waiting list. Anyone wishing to be considered for an Alms-house should contact me.

As Trustees we take pride in the appearance of the building on Weston Road which is an important part of the history of Olney.

The accounts of the trust are available for inspection on request to myself or our treasurer Jeremy Rawlins.

My thanks to all the Trustees, especially Jeremy, and to Mike and Susan Hughes who take a great interest in the day to day management. Also a big thankyou to Brenda Harris one of the residents who keeps a watchful eye on all our residents and reports any problems

- **Cowper and Newton Museum**

Active drive to make the museum more self-sufficient. Increase marketing of museum. Distribution email has a worldwide audience. 31% increase in income. Full events program, including successful Dickens activity. Hosted the Great War MK exhibition. Full condition survey of building carried out.

Poor law project is giving a useful insight into conditions in the 19th century. Exhibition gallery is well booked. He welcomed the addition of John Boardman and Rosemary Osbourne as trustee representative from OTC.

- **Newport Pagnell & Olney Lions**

Trevor Aldred presented a report on behalf of Newport Pagnell & Olney Lion

The Newport Pagnell and Olney Lions Club is part of 'Lions Clubs International' – which is one of the largest community service organisations in the world – with 1.4m members in 207 countries and geographic areas – in 40,000 clubs.

The NP&O Lions Club has been established for nearly 40 years. It has 17 Members – (15 male and 2 Female). The current Membership has accumulated over 270 years of service to the local community. Seven of our members are holders of the prestigious Melvin Jones Fellowship Award for Humanitarian Services.

The Club, through its membership of service-minded volunteers, seeks to serve the needs of the local community through community service. However, the Club's main activities are dedicated to Fund-Raising activities – and thereby, on making focused donations to a range of charities and good causes – International, National, and Local.

The Club's efforts are focused on local causes, since it is from the local community, that the majority of its money is raised. The money is raised through a number of Fund-Raising events held throughout the year – and is maintained within the Club's dedicated 'Charity Fund'.

In addition to its Charity Fund, the Club also has an 'Administration Fund', supported by individual membership subscriptions. Not a penny of the money raised through the charity Fund-Raising events goes to support the administration of the Club.

MAIN REPORT

The Club has had another successful year.

The Club has organised a number of very successful Fund-Raising events during the year including: the Dickens of a Christmas Craft Fayre; the Great Easter Egg Raffle; Sales of the Lions 2016 Calendars / Christmas cards, and an Awareness Evening in the company of the Medical Detection Dogs charity.

Upcoming FR events, for the remainder of the Lion's year, include the Annual Grand Motorama Car Show to be held in Olney Market Place, on June 12th and we hope to be in attendance at the Olney Cherry Fayre in June too. We also plan to have a regular stall on the Market Place to promote Lions – (and maybe sell some second hand books (TBC)) – and then, later in the year, to sell our new calendars and Christmas cards.

The Club's Lionistic year completes on 30th June 2016 - and the Club hopes to have raised around £16,000 by the end of the year – through the huge generosity of the local public and business community. So, a hearty 'THANK YOU' to all of you. Without your support we could not continue.

Donations are a little more difficult to forecast, being as they are, fairly 'random' in nature. After necessary expenses associated with the Fund Raising events, the Club has already donated around £7,000 to a number of charitable causes. With three months of the year left to go, there is bound to be further calls on our Charity Fund – plus, at this time of year, we often make a number of large grants to Lions International causes such as Water Aid, Sight Savers, and the various global Disaster Relief Funds. We are also planning to donate a further £1000 to local causes following the Motorama event in June. The best estimate of the total donations for the Lionistic year would therefore be around £11,000. To date, we have made donations to a number of good causes, including:

The Olney and NP Christmas Parcels – financing and delivering around 300 parcels to local residents

Olney 'Charity Begins at Home' project / Emergency Fund

Support for a local MS Group

Newport Pagnell Civil War Event Youth Education Project

Marie Curie

A Combined Washer / Drier for a local retirement home

A shop 'till' to help a local man connect with some of his memories

Sponsorships for - 'Ride for Willen'; to assist a Volunteer working in India, and to support the Atlantic Rowers (rowing for Brain Tumour Research and 'Make A Wish' charity)

Great Ormond Street Hospital – (supporting a local initiative)

Toby's Trust (Dravett Syndrome)

Medical Detection Dogs

Lions International Refugee Appeal

Hopefully, this selection amply illustrates the International, National and Local aspects of our work.

If you are aware of someone who might need or want our help – please get in touch with us – through our website or Facebook page (details of both below).

The Club continued to work hard to build on the successful relationships it has with the local community, local businesses and with other organisations in the town – who the Club tries to help on a 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours' basis – (for example, the Club has assisted The Olney Group (TOG) at their fireworks event – and, in turn, they have assisted us by providing helping hands at the Dickens event) – and by making a generous donation to Club funds.

The Club would like to sincerely thank the local community, businesses and organisations for their continued and extremely generous support for our activities – and with which we could not do without! In addition, the Club would like to make a special 'thank you' to the small army of Lions Friends, that also help us out when we are a little short of hands – throughout the year.

In addition to the Fund-Raising side of things, the Club has maintained a lively social calendar for the benefit of its membership including Jazz Nights, Dinner Meetings and Slide show presentations (e.g. Operation Mincemeat and The Career of Peter Williams (Isle of Man TT rider)). In April of this year, we are holding a special Dinner-Dance Event to celebrate the 39th Anniversary of the Club's Charter. The Mayors of Olney and Newport Pagnell (and his Consort), have kindly agreed to attend on behalf of the respective towns.

The Club is always on the look-out for new members. We urgently need extra help (Members and Friends) to boost our team. There is a real danger that we will be forced to scale back on some of our activities if we cannot secure more 'hands-on-deck'.

The Club has a regular feature in the Phone Box that provides information about what we are doing in the current period.

To contact the Club, you can visit our website at:

<http://www.npolneylions.btck.co.uk> or leave a comment/message at our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/NPOLionsclub/> . Once again, THANK YOU to all of you.

- **The Olney Group (TOG)**

Roger Mann gave a report on behalf of The Olney Group.

They run a number of successful events since being formed out of the Floral Fiesta

In June held the Duck and Raft races, and Fireworks Display. Santas Grotto at Dickens market. Duck and Raft races have been rebranded as Riverfest.

Finances in good order with a small reserve.

6. Open Forum

- Liz Noble raised a point about parking on double yellow lines along Weston Road.
- Colin Rodden commented that parking is an issue in the area, as well as Oakdown Crescent.
- Rosemary Osbourne said that lots of the yellow lines in the area need repainting.

Cllr Clark thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20:30.

