

MINUTES OF THE STOTFOLD ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD IN THE MEMORIAL HALL, STOTFOLD ON THURSDAY 5TH MARCH 2015 COMMENCING AT 7.30PM

Councillors present: Meeting Chaired by B Collier (Mayor)

Mrs S Bundock	Mrs A Clarey
A Cooper	Mrs M Cooper
S Dhaliwal	S Hayes
C Phelps	H Pickering
B Saunders (& CBC)	L Stoter
J Talbot	

In attendance: Mrs K Elliott-Turner (Town Clerk) and Mrs M Howard (Assistant Clerk) – Stotfold Town Council
Mrs A Clarey and Mrs P Manfield – Stotfold Green Wheel
Mr J Dodd – Headteacher, The Academy of Central Bedfordshire

34 electors who recorded their names

Councillor Collier welcomed everyone to the 2015 meeting, introduced those on the top table. He then asked electors to clearly state their name and where they live before speaking.

693. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Hyde.

694. TO ADOPT MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 6TH MARCH 2014

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 6th March 2014 were circulated to electors prior to the commencement of the meeting.

The minutes were taken as read prior to them being confirmed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

695. MATTERS ARISING

Minute 682 6/3/14

Mr Cutler, Hyde Avenue

Asked last year and the year before what is happening about people parking on grass verges and causing damage to the grass. Both the Chairman and Central Beds Councillor Brian Saunders confirmed that Central Beds Council is unwilling to take action against drivers unless there is evidence of the damaged caused.

696. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S ACTIVITIES DURING 2014/2015

Councillor Collier asked for a minutes silence to commemorate the life of Mr Frank Hyde who passed away this year.

I must start this years report with a tribute to the work of former Stotfold Town Councilor Frank Hyde. He first stood for election in 1946 when there were 36 candidates for the 15 member places. Frank was part of the Independent 9. It has been commented that, "The voters, however, seem to have voted for personalities rather than politics". At our Town Council level that is no bad thing. He became Chairman of the Council twice and served on School Governing Bodies. Frank was elected to Biggleswade Rural District Council and served as its Chairman. When Mid Bedfordshire District Council was formed taking over the work of the Rural Council he became a member of that body. He was an Elder Statesman of Stotfold.

The visits attended during the year included Civic Services, Carol Services, School Functions including judging fancy dress, the Royal Anglian Regt being given the Freedom of Bedford, Army Benevolent Fund functions, the Bedford River Festival and a North Hertfordshire District Council Civic Reception.

In all I went to 52 functions on behalf of the town during the year.

I thank Alan Cooper, the Vice Chairman, for attending other events and our wives for accompanying us.

Councillors

Thanks to all our Councillors for the work they have done for Stotfold this year. Councillor Simon Beckett has had to resign because of new work commitments, we thank him for his enthusiasm in all he did for the Council. Councillor Humphrey Pickering was welcomed as a new councillor.

Staff

A big thank you to all staff for their dedicated work again this year. We also have staff from the Citizens Advice Bureau CAB attending our offices twice a week to give advice. Their times are displayed on a notice at the Town Council Offices

News from Council and the Committees

All our Council and Committee meetings are open for members of the public to attend and, by prior arrangement with the Clerk, to speak on any item that is of interest to them for up to three minutes.

This is particularly important for the Planning Committee, where your input is valuable either by writing to us, or by coming and speaking. Those most closely affected by an application are notified by Central Bedfordshire Council that we hold copies of the plans and will be making a comment.

The Gypsy and Traveller Plan was sent to the Planning Inspectorate and their comments led to CBC scrapping what they have done and starting again. So we will have to be vigilant in the coming months and be prepared to respond.

During the Council year road enhancements were made throughout Stotfold and snagging work has continued in February and March 2015. The general feedback has been positive but problems have been noted in Brook Street. Some drivers are having difficulty understanding what a one way street means. Others are still getting used to most of Stotfold now being a 20 mph safer driving zone. Three years ago I said, "The year before last I reported that work on Queen Street was imminent". We were told by Central Bedfordshire Council that this work would be done at the same time as the Town Centre enhancement scheme starting in June 2014. Still no work has been done at either end of Queen Street !!!

The Arlesey Road Sports Project Phase Two is about to start. The senior football pitch area has been seeded and the grass is growing well. The pitch drainage work is complete and it drains into the hollow to the north of the field section now in use by the Junior Football Club teams. We are awaiting final designs for the changing rooms, community facilities building and extended car park for us to approve. The building work should start in the summer.

This year is an election year for the Town Council. Nomination Forms are available from our Office or from CBC at their Chicksands office. We need to have 15 Councillors elected. If you have an interest in doing this you have until 4pm on the 19th working day before the election on May 7th (May 10th) to deliver your forms to CBC.

I would like to thank all volunteers in the town who have continued to support our numerous organisations.

697. REPORT ON TOWN COUNCIL PRECEPT FOR 2015/2016

A copy of the report, available on file, was provided to those present. There were no questions from the public.

698. REPORT ON THE ELEEMOSYNARY CHARITY OF WILLIAM FIELD

A copy of the financial report of the Eleemosynary Charity of William Field, available on file, was provided to those present. Councillor Hayes as a trustee of the Charity gave the following report:

The Eleemosynary Charity of William Field, is the only poor Charity within Stotfold. Trustees of the Charity serve for four years except for the Vicar who has tenure. The assets of the charity include a sum of money in a deposit account which cannot be touched, 8 acres of land at Common Road, Stotfold, and a parcel of land near Buntingford. With the income from the sale of the land in Brook Street the Charity was able to bring the Common Road allotments back into use and a car park has been established. The day to day running is in the hands of the Town Council Staff and the Charity thank them for all their hard work over the past year.

Bill Cutler, Hyde Avenue

Asked what happened to the Roe's Educational Charity?

Councillor Hayes confirmed that this had now been amalgamated with the Eleemosynary Charity and still gives out grants for educational purposes

699. ANNUAL POLICE REPORT FROM BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE ON MATTERS PERTAINING TO STOTFOLD

As no representative from Bedfordshire Police could attend the Annual Town Meeting a report had been compiled and circulated to all those present, and is available on file.

Bill Cutler, Hyde Avenue

Referred to the forthcoming Police referendum and asked what the additional money being requested is to be spent on. He was advised that the Police and Crime Commissioner has said that it will be used to fund 100 more officers for 'local policing'. The current Council Tax bills will include the 15.85%, however this figure is subject to the referendum and could be amended, with Council Tax bills being adjusted.

700. REPORT FROM A CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCILLOR ON MATTERS PERTAINING TO STOTFOLD

Central Beds Councillor Brian Saunders gave the following report:

- In response to Mr B Cutlers previous question regarding parking on grass verges, Central Beds Council is trialing a system where local Councils can ask for areas to be designated as areas where no parking is allowed. Police, Fire and Ambulance services could also highlight problem areas. Notes will be put on vehicles where there are problem areas, warnings could then be given and when considered appropriate Central Beds Council could put up signage which would allow the Police to fine offenders abusing the no parking area. This is a very long process and is still in a trial stage.
- With regard to Queen Street, the work was considered whilst the town enhancement work was being carried out, but the money has still not been received from the developer as they are in dispute with the fee charges.
- Amey have a licence to use the Old Roecroft school for storing road planings, with only two vehicle movements permitted per day. This is a temporary licence and once all planings are removed the site will be returned to a grass field and reinstated to Central Beds Council's satisfaction. The field is designated as recreational use to change this it will have to undergo a full consultation.

701. GUEST SPEAKERS: MR J DODD, ACADEMY OF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE

Thanked the Town Council for the invitation and gave the following report:

There are two sites for the Academy of Central Bedfordshire – Houghton Regis and Stotfold, 3 years ago a free school programme was set up and 35 schools came together and funding was found for Houghton Regis and the lease of the old Roecroft School. There are state of the art facilities at the Stotfold site and it is unique. It is the heart of the education system in Central Beds Council. They mainly deal with vulnerable children and do not have to follow the national curriculum, however they do teach academic subjects alongside motor vehicle engineering, catering, hairdressing, sports, Health & Social care and animal and horticultural studies. The school focuses on the children as individuals and ensure they develop their emotional well being. The school teaches children that their behaviour is not their fault, however it is their responsibility and believe that the children should be part of the community. The school and teacher welcome visits from interested people and will be holding open days in the summer.

Val Balderstone, Marschfield

Asked if the Academy had approached Central Beds Council for the use of the field that is currently being used by Amey to store road plannings

Mr Dodds confirmed that he has on a regular basis

702. GUEST SPEAKERS: GREEN WHEEL

Councillor Mrs Clarey introduced herself as a Stotfold Town Councillor, the Chair of the Town Plan Implementation Group and Vice Chair of the Green Wheel Stakeholder Group. She introduced Mrs Pamela Manfield as a member of the Town Plan Implementation Group, minutes secretary of the Green Wheel Stakeholder Group, and someone who has lived in Stotfold for 14 years and little that has happened environmentally has slipped past Pam's attention.

Councillor Anne Clarey and Ms Pam Manfield represented the Green Wheel Stakeholder Group that meets regularly in Stotfold. She began her presentation by reminding the meeting of the previous initiatives that have pre-empted the Green Wheel idea.

In 2008 residents were invited by Cliff Andrews of the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) to take part in Green Infrastructure Planning for Stotfold. A group, including some Town Councillors and representatives from the scouting community, produced the inspirational plan which can be viewed at the end of the meeting. Then we had the Quiet Lanes Initiative, run by Central Beds Council, when once again Stotfold Town Council took an active part in naming roads and lanes that it was seen were important in preserving a degree of calm around our town. This ideal would certainly have met with approval from 41% of households who responded to the Town Plan Questionnaire in 2009. More recently the Town Plan Implementation Group had become aware of local newspaper articles about the Biggleswade Green Wheel. They had formulated their own plans for Stotfold, again supporting the view of residents. At the Festival Fete in 2013 they launched their ideas using some of the materials you can see on display. Many of you took the opportunity to talk to members of the Implementation Groups and the Town Council, backing up your thoughts by completing a brief questionnaire. At about the same time it was discovered that Central Beds Council and particularly Cliff Andrews from BRCC, who incidentally was responsible for the Green Infrastructure Planning, was already underway with plans for the Etonbury Green Wheel. This was not just a paper exercise, as we will shortly reveal.

What exactly is a Green Wheel

In the words of James Jamieson – Leader of Central Beds Council – in the Biggleswade Chronicle 20.02.15 It is “a way of increasing access to the countryside by providing an interconnecting ‘wheel’ of

green spaces, cycle paths, bridleways, walks and open countryside, with ‘spokes’ connecting from a centre to a surrounding Green Wheel”

Who is involved in our Stakeholder Group?

Stotfold can be proud of leading the way in our local project. Fifteen to twenty representatives of the various groups meet regularly at the Simpson Centre with Brian Collier as Chair. Representation comes from Stotfold, Arlesey and Fairfield Councils, members from the parishes of Astwick and Radwell, and from the Heritage Foundation in Letchworth Garden City. We are also joined by the environmental groups TEASEL and ACORN. Masterminding the project is Cliff Andrews (BRCC) with Johnathon Woods (CBC Access Development Team Leader), Clare Wardle (Ancient Woodlands Officer) and Liz Anderson (Central Beds Council Ecologist) who is a Stotfold resident.

Achievements

- a) As you probably know, work is already underway at Etonbury Wood, providing better access, re-routed footpaths to protect wildlife, information lecterns and benches and enhanced planting to diversify habitats. Work is already underway and we hope this will be publicised and the Wood formally opened in the near future.
- b) The Green Wheel group has already been successful in being awarded £140,000 over 2 years to be spent on:
 - 1) A new cycle route from the A507 underpass to Fairfield Park, inside the hedge and with improvements of the hedgerow and additional planting
 - 2) A safer cycle route to Arlesey Station: hopefully through the trees near Old Oak Close to line to the existing cycleway, keeping cyclists off busy main roads.
 - 3) In Fairfield Orchard a management plan is being developed and there will be sensitive pruning to safeguard historic trees.
 - 4) Several ponds along Pix Brook will be enhanced for wildlife and wildflower areas will be planted.
 - 5) 2 kilometres of bridleway between Stotfold and Astwick will be gated and resurfaced. (Bridleways 17 and 18). This is the main north-south path going north of Etonbury School and across to Astwick and Common Road. Also 1.5km of hedgerows along the routes will be improved.
 - 6) The remaining 40% of the Fairfield west boundary will be resurfaced and the landscape improved.
 - 7) In Arlesey Old Moat and Glebe Meadows Nature Reserve, hedges will be improved as will those along footpath 1 near the new development.
 - 8) All underpasses of the A507 will have better mowing regimes with possible wildflower seeding
- c) The Masterplan for other major works is underway and an application for further funding for this will go into Central Beds Council later this year. The maps on display show where we would like to link or create other footpaths and bridleways and enhance areas for wildlife, based on comments from residents.

Future Plans

New ideas are constantly being considered. At the last meeting the following were suggested:

1. A link to Henlow from Arlesey Station, providing a safe path for walkers, cycles, buggies and mobility scooters.
2. The Hicca Way near the railway bridge to the Nature Reserve in Arlesey needs wildflower seeding and near the old orchard, trees and wildflowers are needed and a hedgerow should be planted at the new part of the Nature Reserve.
3. At Etonbury School a screen of planting is needed at the bottom of the new football field and there should be headland planting of arable weeds to enhance the area for insects and other wildlife.

How You can be Involved

Having looked at the display, let us know what paths/cycleways/bridleways you think need linking or creating. What areas would you like to see improved for wildlife and how. Send letters or emails via

the Town Council, or discuss this at the Green Wheel display at major town events. Come and help us with major projects once work has begun.

Questions from the public were invited:

Imogen Coverdale, Hitchin Road

With regard to underpasses on the A507, the Arlesey Road underpass floods on a regular basis.

The Chairman confirmed that there has been an upgrade to the pumping system used. There will also be a new bridge over the A507 as part of the new 1000 homes development. The pathway will be passing through Etonbury Wood and will be lit.

703. PRESENTATION OF CITIZENS AWARDS BY THE MAYOR

This year there are two people to receive the Citizen Awards: We look principally at the voluntary contributions people make towards the life of Stotfold

Iain Rutherford

The first recipient has been involved with local schools in several capacities: as a member of PTAs at Roecroft, Etonbury and Fearnhill Schools: as governor of Roecroft School; as a voluntary worker in local schools; helping local children with piano and singing lessons; as a badge examiner for local uniformed organisations; as an organist at St Mary's and the Methodist Churches; a past supporter of Stotfold Junior Football Club; as musical director and accompanist at many Stotfold events; a Roe committee member; a member of Stotfold Mill and as a Justice of the Peace. Recently he took part in the ice bucket challenge and got others to do so as well to raise money for motor neurone disease.

Patrick Chalmers

The second recipient likes to get his hands dirty. Some of his work at the Mill includes in the early days of the restoration he was part of the team moving tons of debris, damaged machinery and then the sifting to find artefacts. Over one week he helped paint the rebuilt Mill with another mill volunteer. He has since trained as a miller. He has been a prominent member of the nature conservation group TEASEL (The Astwick and Stotfold Environmental Link) in which his previous experience as a landscape gardener has been invaluable. He leads weekend work parties in various locations in Stotfold including: Mill Meadows, Centenary Wood, Millennium Green and parts of Kingfisher Way footpath. His advice on the use and purchase of mechanical equipment for Teasel has been needed. He has helped in the management and enhancement of the Mill Meadows which has become a Nature Reserve and part of which is a County Wildlife site. He is a leading light of the teasel steering group and represents that group on the Nature Reserve Management Committee.

704. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION FROM THE FLOOR

Mr B Cutler, Hyde Avenue

Queried if the plots in the New Garden of Rest in the cemetery were going to be sold as single or double plots as he believed married couples should be allowed to share the same plot.

The Chairman advised that the size of each plot in the new Garden of Rest is smaller than the old Garden of Rest plots, and so it may be a question of ease of digging which restricts it to single depth plots. This matter will be raised at a future meeting of the Cemetery Committee.

Laura Beale, Church Road

Thanked the Town Council for their work so far to prevent development of the former Roecroft Lower School playing field. The Chairman confirmed that the Town Council has requested that the site is designated as an official green space in a recent Central Beds Council consultation, and we have objected to its allocation as a possible housing development in the past.

Pam Manfield, Astwick Road

Confirmed that the Town Council and Central Beds Councillor Brian Saunders have worked to keep the site as open space. She has organised a protest in Church Lane on Saturday 28th March 2015 at 2pm outside the playing field site to campaign against allowing it to be used for development in the future. There is also a petition available to sign at Beales, Cards and Crafts, the library and the Town Council office.

Mr D Osborne, Trinity Road

Queried the width of the footpath in Regent Street now that a new layby had been installed as it is very dangerous. Also asked if it would be possible for a new roundabout to be put on the corner of The Green outside the Crown Pub as this would slow down the traffic.

The Chairman confirmed that the Town Council had noticed the narrowness of the footpath and this was pointed out to the project team during the improvement works. There should have been a walkabout with the contractors to raise any issues arising from the works, however this has been postponed to wait for the results of the Road Safety Audit currently being carried out. A date is still to be confirmed. With regard to provision of a roundabout on the corner of The Green by the Crown pub, there was uncertainty as to whether this was included in any Section 106 agreements for nearby developments, and so the matter will be referred to a future meeting of the Recreation Grounds, Public Lands and Lighting Committee.

Mr S Barber, Vaughan Road

Asked for an update regarding the Roker Park and Arlesey Road project.

The Chairman confirmed that Central Beds Council had very recently agreed to lift the covenant on Roker Park which would allow the use of the land for development. Rowan Homes will be leading the project to provide a replacement facility for Stotfold Football Club at Arlesey Road. We are waiting for the plans for this building which will be a 'like for like' replacement facility. The Town Council is setting up a working party to identify other community uses for the Arlesey Road site. Although football will be a prime use, it will not be exclusive, as this is community use space.

Mr B Cutler, Hyde Avenue

Pointed out that the recent work on Brook Street and the provision of parking on the right hand side of the road is now very tight and means that a driver has to park alongside a wall and would struggle to get out of the car. There is also an additional danger as although the road is one-way, the cycle way goes in two directions, and alongside these parked cars. He was advised that the parking provision was at the request of residents in the road who did not have any off-street parking at all.

Mr Cutler also asked about the Stotfold Feast and why the fair does not visit anymore.

The Chairman confirmed that Thurston's Fair has chosen not to come to Stotfold. The Town Council cannot make the fair come, but continue to ask each year.

Mr Pat Clarey, Hazel Grove

Congratulated the Town Council for working with Central Beds Council to provide highway solutions to improve what was there previously. He questioned the idea of a table top sale which would only raise £200 - £400 to kit out the new community building. He mentioned that there would be a Community Christmas Fayre on 28th November which would raise approximately £1000 for pre-school playgroups.

Imogen Coverdale, Hitchin Road

Referred to the Community Christmas Fayre which sells jams and preserves. She highlighted that Stotfold does not have a Farmers Market where local businesses could sell items such as homemade jams and preserves and asked if this would be something the Town Council could investigate.

The Chairman confirmed that this had been looked into previously, however this may be something that could be held in the new Community Building.

Councillor Mrs Clarey confirmed that the Town Implementation Group looked into providing a farmers market but due to Charter Markets being held in surrounding towns it is very difficult to find a suitable day of the week to hold one.

Mrs V Balderstone, Marschefield

Queried if the contractors were coming back to clear up the muddy verges on either side of the newly constructed replacement Ford Bridge. This seems to be caused by cars pulling in onto the grass verge to let others pass. She asked if the Town Council could put in bollards or wooden fencing to prevent vehicles from driving on the verge.

She was advised that the area was seeded as part of the bridge works and they are still to complete works on the banks of the river within Riverside Playing Field. This matter can be taken to a future meeting of the Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting Committee for consideration.

Mr B Cutler, Hyde Avenue

Proposed a vote of thanks to the Mayor and speakers for an excellent meeting.

There being no further questions the Mayor thanked all present for attending the meeting and closed the meeting at 9.40pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATED