

MINUTES OF THE STOTFOLD ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD IN THE OAK HALL, GREENACRE CENTRE, STOTFOLD ON THURSDAY 5th MARCH 2020 COMMENCING AT 7.30PM

Councillors present: Meeting chaired by Councillor A Cooper (Mayor)

S Buck	Mrs S Bundock
Mrs A Clarey	B Collier
Mrs M Cooper	Mr S Dhaliwal
Mr S Hayes	Mrs J Hyde
D Matthews	H Pickering
C Phelps	B Saunders (& CBC)
J Talbot	

In attendance: Mrs K Elliott-Turner (Town Clerk) Ms C Jenkins (Assistant Clerk), Steve Adams (Headteacher, Pix Brook Academy)

39 electors who recorded their names

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the 2020 meeting, and introduced the Town Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Deputy Mayor and the speakers for the evening.

748. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Central Bedfordshire Councillors S Dixon and Ms N Harris.

749. TO ADOPT MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 7th MARCH 2019

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 7th March 2019 were circulated to electors prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Councillor Mrs J Hyde asked for minute 742 to be amended, “this year the Charity has received a request of £20,000 plus interest”, to read “this year the Charity has received a bequest of £20,000 plus interest”.

After this amendment, the minutes were taken as read prior to them being confirmed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

750. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING – FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

Hitchin Road Recreation Ground Changing Rooms

Thanks were given to Stotfold Junior Football Club for their work in refurbishing the changing rooms at Hitchin Road Recreation ground. These are now available for use by the club and the wider community

Garden of Rest

Having drawn up our own designs for repair works, these were not adequate to provide for a contract. A professional was asked to produce structural plans for repair works. Quotes have now been received and these will be discussed in a

fortnight at the Cemetery Management Committee meeting. It is hoped that work will be completed by autumn.

751. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S ACTIVITIES DURING 2019/2020
Councillor Cooper read out his Annual Report:

Town Council - As always, my thanks go to all our Councillors, staff and contractors for the work they have done for Stotfold over the last year. Elections for the Town Council were held in May 2019 and due to the loss of councillors Stuart Jackson and Betty Sowinska for personal reasons there were only thirteen candidates for the fifteen positions, the elections were therefore uncontested. Since that time, we have been joined by new co-opted councillors Steve Buck and Glen Russell and so are once again back to full strength. Current key holders for the Greenacre Centre are Laila Laraman and Richard Booth.

Looking to the future - The 'Town Plan' was formally adopted by the Town Council in October 2009 to act as a guide for future planning in provision of facilities and equipment around the town, it was also an advisory publication for the Local Planning Authority to consider along with their own forward planning intentions under their 'Local Plan'. Progress in achieving these aims is still monitored by the Town Plan Implementation Group who regularly report back to the full Town Council. The Town Council have been able, having met all of the qualifying criteria, to adopt the 'General Power of Competence' enabling them to do "anything that individuals may do, providing it is not prohibited by other legislation." Our ongoing aim is to also become a 'Quality Status' Council. We have now produced a 'Corporate Strategy' document to identify the Councils vision for the town, its aims, objectives and key priorities over the medium to long term future, this was adopted by the full Town Council in December 2019. The document will take some guidance from the original Town Plan and also the shorter-term action plans of the individual committees. At a later stage it should also incorporate a 'Financial Strategy' plan to indicate time scale for delivery of some desired schemes. The former Town Enhancement committee has been renamed the Town Strategy Committee as part of this new initiative.

Cemetery developments – As reported at the last meeting the council need to provide adequate burial spaces for the longer-term future. We have had plans produced to allow the 'Garden of Rest' to accommodate interment of cremated remains over the next 50-year period and are now seeking contractors to undertake the works required.

Communications – So that residents can follow the workings of the Town Council more easily we have upgraded the website to be more 'user friendly' so that along with the Facebook pages, telephone, e-mail, notice boards and counter services as much information as possible is on offer to the public.

New Defibrillator at Kings Baptist Church – Baldock Rotary Club have kindly gifted a second of these potentially lifesaving devices to Stotfold Town Council, the first being mounted to the front of the Greenacre Centre building. Kings Baptist Church, on the corner of The Green, agreed for it to be mounted on their building by the car park where it is strategically placed for the north of the town.

We must all hope that it may never be required but in that unfortunate event the door of the cabinet has full instructions on how to access and use it while the unit itself actually 'talks' you through what to do!

Public Art – There is an obligation for a piece of ‘Public Art’ to be installed within the Greenacre Park and some component parts of this have already been produced with the help of Stotfold residents, financing of this is from ‘Section 106’ contributions by the developers. It must be hoped that this will be installed soon along with the completion of all other work on the Greenacre and Trinity Manor estates so that full adoption by Central Bedfordshire and Stotfold Town Councils can be completed.

Transport issues – It is planned that, in conjunction with Central Bedfordshire Council, further traffic calming measure will be installed on the Norton Road between the Hertfordshire border and our by-pass. Bus users at The Green will have noticed that the (relatively) new bus shelter opposite the Coach and Horses is now fully operational with the electronic notice board announcing next arrival times.

Social groups and volunteers – These continue their great works in maintaining and enhancing the facilities we can all enjoy throughout the year, there are too many to list but I’m sure you all know who you are. They bring both pleasure and support to residents of all ages and abilities around the town as a very valuable part of our community. Our thanks and support go to them all.

Anti-social Behaviour – The Town Council, in their own effort to address this problem, are giving financial support to the ‘Youth Participation Team’ of Grand Union Housing and led by Nicola King. This small group operate at all times of the day in an effort to engage with young people of pre to early teens ages and discourage them from becoming involved in anti-social activities. The team also interact within local schools to give one-to-one mentoring to pupils with domestic or social problems.

Stotfold Football Club – New Home!

After many years of discussion and negotiation, on 14th March 2019 work officially began on construction of the new football stadium and clubhouse within the Arlesey Road Recreation site and was largely completed at the end of that year. This scheme, being carried out by the settle Group, will now release the old Roker Park site for housing development including much needed social and affordable dwellings. The Council are the main lease holders with the football club as their tenants under lease. Full exchange of the clubhouse and grounds lease to the football club was completed on 3rd February 2020. Following completion of this phase the Town Council will be seeking to expand the other community recreational and leisure facilities within this large area such as a MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area), play and fitness equipment along with other activities still to be identified through consultation with local potential users. Type of facilities and timing of their installation at this and other recreation grounds will of course depend on suitable finance being sourced and budgeted over the coming years. In addition to this, the small car park facilities in Malthouse Lane for the Riverside Recreation Ground will be expanded to relieve on-road parking problems when football matches are held on that site.

Stotfold Christmas lights - Many of our residents once again enjoyed this display based around the High Street, Grange Drive and the Greenacre Centre and now at the Hitchin Road crossroads! The main financial support (around 50%) has been donated by the Council with the understanding that the remainder should be raised from local businesses, organisations and individuals to indicate their desire for it to continue. The committee hope to organise further fund-raising events during the year as well as the events in and around the Greenacre Centre at Christmas to help

towards the costs. Council staff, councillors and other volunteers gave their time in supporting these events and are due huge thanks for their efforts (including the mysterious Santa who was so popular with the children). Along with donations from our local retailers and generous giving by the public both to collections at the Co-Op (a very generous supporter themselves) and in collection pots around the town there was a narrow surplus over cost this year. Your continued support for this event is required and we ask that further residents step forward to help organise the festivities, including fund-raising, in the future. Please ask at the Council offices if you are interested.

Keep Stotfold Clean! – Please remember that ‘Big Tidy Up’ events will be held on both 16th May and 12th September this year so all residents are invited to come along to assist in clearing the litter from our streets on either date to make our surroundings more pleasant and less polluted – Look out for fuller details on our notice boards and other media.

VE Day – 75th Anniversary celebration

This being the year for commemorating ‘VE Day’ over the extended weekend of 8-10 May the Council intend holding an exhibition of memorabilia in the Memorial Hall on Saturday 9th from 12:00 to 5:00pm and would appreciate anybody who has relative items of interest considering loaning them for this short period of time along with any supporting information available. Any items loaned will be noted and their lender identified for safe return after the event – lenders may wish to attend and discuss displays with visitors. A poster is displayed during this meeting with all relevant information. Please contact the Town Council offices for details or to offer your assistance. This exhibition will coincide with Stotfold Mill weekend and therefore provide an additional or alternative venue for residents, refreshments and snacks will be available, entrance is free.

752. REPORT ON TOWN COUNCIL’S FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES DURING 2019/2020 AND THE TOWN COUNCIL PRECEPT FOR 2020/2021

The Town Clerk explained the report for the Town Council’s financial activities during 2019/2020, including information regarding the Stotfold Christmas Lights, current use of the Simpson Centre, Investments and the General Power of Competence that the Town Council now holds. Additional information on grants awarded, free or discounted facilities hire and Councillor mileage claims were also included. The Town Clerk then explained the Precept calculation for 2020/2021.

A copy of the report appended to these minutes (appendix A) was provided to those present. There were no questions from those present.

753. REPORT ON THE ELEEMOSYNARY CHARITY OF WILLIAM FIELD

As Chairman of the Trustees of the Eleemosynary Charity of William Field, Councillor Mrs Hyde gave the following report.

You have before you the A/Cs of the Eleemosynary Charity of William Field.

In Stotfold we are fortunate that in the past people such as William Field, Octavius Roe and Jane Brooks left money and land for the benefit of the residents of Stotfold. Originally these were administered by the Vicar and Church Wardens, but with the establishment of Parish Councils some of the responsibilities were then shared by the Town Council and therefore they are answerable to the electors of Stotfold which is

why these accounts are presented to you tonight, as representatives of your community.

The trustees of this Charity are 2 appointees from the Town Council, the Vicar and the two Church Wardens. The Town Council appoints their two Trustees who then serve a 4 year term. The Vicar and Church Wardens serve for as long as they hold that office.

The Eleemosynary Charity is made up of a number of smaller Charities, which over the last 20 years or so have been amalgamated. This process has now finished and Stotfold is left with the main charities being the Eleemosynary Charity, the Roe's Education Charity (largely funded with money from the Eleemosynary), the Roe's Alms Houses, the William Field Charity and the Roe's Charity for the Parish Clerk. Income for these is derived from invested money and land.

At present the Eleemosynary Charity is made up of 8 acres of land down Common Road. 3 acres have been returned to allotment land. The other 5 acres is currently being farmed for us. We are grateful for the work that Annette at the Town Council does on our behalf to administer the allotments for us. We are currently experiencing problems with vandalism, theft and trespass. To mitigate this, we have invested in gates and locks and are currently looking at the possibility of putting a fence and more gates around the allotments.

We also own a parcel of land near Buntingford.

Our main source of income is derived from the sale of the old Brook Street Allotments where the new houses now stand, stretching back some way along the Brook. £390,000 was invested with CCLA an investment company that specialises in investing for Charities and Churches. That capital sum has now grown to £640,000 from which we are currently receiving approximately £19,000 a year to distribute to good causes in Stotfold and Fairfield.

Over the years we have distributed in excess of £85,000.

Last year grants included the Need Project, the work of Stotfold Library and money to help young people fund education costs and trips.

Grants are made half yearly with the deadline for applications being the end of June and the end of December. Application forms are available from the Town Council Offices. If you know of any individual or organisation which might benefit from some funding for a project or a need then please encourage them to apply.

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

Due to operational restrictions, Bedfordshire Police were unable to provide a report for this meeting. We have been informed that the Police will be holding a surgery where residents can meet with the local PCSOs to raise any concerns they have. This will be held on Saturday 25 April 2020, 1pm-2pm at the Common Road Allotments and 2pm-3pm at the Riverside Recreation Ground.

The Mayor advised that Town Councillor J Talbot regularly attends the Bedfordshire Police Priority Setting Meetings on behalf of the Town Council, and shares concerns

of residents and the Council with the Police. Thanks were given to Councillor Talbot for his time in attending these meetings.

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

Central Beds Councillor B Saunders gave the following report:

We start the report for this year with the elections in May. Steve Dixon and Brian Saunders were re-elected and we welcomed new councillor Nicola Harris who replaced John Saunders who had been a local councillor for many years. At the council AGM in May the responsibilities for us were approved, Councillor Dixon is Executive Member for Transformation and External Bodies, a member of the General Purposes Committee and Biggleswade Joint Committee as a substitute. Councillor Harris is on the Licensing Committee and Licensing Sub-Committee and an Audit Committee substitute. Councillor Saunders is now Chairman of the Council, a member of SACRE (the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) and Chairman of the Langford and Biggleswade Wind Farm Committee.

As you can see much of the work of a Ward Councillor is to look after what is going on that affects the whole of the CBC area. There are 7 Full Council meetings a year with most other committees meeting bi-monthly.

Two grant schemes have been put into place this year of which the second round of monies will be available from 1st April. Each Central Bedfordshire Councillor has access to £2000 from which they can allocate grants to local projects that demonstrate a community benefit. Councillors can also work together across a ward to combine their grants, if that is what is most needed. Ward Councillor grant funding is a one-off grant available for capital costs only to purchase items such as outdoor or indoor resources such as equipment with all grants being match-funded. The second of these schemes to launch is the Community Asset Grant Scheme. £182,000 is allocated to help local voluntary and community organisations or town and parish councils make their projects a reality. Groups can bid for matched-funding grants of up to £25,000 to invest in capital projects, such as a new roof for a village hall or to improve access for people with disabilities.

Council Tax

A significant percentage of council tax is spent in areas that aren't particularly evident to residents. Some 70% of CBCs spend is in supporting the vulnerable, elderly and in children's services. CBC continues to evolve our relationship with the Health Service, recognising the pressures being faced by all those involved in primary and acute health care. Plans are underway to create new Health Hubs across Central Bedfordshire in an effort to improve the frontline offer in the primary sector and reduce the pressure signposted to the acute facilities.

At the Budget meeting of the Full Council a motion was passed to put into reserves an amount of £1.68m towards the planting of trees, hedges and the like, part of the Councils work towards making Climate Change. This follows on from a motion passed last year for a Sustainability plan to be written in response to the Climate Emergency declared by the Local Government Association. The draft of this plan will be discussed later this month before its hopeful adoption in Q2 of 2020.

Planning

As with our report of previous years, a big concern faced by many residents is the over development of our towns and villages. We have recently heard the news that the appeal for 55 homes on land west of Langford (Biggleswade Road) has been dismissed by the inspector.

Most residents we discuss these concerns with are acceptive of the need for development, but in Stotfold we have thankfully not received news of any new major plans for the town. That said, we have endured behavioural issues with most of the development sites currently being built in the ward and haven't shied away from tackling these issues head on, if sometimes a little too literally so.

The CBC Local Plan has been submitted for examination and we hope for a decision after the summer.

Education

The consultation on our Schools for the Future programme across the Stotfold & Shefford Cluster is now complete. Initial indications show an overwhelming support for the conversion to a 2-tier structure and the detailed planning thereafter is now ongoing.

The Pix Brook Academy is rising from the ground in a very rapid manor and has attracted a lot of interest. The Head Teacher will update the meeting this evening in more detail.

CBC have equally delivered an impressive number of new school places over the past few years. Since 2015, some 3,500 new places have been created, totalling over £60 million in spend. With nearly 90% of schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted, prospects for our children are improving daily, with our levels of those not in education, employment of training some 8% better than the national average. Indeed, a recent peer inspection concluded that CBC was particularly well managed and in first class financial order.

Football

It was great to see the opening of the new Stotfold Football Club facility on Arlesey Road, after many years working on the deal between CBC, Stotfold Town Council and Settle Housing. This facility together with the existing pitches at Etonbury, rear of the new Greenacres Centre and elsewhere provides an enviable level of facilities for the area.

Update

While it is pleasing to be able to report that the final surfacing of the roads on the Greenacres development has been completed, it continues to be a priority to push roads over for adoption by CBC which is never a quick task. However, the two developers are looking at handing them over in early summer. This will allow CBC to tackle some of the more pressing concerns that have been raised, as a consequence of the development's occupation.

Keeping in touch

While we have tried to hold surgeries over the last few weeks, the frenetic lifestyles most people now lead, has led us to conclude that such prescriptive methods of engagement no longer work. We are generally available at the end of a phone or

email 7 days a week and happy to continue that way or answer questions at any parish council meeting during the year. Indeed such an informal setting has led to equipment being acquired to support residents request to help with litter picking and footpath marking to remind dog owners to “pick up” where necessary!

And on that emotive note, we look forward to serving the ward for the next 3 years.

756. GUEST SPEAKERS:

Steve Adams, Headteacher, Pix Brook Academy, on progress of the new school and its future

The new Pix Brook Academy is currently housed at the Etonbury Academy site in temporary accommodation. This will become a permanent building for Etonbury, once the new Pix Brook Academy is completed.

Construction work started in September 2019 with 65 pupils for year 7. Pix Brook is a BEST school as is Etonbury Academy. The school caters for the Stotfold and Arlesey expansions and the need for pupil places. It is an amazing opportunity to contribute to town. Young people seem to get bad press these days and we see the Pix Brook Academy as a fantastic learning experience.

It has taken a large amount of work to start the school, with many elements to consider. There is nothing in place with a new school, so a large body of work was involved. Staff recruitment, setting up after school and club activities, and the education of the children. We are a values based school, teaching ambitious, aspirational and social respect for the community. Installing values and helping students to do well in exams and make good life choices.

The new Pix Brook Academy building cost £25 Million to build and is anticipated to last 50+ years. Work on the building started on 14 September 2019. The new school will open to pupils of 3 September 2020, so less than a year to construct. The building itself is built on a modular basis, with modules arriving fully fitted, painted, with utilities installed, and then craned into position. We will be expecting 130 new pupils in year 5. In terms of the wider community use, a four-court gym will be available for the community to hire in the evenings.

Members of the public asked questions, which included a query about whether the Arlesey Road access to the school is suitable to be shared by vehicles and children walking to school, and whether alternative pedestrian routes have been considered. A question was also asked about whether solar panels are to be fitted to the school, in consideration of the global climate emergency. The build was carbon neutral, in terms of the heating system used, and topsoil from the build was not removed from site. The argument for solar panels is environmentally sound.

Councillor Brian Collier, Stotfold Town Councillor, on the role and responsibility of Stotfold Town Council within local government

The Local Government Act 2011 introduced the new General Power of Competence. This allows a council to do anything a reasonable individual can do, provided it does not go against an existing law which prevents that action or spend, it is legal. For example, provide a youth club or a community cafe. To be eligible for the General Power of Competence, two thirds of councillors should have gone through the election process, and the council must have an appropriately qualified Clerk. Stotfold Town Council is currently eligible to use the General Power of Competence.

Stotfold Town Council has a Town Clerk, four supporting staff members, two buildings keyholders/caretaker, two caretakers for our Riverside Playing Field MUGA facility, and 3 contractors – Street Lighting, Handyman and Landscape & Grass Cutting. These are 6 year contracts, which end in 2023.

In terms of our council in context, Town and Parish Councils are the lowest tier of local government, the next level up in our area is Central Bedfordshire Council which is a Unitary Authority (other areas have a District Council and then a County Council). The top tier is the UK Government.

Each level of government has its own role and responsibilities, each set out in law. As an example, the current Government sets the law of the land through Parliament; our Unitary Authority Central Bedfordshire Council is responsible for education and children's services, planning and economic regeneration, waste collections, housing, and council tax collection; Town and Parish Councils may be responsible for the town's allotments, cemetery, street furniture such as bus shelter, litter bins and seats, markets, community centres, representation on outside bodies, representation of the community.

Central Bedfordshire Council is funded through Government grants, fees and Council Tax. Stotfold Town Council does not receive Government grants but receives a portion of the Council Tax collected and income from its services and investments.

Work of the Town Council is primarily carried out by its committees. Each committee has its own delegated powers to act, and those actions and decisions are reported to council. Committee members can fully debate matters and vote on decisions to be taken. Certain matters are restricted to full council, such as setting annual budget and large expenditure items. Members of the public may observe our meetings, and may register to speak at the appropriate point.

Going through each committee:

Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting Committee

This committee meets once a month and has responsibilities which include cutting the large areas of grassed areas in the town, such as our public open spaces, recreation grounds, and verges – these are owned by Central Bedfordshire Council, but we carry out grass cutting under a contract. This committee is also responsible for the council's Brook Street/High Street car park, town council owned street lighting – these have a sticker with our logo and an 'S' for Stotfold number, all other lighting columns are either owned by Central Bedfordshire Council or a developer where they have not yet been adopted.

Planning Committee

Central Bedfordshire Council is the Local Planning Authority and therefore grants or refuses planning applications, however we are consulted on applications received, within a 21 day timescale. Our Planning Committee meets as and when needed, but usually fortnightly. We assess each application against planning policy and make our comment.

Cemetery Management Committee

These meetings are held every other month, with meetings in warmer months taking place at the cemetery for a full inspection. Meetings held during colder winter months take place in the council chamber, with a designated member carrying out an inspection to identify any problems or work required to report back to committee. We are proud of the standard of our cemetery.

Buildings Management Committee

This committee is responsible for the Memorial Hall, Greenacre Centre, Simpson Centre, and leased assets such as the Arlesey Road football clubhouse and stadium, and Mossman Centre which is leased to Stotfold Guides.

Establishment Committee

This committee is responsible for standing orders, staffing matters, certain financial matters and works on many of council's policies – there are currently 29 policy documents available to view on our website.

Town Strategy Committee

Has responsibility for working on strategic plans for Stotfold, such as the Town Council's Corporate Strategic Plan and the Stotfold Town Plan.

Our newest Steering Group is the Stotfold Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The Chairman of the Group will be from the Town Council, and the Vice-Chairman being a public member of the Group.

Our full council meetings are formal meetings, at which members stand to speak only once on any agenda item. We receive reports on the work of the police through crime statistics and the Police and Crime Commissioner monthly newsletters. Central Bedfordshire Council Ward Members report on matters which pertain to Stotfold, and we receive reports from our members who represent us on outside bodies. Full council agrees financial reports and considers recommendations from committees.

757. PRESENTATION OF THE CITIZENS AWARDS BY THE MAYOR

Nominations are invited for these awards each year to recognise the outstanding contributions the individual has given to the community of Stotfold, often on a voluntary basis and outside of their everyday occupation. Candidates may be put forward by, friends, colleagues or others who know of them and their involvements. Since the first presentations some 9 years ago there have been only 27 successful nominations so those awarded should feel truly appreciated.

The Mayor presented each successful recipient in turn with their Citizen Award, congratulating them on behalf of the Town Council and their community.

Mrs Helen Wightwick

The first of tonight's awards goes to a resident very much concerned with the welfare of our community and involved with the works of our local King's Baptist Church at The Green.

She manages the production of a weekly information update and a monthly newsletter for the King's Baptist Church and has run a mother & toddlers' group under the umbrella of the church.

She lends her musical talents on piano or violin to events while currently organising and leading a worship event titled 'Arise & Shine' which is attended by several senior Stotfold residents.

For over 5 years she has been involved in 'Churches Together' in the town and, as an active and valued member, has supported a number of events including; raising funds for Christian Aid, providing a holiday club for local children and bringing musicians together to run a 'Songs of Praise with Pam Rhodes' session.

She provides low-cost Christian Counselling services to both individuals and couples, charging only enough to cover the cost of providing the service.

Apart from these Christian based events she also joined the 'Stotfold Good Neighbours Group' in 2013 and for a few days each month is the telephone contact between those needing and those providing assistance. At other times she is one of that same groups many volunteer drivers who provide transport to and from hospital, shopping or other needs as they arise.

In October 2019 she instigated and has led a group of ladies to run a monthly coffee morning at 'The Need Project' centre on the High Street with the objective of raising their profile and providing a friendly environment for people to meet and chat. She and her team give their services free of charge and the first few events have been well attended.

Her desire to be involved in providing an improvement to the welfare of Stotfold residents led her to run as a candidate for Central Bedfordshire Council in the 2019 elections. Although she was not successful in her bid, she was the highest scoring unelected candidate which reflects on how well she is regarded within the community.

Due to other commitments Helen is not able to be with us this evening but will be presented with her certificate at a future Town Council meeting at her request. Please show your appreciation for her efforts.

Simon Barrow

Along with many other residents I looked upon the horrific damage done by fire in 1992 to our historic Randall's Watermill and considered its days were over other than in our memories.

A group of dedicated and hard-working volunteers had different ideas however and set out on the unenviable task of digging out the rubble, salvaging what could be saved, obtaining legal ownership, historic recognition and financing etc. with the aim of total restoration as a working mill. The 'Stotfold Mill Preservation Trust' was incorporated in the year 2000.

Although this madness at times seemed to be pursuing an impossible dream many years of hard work involving volunteers and experts from both here and further afield slowly but surely saw the fruits of their labour literally 'rising from the ashes' such that by April 2006 flour could once again be produced, although the bread did prove to be quite 'gritty'!

We now see the mill with its museum and tea-rooms surrounded by a wonderful nature reserve, all of which are enjoyed by thousands of visitors throughout the year. However – the costs involved in keeping the mill in good condition rely on an army of volunteers, each contributing their skills and efforts towards fund raising wherever possible.

Two major “Steam and Country” shows each year in May and October raise the bulk of the money needed to keep the mill operating and these again rely on a strong team effort to organise and put together.

The person nominated to receive our second award of this evening has played a key role in planning of the steam events, setting up and taking down, sourcing arena attractions & traders, liaising with the flying displays and laying out of controls for motor traffic and pedestrians. He has been involved in the presentation of 19 May shows and 10 October shows. The planning process takes part throughout the year and many are not aware that throughout he has given up a week of his annual holiday entitlement to attend.

As he steps back to be able to spend more time with his family it was felt an appropriate time to recognise his commitment over so many years in helping to preserve this local and National piece of our heritage. Can I ask Mr Simon Barrow to please come forward to receive his certificate?

Ladies and gentlemen, your appreciation please for Mr Simon Barrow!

Mrs Melanie Cheney

Our final nominee for this evening is married and has lived in Stotfold with her supportive family for around 40 years. While her three children attended local schools she was keen to support as many activities as possible and could always be found assisting her husband at the jumble sales held to fund raise for Stotfold Scouts.

Before the advent of school associations, she was and remains a member of the Stotfold Parent’s Association, a role now superseded by separate school associations, and the remaining members still run the traditional quiz at the start of Festival Week. She is always at the event serving refreshments and selling raffle tickets and, being the association’s treasurer, she produces the cheque for the chosen charity.

Although the Parents Association held its final Arts & Crafts Exhibition in 2016 she was regularly there to help on the day and, always organised well in advance, ensured her Brownie Group had produced many entries.

She has a long association with Guiding, becoming a unit helper with the 1st Standon & Puckeridge Brownies in 1980. The following year she began her leadership training with the 3rd Stotfold Brownies, becoming leader in 1983.

It has involved an enormous amount of effort and commitment over 40 years to devise activities for weekly meetings, preparation for badges and the ever-popular camp trips. Regular updating has always been a factor in leadership and so even quite recently she has attended training to refresh programme ideas for the organisation.

Under the new scheme one of her Brownies attained the Gold Award, the highest accolade. As she reported in the Stotfold News Magazine; “Presenting her with her special badge and certificate was one of the truly wonderful moments of my long term serving as Brown Owl.”

In fact, to generations of girls in Stotfold she has no name other than to be known affectionately as “Brown Owl” – a name she accepts proudly.

Although sometimes seeming to operate unnoticed in the background she is always willing to get involved to make a real difference within the Stotfold community, frequently quietly stepping in to pick up any task she recognises as necessary.

Can I ask Mrs Melanie Cheney to please come forward to receive her award and ask you all to show your appreciation of her dedication for the benefit of our young people?

758. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION FROM THE FLOOR

- Query on whether the Pix Brook Flood Report has been finalised. A draft has been produced but is very overdue. Our former MP for this area felt that funding would be available nationally for any flood prevention/mitigation works required, but this may now have been reduced. Anglian Water may have an update, however they have not been heard from on this matter recently.
- A dispute was highlighted with Stotfold Mill that has been going on for 16 years. Water that is coming through the sluice gates is flooding the adjacent banks and now flowing under the culvert in the road. The water has been resisted by a barrier, but there is concern the weir is going to collapse. The council has no power to act over this and is a private neighbour dispute. It should be reported to the environment Agency or the Ivel Drainage board. The houses flood on Mill Lane, Stotfold Mill has rights over the sluice gates and are riparian owners of the banks. Stotfold Town Council are riparian owners of the banks at the Riverside recreation ground only.
- Thanks were given from Stotfold Junior Football club to Stotfold Town Council and all involved with the Arlesey Road Football site project.
- Resident has noticed ‘blatant drug dealing around the town’. This has been reported to the Police, but reporting should be made when crime is taking place, not later. Stotfold Town Council have showed benefits of their involvement with Youth Group participation officer, drug dealing is across the county. Bedfordshire Police do have meetings to highlight drug dealing hot spots and concentration of resources on specific areas. There are 168 hours in a week, and only 30 hours in a week for a PCSO.

There being no further questions the Mayor thanked all present for attending the meeting and closed the meeting at 9.45pm

CHAIRMAN

DATED