

PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

The 40th Annual Meeting of the Town was held at the Rose Room, Festival Hall, Petersfield on Wednesday 22 April 2015 at 7 pm.

PRESENT: Cllr Mrs S Harwood (Town Mayor), Cllr Mrs L Farrow (Deputy Town Mayor), Cllr V Clarke (also HCC Councillor), Cllr J Deane, Cllr Mrs J Dickinson, Cllr P Marshall (also EHDC Councillor), Cllr C Mills, Cllr W Organ, Cllr A Tarver, Cllr Ms M Vincent and Cllr G Watkinson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mr N Hitch (Town Clerk), Mrs A Church (Committee Administrator), Mr R Ayer (EHDC Councillor), Mrs H Ayer (EHDC Councillor) and 63 members of the public.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr G Budden.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Minutes of the 39th Annual Meeting of the Town for 2014.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 9 April 2014 be authorised to be signed as a correct record.

2. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT ON THE PAST MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the 40th Annual Meeting of the Town and gave her report for the past Municipal Year. She began by giving three examples of the many positive contributions made by the Town Council to enhance life in the town:

- The War Memorial had been steam-cleaned at no cost to the precept but with grant funding from the Town Council's two County Councillors. Consequently, Hampshire County Council have confirmed that they will undertake a similar cleaning of the large stone plinth underneath the statue of William III in The Square.
- The badly damaged railings in The Square were repaired by Hampshire County Council at no cost to the precept. The Town Council then arranged for a team of young offenders with community service orders to spend several weekends removing the rust and repainting them. As a direct result of that very successful project, the District and County Councils will arrange to similarly repair all the other railings.

- The Town Council entirely funds the Christmas lighting each year and, for Christmas 2014, the lighting display was upgraded with a new display which runs from the end of the High Street, through The Square and along Chapel Street to the far end of Lavant Street. This created a very festive atmosphere which brought people into the town.

The Town Mayor then summarised the considerable amount of work undertaken by each of the four Town Council Committees that report to the Town Council - Planning, Grounds, Public Halls and Financial & General Purposes. She also thanked the Town Council staff for the outstanding service they provide.

The reason for the increase of £10,500 in precept (£1.96 per year on a band D property) to create a reserve was explained. The reserve would enable the Town Council to continue to provide the level of services required.

The draft Neighbourhood Plan, now submitted to the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), was the culmination of three years of very hard work by a team of volunteer residents, Town Councillors, a District Councillor and officers and is one of the first Plans in the country to reach this stage.

The Town Mayor reported on the many events at which she had represented the town during her term of office and commented on the amazing community spirit that exists in Petersfield. Artscape, a local charity, had been her chosen charity for the civic year and monies raised for them totalled just over £5,700, mainly from the moving concert with the Military Wives Choir held in the Festival Hall on 11 April 2015.

3. PRESENTATION ON ARTSCAPE

The Town Mayor introduced Ms Mandie Shaw, co-founder and Director of Artscape, her chosen charity, who gave the presentation.

Artscape, a very small local charity which has recently celebrated its tenth birthday and runs two weekly sessions in Winton House, is a unique, arts-based charity for adults, with an age range of 18 – 99 years, in recovery from long and enduring mental ill health, recovery from addictions and related disabilities. It works in a unique way using art as a catalyst for enabling healing to begin to take place. Artscape does not give art therapy, but uses the art itself as a catalyst for enabling healing to begin. Its aims are quite simply to help alleviate personal stress, increase self-confidence and social inclusion in a safe welcoming environment. Artscape prides itself on its ability to help maintain people's well-being and to enable them to feel valued members of society.

Artscape has had a difficult financial journey since its inception and the overwhelming support given by the Town Council, Petersfield Life Magazine and Lloyds bank will enable it to continue and increase the help it can offer.

4. OPEN FORUM FOR QUESTIONS

The first two questions came from a previous Town Mayor and Councillor.

Q.1 *Why is the format of the Annual Town Meeting now such that the Town Mayor gives the whole report on the past Municipal Year rather than including separate presentations by the Chairman of each of the Town Council's committees ?*

A *The format of the Annual Town Meeting can be altered. The present format of combining all the committee information into the Town Mayor's report was the preferred choice of the current Town Council. A change in format could be chosen by the next Town Council if it so wished.*

Q.2 *Would the Charity Commission be approving of the increased number of benches being put out by the café on The Heath for the use of its customers ?*

A *The Heath is owned by the Town Council which is delighted by the success of the café on The Heath as it enhances the facilities on offer. All proposed improvements are discussed and approved by the Town Council which takes a great interest in The Heath so that it attracts and can be enjoyed by everyone.*

Q.3 *When will the new parking restrictions, due to take place from 16 March 2015, be implemented ?*

A. *New parking restrictions will come into force. County Councillor Ken Moon, who had given his apologies for the Annual Town Meeting, would be able to provide further details and these could be passed on by e-mail.*

Q.4 *Why has the cost of the Grounds Maintenance Contract increased so much since 2009 ?*

A. *The costs of the grounds maintenance have not increased as much as now being suggested as the original grounds contract did not cover all aspects of maintenance. Some maintenance was carried out as required at an agreed extra cost to the contract. A new grounds maintenance contract has come into force from 1st April 2015 with only grass cutting and heavy duty maintenance being contracted out and other grounds maintenance work being brought in-house. It was expected that this arrangement would reduce the future overall cost of grounds maintenance work.*

Q.5 *Is the problem of street parking in Petersfield being addressed ?*

A. *Parking is an integral part of the Neighbourhood Plan. There is a strategy for the town with provision for an extension of the station car park – the public had rejected a proposal to have a double-storey car park in the centre of the town. In addition, there are currently available season ticket discounts for people who meet certain criteria (details available from EHDC).*

Q.6 *Why has the Town Council overspent on the upgrades to the children's play area on The Heath over the last four years ?*

A. *The Town Council takes great offence at these allegations. Every project is rigorously scrutinised, at least three tenders obtained and the best value quotation selected. All tender providers remain anonymous to Councillors until a resolution has been made. The public can be present at all Committee meetings where discussion and selection of tenders take place.*

5. PRESENTATION ON THE PETERSFIELD MUSEUM HEATH BARROW PROJECT

Mr George Anelay, archaeologist and Fieldwork Director of West Sussex Archaeology, gave the presentation on the four-year project to understand and conserve the prehistoric barrow cemetery on The Heath which had been enabled by funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and support from the South Downs National Park Authority's Sustainable Communities Fund.

The 21 known barrows (all Scheduled Ancient Monuments) on Petersfield Heath form a unique barrow cemetery, which is one of the most impressive and diverse in South-East England. These burial mounds are of Early Bronze Age date and comprise a mix of 'styles'. The project will investigate why this particular mixed cemetery developed here. It will look at how they were built, the impact on the environment and the implications for social organisations. It will also seek evidence for what activities took place here and where the communities lived.

There have been three excavations to date with significant finds and the latest highlight has been the discovery of a new site 24.

Mr Anelay thanked the Town Council for their ongoing support and for the clearance work being carried out on The Heath with the long-term view of restoring the area to traditional heathland.

6. PRESENTATION OF COMMUNITY GRANTS

The Town Mayor presented cheques for the 2nd Tranche of the Community Grants for the year 2014 - 2015 to the following organisations:

*Petersfield Museum
Petersfield Twinning Association
Petersfield Music Festival
Petersfield Youth Theatre
Rotherlands Conservation Group
Home-Start Butser
Victim Support*

7. **PRESENTATION OF TOWN MAYOR'S MEDALS**

The Town Mayor presented a Certificate and Medal to the following in recognition of their outstanding service to the town in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan:

*Richard Besant
Jamie Matthews
John Palmer.*

The Town Mayor also presented an additional Certificate and Medal to

Cllr Vaughan Clarke

who would be standing down from the Town Council and she outlined some of the many amazing events he had organised for Petersfield over his many years of service on the Town Council. This presentation to him was a small token of the immense gratitude owed to him by the whole town of Petersfield.

8. **PRESENTATION OF DANIEL DAY LEWIS AWARD**

The Daniel Day Lewis award (*a signed letter by the actor and a book of the complete works of Shakespeare*) is an annual award for outstanding acting achievement by a young person. The Town Mayor said she was delighted to announce that the recipient of the award for 2014 - 2015 was:

Phoebe McCallen

Phoebe, a pupil at The Petersfield School, has excelled in all her performances and gave an outstanding acting and singing performance as Demeter in the school's much-acclaimed production of "Cats" at the Kings Theatre, Southsea, in January 2015.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.15 pm followed by light refreshment, provided at the personal expense of the Town Councillors