

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

Held on THURSDAY 12TH MAY 2016 at 7.00pm

In the Chair, Councillor Sharon Betts, Town Mayor.
There were 20 persons present at the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr John Dodd, Councillor Phil Moitt, Councillor Chetan Parmar and Mr Roy Sherwin.

2. Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting – 14th May 2015

The Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 14th May 2015 were circulated with the agenda, which was made available to all persons present, and were taken as read.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 14th May 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

3. Town Mayor's Report 2015/2016

Councillor Sharon Betts, Town Mayor for 2015/2016, reported on activities during her Mayoral year:

“Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our Annual Towns Meeting. This meeting gives residents of the Town an opportunity to reflect on the activities in our Town over the past year and look ahead to the forthcoming year. Later this evening, the Full Council will consider the Annual Report of the Town Council which details our achievements over the past 12 months and sets out our proposed activities for the next 12 months and the Leader of the Council will highlight some of these in his report”.

“For myself as Town Mayor it has been a very memorable year. It is a privilege and an honour to be chosen to serve as Town Mayor and experience first-hand the hard work and dedication of many in our community who serve and support the needs of others. I have been amazed at the wide variety of activities and the number of proactive community groups there are in Braunstone Town. It has been a real privilege to meet so many people who are committed to making our Town a vibrant place in which to live”.

“Throughout the year I have attended many events that have taken place to celebrate, honour and recognise achievements of our residents. In July I was proud to sponsor a race at the Braunstone Swimming Club's open meet and present a prize to one of the winning young contestants. I also attended the anniversary dinner of the TS Cutlass Navy Cadet force”.

“Our summer fete was, again, a huge success with plenty of activities going on for all the family to enjoy and a larger number of residents attending and again, we had glorious weather”.

“In October, I opened the annual Franklin Park Community Orchard Apple Day, which also saw the permanent opening of the Community Orchard, following extensive work to prepare the area for the opening. This has enabled many in our community to appreciate this community asset which was created by the hard work of enthusiastic volunteers since the land was passed to the Town Council in 2007”.

“In January, I opened new play facilities at Holmfield Park with the help of local nursery children who meet at Braunstone West Social Centre. It was a wet and cold day, but the children were very excited by the new play equipment and couldn't wait to have go”.

“This year I have been particularly proud to attend events that remember the brave service men and women who have sacrificed their lives during past and current conflicts. Again this year the Council was proud to help mark Remembrance Day with a service at St Crispin's Church and by commemorating Armed Forces Day, including the ceremony raising the Armed Forces Day flag”.

“In addition it was a privilege to support commemorations for:

- 70th Anniversary of VJ Day in August;
- Battle of Britain Parade and Service in September;
- Commonwealth Day in March by raising the Commonwealth Flag”.

“The year has also been filled with events arranged by our local community groups and volunteers. Such events included:

- The Scouts summer Fete in July at Thorpe Astley Community Centre;
- Allotment Society Open Day in August;
- Thursday Over 60s 40th Anniversary Tea Party in October;
- Shakespeare Park Bowls Club Annual Dinner and awards in October; and
- Braunstone's Got Talent here at the Civic Centre in December”.

“I was delighted to host the recent Town Mayor's Annual Awards of merit evening. It was an opportunity to recognise the deserving unsung heroes of our community, and to acknowledge the groups who had joined me in putting on the programme events which this year raised funds of £2346.44 for local groups and good causes. I hope that the Town Council will continue to play such a central role for many years to come in helping to bring people together and promoting the strong sense of community spirit that I have encountered”.

“On a personal note, I am grateful that my year as Town Mayor has given me the opportunity to raise the profile of my charities, Heartlink, which raises money to help improve facilities for children suffering from heart defects and for their families, the charity also raise funds to provide much needed valuable medical equipment; and also for the South West Leicestershire Scouts Association, to provide equipment for local scout groups. The generous people of Braunstone Town have helped me in raising a total of £2561.33 for these good causes and many events were held including a fashion show, a family pantomime and Christmas Craft Fair to help raise funds. I wish to thank everyone for supporting these events. I was

also pleased with the amount of media coverage the Town has received this year, I was interviewed by Radio Leicester for the Fete, Pantomime and Fashion Show, giving us the opportunity to show that Braunstone Town is a vibrant and active community with plenty of things to do throughout the year”.

“Through our Town Mayor we continue to attach importance to our events programmes, significant anniversaries such as remembrance and civic events such as armed forces day. With arrangements for our annual Summer Fete progressing, we will continue to provide a wide range of activities for all in the community. Such events and recognition of anniversaries are important as we celebrate and recognise who we are as a community and continue to build a vibrant and socially inclusive Town”.

“I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to everyone for their support over the year, in particular to my consort Bill who has been there supporting me in this important role every step of the way”.

“I would also like to take this opportunity to wish Braunstone Town’s next Town Mayor a most enjoyable and successful year”.

4. Town Council Accounts and Budgets

Councillor Nick Brown, Leader of the Council, reported on the Town Council’s previous year’s financial position. The Town Council’s Accounts and Budget Report was circulated with the agenda, which was made available to all persons present, and were taken as read.

5. Leader’s Report – Achievements 2015/16 and Priorities for 2016/17

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Nick Brown, reported on the Town Council’s achievements during 2015/2016 and looked ahead to the Town Council’s priorities for 2016/2017.

“At the Annual Meeting of the Town Council following this meeting at eight o’clock, Town Councillors will be considering the Town Council’s Annual Report. This report sets out our achievements since last year’s Annual Towns Meeting, which I will reflect upon on as well as our priorities for the forthcoming year, which I will highlight”.

Achievements 2015/2016

1. **“*Millfield Hall Refurbishment:*** The roof of the Millfield Hall was over 40 years old and leaking, posing a serious risk to the roof structure as well as damage to the internal decoration of the room, affecting hires. The Town Council obtained climate change and environmental improvement grant funding totalling £48,000 towards the project and allocated just under £83,000 of its reserves. The refurbishment included replacement roof lining and insulation, installation of new and more efficient heating and air conditioning, installation of LED lighting and general improvements to the internal decoration including varnishing of the floor and replacement curtains”.

2. **“Improvements to Holmfield Park Play Area:** in the autumn, following extensive consultations, we delivered on our commitment to invest in improvements to the play facilities at Holmfield Park, the improvements included:-
 - New toddler play equipment
 - Installation of New Swings for older children
 - Improvements to safety surfacesThis was part-funded by both Braunstone Town Council and Blaby District Council and the improvements have received positive feedback from many in the local community”.
3. **“Permanent Opening of Franklin Park Community Orchard:** Last summer our parks staff, with the help of the Community Payback scheme, prepared the Orchard and Meadow to be opened permanently by the Town Mayor at the annual Apple Day in October. Local residents, many of whom were unaware of the project, have responded positively saying that it is a delightful and peaceful space to enjoy a relaxing walk and spot wildlife. Yet some have sought to destroy this by wilfully vandalising the pond dipping platform and boardwalk depositing safety warning signs and rails in the water. Not only have local school children and the local wildlife group lost a valuable amenity but Town residents are now faced with picking up the cost. I encourage Councillors and the community to spread the word and encourage anyone who knows or has seen anything to contact the police with information”.
4. **“Access to Public Services:** During the year we have reached agreement with Blaby District Council and the Citizens Advice Bureau to continue and further develop the joint services we provide through the Customer Service Shop at Braunstone Civic Centre until 2019. The agreements provide for Benefits and Housing advice surgeries, weekly Citizens’ Advice surgeries and support services helping the long term unemployed back into work. These services are valued by many in the community, particularly those who cannot easily travel out of the Town and those without internet access. It is however, extremely disappointing that the vision shared by both the Town Council and District Council to provide these services as part of a Community Hub including the Library was not shared or supported by Leicestershire County Council. Our proposals for a Community Hub not only enhanced the existing Library service through longer opening hours but also provided for a convenient accessible location from which improved support services to our residents could operate in a more efficient and effective way. It is still hard to comprehend what the County Council did not like about our proposals, they made an ongoing saving of £30,000 and for the sake of an additional ongoing commitment of £3,000 per annum over their current long term lease commitment, they could not see the potential to deliver better and more cost efficient services in the future”.
5. **“Efficiency Savings:** By contrast the Town Council’s approach to making savings is to invest in more efficient operations, thereby protecting front line services and, as already mentioned, in some cases improving on these. The Town Council invested £15,000 in installing LED lighting in its Community Centres, which produced just under £6,000 saving from August 2015, producing an anticipated ongoing annual saving of just under £9,000”.

6. **“Implemented an Organisation Staffing Review:** Within the existing budgets we streamlined the Council’s Management and Administration directing resources to the front line and most importantly ensuring that all staff working for Braunstone Town Council are paid the living wage, as promoted by the Living Wage Foundation, which is £8.25 per hour, with our lowest hourly rate at £8.29 per hour. This compares to the Government Living Wage of £7.20 per hour”.
7. **“Improvements to Shakespeare Park:** In November we launched a working group of Councillors and sports clubs using Shakespeare Park which has developed proposals for rebuilding the Shakespeare Park Pavilion facilities and improving the sports, recreation and play facilities on the park. The proposals include rebuilding of the Pavilion on a new site between the Bowling Green, Tennis Courts and Sports Pitch, along with installing sensory play equipment, improvements to the Tennis Courts and an extension of the car park. It has certainly been a pleasure to work with both Braunstone Juniors Football Club and Shakespeare Park Bowls Club to put together a shared vision for improvements, which will not only mutually benefit the clubs but will benefit all park users and local residents. I and my fellow Councillors on the group look forward to continued positive working during the forthcoming year to deliver the project”.

Proposals for 2016/2017

1. **“Safeguarding Library Services:** Despite the setbacks mentioned concerning the Library, we will continue to work towards keeping Braunstone Town Library open. Leicestershire County Council as the commissioning and responsible authority are able to determine who the service provider for the Library is, however, as both the premises landlord and an elected body representing the community, the Town Council will work with public bodies, service providers and the community to meet our aims and objectives to protect and enhance public services. Therefore, we will be watching Leicestershire County Council and will expect them to ensure that Fabula, who have been selected to run our Library, meet the obligations set out in the County Council’s own criteria on opening hours and book stock”.
2. **“Thorpe Astley Medical Rooms:** We continue to work with the NHS to find a use for the Thorpe Astley Medical Rooms while consulting with residents on potential alternative uses should a health facility not be provided by the NHS; this will enable the Town Council to maximise the use of the Thorpe Astley Community Centre for the benefit of the community, should NHS services not be forthcoming”.
3. **“Shakespeare Park:** As mentioned, we have made significant progress with the sports clubs to redevelop and improve the sporting, recreation and play facilities at Shakespeare Park; during the year we intend to consult with the local community and the District Council in order to finalise our plans and seek grant funding, I anticipate also that the Council will seek to borrow monies through the Public Works Loan Board given the lifetime of the new pavilion will

be in the region of 30 to 40 years; thereby ensuring we invest in our infrastructure now to protect and enhance facilities for future generations”.

4. **“Thorpe Astley Open Spaces:** This year we look to complete the legal transfer of open spaces at Thorpe Astley to the Town Council and ensure improvements are implemented to the Culvert at Thorpe Astley Park; with the legal transfer completed the Town Council will be able to consult with residents on improvements to the play area and the open spaces”.
5. **“Community Development:** We continue to support crime reduction initiatives and Local Area Co-ordination, which focuses on identifying and supporting people who need help before they reach crisis, and working towards building an inclusive resilient community around them. We have a strong track record in this area and the work of the Local Area Coordinator will build on our community development initiatives aimed at bringing people together and helping to create a stronger sense of community in our area. Our Grants will continue to be available for community groups this year alongside our free use of community rooms scheme. The Town Council sees the work of community and voluntary groups as underpinning a vibrant and inclusive community and we will continue to provide capacity support and signposting for funding to assist groups with their work and initiatives”.
6. **“Community Facilities:** We will continue to implement improvements to community facilities at Braunstone Civic Centre and Thorpe Astley Community Centre; both centres continue to be important providing a focus for community activity and access to public services”.
7. **“Lubbesthorpe:** As the new M1 bridge is completed and opened we will support residents to raise issues affecting their quality of life and we will be working with the principal councils and developer to ensure much needed highway and safety improvements around Meridian Way and Lubbesthorpe Way are implemented and the Town Council is considered for the transfer of public land adjacent to the new bridge in Thorpe Astley”.
8. **“Protecting Services and Making Efficiency Savings:** We have for the last three years undertook longer term financial planning, with the aim of trying to safeguard our existing services whilst building up our reserve, while continuing to find ways to deliver our services more efficiently. There remains a risk that Council Tax Support Grant will be reduced or discontinued in the future; combine this with the reductions in services by both the County and District councils and the increasing pressures on the Police, Fire and health services, the Town Council will be under increasing pressure to find local solutions to the provision of public services which could expose us to serious financial risks in the future”.

“Despite these difficult and financially stringent times, we have been able to continue to maintain our services and in some cases improve upon what we are doing; therefore we are better placed to face the financial challenges ahead – without the need to cut our existing services”.

6. Termination of Meeting

The Town Mayor thanked those present for attending and with no further business the meeting closed at 7.25pm.

SIGNED: _____ (Chair)

DATED: _____