

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

Held on THURSDAY 11TH MAY 2017 at 7.00pm

In the Chair, Councillor Berneta Layne, Town Mayor.
There were 24 persons present at the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Shabbir Aslam and Ajmer Basra.

2. Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting – 12th May 2016

The Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 12th May 2016 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 12th May 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

3. Town Mayor's Report 2016/2017

A report had been circulated with the agenda summarising the following:

- Community Activities;
- Community Achievement;
- Recognising Service;
- Thorpe Astley;
- Programme of Events;
- Summer Fete;
- Anniversaries/Civic Events;
- Caribbean Evening;
- Town Mayor's Charity – Arthritis Research UK; and
- Upholding Community Values.

Councillor Berneta Layne, Town Mayor for 2016/2017, 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, a role which has served the

people of the Town for 40 years. During my year I was able to 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 and these are detailed in the report, which you have as part of your agenda for this meeting. I wish, however, to highlight some of these”.

“Those of you who have had the opportunity to serve as Town Mayor will no doubt have sponsored and attended the Swimming Club’s annual open meet and seen the hard work and time that the young people and volunteers put in to achieving their success. This year I was able to nominate one of the club’s longest serving volunteers, Trevor Hicks, for volunteer of the year at the Blaby District Outstanding Achievement Awards in recognition of his time and dedication to help others to swim and achieve success, including leading a healthy and active lifestyle. And I was delighted that Trevor was runner up in this category”.

“I hosted the 21st Town Mayor’s Annual Awards of merit evening, last Friday 5th May. It was an opportunity to acknowledge the groups who had joined me in putting on the programme events which this year raised funds of £2360.89 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”.

“The event was also an opportunity to recognise the deserving unsung heroes of our community, those whose efforts and service has made a real difference to people’s lives and the life of our community, through the Town Mayor’s Award of Merit. This year I recognised the work of two individuals and two community groups:

- Mrs Nadine Blight in recognition, on her retirement, of her many years work as Secretary for the Braunstone Community Minibus Project;
- Mrs Jo Fox in recognition, on retirement, of her many years work and commitment as a Town, District and County Councillor, including her service as Town Mayor, Town Council Leader and District Chairman;
- Kingsway Flower Club in recognition of the many year’s commitment and support for their members and community events, many of which are held here at the Civic Centre; and
- Leicester Forest Photographic Society in recognition of the many year’s commitment and dedication of this active and well established group, which also regularly meets here at the Civic Centre”.

“My last engagement of the year was a new event, which I was delighted to support. Building on the success of our Christmas Craft Fair, the Town Council organised a Spring Craft Fair at Thorpe Astley Community Centre last Saturday 6th May. Not only was the event well supported by stallholders, many of whom are regulars at the Christmas Fair, there was also a continuous steady stream of

customers. I very much hope that this event will continue in the forthcoming years”.

“On a personal note, I am grateful that my year as Town Mayor has given me the opportunity to raise the profile of my charity, Arthritis Research UK, which as a sufferer is very personal and close to my heart. The charity invests in breakthrough treatments, the best information and vital support for everyone affected by arthritis. If it wasn’t for the hard and dedicated work of the charity, such life changing treatment wouldn’t be available”.

“On 24th March, I was able to host a Caribbean evening here at the Civic Centre in aid of Arthritis Research UK. I was delighted that the event was well supported by my friends, residents and Councillors, which included a hot buffet, live music and dancing. Sixty tickets were sold and I would like to thank all those who helped me organise this memorable and successful community event”.

“At this event and the others in the programme throughout the year, the generous people of Braunstone Town have helped me in raising a total so far, of £2216.49 for Arthritis Research UK. I wish to thank everyone for supporting these events”.

“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 Pansy 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 the 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. Councillor Brown added that the internal audit would be undertaken in the forthcoming week.

5. Leader’s Report – Achievements 2016/17 and Priorities for 2017/18

A report had been circulated with the agenda summarising the following:

- Town Council – Capital Plan;
- Provision and Access to Public Services;
- Pressures on the Local Infrastructure;
- Financial Risks and Pressures; and
- Update Reports.

A copy of the draft Annual Report for 2016/2017, due for consideration and adoption at Annual Council, was also circulated.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Nick Brown, reported on the Town Council’s achievements during 2016/2017 and looked ahead to the Town Council’s priorities for 2017/2018:

“It has been a frustrating year, many issues have stalled due to outside factors”.

1. "Shakespeare Park: we have been working with the architects on finalising our proposals. The Pavilion has reached the end of its useful life and we are seeking the maximum amount of funding from external sources. I am hopeful that work will commence in the next 6 to 9 months".
2. "Civic Centre improvements: during the year we plan to refurbish both sets of toilets and the bar area in order to create a café and meeting point".
3. "Library: I had anticipated this moving forward, however, it is in the County Council's hands. While I remain disappointed that the Town Council's proposals, which were sustainable and tailored to the community's needs was rejected; I and the Town Council want a good and positive relationship with the people who take over the running of the Library".
4. "NHS Services: there are two areas where we have tried to work with the NHS for the benefit of residents and these remain outstanding and outside our control. First, having spent two years working with the NHS to obtain primary care services from the Thorpe Astley Medical Rooms, the arrangements fell through. Then last year we had interest from Leicestershire Partnership Trust, which also appears to have fell through since there has been no response to our correspondence and communications, which is very frustrating. The NHS should be clear to the community about its position and simply state it is not interested and the facility can be used by the Town Council. The second area relates to GP provision, an issue raised by residents in the County Council election campaign, and the inability to obtain GP appointments. This situation cannot continue and is one the NHS must get on top of".
5. Budgets: in January this year the Town Council set its budget in good faith, only to be told by Blaby District Council that it would no longer receive £45-£50,000 in Council Tax Support Grant and New Homes Bonus from April 2018. This is a big hit to the Council's finances equivalent to a 17% increase in precept. I wrote a letter to the Leader of Blaby District Council and his response was not helpful nor supportive. The change has been introduced with no consultation and an amendment to phase out the support grants over 3 years was rejected at a meeting of the District Council. Next year it is going to be a challenge to fill this funding gap and Councillors will be looking to soften the impact, although there is likely to be a significant precept increase".

"The Council continues to provide much valued services and feedback from residents continues to be positive and the Town Council continues to have the trust of people going forward into this next year".

6. Braunstone Town Heritage Warden's Report 2016/2017

The Heritage Warden's Report for 2016/2017 was circulated with the agenda, the Heritage Warden, Mr. John Dodd, reported to the meeting:

"Once more the change in the weather patterns has dominated our natural world, at the moment we can't forecast one year to the next; which plants / trees will come into bud first, what and when migrant birds will arrive; even rainfall and snowfall seem to be getting less".

“Despite this the community orchard has produced pretty scenes in all the four seasons. Sadly, the pond suffered damage from vandals but the area surrounding the pond has now been changed to make it less attractive to damage”.

“We managed to carry out some pruning of the fruit trees in the orchard area and hopefully this will provide a good crop of fruit later in the year”.

“I have made very few heritage related comments on the planning applications passing through the Planning Committee, which is good news for any archaeological remains, they will not be disturbed or lost. The New Lubbethorpe development’s archaeological investigations have been completed with significant finds of Iron age/Bronze age settlements which have been recorded but eventually will need somewhere to display the finds. Please don’t let this part of the heritage of Lubbethorpe be left in dusty cardboard boxes in some basement area of a University or County Council store”.

“As you are all aware I’ve been the Chairman of Braunstone Heritage Archive Group (BHAG) for the last six years and this has taken up, quite rightly, most of my Heritage Warden Duties. Our small dedicated team have managed to stage an annual exhibition relating the all things Braunstone over these last six years”.

“BHAG’s presence has generated a lot of interest and donations which are now overflowing our limited storage space at the Civic Centre, BHAG’s constitution states that we should have a permanent place to store and display our items. Well this year we have, thanks to the generosity of Paul Pender and Son, been given free space and accommodation in his recently restored Shakespeare Pub, now Paul Pender’s main offices for his funeral director’s business”.

“We hope to gradually produce a small village museum, I say “gradually” as we are a small group with limited finances but we hope to make successful bids for funding locally. Early days but we hope this partnership will blossom and attract other partners”.

“Paul Pender will be staging several open days not just to boost his business but to show off his investment in restoring the Shakespeare to a family home, BHAG will be there staging displays of the history of the building and of the village”.

“With both my chairman and Heritage Warden hats on we have embarked on a project to review and publish extracts from the old (older) parish minute books. This has been prompted by the forthcoming 90th anniversary of the creation of Braunstone Parish, with a view to have a comprehensive set of articles and display items for the 100th anniversary. (Probably by then we will qualify as exhibits!!). Also as part of this project we will take the opportunity to digitise these records so that many more people can view them online”.

“With the establishment of the village museum we this will stimulate Blaby into looking for a site for a Blaby District Museum. I would suggest that with the cooperation of the Lubbethorpe developer, the Abbey Farm building complex would make a fine venue not only for a museum but as a community hub and resource centre”.

“My Heritage Report would not be complete without a reference to Braunstone Town Library. It has been over twelve months since the County Council awarded the running of the library to the “Fabula” Company and nothing has materialised, still the County Council have to fund the £50,000 annual running cost, surely if Fabula have not been able to fulfil their contract the County Council should award it to the only other contender, Braunstone Town Council”.

“Finally, can I extend my thanks and BHAG’s to the Town Council for their continued support of the Heritage Warden facility and to BHAG”.

7. Termination of Meeting

The Town Mayor thanked those present for attending and with no further business the meeting closed at 8pm.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____