



# GILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

## ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Minutes of the **Annual Town Council Meeting** held on **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017** at **7.30 p.m.** in the **Jubilee Room** at the Town Hall, School Road, Gillingham.

**Present:** Cllr Von Clemens (Mayor)  
Cllr Mrs B Ridout (Deputy Mayor)  
Cllr Mrs A Beckley, Cllr R Evill  
Cllr A Frith, Cllr M Hill  
Cllr P Harris, Cllr Mrs S Hunt  
Cllr Miss E Jones, Cllr R Monksummers  
Cllr Miss N Purkis and Cllr Mrs D Toye.

**Also Present:** Seven members of the public were present.

**In Attendance:** Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk,  
and the Planning Committee Clerk.

**Apologies:** Cllr M Gould, Cllr S Joyce, Cllr Mrs V Pothecary  
and Cllr D Walsh.

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Prior to the start of the meeting the Mayor presented North Dorset Rugby Football Club (NDRFC) – represented by Mr N Hall and Mr S Keates - with a cheque for £1,062.33, which was the money raised at the Mayor's Dinner Dance held in March.

NDRFC were extremely appreciative of the cheque, which will go towards providing better referee facilities within the original building. The club continues to go from strength to strength with 1,200 members, 600 of which are junior members. The club supports 19 sides and covers 28 acres. There are 167 volunteers to help run the club, which has been recognised by the Rugby Football Union as a 'club to watch'. The club likes to feel they are part of the community by offering its facilities for other events and intends to build more partnerships with other local organisations in the future.

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**1. To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016.**

Proposed by Cllr Mrs Beckley seconded by Cllr Mrs Ridout that the minutes of the last meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016 were received, approved and adopted as a correct record of that meeting. The Chairman duly signed the minutes. **RESOLVED.** Cllr Frith abstained as he was not at the meeting. Cllr Hill and Cllr Miss Jones also abstained as they were not members of the Town Council at the time.

**2. Questions.** There were no questions.

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **3. To receive the charity account of Reads Charity for FY 2016-17.**

The Town Clerk presented the accounts on behalf of the Reads Charity as follows:

The William Read Charity was founded by a will in 1798. The original aim was to provide a loaf of bread for the poor in the parish of Gillingham. Over the years further monies have been bequeathed to the charity and two smaller charities added to the original. The Francis Dirooe charity supported apprenticeships. The charity is now administered by Farnfield and Nicholls and a committee selected from across the community.

Money is only allocated to people in the parish of Gillingham or Milton-On-Stour and, under normal circumstances, they must have lived in Gillingham for at least five years.

This year a total of 20 vouchers valued at £20 each were issued to those in need for spending in local shops at Christmas. An emergency grant of £500 was issued to a local resident to cover removal expenses when relocating elsewhere in the Town. The individual concerned has learning difficulties and would be described as “vulnerable”.

A member of the public present, Mr David Beaton, asked whether money is still awarded to apprentices.

The Town Clerk replied that in the recent past a grants has been awarded to local young person to help towards the cost of a computer and another grant was awarded to help with the purchase of hairdressing equipment required for a hairdressing apprenticeship course.

Cllr Von Clemens explained that although Reads Charity is not administered by the Town Council the Town Clerk, Mrs Sylvia Dobie, the Planning Clerk, Mrs Julie Hawkins, and Cllr Mrs Su Hunt are members of the Board of Trustees, who administer the charity.

### **4. To receive reports from the following local organisations:**

The Town Clerk informed the meeting that this year there were no reports from local organisations; however, the Chairman of Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan Group (GNPG), Mr David Beaton, was present and was asked if he would like to make a comment on behalf of GNPG.

Mr Beaton gave a brief summary on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan and explained that whilst the document has been endorsed by the Town Council, further work has to be done so that it can be presented to the district council before any referendum can take place.

Cllr Von Clemens thanked Mr Beaton for his impromptu update and thanked him and the other members of the GNPG for all their hard work to-date and fully appreciated that there was still more work to do before the project is finally completed.

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen:**

#### **(a) General Purposes – Cllr David Milsted (read by Cllr Mrs Belinda Ridout)**

Cllr Von Clemens informed members that as Cllr Milsted has just recently resigned from the Town Council, Cllr Mrs Ridout as Vice Chair of the General Purposes Committee and also Deputy Mayor, will read the report prepared by Cllr Milsted.

The General Purposes Committee is the workhorse of the Council. It oversees all the work the Town Council does around the town and in Milton-On-Stour by our ‘outdoor’ staff, and all the property in Council ownership, including the cemetery, the public toilets, all the play areas and public open spaces, the allotments and planted areas, and the Town Hall itself. In addition, it acts as a liaison between the Town Council and the County Highways Department for all local

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen (continued):**

road and traffic related issues. In order to undertake this large workload efficiently, the Committee has a number of Working Parties, each with a Lead Member. These meet regularly or as required, and give written reports with recommendations for action. Their membership may include members of the public and specialist advisers. Their work means that discussions at General Purposes Committee meetings do not go on for too long – 45 minutes is the optimal time for a meeting. When recommendations require spending from the Council's budget, the committee's reports are sent to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

A special meeting was held with Dorset Countryside in October to review the progress of the work outlined in the agreed five year management plan 2014-2019. Since 2014 Dorset Countryside has gone through a period of change, moving further away from only managing areas of public open space to being responsible for highway verge cutting and school grounds maintenance and all with a diminishing workforce and budget from the County Council.

Despite these hardships, Dorset Countryside staff worked hard to ensure at least four of our open spaces achieved Green Flag status in 2016; however, it is becoming increasingly difficult for Dorset Countryside to deliver the service that Gillingham Town Council requires. From April 2017 Gillingham Town Council will manage all its public open spaces in partnership with Dorset Wildlife Trust, and revised management plans are being written accordingly. An extra member of staff has been recruited to help the grounds team with the increased workload and additional large machinery will be purchased. All this has been allowed for in the precept for FY 2017/18.

The General Purposes Committee received a request from the organisers of 'Party at the Rec' to hold an event on the recreation ground at Hardings Park in June 2017. The Committee agreed that Hardings Park was no longer suitable for large events and that in the light of the extensive refurbishment and upgrading works to the play area and skate park the Policy and Resources Committee should review the letting agreement for Hardings Park. More appropriate venues were suggested to the organisers so that an alternative venue could be found for this and future years. The Council's Lettings Policy has duly been amended.

Space for additional car parking was considered for heavily congested areas at Chaffinch Chase and Maple Way but because of cost and other issues this project has been deferred until at least FY 2018/19. The Committee has given its support to the residents' request for Residents' Permit Parking on Buckingham Road.

With the reduction in Highway services from the County Council, Town and Parish Council were asked to consider paying for highway services that would not be carried out on minor routes (roads that are not covered on the gritting routes). The General Purposes Committee set up a temporary working party to investigate what this would entail and the likely costs. Several quotations were obtained as part of this research. It had not at that stage been confirmed that Town and Parish Councils are lawfully able to engage contractors to work on the highway and a decision was awaited from the Solicitor at the County Council. It has now been confirmed that the Town Council can carry out works under an Agency Agreement. Accordingly, the Council has obtained quotes from contractors to carry out gully emptying in Queen Street, and other works, on a three-year contract, beginning in FY 2017/18.

It is probable that in future years the Town Council will be invited to take over other works and services as the District and County Councils adjust to reduced funding. The General Purposes Committee and its Working Parties will consider all such requests on their merits, and their usefulness to residents, and make recommendations accordingly.

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen (continued):**

#### **REPORTS FROM WORKING PARTIES, as follows:**

##### **Allotments and Burial Provision Working Party (Lead Member, Cllr Rupert Evill)**

This year eleven internments of cremated remains took place at Gillingham Town Cemetery and nineteen burials.

As the cemetery has grown in size the work involved in cutting and maintaining the area has greatly increased. Thanks must go to the town council grounds staff who maintain the cemetery to such a high standard.

This year a freestanding noticeboard has been erected at Gillingham Cemetery displaying a plan of the cemetery as well as the rules and regulations.

The Town Council is responsible for two allotment sites; one at Cemetery Road and one at Park Farm, Shaftesbury Road. The Town Council work in partnership with the Gillingham Allotment Association and a representative of the association attends all Town Council working party meetings.

In the summer of 2016 the Allotment Association erected a community allotment building and the working party are currently investigating the possibility of siting a composting toilet on the site.

Last year the council agreed to change the rules in order to allow bonfires at the Cemetery Road allotments gardens between 1st October and 30th April. This is subject to certain restrictions.

In January the Town Council worked with SDK Environmental to eliminate the possibility of rodent infestation at the Cemetery Road allotment gardens and a set of guidelines was issued to tenants.

During the past year the Town Council has welcomed two new tenants to the Cemetery Road allotment gardens and six new tenants to the Park Farm allotment gardens.

The past four years has seen a decline in the number of people wishing to be added to the waiting list for an allotment. Many tenants have taken an allotment for a short time and have been unable to make the necessary commitment; therefore, we have seen an increase in the number of allotments being re-allocated part way through the season. In November 2013 there were 73 people on the waiting list. As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 the number of people on the waiting list for an allotment at Cemetery Road is 14. There is nobody on the waiting list for an allotment at Park Farm and there is currently one vacant plot.

##### **Estate Management Working Party (Lead Member, Cllr Barry Von Clemens)**

The Estate Management Working Party is an extremely busy working party and meets every month. Cllr Von Clemens, Lead Member, is assisted by five other councillors which was reduced to four following the resignation of Cllr Ms Anna Baker in January 2017. Usually a representative from Dorset Countryside Rangers is in attendance and Gillingham Action for Nature is represented by Mr Bob Messer. The Assistant Town Clerk and Works Manager also attend these meetings.

Earlier this year the attenuation pond behind St Mary the Virgin Primary School was transferred from Taylor Wimpey into the ownership of Gillingham Town Council with a commuted sum of £15,000 towards its annual maintenance.

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen (continued):**

The site was brought up to standard by Dorset Countryside and a new interpretation panel is being designed ready for installation later in 2017.

The process of Voluntary Registration of Land Registration is still in progress having been started in 2015.

The Initial investigation into becoming recognised as a ‘Pollinator Friendly Town’ in June 2016 will hopefully conclude in 2017. This is not a nationally recognised achievement but nevertheless will show that Gillingham Town Council is taking a responsible attitude towards the husbandry of its open spaces.

Under the management of Dorset Countryside Jubilee Fields, Rolls Bridge, King Edmund Green and Hawthorne Avenue were judged for Green Flag accreditation in June 2016, with an award being made in July 2016. The Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk travelled to Cheltenham to receive the Award. This is a real achievement and shows that the Town Council is committed to maintaining our public open spaces to a high standard. The sites have been put forward for re assessment in 2017 and it is hoped that Upper Lodden, Lower Lodden and Ham Farm will also be accredited with a Green Flag in 2018 or 2019 depending on how much work will be required to bring them up to standard. There is now a map on the Town Council’s web site that shows the locations of public open spaces, play areas and outside gym equipment.

Two ‘Community Work Days’ were held last year at Jubilee Fields, Rolls Bridge, King Edmund Green and Hawthorne Avenue. A lot of work was done to clear the amount of Willow in and around the attenuation pond at Jubilee Field and the river bank. Path edges were also cleared and tidied and hedges cut back near walkways. In addition a ‘Bug Hotel’ was cleverly constructed using reclaimed building and gardening materials under the guidance of Dorset Wildlife Trust with help from volunteers. The structure provides not only a home for insects but is also an interesting feature in the landscape.

Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT) organised training for volunteers to monitor the health of the River Stour and also held a ‘What’s in Your River’ event on the Town Meadow. These events were very successful. The Town Council will be working in partnership with DWT this coming year to write a Biodiversity Action Plan for all our open spaces, which will prove a vital piece of work to improve the biodiversity of our open spaces, especially as so many animal, insect and plant species are under threat from development and climate change.

To rid the upper reaches of the River Stour of Himalayan Balsam, the first Himalayan Balsam ‘bash’ was carried out by volunteers over the summer. Dorset Wildlife Trust co-ordinated volunteers and great work was done. The Town Council’s grounds staff concentrated their efforts on the removal of Himalayan Balsam from the River Lodden. The control of Himalayan Balsam will continue in 2017.

Various tree work was carried out this year, some of which was residual work contained within the Town Council’s Tree Condition Survey and Risk Assessment Plan.

The avenue of trees planted at Upper Lodden to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gillingham School was completed in March 2017. A total of 24 trees have been planted. A grant from North Dorset District Council and donations from local residents contributed towards the cost of this project.

The sponsored summer bedding scheme was very successful and there were sufficient funds to keep the flower beds and planted areas stocked with plants from summer through to spring.

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen (continued):**

Many compliments were received about how lovely the flower displays looked and what a difference it makes to the town, even to those that only drive through.

In May, Cllr Mrs Anna Baker (who resigned from the Town Council in January 2017) engaged with residents at an event at RiversMeet leisure centre in May to gather comments regarding playing spaces in Gillingham. The feedback received was very favourable. There is a trend to see more areas for youngsters where they can play ball games - narrow streets within housing developments littered with parked cars are not ideal playing spaces. This endorsed the decision by the Town Council to provide a Teenzone' goal end at Church View play area and a Multi-Use Games Area style goal end on the public open space between Downsview and Gyllas Way. A further goal end will be considered for Ham Farm in 2017/18 as the equipped play area nearby is being inappropriately used for ball games. A five year plan has been agreed for the refurbishment of the play area at Marlott Road, which floods terribly in wintertime.

The Town Council maintains and is responsible for thirteen areas of play. Routine and monthly inspections are carried out by members of the grounds staff team who have attended RoSPA training for the inspection of play areas. All play areas are independently inspected annually.

Both the northern hedges at Shires Gate and Jubilee Fields were both laid in the traditional 'Dorset-style' by a professional hedge layer in January 2017. The hedges will be easier to manage in future years and will provide a haven for wildlife. The workmanship that has gone into these hedges has been much admired.

### **Festive Lighting Working Party (Lead Member, Cllr Barry Von Clemens)**

The Festive Lighting Working Party and Town Council staff managed to deliver another great event for the town. The theme was 'pantomime' and four local amateur dramatic groups were approached in the spring of 2016 to find out if they would like to participate. All agreed to parade and perform on stage and a large covered stage was hired. Unfortunately, all but the Gillingham Players dropped out three weeks prior to the event leaving it to town council staff, councillors and some willing locals to dress up for the parade. A children's entertainer was hired to make use of the stage. Coles Funfair provided several rides and a sweet stall and The Anonymous Traveling Market was moved over to the High Street car park to make room for the stage.

The event benefitted from financial support from local companies and Coles Fun Fair. It was possible to provide a new festive lighting display at Lodbourne and increase the display at Newbury, courtesy of Dextra Lighting and Reynolds. A new supplier provided a good quality Christmas tree on the Town Meadow for a third of the price of the previous supplier.

### **Future Workshop Provision Working Party (Lead Member, Cllr David Milsted)**

In February a meeting was held with the Gillingham Community and Leisure Trust to finalise the proposal discussed a year ago to use of the footings to the rear of the building to build a works depot. The Board of Trustees of the Three Rivers Partnership have since confirmed that they would be happy for the footings to be used as a works depot for a period of not less than thirty years at a 'peppercorn' rent; and that Gillingham Town Council will pay Gillingham Community and Leisure Trust £10,000 per annum for a ten year period by way of payment for the existing footings; land to the south of the RiversMeet building on the recreation ground will be made available for a period of thirty years at a 'peppercorn' rent to build a sports hall/community facility, subject to planning permission. The agreement made seven years ago

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen (continued):**

to use the car park at Hardings Lane for the use of the leisure centre/community facility will be extended for a period of thirty years. During the coming year planning permission will be sought for the proposed works depot prior to a legal agreement being drafted between Gillingham Town Council and Gillingham Community and Leisure Trust.

### **High Street Facilities Working Party (Lead Member, Cllr David Milsted)**

The working party has worked hard to achieve the desired outcome to refurbish the High Street facilities into a useful public facility with a multi-access toilet unit for public use. Windrose Trust (formerly Trilith), a long established media charity working with local people across Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire to produce film, TV and radio material about local history, culture and life, expressed an interest to use the building as an office/store and to maintain the existing multi-access toilet unit for public use during their opening hours. Windrose Trust proposed to pay for the refurbishment costs by obtaining a grant in return for a long term 'peppercorn' lease.

The working party was well aware that the High Street facilities would need to be refurbished in the near future whether or not Windrose Trust were successful with their grant application and the Town Council agreed to include £25,000 in the precept to pay for refurbishment works. In March 2017 Windrose Trust were informed by the Heritage Lottery Fund that their grant application was unsuccessful.

The Town Council has agreed to refurbish the facilities to provide a community facility and to retain a multi-use public toilet and will be applying to the district council for a 'change of use' before these works can commence later in 2017. Negotiations with the Windrose Trust will continue.

### **Town Seating & Planted Areas Working Party (Lead Member, Cllr Mrs Belinda Ridout)**

The working party has been working on ideas to improve the areas around the High Street car park. These areas fall within the Gillingham Conservation Area and therefore it has been necessary to work closely with the Conservation Officer at the district council. The Conservation Area has been put on the 'At Risk Register' by Historic England and the working party are keen to improve and enhance the area in a manner appropriate to its historic value. Plans have been drawn up, at no charge to the Town Council, by a local architect and discussions have taken place regarding appropriate materials. Quotations have been obtained for a new surface to be laid under the Oak tree adjacent to the Town Bridge and the options are currently being considered by the Conservation Officer. The raised flower bed adjacent to the Bus Shelter is in need of repair and plans have been drawn up for a seating area at this location; however, as the wall falls within the curtilage of Rawson Court, Listed Building Consent is required and the original plans drawn up by the working party will need to be amended to take this into consideration. Last summer, improvement work to the bus shelter was completed and an information board was erected to display bus timetables, a map of the town and information regarding Gillingham Conservation Area. The working party has also been working in partnership with Sovereign Housing Association and this month a tree was planted on the grassed area between Rawson Court and the car park. Thanks must go to everyone involved and in particular, local architect, Mr Mike Lawson, who has provided his services at no charge to the town and to Sovereign Housing Association who have funded the new tree.

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen (continued):**

#### **Traffic Management Working Party (Lead Member: Cllr Mrs Belinda Ridout)**

Traffic management meets on a monthly basis and has had a busy year working with the community, local schools, organisations and businesses, covering Gillingham and the immediate surrounds and members are thanked for their hard work and commitment over the last year.

The issues can be broadly grouped into the following, but overlap each other in most cases:

- Pedestrian safety
- Traffic congestion/traffic flow
- Speeding
- On-road parking/pavement parking
- Traffic Regulation Orders
- Highway signage
- Traffic signalling

As a consequence, 11 recommendations (including 5 Traffic Regulation Order requests) were put forward to Dorset Highways between May 2016 and April 2017, as a result of investigation, evidence gathering and consultation with members of the public. Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) requests put forward in previous years are currently being processed by Highways relating to traffic calming on New Road, Wyke Road, School Road and Bay Road. We have been informed by DCC Highways that the list of 'approved' requests for TRO'S now contains 200+ schemes, countywide, and that only approximately 20 schemes are selected per annum, taken in priority order. The schemes put forward for Gillingham do not currently rank 'high priority' and could, therefore, be years away. Therefore, it has been necessary for the Working Party to work with DCC Highways to explore all possible alternative solutions before putting in a TRO request.

Roger Bell, Community Highways Officer for Gillingham (only a small part of the area he covers) has attended every working party meeting, offering his expertise and advice, providing a very valuable link between our work with the community and Highways.

The support of the local PCSO's (Police Community Support Officers) is very much welcomed and appreciated at the monthly meetings, contributing invaluable local knowledge to discussion and highlighting concerns which can be taken forward through the Traffic Management agenda. Likewise, working in liaison with the PCSO's and the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, emergency road markings have been installed by DCC Highways within two residential developments, to ensure that emergency access routes are kept free of parked vehicles.

The Working Party has shown on-going support for community led safety campaigns and has not delayed in acting upon concerns, which included Gillingham Town Council supporting two connected petitions, one by the Milton-on-Stour Road Safety Committee and the other by Milton-on-Stour Primary School for improved pedestrian safety and traffic calming in and approaching the village. The petitions received a positive outcome at a Petition Panel Hearing held on 19<sup>th</sup> January this year, actions from which are currently being progressed. Similarly, following a petition by residents of Buckingham Road and after significant discussion with DCC Highways, the Working Party made recommendation to the General Purpose Committee for a resident parking permit scheme. This is currently being looked into by DCC Highways.

The Speed Indicator Device (SID) continues to be deployed on a rota basis across the town: Wyke Road, Peacemarsh, Shaftesbury Road and New Road. This has been extended to a 6 week deployment period as instructed by DCC Highways, based on evidence that

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen (continued):**

deployment of SIDs over the longer period is more effective. A second-hand SID procured from DCC Highways is now fixed at Bay Road and will similarly be deployed on a 6 week schedule.

Public concern about inappropriate and dangerous parking is a common theme and action is taken, where appropriate, working with the Police and DCC Highways but more often than not, there is no easy solution, if at all. Concerns about parking along Wyke Road between Lydfords Lane and Clarendon Close has been seriously considered and DCC Highways has put forward a pedestrian footway scheme which has been included in the 2017/18 Capital Projects Programme.

All public concerns and requests to the Working Party are discussed and wherever possible, recommendations are made to the General Proposes Committee for action. Explanations for decisions made are always communicated back to the originator, whether positive or negative, and it is made clear that any recommendation approved by Gillingham Town Council, is still subject to DCC Highways approval.

Finally, thank you to the members of the General Purposes Committee for all their hard work.

#### **(b) Planning Committee – Cllr Barry Von Clemens**

Cllr Von Clemens presented the following report on behalf of the Development Management Recommendations Committee:

As always, over the council year 2016-17, the Planning Committee has been very busy considering a large number of varied planning applications.

At the start of the financial year 2016-17 the Planning Committee went paperless with all planning applications now being viewed on-line. We have had some hick-ups over the months with the Planning IT but with the kind assistance of the Planning Committee Clerk all members have been able to view all applications. The paperless system has been rolled out across the district.

Due to the Nordon closure project many of the officers and staff and North Dorset District Council have been relocated to South Walks House in Dorchester. The transition was smooth and successful and the Town Council has already built up a good working relationship with the officers working for the Dorset Councils Partnership in Dorchester. I am pleased to report that despite our initial reservations, the new arrangements are working well.

We have received, as always, a large number of planning applications, with the committee having made recommendations on over 120 planning applications over the past 12 months.

The applications that the committee has considered have been varied, ranging from new dwellings; extensions; agricultural buildings; mobile homes; work to listed buildings; applications for advertisement consent; agricultural workers dwellings; and applications for changes of use and conversions of agricultural buildings into dwellings. The past year has seen a good standard of applications being submitted with creative and innovative proposals being submitted. But it has not all been bricks and mortar, we also receive applications for tree works which are also a very important part of our role.

Cllr Ms Anna Baker, who has guided the committee through a number of applications, decided to leave the council in March due to personal commitments. I would like to thank Ms Baker for all her hard work during her time on the committee.

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen (continued):**

Mr Ben Drew has taken on the role of Tree Warden, and has been a valuable addition to the planning committee's team. I would like to thank Mr Drew for all his great work so far and look forward to continuing to work with him in the future.

We continue to have a very good working relationship with District Tree and Landscape Officers who have been a great help. As well as contributing to the planning process the officers have overseen the designation of Tree Preservation Orders following consultation on trees that we considered to be of value to the community and its local landscape. Working with NDDC tree officers we hope that we have achieved a good balance while still being able to boast that our townscape has a good and healthy and well balanced tree population.

The Conservation Working Party under the lead member of Cllr Mrs Hunt along with members of the planning committee, representatives from the GNPG and Local History Society, continues its great work on areas in the town which are considered to have a special architectural and historic interest. The working party is producing an appraisal of the Gillingham Conservation Area which will be followed by a Management Plan. Following the production of these documents, it is hoped to submit an application for the extension of the area.

The working party has also been working on an application for Colesbrook to be made into a Conservation Area. Following a lot of hard work, enough evidence was gathered to produce an appraisal document for Colesbrook and an application was submitted to North Dorset District Council at the beginning of 2017. Following submission of the application, a public consultation was carried out in March and the results are currently being considered by the District Council.

The Planning Committee also deals with footpath matters and liaises with Gillingham's Rights of Way Liaison Officer. Thanks must go to Mrs Messer who has given a great deal of valuable information and time to the committee this year and has kept us fully briefed on the excellent work being carried out by the Walkers are Welcome Group. This group of volunteers has produced new Walking Guides, designed maps, cleared footpaths and helped install new finger posts as well as taking on the task of upgrading many stiles to gates. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sheila and all the volunteers for their excellent work this year and wish them well in their continued work on our footpath network in the year to come.

Finally I would like to thank my two Deputy Chair's, (Cllr Mrs Val Potheary who left us to take up a seat on the NDDC Planning Committee and Cllr David Walsh who was voted to take her place) for all their help and support over the past year. Cllr Alan Frith for operating all our IT equipment during the committee meetings, all the committee members for all the work that they do in preparing for our meetings and of course to the Planning Clerk Julie Hawkins for the huge amount of work she does both at committee and behind the scenes.

### **(c) Policy and Resources – Cllr Mrs Su Hunt**

Cllr Mrs Hunt presented the following report on behalf of the Policy and Resources Committee:

The Policy and Resources Committee meet on the third Monday of each month. The main role of this committee is to consider and approve payments to suppliers, oversee quarterly income and expenditure, the internal audit, service level agreements, insurance, risk assessments, health and safety policies and the management plans for play areas and public open spaces. Within the precept there is provision to award annual grants to local charities and organisations.

The council year begins on 1<sup>st</sup> April and ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> March. Gillingham Town Council has set their annual Precept for the Financial Year 2017/18 at £764,594.13. This represents an increase of 17.88% based on a band D property – an increase of £2.27 per month.

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen (continued):**

The Town Council were mindful that there would be an increase in expenditure resulting from service devolution of the district and county councils and the withdrawing of support for various functions they provided previously. The County Council was capped and, therefore, they were unable to raise their precept by more than 2%. The District Council also had budget restraints and were unable to fully support the valuable services of North Dorset Citizens Advice Bureau and the Community Resources Workers. The Town Council, however, continues to support North Dorset Citizens Advice with a grant of £10,000.

The Town Council continues to provide roadside verge cutting throughout the town with small financial assistance from the County Council, maintains planted areas (some under licence from the County Council) and provides festive lighting in the town at Christmas. Street cleansing in the town is carried out daily with some financial help from the District Council. The Town Council has received many compliments from members of the public on the clean and tidy appearance of the Town and its open spaces.

The Town Council is responsible for 27.66 ha (68 acres) of public open space, which includes 12 areas of playing space; a recreation ground that is fully equipped with an adventure play area, skate park, outdoor table tennis facility and shortly a multi-use games area; a cemetery and Garden of Remembrance. The Town Council also provides and maintains an extensive CCTV system in the town that is a highly valued resource by Dorset Police.

As from April 2017 the Town Council will maintain all the larger public open spaces that were previously maintained under contract by Dorset Countryside. The staff and salaries budget has been increased to cope with this extra work and additional monies have been set aside to cover the cost of machinery, repairs and fuel.

During the winter months the grounds staff are busy servicing machinery, refurbishing fencing and public seating, erecting the Christmas trees in the High Street and the main tree on the Town Meadow along with other festive decorations in the town. The grounds staff also prepare for the Annual Christmas Parade to ensure that the event is a success.

In early January, members received letter from the Local Government Pension Scheme regarding a further shortfall of £16,000 in the superannuation fund for employer's contributions that needed to be paid over the next three years. The Town Council had already anticipated a £5,000 shortfall and provision had been made within the precept considered in December. The request to cover a larger amount was unexpected and a further £11,000 had to be added to the precept in January.

To assist with expenditure, the Town Council hires out facilities at the Town Hall, which generated an income of just over £5,640.00. A further £83,511.56 income was received from:

- eight civil partnerships ceremonies which took place at the Town Hall;
- allotment and burial income;
- service level agreements with parishes and property developers;
- donations towards Harding Park, Sponsored Flower Beds and Festive Lighting;
- donations towards trees and seats;
- statutory payments and the
- draw-down of land management monies received from developers and the district council when the Town Council received public open spaces and land transfers.

The draft Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted by the Town Council. The final submission reports are being collated and the full draft plan will be forwarded to North Dorset District Council prior to being approved by the Planning Expectorate and a referendum taking place.

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **5. To receive the annual reports of the Committee Chairmen (continued):**

The refurbishment of Hardings Park is almost complete. The skate park and play equipment was installed last summer and the multi-use games area will be ready for use next month. The artwork for the new site signage at Hardings Park is with DCC sign shop and should be completed before the end of the April. The concrete path leading to the skate park will be extended to meet the new car park extension in the next few weeks. The outside table tennis facility is in position and will be dedicated to the late Mr Alan Hislop, a veteran international table tennis player, whose idea it was for an outside table tennis facility at Hardings Park. The skate park will be officially opened on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2017 along with the multi-use games area and table tennis facility.

The grant money received specifically for Outreach Youth Work in connection with the Hardings Park project is still available. With the help of Anthony Nye, DCC Senior Youth Worker for Area North, a grant application pack was put together and circulated to all local youth organisations, schools and church groups.

A press release was issued and appeared in the local newspaper. Only one application was received, which is currently being processed to see whether or not the proposed project is suitable. Regardless of the outcome, the money will be spent in Gillingham for its intended purpose.

Stage 1 of the community sports facility off Hardings Lane, is complete. The new electricity supply will be awarded to a local company. The changing rooms and toilet facilities will be prefabricated and made to order in a factory before being delivered and placed on concrete pads. There has already been interest shown in the hire of the football pitch and hire of the outfield by other groups such as car boot sales and the organisers of 'Party on the Rec' event. It is anticipated that Gillingham Town Football Club will be using the pitch next season.

The Sports and Cycle Link between Hardings Lane and Motcombe is still progressing. A letter has been sent to the relevant landowners informing them of the proposed footpath diversion. One landowner has replied and approved the revised route.

A Butterfly Garden and Snowdrop walk is to be created in the Garden of Remembrance in the spring following the successful award of £5,000 from the Tesco Bags of Help scheme.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Policy and Resources Committee for all their hard work and continued support.

### **6. To receive a report from the Town Mayor on his year in office.**

The Mayor, Cllr Von Clemens, presented the following report:

Fellow councillors, ladies and gentlemen I would personally like to thank our committee chairman Cllr Mrs Hunt, Cllr Frith and Cllr Milsted for their hard work overseeing their various committees over the past year and their reports this evening. As you would have heard, it has been a very challenging but positive year for the Town Council. The Mayor has a dual role, one as the Chairman of the council and one as an Ambassador. I do not want to repeat what has already been said, therefore, I thought I would give you some insight of the year in office as the Ambassador, carrying out the Mayor's Civic duties.

I began my year in office in pledging my support to young people and have carried this out to the best of my ability. One of my aims was to get our young people engaged in how we develop and managed our town, on a town council level and above. One way in which I hope

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **6. To receive a report from the Town Mayor on his year in office (continued):**

I have achieved this is by linking the Town Council with the town's School Council's, giving our young people a voice here in local government and hopefully encouraging them to continue their involvement in to adult hood.

My Civic Day was themed on the young people of the town. We started the day departing with my fellow mayors on a red London double decker bus to the North Dorset Rugby Club. Here we were shown around the club house and watched some of the youth teams play rugby. The opportunities and life lessons that the rugby club offers to the young people of the town and the surrounding areas are of great value for their future lives and as such, I have been very happy to support them during my year as Mayor. Another jewel in our town's crown is Gillingham School, who in 2016 marked its 500 years as a school. Mrs Lyons, the Head Teacher of Gillingham School, and some of the school governors gave us a fascinating history of the school and its many achievements over the past 500 years. We were treated to some beautiful music performed by pupils of the school followed by a brief tour of the grounds to see the newly installed sculpture that local businesses have sponsored to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary the Town Council planted an avenue of Oak trees at Upper Lodden, which it is hoped will be a living tribute to this great anniversary.

Finally, we walked over the road to RiversMeet Leisure Centre where all the facilities of this fabulous centre was highlighted by the staff. It was a wonderful day, which all the visiting Mayors totally enjoyed. They were all very impressed with what Gillingham has achieved and the facilities on offer.

Sadly, this year, the Community Resource Workers positions had to be removed due to North Dorset District Council budget cuts. Over the years the Community Resource Workers have been a vital link in supporting many groups and organisations within our towns, and I would like to especially thank all the Community Resource Workers who have worked within Gillingham for their support and hard work, in particular with the Gillingham Neighbourhood Draft Plan, Read Easy and Walkers are Welcome initiatives. The Town Council are continuing to assist any groups or organisations who are no longer being supported by a Community Resource Worker.

One of my first events was to attend the Gillingham Town Twinning Association Cheese and Wine evening. It was a great surprise for me to be 'sacked' hardly before I had had time to begin. It turned out that this was done in the nicest way, as they had adopted some changes to their constitution, which meant the Mayor will no longer an honorary member of the association. However, they hoped that the close links with Gillingham Town Council will continue and grow in the future. This year they will be celebrating their 40<sup>th</sup> twinning anniversary with Le Neubourg and the Town Council will be earmarking this event with a tabloid in the High Street 'D' Bed.

I have been fully supportive of the initiative to make Gillingham a Dementia Friendly Town. Along with our amazing Dementia Friends Champions, I chaired the group's first public meeting, where it was explained how the project was progressing and what it hopes to achieve in the future. In May, the Town Hall is going to host a 'Cake Concert' and a trio from the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra will be entertaining residents who are living with dementia. I am in charge of 'supplying the cakes' – so I will have to be especially nice to my sister, Alison, who is the main cake maker!

In August, Alison and I attended the fabulous Gillingham and Shaftesbury Agricultural Show, which this year was held on a perfect summer's day. We were asked to judge the stands in the trade tent. Not an easy task as there were so many wonderful stands to look at, but in the end, we made our selection. To be honest, if we could have, we would have made them all winners. It was a lovely day and I must give my grateful thanks to all the staff and all the

## **Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

### **6. To receive a report from the Town Mayor on his year in office (continued):**

volunteers who make this such a successful event. There is so much to see and tribute must be given to the massive selection of local business within our area who attend, either as trade stands, or taking part in the events.

In October, Alexandra and I were invited to take part in the annual carnival. WOW! What a totally fabulous day that commenced with the children's parade in the afternoon. So many amazing entries. I am glad I did not have the task of judging. I would still have been there now trying to decide. In the evening, Mrs Janet Robson very kindly offered to drive us in the parade. To wave to the crowd was, indeed, an exciting honour. A massive 'well done' has to go out to everyone who organised and took part in the event.

In December, the annual Christmas festive lights parade hit the streets again, but this year Cllr Elf was absent; may be the appearance of Captain Hook could have been the reason? A pantomime theme with local am-dram groups doing sketches on stage was planned for this event, but sadly at the last minute they all had to drop out, apart from our wonderful Gillingham Players. In the best panto tradition a dragon came to the rescue. I must sincerely thank my fellow Town Councillors and the Town Hall Staff, who bit the bullet and dressed up in panto costumes, and attended the parade, which once again was a huge success.

It was a great privilege to invite the High Sheriff of Dorset, Sir Philip Williams and Mayors and Chairman from as far away as Weymouth to the other side of the county in East Dorset and over the border from Yeovil to our towns annual Christmas Carol Service held at Gillingham's parish church of St Mary the Virgin. It was a wonderful service and one that I really loved. The pastoral team offered to donate the collection to my chosen charity, Parkinsons UK, in honour of my late mother who was a sufferer of the disease. We raised over £500. Thank you to everyone who came along.

The Freedom of the Town is the highest honour Gillingham Town Council can bestow – and as it has no practical application, it is truly an 'honour'. It shows our appreciation for service to the community over a long period. It gave me great pleasure in awarding the Freedom of the Town to Cllr David Milsted in recognition of his long record of public service to the town of Gillingham as a Town, District and County Councillor and former Town Mayor on two occasions. David Milsted has now left Gillingham to live in the Orkney Isles.

In March this year, the parish church of St Mary the Virgin marked its Patronal Festival with a lovely service, which I was kindly invited to. Once again, they were kind enough to donate the collection to my chosen charity Parkinson's UK with another £105.

One of the highlights of my Mayoral year was the Mayor's Dinner Dance. The event raised £1,062.33 and has been donated to the North Dorset Rugby Football Club. It was a wonderful night and I thank everyone who attended the event and especially my Mayor's Secretary, Mrs Jill Ezzard, for her organisational skills and to local businesses who donated the raffle prizes.

Over the civic year, I have attended so many wonderful events both here in Gillingham and around our beautiful county of Dorset and beyond. I would be here all night telling you about them all. From each and every one I have bought away something that I hope I have been able to use to offer something to our lovely and caring town. I must, at this point, just let you know that the 'icing on the cake' is that I have been nominated to attend the Royal Garden Party in May. What an end to a truly fabulous year in office!

**Annual Town Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (continued):**

**6. To receive a report from the Town Mayor on his year in office (continued):**

To conclude, I must take this opportunity in thanking my Deputy Mayor, Cllr Mrs Ridout for her help and support though out my year in office; my fellow councillors, the Town Clerk, the Works Manager and all the staff for all the advice and help that they have given me. Last, but no means least, my sister Alison and my niece Alexandra, who have escorted me to so many of my Mayoral events, and who have both been excellent ambassadors for our town.

**7. To receive Public Questions.**

There were no public questions.

**Closure.** The meeting closed at 8.45pm.