

**Sleaford Town Council**

**Annual Town Meeting**

**Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting**

**held on Wednesday 18th May 2016 at 6.30pm**

**at The Town Hall, Quayside House, Navigation Yard, Sleaford, Lincs, NG34 7TW**

**Present:** Cllr G Titmus, Chairman of the Council; Cllr D Suiter, Deputy Chairman

**Officers:** Clerk and Minutes Clerk.

**Members of Staff:** 3

**Press:** 1

The meeting was attended by approximately 27 members of the public including Sleaford Town Councillors, staff and the press

The Chairman apologised that two meetings were both being held on the same evening and welcomed all to the Annual Town Meeting

**ATM. 1 Apologies**

Apologies, with reasons had been received from Councillors M Graves and H Lorimer. These were accepted.

**ATM.2 Minutes**

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that these notes from the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2015 be accepted as Minutes of that Meeting. The majority of those in attendance agreed. The Resolution was carried.

(Members of the public who wished to vote and who were present at the meeting were able to do so)

**ATM.3 Mayor's Report**

Cllr Titmus said that he would first speak as a Chairman and later as a Mayor. As Chairman he said that there had been so much change and upheaval during the past year but that it had mostly been for the better and was well worth the effort. There have been two major factors which impacted on the Town Council.

**Firstly** - not being able to rely on a regular Town Clerk since December 2013. With the number of people and plans for increasing urbanisation and change this has been very difficult. Temporary staff have been employed and the Council have had to rely heavily on office staff. The situation had been very negative. Lessons have been learned and the Council will no longer use Human Resource advice that is detrimental to the Council. Kevin Martin is now in post as Sleaford Clerk.

**Secondly** - Acquiring the new building to operate from. The previous office could not accommodate meetings. It was very small and unsuitable. Quayside House is

18<sup>th</sup> May 2016 ATM

Date:

Signed:

large. It will have many uses. It can be used for meetings, communal use and be used to store archives.

The Chairman noted that the downside of the move is that so far fewer members of the public have been present at meetings and there has been less press presence. Hopefully this will improve.

There are plans to improve the tractor shed to bring it up to a modern standard and hopefully to move away from Woodbridge Road - to be more efficient regarding services and management of personnel.

Much has been achieved over the last months. The Chairman commended the Services Supervisor for his work.

There has been praise for the way that the Cemetery is kept and for the way the staff dealt with the first Muslim burial.

The tree planting in George Street has been well received with over 40 trees being planted and may well continue in the next planting season.

The Council works well with Sleaford in Bloom and with the Museum Trust. The Museum is becoming a place to visit and revisit in Sleaford.

The Council continues to offer support to the River Clean Up Team. Sleaford is currently successfully twinned with both Germany and France and there are hopes to increase the membership.

Support is being given to a new venture - Sleaford Radio.

Also in the pipeline are plans to make more of Castlefields. Work here needs to be carried out with care and sensitivity.

The Town Council have agreed to join Speedwatch. Ten sites have been identified for placing the new signage and the application to join the scheme is imminent. The replacement of the skateboard ramps in Boston Recreation Ground is an agenda item on the following meeting.

The Market - Attempts in the past to revitalise the Market have not worked but the Town Council now has a re-negotiated licence and plans to improve the Market. Communication and co-ordination are key. The public are welcomed to Council meetings and the Council is currently developing a Media Policy.

There has been progress with co-ordination with NKDC. Several meetings have been held between the two councils and these meetings have gone a long way to a better understanding and improvement of trust.

The Neighbourhood Plan is being worked on.

More informal meetings between councillors can now take place due to the extra space in the new Town Hall.

The re-introduction of the post of Leader of the Council will provide a link between the Clerk and the Councillors.

The Constitution has been reviewed and changed. In future all public meetings will be Full Council Meetings and this will hopefully reduce the number of meeting taking place. It is a successful format in other councils and should be for us.

The introduction of Sleaford Town Council Strategic Plan begins today. It is a more comprehensive plan and will provide a framework for the Council in the future. It will provide a better place to live, work and play. All of this has been achieved by hard work.

As Mayor, Cllr Titmus, said it has been a privilege to do the job and to be able to get to know the people and the town. He said he had decided at the beginning of the year to promote Sleaford to the rest of Lincolnshire. As Mayor he has visited places outside Sleaford at least fifty times and, in addition, attended at least sixty events in Sleaford.

Cllr Titmus said that he had been pleased to re-introduce the Civic Service and that it coincided with the formal opening of the Town Hall.

Cllr Titmus said that he had enjoyed every minute of his time as Mayor. He had found it interesting and challenging. He thanked and praised the Staff, Councillors and his wife for their hard work and support.

#### **ATM.4 Financial Report**

Kevin Martin, Sleaford Clerk said that he is enjoying his new post. He thanked the office staff for their help and support.

The Clerk gave a powerpoint presentation showing Town Council finances. He explained the 2015/2016 budget, Precept, Income for the Year, Expenditure, Surplus, Balances and Reserves.

There is currently £716446 in the bank.

The Clerk gave a short resume - Income from Car Parking and Cemetery is up. Income from the Market is down but a plan is being put together which will hopefully develop this. Savings have been made on utilities.

The money in the bank has a purpose. The intention to resurface and re-line Eastgate Car Park will cost £180K

£204K is in Capital programme  
£190K is in General Reserves

All internal and external audits have been completed. Financial Regulations and Insurances have been reviewed.

There are plans to improve/refurbish the Skatepark and Tractor Shed and to purchase The Town Hall.

**ATM.5 Town Hall Proposal** - options to buy or to continue to rent were considered. The Town Hall was available for rent with a 12 month licence with the option to purchase 9 months into that. The price to purchase is £350K. Contracts will be exchanged on 6th June 2016.

The Clerk consulted with LALC regarding attracting more public interest in the option of whether to rent or to buy the Town Hall. 3629 people viewed social media regarding this but only 23 actually responded. There was also a public survey. The majority were in favour of buying.

Buying will mean a mortgage of £280K with an additional £85K being used from reserves (this includes stamp duty etc)

Some outside agencies have already shown interest in using the facilities at the Town Hall.

**ATM.6 Modernisation of the Council** - verbal report from the Clerk  
The Clerk detailed the Strategic Plan. The key objectives are Communications; working well with other Councils and agencies; improving the Market; Fairs; property assets; service provision and the Neighbourhood Plan.

As per the new Constitution - Council Meetings will initially be held 3 per month hopefully reducing to 2 per month.

Modernisation will take place over the whole arena with effective ways of working. Wifi is available now in the Town Hall.

There are new Premises, a new Clerk, a new Constitution and a New Plan.

**ATM.7 Questions from the Public**

The gates to the Cemetery had not been opened in line with the opening hours listed on the gate and this had caused distress to a bereaved lady who wished to visit her husband's grave. This lady asked her friend to investigate as she was too upset to deal with the matter herself. Her friend contacted the council only to be told that there had been a technical fault. The Chairman was asked to clarify the "technical fault". The gate has a key. The Clerk and Chairman both apologised for the distress and the fact that the gate was not opened at the correct time. There had been

staffing issues. One person had been on annual leave and the other who should have opened the gate was ill.

It was mentioned that this is not the first time the gates have not been opened when they should have been.

The Clerk told the meeting that he is looking to prevent this happening in the future - perhaps with others holding keys.

The Clerk apologised again.

It was asked if the copy of the Constitution will be available to the public and in what format. The Clerk replied he is happy to provide a copy either electronically or a paper version (though it is very lengthy). The member of the public said he would be happy with an electronic version and asked for a copy of the strategic plan also. Both will be made available via the website. These documents are both very new and were only completed a few weeks ago. They are live documents and will be updated as and when there is a need. Revised editions will be updated onto the web site.

A member of the public noted the small number of public present. Older people used to attend but some had difficulties hearing in the previous premises. This lady thought that it was easier to hear in the upstairs room rather than downstairs but commented that it was always easier to hear if the speaker is turned towards listeners. The member of the press said that he felt there was a great improvement over the old meeting room. Moving chairs closer to the speakers may help. If there are still difficulties other solutions could be investigated.

There were no more questions and the meeting closed at 7.20 p.m.