

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

THURSDAY 7 MARCH, 2019

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Presiding: The Mayor (Councillor John Bicknell)

Councillors Present:

Alcock	I Fradgley
Applin	J Fradgley
C Bates	Griffiths
T Bates	Jackson
Bott	Rolfe
Dowling	Wall
Fojtik	

Clerk – Town Clerk
Deputy Town Clerk
Electors – 14
Press – Absent

Apologies: Councillors Brain, Lowe, Jefferson
and Short

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Town Meeting. He advised that although it is statute for the Town Council to hold an annual meeting, it was not a Town Council Meeting, no decisions or resolutions passed would be binding by law (other than a call to provide allotments at a well-attended meeting), as it was purely an opportunity for the electorate to air their views and concerns regarding current matters. The Council would, however, take into consideration that which was discussed.

Members of the Town Council introduced themselves, confirming the ward they represented.

1. Minutes

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 1 March, 2018 be approved as a correct record.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

3. Annual Return for the year ended 31 March, 2018

The Annual Return was noted.

4. Mayor's Annual Report – 2018/2019

The report was 'taken as read'.

5. Parochial Matters Raised by Electors

5.1 A representative from the 'Friends of the Firs' asked three questions relating to the Peony Pavilion, which has been gifted to the town by the government of Fuzhou in China. The Pavilion is currently being erected in the Firs Garden:

- 1) When was the Town Council officially informed of the decision to site the Peony Pavilion in the Firs Gardens?
- 2) Why were there no objections from the Town Council?
- 3) Why did the Town Council not consult local residents?

The Mayor referred the questions to the Chairman of the Planning Consultative Committee, Councillor Ian Fradgley.

Councillor Fradgley responded, thanking the Firs representative for submitting her questions in advance of the meeting giving time for a more considered response. Councillor Fradgley advised:

For proposals such as this, it is normal procedure for the applicant to contact the Town Council and arrange what is called a Pre Planning Presentation of their proposals – I am afraid that in this instance no such approach was made from the applicant. The subsequent planning application was formally received by the Town Council on 4 October.

Consequently, the Town Council had to respond to this specific application on 9 October.

Ideally, the Town Council would have preferred to defer the application to its Planning Meeting on 26 October in order to take account of other consultee's recommendations and observations, including those of the ward councillor, residents, Highways Authority etc. which had not been received by 9 October meeting. However, SDC were demanding a response by 25 October and any responses after this date would not have been taken into consideration.

SDC control the overall timetable of planning applications and our meeting timetable is scheduled to coincide with that time-frame. However, during the second half of 2018, the Town Council were in receipt of planning applications from the District Council that required determination outside the normal response time-frame, which was entirely outside the Town Council's control. Procedures have now been put in place in order for the Town Council to respond should these mismatched 'timing' issues continue.

No further responses or questions were put.

- 5.2 A former Mayor voiced concern that the existing Police and Crime Commissioner appeared to have a 'shyness in coming forward' and had not appeared at any of the town's Community Forums nor had he attended a meeting of the Town Council. He expressed great disappointment, that once again, the Community Forum had been cancelled. As drug dealing and drug related crime is of serious concern, the resident called for the Police and Crime Commissioner to be openly available to explain the process of how the Police are dealing with this specific problem and answer why the Police presence in the town is so limited.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Police and Crime Commissioner will be in attendance at the next Town Council Meeting on 30 April, 2019.

Councillor Dowling advised that the town centre now enjoys 100% CCTV coverage 24/7 and as a result, has

been instrumental in aiding in a number of arrests which are drug related.

A further suggestion from the floor was to install CCTV coverage in the alleyway system, as much of the drug trafficking is believed to be conducted in these areas, sometimes quite openly.

- 5.3 The same former Mayor went on to remonstrate with the Town Council for showing utter disrespect by parking the civic car in the Cemetery on a long term basis. He was dismayed that the Council would take such a decision, particularly when it had gone to such lengths to create the Tranquility Garden, which he thought was excellent. He also congratulated the Council and their Open Spaces team for maintaining the Cemetery so beautifully. He advised that he therefore couldn't understand the Council's logic in sanctioning an action which was not in keeping and was so disrespectful, claiming that 'surely the Council can afford to pay for alternative parking arrangements?'

The Town Clerk responded that the decision to park the civic car in the cemetery was a management decision necessitated by having to instantly react to unforeseen circumstances. Due to the sudden and immediate resignation of the Council's civic chauffeur, the civic car had to be removed from his private premises and stored cost effectively and securely, whilst at the same time, allowing ease of access to ensure civic business continuity. As the Council's two other vehicles are kept at the Cemetery, she advised that at no time did she consider that a black car, encased in a grey cover parked at the side of the chapel would be seen as disrespectful. She explained that although it may appear churlish to judge the situation monetarily, every decision reached by Council and their Officers has to take account of ever dwindling financial resources.

The Mayor confirmed that he would refer the matter to the Mayoral & Protocol Committee for further consideration.

- 5.4 Picking up on Cemetery issues, another former Mayor raised concern that the burial space appeared to be rapidly filling up. He was aware that the problem would become that of the District Council once the existing burial space

within the Cemetery was exhausted. However, he suggested that in the short term, in addition to increased interment fees for those who did not reside in the town, the Town Council should also ensure that the surviving family must demonstrate the deceased's former strong and personal association with Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Town Clerk responded that these safeguarding measures were already in place, which appears in the Stratford-upon-Avon Cemetery Fees and Charges:

- The following fees, payments and sums will be increased by 100% where the person to be interred, or in respect of whom the right is granted, is not an inhabitant of Stratford-upon-Avon. A person will be regarded as an inhabitant if he/she has lived in the town within the last five years.

There being no further issues arising, the Mayor thanked those present for attending and declared the meeting closed at 7:55pm.