

**MINUTES OF THE 44th TRING ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD AT THE VICTORIA HALL,
AKEMAN STREET ON MONDAY 24th APRIL 2017 AT 8 p.m.**

Present: Councillors: Mike Hicks, Town Mayor (presiding)
J. Bowden
O. Conway
H. Grace
P. Hearn
S. Hearn
P. Hills
N. Hollinghurst
N. Nutkins
R. Ransley
C. Townsend
G. Wilkins

Also present: Michael Curry (Town Clerk)
Dawn Slade (Deputy Clerk)
Karen Trickey (Guest Speaker)
Gareth Hopkins (Guest Speaker)
30 registered electors of Tring Town

419. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from the following members of the public: Tim Amsden, Barbara Jones and Brian Kazer.

420. MINUTES

The Minutes of the forty third Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 18th April 2016 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

421. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

Councillor Hicks began by saying that it had been an honour and a privilege to represent the people of Tring. He thanked the people of Tring, the voluntary sector, the town council staff and his fellow councillors for all their support during the year.

He then outlined the activities of the Town Council in the past year. The remaining town plan money had been used carefully to continue the projects started in previous years. He gave particular thanks to Councillor Stephen Hearn for his dedication to the piece of land known as Meadow Brook next to footpath 41.

He explained that these are challenging times with government legislation driving the county and borough councils to implement change. As a council we have strived to modify the changes in the best interest of the people of Tring.

An example of this was where the Town Council successfully challenged the building of a travellers' site on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty abutting LA5. This will not now be built, but the houses and the cemetery extension will be. There will also be public open space.

The Town Council will continue to strive for proper infrastructure to be built to support the extra population.

To complement the planned works to Tring School the Council lobbied Dacorum Borough Council on the state of the swimming pool. This will be refurbished very soon at considerable cost.

He recommended the latest edition of The Town Crier as a comprehensive report of the Council's work over the past year.

422. ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2017/18

Councillor P. Hearn, Chairman of Finance & Policy Committee reported on the Estimates of Income and Expenditure for 2017/18. The Committee has special responsibility for agreeing the annual Estimates of Income & Expenditure and recommending to Council the level of Precept.

2017/18 will see a 2% increase in the Town Council's element of council tax. This is a 50p increase for a band D property with the charge for the year being £25.66. The increase is to cover inflation. Pension costs will rise significantly with the implementation of pension auto-enrolment.

With regard to the budget for the forthcoming year, the first thing to note was that there had been a change in accounting procedure which made a direct comparison of the total figures with the previous year difficult. However the net effect was unchanged, so comparing the overall surplus or deficit was still a good guide.

Last year the Town Council budgeted for a surplus to put funds by for the Nora Grace Hall and projects tended to be funded by the grant from Dacorum Borough Council for implementation of the Town Plan. These funds are drawing to a close so the work of the Council will have to be financed from the Council's own funds. In addition to all the usual costs of running the Council, funds have been allocated for the following projects:

- New fencing at Duckmore Lane Grass Keep – the area of land the Town Council owns opposite Duckmore Lane Allotments. An area that has been greatly improved thanks to the work of Councillor Wilkins
- Upgrading the Town Council's website to a better software platform
- The employment of professional services as the Town Council reviews the use of some of its property e.g. exploring the use of the Market Place as a car park.

Making allowances for these projects leaves the budget with a small planned surplus.

423. A PRESENTATION BY TRING YOUTH COUNCIL

Mrs E. Cave, Clerk to the Youth Town Council, explained the composition of the Youth Council, how frequently they met and that the meetings followed the same format as the Town Council. Meetings are open to the public.

She continued on how the members were selected. Originally this had been by trying to get representatives from a cross section of organisations e.g. the town's sports clubs, but this had switched to holding elections in conjunction with the secondary school. The election had been part of the curriculum, but the school felt it could no longer dedicate time to the process. Understandably this caused a drop in participation. Generating interest in youth councils is not just a problem in Tring but is national issue given all the competing pressures on children's' time nowadays. There was a discussion of possible ways to try and stimulate interest.

Mrs Cave then outlined some of the various events the Youth Council had been involved in: The dog show at the Summer Carnival, the Bake-Off competition at the Woodland Trust's Summer Festival (raising £180 for Hector's House), working with the youth club, and participating in Neighbourhood Watch.

She concluded by thanking the Town Council for their support.

424. REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

A list of representatives had been provided. There were no questions.

425. GUEST SPEAKER

The Mayor introduced Ms Karen Trickey and Mr Gareth Hopkins from the Woodland Trust to talk about the possible development of their newly acquired land adjacent to Tring Park.

Mr Hopkins spoke about the strategy they had adopted: a considered approach of a wide range of possibilities identified through consultation followed by initial tests and pilots. The outcomes would then be brought together in a business plan for approval by the Woodland Trust's Board. He stressed that the Woodland Trust was a woodland conservation charity, but it recognised that open spaces were an integral part of the local landscape.

Ms Trickey then gave details of the progress made so far. The consultation had identified concerns about parking, lack of toilet facilities, the need for a safe link between the sites and the need to improve disabled access. Events would continue and develop and innovative ways to tell the history of the site would be explored. Examples of things that would be tested in the near future would be a coffee van on site (there was a discussion on controlling litter) and a simple pop-up visitor hub giving somewhere where people could talk to Woodland Trust staff/volunteers. She stressed that whatever is done would be in a way that was sensitive to the land and the historical context.

Cllr S. Hearn asked about the effectiveness of measures taken to reduce the spread of thorn bushes in the open parkland. Mr Hopkins answered that the cattle were effective in parts of the site but not everywhere. Schemes to control thorn trees on the escarpment were being investigated.

There was a discussion on the possible reintroduction of softwood to replicate the original Plantation. The need for diversity to enhance resilience was noted.

Cllr Hollinghurst asked about the existence of landscape and heritage designations such as SSSI in the area. The Woodland Trust is aware and confirmed any areas with such status.

The Mayor thanked Ms Trickey and Mr Hopkins for their presentation.

426. BEST KEPT ALLOTMENT 2016/17

The Best Kept Allotment prizes, sponsored by Tring Market Auctions, for 2016/17 were presented by Councillor Hicks, as follows:

Winner	Mr & Mrs A. Bolton
2nd Prize	Mr K. Pemberthy
3rd Prize	Mr P.G. Flitney
4th Prize	Mr B. Green

427. THE ANNUAL COMMUNITY AWARD 2016

Having congratulated all those volunteering in Tring on their achievements and giving a brief resume of the winner's contribution to the Town, the Town Mayor announced that the winner of the Annual Community Award of £300, to be donated to a charity of the recipient's choice, was Caroline Hind.

428. OPEN FORUM

During this item the following comments were received from members of the public:

Ms Holliday expressed her concern at the general state of the roads in Tring with particular areas blighted by potholes. There was a general discussion on the need to report faults via Hertfordshire County Council's website – ideally with photographs, how it could be frustrating that large potholes that did not meet the strict safety criteria were left to proliferate, and the work of the Road & Home Safety Working Party to audit and report the state of the roads, pavements and streetlights throughout the Town.

The discussion moved to the state of the High Street. Councillor S. Hearn explained how this would always be a problem unless there was a major project to stabilise the effect of building a road on rock chalk.

A resident asked that pressure be put upon London Midland to improve facilities for the disabled at Tring Station. Cllr Hollinghurst, in his role as County Councillor, explained that both the County Council and Town Council had lobbied the Rail Regulator for such improvements. There is an obligation on the franchisee and the understanding is that lifts will be installed, but it is unclear whether this will be before or after the new franchise is granted. The Town Clerk will send another letter.

The Mayor concluded the evening by thanking everyone for their interest.

The meeting ended at 9:04 p.m.

Signed
Town Mayor

DRAFT