

**TOWN COUNCIL
PRINCES RISBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 17th APRIL 2018 INCLUDING
THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
THE PRINCES CENTRE PRINCES RISBOROUGH AT 7.00PM**

Welcome and Introductions by the Town Mayor and apologies for absence

The following councillors were present:

Cllr M Walsh (Chairman)

Cllrs J Coombs, P Summerbell, A Ball, N Davis, Roberts, I Pearce, L Byrne, D Knights and A Turner
Susanne Griffiths – Clerk, Kirsty Pope – Deputy Clerk, Jayne Mylchreest - Administration Officer,
Kevin Locke - Maintenance Team Leader

Apologies were received from Cllrs A Rolfe, G Hall and I McLauchlan

33 members of the public were present.

Chairman's Report

On behalf of the Town Council I would like to thank you for your attendance this evening.

I would like to thank all of the staff at the Town Council who have gone above and beyond and helped us to deliver a successful year but there is always room for improvement. The office has been very busy dealing with calls regarding the reorganisation of the Local Government. Small things make a huge difference in the Parish such as the Community Bus and seating in the town as well as larger issues such as the Local Plan. The Town Council continues to play a vital role in all the issues raised concerning the town and the Councillors local knowledge is invaluable.

The Local Plan has been submitted to the Inspector. All the pros and cons were discussed in depth and whilst challenging the Town Council believes it to be the best Plan for everyone.

I look forward to enhancing a bigger role regarding the Unitary decision.

The Town Council continues to take a leading role with Devolved Services, The Princes Centre and the Thursday Market. Significant changes and improvements are being made to the Summer and Christmas Festivals. Also working with Lea Valley regarding the open spaces and on the economic regeneration of Princes Risborough. I look forward to find ways to enhance and expand the role of the Town Council.

I would like to welcome Councillor Bill Bendy-she Brown from Bucks County Council.

I would like to end by thanking all of the officers and Councillors.

Councillor Walsh having ended the Chairman's report took a number of questions from members of the public.

Finance Committee

Cllr A Turner gave an overview of the budget–v–actual figures displayed on the screen and confirmed the precept was increased by 1% at £354,151.00 for 2018/19. The Council Tax Support Grant was reduced by 13.5% at £12,761.66. Supplementary income included Market Rents, Devolved Services, Services to other Councils, Festival Sponsorship/Grants and CIL monies.

Additional summer operatives have been employed to join the Maintenance Team.

Cllr Turner thanked the Clerk, who is the Responsible Financial Officer for her sound management.

Admin & HR Committee

Cllr A Ball presented the report. He outlined the budget and expenditure and staffing levels.

The administration of the Town Council is carried out by the qualified Town Clerk who is appointed by the Town Council. The Town Clerk is required to carry out all the functions required by law as the Town Council's proper officer and to issue all statutory notifications. The Town Clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer.

The Town Council is supported by a team of 9 members of staff as displayed on the screen.

A new Projects and Administration assistant has been employed and is due to start tomorrow and would like to welcome Belle and all wish her well.

Public Relations Committee

Cllr D Knights presented the following report:

Keeping Residents Informed

We have spent the last year trying to spend more time focussing on keeping residents informed. We issued three editions of Crosstalk in the last year with content that we hope is both informative and interesting to residents. Over the last year we have covered the Local Plan, new lighting schemes, information about our parks, dog fouling, and details about the many community groups and organisations that have benefitted from our small grant programme.

We have recently completely redesigned our Town Council website. This is often the first port of call for people who are new to the area as well as residents living here. We have aimed to make it more user friendly and much easier to find things. We hope that you will take the time to look at www.princesrisboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk and let us know of improvements or enhancements that you would like to see.

Improving our environment

In collaboration with the Town Committee we have looked at ways of improving our town and making it a more attractive place to live. Once again we ran the Art in the Park scheme to highlight the amazing talent of local artists, sculptors and craftspeople. The winners of the competition had their entries made into large display boards which were posted around Wades Park. This scheme is greatly appreciated by residents, but sadly earlier this year four of the displayed artworks were defaced with offensive graffiti and had to be removed from display. Luckily this seems to have been an isolated incident. We have allocated some funding to help establish a new waymarked Heritage Trail for the town. We have only just started this project but have pulled together some residents and interested parties to make this a reality. The Heritage Trail will be really important in order to protect and signpost the town's considerable heritage assets ahead of any changes and developments brought about by the new Local Plan. If you are interested in being involved in the Heritage Trail working group, please contact me.

Promoting our Town

We have taken time this year to discuss and resource the promotion of the town and the Town Council. We purchased new sail banners that have been used on several occasions already and have looked at ways of making the Town Council's work for evident to residents. Now that the Town Council manage and operate the Thursday market, we have started to look at ways of improving and promoting the market. We have paid advertising on the Community Bus as well as adverts in local guides and magazines. In addition we are working on a #ShopLocal campaign to promote the market. We will continue to consider other ways of improving footfall. If you have seen any market stalls at a neighbouring market that impressed you, please let us know or let them know that we are looking for new and different market stall offerings.

We will continue to consider ways in which the town can be regenerated and kept vibrant. The refurbishment of the Market House has given us an opportunity to promote the Town and make this community facility available to a new audience.

I want to thank the members of the PR Committee for their imagination and commitment to promoting all that the Town has to offer.

Town Committee

Cllr J Coombs presented the following report:

The Town Committee is responsible for the Maintenance of all aspects of the Open Spaces and Buildings that come under the control of the Town Council, which includes, among other things parks, lighting, bus shelters, seats, the Market House and War Memorials, all of which have kept the committee focused and determined to offer the best value for money.

The committee is admirably supported by the Clerk and her staff and our Maintenance Team who 'do the actual work' and should be commended for their diligence in maintaining the integrity of the town and its buildings.

It has been a very busy year for the committee and staff, but many projects that have been ongoing for some time, years in some cases, have come to fruition.

The prime example of this work has been the refurbishment of our Grade 2 listed Market House. This building had for some time been somewhat neglected and was not being used to its full potential as a

meeting place for small committees or groups within the town as it was cold, damp and in a poor state of repair.

The Town Council along with a grant from Wycombe District Council started the project early last year with the expectation of the work being completed by the summer, but because of unforeseen problems it took rather longer than expected but the result has been very worthwhile as we now have a building that the town can be rightly proud of and is available for hire by small local groups or on a more commercial basis for anyone who requires a short term presence in the town.

The facilities include a small meeting room that is adaptable for different uses, hot and cold-water dispenser, toilet and washroom and a multi-use digital hub that is connected to superfast broadband. The building was re-opened by our MP John Bercow and it is our intention to hold some open days, both during the week and at the weekends so that interested parties can view the refurbishment and see where the money was spent.

Another long-term ambition of the council, delegated to the Town Committee, is the desire to reduce our lighting electricity costs by replacement of our lighting stock with low consumption LED lighting heads.

We have already had two pilot schemes running to ascertain the best value heads and this has recently been followed by a third, in Eastfield Road, which we hope will finalise the type of head required and then we can go ahead with a full replacement programme.

The committee is indebted to the Lighting Project Group for their sterling work in keeping this project going ahead despite the major difficulties that have had to be overcome.

The Maintenance Team that reports to the committee has seen a number of personnel changes during the past year but continue to do a fantastic job in maintaining the fabric of the town as well as earning the council much needed income through devolved services to both Bucks County Council and other local and parishes and should be commended for their work both within the town and without.

The parks and open spaces are regularly inspected and assessed for any need of development to ensure their best possible use and visual appeal and so soon it will be time to replant the flower beds and baskets around the town for the summer.

We have recently had an approach from 'People and Places' to allow them to run regular Street Football training on the MUGA in Wades Park. This is a not for profit enterprise which is backed by Bucks County Council and is aimed at men of a certain age and ethnic diversity that is not catered for elsewhere. More information will be published in a future edition of CrossTalk and you will also see banners advertising the event around the town. The project will run initially for 6 months but if all goes well then it can be extended as necessary. During these sessions the MUGA will still be available for use by others, who may like to join in even if they do not fit the required profile.

Work is being undertaken at the Earle Mitchell Ground to make the pavilion safe and it is in our plans that in future this building will be refurbished, but this is a long-term aspiration.

However, we have enabled Risborough Rangers teams that use Wades Park regularly to store their equipment in a purpose built building on the park which is part of our commitment to their long-term future.

The committee has recently undertaken the organisation and day to day running of the Thursday Street Market and along with the Public Relations committee is seeking to enhance and promote the market by bringing in more different stalls to make it the go to Thursday market in the area, but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to that effect.

The committee is committed to making best use of the funds that we are allocated from the precept and will continue to operate a best value policy on all items and projects brought before us.

Planning Committee

Cllr Ian Pearce gave the following report.

The Town Planning Committee currently consists of 5 councillors and our Town Mayor who meet once a month prior to our Town Committee meeting.

Particularly with the planned expansion of Princes Risborough, we recognise the importance of good controlled Town Planning for new developments, alterations to and change of use of existing property and tree preservation.

With this in mind, we consider and discuss every Planning Application we receive from Wycombe District Council. We respond by providing our comments as to whether we are happy or not with each application. If we are not we give our reasons why. If for any reason we recommend refusal, we are given an opportunity by Wycombe to speak at their Planning Committee meeting.

Events Committee

Cllr A Ball presented the following report.

This committee is responsible for the planning and running of our Town Summer Festival and also the Christmas Lights Switch on.

As chairman of the events committee, I am assisted by a team of 6 councillors, local retailers, residents, our Deputy Clerk Kirsty Pope and our new member of staff Annabelle Denbury.

We start planning for our Annual Summer Festival straight after the last one has ended, the same goes for our Christmas Lights Switch On.

None of this would be at all possible without generous sponsorship/grants from Michael Graham Estate Agents, Wycombe District Council, Tesco Bags of Help Scheme.

A few of our main sponsors are as below.

Local Car & Vehicle Rental (Green Motion)

Lightfoots Solicitors

Hypnos

Blanchfords.

Dukes Wine Bar

Last year's summer festival was enjoyed, by it would have appeared, the entire population of Princes Risborough who basked in glorious sunshine with even a manmade beach to make it feel like a day at the seaside.

There were so many attractions on the entire length of the High Street that you had to actually pinch yourself that you were still in Princes Risborough and not Bournemouth, especially with the added attraction of the donkey rides!

As the Events Chairman, I would like to express my thanks to all our many volunteers on the day that put in around 10 hours work.

After such a great summer festival we were a little apprehensive that we could attract such a great turnout from you our local residents to our Christmas light switch on.

Thankfully we were proven wrong and again you came in your thousands to what many residents are saying was the best lights switch on our town has ever seen.

A lovely cold, crisp afternoon gave it that very special feeling and along with the ice rink and live music made you start to think about Christmas.

The grand finale of the fireworks was a great touch that was kept secret from everybody, including me, until the last minute.

Chairman of Events, in my opinion, is the best committee to Chair on our Town Council as the reward far outweighs the time and effort we all put into it and believe me there is a great deal of both!

We couldn't put on these events without the assistance from our hard-working office staff, Town Councillors, numerous local volunteers, our sponsors and of course you, our local residents.

On behalf of PRTC I would like to thank you for attending both events last year and hopefully your continued attendance in the coming years as we can only see our events getting bigger and better.

Thames Valley Police

Sgt. James Benfield reported that Princes Risborough is a low crime area. The Princes Risborough neighbourhood team has been problem solving to look at the root causes to reduce crimes being committed. The team has a strong presence in the High street and at local schools. Residents are encouraged to speak to the team if they have any concerns or information and although the police station does not have a front desk residents are welcome to call on for advice.

Problems with unofficial scrap metal dealing have been dealt with.

The focus is still the increase in cyber crime and the advice is to install firewall security and regularly change passwords. The Neighbourhood Watch scheme is supported by TVP. To report cyber crime visit www.actionfraud.police.uk

A lot of Police time is spent safeguarding vulnerable people within the community working with social services and mental health services to make them aware of these people and work together to minimise the risk going forward. Missing persons are graded as high, medium or standard risk. Those categorised as high risk are a priority with all hands to the deck which is clearly very resource intensive with Police dogs and helicopters being utilised.

The Neighborhood Watch scheme has been invaluable sharing information regarding shoplifting.

The team have attended local events and the Town Council festivals was a huge success without any arrests.

A review of the staffing is under review. The current Police Station is likely to be sold and the team will move into an extension to be built at the Fire Station with response still being dealt with from High Wycombe.

Sgt James Benfield took questions from members of the public.

Presentation of Princes Risborough Citizens Award

Cllr Walsh presented a Citizen's Award to John Biggs who has shown outstanding commitment to the community with his unstinting efforts in the organisation of the "Kop Hill Climb" and his support of the town festivals (vintage car included).

Cllr Walsh presented a Community Group Recognition Award to the Kop Hill Climb. The restoration of this traditional hill climb by dedicated local volunteers, now in its 10th year, has brought much kudos to the town and is a great example of the whole community working together through its various organisations.

Cllr Walsh also presented a Citizen's Award to Trevor Lynch from Risborough Run in the Park. Trevor has set-up and led the highly successful weekly 5k run, Risborough Run in the Park. From humble beginning in 2014 with four volunteers, RRP has continued every week to provide the opportunity for families and individuals to run 5k around Wades Park. Despite personal health challenges and rain, snow, ice and sunshine, Trevor has continued to manage and steer RRP, devoting his time, energy and commitment to ensure its continued success. He has also raised valuable funds for charity and was instrumental in establishing a community defibrillator at Wades Park.

Public Open Forum

- A member of a local group informed the meeting that the group had rolled out a similar project to the Town Council's Art in the Park in the local schools.
- A resident praised the idea of a Heritage Trail and asked if this could be publicized in the Crosstalk magazine to encourage local people to come forward to assist with their local knowledge

The Mayor thanked the public for attending and the meeting closed at 8.50 pm