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To all Electors of Bicester, the Annual Town Meeting will be held at The Council Chambers, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester OX26 6PS on Monday 16th May 2022 at 7pm under the Chairmanship of Councillor Alex Thrupp (Town Mayor)

Agenda

All Council Meetings are open to the public and press, unless otherwise stated.

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Minutes of the Annual Town** (Pages 3 -
To confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 27th May 2021 at 19.00hrs by Zoom. 7)
- 3. Town Mayor's Report**
To **NOTE** the Town Mayor's report from 2021/2022.
- 4. Reports from the Town Council for 2021/2022**
To **NOTE** reports from the Town Council 2021/2022.
- 5. Reports from Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Councillors servicing Bicester Wards**
To **NOTE** reports from Oxfordshire County and Cherwell District Councillors serving Bicester Wards.
- 6. Consideration of any written resolutions of which the Town Clerk has been given three days' notice**
- 7. Public Questions and Comments**

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Cllr Alex Thrupp, Town Mayor

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 27th May 2021 at 19.00hrs by Zoom.

Present:

Cllr Nick Mawer – Bicester Town Mayor
Cllr Nick Cotter
Cllr Sandy Dallimore
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Harry Knight
Cllr Zoe McLernon
Cllr James Metcalf
Cllr Richard Mould
Cllr Lynn Pratt
Cllr Dan Sames
Cllr Les Sibley

In Attendance:

Phil Evans – Service Manager
Julie Trinder – Administration Office (Civic & Democratic)

The Meeting started at 18:39

1. 049/2021 Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED that apologies were received from Cllr Jason Slaymaker, Cllr Alex Thrupp and Samantha Shippen, Chief Officer.

2. 050/2021 MINUTES

The Service Manager informed the meeting that the previous minutes had been misplaced and will be signed at a later date.

3. 051/2021 Town Mayor's Report 2019/2020 & 2020/2021

RESOLVED that Cllr Nick Mawer reported on Cllr Jason Slaymaker's report and covered the following points:

- Bestowing the Freedom of the Town to DEMS Training Regiment
- A garden part held in September 2019
- Remembrance Day Service and Parade 2020 which took place virtually
- Civic Service and Parade 2019
- Bicester Christmas Lights switch on in December 2019
- Opened St Edburges Christmas tree festival 2021
- VE Day in 2020 held virtually
- Opened a new shop in Bicester, Home at 96 Sheep Street
- Visit to the vaccination centre at Bicester Heritage
- Thanked all the Town Council staff, his family, fellow councillors and the residents of the town for all their support

4. 052/2021 Reports from the Town Council for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021

RESOLVED that Cllr Richard Mould reported on the following points over the years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021:

Environment Committee

- Armed Forces Day celebrations in June and ending with the usual pre-August bank holiday music event with the Superhero's Day in Early August.
- The committee carried out a number of play area refurbishments bring the total number to have a refurbishment up to 12. The grounds maintenance team were kept busy throughout the year with the maintenance of our open spaces and preparing for the events.
- In March 2020, the Covid 19 pandemic struck and normal life ground to a halt. Our Service Manager Phil Evans joined the council a couple of weeks prior to the lockdown and had an interesting time getting up to speed with operations.
- On the 23rd of March, our admin staff began working from home and are just preparing for a return to the office when the third lockdown eases next month.
- The ground staff have been operating normally but in the early stages of the pandemic reduced opening hours in both the Garth Park and Cemetery opened for reduced hours to make sure staff and the public could be protected. As things began to open, in June the park reopened and later a number of play areas were cleaned and sanitised ready for the children to return.

Finance Committee

- All meetings were held virtually, and the finance committee continued its work managing our budgets. Due to their diligence, we exited the year 2019/20 with a small surplus which transferred to the earmarked reserves for projects like the new cemetery.
- The pandemic meant we were faced with additional costs to make sure staff and residents were kept as safe as possible.
- We also created a Covid fund that was made available to local charities and associations like the CAB, Food Bank, Good neighbour scheme etc to help the provide additional services to the vulnerable and those shielding. These were however offset by savings arising from the cancellation of the events programme and part of our grant aid funding and we expect to exit the year around the breakeven point or with a small surplus.

Planning Committee

- The planning committee have been kept busy; over the two years we have seen a number of major applications probably the most notable being Great Wolf which attracted a large public attendance at the meeting. Despite many objections of course we all know how that finished.
- Over the past 2 years a number of major developments have been commenced including Symmetry Park, David Lloyd Leisure and Holiday Inn to name but a few.
- The most recent landmark of course was the completion of the bridges under the railway in North West Bicester which was slotted into place in 96 hours over the Easter weekend.

Policy Committee

- The Policy committee have been kept busy with the changes brought about by Covid and the myriad directives from central government often announced before the fine detail had been passed to the council.

We have been focused as well on the provision of a new burial ground for which land is allocated on Northwest Bicester. To date we have no firm date as to when this will be available but are expecting to hear sometime this year, the planning application is ready to go as soon as we have the green light.

5. 053/2021 Reports from Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council Councillors serving Bicester Wards

RESOLVED that reports were given on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council officers and Cherwell District Council officers, the following points were covered:

Report from Cllr Michael Waine, Oxfordshire County Council

- The COVID Pandemic has overshadowed the whole year. However, the determination of the Leadership of the Council to ensure that all District Councils, Health and other agencies co-ordinated their work and particularly delivery has meant that Oxfordshire residents have been well provided for throughout. Early action in March 2020 of providing £1 million worth of PPE to Oxfordshire Schools and care centres was widely welcomed. Locally we applaud the work of our local GP Practices with the innovative Bicester Heritage vaccination centre and thank the many volunteers for their untiring support in all weathers. Cherwell has one of the best vaccination records nationally.
- The Climate Change Agenda has been actively at the forefront of the Councils work with OCC being a 'Climate Change Council'; Operating at Carbon Neutral by 2030 – 50% reduction since 2010, Supporting maintained schools to take climate action, Working with all suppliers to 'green' supply chain, Enabling a net-zero future for Oxfordshire.
- Oxfordshire is the top Local Authority for re-cycling for the 7th year running, policy for 100% LED streetlights with a third already in place, EV charging points installed, especially here in Bicester.
- School Streets are being trialled at two schools: St.Edburg's and Bure Park.
- Active travel measures are being introduced in the town to improve access for local walking and cycling. Councillors have worked with officers to find best solutions, but particularly to keep the Causeway open one-way for light vehicles.
- Councillors are working with officers on possible cycle routes into the town especially using the Middleton Stoney, Banbury and Buckingham Roads.
- Councillors have maintained a high profile in local infrastructure issues, in some cases over several years:
- We welcome the recent building of the underbridges north of the Bucknell Road railway bridge which in time will lead to the re-aligning of Howes Lane.
- Given the cumulative impact of developments on the A41 with Kingsmere retail growth, the new Tesco/MacDonald's, David Lloyd, and the office park we have pressed for the building of SE link road to enable traffic to bypass the Rodney House, Hamburger, and
- Vendee Drive roundabouts to access the M40. This is now being worked on by county officers with a stakeholders meeting to be held soon leading, hopefully, to the reserving of land in the Local Plan process.
- We welcome the current EW Rail Consultation which includes, for the first time, discussion about the London Road issue. The options which are available have come from joint working with OCC.
- We have been concerned about the proposed merger of local GP Surgeries and the re-location to a site at the edge of town at Graven Hill and have raised issues of accessibility.
- Bicester is well served by its schools with all being found to be Good by OFSTED. Cooper School has A Levels results in the top 10% nationally for the second year running. All councillors used part of their 'Councillor Priority Funds to purchase laptops for local schools.

- We supported the expansion of St Edburg's Primary school across the two sites at Kingsmere and monitored the implications of combining Bicester school and the Studio school under one headship and governance.
- A significant number of roads and pathways have been re-surfaced with further work planning for 2021/22.

6. 054/2122 Report from Cllr Nick Cotter, on behalf of Cllr Calum Miller, Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr Miller was sorry to miss the Annual Meeting of Bicester Town Council due to a prior commitment.

Election and New Council; In the recent election, voters in Oxfordshire did not give any single party a majority of seats to run the council. The Liberal Democrat, Labour and Green parties have agreed to put party differences aside and work together as The Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance. On 18 May, Cllr Liz Leffman, who leads the Liberal Democrat group, was elected leader of the Council.

I am honoured to be serving as the Cabinet member for finance. I will work hard to ensure that the Council's financial resources and assets are carefully stewarded and used for the greatest benefit of our residents.

Issues; Your meeting will cover many important local issues but I want to highlight one. The East West Rail consultation on the London Road crossing and Bicester Village station closes on 9 June. This is a critical issue for everyone in our town. It is not only for those living south of the crossing. If we have no vehicle crossing point left in the town, we will be a town divided and the fabric of our community will start to fray. We must keep London Road open.

I am working closely with residents and a number of community groups explore alternatives to the closure of the road. Having received over 1250 signatures to our petition, we recently wrote to the CEO of East West Rail who has replied, emphasising that they recognise the disruption closing the road would cause and asking anyone with views to contribute to the formal consultation. I encourage everyone to do so via the EWR website before 9 June.

Contact details/ staying in touch

I hope very much to be at the next meeting of the Town Council. In the meantime, town councillors and residents should feel free to contact me by email or phone: details are available on the Oxfordshire County website.

Calum Miller
27 May 2021

055/2021 Date of Next Meeting: TBC

Close of Meeting: 21:42hrs

