

**Present:** Councillors;

Anne Fleming (Chair) David Thomas (Vice Chair), Peter Dutton, Rosemary Lewis, Andrew Payne, Sandra Leverett, Paul Widdowson, David Wollweber.

**In Attendance:** N J Rees (Clerk), County Cllr Tony Goldson

Apologies: Cllr Anne Baldwin, Cllr M Took & Cllr I Winton

**Members of the Public:** A register was kept on the door, manned by Mr M Fleming, 56 members of the public attended for the meeting.

The Chair, Anne Fleming pointed out the fire exits and warned residents that the main gates would be closed as a precaution during the meeting due to the Travellers in the town.

The Chair explained that the Travellers who had arrived and set up in the Angel Link car park were nothing to do with the 'Stocks Fair' which had been expected the week before. The Chair read out an email from Andrew Jarvis of WDC which confirmed that there was a delay in moving the Travellers on because of the necessary welfare checks had to be made first. It was hoped that they would be leaving shortly as there was a limited Police presence in the town.

The Chair reported that this meeting represented almost a year for the new Council which took office in May 2015. The members had not expected that there would be so many difficult issues to deal in the preceding months. The Chair thanked all the Councillors and the Clerk for their hard work and support and for their commitment to all the various committees and outside bodies over the last 11 months.

The Chair explained that this meeting was the Annual Parish Meeting and was required to be held every year however it would follow the now familiar format of the Town Forum meetings where residents of Halesworth were invited to put forward questions on local topics.

The subjects for discussion received from residents were as follows:-

- 1) Town Park Toilets, were they closing?
- 2) An update on the Rifle Hall
- 3) An update on Campus
- 4) What events were planned for the Queen's Birthday?
- 5) Update on the Old Bistro
- 6) Halesworth Arts Gallery
- 7) Litter in the town
- 8) Update on the London Rd Building?
- 9) Clinical after care at Patrick Stead Hospital
- 10) What is happening with the Skills Centre?
- 11) Update on the Barrow Crossing.

**New Halesworth Town Council Website**

Before these matters were discussed the Chair handed over to Cllr David Wollweber who presented an introduction to the new Halesworth Town Council website with the aid of the School's Projector. Cllr Wollweber explained that the site was not 'live' as yet but was very close to being ready. The layout of the website was shown on the Projector and Cllr Wollweber explained that this new website was intended to be much more accessible for all.

Furthermore, the intention was to have a means of communicating events and matters of interest via emails. Cllr Wollweber requested that any residents who were interested could leave their email addresses after the meeting which would only be used by the Council for sending out Council newsletters.

**Old Bistro:** The Council and The Tourism Group had both again tried recently to get some action taken on the neglect of this historic town building. Cllr Wollweber noted that he

thought there was now mildew growing on the wood carving but the Conservation officer had advised that the cost of restoring the woodwork was many thousands of pounds. Halesworth & Blyth Valley Partnership had also tried to hold meetings with the Tenant but on each occasion the Tenant had not turned up. It was noted that perhaps photographs could be put in the windows to make it more presentable but the problem was that this may encourage the occupants to continue live in the building without opening for business.

**Halesworth Art Gallery:** Joanne Barfield wished to inform everyone that the Art Gallery was not on the Town Map which was compiled and printed by the Community News. It was the Art Gallery's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and they were holding many exhibitions over the next year. The Council would make sure there was a link on the new website.

**Barrow Crossing:** The Council and the action group SOCH (Save our crossing Halesworth) were still awaiting a response from Mr Hooker of Network Rail. Cllr Thomas advised the residents that it would be very difficult to stop them closing the crossing on the argument that it was a public right of way as the evidence suggested that it was in fact not a public right of way. It was a different scenario with Old Station Rd and the Mells crossing which were public rights of way and possibly the reason why Network Rail had not targeted these sites. It was noted that Network Rail had not conducted the necessary Impact Diversity Assessment and had also as yet not supplied an updated Risk Assessment. The arguments for the unsuitability of the proposed alternative footpaths and the suggestions for making the North bound train stop at the crossing may be the best way forward.

**Queen's Birthday Celebrations:** The Chair confirmed that the date would be Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup> June in the Town Park. The plan so far was that there would be a Pimms and Beer tent, Ice cream Van, Jazz band and areas for people to bring their own picnics. This would all tie in with Halesworth in Blooms reception party at the station where a brass band would be arriving. The times were provisionally 11am – 4pm but all this and further details would be confirmed a little nearer the time.

**Aviva Women's Cycle Tour:** The Chair reported that the Council had met with representatives from Suffolk County Council who were promoting the event. The event would take place a few days after the Queen's Birthday celebrations on the 15<sup>th</sup> June at approximately 10.30am. The Council intended to purchase bunting for both events and would apply for help in funding the purchase of the bunting from a fund set aside for this purpose.

**Was the Old Print Works still putting on regular events?:** Mr Leverett (H&BVP) explained that they had just received a new 3 year lease from Tesco and so the Old Print Works would continue to host events. The recent 'Brocante' had proved very successful and had increased the footfall to the town.

**Carpark Fees:** The Chair reported that members of the Council together with District Cllr Tony Goldson had met with Stephen Baker CEO and Andrew Jarvis Strategic Director for WDC. The negotiations were not completely closed. It was clear that the numbers of cars using the Thoroughfare car park was noticeably less since the re-introduction of the charging for the first hour. This fact would eventually become apparent to WDC and would affect their previous calculations. It was agreed to monitor the situation over the next three months and then the Council would meet again to discuss the situation with WDC. Cllr Thomas reported that WDC had in various correspondence indicated that the revenue from the car parks were being used to support shortfalls in their overall budget and this may be illegal. This was denied by Mr Baker. Overall the meeting was more positive than expected and it was hoped that a deal to enable HTC to control the car parks, the London Rd Building, the Toilets and the Park could be made at some point in the future.

**London Rd Building:** Cllr David Thomas explained that the Business Plan was evolving and the Council was currently awaiting confirmation from WDC that the application for the building as a Community Asset had been accepted. It was also awaiting the results of a

survey of the building and its services which was to be conducted by Mr Brian Morton of the Morton Partnership and this information would be used in the Business Plan.

**Toilets:** It was noted that WDC had not made any decision to close any of the toilets at this stage.

**Rats in the Town:** The Chair reported that the Council had commissioned Millennium Pest Control and they would be installing bait boxes along the river bank in the next week. There would be notices warning residents to keep dogs under control and stop feeding the ducks. This was part a programme of control to try and reduce the numbers of rats in the town.

**Campus:** On the 6<sup>th</sup> May there would be a public presentation of the plans for the Sport Facilities and the Health care facilities in the Library. A recent report on the pitches had identified a problem with the drainage and this would need to be addressed before the pitches could be used. This was potentially holding up progress as the HPFA would not sell the land until the facilities were ready to be used.

**Skills Centre:** The Skills Centre currently run by Bungay High School would be closed next year however County Cllr Tony Goldson explained that it was hoped that this would be joined to the Campus Project and the facilities could still be used for Apprenticeships and educational purposes.

**Rifle Hall:** Cllr Thomas reported that the Council had been informed that the Rifle Hall Trust was now a Charity Incorporated Organisation (C.I.O.). Mr Doug Gray expressed concerns that this meant that the trustees were not answerable to the public. It was noted that the new organisation were still under the regulatory powers of the Charity Commission but direct public consultation was not a requirement.

**Litter:** Mrs Copperthwaite reported that there was a lot of litter around Harrison's Lane and Norwich Road, particularly along the boundary with the Campus grounds. Much of which was in the hedges and verges. Cllr Thomas said that he would have a look at the problem. It was agreed to organise another litter pick as soon as possible as WDC were currently offering a small budget for gloves and equipment.

**Brass Band at the Station on June 11<sup>th</sup>:** Tamsyn Imison reported that she was expecting up to a 1,000 people to attend the event at the station when the brass band arrived for the Queen's birthday celebrations. Tamsyn asked whether the Council could supply a couple of 'Portaloos'. The Clerk would investigate costs and options.

**Assistant Town Clerk:** The Chair welcomed and introduced Phillippa Welby who had just started work as the Assistant Clerk on Monday the 11<sup>th</sup> April.

**Other business:** Mr Leverett, referring to the proposed amalgamation of the Halesworth Playing Fields Association and Campus into a single charity said that he would make the details of the agreement available in the Library.

Mr Leverett wished to express his appreciation for the Council's efforts which had injected some much needed pace back into the Community.

Mrs Dutton wished to congratulate the Chair and the Council members on their hard work over the last 11 months.

Mr Doug Gray also wished to thank the Chair, the Council and County and District Councillor, Tony Goldson for putting Halesworth first on the many issues the town had faced in the last year.

The Chair thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and reminded residents that the next Council meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> May was the Annual meeting of the Council.

The meeting was closed at 8.25pm