

ANNUAL DISS TOWN MEETING **MINUTES**

Minutes of the proceedings of the **Annual Meeting of Duly Registered Local Government Electors** held in the Diss Youth & Community Centre, Shelfanger Road, Diss on **Thursday 5th March 2020 at 6.30pm.**

Present: Councillor Sonia Browne (Town Mayor) in the Chair
Sarah Richards (Town Clerk)
Sonya French (Deputy Town Clerk)
Councillors Collins, Gingell, Howard, Kitchen, Mason, Olander (Council Leader), Poulter, Robertson, Taylor and Welch
71 members of the public

1. WELCOME BY THE TOWN MAYOR OF DISS

Councillor Sonia Browne welcomed those in attendance to the Annual Parish Meeting of Diss.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 9th May 2019 were agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Town Mayor.

3. ANNUAL REPORT FROM DISS TOWN COUNCIL

Councillor Browne provided an Annual Report on the activities of Diss Town Council. Improvements to Council-owned sites included investments from developer contributions in play equipment in Diss Park and the Skateboard Park at the Sport Ground, planned works at the Diss Youth & Community Centre to install a kitchenette and support of a project to restore an ancient walkway on the same site. The Town Council contracts Suffolk County Council to manage 240 streetlights transferred from South Norfolk Council and will take over management of the toilets at the Mere's Mouth in addition to those on the Park once the refurbishment works have been undertaken by the District Council.

Plans for a 'Space-Inva-Diss' themed Carnival on Sunday 14th June are well underway and as well as oversight of the Christmas Lights Switch-On event and support to other event organisers, the Town Council will take on responsibility for the Remembrance Parade and is preparing a special event to celebrate the VE Day 75 commemorations in May.

There have been fewer highway related works this year given the £1 million investment by Norfolk County Council last year. The County Councillor for Diss reports that the funding and plans are in place to support the link road between the railway station and Nelson road, and the Vinces Road/A1066 junction scheme and will be scheduled once the legal matters are resolved.

The Town Council is involved as a consultee in planning decisions and has recently approved recommendations to support retention of the local open space on Parish Fields / Lawns and employment land on the Frontier site. Members of the public were encouraged to have their say on the Greater Norwich Local Plan, which is currently out for consultation until 16th March.

Electors were also updated on staff and councillor changes and encouraged to stand for co-option as Town Councillor to fill the last two remaining vacancies.

The Town Mayor concluded by talking about the fundraising she has been doing in aid of her two charities - Papyrus (Prevention of Young Suicide) and Norfolk's Big C Cancer Charity.

4. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE DISS YOUTH COUNCIL

Diss Youth Councillor Murphy presented an Annual Report on the activities of Diss Youth Council. The Youth Councillors have been busy at various events throughout the year including the Council's Annual Town Meeting, Mayor's civic service and being represented at the Police information stand.

They also attended the Cyclathon, Fair Green spider equipment opening, South Norfolk Council's On Show the Diss remembrance parade and Christmas Lights Switch-on events. The Youth Council has also given its time to helping to tidy up the plant pots & maintain the wildlife gardens and arranged an intergenerational lunch connecting both the young and older people in the community. Youth Councillors have also reviewed what they can do regarding climate change, attended a Norfolk Anti-Bullying conference and the Town Mayor's Christmas carol concert. It was noted that there are currently 7 Youth Councillors, aged 12-19 and that they are looking for new recruits.

Julia Fairbrother of MTM Youth Services talked about the benefits of the Council's grant for young people of Diss. The funds enable her to help to support the Youth Council and run a wide range of activities which encourage young people aged 13-19 to engage positively in and with their community, to take pride & social action in Diss and to be offered access to wider experiences with other organisations. Examples include running the Fare share food scheme for vulnerable people, conservation work at Quaker Wood as well as intergenerational lunches.

The Youth Council and Julia were thanked for their input across the year particularly regarding the research they undertook at the High School regarding the expenditure of the Section 106 developer funds.

5. ANNUAL REPORT FROM NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Norfolk County Councillor Keith Kiddie gave his apologies for the event and his written annual report was summarised by the Mayor.

6. ANNUAL REPORT FROM SOUTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

South Norfolk District Councillors were unable to be present at the event due to an emergency Coronavirus meeting and written reports were received from Councillors Minshull and Wilby.

7. ISSUES RAISED BY ELECTORS

Several issues were raised by electors.

Former Tourist Information Centre

There was a question regarding the negative appearance of the former Tourist Information Centre building at the Mere's Mouth and lack of usage. It was noted that the building belongs to South Norfolk District Council and that requests for usage of the building are being reviewed.

Pigeons

There was a question regarding the number of pigeons still in the town centre and banning feeding by the individuals who deposit large quantities of seed/bread on the Mere's Mouth. It was noted that the falcon flying initiative led by the Town Council and supported by local businesses and partners, which aims to disperse the pigeons, is set to continue until September to complete the 12-month programme. The Town Council met recently with the Dealey Falconry regarding varying flight times to ensure safety of the falcons and to keep the pigeon population on the back foot. The Town Council is also trying to work with traders regarding pellet sales, encouraging the public to feed appropriately and working with the District Council on the cleanliness initiatives. We are also investigating the option of a dovecote located on the Park to manage numbers. It was also noted that Diss is synonymous with the Mere and that families/visitors like to come and feed the ducks, so a balance is required. There was a suggestion that the public could be encouraged to feed seed to the wildlife on the water, which the pigeons would be unable to reach.

Diss Town Guide

The Chair of the 25th edition of the Diss Town Guide was thanked for her efforts in producing this edition and the Council for supporting.

Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP)

There was a question regarding the plans for infrastructure improvements in the town given the planned 400 new homes in the GNLP. It was noted that the Council has provided its response to the GNLP consultation and has asked how the District Council intends to mitigate against the impact with regards to infrastructure particularly healthcare provision. The GNLP proposals allow for a road connecting Shelfanger and Heywood Roads, which will relieve traffic on Sunnyside. Residents were encouraged to respond to the consultation ending on 16th March.

Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan (D&DNP)

There was a question about the progress of the D&DNP. The Steering Group Chair confirmed that a consultant has been appointed and is putting together the next stage of the Plan. It was noted that the technical assistance work has been undertaken, which includes a housing design guide, housing needs and sites assessment, which will form evidence for the Plan. There will be a pre submission consultation, which is planned for June. This plan is a challenging one as it involves seven parishes and two County Councils working together and it is deemed that this will result in the best way forward for the area given the interdependence of Diss & surrounding villages. Electors were advised that the delays with the GNLP process particularly the government's Housing Needs Assessment has caused inevitable delays for the DDNP.

The meeting concluded with award presentations to Honoured Citizen Andrew Rackham & Junior Good Citizen Callum Doe who were awarded for their respective voluntary work in the Diss community.

The meeting was declared closed at 7.43pm.

Signed as a true record - _____
TOWN MAYOR