



Leigh-on-Sea Town Council



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Chairman: Cllr Carole Mulroney

Town Clerk: Helen Symmons

Minutes of 21st Annual Town Electors Meeting 28th April 2017, 7.00 pm at Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road

Present: Councillors: Carole Mulroney (Chairman), Karen Bowden, Anita Forde, Donald Fraser, Jill Healey, Valerie Morgan, Declan Mulroney, Ron Owen, Caroline Parker, Vivien Rosier and Jane Ward.

Sir David Amess MP, Cllr John Lamb, Leader of Southend Borough Council, Borough Councillor Bernard Arscott, Cllr Peter Davey (EALC) and Peter Geraghty (SBC). Press – Evening Echo & Leigh Times

Town Clerk and two members of staff along with 39 members of the public.

Those attending who were Leigh Town Council electors numbered 42

The meeting opened at 7.07pm

1. OPENING OF MEETING

The Chairman opened the meeting, welcomed everybody and thanked the attending Borough Councillors and MP. Leigh Town Council members were asked to stand and introduce themselves.

2. APOLOGIES

Councillors: Patrick Fox, Richard Herbert, Fr. Clive Hillman, Past Councillors: Peter Dolby and Helen Robertson

3. MINUTES OF THE 20th ANNUAL TOWN MEETING were agreed and signed.

4. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN – Cllr Carole Mulroney

Good evening everyone and thank you for coming and showing an interest in the work of the Town Council. Well here we are at the end of another Council year, they seem to come round very quickly.

It has been a pretty eventful one for the Town Council with the opening of Strand Wharf after many years hard slog and the ever increasing popularity of our events and of course the Community Centre. There have been some changes in the offices with the retirement of the former Town Clerk, Paul Beckerson and a very long standing member of staff, Vivien Choppen and we thank them for the years of service they gave to the Council. Of course retirements mean new appointments and we welcome our new Town Clerk, Helen Symmons and other new members of staff filling the vacancies we have had over the year. We are very pleased to be an employer in the town and encourage youth employment. Both of our apprenticeships have resulted in permanent employment with the Town Council and career development. There has been a major review of job roles and the new restructuring allows us to move forward efficiently and with cost savings. We now employ 6 full time and 8 part time members of staff.

Sadly there still seems to be people in the Town that don't know much about us and so part of the staffing restructure was to enable us to move forward to rectify this and enhance our community engagement – it really isn't just about dishing out pink sacks!

We hold many events other than the major ones of the lights and Carols. We make great use of the community centre to arrange childrens' events during the holidays, book fayres and the like and the art wall which gives a great opportunity for local artists to display their work. We provide Grant

Aid for those who are just getting started with schemes and organisations. With our artist in residence scheme we ensure that the arts are well provided for in both the centre and the wider town.

You may not be aware that we fund the first aid post in the Old Town in the summer, the School Crossing Patrol at Elm Road, the hanging baskets, the Farmers' Market and the Community Transport Scheme for our elderly and disabled. On top of that we have major allotment sites, the skate park and Strand Wharf where we will be holding events in the coming months. And we get involved in litter picks and provide a first port of call for channelling comments to the Borough Council – in many cases avoiding people having to go to Southend or spend time calling and writing.

There are some detractors of course – no organisation is without the doubters – but that is good because it keeps us thinking about how better we can serve the community. And that is just what we have been doing in the last few months.

We have started to prepare the ground for a neighbourhood plan following the framework provided by the National Association of Local Councils, we hope to shortly meet to discuss this with the Borough whose support we need and when we get to the appropriate stage there will be full consultation town-wide. There is an exhibition of the work done so far at the back of the room. It is a long exercise with several stages and many views and variables to be taken into account so it won't be a quick process. It will go to referendum when it is the best it can be. Yes, it will actually be the residents of Leigh who decide whether the plan is adopted

One of the biggest issues in the town is parking. If there was a simple solution it would have been thought of long ago. We are not the highway authority but we will give a view on proposals and consider this through the Neighbourhood Planning process and by responding to the Borough's Parking Strategy when this is published, hopefully later this year. You can't please everyone of course and sometimes solving a problem in one place just moves it along the line so solutions have to be thought through carefully.

We all care for our town in its many aspects and one of the most important of these is its commercial side. We understand exactly how people feel about the individual shops but we cannot alter the law and so sometimes have to accept changes we don't like. One recent excellent event is the founding of the new Group, Love Independent Leigh, this town needs a strong commercial organisation to work with the Town and Borough Councils and other organisations to look after the interests of our commercial enterprises and it has been really gratifying that the traders are moving this forward – they have to lead because they know the climate they are working in.

Another subject which is important to the town is its heritage. The Town Council's Planning Committee responds to all planning applications within the town and where heritage assets are concerned is particularly testing of proposals whilst acknowledging the limitations the planning system places on us and the Borough. You all know how we fought to save the community centre and our library and we have already registered our interest in what happens to the police station once the police finally leave and I have received an assurance from the Leader of the Borough Council that we will be consulted at that time.

Several of the councillors sit on outside bodies representing the Town Council and so the Town. Valerie Morgan sits on the Airport Consultative Committee, Richard Herbert is our representative on SAVS and other councillors attend business partnership meetings and Borough Council working parties. I have been working as part of the Leigh Coastal Communities Team and the North Thames Fisheries Local Action Group both of which are looking at the fishing industry economics, tourism and betterment of the town and how it works within our varied population.

We are a group of 16 people, all different, all with different ideas, experience and hopes for the future and we come together on a totally non-party basis– whatever our personal politics, they have never entered the Town Council arena – that is the way it should be and that is the way we think you would want us to remain.

So all in all I hope that has explained a bit more about what we do, what we intend to do and how we want you to become involved. The town belongs to all of us and we should all be playing a part in its future.

Signed/Initialled

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5. OBSERVATIONS FROM GUESTS

The Chairman moved this item forward from Agenda item 10 as Sir David Amess and Cllr John Lamb had to leave for another engagement.

Cllr John Lamb gave his apologies for having to leave early but wished to recognise the role of Leigh Town Council with particular regard to the planning comments passed to the Borough and involvement with the Fisheries Local Action Group. He wished the Council well for the future as Leigh continues to grow along with the business side and as such the Borough are looking to extend the Business Improvement District.

Sir David Amess congratulated the Councillors for all the work they undertake for electors. He believed Cllr Fraser was the only original Councillor remaining from 20 years ago. Sir David stated that he remains in touch with the local community and highlighted Southend as the Alternative City of Culture at present and informed the audience of an event taking place imminently.

6. PRESENTATION OF LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD

The Town Clerk introduced Cllr Peter Davey, the Vice Chairman of EALC and Chairman of the Essex County Accreditation Panel. Cllr Davey thanked the Council for their invite and advised the audience that he also sits on the National Association of Local Councils and provided an overview of some of the areas he is involved in and the types of work where Councils and Councillors are represented.

He was delighted to be awarding Leigh Town Council with the Foundation award which he presented to the Chairman.

7. GUEST SPEAKER

The Chairman introduced Peter Geraghty, Director of Planning & Transport at Southend Borough Council. Peter highlighted that planning is a challenging role in any town and presented the legislation behind planning decisions.

Members have to act in accordance with legislation. Objections and petitions to applications show strength of peoples' views but members have to look at all relevant material considerations not just those views. All the evidence has to be considered. The Planning Officers advise the Council. It is independent advice as the Officers have a Code of Conduct to follow and act in the widest public interest not a political one. The local community is respected but planners must act independently based on legislation and evidence.

National Guidance rules as well as the Local Plan have to be followed. A new Local Plan will be due for consultation in 2018 and Leigh Town Council will be able to contribute. The thrust of the plan is pro-growth and development.

Mr Geraghty explained the process of submitting planning applications and the right of appeal if an application is turned down. He explained that the Right to Light is not a planning consideration but the impact of daylight and sunlight can be considered.

Planning Officers make recommendations based on the weight of the impact of the material considerations in an objective way in view of the local and national guidance. When an application has gone to appeal, not all inspectors are from Bristol. An Inspector will spend some time in the area considering an appeal. It is an expensive process and planners have to advise their Councils accordingly. Appeals made are actually quite low and most applications are approved.

Finally Mr Geraghty spoke briefly about Neighbourhood Planning and highlighted that these plans are about promoting development whether building wise or community.

8. COMMUNITY GUEST SPEAKERS

Current President of Leigh Lions, Deborah Jones was the first to speak highlighting the work of the Leigh branch and provide background to membership and some forthcoming events they are involved in.

John Riddell, the Press Officer of Lower Thames Rowing Club spoke of the club based at Two Tree Island which has a packed rowing and social calendar. They are the largest touring rowing club in the country with a diverse membership, being inclusive and welcoming.

Finally, original founder of the Thames Traditional Touring Club spoke of this big social biking and walking club and some of its history having begun in 1993 with just 6 members, it now boast well over 100 members.

9. GOOD FOR LEIGH AWARDS - Presentations were made to:

Mary Lister

For enhancing the arts and crafts in Leigh and creating a great community project at Wesley Church which was a pleasure for all to see and participate in.

Peter Monk

For being a very active member of the Leigh community over many years. Helping at events and making sure St. Clements Church Yard always looks its best, as well as showing great community spirit.

Joan Young

For a long career of bringing arts & crafts to our Senior Citizens at St. Edith's Court and helping them to remain involved in the community of Leigh and unleashing their creative talents.

Leigh Art Trail

Leigh Art Trail, in its 20th Birthday year, is a group which Leigh can look on as a great asset, attraction and promotor of the arts for Leigh, its artists and visitors. Long may it continue.

Love Independent Leigh

Love Independent Leigh, a new group showing initiative and leadership in enhancing and promoting the shopping experience in Leigh and working together for the good of the community.

10. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

The meeting received the report with one question being raised with regard to the extended approved leave of absence for Town Councillors and not representing the electorate in their ward. The Chairman highlighted that ill health was behind the requests and Council had voted on the matter.

11. RESOLUTIONS OF WHICH WRITTEN NOTICE HAD BEEN RECEIVED

MOTION TO ANNUAL TOWN ELECTOR'S MEETING 28th April 2017 – Received 18th April 2017

This meeting calls on Leigh-on-Sea Town Council to engage with and consult the community, residents and businesses of the Town with an aim to progressing the following policy issues.

- 1. Neighbourhood Plan.** That a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group of interested parties from within the community be formed to progress and formulate a Neighbourhood Plan for Leigh-on-Sea with the aim of going to referendum within the lifetime of this administration.
- 2. Parking.** That a house to house resident's survey be undertaken in areas of parking stress within the town, for the purpose of arriving at solutions of traffic management and the possibility of residential permit areas. The results to be put to Southend Borough Council for implementation.
- 3. Town Centre Management.** To help and encourage the businesses within the town to form a Marketing Steering Group with the aim of employing a Town Centre Manager and look into the possibility of creating a Business Improvement District.

4. **Former Leigh-on-Sea Urban District Council Offices (Police Station).** That the Town Council works with others in partnership to secure the retention of this historic building in civic use, including cultural, information and administrative uses.

Proposer: Paul Beckerson

Seconder: Janet Parmenter

The Chairman asked Mr Beckerson if he wished to speak on his motion and highlighted that many of the points within the motion had been mentioned by various speakers during the meeting. Mr Beckerson gave reasoning for his motion – essentially more engagement with the community. Cllr Ward provided an insight into what is already going on within the Council. The Chairman added to this – in areas where a parish or town council exists, these are the only bodies that can prepare a Neighbourhood plan. The Town Council have a few more steps in the process before the required part of Neighbourhood planning when they must consult with a variety of groups and residents. When they are at that point, there will definitely be full consultation and engagement. Both the parking issue and BID consideration will be part of the plan but also the Chairman highlighted that SBC are undergoing a parking strategy which Leigh Town Council will be able to respond to. The basis of a BID area is that the businesses make a financial contribution so they would need to steer this suggestion of a Town Centre Manager rather than the Council. Finally it was known that the Police Station remains in use but that the Town Council as Mr Beckerson was aware, had already registered its interest a while ago with SBC who own the premises and that the Leader of SBC had personally assured the Chairman that LTC would be approached in advance of anything happening.

The electors were advised that they had one vote but that any resolution is not binding on the Council, purely persuasive. It was requested that each point of the motion be voted on individually.

Issue 1 – Neighbourhood Plan **RESOLVED**

Issue 4 – Former Leigh-on-Sea Urban District Council Offices (Police Station) **RESOLVED**

Issues 2 & 3 did not receive sufficient votes in favour.

12. OPEN FORUM

In the absence of a representative from SBC, Cllr Mulroney spoke in her capacity as a Southend Borough Councillor where necessary.

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| 12.1 | Member of the Electorate Raised that there had been a loss of street trees | From Cllr Carole Mulroney SBC policy is to replace but not necessarily in the same place. It will be referred to SBC and also whether LTC can be involved. This issue would also form part of the Neighbourhood Plan. |
| 12.2 | Member of the Electorate Pointed out that many litter bins on the seafront but a distinct lack in Leigh. | From Cllr Valerie Morgan This had been recognised and she had raised the matter at the last meeting of the E&L Committee requesting that it be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting. |
| 12.3 | Member of the Electorate Stated that traffic signs around North Street School area were not evident like those at West Leigh School. | From Cllr Carole Mulroney The speed limit around West Leigh Schools is 20 mph hence the signage. SBC are gathering evidence to consider other roads for 20 mph but are now awaiting a Government report on the matter. |

Signed/Initialled

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- 12.4 **Member of the Electorate**
Advised that the shelter at Bell Wharf is boarded up as owned by the railway and now sold by them.
- From **Cllr Carole Mulroney**
Confirmed this.
- 12.5 **Member of the Electorate**
Asked if there was ever going to be a cycle path between Chalkwell Station and Leigh.
- From **Cllr Carole Mulroney**
Not being sure of the answer, SBC would be asked for the current position.
- 12.6 **Member of the Electorate**
Was most concerned with the condition of some roads with deep pot holes etc.
- From **Cllr Carole Mulroney**
Advised that areas are prioritised by SBC but the Town Council will report his concerns with regard to West Street and Woodfield Road.
- 12.7 **Member of the Electorate**
Asked about electric car charging points for Leigh.
- From **Cllr Carole Mulroney**
SBC are actively looking at this as she had raised the question with them today.
- 12.8 **Member of the Electorate**
Raised the free parking anomaly with regard to differing times.
- From **Cllr Carole Mulroney**
This was a trader driven decision. Not aware of any plans for it to change.

13. CONCLUSION

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking other Councillors for their support, the staff for being first class, Gavin Dixon as her Chaplain for the year and to all the volunteers that have assisted the Council over the year.

Meeting closed at 9.07pm