

# SAWBRIDGECWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

## MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL Minutes

of the Meeting of Sawbridgeworth Town Council held at the Council Offices, Sayesbury Manor, Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth at 7.30 pm on **Monday 29 June 2015**.

### Those present

Cllr Sotirios Adamopoulos	Cllr Don Hall
Cllr Angela Alder	Cllr Will Mortimer
Cllr Eric Buckmaster	Cllr Tom Reeks
Cllr Ruth Buckmaster	Cllr David Royle
Cllr John Burmicz	Cllr Mike Shaw
Cllr Pat Coysten	

### In attendance:

Cty Cllr Roger Beeching	Michael Jarvis - H&E Observer
PC Yvonne Hyne – Herts Police	29 members of the public
R Bowran - Town Clerk	Joanne Sargent – Town Projects Manager

Welcome by the Mayor, prayers were read by Cllr David Royle

### 15/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Heather Riches – on holiday.

### 15/26 TIME BANKING

Members and the public received a presentation by Mekhola Ray and Sally Millett of East Herts District Council on the District Council's Time banking initiative following the trials at Buntingford. In answer to a question it was confirmed that EHDC has a budget of £14k for the project.

### 15/27 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

To receive any Declarations of Interest by Members.  
There were none

### 15/28 PUBLIC FORUM

To receive representations from members of the public on matters within the remit of the Town Council.

The mayor welcomed those attending to address the council on the concerns about empty shops in the town. He mentioned a number of current and future activities that could assist including the new Town Action Plan, a Neighbourhood Plan, Town Centre developments, events, community transport and contributions to parking costs.

**Mrs Berrin Lee** presented a paper detailing a number of questions relating to Parking Issues, the Mix of Businesses in the town and the role of the new town councillors in addressing the issues.

*The full text of the address is included in the minutes as Appendix A.*

*A comment was made that Bell Street is going downhill because people choose to shop in Harlow or Bishops Stortford.*

*A comment was made that some parking issues could be solved by reversing the entrance and exits to the Bell Street car park.*

*The mayor said solutions lay in all parties working together and advocated the new Town Action Plan as a vehicle. It is important that retailers and the public are all involved.*

**Mr Tristram Mayes** said that the points that he had wanted to raise had been covered in the address by Berrin Lee, but that Sawbridgeworth needed to have a busier shopping centre.

*Mayor responded that he would set up a meeting with Forebury Estates, who had said they had recently let 47 Bell Street as a book shop, and also investigate with the planning authority how any change from retail usage to residential could be resisted.*

**Mr Doug Hintridge** asked if there were similar situations on other towns and was the town council in touch with them.

*Clerk replied that there were similar issues and he was in close contact with the other four town clerks.*

**Mrs Natasha Plowman** referred to her summary of a Survey Monkey poll that had been conducted, by saying that the main problem is the mix of shops in the town rather than a parking issue.

**Cllr Roger Beeching** said there was a long history of trying to get parking bays in Bell Street. A review by Herts Highways a few years ago had ruled them out on technical grounds. The issue was one for inclusion in the next Town Action Plan.

**Mr Norman Manion** reminded us that in 1951 there were 72 businesses in Sawbridgeworth. He also remarked that the street lights in Saffron Close were lit during the day but not at night and this facilitated the three break ins to cars that had occurred during the last week. He thanked the Clerk and Cllr Alder for their prompt response to the threatened eviction of an elderly person in the area.

**Mr Greg Rattey** suggested that if it was not possible to create parking bays in Bell Street then the discretionary “period of grace” offered by EHDC should be extended to 10 minutes.

**Mr Derek Filler** said that the main problem in Bell Street was the speed of cars passing along it.

*Mayor responded that he received a petition and would announce it in his report.*

## 15/29 MINUTES

**Resolved:** To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Town Council held on 18 May 2015 (M01)  
*[prop. Cllr R Buckmaster; secd. Cllr Alder]*

## 15/30 PLANNING COMMITTEE

**Received and noted:** the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on:

- 15 June 2015 (P01)

- 15/31 FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE**  
**Received and noted:** the minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee Meeting held on:
- 15 June 2015 (F01)

**Confirmed:** The recommendation of the Appointments and Appraisals Committee for a variation of hours for a member of staff.

**15/32 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL RETURN FOR 2014/15**

- 1. Resolved:** To approve the Annual Accounts and Annual Return for the year 2014/15.  
*[prop. Cllr Alder; secd. Cllr Mortimer]*
- 2. Resolved:** To approve and sign the Certificate of Governance for the year 2014/15.  
*[prop. Cllr Alder; secd. Cllr Mortimer]*
- 3. Resolved:** To note the actions recommended in the final report of the Internal Auditor.  
*[prop. Cllr Alder; secd. Cllr Mortimer]*

**15/33 MAYOR'S CORRESPONDENCE/COMMUNICATIONS**

To receive Mayor's appointments and communications

The mayor received a petition that had been delivered to the council asking that Bell Street should be made a 20mph zone. Since this is a Herts Highways matter it was handed to County Councillor Beeching for investigation and consideration.

The mayor congratulated Joanne Sargant, Town Projects Manager, for the successful Fun on the Field event, bigger and better and which gave great fund raising opportunities for our community groups.

Civic Service at 3pm on 12 July at Gt St Marys church.

Fund raising events will include a quiz night, a film night, a Guides Christmas party, the Civic Dinner and a garden party.

Rotary have approached the council with an idea for a fundraising race night and wants ideas for ideas for a town council nominated project.

Reported having returned from Moosburg as a prelude to a larger group going there in October for a town twinning weekend.

**15/34 REPRESENTATIVES REPORTS**

To receive representatives reports from:

- County Councillor Roger Beeching MBE JP BDS deferred his report to the next meeting of the council.
- District Councillor Will Mortimer reported:
  - He was now the chair of the EHDC Audit Committee
  - EHDC now shared an anti-fraud service
- District Councillor Angela Alder reported:
  - Being appointed to the
    - Health and Wellbeing Committee

- Licensing Committee
  - Standards Committee
- Emphasised that training is vital
- District Councillor Eric Buckmaster reported:
  - The decision making structure of EHDC
  - His portfolio responsibilities
  - The launch of the Time Banking initiative at 2.30pm on 15 July in the Chamber.
  - Next EHDC meeting on the District Plan is on 23 July
  - Air Quality Action Plan is due in 18 months' time
  - Acknowledged that the time given for responses to the air quality consultation were very short.
- Hertfordshire Police PC Yvonne Hyne reported:
  - Incidence of shed break-ins, thefts from cars (usually left unlocked)
  - Some success in arrests
  - Activity with Neighbourhood Watch
    - Member reported no major parking issues and asked about a community speed drive
    - Member asked how new locations for ANPR cameras be suggested
    - Member thanked police for their help in resolving an issue in Bellmead
- Other Representatives:
  - Cllr Alder for **HAPTC**. Reported a lobby at the House of Commons with Oliver Heald MP. Noted that Mark Prisk MP was not present. Noted that three new Members had not attended booked councillor training courses.
  - Cllr Alder for **Windhill 2**. This now embraces all local children's centres and covers ages from birth to 19 years. Cllr Beeching said he also attended this forum.
  - Cllr E Buckmaster for **RHSO**. Noted that there will be a maintenance day on Sunday 05 July. Apple Day is planned for 10 October.

**15/35 ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

To consider whether to authorise the distribution of official council papers to Members by electronic means.

The clerk presented a paper giving options available under the Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 which modified Sch12 to the Local Government Act 1972.

Resolved: That Agendas and other council papers should continue to be distributed to members on hard copy form.

*[Prop Cllr Alder; Secd Cllr Coysten]*

**15/36 CLERK'S REPORT**

Received and noted: the Town Clerk's report,  
*attached as Appendix B*

**15/37 TOWN PROJECTS REPORT**

Received and noted: the Town Project Manager's report,  
*attached as Appendix C*

The use of the Town Projects Manager to act as the secretariat for the Rivers Heritage Orchard Group was questioned and justified as the town council's contribution to ensuring the continuing activities of

the volunteer group.

Cty Cllr Beeching asked whether the town council was contributing to the "100 Parishes Group". Clerk responded that it was.

**15/38 DEPOSIT & CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS**

To note receipt of any Documents for Noting and Consultation.  
There were none

**15/39 FINANCIAL REPORT**

***Noted:*** The current Financial Report

**15/40 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

***Noted and Approved:*** Accounts for payment

Meeting closed at 21:05

The next meeting of the Town Council will be held at 7.30 pm on Monday 27 July 2015 in the Council Chamber at Sayesbury Manor, Bell Street Sawbridgeworth

My name is Berrin Lee and I own House of Harlequin which I have run for the last 24 years. I have been asked to address you this evening on behalf of some concerned Sawbridgeworth retailers who are also here tonight.

We are aware of a growing social media campaign which has been focussing on the empty retail units in Bell St and its surrounding areas. We also have concerns that Sawbridgeworth is no longer a thriving shopping area as it once was and we have spent some time discussing the historical reasons for why this might be.

Rather than spend a lot of time going through why we think things have gone wrong and looking backwards, we have come up with a series of questions which we would like Sawbridgeworth Town Council to take forward on our behalf.

### **1) PARKING**

We are aware that Bishops Stortford has parking bays on North St which offer a limited amount of free parking.

- a) What is the EHDC rationale behind allowing this in Bishops Stortford but not all towns in East Herts? We have always been told that it cannot be done on Bell St, yet there are no parking restrictions on Sundays? We feel that 20 minutes on-street parking on weekdays would be adequate for Sawbridgeworth and would have the additional benefit of reducing traffic speeds on Bell St without the cost of traffic-calming measures.
- b) Why are Saturdays and Bank Holidays considered different from Sundays as regards parking restrictions on Bell St? Is this simply a case of nothing being done to change the byelaws or is there a valid reason for the difference?

### **2) MIX OF BUSINESSES AND CONTROL OF CHANGE OF USE**

It seems that recent business openings have been more of what we already have and that some of these have required applications to EHDC for change of use.

- a) Does EHDC have a policy of keeping retail space as retail as we have seen some recent conversions to residential?
- b) Does EHDC have a policy to encourage / enforce mixed retail use so we can enjoy a varied and unique shopping offering? Does EHDC consult with the town council or town representatives about change of use?
- c) How does EHDC use its position to influence private landlords to ensure a mixed retail offering?

### **3) NEW COUNCILLORS**

Following the recent elections, we have some new councillors and some who have been re-elected. We understand that all the portfolios have been allocated so now is the time to find out who we need to speak to in order to start things moving for Sawbridgeworth.

- a) Who is the ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT COUNCILLOR?
- b) Is it possible to arrange a meeting between interested parties in Sawbridgeworth, a representative from Sawbridgeworth Town Council and this councillor? The meeting should have a clear agenda so that it avoids becoming just another talking-shop.

Thanks for listening, we look forward to hearing the responses to these questions and moving forward together towards a more vibrant Sawbridgeworth.

### **Allotments**

- Monthly inspection carried out
- Significant weed clearance at Bullfields.
- Tree surgery initiated at Vantorts.
- Overall Allotment Association has been disbanded, so Landlord's Meeting to be established.
- New representative for Vantorts site
- Autumn Flower show will be resurrected in September.

### **Bus Shelters**

- Cleaned and maintained, hanging baskets installed

### **Car Park Subsidy (First Hour Free)**

- Now taken on by EHDC

### **Cemetery**

- 19 Interments managed in 2015 to date
- Significant tree surgery carried out
- Road ways resurfaced with 59 tonnes of pea shingle – usual complaints!
- Service development by utilising council chamber for secular services

### **Chamber Utilisation**

- See cemetery service development above
- Request by Mark Prisk MP's office to hire chamber for surgeries, quoted but advised that we did not wish to be in competition with the Hailey Centre.

### **Community Transport - Sawbobus and Minibus Hire**

- Sawbobus will continue to operate through the A1184 road works, now scheduled for the beginning of July, although at a reduced frequency
- Dial-a-Ride service provided; 16 so far this year.
- East Herts Council community transport forum
- Hertfordshire Minibus Conference

### **Consultee on all matters relevant to the town**

- HCC consultation on "Sensitive Streets" – A1184 is flagged as a Grade 2 street from 08:00 – 18:00

### **Crime Prevention Initiatives**

- CCTV; recent incidents: images captured of LCV causing damage to railings and forwarded to Ringway for recovery action; images captured of perpetrators passing off fake £50 note.
- Police Liaison, noted that our current cover is one part time PC. Full time PC has been transferred away and two PCSO's are currently both on leave.

### **Democratic Services**

- Declarations of Pecuniary Interest for all Members filed with Acting Returning Officer at EHDC.
- Health and Safety procedures being revised and reviewed
- Annual Return produced, subjected to internal audit and prepared for external audit.
- Council constitution and protocols in phased production

### **Farmers Market**

- See Project Manager's report

### **Fly Posting**

- Continued surveillance and unauthorised advertising removed.
- Authorised charity banners installed and removed in a timely manner.

### **Grants to voluntary organisations**

- Next round due to be considered in July. Applications already received from two of the allotment associations and Sawbridgeworth Camera Club.
- Appeal from CAB for further help as potential grant funding reduced after change in council's grant policy

### **Hanging Baskets and Planters**

- London Road planter maintained and watered on a daily basis.
- Hanging Baskets, approach sign planters and direction post baskets installed throughout the town, sponsored by Oakridge Nursery.

### **Hertfordshire Highways**

- Highways Together pilot project. Invited to present to launch event on 29 June. Feedback given to County Officer.
- Sign cleaning, sign removal, footpaths clearance, town sign erection and gardening works carried out.
- Herts CC invoiced for local agency work. Now are querying item on invoice relating to investigation HCC liability for clearance of Scholars Walk footpath.

### **Planning Matters (acting as a consultee)**

- 16 Applications considered since the beginning of the new term.
- 4 apparent contraventions of planning system reported to EHDC enforcement officers for action
- Coming to terms with a seriously flawed EHDC planning notification system.

### **Projects**

- Bell Street Conveniences; ongoing dialogue with EHDC since October 2013 over refurbishment and maintenance responsibility.
- Town Green; ongoing dialogue with EHDC since January 2015 over project to revitalize area as a community hub and town centre focus.



**Publicity/Information:**

- Annual Report; published at Annual Town Meeting; report to be included in next newsletter.
- Newsletter; four editions published annually; next edition due by end of July.
- Town Guide;
- Website; new site managed by two staff members.

**Promoting the town**

- See Project Manager's report

**Recreation Areas**

- Bullfields, vandalism to litter bins
- West Road,
- Challenged by a MoP re: Sheering Mill Lane site, advised on EHDC responsibility but progressed repair work.

**Rivers Heritage Orchard Group**

- See Project Manager's report

**Staffing**

- Gill Abbott remains on long term sick leave
- Tracey Dobinson returned 17 June after knee surgery after two month's absence
- Frank Gowen acting as a relief driver.
- Karen Ashton offered a three month extension to her contract to job share with Tracey Dobinson for community bus driving / reception duties.

**Town Action Plan**

- Secretariat managed on behalf of the town

**Town Ranger & Groundsman**

- On summer hours from 01 June to water plants
- Height of grass cutting season, Rangers tools budget committed to purchase of a second hand mower.
- Contract grass cutting for SYPRC
- Contract grass cutting for RHSO Group
- Some relief community bus driving

**Training**

- Arranged for all new Councillors for 21 May. Unfortunately three members did not attend, this cost the council £105.
- Trading for Councils course attended to determine the conflict between the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Act 1933. Now have a clear idea of the differentiation between "trading" and "carrying out ancillary activities" under General Power of Competence.
- First Aid training carried out for all members of staff.

### **Civic Events (promoted by the Mayor)**

- Civic Service - Sunday 12 July 2015, 3pm at Great St Marys Church, afterwards at Sawbridgeworth Town Council Chamber for light buffet and refreshments
- Mayor's Charity Fund raiser – Outdoor Film Night at Bullfields, Family Event. Friday 11 September 2015
- Civic Dinner – Saturday 12 March 2016 – the venue has yet to be decided

### **Community Events**

- Fun on the Field; in partnership with Hertfordshire Police; June 2015; now a regular community event with dog show; fairground; fire service; police service; charity stalls; Bar-B-Q and other Refreshments
- Christmas Lights/Trees: Planning already under way, including police liaison, applying for road closures, contacting Santa Claus in a format not dissimilar with but with enhancements to the highly successful events of the last two years.

### **Farmers Market**

- Shared advice and experiences with BSTC. EHDC have taken no interest in the development of events.
- Remarkably no comments at all from retailers at this turn of events, it has been noted that the town remains quiet on the days that the market would have been held.
- Researching a replacement community event with the addition of a different style of trading activity.

### **Promoting the town**

- Tourism agenda, working with EHDC on promoting the attractions of the town amongst others in East Herts.
- Town signs to give a welcome to the town and mapping to give guidance to visitors to the town.

### **Rivers Heritage Orchard Group**

- Secretariat for the new group
- Grass cutting for path ways
- Tools storage;
- Monthly maintenance programme.

### **Leventhorpe School**

- Exhibition of Art now in the council offices
- Hosting a pupil for work experience.