

HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 21st March 2018 at 7 pm in the Corn Exchange, Hungerford (Fifty people present including councillors and speakers)

1. Welcome and Mayor's Report – Pigeon numbers have been reduced and measures are on-going. Retendering contracts is producing a saving e.g. for the Xmas lights 25%. Savings also obtained by renegotiating the Triangle Field Rent with the Rugby Club. The Town noticeboards have been repainted and rebranded. An extra CCTV camera has been installed, this time at the Skate Park and it is the intention to install two more bringing the total to 7 cameras. Neighbourhood Watch Scheme has expanded and another meeting will be held next week in the library. We have made an increase to our grants budget for 2018/19 by £5k up to £23k. WBC (West Berkshire Council) precept has increased but there is a 0% rise in the HTC precept for 2018/19

2. Cllr Knight introduced and thanked the Police for attending

3. Thames Valley Police - PC Burleigh 7677 Hungerford & Downlands NHPT (report as below)

Team consists of: - 1 inspector, 1 sergeant, 4 PC's (2 full time, 2 part time) & 6 PCSO's over 2 subgroups on opposite patterns to allow NHPT to be in daily throughout the year. It is a large rural geographical area to cover from Hungerford all the way over to Woolhampton as North as Lambourn, Farnborough and Yattendon. They are based out of Newbury but use the tri service station in Hungerford which the NHPT do frequent on a daily basis.

I. Local crime statistics

Statistics – Hungerford / Lambourn district

1st April 2017 – 20th March 2018

Victim based crime		
Local	TVP	Berkshire
Last year 662	Last year 121,562	Last year 47,883
This year 739	This year 132,319	This year 50,421
12% increase	9% increase	5% increase
Shopliftings		
Local	TVP	Berkshire
Last year 33	Last year 16,123	Last year 5,904
This year 71	This year 16,293	This year 5,463
115% increase	1% increase	7% decrease

The process for reporting theft offences from shops is now simpler and easier for stores to report them to the police. For incidents where the offenders have left the store and there is a delay in reporting, a pack is sent out instead of sending an officer which the store can complete at their convenience. This is

reflective in the increase of reports we have seen. Also 18% detected last year & 31% this year. Start to finish disposal. This shows we have detected 3 times the amount of offences compared to the year before.

Residential burglary - dwellings		
Local	TVP	Berkshire
Last year 31	Last year 4,803	Last year 2,125
This year 30	This year 5,591	This year 2,129
3% decrease	16% increase	0% (same)

Theft from vehicle		
Local	TVP	Berkshire
Last year 84	Last year 9,419	Last year 3,990
This year 85	This year 10,596	This year 4,357
1% increase	12% increase	9% decrease

(Spate of thefts in february recently from motor vehicles we ran an operation over 6/7/8th March OPERATION FENDER working with local non police spotters in and around Hungerford)

II. Non crime jobs

202 domestic incidents (non crime)
 124 RTC's
 70 adult protection CRI's
 101 child protection CRI's
 39 Missing people
 mental health jobs

III. NHPT what are we doing –

Listen to the public via HYS events big blue bus. Calls to police through 101. Reports via the website. Being given information in person.

- Speed awareness/ enforcement – Garden centre, Hungerford / EASTBURY
- School visits to educate around child sexual exploitation and drugs
- Business visits also (hotels etc)
- Social media to let people know what were doing TVP alert, Newbury weekly news, Twitter (TVP_WESTBERKS) #HnD_NHPT local officers tweet from live jobs.
- Carry out patrols in key areas where there maybe anti social behaviour etc
- Visiting local groups and neighbourhood schemes to provide assistance and reassurance whilst engaging in the community.

IV. GOING FORWARD.....

Continue to serve & support the residence of West Berkshire through engagements & events. Provide visibility to the public and let them know what we are doing (social media) & attending/ supporting local events. Work closely with other agencies (social services, mental health team, partner agencies (council)) in order to build on our policing capability.

Ellie Dickens introduced herself from the Town and Manor, a charity that is older than the National Trust. It is managed by a board of trustees who are all unpaid and they also employ sixth staff including the new CEO Jed Ramsay who now manages the Town and Manor Estate, Sylvia the Clerk having since retired.

The Town and Manor give 'Commoners rights' to owners of certain properties in Hungerford which include the right to fish, shoot, raise cattle and grow watercress. Jed has been working on, restoring the Common to its original habitat, protection of the banks and restoration of the Picket Mead Orchard

which has recently been purchased and was very overgrown. The Orchard contains 60 fruit trees and 550 tonnes of fruit was picked last year. The Town and Manor offer pruning courses and are building up a volunteer team of fruit pickers.

Town and Manor own the Corn Exchange and the John O'Gaunt pub as well as the Common and Freemans Marsh. They sell rods on fishery and this brings in a good source of income. They supplied support for grants last year for 14 organisations up to £17,000 most of which was matched by Greenham Common Trust. They work closely with Defra and Environmental England to help preserve the environment and protect it including protection of a species of endangered snails. The Town and Manor have regular meetings with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor as a means of communication with the Town Council. They offer tractor and trailer rides and educational walks and talks and partner with HADCAF. If anyone wishes to be involved or has any questions they can contact the CEO Jed who will help and is located in the office upstairs in the Corn Exchange.

4. Presentation (Action through Enterprise Charity) Penny & Toby Quinn (a video was played with the report as below)

Thank you for this opportunity to share the experience of our recent visit to Ghana with the small charity Action through Enterprise based in Ramsbury and run by Sarah Albeboire (nee Gardner) and her husband Habib. Thank you to everyone who supported our fundraising for the trip and donated items for us to take over.

In light of recent OXFAM headlines I'm happy to report that we were very impressed by the small hardworking team at ATE who are 100% accountable and transparent, with our help, make such a big difference to the people in their community. This was our first visit to Africa. We didn't know what to expect. All we knew was that many of the people there live in poverty, and need things that we can spare.

It took two and a half days to take the donations kindly given by local people. We travelled by bus over 700 kilometres through a country where the people and their homes looked very different to back here at home.

But when we arrived in Lawra, we discovered that it is market town surrounded by remote villages on the edge of Upper West Ghana with many parallels to Hungerford, our local market town surrounded by villages on the edge of West Berkshire. The people we met were intelligent, caring and motivated. They are just very poor simply because they happen to live in sub-Saharan Africa. Work is scarce and is hard to get, and it is increasingly hard to live off the land due to longer dry seasons cause by climate change and soil depletion. There are scarce government benefits which are very difficult to access due to widespread corruption, and very little charity support. So many people in Lawra travel south to find work in larger towns and mines. Families send girls as young as 8 years old down to the capital Accra to work as porters to help pay for their brothers to go to school. Without learning English people can't get decent work and without going to school, children can't learn English.

We visited several schools across Lawra District to take our donations and see the support ATE gives them by providing school meals and equipment. We gave out the Hungerford Football Kit which proved very lucky for the team at Gombele JHS! We met many intelligent students who study in English a similar curriculum to our own children but they walk 2 hours each way to school and survive on 3 meals a week at home. The parents never went to school – there simply weren't any near enough their homes until recently. So this new generation are real teenage pioneers into education, desperate to get qualifications so they can become nurses or teachers rather than remain as subsistence farmers like their parents.

We went to Ghana to help people needier than ourselves but actually by stepping into their lives we gained a new perspective on our own. I feel wealthier now than before I went to Ghana because I have seen what they can survive on. I feel that I'm capable of more because if the teenagers we met can survive on three meals a week, walking 2 hours each way to school then I can cope with being hungry now and again, tired now and again, stressed now and again.

ATE is looking for people to make £5 per month standing order as £5 pays for enough food to feed one student every school day for a month. They want to provide meals in more schools. While we were there

we visited a new JHS in Biro that currently has only 12 pupils. The students have no meals. The government provides lunch for the teachers and the primary school next door but not for them and many of the students we talked to get only three meals a week at home.

Given what £5 is worth over here this seems like a good use of our money. What this experience has given me is definitely worth £5 a month. I hope that we are able to share some of experience with you. Please click here to set up a monthly donation online.

LIFE IN LAWRA

Lawra has 10 schools (five primary, four junior high schools and one secondary). Their education system was founded by British colonials, and their curriculum is similar to our schools here. Faith is very important in Ghana and Lawra town alone has 6 churches and 2 mosques. They also have a large Hospital and three smaller clinics, a police station, Post Office and one bus stop.

There are several bars and restaurants (10 bars, four restaurants, many more takeaway restaurants) and a big weekly market every six days where outlying farmers sell their produce. Many people in the town have bicycles and motorbikes, although many travel long distances on foot under the hot sun. Only very senior government officials and big business owners can afford cars and there are only about 20 in the whole town.

There are local government offices in Lawra, but there are still strong ties to the traditional life of the Dagaarti Tribe. The Paramount Chief is the most influential man by traditional law and his large extended family live at the Chief's Palace. The local tribal language is Dagaare which is only spoken over a 30 km radius in Ghana. The tribal land was split by the colonialists so half of it is now over the border in Burkino Faso (whose official language is French but the local people also speak Dagaare).

5. The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 23rd March 2017 – Cllr Brookman proposed the minutes of the last Annual meeting as a true record, seconded by Cllr Crane, all in favour.

6. Reports by Committee Chairmen

- i) Finance & General Purposes - Cllr Dennis Benneyworth (New Acting Chair)** – Cllr Bumbieris who recently stepped down was thanked. There has been a steady rise in the precept over the last few years which came about through increased responsibility such as the taking on of the Public Toilets and the Croft Field Centre. This year you will see a 3p reduction in the precept! The main cost is staff. Thanks were expressed to the RFO. The Swimming Pool Contribution secures the Leisure facility in Hungerford and the Xmas Lights, although a significant cost, receive a generous contribution back from the public. Money has been put aside to fund the library and a contingency budget is now in place for any surprises. A pie chart was then shown displaying the budget for next year.
- ii) Environment & Planning – Cllr Claire Winser (Deputy Chair)** presented the report in the absence of Cllr Carolann Farrell who is hosting her son's birthday party and sends her apologies. Salisbury Road was the largest planning application received. HTC has met with Cala Homes and Waites as we would like a say in how the development will be designed. We would like CALA to use a local work force and we await a detailed plan. There is permission for 8 residential units at the Station which could be completed in 18mths time. We wait for news on the Oakes temporary car park. We have held a Neighbourhood Plan initial meeting with WBC. Please can everyone complete the form given out. E&P carefully consider each planning application and report back to WBC. The public are welcome to attend any meetings. Cllrs Winser, Farrell and the Clerk visited WBC for a meeting about the withdrawal of paper plans. We are moving into the 21st Century and the office is prepared for this.
- iii) Recreation, Amenities & War Memorials - Cllr Helen Simpson (only became the chair of this committee yesterday)** – R&A is one of the biggest committees with 8 councillors. HTC are becoming more of a business as they take on further responsibilities from WBC. The biggest asset is the Triangle Field which is run by the Triangle Field Management Committee. The Rugby Club has seen incredible growth and has flourished in this community space. When RFC are not using the field we wish to diversify and put on music events, car boot sales etc. as the field was purchased for use by the whole town. St Saviour's Cemetery and St Lawrence

Churchyard are both in good maintenance and the allotments are well managed by Hungerford Allotment Holders Association led by Geoff Greenland. There are 100 plots of various sizes which are well utilised. The Mayor recently opened the new compost toilet which will save HAHA £700 a year. This was funded by the National Lottery Grant. With the centenary approaching HTC are looking to arrange cleaning of the War Memorial in Bridge St. The springy camel at Smitham Play Park got the hump! The committee are choosing new equipment to replace the worn out camel. The surface grip on the skate park ramps is to be redone. If there are suggestions on how the parks can be improved please let us know.

An outside garden room is being built at the Croft Field Centre and grants have been secured to help with the cost. The area will be used for BBQs and outside teaching etc. There is a long term plan to improve the toilets/shower facilities at the centre. The Library is a valuable community space and work is still to be done to agree the taking on of the lease but this is in hand. A passionate group of volunteers are involved but please get in touch if you can help.

iv) Highways & Transport - Cllr Rob Brookman - His report focussed on 5 items

Pedestrian Safety – There is concern over the safety of those crossing at Bearwater (Charnham St) so a meeting will take place next week with WBC to try and obtain a pelican crossing (with traffic lights) at the location. Cars are travelling 40mph both ways.

Footway Lighting – HTC own 105 streetlights (the rusty ones!) WBC owns all the LED lights. HTC ones are sodium. These have been inherited from the Rural District Council so are 44 years old. WBC carry out maintenance on our behalf on the lamp posts and this is funded by special expenses on your council tax bill. HTC wish to rid of the liability and hand back the lamp posts to WBC but they will only accept them street at a time and if they are up to standard. This will be discussed at a meeting on Monday.

Parking – Cllr Brookman is meeting with the District Councillors and WBC to discuss the budget. Parking is taking place on grass verges so there will be a request for hard standing to be put in place especially in Cold Harbour Road.

Railway Station – Maintenance is of a poor standard and we have been pushing for GWR and Network Rail to act. Most of the railings have been painted. John Willmott has spearheaded this. HTC applied for a grant from GWR to cover the £20K cost which if successful will increase the passenger shelter to twice the capacity.

Annual Litter Pick – This will be held on Sunday 8th April at 10am, meeting on the Town Hall steps. Light refreshments will be available afterwards and all equipment will be provided. Please come along. Town & Manor is carrying out a litter pick on the Common on the same day.

v) Tourism & Economy - Cllr Martin Crane – Hungerford has many unique shops, markets and beautiful countryside such as Freemans Marsh and also fishing. Tell your friends and encourage others to visit. We wish to promote coach visits also. Events include Hocktide which is approaching and the Xmas Lights, a great attraction. We need to engage with social media, promote our town and explore using QR on mobiles. Hungerford is part of the corridor of visitor destinations known as the ‘Great West Way’ which has been running for 2 years now. Links to antiques and Equine are promoted through this.

There is a need to engage with main local employers such as CDK. We need to build links with these companies as only 20% of their work force is local. A ‘trade showcase’ will take place on Thursday 18th Oct in the Corn Exchange with all the major employers showcasing their skills and employment opportunities. These employers should be participants in the Neighbourhood Plan which will need to embrace many sectors.

vi) Update on Library - Cllr Knight – HTC has been working closely with Paul James for over a year and is in the process of agreeing a lease and schedule of improvement works to take over the building. This is currently with our solicitor and we hope to get this signed in the next few weeks. A large opening event will then be planned. We have gone from thinking the library would close to creating a community hub – Watch this space!

vii) Town Suggestions/Volunteers - Cllr Knight is hoping to set up a Suggestion Scheme which will take the shape of both an on-line form and paper form. Every year the best scheme will receive a reward. We would like to put together a list of volunteers for activities.

7. Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Knight – This will be a two to three year journey. HTC has been drawing on the

expertise of Stratfield Mortimer. It is quite exciting and will give us all a say in how the town will change with regard to planning, transport, heritage and business etc. Info from the Town Plan refresh that took place in 2013 will be useful. A first meeting of our steering group took place with Gary Lugg, Bryan Lyttle and Laila Bassett. The first decision was to choose an area and the whole of the Parish of Hungerford has been selected. This will be signed off next month.

8. District Councillor's Reports - District Cllrs were not present and sent their apologies.

9. Questions and suggestions from the floor –

Geraldine Fost (Friends of Hungerford Library)- She drew up the business plan. Is the £10k budget to cover the rent?

Cllr Knight – It has been accrued from last year and a cheque has been raised for the charity to help cover the running costs of the library which are around £18k a year. Another £10k has been budgeted for this year and Greenham Common trust may add to this.

Geraldine Fost – Can Paul James (WBC) confirm the charity will receive income from activities arranged out of library hours?

Paul James – Yes they will

Geraldine Fost – The survey did throw up some inherent problems. Can WBC agree they will put this right? The surveyors report said whoever passed the building should be embarrassed.

Paul James – It isn't a building of poor quality. There are a number of fairly minor issues that will be put right.

Member of public – Lives in Sanham Close. In Bourne Vale they have 'no cold caller' posters. Can they have the same in Sanham Close? Who supplies them?

Cllr Knight – Neighbourhood Watch may have supplied them. There are 28 coordinators in Hungerford and their next meeting is in the Library on Wednesday. The contact is Angela Money.

PC Burleigh – Please let the police know if there are problems with cold callers and they will enforce.

10. Announcing of Freedom Award Nominations and closing remarks by the Mayor – There were quite a number of nominations and those from previous years have also been considered.

The three awardees are: -

Norman Barr, Catherine Wooliston and Chris Scorey

The award ceremony will take place in May. Congratulations to all.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm