

Minutes of the **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** of Ross-on-Wye  
Held on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018 AT 7.00PM  
At the Larruperz Centre, Grammar School Close, Ross-on-Wye

**1 Welcome from the Mayor of Ross-On-Wye**

Cllr Nigel Gibbs thanked all those present for attending.

**2 Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting**

To receive the minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017 be signed as a true record of the meeting.

**3 Mayor's Annual Report**

Councillor Gibbs reported that the past year had been a busy one for the Town Council and its committees.

The newly renamed Community, Markets and Tourism Committee continues to arrange Bands in the Park, the series of summer concerts, as well as for a second year, Proms in the Park which proved extremely popular last year. This year's concerts will commence on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May followed by the Proms event on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July. In addition, the Christmas Fayre and Light switch on will be taking place on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November, this will be the fourth one organised by the Town Council.

The Planning Committee continues to comment on planning applications and has been working recently with Balfour Beatty on possible locations for Speed Indicator Devices for Archenfield Road, Walford Road, Ledbury Road and Gloucester Road, it is hoped they will be installed this year. The Neighbourhood Plan continues to progress, and the chairman Mr. Reynolds was commended for his patience and perseverance. The current anticipated timeline for completion of the Plan allows for the Public Consultation to take place in the summer and for examination and referendum in late 2018/early 2019.

The Market House is due to have repair work to be done later this year, with the first phase concentrating on the roof, rainwater goods and the badly worn steps leading to the first floor.

The Amenities Committee have arranged a contract for a planting schedule which includes hanging baskets, pole toppers, raised and flower beds. Works continues on improving our open spaces, particularly focusing on the river bank where an information board will be installed to inform the public what works have been carried out.

The Finance Committee had to manage several complex VAT issues arising from the Council's planned business activities and in some cases there was the need to restructure lease agreements.

Perhaps the hardest task was agreeing a budget to provide services in line with the expectation of the town's residents. An independent review of the Council's staffing identified the need to recruit additional staff to cope with the added workloads brought on by the increasing property portfolio.

The Council will continue to help local organizations and to support provision of regular CAB sessions, CCTV in the town, the Neighborhood Plan, Bands in the Park and Christmas lights.

Councillor Gibbs thanked all the committees for their work and concluded that the Council remains committed to promoting the town as a key location to live, work and visit and will continue to work with partners to drive forward initiatives to boost the local economy.

**4 Presentations from Council's Grant Scheme recipients**

- i. Ross & Monmouth Sea Cadets – the meeting was informed that £40k was needed to move their demountable buildings after notice had been given to vacate their previous site. Improvements were needed for the WC's and kitchen areas as well ensuring the new site at Homs Road car park was securely fenced. An inspection revealed the need for a fire alarm system to be installed which the Town Council kindly made a grant towards. A major recruitment campaign is underway as more staff are needed and in addition professional people are sought to join the Unit Management Team.

- ii. Age UK – The financial assistance from the Town Council helped make life safer for the older members of the public by testing equipment such as electric blankets. This was the only service in Herefordshire and was so popular that unfortunately people were turned away. There was a team of volunteers helping by taking calls and making bookings for people. In addition, partnership working with Ross Fire Station was helpful as they were on hand to offer fire safety advice. Over 30 people attended and half the electric blankets failed the test, those that were faulty were replaced with a free new one thanks to the help from the Town Council.
- iii. Enviroability – This Shop mobility is one of the only schemes in the country that does not charge. The scooters are a vital link for those with mobility problems. They can be found at Can Do Books. The Council was thanked for funding the insurance for the scheme.
- iv. Ross-on-Wye 4 Acorns – The funding went towards putting on a fun run which is held annually in September. It attracts many visitors and is a good way of encouraging people to keep fit. The Mayor starts the event as well as being there to hand out prizes at the end of the run. The proceeds are given to a charitable group that supports a local hospice.

It was agreed to bring Item 5 forward as the Police Inspector had to leave the meeting early.

## **5 Presentation**

Inspector James Ashton, from the Safer Neighbourhood Team Herefordshire Rural, addressed the meeting to explain he looks after local policing in the whole county outside of Hereford City. There were changes to the Policing Model in West Mercia however this did not affect Ross and 24/7 policing is still intact. There is a team of 4 (3 PCSO and 1 PC) covering all posts and this has provided stability in the town. The team will be making sure that throughout the summer they support the town by making sure recreation areas can be enjoyed by the public in a safe manner and ensure there are no long-term issues to contend with. Street drinking will be covered by the new order which will take effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018.

### Public Questions

Praise was given to the Team, but a question was asked about the frequent problems that were happening outside Peacocks. Had any thought been given to more regular patrols and action being taken to move people along or to relocate the bench? Those present were made aware that night time patrols will still be continuing and during the summer months this will be increased.

A question of resourcing was asked as to whether there are adequate resources available? The problem of parking in residential areas and the town was raised and the perception that the Police are not adequately dealing with parking infringements. It has been confirmed that public services have been under pressure but despite this a budget has been set. Members of the public were encouraged to report problems to ensure that action could be taken.

A question was asked about improving signage for the new alcohol drinking Order as this will help to deal with moving people on.

Concerns were expressed about some residents in social housing and the use of drugs and alcohol which is causing anti-social behaviour and vandalism. In some cases drug dealing is taken place openly and a question was asked about what could be done to prevent this. The Inspector confirmed that the public need to make sure there is sufficient information available and evidence so that court orders can be applied for to issue warrants.

7.55pm The Police Inspector left the meeting

Item 4 was resumed

- v. Ross Christmas Carnival – The parade is 60 years old and the committee currently consists of 7 members. Last year 1200 goody bags were provided to local children thanks to the generosity of local businesses in Ross and through bucket collections and leaflet drops requesting charitable donations. The Council was thanked for its continued support.
- vi. Ross Tourism Association – the new Ross Town Guide has just been printed and 70% of the cost came from traders advertising in the guide, the Council was thanked for its grant. There are 4 main Tourist Information Sites in town which have started up since Herefordshire Council closed its Tourist Office in 2010. These opened in 2015 and they provide information on accommodation and places of interest. Last year’s grant enabled the production of a new Town Map and the production of a number of town trails. Ross plays host to 15 festivals within the town in the year covering a wide range of interests including Art and Music Events. The website and Facebook pages continue to attract a lot of visits and people are encouraged to share information on events they are organising. Herefordshire recognises the importance of tourism to its economy although information available does not show the value of the benefit to Ross.
- vii. Ross Town Band – The Band was formed in 1924 and is one of the few remaining Brass bands in Herefordshire. It continues to support local events, but the band is expensive to run as instruments are costly as well as room hire and the provision of music. The Council was thanked for its grant which provided new music books. Those present were encouraged to give the Band a try, all training is provided free of charge and all ages are welcome
- viii. U3A – The embroidery group was started in 2011 as it wanted to create a history for the town through the creation of drapes. It was difficult raising funds to purchase the materials, but the Council’s grant helped with buying 15 meters of fabric and over 40 coloured threads. It is now finished and has taken 2 years and 5 months, with over 5000 volunteer hours to make 8 panels which will be joined together to form 2 drapes. The finished art work will be displayed at the Larruperz Centre where it can be enjoyed by many people for years to come.

**6 Matters raised by Ross on Wye Residents**

Questions were put to the Chairman regarding;

Mrs Margaret Jones – Reference was made to the Dedication Service for the Falklands Bench which had been purchased as a result of donations by the people of the town within 5 weeks of the campaign launch. RBL have requested the bench be placed in the Market Square and raised a question as to how long the proposed works would take at the Market House. The Chairman confirmed the timescale is unknown at present.

Mrs Joyce Thomas – Raised a point on an article in the Hereford times about HC’s Chief Executive being paid more than the Prime Minister and asked would the CEO consider taking a pay cut. It was reported that decisions relating to staffing matters are made by the elected members but that it was important to remember the CEO is a paid Officer not an elected Member, as the Prime Minister is.

Ms. Jill Scammel spoke on behalf of the Litter Action Crew about initiatives to work together so that volunteers work alongside businesses and residents to get involved with litter picking. 7 events have already taken place this year. The important issue of encouraging and educating young people’s groups was raised.

Mr Geoff Jones – Asked if signage to the river could be improved as this is most common question from visitors. It was noted that improvements are being investigated, such as better signage and tour maps having more detail in them to enable better signposting to visitor attractions.

Mr. Brian Lampert made the point that with increased use in Homs Road car park, visitors often ask how to get into the town?

Mrs Joyce Thomas reported that walls are falling due to old age in Gloucester Road and a wall in Alton Street too is falling down. A request was made to the Town Council to get this resolved with the owner.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

Chairman.....Date.....