

NOTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD IN THE SESSIONS HOUSE, LOUTH
ON TUESDAY 26TH MAY 2015 AT 7PM

Present:

The Town Clerk, Mrs. L.J. Blankley, The Mayor's Secretary, Mrs. L.M. Phillips, The Chairman of Louth Independent Traders, Mr. G. Dennis, Town Councillors, District Councillors and members of the public and press were also present. (Total present = 27)

1. Welcome by the Chairman

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs. Eileen Ballard JP (Deputy Mayor) welcomed those present to the meeting and explained how the evening would progress.

2. Annual Town Meeting Minutes 2014

The notes of the Annual Town Meeting which took place on 13th May 2014 were discussed and following a proposal by Town Councillor Mrs. M. Ottaway MBE, seconded by Town Councillor D.E. Wing were signed by the Chairman as a correct record of that meeting.

The Chairman explained that the guest speaker for the evening, Mr. G. Dennis had requested to speak next as he had another important engagement to attend. Those present agreed that this was satisfactory.

3. Louth Independent Traders

The Chairman of Louth Independent Traders, Mr. G. Dennis explained that the group had been set up in January 2015 upon the demise of the Louth Town Partnership. The group was self-funded but had been given £1,500 as a start-up fund from ELDC. The group were going to be organising the Victorian Fayre, the Christmas Market and in addition were looking at holding a Louth Fashion Week which would entail any fashion outlets in the town coming together to have promo's in their stores for a week and would be concluded by a fashion show at the Town Hall. Mr. Dennis said that if that was a success then an Ideal Home Week and a Food Week would also be looked at. Mr. Dennis reported that the group were looking into the possibility of introducing loyalty cards for Louth where six times a year some of the shops would put events on and loyalty card members would receive discounts. He enthused that the Target Newspaper were interested in running this aspect and were also in talks with the group to provide a pull out section in their papers entitled We Love Louth which would replace the Love Louth Magazine (formerly produced by Louth Town Partnership) which would, due to their affiliation with the Echo, provide a wider audience for all things Louth. The Chairman opened the floor to those present and members of the public and several Town Councillors spoke making comments, suggestions or asking questions, as follows: 1) Councillor L.M. Stephenson knew someone who would be able to help with setting up a web site. 2) A gentleman wondered if the Cattle Market could be used to hold a Steam Rally on. 3) Councillor D.E. Wing asked if the group would be working with the former Chairman of the Louth Town Partnership and was told that the group would consider working with anyone. 4) Councillor G.E. Horton JP wondered if the group and Louth Chamber of Business would clash while trying to do the same things. Mr. Dennis assured those present that he had been in talks with and continued to talk to Mr. N. Sharpley of the Chamber of Business and they were not trying to do the same thing. The Chamber of Business were covering a much wider area, incorporating the Wolds and the Industrial Estate while the Independent Traders were concentrating on the town. 5) Councillor Mrs. M. Ottaway MBE thanked Mr. Dennis for starting the group and continuing the town's traditions of having first class markets etc. 6) Councillor A. Leonard JP wondered why the group had not chosen to use the Louth Leader Newspaper and Mr. Dennis explained that the Target had approached them not the other way around.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Dennis for an informative presentation and Mr. Dennis took his leave.

4. Annual Report of the Town Council 2014/15

The Chairman informed those present of the following:

- a. The current number of electors in the parish was 12,293 as at 1st December 2014.
- b. There are currently 19 councillors representing the town comprising 3 for each of the 7 wards with vacancies arising from the election in Trinity and St Mary's Ward. There will be a special meeting held on Tuesday 16th June 2015 to co-opt two councillors for which applications are currently invited.
- c. Councillors performance for the last year was 85% attendance an increase of 3% on the previous year over 22 Town Council Meetings, 19 Planning Committee, 8 Governance and Finance Committee, 5 Personnel Committee, and 10 Community Resources Committee Meetings held on a total of 23 occasions.
- d. Councillors also attended working groups, meetings with other authorities, Town and Parish Assemblies, Project Boards, Residents Groups, Local Action groups, and are representatives on charitable trust boards.
- e. Major topics / events for the year which the Town Council considered were:
 - i. Promoted Local Democracy by holding two open events for prospective Councillors and produced supporting information for the elections held on 7th May 2015.
 - ii. Louth Livestock Market – following concerted efforts including a request for a judicial review ELDC entered into negotiations with representatives for Asda Supermarkets against the wishes of Louth Town Council.
 - iii. Worked with ELDC Planning Policy Officer on Proposed Housing Targets and Preferred Growth Options and responded to Local Plan Review on the Town Centre boundary.
 - iv. Challenged ELDC regarding the demise of Louth Town Partnership
 - v. Raised concerns regarding quality of Market with ELDC
 - vi. Supported Louth in Bloom Projects resulting in EMIB Silver Gilt Award 2014 and a special volunteer's award for the cemetery.
 - vii. Continued to support Flood Warden and River Lud Attenuation Scheme. Louth Town Council have supported the funding of the maintenance of the scheme which is due to start in Summer 2015.
 - viii. Continued to support the work of Hubbard's Hills Trust by funding day to day operational costs and their proposals for a Lottery Funding bid. At this point the Chairman handed over to Mr. A. Leonard JP, the Chairman of the Hubbard's Hills Trust who confirmed that he had that day heard from the Lottery Fund and they wanted to meet to discuss funding. He reported that there was lots going on in the background and funding received was being put towards maintenance of the grass, paths, bins, trees and river and dredging of the duck pond. The Chairman then continued:
 - ix. Commemorated WW1 and WW2 local and national events by participating in 'Lights Out' (August 2014), Single Commemorative Act (March 2015) and VE Weekend (May 2015).
 - x. Held a 3 day 'Wolds in Wartime' Heritage Open Day Event (September 2014) attracting 160 visitors.
 - xi. Approved the loan of Browns Panorama to the Usher Gallery for the great Lincolnshire Exhibition.

f. Town Council Routine activities

- i. Hosted a Public Forum at every scheduled meeting receiving comments ranging from disabled friendly play areas to traffic speed controls and dog control orders.
- ii. Issued Louth Town Council Newsletter in 3 issues of Love Louth Magazine with a distribution of 15,000 copies including every home in Louth.
- iii. Celebrated National events and anniversaries by flying the flag, including '@Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth' for the first time in 2015.
- iv. Supported x 3 Charity Street Collection requests
- v. Supported x requests for 2 Discretionary Business Rate Relief
- vi. Responded to x 3 Traffic Regulation Orders
- vii. Responded to x 3 Street Lighting Scheme proposals

g. Planning:

- i. Commented on 172 planning applications.
- ii. Recorded 9 variances of comments to ELDC outcome.
- iii. Commented on 27 'Works' to trees, including an appeal to the planning inspectorate following an objection to the removal of townscape trees at The Quarry, Ugate.
- iv. Major / Notable Planning Application Consultations:
 1. Flood Alleviation Schemes - approved
 2. Mount Pleasant Housing Development #2 – Objected = Refused by ELDC
 3. Southern Gateway / Agarth Farm – Objected and supported Community Action group = Refused, Public enquiry held outcome currently awaited.
 4. Old Swimming Pool Site - objected = Approved (Variance)
 5. Meridian House – change of use – Objected – protect office accommodation = Refused – Appealed – Upheld.
 6. Cattle Market (Fairfield Industrial Estate) – objected to detailed particulars.

h. Governance and Finance:

- i. Finance Overview Group meets monthly
- ii. Oversees Audit procedures – LTC received an unqualified audit for 2013/14
- iii. Carried out an Insurance Review and Risk Review, tightening Internal Controls accordingly.
- iv. Reviewed Governance Documents and created new Financial Regulations which have been adopted by the Town Council.
- v. Carried out a thorough Budget Setting exercise resulting in Precept and Support Grant of £213,135 for 2015/16 or £ £42.33 for a Band D equivalent an increase of £1.02 or 2.5% on 2014/15 largely due to a further reduction of Support Grant by 25%.
- vi. Responded to Internal and External Audit comments by producing and adopting new Financial Regulations.
- vii. Expenditure and Income 2014/15
 1. Approved net expenditure against Loans, Reserves and Precept monies of £203,926 (audited April 2015) major items included:
 2. Hubbards Hills £35,000 day to day maintenance expenditure
 3. Cemetery Net Cost £ 29,368
 4. Loan Repayment £20,513 Loan Balance outstanding £109,406 which will be complete in 2021
 5. Christmas Celebrations including Safety checks, Lights and Tree - £10,806
 6. Grants – £5,000 – Awards including Run for Life, Louth Navigation Trust and the Men's Shed. The Town Council also gave £1,000 to the Citizens advice bureau.

i. Personnel Committee

- i. Maintained Policy handbook for Employees and Members, adopted by Town Council
- ii. Supported officers and Councillors attending training courses throughout the year – Councillors -finance, Clerk's Training.
- iii. Ensures the well-being of 4 Town Council employees
- iv. Employed specialist personnel advisor to ensure employment legislation compliance
- v. Created discretionary policies for the Superannuation scheme.
- vi. Oversaw the transfer of Superannuation scheme administration from Mouchel to West Yorkshire Pension Fund via Lincolnshire County Council.

j. Community Resources Committee

i. Council Premises –The Sessions House

1. Provides office accommodation for the Town Clerk and secretary.
2. Hosts council, working group and public meetings
3. Instils Civic Pride by Flying The Flag(s)
4. Councillors are Fire Wardens and nominated keyholders
5. Hosted visits from schools, twinning and art groups
6. Hosted an Heritage Open Days Event – 3 day event in September 2014
7. Brown's Panorama Open twice a week with volunteer guiding service
8. Participated in Charity Event - Coppers on the wall
9. Hosted Action Groups Meetings
10. Louth in Bloom base and storage

ii. Town Assets:

1. Review of All Assets continues to ensure best use
2. Maintained benches in the Market Place to safeguard / retain for public use through Louth in Bloom
3. Town Signs Refurbishment Project completed
4. Partnership working with Coastal Grazing Marshes Project to recognise importance of Louth as Livestock Market destination to provide Community Notice Board on Aswell Street.
5. Partnership working with LCC, and ELDC Councillor Grants to provide replacement Bus Shelter on Kenwick Road with Notice Board and Planter.

iii. London Road Cemetery:

1. 61 burials took place in 2014 made up of 39 full burials and 22 sets of ashes
2. Total Town council responsibility of 29,079 burials since 1855 as at 31/12/14
3. Completed working with Lincolnshire Family History society transcribing records and received complimentary CD and excel format data.
4. 18 weeks of Community Payback attendance
5. Completed project working with Grimsby Institute students based at LRAC
6. Commencement of the creation of a meadow area and planned orchard by Community Payback Team in conjunction with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Officer following a grant from the Evan Cornish Foundation
7. Creation of Bluebell Walk following receipt of ELDC Councillor Grant.
8. Continued phased approach to re-open archway access and structural repairs by carrying out structural survey and historical research.
9. Drainage channels were cleared under riparian owner responsibilities

5. Louth Town Council Objectives / Projects 2015/16

In addition to day to day budgets for the maintenance of assets and provision of services:

- a. Louth Town Council have focussed on Community Safety in its budget setting exercise for 2015 / 16 working in partnership with principal and other authorities to deliver schemes for the benefit of Louth residents and visitors. The Council are mindful that a safe environment makes the town a pleasant place to live and will attract more visitors.
 - i. It is hoped that the Environment Agency will complete the long awaited flood alleviation schemes which will protect not only hundreds of residents in the town but also in settlements downstream towards the coast. Louth Town Council is about to enter into a ground-breaking multi authority agreement which will be in place for the next 100 years providing protection for the town.
 - ii. Speeding traffic is also a major concern of Louth residents evidenced by the correspondence received this year and Louth Town Council have noted this and provided funds in 2015/16 to join the countywide road safety scheme. This will provide for lamp column mounted plates onto which reactive signs are placed and rotated around the town for maximum impact.
 - iii. The Town Council have also provided for a new street light on Gospelgate to improve pedestrian safety in the area.
 - iv. CCTV remains a priority for the town council; the delivery of the monitoring of the town council cameras is currently under review by ELDC. Reserve funds have also been established to relocate one of the cameras which had to be temporarily removed for building works; however a proposed move to wireless technology for image transmission will make this a more flexible feat in the future.
- b. Another major thread in town council projects for the year is the supporting of local and national celebrations which includes Inspire 500, a yearlong series of activities based on the spire of St James church. Whilst the Town Council have agreed to loan Brown's Panorama to the Usher Gallery for the Great Lincolnshire Exhibition over the summer, the town council will be supporting the celebrations in other ways. Open days are planned to be held at The Sessions House, home of the Panorama, later in the year and will be combined with lectures on the paintings which were sketched from the spire.
- c. Additional funds have also been found to allow a more in depth investigation into the provision of Christmas lights in the Town Centre, which could possibly be extended into more outlying areas with the use of solar power which was trialled in 2014. The Town Council are awaiting feedback from the newly formed Louth Independent Traders and reformed Louth Chamber of Business regarding their input to the project for the coming year.
- d. Support in the form of grants continues to be available to Community groups to apply for as well as other funding provided on a perpetual basis for items such as the parish clock, power to St James floodlights and annual funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- e. Provision of community facilities is also an important responsibility within the town with additional funding being provided this year to ensure that the notice boards, bus shelters, seats and town signs are all maintained and replaced if necessary.
- f. Finally, with the withdrawal of funds from Louth Town Partnership in 2014 it is important that Louth Town Council can provide some assistance to ensure that valued initiatives that were introduced by the group can continue. Louth Town Council has a modest tourism and newsletter budget which will be applied in the most effective way possible when alternatives have been assessed.

6. War Memorial Update

The Town Clerk reported that the work that is needed to the War Memorial is not superficial. The work to date has been to establish that the structural integrity of the column and soldier remains intact. She reported that the broken pieces of wall and shields had been taken away and she was working with the Insurance Company, Loss Adjuster and Conservation Surveyor and different methods for repair were being looked at. The Town Clerk explained that there were lots of aspects to consider from the fact that the structure was a listed building to weed control and also finding the correct stone to match the existing was proving time consuming. She reported that the Council were waiting for the Conservation Surveyors report which would then go to the Loss Adjuster. In the meantime temporary shields had been installed to assist people who wished to commemorate their loved ones on VE Day. Status reports have and will be posted in Community Notice Boards, Louth Town Council website and at the War Memorial.

7. Public Forum

The following points were raised by members of the public present:

- a. A lady asked if there was any news regarding the building of a Skate Park in Louth. Town Councillor J. Garrett reported that the Louth Xsports Group would be resubmitting plans in the next two weeks for the site near to Meridian Leisure Centre but he cautioned that once these were passed they would then need to find funding. Councillor Mrs. L.M. Stephenson wondered if Louth Town Council could write to ELDC and request that it part fund the project.
- b. Councillor Mrs. L.M. Stephenson hoped that Louth Town Council would continue to try to form a Youth Council.
- c. The Chairman read out a letter from former Councillor, Mr. T.F. Marris which thanked the Council for its support over the years.

There being no other issues raised, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8pm.

Signed _____ (Chairman)

Dated: _____