

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 20TH APRIL 2021**Held on the Zoom Virtual Conference Platform****Chairman – The Mayor of Louth, Councillor Darren Hobson****Present – Town and District Councillors, Members of the Public and Members of Community Groups.****Total 27.**

1. The Chairman, Councillor Darren Hobson, welcomed all present to the meeting.
2. Following a proposal by Councillor Mrs. EB, seconded by Councillor Mrs. JMS and a vote of those present, the notes of the 2019 Annual Town Meeting were approved as the minutes to be signed by the Chairman forthwith.
3. **Annual Report of the Town Council 2020/21**
The Chairman reported as follows: I am sure you will join with me in declaring 2020-21 as one of the most challenging years in recent history. As a Nation we have seen huge losses but the way in which everyone has pulled together and each have made sacrifices for the greater good has been commendable. Remarkably dedicated volunteers worked tirelessly to help those shielding or in need with their shopping, food and other items. New social media groups were set up and flooded with ideas, humour and information sharing. The NHS has done the Nation proud. I would like to thank all members of our community for their assistance throughout this pandemic who give us hope of a return to normality. During the last year Louth Town Council has, through virtual meetings, continued to conduct business and provide support as best it can to the community. When the Covid-19 Lockdown was announced in March 2020, the Town Council quickly took steps to enable the continued running of the Town Council's services. The Town Clerk and her assistant worked from home through the first lockdown period but the Cemetery Staff continued to work at the Cemetery undertaking all the work relating to the funerals held there along with grass cutting and topple testing.

Unfortunately, last year no Annual Town Meeting was held due to lockdown. Special legislation was approved by the Government to make this legal and this legislation included other measures bought in to aid the running of local councils and authorities.

All Louth Town Council meetings from 19th May 2020 moved to the virtual conferencing platform, Zoom. At our first Zoom meeting of the 2020-21 Council year, I was elected as Mayor and Councillor Mrs. Jill Makinson-Sanders was elected Deputy Mayor.

During lockdown and the subsequent tier restrictions the Mayoral duties were, as you might expect, very different to previous years: no Civic Receptions or Civic events were held at all throughout the county and prescheduled Town Council events had to be cancelled, however contingency plans were put in place. The Mayoress and myself were able to attend or mark the occasions of:

- a. 100th Anniversary of the Louth Flood, and a video was made laying a wreath at the cemetery memorial in remembrance
- b. 75th Anniversary of VJ Day as well as Remembrance Sunday – again, videos were made and informally the laying of wreaths took place at the War Memorial and St James' Church. Councillor Treanor, as Mayor at the time, marked the 75th Anniversary of VE Day in a similar manner.
- c. The opening of the Louth Navigation Trust's 250 year anniversary celebrations
- d. The Christmas Light Switch On – which was a virtual event with a video made and promoted on Facebook.
- e. The opening of a new café in town and the annual pop-up charity card shop at St James' Church.

f. Christmas Carols and Readings at St James' Church on Christmas Eve.

As well as these events, we visited many of the essential shop owners after the first lockdown to thank them for their help in keeping the people of Louth going. We also visited both the Louth Community Food Bank and the Neighbourhood Kitchen to thank the volunteers for all their hard work in helping people who were in need at that time. On Christmas Day we visited the Salvation Army Church to thank those volunteers delivering Christmas dinners to local residents.

In April this year, when non-essential shops were finally allowed to open after the last lockdown, we again walked around the town to see many of the independent shop owners to ask how they had coped through the 2021 lockdown and their thoughts for the future.

Throughout the year, I have written a blog which has been promoted on both the Town Council's website and Facebook.

As part of other measures put in place by the Town Council to support the community, the Clerk's assistant was sent on secondment for three months to help at the Foodbank in Louth for an hour each morning (along with a group of volunteers) - at this time the demand on the foodbank had quickly increased.

To ensure that the residents of Louth were kept up to date with the pandemic, advice and services available; the Council set up dedicated pages on their website to signpost:

- i. All food produce shops and takeaways which would deliver to those now having to stay at home to shield or isolate
- ii. The contact details for local help such as foodbanks, medicine collection and volunteering services
- iii. The contact details for primary regional and national advice pages.

A Town Council Facebook page was quickly created so that important information could be communicated in a timely fashion to residents through the popular social media platform.

The Council agreed to support the Neighbourhood Kitchen/Meals at Home – called 'Apart – Not Alone' by assisting in the production and delivery of a leaflet. The previous Mayor, Councillor Treanor, kindly donated from his Charity Fund.

Councillors became referrers for the local Food Bank which enabled them to get help for members of the public in a much timelier fashion.

Councillors also set up a WhatsApp group intended to be used as a support network and for the sharing of information. From 11th March to 18th May 2020 the Town Clerk carried out the running of the Town Council along with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor using delegated authority ratified by the Council.

On 19th May 2020, the first Zoom Town Council meeting of 2020-21 was held, which was the Annual Town Council Meeting.

The Town Council

- a. The Town Council is made up of 21 councillors representing the town comprising of three Councillors for each of the seven wards. There are currently no vacancies.
- b. Council meetings during this year were all held remotely using the Zoom platform due to Covid-19 Restrictions. Legislation was put in place for this by Central Government.
- c. Attendances for the last year (to 30th March 2021) were 87%, which is an increase of 5% on 2018-19 with six councillors missing no meetings at all.

- d. During the year there have been 12 Town Council Meetings, 11 Planning Committee, 7 Governance and Finance Committee, 4 Personnel Committee, and 5 Community Resources Committee meetings held on a total of 21 occasions (to 13th April 2021).
- e. Councillors and officers also attended online conference working groups, meetings with other authorities and associations and online meetings related to representatives on charitable trust boards.

Town Council Routine activities:

- a. Hosted Public Forums at scheduled meetings receiving comments, mainly on planning issues.
- b. Attended the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC) AGM, attended the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Annual Meeting and ICCM information and training sessions. Both staff and Councillors also attended training sessions through LALC. All of these events were held online. A member of the Council was elected onto the LALC County Committee.
- c. Supported the work of Hubbard's Hills Trust with £45,000, continuing to fund operational costs.
- d. Provided storage facilities under agreement for Louth Naturalists' Antiquarian and Literary Society.
- e. Celebrated national events and anniversaries, flying flags for events such as the Queen's birthday, VE & VJ 75th anniversaries and St. George's Day and most recently flew the flag at half-mast on the announcement of the death of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip for the period of national mourning.
- f. Approved the Budgets and Precept for 2021-22 and submitted the request to East Lindsey District Council.

Major topics / events for the year which the Town Council promoted:

- a. 75th Anniversary of VE and VJ Day – on Youtube and Facebook.
- b. Louth Flood 100th Anniversary – Louth Town Council originally had produced a leaflet for this, but on going into lockdown, a virtual tour was created with the assistance of the Louth Museum and Dr. Richard Gurnham, who wrote the tour route. Two thousand five hundred people have watched the video since its launch, which is 45 minutes long and was featured on BBC Look North and BBC Radio Lincolnshire.
- c. Organised the Lovely Louth competition and awarded the winners.
- d. Organised a new Festive Window competition and awarded the winners.
- e. Organised a new Light Up Louth competition and awarded the winners.
- f. Discussed and responded to various consultations including, most recently, CCTV in Licensed Vehicles and the Review of the East Lindsey District Council Local Plan.
- g. Supported residents' requests for litter bins.
- h. A Speed Awareness Working Group was formed to look at combatting such antisocial behaviour in the town and obtained a grant from ELDC Councillors in the sum of £1,000 for use in purchasing a third reactive speed sign.
- i. Supported a proposal to pay tribute to key workers in the town, the details of which are to be finalised.
- j. Requested Lincolnshire County Council carry out a footpath review to assist the elderly and wheelchair users.
- k. Lobbied Lincolnshire County Council to rethink the positioning of the new St. Bernard's Avenue crossing.
- l. Signed the petition to reopen the East Lincolnshire Railway between Grimsby and Peterborough via Louth.
- m. Supported ELDC's concerns for elderly and vulnerable people regarding the amount of unsolicited and nuisance phone calls received by them.
- n. Supported residents in ensuring that the replacement of the AstroTurf pitch at London Road benefitted as many as possible.
- o. Supported a new 'Best Loved Tree Competition' in partnership with Transition Town Louth and the Louth Leader.

Planning Committee

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor Mrs. S. Crew reported that the Planning Committee has delegated responsibility for all items relating to planning, make comments on planning applications, traffic regulation orders, proposed works to trees, street naming, planning enforcements and planning appeals. Note planning decisions, other correspondence received e.g., temporary road closures and consideration of matters relating to road safety and enforcement complaints.

- a. Commented on 135 planning applications (to 13/04/2021) and amendments following recommendations from the Planning Working Group who meet prior to Committee meetings. This was a substantial decrease on pre covid years applications, the number consider in 2018/19 being 161.
- b. Recorded variances of planning consultation responses compared to ELDC outcome including N/105/02367/20 – Copse and Pond Legbourne Road, N/105/02328/20 - Land at Wintringham Way, N105/01942/20 – Aldi Supermarket, N/105/00981/20 – Former Julian Bower Playing Fields, N/105/01559/20 – Meridian House Units 3 and 4, N/105/01569/19 – Outline Erection – 12 no. dwellings Land adjacent to Kenwick Gardens, Legbourne Road, N/105/01170/20 – Dexters Alehouse and Kitchen, Kidgate, N/105/00692/20 – Consent to Display – 15 Market Place, N/105/00504/20 - John Barkers Property, Ugate, N/019/01451/20 - siting of 116no. holiday lodges and excavation of land at Brackenborough Arms Hotel, N/105/00981/20 Section 73 application in relation Julian Bower Playing Fields, N/105/02255/20 Section 73 App Former Quarry, Ugate, N/105/01961/19 Erection of 237no. dwellings, associated garages, provision of 3no. Land Off Brackenborough Road
- c. Considered 21 ‘Proposed Works’ to trees (to 13/4/21)
- d. Received 23 Temporary Traffic Restrictions/Closure notices.
- e. Consulted on one street naming proposal at a development for land adjacent Playing Field on Julian Bower
- f. Notable Planning Application Consultations some of which were attended by a representative of LTC at ELDC Planning Committee:
 - i. Land off Brackenborough Road 237no. dwellings, associated garages etc

Governance and Finance Committee

The Chairman of the Governance and Finance Committee reported that all of the members on the Town Council sit on the Governance and Finance Committee. They all share responsibility for the financial management of the Council although the finances are administered by the responsible financial officer, who is the Town Clerk.

They ensure that the responsible Financial Officer acts properly and that the council avoids the risk of fraud, bad debts or carelessness. It is incumbent upon them to ensure that the accounts have been properly prepared and approved, that the Town Council has an effective system of internal controls, that it complies with the law, that it has assessed all possible risks to public money and that it has appointed a competent and independent internal auditor. They make sure that the accounts are publicised for general inspection and that there are no hidden issues, (such as impending claims against the Council) and also that any significant differences in the figures from previous years can be explained. Louth Town Council received an unqualified external audit for 2019/2020.

A group of Councillors sit on the Finance Overview Group which meets prior to the Governance and Finance Committee meetings to make recommendations to the committee members, such as risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the Council. It has recently carried out a risk management review, adding to internal controls accordingly. It has also reviewed governance documents (Standing Orders and Financial Regulations) and insurances and have prepared and adopted a number of new policies and procedures during the year.

As chair of the Governance and Finance Committee I keep an eye on the arrangements for financial management and check financial documents such as the cheque schedules regularly.

The Governance and Finance Committee are responsible for the collation and production of the annual budgets and recommendations to the Town Council, and to oversee financial transactions of Louth Town Council. The committee also oversees the Council's formal grant giving process, assessing and making resolutions on applications received.

The Committee reviews Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, the Code of Conduct, internal controls and any other matters required. It has to ensure that all statements of the AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return), can be approved by the Full Council. Its responsibility is to develop general policies and strategies on behalf of the council, for implementation.

Louth Town Council participate in a quadripartite internal audit arrangement with three other local councils, Skegness, Mablethorpe and Alford.

It carried out a thorough examination of the council's income and expenditure and undertook a budget setting exercise.

The Council's expenditure in 2020/2021 included:

- a. Installation of a new container at the Cemetery
- b. Upgrade of IT equipment at the Town Council offices
- c. Hubbard's Hills £45,000 day to day maintenance expenditure
- d. Cemetery net cost (to 28th February 2021) is £21,681
- e. Loan payment of £10,256.70 (Sessions House) was made in January 2021 completing payment of the full loan
- f. Christmas tree and lights, including safety checks, repairs, installation, Market Place tree and rental and installation. Etc. £10,480
- g. Funding – £1000 was awarded to Lindsey Citizens Advice as allowed under the LGA 1972, s142 (2a) and £1,200 to help for the homeless under the LGA 1972 s137 and a further £2000 was awarded to Louth Playgoers under the LGA 1972 s145 power to give to a theatre.
- h. Flood alleviation scheme – payments towards the maintenance of the structure which was completed in 2017 and is located near the Hallington end of Hubbard's Hills. As agreed with the Environment Agency and commenced this year and required the council to contribute £12,394.26.
- i. The Mayor continued to receive no honorary payment for undertaking the Mayoral role, and there were no Mayoral mileage expenses due to the pandemic.
- j. We also ensure that public notice requirements are complied with.

Personnel Committee

The Chairman of the Personnel Committee, Councillor Mrs. J. Makinson-Sanders thanked the Town Council' staff you for the hard they all put in during the pandemic and said it was much appreciated by the community - two in the office, two at the cemetery and the Council's beloved Mayor's Sergeant. She also praised the Council's volunteer for his voluntary work at the cemetery. She then reported that the Personnel Committee:

- a. Has responsibility to oversee all staffing matters in conjunction with the Town Clerk e.g., staffing structures, salaries, wages, employment contracts, policies and procedures, recruitment, appointments, compilation of job descriptions and person specifications.
- b. Maintained Policy handbook for Employees and Members, adopted by Town Council.
- c. Supported officers and Councillors attending online training courses throughout the year.
- d. Ensured that the Council complied with its statutory Pension Scheme requirements.

Community Resources Committee

The Chairman of the Community Resources Committee reported that the Committee:

- a. Has responsibility for all inspection / maintenance / refurbishment / terms and conditions / regulations and charges re. Louth Town Council owned or 'responsible for' assets e.g. Church Clock or 'default' assets e.g. war memorial.
- b. Council Premises –The Sessions House – now owned by the Town Council, is usually used as follows but has been subject to restrictions due to the pandemic.
 - i. Provides office accommodation for the Town Clerk and office based staff.
 - ii. Hosts council, working group and public meetings.
 - iii. Instils Civic Pride by Flying Flag(s).
 - iv. Councillors are nominated keyholders.
 - v. Hosts visits from schools, twinning groups, art groups and charity events.
 - vi. Hosts Action Group Meetings.
 - vii. Hosts award ceremonies.
 - viii. Provides storage facilities for LANALS.
 - ix. Stores the Town Council/Borough Council archives along with the Town Charters and Mayoral Robes and Maces.
 - x. Brown's Panorama hangs in the Court Room.
- c. London Road Cemetery:
 - i. In total the Town Council has responsibility for 29,439 burials since 1855 as at 31st March 2021
 - ii. 60 interments took place in 2020/21 made up of 35 full burials and 25 sets of ashes
 - iii. A volunteer has kindly assisted this year in the administration required to record Topple Testing as it is undertaken. They have also photographed every single gravestone in the cemetery, cataloguing the wording on each memorial and they have double checked that the Council's records match the location of graves on the ground.
 - iv. We continue to cultivate the Meridian Meadow area and the Meridian Orchard, a community initiative (which contains 26 apple trees all species native to Lincolnshire, 2 blackcurrant bushes and a mulberry bush) in conjunction with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Officer.
 - v. We support biodiversity by allowing the growth of the wildflower meadow and other set aside areas.
 - vi. Following a comprehensive tree survey highlighting problems with the avenue of Lime trees running east to west across the Cemetery, remedial action in the form of pollarding and mulching continues and restriction of vehicular access in the area has been implemented with lockable bollards.
 - vii. Professional cleaning was undertaken of the Louth Flood Memorial this year to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Louth Flood.
 - viii. A new container was installed (following arson attacks in 2019/20).
 - ix. One Chapel located at the Cemetery is rented by St. Aethelherd's Greek Orthodox Church.
- d. Louth Allotments
The five sites are managed by The Louth Cottage Garden and Allotment Association.
- e. Civic Pride in the Town – organises the Lovely Louth, Light Up Louth and Festive Window Display Competitions and organises the erection of the Town's Christmas Tree, Nativity and Town Lights. The town's planters and troughs are replenished throughout the spring and summer. Upkeep of the War Memorial and decoration with poppy garlands and wreaths for Remembrance Sunday. Litter picking equipment is available.
- f. Pay for the running costs of the Parish Clock and external lights at St. James' Church

4. Presentation by Mr. Edward Brindle, Chairman of Louth Playgoers Society Ltd

Mr. Brindle gave a brief history of the Louth Playgoers Society and the Riverhead Theatre since relocating and converting the Old Drill Hall in 2002. Mr. Brindle thanked Louth Town Council for the grant in 2020/21 of £2,000 which contributed towards the cost of re-upholstering the seating in

the Studio Theatre and expressed how important the Studio Theatre was to both local community and theatre groups. He continued that having the grant meant that the society could bring forward the project of reupholstery, taking advantage of the theatre being closed due to Covid. (A photo of the new upholstered seating in blue was shown to those attending); he thanked those in the society, including the Manager, Assistant Manager and volunteers that had worked on the project throughout the year. Mr Brindle gave a brief overview of the theatre and community projects they had put in place during the last year, mostly online, live streaming and digital due to Covid restrictions, but they had also held a socially distanced festival outside. Mr Brindle outlined equipment and procedures that they were currently putting in place so that the theatre could open when restrictions were lifted; this included such items as purifying units.

5. Presentation by Mr. Patrice Purves, Chairman of Louth & District Help for the Homeless

- a. Mr. Purves began with an outline of the Charity, explaining they were a small group with volunteer trustees, and the only cost to them was their website.
- b. Mr Purves explained that they gave loans of £4-500 to those people trying to get off the streets to start tenancies. Although people were encouraged to repay back the loans, this did not always happen.
- c. He continued by explaining that they were funded by donations, fundraising and grants (such as LTC grant) and reiterated the importance of the loans to those who had been homeless; it was expected that there would be an increased use of the charity funds once the furlough scheme stopped later in the year.
- d. Questions were put to Mr. Purves relating to the possible lack of single bed flats in Louth as well as the issues found rehousing those homeless who owned a pet.

6. Floor Open to the Public

- a. Questions were asked regarding the cemetery, if there had been a significant increase in deaths in Louth due to Covid and what capacity the Cemetery had left in terms of graves. The Town Clerk answered both questions, no significant increase in deaths and that the Cemetery had 15/20 years of grave space left (based on current annual use). Covid related deaths were reported March 20 until Feb 2021: Louth Central and South – 2 deaths, Louth North and East – 16 deaths.
- b. Questions were asked regarding littering in Louth; David Ford and the Wombles were thanked for the litter-picking they carried out in the town. Andrew Leonard (Hubbards Hills Trust) reported that already in Hubbard's Hills two skips had been required over two weeks to deal with the littering. Further questions were asked regarding ELDC and scheduling of litter picking, and it was reported that although ELDC litter picked in the town, they did not do so on the main entrance roads to the town.
- c. A representative from LincsLSar (Lincolnshire Lowland Search and Rescue) wished to thank Louth Town Council for a grant they had received in 2019/20 but due to the cancellation of the Annual Town Meeting (Covid 19), he had been unable to formally thank them.
- d. Councillor Darren Hobson was congratulated for being Mayor Elect and for all the work he had carried out in the past year.
- e. The pedestrianisation of Louth consultation was raised and it was thought that opinions of shop owners in the town were split. It was reported by one person that 45 parking spaces would be lost – some of which were 'disabled spaces', and no extra provision had been made for the elderly or for people with disabilities. It was confirmed that the Lions had offered to do the planting of troughs in the Cornmarket (a part of the café culture) and that this would take place in May once the risk of frost had passed.
- f. The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting finished at 7:23pm

Signed _____(Chairman)

Dated _____