**Minutes of an Annual Town Meeting in Market Drayton held on Tuesday 7 March 2017 at 7.00pm in the Festival Drayton Centre, Frogmore Road, Market Drayton.**

**Present:** Councillors: R. Aldcroft, T. Beckett, J. Beckett, K. Brown, D. Erwin, S. Glover, R. Hughes, D. Minnery (Mayor), R. Smith V. Taylor and M. Whittle.

**Clerk:** Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk.

There were also approximately 10 members of the public present.

1. **Welcome by the Town Mayor**

Councillor Minnery welcomed the residents of the town and introduced himself. He said this is not a meeting of the Town Council; it is a meeting for the residents of the town, to give them an opportunity to ask questions and to hear verbal reports from local organisations.

The Mayor apologised for the short notice of the meeting, it was scheduled to be 20 April however it was realised this was during the purdah period prior to an election and the Town Council decided to hold the town meeting early.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies have been received and accepted from Councillor M. Erwin, J. Gough and L. Ridgway.

1. **To confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 20 April 2016**

The Mayor asked if everyone was satisfied with the minutes.

Councillors and members of the public said they were.

Councillor Whittle proposed, Councillor Glover seconded and it was **RESOLVED** with 1 Abstention:

**To confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 20 April 2016.**

The Mayor wanted residents to know that Councillor Hughes abstained from the vote because he lives outside the Town Boundary; he is able to comment but cannot vote.

1. **Written questions received from members of the public**

The Mayor said the Council have received a question from Mrs Cindy Whitehurst; she is not at the meeting but her question is:

1. I would like to know if the plan is to continue and finish the new skate park the children/teenagers need somewhere to go and something to do. I feel that now they have removed the equipment they should be obliged to replace it and finish the job so it’s returned to a skate park and not just left as a field. Rumour has it that it will cost more than anticipated so might not go as planned. If this is the case that’s down to bad research and planning and the people of Drayton should not be made to suffer and loose amenities because of that.

The Mayor said the Skate Park project has become more complicated than originally thought. He said they have encountered some issues and a meeting with the contractors has been scheduled for later this week. He assured residents this is temporary the Skate Park will go ahead.

The Mayor said he has received 7 further questions from a resident who would prefer to be anonymous; the questions are:

1. New Roundabout on A53, is this roundabout constructed with National standards for 60mph ‘A’ roads? Shropshire Star 1 February 2017 reports that a building with outline planning permission for 250 homes on land to the east of the site, said it had always been the aim that the developments would link and provide easy vehicle, pedestrian and public transport links from the A53 and the town centre. But he said David Wilson Homes planning application would do none of those things.

Is MDTC happy that the very best use has been made of all the lands at its disposal?

The Mayor said Town Council are not responsible for the roundabouts; it’s the responsibility of Shropshire Council’s Highways Department. He knows the roundabout was paid for by the developers; David Wilson homes and he assured the roundabout was up to highways standards.

Councillor Hughes said he is aware that the roundabout is up to Highways standards.

The Mayor said the quote from the Shropshire Star is misleading; it is a quote from the other builders that were interested in the site at the back of David Wilson homes and he was satisfied with the best use of land; Town Council own no land other than by the Greenfields site.

1. Minutes show that £5,000 was suggested as payment to a County employee and a regular sum of £500-800 is paid by MDTC to another County employee. Are these sums agreed by Full Council and are they paid directly to individuals or to the County?

The Mayor said this is not quite accurate; the first is payment is paid directly to Shropshire Council as agreed and resolved by members to pay for a secondment Officer from Shropshire Council to help Town Council with a project. The second payment in question is paid to a former Shropshire Council employee who is now self-employed. This payment was agreed and resolved in committee to help Town Council with another project.

1. Greenfields exists on a grant of £27kpa plus subscriptions. The Skate Park (when completed) will have used £80k of MDTC Reserves. Is there a plan to support this spend by asking for subscriptions from the Skate Park users or are they too small in number? Did anybody discuss this at Full Council, and if not, why not?

The Mayor said there are no plans to charge people to use the Skate Park; there are several parks around the town that also have no charge to use them.

Councillor Hughes said these facilities are available to everyone to use them unlike Greenfields.

1. BT phone accounts show a commendable reduction from £3,153.34 to £886.65. How has this been accomplished and will it be maintained? Who is responsible for spotting any accounting aberrations – is it the RFO or Handelsbanken? Who is the RFO and what qualifications are required to hold that role?

The Mayor said he is limited to what he can say but he can confirm that the lower level of fees will be maintained. He confirmed it is not the sole responsibility of the RFO, every member of the Council is responsible; there is a list of payments that go to a Finance & General Purposes Committee as well as a Full Council for members to ask questions, values over £500 are shown on our website so residents can also make queries.

He said there are no qualification required to be a RFO to the council, there is an independent assessment carried out yearly and said it has been reported back to Council that there has been no issues raised with Town Councils accounts.

1. MDTC was gifted £425k of tax-payer’s money in 2011/12. Their last action was to return the remainder of the unspent cash (total +-£82k) to SC in January 22016. This is not history-it persisted throughout the ‘reign’ of the current Council. Nether the TC nor any Councillor appears able to account for that money. The agendas and the minutes of MDTC seem to have been cleansed? Could someone please step forward and explain in simple terms what transpired?

The Mayor said that £425k was made available to the Town Council from Shropshire Council

He said some of the money was handed out in grants for a regeneration programme of shops in the town. He said not enough schemes came forward over the three years Town Council had to spend the money so £14-£15,000 was returned to Shropshire Council.

Councillor Hughes said some of the money went to Festival Drayton Centre to purchase a projector and other projects.

1. Given the hugh sums afforded the ‘Zone’, and concern about MDTC’s historical failure to add up correctly, who is responsible for accounting for the hugh sums of Lottery Money and for the lesser sums from MDTC Reserves? Will MDTC please explain who is in control and is it possible to publish the figures so we can check them?

The Mayor said Town Council are putting £100k towards The Zone project but most of the funds are coming from the Lottery, the building for the café and training centre is currently going through the procurement procedure. The trustees of the project are accountable for the finances.

Councillor Hughes said trustees are in the process now to being appointed.

1. CCTV – petty crime continues at the rate of 40 reports per week. Has our CCTV system caught anyone red-handed? Where are the cameras and what is the next phase? Which body on the Council is responsible for leading the CCTV initiative? What is the next phase? Is it true that at least one councillor overseas the footage from his home address? Is MDTC still struggling with the idea that CCTV footage is not acceptable evidence? If that remains the case perhaps they would explain their understanding of RIPA to the audience?

The Mayor said RIPA does not apply or required for Town Councils because they do not target surveillance.

Councillor Hughes said he is aware that people have been caught on Town Councils CCTV which has led to prosecution. He said the first phase of the CCTV has been completed in the town which covers the Town Hall, Frogmore Road car park and at the back of the Library. Town Council are in the process of starting the second phase for cameras in Queen Street and High Street.

He said the old CCTV is still in operation and functioning but the quality is nowhere near as good as the new system.

Councillor Hughes said he did have CCTV at his home address for a short period of time but confirmed he has not got it now nor has had it for the last 12 years.

P.C. Mick Sturland said the new CCTV system is fantastic, the resolution and quality is very good. He said there are plans to use the system remotely at the Police Station; doing this will reduce time and target crimes.

1. **To receive reports from the following local organisations:**

**Mr. Chris Powdrill – Drivers Day for the youth of Market Drayton**

The Mayor introduced and welcomed Mr. Powdrill to the meeting.

Mr. Powdrill said he is a member of a likeminded group who are concerned about the way younger drivers drive around the town; they like to engage with the drivers to try encourage their skills they held an event on the Cattle Market.

The event which targets drivers aged between 17 – 25 year olds from Market Drayton and surrounding areas had an assault courses to drive around, many events including a fire brigade rescue re-enactment and the police were present. He said all in all the day went really well, they engaged and encouraged younger drivers to drive more safely and to go on and do the advanced driving course.

Mr. Powdrill said last year’s event was funded by a grant from the PCC Ambassador Support, free use of the Cattle Market, the Police, Fire and Rescue Services and local business all of which he hoped will support the event again this year.

The event this year is planned for the second weekend in July and any support would be welcomed.

Mr. Powdrill thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to speak and asked if anyone has any questions.

The Mayor asked if the group had any connection with the Road Safety Group.

Mr. Powdrill said the group is separate.

P.C. Mick Sturland said he took part in the event last year which was very well supported and went really well.

The Mayor thanked Mr. Powdrill.

**Mrs Beryl Edwards – Market Drayton Good Neighbours Scheme**

The Mayor introduced and welcomed Mrs. Edwards to the meeting.

Mrs Edwards thanked the Mayor for the opportunity to promote the scheme.

She said the Rural Community Charity areas set up the Good Neighbourhood Scheme in Market Drayton in 2015 because there was a need within the town to help vulnerable people that live in their home independently.

The group has taken approximately 10 months to set up to ensure all documents and policies are in place and DBS checks have been completed on the volunteers and they have now been launched over 12 months.

The Group is financed partly from a grant from R.C.C. help from the community such as Sherwood Wholsfoods and holding charity events at Oruna and Tudor House.

She said the volunteers help with tasks around the home that service users may not be able to do, taking them for trips out such as shopping or hospital visits and even requests to help with their dog walking whilst they recuperate after being ill and are not well enough to walk them themselves.

Volunteers are currently made up of professional people in this line of work however the group would much appreciate other willing volunteers to help out; there is a meeting to discuss this further tomorrow night at 7pm in the Festival Drayton Centre or you can visit our website.

The Mayor thanked Mrs. Edwards and said it was a thoroughly good scheme to have within the town.

Mr. Geoff Vernon asked if he could read out a report on behalf of Mrs. Jane Evans, the Clerk at Hodnet. He said unfortunately she has prior work commitments so was unable to attend but felt the report would interest the residents of the town.

The Mayor said yes.

Mr. Vernon said Mrs. Evans has been busy fund raising for the last 3 years for the Guide Hut Community for over 100 members which include rainbows, brownies and guides due to the larger grants now not available from Town Council.

Market Drayton Youth Centre came up on Shropshire Councils asset register; the guides expressed an interest in this building to run alongside similar guides, education and social needs and was pleased to announce that last year they had adopted a 99 year lease for the building at a cost of £1 per annum.

Mr. Vernon said the building has had a new identity called; ‘The Phoenix Centre’. It is continuing to go from strength to strength and has been possible to keep running from the money generated from the groups and fund raising events. He said the building is in need of some decorating and there will be a launch day in the near future where everyone one is invited to see how good this group is for the community and how it allows the girls to have a place to meet up in a secure and friendly environment.

The Mayor thanked Mr. Vernon and wanted him to thank and congratulated Mrs. Evans on his behalf; he said this is another asset for the community.

The Mayor said he has received a written report from Mr. Eric Davies on behalf of Market Drayton Seniors Enterprise which is on the table for people to have a look at.

1. **Mayor’s report and closing remarks.**

The Mayor said he does a weekly column in the Market Drayton Advertiser which allows him to keep residents up to date on topics the councillors have discussed.

He said one of Councils main topic of discuss this year has been the taking over of some of Shropshire Councils assets such as car parks, the Library and Customer First due to Shropshire Councils budget issues. He informed people that Shropshire Council have still to make a decision on these issues.

The issue that have troubled the Council this year is the withdrawal of the bus route to Telford and Telford hospital. He said this was due to Telford Council not funding the route, Shropshire Council were willing to bridge the gap until the quotes for the bus route came in at a much higher cost than previously being paid,

He said the North Shropshire Wheelers, a group of volunteers are doing a fantastic job running the scheme.

Councillor Aldcroft said volunteers, drivers and vehicles are at a premium. North Shropshire Wheelers do a fantastic job to help people not only to get to hospital appointments but to other places they need to be.

The Mayor said there is a timetable on the back table for people to take.

The Mayor said there have been a few points of concerns over the year; the public toilets have suffered a lot of vandalism, he said Town Council provide these facilities and they are constantly getting abused. More recently there has been two bursts of vandalism with the fruit trees within the Town Park.

Councillor Taylor asked if Town Council are paying for the trees to be replaced.

The Mayor said he was aware of some donations being raised to pay for the trees of which he was very thankful of however this amount will not pay for all of the damage.

Councilor Whittle said there is CCTV within the park; can this not be looked at.

Councillor Hughes said CCTV in the area has been looked at however the orchard is too far away to pick up any useful images. He said there will be a surveillance camera put up in the area very soon.

The Mayor reported that Town Council supports The Messenger along with adverts to help pay towards the publication; this is distributed to every household in the town and surrounding areas with up-to-date information and notices of what is happening within the town.

The Mayor reported that the Neighbourhood Plan is nearly ready to be submitted to Shropshire Council after a lot of work.

The Mayor said he has been very proud to represent the Council for the year and thanked the Town Clerk and Assistant Clerk for their support and for organising the Remembrance Service and the Festival of Lights event; he knows that there is a lot of work that goes into these events and both went fantastically well.

He concluded by saying Town Council will be having their biggest changes in May since 1973 where there will be reducing from 17 to 12 councillors; from 7 to 6 in North Ward, from 5 to 3 in East Ward and from 5 to 3 in South Ward.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 8.00 pm.