



# New Alresford Town Council

## ANNUAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF NEW ALRESFORD TOWN COUNCIL held on TUESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> March 2017 at 7.30PM in the Alresford Recreation Centre, Alresford**

	In Attendance	Apologies	Absent
Cllr Barrett	✓		
Cllr Evans	✓		
Cllr Griffiths	✓		
Cllr Gower	✓		
Cllr E Jeffs	✓		
Cllr B Jeffs	✓		
Cllr Kerr-Smiley	✓		
Cllr Pinch	✓		
Cllr Power	✓		
Cllr Saunders	✓		
Cllr Spencer	✓		

Also present: Mrs Karen Ross- Locum Town Clerk, and 48 members of the public

- 1. Introductions and welcome from Chairman Cllr Lisa Griffiths**

Cllr Griffiths welcomes every-one to the meeting and gave a report which can be found as Appendix A  
Cllr Griffiths read out a Press release from the Council regarding the ARC facility which can be found as Appendix B  
In light of Appendix A Cllr Jeffs took the chair for the remainder of the meeting
- 2. To receive the minutes of the Town Council meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016**

The minutes of the Town Council meeting were signed as a true record of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016
- 3. To receive reports from**
  - Recreation Committee**
  - Environment Committee**
  - Finance Committee**
  - Planning Committee**
  - Tourism Committee**

Reports can be found as Appendix C
- 4. To receive reports from outside bodies**

Reports were received from County Councillor Jackie Porter
- 5. To receive questions from members of the public**

Questions from members of the public were taken  
There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.40pm

## Appendix A

This past year has been exciting and frustrating – for residents, staff and Councillors. So I would like to thank all of you for being here. It would be fair to say that life on the Town Council brings new challenges for all of us – every year is different and not always for good reasons.

My first comment must be about the ARC bar which has been closed today. This is the press release issued today :

*“It is with much sadness that New Alresford Town Council is announcing with immediate effect the closure of the Alresford Recreation Centre Bar, known affectionately to its users as the “ARC Bar” facility.*

*New Alresford Town Council has spent considerable time evaluating the ARC Bar facility’s future and how a possible closure would impact the community, but as Local Government funding comes under further pressure, they felt unable to continue to operate the facility.*

*New Alresford Town Council is very grateful to each member of staff at the ARC, and appreciates their loyalty through this time of uncertainty.*

*If you have any queries or concerns, or you have an existing booking; please call the office on 01962 732079 or drop us an email at [tclerk@newalresfordtc.org.uk](mailto:tclerk@newalresfordtc.org.uk)”*

As you are no doubt aware, our long time Town Clerk, Stevie Kavanagh, had a long period of sick leave in the past year and has decided to retire her town council keyboard. We thank Stevie for 13 years of service and wish her a relaxed, enjoyable retirement. This period has not helped our efficiency and communication and caused additional pressures to our office staff. We are very grateful to Julie Cleeve and Frances Simpson who have fought valiantly to rise to the challenges and demands of Councillors. We have an excellent Locum Clerk in Karen Ross and cannot express loudly enough our appreciation of her attempts at holding us together and guiding us during this time. We are a challenge as a Council – that she would not deny.

So, as your Chairman, I don’t stand here proud of our progress. Councillors need to work together, learn to compromise and communicate clearly with one another to deliver the needs of their residents and support their staff.

- The Council have prepared a budget which it understands and owns this year. Last year the Council was working on a budget which had been agreed prior to their arrival and was not necessarily clear in its aims.
- The Council had to compromise to formulate that budget but have achieved that. We have tendered for the grass mowing and Peter Bridges and his team once again will be mowing and caring for our pitches and town approaches. He takes pride in keeping the town looking neat and tidy. There is a new arrangement for hanging baskets which were overwhelming backed for a repeat in 2017, and no failing bowser to make residents and staff miserable with. We have a plan for building repairs following a survey which has given us a plan of action as to the urgency and timeframe required.
- There is a new internal auditor who is clear in what she wants to see. The Council have strengths and weaknesses but she has the knowledge and forthright manner to ensure, as long as the Council takes her advice, will be on a good footing in the coming years.
- To help the residents understand the Councils aims, Committee Chairman have been asked to provide a narrative to support their budget and tell you the story of the spending so that you will understand what it plans to achieve when spending your money.

- The Local Plan Part 2 has been found sound by the Government Inspector and we know that the housing developments will be concentrated on The Dean and Sun Lane. There is a Masterplan for The Dean and the City Council are working hard to provide the additional parking facilities which we need. The Masterplan is not a hard and fast rule, but a guide to anyone wishing to develop a site in that landscape, in order to bring cohesion and a sense of place as it develops over time. We are working together on the Open Space requirements for the Sun Lane site and looking to support the Scout Organisation in their plans to create a new facility for the scouting movement. This work is at preliminary stages but looks as though it could provide much needed space for themselves and other users.
- And lastly, the Council have agreed to communicate with all residents this year so to understand what you feel is important and your wishes will help to form future budgets which reflect your wishes.

Finally, I wish to advise you that I am disappointed by repeated breaches of confidentiality and breaches of code of conduct. In the past week, following the decision to close the ARC bar and whilst we were ensuring we followed correct procedures and treated our staff in the kindest way possible, I have become aware that 3 Councillors released exempt and confidential information to third parties. I am appalled at the lack of respect to our staff by some Councillors in the past year, ignoring their advice and disrespecting them by their behavior. For this reason, I am tonight resigning as Chairman and as a Councillor.

## Appendix B



**New Alresford Town Council**  
Alresford Recreation Centre,  
The Avenue, Alresford, Hants, SO249EP  
Tel: 01962 732079

Press Release  
Date: 28<sup>th</sup> March 2017

It is with much sadness that New Alresford Town Council is announcing with immediate effect the closure of the Alresford Recreation Centre, known affectionately to its users as the 'ARC Bar facility'. The ARC bar facility has been managed by a number of groups since its inception and had suffered a number of financial failures before coming under the management of New Alresford Town Council.

New Alresford Town Council has spent considerable time evaluating the ARC Bar facility's future and how a possible closure would impact the community; but as Local Government funding comes under further pressure, they felt unable to continue to operate the facility.

New Alresford Town Council is very grateful to each member of staff at the ARC, and appreciates their loyalty through this time of uncertainty.

If you have any queries or concerns, or you have an existing booking; please call at the office on 01962 732079 or drop us email to [tclerk@newalresfordtc.org.uk](mailto:tclerk@newalresfordtc.org.uk).

## Appendix C

### Recreation Committee

The Recreation Committee is responsible for the town's three recreation grounds, together with the Memorial Gardens.

Our maintenance work, including the ongoing grass cutting that has been carried out by our contractor, Pete Bridges, has enabled us to provide parks that continue to be enjoyed by so many residents and visitors. From dog walking to family picnics, via children's play and the activities of our sports clubs, all of the parks are in regular use.

The sports clubs all work closely with us, with their representatives attending our committee meetings. We're grateful for their input and continued support.

I'll cover some brief sporting highlights from the past year: firstly, Alresford Rugby Club continue to go from strength to strength, with both the first and second "fifteens" currently well placed within their respective leagues. They tell me that we have some of the finest rugby pitches in the county.

Those pitches are also used by the Alresford Minis on Sunday mornings, introducing an ever-increasing number of children to the game.

I'm pleased to report that Alresford Town Football Club have also enjoyed an excellent season to date. With a new Chairman in place, together with a new manager and a significant number of new signings, the football team had their best ever run in the FA Cup. Having flirted with relegation last season, they also currently sit comfortably within the top 6 of the Wessex Premier Division.

As with the rugby club, they have a thriving youth section, running a large number of teams for both boys and girls.

The Council also supported the tennis club with a grant for their pavilion, while recent work on repairing the cricket strip here at Arlebury Park should ensure another great summer of cricket in the town.

Away from sports, the recreation grounds are used for a variety of events, notably including the annual Alresford Music Festival (which has become a firm favorite on the town's calendar of events), together with the Bonfire Night celebrations. We're grateful to the organisers of these and other events for the contribution that they make to our town.

The past year has also seen New Alresford Town Council commit to increased funding of improvements to our playgrounds. A new multiplay seesaw has been installed at Stratton Bates, while we await the imminent arrival of a zip wire at Sun Hill. The Council's budget will allow for continued spending in this area during the course of the next financial year.

This coming summer will also see the launch of the inaugural Alresford Garden of the Year competition, which will celebrate those who help to brighten up our town via their gardening efforts.

None of the work of the Recreation Committee would be possible without the dedicated efforts of the Town Council's staff. I'd like to extend my thanks for the help and support provided by Karen, Julie and Frances throughout the year. It's much appreciated.

Finally, the Recreation Committee works very much as a team and I'm grateful for the input received from all members of the committee during the year.

## Planning Committee

The NATC Planning committee meets on the first Tuesday of every month to look at any application sent to us from Winchester City Council - which is the decision-making body. Our job is to support or not to support: and to send our comments and reasoning's back to Winchester. Most of the applications we look at are decided under delegated powers: i.e. they do not go to committee, but are decided by the planning officers at Winchester.

The 2 most important applications we have looked at in the last year have been connected with our local plan. As you will know, the Government Inspector has judged the NATC Local Plan as 'sound' - and this calls into play the potential residential development of the Dean. Both the Warwick and the Huxley sites have submitted significant applications, although only one has been approved: the McCarthy Stone development on the Warwick Trailer site. NATC approved this scheme last year, but with certain caveats, most particularly concerned with the parking arrangements. Meanwhile, WCC has been brainstorming a 'masterplan' for the Dean to deal with this very subject. The Inspector had made crystal clear that an additional car park was needed in the Town, and that the Dean was the obvious place for it. This means that potential developers and landowners, not to mention tenants need to be involved. And this means that monies need to be found in a fair and evenly distributed way to assist WCC purchase land for a car park - land which could have been used for more residential development. The deal agreed by the Warwick site is to put £221 into the car park 'kitty'. When the Huxley site comes to committee it will be expected that the developers will put up a similar sum of money.

The other important application we considered was the application by Alfred Homes for dwellings North of the Avenue. This was land not included in our Local Plan, and it is fair to say that when NATC came to look at it we had a room full of objectors. Partly this was because it was land in designated parkland with dubious access = but mainly because it was considered that the developers were attempting to get their application approved before the Local Plan had been officially signed off by the Inspector and by WCC. We at NATC declined to support this application, and when it came to committee at Winchester it was unanimously refused. Had it been allowed it would have disrupted the entire Plan and it would have given the green light to other developers to try their luck.

As with all other NATC committees, our Planning meetings are open to all: if you are involved in a local planning application whether as the applicant, or as an objector, you are especially welcome to state your of view. You have a 3-min slot (the same as at WCC meetings) and we really welcome your input.

## Tourism Committee

As Chair of the newly named and enhanced Tourism & Economy Committee I would like to give you a brief overview of our actions and achievements in the past year.

Outsourcing of the Hanging Basket project has gone very well, and we will continue this great decoration and celebration of our town this coming season.

This scheme is not without its challenges as SSE Enterprise Lighting have informed us that we will need to carry out structural integrity tests of the Street Lights on we wish to install Planter Hanging Baskets.

Swinging off these Street Lights to test their strength is not an authorised route, so if you see men in fluorescent jackets standing around these 19 Street Lights, that's what's going on.

This committee continues to be fully engaged with the Market Towns Development Officer role in conjunction with WCC.

We spend 40% of our annual budget on this role, and we are committed to the success of this scheme.

This past year we have been closely involved with a professionally commissioned Town Benchmarking Survey in August 2016, measuring our town against a set list of criteria.

There was pride in our results, however several key areas of improvement have been identified many of which revolve around car parking. Which was a great surprise.

Action points and plans from this Survey are forming the future of our meetings.

The Millennium Trail which runs past the Fulling Mill down at The Dean has provided us with some difficulties in the past year. Cllr Saunders got her feet wet several times to show just how much of the path was waterlogged, and with great help from several Councillors here tonight, the path has been repaired and will continue to be maintained for the enjoyment of all.

I'd like to thank my fellow Councillors and especially Frances the Committee Clerk for their work over the past year.