

**MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

held on Wednesday 13 March 2019

Coach House Theatre, Grange Road, Malvern at 7.00 pm

Councillors

Present

C Palmer (Mayor, Chairman)
S Charles
I Hopwood
L Lambeth
N Mills
P Smith
P Tuthill
D Watkins

Apologies

J Cain
N Morton
J Thomas

In attendance

Linda Blake – Town Clerk
Louise Wall – Minute Clerk

7 members of the public

1. MAYOR'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

The Mayor, Cllr Cynthia Palmer, welcomed everyone to Malvern Town Council's Annual Town Meeting and thanked the Coach House Theatre for providing the venue and refreshments.

2. MINUTES OF ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD TUESDAY 21 MARCH 2018

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 21 March 2018 were approved and signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

3. THE MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018/19

The Mayor presented her annual report. The Mayor said that it had been an honour and privilege to have been Mayor for a third term, something she had not expected.

Mayoral Charities

In 2018, £4,134 was raised for her chosen charity ARCOS, which enabled them to continue with their amazing work in Malvern. This year, the Mayor chose Sight Concern, Worcestershire, as her charity, to help raise awareness of sight loss and the work that this wonderful charity carries out.

Achievements in 2018/19

The Operations Team were successful in obtaining a Gold award in the Heart of England in Bloom competition for the cemetery,

A new Town Council website has gone live which offers many new features for the public to use including bookings and payments online, and a forum area for councillor discussions.

UNADOPTED

A campaign led by Sergeant Alex Denny had seen the restoration of a grave in the Victorian area of the cemetery. The grave belongs to P C Overton, who died whilst saving a young girl in 1928. A short service was held prior to the Mayor's Civic Service, and the Mayor was delighted that several of P C Overton's family could attend, including his 103 year old niece.

After two years' hard work by Jon May and Tom Bennett of Malvern Hoops Basketball, and the Town Council, £50,000 of Section 106 funding was secured towards new basketball courts in Victoria Park. Work is due to start as soon as planning permission is received.

Events

The Town Council has organised a number of events throughout the year:

The Mayor will be holding her Civic Service at Great Malvern Priory on 20 April. The theme is celebrating Malvern's Heritage with re-enactors in the Priory grounds, with displays of old weapons, clothing and food, and everyone is welcome to attend.

The annual Health and Wellbeing Fair at the beginning of May drew its biggest crowd ever and it is hoped that this year's event on 4 May in Rose Bank Gardens will be even more successful.

Bands in the Park will once again take place over the summer in Priory Park.

The Mayor's Bonanza was held in Priory Park in August and once again the hot and sunny weather contributed to a successful day, with around £1,800 raised for Sight Concern.

Rose Bank Gardens was also the setting for outdoor theatre, and the Illyria Theatre Company thrilled audiences with its adaptation of the Hound of the Baskervilles.

The year ended with the biggest event of all, the Christmas Festival held at the end of November. Church Street was packed with people waiting to see Su Pollard switch on the lights.

Remembrance

The Town commemorated the centenary of the end of World War 1 with a field of remembrance in the library grounds. Many local schoolchildren laid crosses to remember those whose lives had been lost. On Remembrance Sunday, there was a moving service in the Priory following the laying of wreaths on the war memorial. Cllr Brian Regimbeau, Deputy Mayor at the time, laid a wreath but sadly died a few weeks later; he is sorely missed by all.

Finance

The Town Council is in a stable financial position thanks to the hard work and dedication of Linda Blake, Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer and Charles Porter, Deputy Town Clerk and Operations Manager.

Although the council is facing rising costs again this year, the increase in precept has been kept to just 0.5%.

Grants awarded to local community groups last year included 10th Malvern Guides, Malvern Rugby Club, Malvern Welcomes, Malvern Food Bank and the Malvern and District Scouts. £7,844 was awarded under the large grant scheme and £3,145 under the small grants scheme.

Neighbourhood Plan

Malvern's Neighbourhood Plan has passed its examination and will go to public referendum on 2 May, on the same day as the district and town council elections.

Once passed, the Plan will be a blueprint for future development and the protection of the town's heritage, green spaces and views and vistas for many years to come. The Mayor said that to reach this stage had taken four years because of the detailed work required but once adopted it will be the biggest in the country.

The Mayor concluded by thanking the Town Clerk and staff at Malvern Town Council for all of their help and support over the past three years and for working hard to ensure that the council serves the people of Malvern in the best way possible.

4. SIGHT CONCERN

Shirley Sheridan is a Trustee of Sight Concern and thanked the Mayor for her invitation to speak at the meeting. Shirley is registered blind and was accompanied by her guide dog Taylor.

Shirley explained that she suffered sudden, traumatic sight loss which changed her life instantly. From being a confident, outgoing person who enjoyed work, playing sports and a good social life, Shirley found herself dependent on her husband for the smallest of tasks. This made her feel stupid, isolated and lonely in a frightening world.

However, Sight Concern contacted Shirley and invited her to a 'Which Way Now?' course. Although Shirley was reluctant to go along, persistence on Sight Concern's part meant that she finally accepted their invitation and found a group that really understood what she was facing and which offered her help in developing techniques to cope with her new situation, and aides to help in day-to-day life.

Since then, Shirley has learnt to use her computer with a special software package, plays golf, ridden a tandem and taken tours of places such as Worcester library and the bus depot, with the aim of being able to use public transport. Shirley has also abseiled, taken part in the Worcester 10km run – ably led by Cllr Palmer – and made a sky dive. But her most memorable achievement was making a sandwich and hot drink by herself for the first time after losing her sight.

Now, with Taylor to help guide her and ongoing support from Sight Concern, Shirley reported that she no longer feels her sight loss is a restriction to her life. She has experienced first-hand just how big a difference Sight Concern makes to people's lives and Shirley urged everyone to keep supporting them.

5. MALVERN'S WELL DRESSING FESTIVAL

Rick Banbury explained that Well Dressing started in Malvern in 1993 and has grown each year to the current 60 wells that are being dressed for nine days in May. Many different groups take ownership of the wells, with some being dressed by generations of the same family and others by school and youth groups. Everyone can take part, with some wells being accessible by those who are less-able bodied. There will be tours by minibus which take 2 ½ hours and cost £10 or various walks taking in anything from a few wells to all of them. The Mayor has also agreed to once again 'take the water cure' on May Day.

6. TOWN COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Cllr Samantha Charles, of Chase Ward, is a relatively new Councillor on the Town Council and spoke about her experience so far. She explained what the role of a Town Councillor involved. She felt that it was a two-part role: being a representative

for people living in your ward and passing on their views, comments and concerns; and attending meetings to discuss items tabled on the agenda.

Cllr Charles has enjoyed her time so far and encouraged others to stand in the upcoming elections in May. She felt being a Town Councillor was a really good way to engage with her community and the town as a whole.

Following questions from the floor, Cllr Charles said that she felt it did not take up a lot of time to be on the Town Council but that by being part of discussions and decisions, you could really make a difference to local issues. She pointed out the Town Council is not political and although she is a Labour Party member, she did not let that influence her input at Council meetings and just wanted to do her best for Malvern Town.

7. OPEN FORUM

A member of the public asked if the Town Council had any plans to take back ownership of Belle Vue Island. The Mayor responded that this had been discussed in the past between the Town Council and Malvern Hills District Council but that no decision had been made so far.

8. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 March 2020 at 7.00 pm.

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(Mayor)