

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Monday 3rd April 2023 at 7pm

held at the Civic Centre

Councillor Chris Robbins, The Mayor of Warminster

Present:

Councillors: C Robbins, S Allensby, A Cooper, A Davis, S Fraser, S Jeffries, J Jones, P Keeble, P Macfarlane, and B Parks.

Officers: T Dommett (Town Clerk), J Halls (Deputy Town Clerk), S Atherton (Committees and administration Clerk)

Public and press: 25 members of the public and 2 members of the press.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Syme and Brett, Mr Nick Parker

2. Minutes from last Annual Town Meeting

The minutes of the last Annual Town Meeting held at the Civic Centre on Monday 4th April 2022 were accepted and signed as a true record.

3. Chairman's Report

Cllr Robbins, Mayor of Warminster reported on his year in office:

Another busy year has come to an end, not only have the town council continued to provide good service to the town, but a number of major projects have been completed and initiated.

Among these are the completion and opening of the Space Themed Splash Pad. This facility has proved to be extremely popular and along with our Skatepark, is the envy of many towns. We have recently been successful in organising a joint project with the Lawn Tennis Association to upgrade our tennis courts; indeed, work has already started as from mid-March 2023. Hopefully all will be in place before Wimbledon and our Spring in the Park event. I am pleased to report the Lake Pleasure Grounds have again been awarded Green Flag Status, indeed the park is a wonderful asset for the Warminster community.

A decision was made to renew the CCTV. We now have new modern high-definition cameras which have replaced the original equipment.

Another major project taking much time and resources is the renewal and upgrading of the Neighbourhood Plan. This is well under way now and the final document will help pave the way for the development of Warminster in many ways, whether planning issues, heritage, commerce, green spaces and more. It's at the consultation stage now.

On September 8th, 2022, very sad news was received that HM Queen Elizabeth II had passed away. The Warminster community joined the rest of the country in mourning and many a church service was attended to offer our prayers and thanks for the monarch's life of service to us all. As Mayor I was very proud to read the Kings' Proclamation from the steps of the Council Offices, aided by the WCR broadcasting facilities so all could hear.

Other events include Remembrance Day, Christmas Lights Switch On, the wonderful Carnival procession, Shop Window Competition, the Civic Awards and representing Warminster and our council many times.

The finances of the town council are in good shape which allowed the council to not increase our portion of the Council Tax, all councillors were pleased to support this approach. The council is committed to find the most sustainable methods of providing services and by reducing our carbon footprint as we go along, but this does take time and resources.

We recognise there is still much work to be done but I must praise and thank my fellow councillors, the very welcome volunteers, our managers and staff for what we have achieved thus far.

The Full Warminster Town Council Annual Report is available from:

<https://warminster-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/WTC-Annual-Report-2022-2023-April-2023.pdf>

4. Open Door – Chat Café

Simon James of the Chat Café gave an update of the progress and success of the three different Chat Café groups that run on the generosity of trained volunteers. This is an unincorporated charity managed by the Charity Commission to enrich the wellbeing of the community. Mr James thanked the owner of 'The Old Fire Station' for allowing the café to use the venue for the last three years. As the 'Open Door' charity Chat Cafés have become ever more popular, it has now moved to the Athenaeum. The weekly Café's cover support for people who are either suffering from cancer or are recovering from it. They also run a support for people who are grieving. Volunteers for this café have been trained in supporting people suffering with grief by Dorothy House and McMillan.

Mr James also gave an example of one gentleman who gave the feedback on the support that he received: 'Thank you so much for the support the Chat Café has given me. Thursday is my best day of the week. I have been able to process my feeling and release, just because of this charity.'

5. 2022-2023 Grant Recipients

5.1 Age UK – Kate Brooks Deputy CEO

Kate Brooks thanked Warminster Town Council for the grant received which has been used to support the group at the Civic Centre twice a month. Run by volunteers, the group is made up of people over the age of 70, some of whom have long term health issues. In each class the members take part in chair-based exercise, Tai Chi, parachute games, bowls, all designed to strengthen muscle which in turn will help with lessening the likelihood of falls. Additionally, there are also quizzes, to keep the mind active and an abundance of birthday celebrations.

5.2 Athenaeum Centre – Jon Ellis

Jon Ellis thanked the Warminster Town Council and Dewey Trust for the grant that has and continues to have a significant impact on the development. The objective of the project is to join the Athenaeum and the 'old Youth Club' building into one seamless community building. So far, the utilities have begun to be updated. The boiler system has begun to be updated and additional insulation has been installed which has been recorded at 97% efficient. The lighting has been changed to LED lighting that has equally made the building more efficient.

Wiltshire council officers and conservation officers have been engaged to support the further development of the building ensuring flooring levels comply with accessibility.

5.3 The Chapel of St Lawrence – Ian Frostick

On behalf of the chapel, Ian Frostick thanked Warminster Town Council for the grant that was needed for essential repairs to the east window, clock room floor and panelled ceiling.

Since receiving the grant, the work already carried out includes:

- Surveys of the window, stonework, floors and panelled ceiling.
- Condition survey and architectural drawings of the chapel completed.
- Listed building permission submitted.
- Timeline put in place for the removal of the east window repairs to the clock and clock room floor.

Updates will be given at regular intervals and published in the Warminster Journal with acknowledgement to Warminster Town Council.

5.4 HELP Counselling Service - Amanda Wilks

Amanda Wilks sent apologies and will attend a future committee meeting to give the update on how the grant has had impact on the residents of Warminster.

5.5 Princecroft Primary School

On behalf of Princecroft Primary School Cllr Robbins gave an overview of the impact of the grant.

The grant was planned to be used to develop a working garden for the children to cultivate not only in gardening club but also through the curriculum. With regret, the gardener resigned before work could begin. A new gardener has since been appointed. Princecroft School invited members to attend the opening of the garden in the summer term.

5.6 Splitz Support Group – Jessica Gay

Cllr Robbins presented on behalf of Splitz:

Thanks was received from FearLess (formerly Splitz Support Service).

The charity has supported adults and children who had experienced domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking across Warminster and Wiltshire.

Since COVID, the referrals had continued to increase 20% year on year.

In Wiltshire, FearLess received 3808 referrals from adults and 633 referrals from children in need of support. FearLess provided a vast range of services

from crisis support to long term trauma recovery. With the grant received, resources were provided at the point of crisis to Warminster based victims and

families. Emergency travel for a local resident fleeing abuse, supermarket gift vouchers to enable seven local and vulnerable families to purchase food and essentials as well as personal safety alarms and kitchen essentials and a microwave for a woman who had been moved to safe but unfurnished accommodation, was purchased.

5.7 Sustainable Warminster - Fiona Stafford

Fiona Stafford expressed gratitude for the grant that enabled Sustainable Warminster to purchase two devices to survey and track the bat population in Warminster. The devices use ultrasonic and sonogram to record the movements of the bats.

The data captured is shared with Wiltshire Bat Trust. Results showed that there are nine different species of bat across Warminster, with two types being rare breeds: Barbastelle and Leisler. It was discovered that the Lake Pleasure Ground is a feeding corridor for the bats given the ecology of the lake.

The data has been used to be included in the environmental evidence of the Neighbourhood Plan and can be accessed by all developers in Warminster when considering planning. Fiona also stated there will be a bat walk in the coming months for the community to join in with.

5.8 The Warminster & Westbury Visually Handicapped Club – Stephen Kervell & Janet Marshall

Stephen Kervell expressed great thanks to the Town Council for the vital grant to the charity referred to as 'The Blind Club'. The financial aid is used to support the rent of the hall, lunch, fuel for transporting members to and from the venue as well as contributing to the payment of guest speakers and musicians. Subscription to the club has increased by 66% over the past three years.

5.9 Touching Tones Music Therapy - Joanna Turner

Joanna Turner shared a thorough overview about the impact the grant received has had on families and children who deal with selective mutism on a daily basis. Children with Selective Mutism can suffer from extreme anxiety and agoraphobia. They find it difficult to interact in any social situation including interaction with extended family. Social situations outside of family are increasingly difficult.

The grant has gone towards the funding of a team building fund day with families, gift bags that included communication cards, voice recorders and puppets. Puppets can be a significant tool in breaking through selective mutism. The therapy has also delivered music and art therapy sessions, one including steel pans and humming. Humming can stimulate your relaxation response and signals to your parasympathetic nervous system that you are safe. Training has also been delivered to staff and volunteers on signing with Makaton which in turn will support individuals in accessing everyday society.

5.10 Warminster Carnival Committee - Sandra Major

Sandra Major thanked Warminster Town Council for the ongoing support of giving a grant to the committee. The funds have been able to support the charges relating to the hiring of bands and the marshals needed to keep the carnival safe. Sandra also thanked the Mayor of Warminster for his continued support of the Warminster Carnival.

5.11 Warminster Citizens Advice – Suzanne Wigmore CEO

Suzanne Wigmore expressed gratitude for the generous grant from Warminster Town Council. From the grant, 388 Warminster families have benefitted directly with benefits and housing. It has supported with housing in the private, quality, access to housing.

It also supported families in need of Foodbank usage. It was to be noted that there has been an increase in younger families in need, in the age bracket of 30-39yrs.

5.12 Warminster Cricket Club - John Powell

With thanks, John Powell detailed how the grant enabled the renovations of the Pavilion. These include Double Glazing, an air source heat pump and new chairs and tables which are a welcomed modernisation to the club.

5.13 Warminster Philharmonic Orchestra - Amanda Williams

Amanda Williams thanked Warminster Town Council for the grant that has supported the rental of rehearsal space, the purchase of music scores and the right to music played by the orchestra at concerts. All concerts that raise money is donated to charity of which the Open-Door Chat Café will be the recipient of their next charity fundraising.

5.14 Warminster Saddle Club – Lisa Gilby, Club Manager

Lisa Gilby expressed gratitude to the council for the grant that helped to buy a grass topper. This piece of equipment's impact is that horses can graze on the 30 acres of grass for longer therefore there is less need for the purchase of hay and additional feed. It is also more environmentally friendly as there is less need for pesticides as the weeds find it difficult to grow with this style of land management. This is a not-for-profit charity. The impact of the grass topper has meant that the cost that would have been involved in additional feed can be fed back in into upgrading of the club. The club is widely used by residents, the military and children with disabilities.

5.15 Warminster Town Football Club - Tim Fry

Tim Fry on behalf of the Football club thanked Warminster Town Council for the grant received. This has supported the maintenance of the football pitch. During covid it was impossible to maintain it as it should have been. The droughts and flooding then had impact on the maintenance. Now the pitch has been re-seeded, fertilised and sanded by the contractor Green Sword.

5.16 Warminster Youth Club – Fred Beckett

Fred Beckett on behalf of the trustees, the parents, the staff, but most of all the young people, He thanked he town council for giving this fantastic opportunity to support the learning of life skills and lessons that wouldn't have been achieved without the grant. He explained that the club has been running for the last 4 years. Last year was the first year they applied for a grant from the town council.

Although the club runs every Thursday during term time, they look to increase their provision and offerings by offering the members extra activities outside of usual club hours.

This grant from the town council was used to offer members, a heavily subsidised 2-night residential experience. In September 2022 because of the grant, the 10 members paid just £10 each and went on residential to Oxenwood Outdoor Education Residential Centre. Included was a midnight walk, an activity to build and light a fire, then roasted marshmallows. The group also took part in raft building, problem solving, archery and wall climbing. Alongside this, they had all meals included but much to their dislike had to wash up afterwards.

The residential was enjoyed by every member where they made memories to last a lifetime especially the midnight walk. Some members suffer with their mental health and anxiety but through this residential experience, have overcome huge hurdles that they never thought they would. For some members, just being away from home was something they never thought they would do.

5.17 Wiltshire Sight - Karen Monk

Karen Monk expressed thanks for the generous grant that has had significant impact. With the grant money, 60 home visits were able to be funded. These visits supported independence. Transport for members was funded to enable them to access the Unity Hub. Public transport can be a barrier to them being able to access the hub.

One example of a significant impact the grant helped to fund was one member was supplied with a visualiser that enabled a grandmother to see photographs of her grandchildren for the first time. Karen explained that this specific example is immeasurable and for that Wiltshire Sight are eternally grateful.

5.18 There was no representation from: The Friends of St Georges School

Cllr Robbins thanked those who had reported on how they had spent their grants and the long hours of voluntary work that had gone into the success of the projects. He also pledged that the Council would do as much as they can to continue the support of the community of Warminster.

6. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Update

Cllr Keeble gave an update on the work that has been done so far on Neighbourhood Plan. He explained that this is the opportunity for community involvement, it is the key to enable the community to have input on what they treasure, what to protect and what they would like to transform in Warminster. Cllr Keeble explained that in July last year the public had been invited to form membership of a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. 30 members of the public and councillors came forward. A steering group was formed and 4 topic groups to look in more detail at the following areas:

- Housing and communities
- Economy, town centre and tourism
- Environment, heritage, and design
- Getting around

Cllr Keeble explained that surveys are online on the Warminster Town Council website for public participation views. <https://www.warminsterplan.com/>

7. Forum

Councillor Robbins invited questions from the members of the public on any subject related to the town or Town Council.

Questions were asked from:

- **Andrew Robinson** – asked, what percentage of time is the road sweeper, Basil Brushes used for the street of Warminster, other towns or villages and what percentage of time is used having to journey to Devizes to unload the controlled waste?
Response:
- The road sweeper does not clean other towns or villages. The sweeper has a rota of cleaning the roads of Warminster. It is also a versatile resource for the town as it can also deep clean the toilets in the park and Central Car Park, can be used to water the hanging baskets around the town and is compact enough to clean the mess left by the avian population in the Lake Pleasure ground. The road sweeper's waste is classed as contaminated waste and therefore classed as 'controlled waste' that must be disposed of following regulations. There are investigations to find a location nearer so that the sweeper does not have to journey to Devizes.
- **Harriet James** – asked, will Warminster Town Council support the closure of the Smallbrook Road in order to try to save the deaths of multiple threatened species of toads during their migration season?
Response:
- Wiltshire Council have responded that they do not think it is legal to close a road for toads, even if other councils have done so. A meeting is being arranged.
- Cllr Parks recommended that it would be best to approach the cabinet member for highways directly rather than the Highways Officers.
- **Colin French** asked for a metro count be requested to gain evidence of the usage of Smallbrook Road. He has filed a Highways Improvement Request.
- **Steve Kervell** asked that signage be looked at for new roads that are created on the various new development so that new road names are visible from both directions.
- **Fiona Stafford** – asked, if it would be possible to consider additional support for wildlife including frogs access out of the lake in the Lake Pleasure Ground. She suggested a rocked-based structure covered in coir matting embedded with aquatic seeds that would grow over time. Sustainable Warminster are fully supportive in being involved and would work with the town council on this.
Response: A similar proposal had been looked at and rejected in the past. his matter will be raised at a future meeting of the Parks & Estate Committee.
- **Cllr Parks** asked for an update on the re-meandering of the stream through Smallbrook Meadow.
Response:
- The works are due to begin in the next month.
- **Andrew Robinson** invited all councillors to attend his 10-year anniversary show outside of No.3 High Street on the August bank holiday.
Response:

Cllr Robbins confirmed that whilst the town council is sympathetic to the issue of No.3 High Street and had tried to get progress the town council do not own it, nor does it have jurisdiction over the property. It was a very complicate issue with no easy solutions.

Cllr Robbins closed the meeting with great thanks to all organisations that took time to share the update on the spending of the grant monies and the positive impact it had on the residents of Warminster.

Meeting ended: 8:20pm

Signed..... Date.....

DRAFT