



**Minutes of the
FORTY SEVENTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
of the
BERKHAMSTED TOWN MEETING**

**Held in the Great Hall, Berkhamsted Town Hall
on
THURSDAY 19 March 2020
at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT:

Council Members

Cllr G Stevens (Town Mayor)
Cllr A Armytage
Cllr G Corry
Cllr P de Hoest
Cllr P Fisher
Cllr R Freedman

Members of the public

C Birch; P Dottridge; D Evans; O Evans; R Evans; T Evans; P Franc; D Simpson; C Toner; R Turner; Miles Wood and Margot Wood.

Officers

Mrs J Mason – Town Clerk
Mrs J Harley – Deputy Town Clerk

1. **Welcome from the Town Mayor, Councillor Garrick Stevens and Civic Awards.**

Cllr Stevens welcomed everyone to the Town Meeting and explained that the agenda and arrangements had been amended in the light of government advice relating to coronavirus. The chairs were set out to ensure social distancing and in view of the circumstances it would not be possible to serve refreshments. Hand sanitiser was available. Despite the difficult circumstances he was delighted to introduce Derek Simpson, President, Berkhamsted Rotary, whom he would now join in presenting The Rotary Club of Berkhamsted Bulbourne Centenary Civic Awards (Senior and Junior) for 2020.

Mr Simpson announced the recipients: Liz Wood would receive the Senior Civic Award, and Osian Evans, the Junior Award. Unfortunately Mrs Wood was unable to attend and he wished her a speedy recovery. Happily her son Miles was present to receive the award on behalf of his mother. Prior to the presentation, he paid tribute to both recipients as follows:

“**Liz Wood** has tirelessly contributed to the life of this town in many ways for almost 50 years. Initially Secretary at Berkhamsted Girls School, Liz then served 25 years as a medical secretary in Milton House surgery.

Liz has, for fourteen years, compiled the Berkhamsted Arts Society diary, known locally as the “Green Sheets”. This is published each autumn and contains arts events for the following 12 months.

Her voluntary service has ranged from calligraphy (the Hospice of St Francis Book of Remembrance), the Hospice e-Bay shop, and membership of local music and arts societies.

She has been a committee member of Gade Valley Arts and Berkhamsted Music Society and is an active member of a number of local groups and societies.

Perhaps most notable has been Liz's 18 years dedicated work creating and running the "Sin 'assle Theatre Club", building it up to 450 members for whom she arranged 435 outings to concerts, plays, musicals and dance events - a labour of love. Another of Liz's accomplishments is cake-making and decorating. Over the years, she has provided cakes for many weddings, birthdays and anniversaries for old and young. We wish Liz a speedy recovery from her broken leg.”

“**Osian Evans** is from Berkhamsted and attends Chesham Grammar School. The 1st Berkhamsted Scout Group has been a major influence in his personal development since he joined as a Beaver aged 6, and he in turn has contributed to the development of younger members in the Group.

In all stages of scouting life he has been involved in a wide range of activities and projects: camps; meal planning and food preparation; the Annual Christmas Tree collection around Berkhamsted and helping to clear the Three Close Lane Cemetery.

As well as scouting, Osian loves the performing arts and here too he is developing his skills as well as helping others and going the extra mile to make shows happen. He has achieved a merit in singing at grade 7 and is working towards Grade 8. He has performed on many occasions, including a performance at a West End Theatre in London.

He's an outstanding member of his school's drama department - always willing to give his time and effort to support others."

The awards were then presented to enthusiastic applause. Mr M Wood, who had received the senior award on behalf of his mother, Liz Wood, said she was very surprised but equally delighted to have been nominated and sent her thanks.

2. To receive apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr W Conian; Cllr S Cloughton; Cllr M Hardinge; Cllr N Taylor; Cllr P White; Cllr I Reay; J Eaton; S Johnson; B Johnson; K Roberts and L Weinreb.

3. To receive and confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 14 March 2019.

Mr R Turner **proposed** and Mr C Birch **seconded** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2019 be **received and confirmed**. The Town Mayor then signed the minutes.

4. Berkhamsted and Tring Police Neighbourhood Safety Team

Sergeant Damien Hewitt had agreed to make a presentation, however, this had now been postponed because of a curtailed agenda due to coronavirus and the need for social distancing.

5. Chiltern Conservation Board

Nick Marriner, the CCB's Landowner Engagement Officer, had agreed to make a presentation, however, this had now been postponed because of a curtailed agenda due to coronavirus and the need for social distancing.

6. The Council Year 2019 – 20

Cllr Stevens reminded the assembly that as Town Mayor it was his duty to chair the meeting, which was an opportunity for electors of Berkhamsted to

have their say. Current circumstances meant that the arrangements for the event had had to be significantly amended and he thanked those who had, nonetheless, been able to attend. Last year around 150 people had been present and he hoped that another public meeting could be arranged at a later date to accommodate the exhibitions and speakers that had originally been planned for tonight. Referring to the reports which had been circulated with the agenda, he advised that it was not his intention to go through each line by line, rather he would summarise key points as follows:

In May 2019 the new council had been elected and in June members had declared a Climate Emergency, as members of the public had urged at last year's Town Meeting. Three working groups had been established to tackle key aspects with the objective of contributing to the achievement of carbon neutrality for 2030. The groups operate under the umbrella of the Climate Emergency Steering Group and address travel, energy and habitats respectively. Membership of the groups include many volunteers from local residents. A Community Bus Group is also investigating the establishment of a local service that would not only help to reduce congestion on the town's already overloaded roads but would also reduce emissions.

The Council's Finance and Policy committee monitors the budget during the year and makes recommendations to Full Council regarding the level of precept for the next year. The precept has been increased for 2020-21 to facilitate the initiatives already outlined and to enable the Council to increase its finding contribution to the Swan Youth Project from £15,000 to £30,000 per year. Despite the increase, the weekly cost of the Town Council to a Band D council tax payer is only 65p per week. In addition, budget provision has been made to part fund an additional PCSO for Berkhamsted. The F & P committee also manages the Council's grants budget and the Council is pleased to be able to support a number of local groups and charities, for example, the Rectory Lane project and Berkhamsted Castle Trust.

The Town Planning committee meets every three weeks and during the year considered around 400 applications. Phase 2 of the Taylor Wimpey development off Shootersway is in the pipeline despite not having been encompassed in DBC's original master plan for the town. An application to build 17 flats on the site of the Old Orchard, also off Shootersway, had recently been rejected by DBC's Development Management committee because there was no provision of affordable housing. Applications for back land development and inappropriate development in the Conservation Area continue to be of concern to the committee.

The Climate Emergency working groups report into the Transport and Environment committee. Cllr Stevens suggested that residents should look at the issues that are being covered and get back to the Council (via the Town Clerk) if they have any comments or wish to be involved.

The Council owns and operates four allotment sites and would never contemplate selling off any of this land. Plots are great value at £25 per annum for ten poles. The Council is indebted to allotment representatives at each site for their hard work and dedication. They also attend the quarterly Allotment Management Team meetings with officers and councillors, to discuss issues such as waiting lists, vacancies, allotment finances and projects.

The Canal and River Partnership (CARP) has recently been reenergised and a meeting was held in February with all relevant agencies. The Grand Union Canal and the River Bulbourne are much loved features of Berkhamsted and it is likely that emerging improvement projects will be part funded from the Town Council's Community Infrastructure reserve, which currently stands at £106,000.

In conclusion, Cllr Stevens referred to the reinstatement of The Moor which was being used as a temporary car park pending completion of the new multi storey car park (MSCP). Progress had been delayed by recent wet weather and DBC's Clean, Safe and Green team were waiting for the land to dry out following which the surface would be scraped off, top soil applied and grass seed sown. The CSG supervisor had agreed that insect friendly seed and planting would take place to enhance the site. It was, at this stage, anticipated that the work would be completed in early to mid-summer and that the new car park would in June.

7. Brief Open Forum - Question and Answer Session.

Mr R Turner questioned why the MSCP was still not open. From a civil engineering perspective, the proposal for a mini roundabout at the entrance to the site was unwise; the space available for large vehicles to turn would be too tight and dangerous and would cause serious delays. The proposals would replicate similar mistakes in the town and he referenced sites at Victoria Road and Ravens Lane.

Cllr Stevens had shared concerns about congestion at the junction and, as a result, Highways had studied the site and had proposed the mini roundabout and waiting restrictions in Lower Kings Road. Concerns about

huge articulated lorries safely negotiating the junction had been sent in writing to DBC. The issue would have to be reviewed in due course.

Mr C Birch, on behalf of the assembly, thanked Cllr Stevens for his service. Cllr Stevens thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.

8. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm

Signed.....

Date.....