

CINDERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Cinderford Town Council held at The Council Chamber, Cinderford on Tuesday, 28th April 2015 commencing at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillors; G.L. Morgan (Chairman), M. Coborn (Mayor), Mrs L. Bent, Mrs J. Gouha, T.R. Holder, Mrs J. Johnson, Mrs E. D. Martin, B. O'Neill, R. Pritchard, Mrs L.I. Sterry, R.A. Sterry, D. Wildin.

APOLOGIES for Absence were received from Cllr. A. Knight.

The Chairman welcomed one Member of the Public, to the Meeting.

1. REPORT FROM DISTRICT CLLR. MRS E.D. MARTIN.

Cllr Mrs Martin reported that the District Councillors had continued to represent residents and businesses in the Cinderford area in a variety of different ways which included the provision of advice and casework on Housing, Benefits, Business Rates and Planning.

During 2014, they had worked with the Housing Team to obtain more homes for Cinderford families, with more provision of one bedroom accommodation. The Council had continued to fund building works to enable older and disabled people to remain safely in their homes. They had also pressurised the District Council to carry out improvements at the Leisure Centre, which had now been completed, enhancing the Cinderford facility. It was also the Cinderford Councillors that had spearheaded the 'Friday Night Project', and the new Boxing and Fitness facility was now open at the Cinderford Welfare Hall.

They had continued to work with Officers at the District Council, to maintain support through Service Level Agreements with FVAF, CAB, Age Concern (befriending and hot meal provision), and Artspace and had represented Cinderford at various meetings in Coleford to ensure that a fair share of resources came to the Town. They had been actively involved in the Economy Working Group and campaigned to cease car parking charges in addition to looking at how the Council could continue with such a looming budget deficit, and trying to halt the speed at which the 20/20 vision project was being pushed through, until after the May elections.

The Cinderford District Members were committed to keep Cinderford issues high on the Agenda, to ensure that Cinderford residents had representation at District level.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin for her report. Cllr O'Neill confirmed that the 'Forest Fighting Fit' had indeed opened with 50+ youngsters/12 adults attending on the first night. It was a brilliant facility with three trained Coaches, to work with people and building confidence and self esteem. The official opening would most likely take place on the 1st June.

2. REPORT FROM THE MAYOR - CLLR M. COBORN.

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting, and reported that although the year had been mixed for Cinderford, he was pleased to see that Town Centre improvements continued to be carried out.

Unfortunately however, the Asda saga was still ongoing with the Co-op continuing to object, which ultimately meant the loss of 250 jobs.

The Northern Quarter would hopefully be progressing fairly soon, as such a lot of hard work and money had been spent on the project, which was important not just for Cinderford, but the Forest, as a whole. Cinderford badly needed the jobs and houses that would come from the site, including the education element.

The former Swan public house was still being refurbished, but the prominent building was really taking shape, with everyone awaiting the opening.

It was good to see the former Ensor site developing into a residential site, providing affordable housing.

He was very pleased to see that the Traders in the Town were now forming an association and looking at ways to improve the footfall in the Town. He had recently had the opportunity to meet with a group and it was good to see them taking an interest in the Town.

Finally, he acknowledged that the recession continued and this meant services being cut back, with everyone having to make tough decisions. He sincerely hoped that the Town Council would continue to maintain its services in the near future.

The Chairman thanked the Mayor for his Report.

3. REPORT FROM COUNTY CLLR. G.L. MORGAN.

Cllr Morgan then proceeded to read through his Report, confirming that the County had been required to make savings over the past four years, of £114 million, which had seen both properties and staff decrease under the County Council. The overall budget for the County for 15/16 had been £420 million, being 8 million less than the previous year.

County Members had been able to support local initiatives, ie Highways Local, Active Together and Healthy Together. In the Forest area, many organisations had received grants. Under the Active Together programme, Cllr Morgan had supported CANDI, Cinderford Under 13 Football Team, Forest Pulse, Artspace, Ruspidge Play, Harmony Twirl Stars, Friday Night Project, St. John's Cricket Club and Forest Sensory Services.

With regard to highways, the County was still struggling with the Highway Amey Contract, although things had started improving, with a special cross party task group. Other issues being discussed, which would affect the Forest, were

- A40/48 congestion - traffic lights were being considered for the improved Over roundabout, with the Highways Agency still considering the removal of the cross hatching outside the Highnam Coach House.
- The lifespan of the first Severn Bridge.
- Local Transport Review (3).
- Impact of development at Oldbury Power Station.
- Network Rail Western (Lydney Station).
- Fire & Rescue Consultation.
- Glos Road Safety Partnership.

Cllr Morgan then reported on the local highway issues he had been able to address, both in Cinderford and Ruspidge, with funds from his local allocation ie surfacing, drainage etc.

4. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC.

The Chairman asked Mr. Turner if he had any questions he wished to raise with the Council, and he confirmed he had 3 questions;

Q1. He had noted that at two Meetings there had only been 6 Members in attendance, and he asked if Members thought that was acceptable.

Members replied that the role is voluntary and there were occasions when other meetings clashed, or illness for example. As long as the Council was quorate (5) in making decisions, then it was legal. The Clerk was asked to assess the average attendance figure for meetings held over the past 3 years.

Q2. If there were low attendance at a meeting, then several Members of one family could control decision making, which he considered to be unhealthy and un-democratic.

Members replied that this was down to the election process, to be determined by the electorate. There was certainly nothing in legislation to prevent this happening.

Q3. He had noticed the web page was still not up, and he was also concerned that the domain name was not registered to the Town Council. He still also believed that Facebook was a brilliant form of communication.

The Clerk confirmed that a lot of information had been sent and she would ask for it to be put up asap and further information could then be added. When she had enquired about the domain name, she had been informed this was normal practice. With regard to facebook, Members queried who would administer it, as no-one had been trained, and there was no budget set aside for this work.

2.

Mr Turner commented that he was interested in the Council, and although he did make comments, he did not wish to be seen as a troublemaker.

Cllr Wildina said it was good to see people interested in the Town and filling the seats.

Cllr Coborn did comment on the bad publicity caused by Mr. Turner's comments reference the Christmas lights, and Mr Turner agreed that it had got out of hand.

5. CLOSURE.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending, and the Meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.