

## Notice of the Annual Town Meeting



### All residents of the Parish of Didcot

You are invited to attend the Annual Town Meeting to be held at:

**Didcot Civic Hall**  
on  
**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 7.30pm**

(Please send questions for discussion at the meeting to the Town Clerk by  
Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020)

Councillor Anthony Dearlove  
Mayor of Didcot  
10<sup>th</sup> March 2020

### Agenda

1. Opening address and welcome by the Town Mayor
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019
4. Council annual report – year to date 2019/2020 (Leader of the Council)
5. Open forum
6. Close of the meeting

Tea and coffee will be available from 7pm and throughout the evening.

## Annual Town Meeting

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 7.30pm

Didcot Civic Hall



## Minutes

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record at the next Annual Town Meeting.

### PRESENT

Councillors:

Mr B Service (Mayor)	Mrs D Macdonald
Mr S Connel (Leader)	Mr R Milton-Eldridge
Dr S Clarke	Mr A Thompson
Mr B Cooper	Ms P Siggers
Mr N Hards	
Mr M Khan	

Officers:

Mr C Wayman (Town Clerk)
Mr T Hudson (Deputy Town Clerk)

A number of electors and residents were present.

The Mayor of the Council, Councillor Mr B Service, welcomed attendees to the Annual Town Meeting.

### 1. Apologies

Councillors Ms J Billington, Ms C Augustine, Mr A Dearlove, Mr T Harbour, Mr D Healy, Mr C Robertson and Mr B Shaw tendered apologies.

Councillors Mr T Bedford, Mr N Harris, Mr J Hart and Mr S Hewardine did not sign the attendance register.

### 2. Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2018 were agreed and signed as a true and correct record.

### **3. Mayor's Report – year to date 2018/19**

Councillor Service reflected on how much he had enjoyed his year as Mayor, and the opportunities he had had to meet people and represent the people and Town of Didcot. There were details of the highlights in the Mayor's section of the Annual Report. He drew attendees attention to the feedback form contained within the pack and encouraged them to complete it and place it in the feedback box provided.

### **4. Town Council Report – year to date 2018/2019 (Leader of the Council)**

Leader of the Council, Councillor Mr S Connell, introduced the annual report and encouraged attendees to read it.

### **5. Open Forum – Questions**

**Q Noted her thanks to the Environment Committee for the research it has done to improve the half bus shelter by the cinema and grateful that the Council did not to accept the quoted £10,500 to complete the work. It was understood that the two side panels planned would be interfered with by the existing cycle racks and other street furniture, which should not have been placed so close in her opinion, with cyclists having trouble getting bikes out and the shelter and any passengers, racks and benches cause obstructions to those with mobility issues trying to make their way along the pavement. This might enable a second panel to be installed, possibly at a buy-one-get-one free price?**

**A** It was confirmed that this would be looked at.

**Q Car parking issues in the vicinity of the station was causing concern and did the Council have plans to undertake some enforcement action?**

**A** It was confirmed that this would be looked into and that the Council was funding an additional PCSO in the expectation that this would help with illegal parking.

**Q Cllr Harris sought the Leader's agreement regarding the way in which the Mayor conducted his civic duties, which was a credit to the Town?**

**He also asked if the date of this meeting could be included in its Council tax demand letters to ensure all residents were aware of the date?**

**Thirdly, he commented that the report being considered was not the Council's report as it never considered the report and should be seen by the Council first.**

**A** The Leader agreed that the Mayor had conducted himself well throughout his tenure.

The Council Tax letters would be reviewed and the costs considered.

**Q** **Parking problems along Station Road was caused by the employees of Sainsbury's not wishing to pay for parking closer to their work and Sainsbury not actually owning the car park. Could the Council act as broker between Hammersons, the owner of the car park and Sainsburys to resolve this issue?**

**A** The Council had already contacted Hammersons asking for the over-term policy to be revised, likewise regarding the maximum hours that can be parked to be increased and the no return policy revised.

**Q** **Could the Railway Station increase the cycle parking on its site? Could the cost of parking at the station be reviewed, which many considered too expensive?**

**A** A member of the Council would raise these questions internally, also being an employee of GWR.

**Q** **Parking problems around Station Road had become serious, with violence being threatened to local residents approaching those parking on residential streets. Anti-social parking was also causing problems with visibility. Can the residents-only parking be enforced? Can the Police support the residents?**

**A** The Police should be assisting. It was also considered that parking enforcement should be in the Council's hands, by taking control of civil parking enforcement. Money had been made available from the District Council to develop the business case, which, if considered strong enough would need to be considered by the Secretary of State. This was considered a frustratingly slow process.

**Q** **Cllr Khan urged the Council to maintain the pressure on the Police, District and County Councils to ensure a swift resolution to this ongoing issue.**

**A** Cllr Khan was thanked for his input.

**Q** **Was the Council aware that the new car park behind Boots, north of the Broadway was under the same ownership as the larger carparking by Sainsburys and thus was subject to the same non-return policy as the larger carpark. How far had the Council got with its mission to improve carparking issues across the Town and did the Council know that the ANPR camera sited at the entrance also picked up vehicles entering the parking areas behind shops on the Broadway?**

- A** The Council agreed it was a problem and he reminded the questioner that Hammersons had been contacted regarding their non-return policy.
- A** The carparking owned by the shops on the Broadway should not be under the view of the ANPR camera owned by Hammersons, who should be told firmly that they should not be taking note of vehicle registrations and issuing fines when their property is not entered.
- Q** **The Councillors who took the trouble to come were thanked for attending, with particular thanks to the Leader, who was not standing in the forthcoming election. She understood that a number of trees were to be felled at Edmonds Park and could the Town Council have a policy of replanting any trees that are felled or removed?**
- A** It was confirmed that this would be considered as a policy, trees being important, both in terms of their amenity value and environmentally.
- Q** **A 'road to nowhere' has been built for £11m, an intersection had been completed to benefit Harwell but the northern perimeter road had yet to be completed. Could this be completed as soon as possible, especially as building had been started to the north of the Town?**
- A** The Council confirmed that it was the responsibility of the County Council to commence and complete them work, though this may not cure the traffic issues on Lower Broadway and the traffic problem may merely be moved.
- Q** **What caused the change of heart at SODC with regard to its position in relation to residents of out-lying villages being able to park in any areas uncontrolled parking in the Town. Was it the change of membership?**
- A** The change of Leader may have had an effect, though the pressure from Town Councillors had also been successful in bringing the particular issues of the Town to the District Council's attention.
- Q** **'Outlook' and the Oxford Mail had reported that Didcot Garden Town, 60 projects were being prioritised by the Garden Town and the County Council, though the Town Councillors had not been included in the list of interested parties. Had the Town Council seen the list of projects?**
- A** It had, yes, though the projects would have to be ratified by the District and County Councils. Once agreed, the list would be prioritised. The scheme of Didcot Garden Town was considered too broad in its vision and certain projects should be removed.
- Q** **Could the attendance on the Environment Committee be confirmed? The cost of the aerator at Ladygrove lakes caused concern, could something**

**more economical be done, or could the benefits of this project be made available to the wider community?**

**A** It was acknowledged that it was hard to undertake the work of the Council when members did not attend Committee meetings. The cost of the aerator had been considered the only way that the lakes could be kept open for fishing, though the Council did consider the cost closely. It was noted that Councillors' attendance was available on the website for all to view.

**Q** **The resident commented that Didcot's growth in housing and population was not being matched with amenities and roads were unable to cope with the increased traffic. She asked the Council if grit boxes could be installed so members of the public could grit the paths as in cold weather Broadway became icy? The track from the Cemetery entrance to Laburnum Grove was dark at night and during the winter months, could lighting be installed? Can next year's Meeting be scheduled so it does not clash with noisy Civic Hall users?**

**A** The traffic and parking issues were acknowledged. Vehicle speeds and movements had been recorded and details had been sent to the Police. It was noted that £218m had been received for the area but this would have limited impact on traffic and parking. Regarding the grit bins, Hammersons would have to agree to the installation on their land, with the County Council being responsible for highways. The lighting would be the responsibility of the County Council, so the resident was urged to contact them directly.

**Q** **Has there been a measure of the air pollution in Didcot?**

**A** It was confirmed that there had been, at the request of the Town Council, opposite Marsh Road recreation ground, where it was not deemed sufficient to require measures. Other locations were also identified and that testing was yet to be undertaken.

**Q** **The Council was thanked for not increasing the Council Tax in the financial year. The resident brought the Council's attention to the state of the footpaths across Ladygrove, whilst this might be the responsibility of another body had the Council lobbied that body on the residents' behalf? Finally, referring to the question previously about grit bins, could the Council staff contact the relevant authority, rather than expecting the resident to?**

**A** Regarding the Council tax, it was pointed out that all other relevant authorities had increased their portion of the tax. Regarding lobbying, the Council can send letters to the relevant authority or contact colleagues in other authorities. Finally a number of the members were also District or County Councillors who can take forward a residents' complaint.

**Q Dog waste being left in inappropriate places because there were no dog waste bins on streets, only in parks. Could this be reviewed?**

**A** Could the resident advise where the best places might be, so the Committee may review the proposal as there would be a cost implication.

**Q Regarding the archaeological boards at Boundary Park, could their display be followed up?**

**A** Planning permission needed to be sought to install the boards. The Council had not seen them. The Council had met with a representative of SODC regarding Arts funding, seeking to ascertain if Public Arts funding could be used to publicise the display.

**Q Was it considered appropriate that so few of the ruling group were at the Annual Town Meeting and was it considered appropriate that the budget was passed on six votes of the leading group?**

**A** It was confirmed that the Annual Town Meeting was not a scheduled meeting of the Council but an opportunity for the Mayor and Leader to answer questions from members of the public. Thus Councillors could take their seats amongst the Councillors or the audience, as the questioner had done. Other Councillors would be welcomed amongst the Council to respond to residents questions. It was confirmed that the budget had been passed with a majority and had it not been agreed with it would not have passed.

**Q A resident commented that this meeting was for the electors of the Town to pose questions to the Council and for the Council to respond with what is being done to address the issues raised rather than what as individuals they would like to be done. Could the appreciation of the Council be recorded for Cllr D Healy?**

**A** The Leader had warm recollections of Cllr Healy, which he recounted for the audience.

Another member considered that all elected members should sit amongst the Council in order for electors to be able to see them.

**Q The resident wanted to know if the disputed boundary on Tyne Avenue was being resolved with the Football Club?**

**A** It was confirmed that the Council was in communication with the Club but that the situation remained unresolved.

**Q A resident assumed that Councillors who were sitting amongst their colleagues were doing so to make themselves known and therefore**

**accountable to the electors in the audience. Could other elected members seated in the audience stand to make themselves known to the audience?**

- A** Cllr Hewerdine made himself known, confirming his reasons for not sitting with the other elected members and confirmed he was available to residents in his ward and across the Town. He chose to sit in the audience to enable him to hold the members of the two main parties to account.
- A** A resident commented that all members of the Council had a political position, an agenda and tried to do their best and that the comment made by Cllr Hewerdine was ignorant and should be struck from the record.
- S** **A resident congratulated the resident who had been working to maintain the green verge along Tyne Avenue and that residents of Ladygrove appreciated all her work. He further commented that the exchange that has happened this evening - could be a reason why more residents did not put themselves forward for election.**

The Mayor closed the meeting thanking all for their attendance and noted that all tiers of Local Government were working together as never before and that this could only benefit members of the community.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

