

## **FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011 in the Town Hall, Fordingbridge**

#### **Present:**

Cllr. Connolly (Town Mayor)  
Councillors Lewendon, Perkins, Price, Willis & Wilson

#### **In attendance:**

K. Mason, Town Clerk  
Deborah Gordon, Finance Officer  
HCC Cllr. Edward Heron  
NFDC Cllr Miranda Whitehead  
26 members of the public

#### **The meeting was opened by a presentation from Hampshire Police Inspector James Douglas, Fordingbridge Safer Neighbourhood Team.**

Insp. Douglas discussed future policing which may change in line with recommendations from the Comprehensive budget review in Hampshire which is currently taking place. 25% of the current budget is proposed to be cut over the next 4 years (£60-70 million). The funding from Central Government will be reduced and the precept request capped. Frontline services will be protected where possible as visible policing is what the public want. Hampshire Police are listed 6th out of 43 forces in England and Wales for efficiency.

The current police staffing in Fordingbridge numbers 5 officers who cover both rural and town beats. Two officers are on duty at night. There has been an 8% drop in overall recorded crime in 2009/10 and a 10% drop in 2010/11. In total 1200 crimes were reported during the last year.

- Anti-social behaviour has dropped by 8%
- Criminal damage dropped by 8%
- House burglaries increased
- Violence against the person increased by 30% - with cases of domestic violence and associated in schools.
- There were 2 incidences with pubs this summer and none since
- Drug related crimes are increasing pointing to an underlying problem with dealers in the town. This is being dealt with.
- Rural theft continue to be of concern but sporadic operations are being carried out with neighbouring forces
- A scheme to tackle speeding involving local volunteers is being planned
- More use of a mobile covert CCTV camera

Officers will be increasingly spending more time in the community and less in the Police Station with the introduction of blackberry devices and laptops which can be accessed from vehicles.

PSCO Danni Clarke, based at Fordingbridge, is launching a Junior PCSO Scheme for youngsters from Fordingbridge Junior School during April and May. If it is successful then it will be rolled out to other junior schools in the area.

Questions were then received from the floor.

The Mayor thanked Insp. Douglas for attending the meeting and giving such an interesting presentation.

#### **1. To receive apologies for absence**

There were apologies for absence from NFDC Cllr Shand and Ruth Croker, Footpath Officer.

**2. To confirm the minutes of the minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly on 22nd April 2011.**

It was proposed by Cllr Willis and seconded by Cllr Lewendon that the minutes of the last Annual Parish Assembly be signed as a true record. All in favour, Carried.

**3. TO REPORT ANY MATTERS ARISING:-**

There were no matters arising

**4. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE TOWN MAYOR**

Once again it has been a very busy year for the Town Council. You have already been made aware of the continuing problems with anti-social behaviour and our efforts to work with our colleagues of the neighbourhood police team to remedy this problem.

Early in our fiscal year the town experienced very sad family tragedies and the loss of life had a profound effect on several parts of our community; also, during the year we have paid respects to three people who served the town with great distinction in years gone past...Malcolm Purdy, Brian and Margaret Bruton.

On a more positive note our Council has made great strides in its endeavours to form stronger links with its community. Dialogue with Burgate School is occurring and Fordingbridge in Bloom attracted a good cross section of participants. I personally feel our relationship with Fordingbridge Rotary Club has been a huge benefit to our town and together we have collaborated with youth projects, Late Night Shopping and the Christmas Lights. Ian Newman and his staff must also be thanked for their unwavering support on many town projects. The Community Forum project is due to be discussed and adopted by the Town Council and in the ensuing months we will be working at ways to update the information and consequently revising the objectives accordingly.

What of the future? The long heralded localism bill is going through parliament at the moment and first indications would suggest that the theme is more work for less money. However, we wait with baited interest. We continue in our efforts to bring more custom to our town; unlike many towns in our area we have kept open our Visitor Information Centre and we are talking to the New Forest National Park Authority about extending a bus link between Totton and Godshill to take in the town. We are also exploring the possibility of a cycleway, come footpath between the town and Godshill parish. Repairs to the children's play area at the Recreation ground are urgent and the replacement of the existing conveniences at the Recreation ground are also high on our list of priorities. In the very near future the Town Hall clock tower will be replaced and within the next few days we hope to announce a more definitive timetable. I take this opportunity to remind interested parties that the event will be subject to prevailing weather conditions and despite suggestions, we have absolutely no control over that situation. The lease on the extension to the Recreation ground is also nearing completion.

Our Town Council is indebted to its employees for yet another year of exemplary performance. The Recreation ground and play areas and lots more beside are always in the most pristine condition, the Town hall always clean and tidy and the help and assistance from the information centre to our visitors is always helpful, polite and objective...many thanks to them all.

I must also pay thanks to my fellow councillors. Council work extends far beyond the once a week meetings and attendance at many outside meetings are undertaken - Citizen's Advice, Avonway, Museum, Twinning, the list goes on. Many of our councillors also have employment to consider, as well as council work, however they go about their duties with a smile on their face (most of the time), thinking about such areas as health and safety and due diligence, all without any financial remuneration. I thank them all.

This year is the advent of local elections, the time when existing councillors consider whether, or not, they want to continue for another four years. It is always a time to reflect on the past: how have we done in the past four years, do I want to go through this for another period? It is my hope to see all of our council returned to office. The period we have just experienced has been one of

great change and it is my belief that the present town councillors have performed beyond the call of duty.

As we face elections so do our district councillors, Miranda Whitehead and Mike Shand. Mike, who has decided to stand down this year, Miranda and our County Councillor Edward Heron have been of great assistance to our council during the past four years, and more, and again I thank them for their help and advice.

Last year I was slightly admonished by two ladies on whom I heaped praise on for the wonderful way they helped me through my civic duties. You may remember I thanked Kate for her help and guidance and Marie for looking after me and accompanying me to some pretty intimidating occasions. They have been even more helpful to me this year but I will not mention it!

In closing I request from you a little indulgence on my part. When elected as Town Mayor two years ago I set myself certain objectives, my own personal goals so to speak. Some have been achieved, some not. The not's I would like to think are not for the want of trying. I hope to be elected back to the Town Council at the May elections and I would like to continue as Mayor, however, that decision is not down to me and should I not achieve any of those targets I would like to minute that it has been a huge honour and privilege not only to be Mayor but also to work alongside my very dedicated fellow councillors at Town, District and County level.

#### **5. TO REPORT ON FINANCES FOR 2010/2011 ( un-audited accounts)**

Deborah Gordon, Finance Officer, presented the un-audited accounts and invited those in attendance to view them at the end of the meeting.

#### **6. TO RECEIVE ANY MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Fordingbridge Tourism website – Mr R Shering asked why there was not a tourism website for Fordingbridge. Cllr Adams advised that this was something that the Tourism Group were considering and it was hoped a website would be completed during the forthcoming year. The Mayor advised that the Town Council website was also being re-vamped and modernised.

Junior & Infant School Travel Plan - In her role as a governor of the Junior School, Cllr Fulford brought to the attention of the meeting the problems faced by children and parents gaining access to the Junior and Infant Schools because of the traffic congestion. A 'Walking Bus' is proposed but one of the difficulties is that the Avon Valley footpath has no signage indicating the schools. Cllr Heron agreed to look into this. The footpath next to the school is often overgrown and muddy. Cllr Connolly advised it would be placed on the Groundsman's list for regular maintenance. Insp. Douglas confirmed that the police patrol the school entrance on a regular basis.

#### **7. TO RECEIVE ANY OTHER RELEVANT PARISH BUSINESS**

There was no relevant parish business

The Mayor, Cllr Connolly thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.