

North Walsham Town Council
7 April 2015

**Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held at North Walsham Community
on 7 April 2015**

PRESENT

Town Mayor:	Mr R Sims
Town Councillors:	
East Ward:	Mr D Turner Mrs V Uprichard
North Ward:	Mr B Hester Mr E Seward
West Ward:	Mrs J R Belson Mr D Spencer Mrs B West
County Councillors:	Mr E Seward
District Councillors:	Mrs V Gay Mr N Lloyd Mr E Seward Mrs V Uprichard
Guest speakers:	
Mr Colin Chambers	Royal British Legion, North Walsham Branch
Mr Fernando Reis	North Walsham Memorial Garden
Cllr Barry Hester (on behalf of Mr Paul Oakes, Chair)	Regenerate North Walsham Youth Group

15 members of the public

The meeting commenced at 19:30

- 1 **WELCOME**
The Town Mayor welcomed those in attendance to the meeting, and asked all present to sign the attendance book.
- 2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Apologies were received from Town Cllrs G Bull, Canham, Peck and Rose, District Cllrs A & P Moore, and Inspector K Brooks (North Walsham Police).
- 3 **MINUTES**
The minutes of the Town Meeting held on 1 April 2014 were approved as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor, noting a repeated paragraph number 10954.
- 4 **TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT**
Much has happened in North Walsham since the last meeting.
The town has suffered the sad loss of Cllr Dave Robertson, a Town Councillor and former Town Mayor whose energy and passion for the role and the town provided a great deal of impetus on issues such as planning and CCTV. I'm sure fellow Councillors and staff alike miss access to his knowledge and his frankness when expressing his opinions.

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In early October 2014 we received the news that the pub chain JD Wetherspoon had entered an offer to purchase the Council Offices from North Norfolk District Council. This has sparked a lot of activity as the Town Council seeks to identify SUITABLE and more importantly AVAILABLE alternative premises.

Beginning in January 2015, a trial run of artisan markets opened in Market Place on the final Sunday of each month. These have proved very successful, so much so that the Council has approved their continuation. The important thing to know about these markets is that the income from stall fees is split equally between local charities and projects through which the Council supports the markets.

The Town Council was able to keep its Council Tax precept to an amount only slightly higher than the level set for 2014/15. The primary reasons for the small increase are the likely need to pay a commercial rent on a property at some point in the financial year, and further contributions towards Highways improvements. The Council has again successfully applied for a County Council partnership grant to fund 50% of the costs of three projects in 2015/16 – the installation of a gravel footpath along Bacton Road leading towards the town centre from The Shires; a third SAM2 movable speed awareness sign; and 20mph flashing ‘wig wag’ signs for installation in the vicinity of North Walsham High School. Highways continues to work on the 2014/15 projects, with the first two SAM2 signs currently being built by the County’s contractor and Network Rail recently giving permission for signage upgrades on its property (including the height warning sign from Cromer Road Bridge) to proceed.

In addition to this, the Town Council will also be receiving a support grant from the District Council. Together this means the rise has been kept to a minimum. Of course, the Town Council could have said “no” to any increase in Council Tax, but then we would not have been able to support these projects which we see as vital to the town and community.

The CCTV system in the town went live in the second half of last year, and despite some teething problems has already proved beneficial to the police.

The Town Council has agreed to a deal with North Norfolk District Council to extend its lease on Midland Road car park. In addition it has put in place an agreement whereby it is able to offer free parking at Vicarage Street Car Park to visitors to the artisan markets, on the last Sunday of each month. The car parks on Mundesley Road, New Road and Vicarage Street are owned by the District Council and any complaints about these should be addressed to them at Cromer (although any complaints made through our officers will be passed on to the relevant department on your behalf). During the year, NNDC decided to commence charging at Mundesley Road, once the necessary surface repair work has been completed, despite objections from the Town Council.

Responsibility for the common land at St Nicholas Court precinct remains unresolved. However, NNDC is in the process of completing a compulsory purchase on the 4 Market Street site, following which that area will be landscaped. This may bring the issue of the state of the precinct back to the fore.

The Council is working on a project to improve the play facilities at Woodville, including a survey of local children and bids to the NNDC Big Society Fund and other funders.

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I would like to thank the grounds staff for continuing to do an admirable job looking after the Cemetery, Churchyard and Parks. This is not always an easy job, and they deserve support and respect for what they do.

Thanks to the Christmas Lights Group for their work through the year to ensure that the town is prepared and lit for Christmas, and to the local businesses who continue to support their work in whatever way they are able. Thanks also to the Fun Day Committee for continuing to organise the annual event in the War Memorial Park. As always, both the Christmas Lights Switch-On and the Fun Day were well attended last year and I hope they continue to be as successful.

Finally some dates for your diaries

- Civic Service – Sunday 7 June
- Fun Day – Sunday 28 June
- Fun Fair – Wed/Sun 29 July-2 August
- Artisan markets – final Sunday of each month except December
- Christmas market – Sunday 20 December (100% of stall fees to annual Town Mayor's charity)

5 REPORTS

(a) Police

Unfortunately Inspector Brooks of North Walsham Police was on duty and therefore unable to attend the meeting to report on the last year in person. A written report had been submitted, and the figures for the year can be found at Annex A.

I have used a new piece of software to produce the figures. They take the crime by ward or parish, so will cover some areas we may normal discount for the town council meetings as they are not exactly in North Walsham town. The only explanation I have for the two sets is the software must think there are two wards/parishes in North Walsham.

I'm afraid I haven't been able to put any context around the figures, but as these are given monthly hopefully the meeting will not feel the need for them.

The figures are higher than last year, this is a result of Norfolk Constabulary striving to achieve 100% adherence to the National crime recording standards. These are very strict, and maybe what some people would not think of as a crime, has to be recorded. Some examples a person living in a care home suffering from dementia and assaulting some-one or a 4 year old brother on receiving a pair of boxing gloves for his birthday hit his two year old sister has to be recorded as a crime. As a result we have seen our recorded crime around assaults rise, but wish to reassure the town the figures do not reflect a rise in any violence relating to the pubs etc. in North Walsham.

Any feedback from the meeting please let me know and I will get back as soon as possible.

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In response, the Town Clerk was asked to query the figures for **Robbery** and **Theft of MV INC. TWOC**, which seemed low.

(b) **COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Eric Seward reported on behalf of North Walsham's County Councillors.

The Norfolk County Cllrs for North Walsham are Eric Seward North Walsham East and John Timewell North Walsham West. The County Council was now run by a loose alliance of 44 Councillors from different political parties, with the other 44 Councillors being Conservative. The Cabinet system of governance had been replaced by a Committee system, which meant that more Councillors could be involved in the decision-making process at County Hall.

The key issues reported were:

- Norfolk County Council had not increased its share of the Council Tax for 2015/16, but did face significant challenges in relation to its budget. The biggest of these was the rising cost of adult social care.
- The opening hours of Worstead Recycling Centre were now being reviewed, and charging for using such centres would not be pursued now that the Government has made it unlawful to do so.
- Work had been carried out at Spa Common to reduce the risk of flooding.
- A review of the CAB service in Norfolk was being carried out to ensure that funding for advisory services was buying the best services available and the best value for money.
- County Hall finance officers continued to report that there were pressures on funding.

(c) **DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT**

Cllr Vivienne Uprichard reported on behalf of North Walsham's District Councillors.

In the last twelve months there have been a number of issues for District Councillors that have affected the town as a whole. As a result we agreed that it was appropriate for us to work together irrespective of which ward was directly affected and that a joint report was also the most suitable way of reporting to this meeting.

We would like to begin with the planning application from Hopkins Homes. We were strongly opposed to the application due to the lack of social housing and the absence of s106 monies for the schools. We were appalled at the destruction of the iconic hornbeams and took immediate action to ensure that the mulberry tree remained untouched by the developers. We were not opposed in principal to housing on this site, which was an eyesore. We are actively engaged in discussion with developers who are planning the second stage, to ensure that similar mistakes are avoided.

We are happy that another eyesore, 4 Market Street, has been resolved. By the end of the month the site will be owned by the District Council and discussions as to the future use of this land are ongoing.

We supported the expansion of Lidl and thought it was right that Lidl should enlarge their car parking by acquiring an unused building and demolishing it for that purpose.

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The increased volume of traffic around town has proved how important Lidl is to the vitality of North Walsham.

Finally we come to the question of Wetherspools. We are neither for nor against Wetherspools, but are concerned that the Town Council, Citizens Advice Bureau, North Norfolk Community Transport and all the other organisations that use the barns for storage, are all suitably re homed for the foreseeable future. And we are adamant in our view that any money the District Council receives from the sale of Cedar House must be ring fenced for the benefit of North Walsham.

There have been many other issues over the last twelve months, most notably the North Walsham Sports Centre which remains a thriving concern with the help of the community.

In addition we have all been busy with case work. This is often concerned with planning and housing matters and is just as important to the people who call on us for our help.

The last twelve months have seen some major changes to our town and the future holds more. There are lots of plans in the pipeline, many of them coming from Regenerate North Walsham. The future looks bright.

6 **OPEN FORUM**

The following questions were raised:

- (i) Why did the money from the sale of the former youth centre not get reinvested in North Walsham
Norfolk County Council had been asked, but this had been refused as the County wished to build up its capital reserve ahead of construction of the northern outer ring road, which would benefit North Walsham. It was noted that the County Council's capital position was much weaker than that of North Norfolk District Council.
- (ii) There are a number of potholes around the town. Would these get filled in?
If seen, potholes should be reported to Highways. If they weren't reported then no repairs would be carried out. Once they had been reported, the County Council was responsible for any damage caused, eg to vehicles, but it was not responsible if the pothole had not been reported.
- (iii) There was an issue with regard to parking in the vicinity of North Walsham Junior & Infants School on Manor Road. Who decides where yellow lines go?
This was a Highways matter. The estimated cost per site was between £4,000 and £5,000, primarily for the legal process involved. Highways worked on two or three sites per year in North Walsham. Cllr Seward agreed to raise this area with the Highway Engineer.
- (iv) Will Market Place ever get double yellow lines? There were frequent problems with vehicles parking across dropped kerbs and blocking access for buses by parking near Market Cross.
Market Place is in a conservation area, and Council's understanding is that double yellow lines are not permitted in these. It was noted that obstructing dropped kerbs was an offence that should be reported to the police. Similarly

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causing an obstruction on the highway should be reported so that offending vehicles could be removed.

- (v) How far along is the Wetherspoons proposal?

The Town Council has received notice to vacate the Council Offices by 31 December 2015. NNDC, which owns the building, had exchanged Heads of Terms with JD Wetherspoon, and all the Town Council would be able to do is to secure the best possible deal for the town. There were not many suitable properties available, although the Council and Town Clerk continued to actively explore all options.

No planning application had been submitted yet, and until that legally independent process commenced there was no opportunity to consider a response.

The Police Authority had been asked about the feasibility of sharing space at North Walsham Police Station, but this had been rejected as the site was being redeveloped to make it fit for purpose as a police station.

The Council was exploring options to provide more welcoming meeting space, as it was recognised that the existing Council Chamber was not fit for purpose for larger meetings.

- (vi) What is happening on Aylsham Road?

This had been one of the most dangerous roads in the town for a number of years. It was currently not wide enough to allow installation of a footpath of any sort, in line with current regulations. The only apparently practical solution, compulsory purchase of property frontages to create that space, is both costly and complex. Residents had been asked several years ago to agree to a one-way system through Aylsham and New Skeyton Roads, but had objected strongly and the proposal had been withdrawn. There was no reason why this could not be looked again.

7 **PRESENTATIONS**

(a) **Royal British Legion**

The Town Mayor introduced Mr Colin Chambers, Chairman of the North Walsham Branch of the Royal British Legion.

The Royal British Legion was founded on 15 May 1921, and is governed by Royal Charter. The North Walsham Branch currently had 62 members, of whom 10 were active, and met 5 times a year. Anyone could join the Legion, but in order to be a beneficiary of any of its support services you had to have served a minimum of seven days in the armed services.

The Legion's strategy was focused in four key areas:

- Membership
- Representation, particularly through campaigns such as 'Insult to Injury' and the 'Armed Forces Covenant'
- Remembrance, for example through the annual Poppy Appeal which raised more than £15,000 in North Walsham last year
- Welfare – Welfare was administered nationally by area, in our case East Anglia & Essex which is based in Colchester. The area office had four part-time caseworkers,

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and there were seven volunteer caseworkers in Norfolk. Welfare is means tested, and was not available for those with savings in excess of £11,000. The welfare arm works closely with Turn To Us (for checking entitlement to benefits) and Step Change (which was used if a client was in debt).

(b) **Memorial Garden Project**

The Town Mayor introduced Mr Fernando Reis, who worked for the Royal British Legion at Halsey House.

Mr Reis became involved through discussions with the Regenerate North Walsham Youth Group and the Town Clerk, and noted the important input of the Town Council in agreeing to purchase trees for the project. He had involved a small group of ex-service personnel ranging in age from 80 to 99 to help design improvements to the Memorial Garden (see Annex B). Eight rowan mountain ash trees had been planted last Thursday by a group of volunteers including Town Councillors, members of the Youth Group Committee and Victory Explorers. So it was already a real cross-generational project. The next stage of the project would be to install two raised, poppy shaped flower beds with support from St Nicholas' Prep School, whose pupils had donated £120 to the project. North Walsham Junior & Infants School had also asked to be involved. Future proposals included improved seating, making the pathways more suitable for access by wheelchair/buggy and cleaning of the memorial itself.

The Garden would also be given a general 'tidy-up', and the grassed areas would be improved. Maintenance would primarily be by Council grounds staff and volunteers, and it was hoped to engage advice and assistance from North Walsham in Bloom.

Public fund-raising had not yet been considered, but there may be an opportunity to approach the War Memorial Trust and also the Town Council and other grant awarding bodies.

Despite warnings that previous efforts had been disrespected and trashed, it was thought that this was a risk worth taking especially given the cross-generational focus of the work.

(c) **Regenerate North Walsham Youth Group**

The Town Mayor introduced Cllr Barry Hester, who had been asked to speak on behalf of the group's Chair, Mr Paul Oakes – he unfortunately had a prior engagement and was unable to attend.

The Youth Group was born out of the "Regenerate North Walsham" committee that formed in November 2014. I was asked to put myself forward at the public meeting. I think everyone knew I was angry about the proposed demolition of the Youth Centre. Sadly now a Car Park.

The group very quickly gathered together a band of very talented like minded people and quickly established a formidable committee, This I am privileged to Chair. At our first meeting we decided to Ask our youth by way of a survey, What is important to them, What do they like about NW, In a perfect world what would they like to have in NW. Plus a few other questions, This has taken time to organise but thanks to Shelly for her hard work, she is now collating the findings, Information

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very useful for our Town moving forward.

Since that first meeting the group have been working on several projects:

- **"Art on the Boards"** This is, Groups and Schools expressing through Art, their talents. The boards will be on display at the Children's Day 25th May.
- **"Memorial Park Project"** This is a project put forward and backed by our Town Council. After advice from the Ladies from the British Legion we came up with a plan to refresh this space. First stage is to Plant, "Eight Rowan Mountain Ash Trees" These evergreen trees have white flowers in Spring and Red berries in November. Paid for with thanks, by our Town Council. With help from The Victory Explorers and volunteers from Youth Group and Town Council, The first stage is ready to complete. Next stage is Flower Beds, St Nicholas School have pledged towards "Poppy Shaped Flower beds" The Schools Children will help us plant the beds in due course.
- **"St Nicholas Children's Day 25th May, bank holiday Monday"** This is a joint project with The Youth Group, St Nicholas Church and Richard Sims (Mayor) plus many Volunteers. It looks hopeful that all of our junior and infant schools will be taking part in this bonanza of a day! some fantastic attractions on offer here. The event will be held in the Church Yard. Money raised will go towards the WW1 memorial Window in the end of the Church. Paul Cubitt is hoping to repair this for 2019 centenary. We still need funds or donations of prizes please? don't be shy! this will be a great event for our children and all for the right reasons! Cross generational project.

Our group is working hard with others here in North Walsham. We have linked ourselves now with the Town Council and are very happy that Councillor David Spencer has joined us. We are also grateful to Joe Ballard for use of his Shop for our meetings and for his guidance. We have committed to working with Joe and Arts North Norfolk on his future events.

We have more exciting projects in the pipeline but these are still work in progress. Personally, I see our youth group as help for any group in our town, happy to join in with any group to help with projects youth related.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank our committee and friends for all your help and advice. I am looking forward to some exciting projects in the future. Thanks also to Nick Clancy our Town Clerk and our Town councillors for making our youth group welcome at council.

If you or your youth group want to contact us about projects or just would like to get involved please Tel: Paul Oakes on 01692 409141 or email: pmoakes@btinternet.com

All the speakers were thanked for their time.

8

CLOSE

The Town Mayor thanked the town for having him as Mayor for the last year. It had been a real privilege. The meeting closed at 20:20