

**\*\*\*\*\*DRAFT, UNAPPROVED MINUTES\*\*\*\*\***

**HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL**

Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich CO12 3DS

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF  
HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL  
HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, CHURCH STREET, HARWICH  
on  
WEDNESDAY 18<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2018 at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Cllrs B Brown, Calver, Fay, Fowler, McLeod,  
C Powell, F Powell, Smith, Struth, Todd and Urwin

**Clerk:** Ms Lucy Ballard

**Chairman:** Cllr J Brown

**Also present:** 3 members of the public, 1 member of the press, Inspector Darren Deex and Dave Blackiston from the Harwich & District Community Speed Watch Partnership

The Chairman welcomed members of the public as well as guest speakers

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**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllrs Ashley, I Henderson, J Henderson and Morrison

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (previously circulated) be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record with the following amendments:

1. Changing the wording on page 3 from '*There were no further public questions*' to '*No further public questions were taken*' since this was challenged by an elector present at the last meeting who said they did have further questions but was stopped from asking more.
2. An addition to the Public Questions segment of the minutes on page 3, to reference that an elector was asked by the Chairman why he didn't ask these questions at Full Council meetings, and his response which was that due to the Council's rules, he wasn't able to ask more than 1 question.

Dr Rogers of East Central Ward proposed and Betty Holbrook of East Ward seconded the minutes be accepted with these amendments.

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Betty Holbook, resident of East Ward, referred to a question previously asked at a Full Council meeting regarding the untidy site at the Harwich Town Brewery site and asked if anything had happened about clearing it, since it seemed to be getting worse and didn't look good for visitors arriving through Harwich station. Cllr J Brown has spoken with those responsible and whilst it's better than it was, there is more to be cleared and he'll keep following it up.

Dr Terry Rogers, resident of East Central Ward asked several questions, the first 2 referring to items discussed at last year's meeting.

He referred to page 3 of the previous meeting's minutes and the Clerk having said there had been issues recently which were preventing the feedback/contact forms being received, but which had since been resolved. Dr Rogers asked again if there were still problems since he was unable to locate a 'submit' button on the form. He confirmed that on the website under 'Residents' and 'Community', there is an option at the foot of the page to feedback but there's no 'submit' button. The Clerk confirmed that feedback forms were being received but agreed to check this out again.

He referred to the fouling of the pavements north of the traffic lights in the High Street and asked what action had been taken. Cllr McLeod said he'd spoken to the shop owners along there who had installed the pigeon prongs and which has stopped a lot of the mess. Dr Rogers admitted it is better than it was.

Dr Rogers went on to ask questions relevant to the community and tourists that will visit Harwich for the various Mayflower 400 events although admitted that some of the issues were not the direct responsibility of Harwich Town Council (TDC) and in these cases, asked if HTC would assist in raising awareness with the relevant authorities, or via the members who are also district or county councillors.

Lamp posts – He gave an example of one that's sitting at an angle and another outside Homecraft at Upper Dovercourt which was similar. He said there were also a number that are held on by tape or by cable ties and that most of those which were faulty go back to the time when lights were changed over to LEDs. He said in terms of community and visitors, it doesn't give a good impression. He's visited the Essex County Highways (ECH) website to report the faults but the reporting system won't permit multiple reports of the same fault, instead there is a message to say it's been reported and will be attended to. Cllr J Brown said councillors have the same issues when reporting matters and referred to a signpost which has been knocked over for several months, which he'd been trying to have seen to, and has now been able to mention the matter to the chairman of Essex County Council (ECC) recently. He also mentioned the flashing speed sign on Oakley Road, which has been reported over the course of 2 years and still hasn't been done. Dr Rogers said he'd attended several presentations about marketing Harwich but feels it looks like we don't care. He said either we do care and do something to remedy the issues or stop the marketing as we can't do both.

Cllr McLeod said photos have been taken of the various faults and forwarded onto to Cllr Ivan Henderson who will take these forward with ECC as the county councillor.

Knocked over signs – In addition to the above, Dr Rogers takes the view that if traffic signs get knocked over and they're surplus to requirement, they should be taken away completely, or replaced. He referred to one by the Minesweepers memorial, which had been removed but the hole hasn't been filled and is now a trip hazard. He feels these things should be sorted or a statement made that "*Harwich is closed*". Cllr J Brown said people do try to get things done but he couldn't answer for ECC who he felt was letting us down. Cllr Calver said if we didn't care, these issue wouldn't appear on committee agendas or be reported, adding that unfortunately when dealing with ECC, all we can do is continually bring it to their attention and trust they'll act. He agreed that due to the opportunities being presented to the town in relation to Mayflower 400, many things are being pursued and are coming to fruition. He promised that everything that can be done, is being done. Cllr McLeod said there is a road sign at the end of Bay Road which is pointing in the wrong direction and he's being reporting it for a number of years but yet nothing has been done to remedy it.

Litter – Dr Rogers referred to the levels of litter on the A120, which has worsened since much of it was previously buried in the undergrowth and which is now exposed due to the clearance on the A120. He also mentioned the litter which can be seen alongside the train tracks. Cllr C Powell referred to a particular section of track (by the bridge) and said they don't have permission to clear that section as it's railway property. Cllr J Brown said the issue of litter was mentioned at a recent meeting he'd had, along with Cllrs I Henderson and Smith, with Highways England. He said the litter clearance on the highways was the responsibility of ECH not Highways England. Dr Rogers asked if the Community Payback teams could be utilised to carry out some of these jobs given that it's clearly not taking away work from someone else. He asked if the relevant authorities could be persuaded to marshal some of the resources of these payback teams. Insp. Darren Deex said he frequently communicates with the necessary authorities and would make this suggestion; and whilst he couldn't make any promises, he said he would feed back to the Clerk in a couple of weeks. Cllr J Brown added that there are certain restrictions preventing the payback teams from working in certain areas. Dr Rogers asked if pressure could be put on Greater Anglia and Railtrack also to keep the rail tracks free from litter. Cllr C Powell said greater positive feeling from the public would help. He said that some comments were very negative. Dr Rogers said he was irritated with the speeches about marketing as they shouldn't be needed if enough was actually done to improve certain things as the town would sell itself. Cllr J Brown said HTC work very hard for this town and will continue to do so.

Cllr Fowler said she would challenge anyone to find someone they know in any town that doesn't know someone who complains about something about where they live. She said she will continue to battle on because she's heard our town termed as the jewel in the crown of Tendring and she is proud to live here. She said we can't do any more than we do.

Blue roundabout – Dr Rogers asked if it was going to get a sculpture on it. Cllr J Brown said it's expected to be completed by June.

Highways/Roadworks – Dr Rogers said it was a disgrace that contractors get away with digging a hole in the road and leaving it and gave 3 recent examples – outside the former Cliff Hotel where a hole was dug to disconnect the gas, the obstruction was there for 8 days and for 3 of those, the tarmac was laid, but no one took the obstructions away; a similar issue at the bottom of Ramsey Hill where roadworks had been completed and the roads made good but the obstructions not removed in a timely manner and; the same on Parkeston Road outside Churchill Court. He asked why ECH can't be persuaded to enforce the rules with the contractors? Members agreed. Cllr J Brown referred to another example in Clayton Road. He said he was told if the road closure is set for a period of time and the works finish sooner, the closure must remain in place for the originally specified time and that's why the cones/lights etc. remain in place. Cllr Calver said that Cllrs Henderson were not present at this evening's meeting since they were attending a major briefing at Tendring District Council but informed all that Cllr I Henderson is constantly chasing up ECC and is getting frustrated with the responses he's getting and feels he's not receiving accurate information but will continue to lobby hard on those issues that he's receiving complaints about.

Parking – Dr Rogers says he said he uses all forms of transport (walking, cycling, car, bus and train) but as a pedestrian, parking has become a joke in this area. He said it was rare that you can walk without being dinged by cyclists or shouted at and more recently was even toted at by a car wanting to mount the pavement. He said due to his hearing, he can't hear them coming up behind them. He said at the last briefing he attended in relation

to Mayflower 400 at Harwich International Port, a major event like this doesn't need to happen to know there's a problem with parking. He said that there isn't enough for visitors and also there's a lot of inconsiderate, unnecessary and illegal parking which makes driving and being a pedestrian very dangerous. He said he has few options because he can't walk in the road and can't seem to walk on the pavement either. Insp. Darren Deex confirmed that drivers may park on the pavement so long as they don't obstruct the highway.

There were no further questions from the public.

### **BRIEFING FROM INSPECTOR DARREN DEEX ON LOCAL POLICING MATTERS**

Insp Deex introduced himself as the local community policing inspector and talked about the current structure of Essex Police. He said there have been major changes in recent years as 5-6 years ago, there were 3 community policing inspectors but now it's just him. In terms of the structure within Tendring, the Community Policing Team work from Clacton and cover the entire district; they comprise of a number of police officers, PCSOs, a Children & Young Persons Officer and a Missing Person Liaison Officer. Their role is to engage with the public, protect the vulnerable, provide a visible policing presence and work with partners to problem solve complex ASB and crime issues. The Local Policing team at Harwich, provides a response capability for the district, responding to emergency and priority incidents. They are based here 24 hours despite the front counter having closed a few years back.

He said the changes weren't specific to Harwich, as there's been other restructures to meet the changing needs of the public including that Clacton has reduced its hours to 9am-5pm as it was being underused. He said they still have CID at Clacton, the JUNO team (domestic abuse), roads policing at Stanway and the firearms officers. He said there's many more teams to deal with the different elements of policing and referred to a recent issue regarding modern slavery offences in Clacton, which is categorised as a 'hidden' crime. He said that 35% of violent crime is domestic abuse related and mental health issues also take up much time and as such they spend a lot of time in people's homes rather than patrolling the streets.

Insp. Deex said that cyber and digital crime is growing, and they sometimes struggle to keep up with the emerging crimes as the criminals become more inventive. He said he wants to focus on the positive and that as a local resident, he is proud to live in Harwich, however in terms of crime, it wasn't looking healthy 6 months ago as there was an increase in crime with a small group of youths causing trouble in the Harwich area.

September's figures showed there was a 25% increase in crime with 94 more offenses than in the previous year, however in perspective, Harwich is a safe place to live and he gave comparisons in the number of robberies in Harwich compared to those in Clacton.

Betty Holbrook of East Ward asked if there would be another public meeting as the previous one held in 2017 was very popular and well attended. Insp. Deex said street action days are now held monthly and they've also introduced 'Coffee with cops', an initiative from America, where people can go along to Costa and talk to the police about issues whilst having a coffee, which helps to encourage community engagement. They've also thought about having a stand at the market.

Cllr Fowler commended Insp. Deex on the splendid job he's doing on social media. She said there's a lot being said on social media so it's nice to see the positive, good news stories on there too.

Insp. Deex said Essex have the best volunteering group (cadets) and the most followers on social media.

Cllr Calver asked if the CCTV, the monitoring for which is part-funded by Harwich Town Council, was proving useful. Insp. Deex couldn't answer that specifically but said he does liaise with Mark Westall at Tendring District Council on a regular basis.

Dr Rogers of East Central Ward said it was clear there was public apathy about what HTC does given the number of public attending the Annual Parish Meeting and asked Council if they could also hold engagement meetings with the public. Cllr J Brown said these surgeries/sessions had been held in the past (at the Long Meadows Community Centre) but the turnout was poor. Dr Rogers said he was never aware these taking place. Cllr Calver confirmed that the location of the surgeries was in West Ward but was open to residents of the entire parish.

The Chairman thanked Insp. Deex for his attendance.

### **PRESENTATION FROM DAVE BLACKISTON FROM THE HARWICH & DISTRICT COMMUNITY SPEED WATCH PARTNERSHIP**

Dave Blackiston of the Harwich & District Community Speed Watch Partnership updated members on the activities of the Partnership, which include the parishes of Harwich & Dovercourt, Ramsey & Parkeston, Lt and Gt. Oakley, Wix, Wrabness and Bradfield. He said much has happened since he last met with the council on 12 December and confirmed that all councils he's met with have supported the initiative, with further support from Tendring District Council, Essex Police, the PFCC, MP and High Sheriff of Essex. Mr Blackiston talked about the growing publicity of the Partnership. He said the Partnership has 2 groups on Facebook, one of which (the public one) already has almost 1000 members, and is a good platform for spreading the word about Speedwatch as well as other road safety issues. He has also presented to the Tendring Local Highways Panel about his concerns for Parkeston road, which were backed up by real statistics. He thanked Cllr I Henderson for his support at the meeting. They have also had their operations broadcast by BBC Look East and been interviewed by Dream 100 and BBC Essex. He said their press strategy was to get as much good publicity as possible around their aims and successes, and said that a Harwich & Manningtree reporter would be joining them on their operations tomorrow as they have a good relationship with the paper who has already given them quite a bit of coverage.

His main concern is the speed of vehicles along Low Road, which seems to have turned into the Main Road. He's engaged with Essex County Highways to try and obtain some A-boards with the 30mph sign on it as he believes that many drivers think it's a 40mph zone. He said this would only be a temporary measure, for the period of a month, to see if this made a difference to drivers' speeds. This month, the Partnership will have completed 75 hours of monitoring across their 30 locations, the most recent of which are Wrabness, Gt. Oakley and Bradfield. They'll be attending the forthcoming Corbeau Seats rally event but only to discourage supporters from also driving at speeds rather than the participants. In addition to Low Road, there will be an emphasis on monitoring commuters at two locations and for this, commencing at 6.15am. He said by May, they will start as early as 5.15am and finish later as the daylight hours become longer and already have 47 sessions planned with more to be added.

Mr Blackiston said this week is Speed Awareness Week, which involves the Police right across Europe, including the UK. As such, the Partnership will be operating daily for about 4 hours each day.

His team membership has fluctuated but he currently has 30 members with some giving 10+ hours of their time per month. There is another members awaiting training and they've started another recruitment campaign as they need more volunteers.

Mr Blackiston referred to a recent incident, which was covered recently in the press, following which a man has been arrested, bailed and will appear in court in early May.

They have acquired two new speed detection devices, which can latch onto a vehicle up to a mile away, and 4 new Community Speed Watch pyramid signs. Since January, they've detected 623 vehicles travelling at 36mph or faster. One was at 62mph entering Harwich past Trinity House and a lorry at 58mph on the same route. Other vehicles detected were a bus, a post office vehicle and a milk van. The vehicle owners will have received a letter from Essex Police. These were only detected on their sessions so the true figure will be much higher. He said of the 623 vehicles detected, 23 were in January, 157 in February, 272 in March and 171 so far in April and they've had to cancel 20 sessions due to cold and snow and 8 sessions due to the aforementioned incident.

The worst road is Low Road with a vehicle detected speeding every 3 minutes on average with school and commuter times the worst. They regularly experience 20-30 vehicles per hour speeding along this road with 391 altogether.

Mr Blackiston asked the question 'Are we making a difference'? He feels yes, because of the 623 vehicles recorded travelling over 36mph, only 25 are repeat offenders and just 2 have been caught a third time. He said that looking to the future, they'd like to recruit another 20+ volunteers to enable sustained operations across the district in areas of concern. He also would like a deputy to take the pressure off as he goes out to every session and there's 4 each day and on top there is the paperwork, research, analysis etc. He'd like to engage younger members of the community also as well as senior members and said they'd be looking to offer summer only positions for those who find the cold an issue.

Mr Blackiston finished by thanking the Mayor and Cllrs Henderson for their support. He also thanked Essex Police (Tendring) through Insp. Deex, not only for their day-to-day support for also during the recent incident. He also thanked his team as without them none of this would be possible and lastly, he thanked their parent panel the H&D Community Crime Prevention Panel, also for their support.

Cllr C Powell said in Brantham there are wheelie bins with 30mph stickers on them placed outside properties along the roadside.

Cllr Smith congratulated Dave for the work he and his team have put in. They do much behind the scenes that the public don't see.

Dr Rogers referred to Low Road and said Lower Marine Parade is also a problem with speeding vehicles. Mr Blackiston said that whole length of road needs looking at and they have identified 6 locations along there. He said they often have two check points set up at the same time as some speeding drivers tend to slow down when they identify the Speed Watch team and then speed up again afterwards.

Darren Deex also thanked Mr Blackiston on behalf of the local police. He said without his enthusiasm this wouldn't be a success.

The Chairman thanked both guest speakers.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.16pm

**CHAIRMAN**

**DATE**