**BRADLEY STOKE**

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

**9 May 2018**

Minutes of the TWENTY SIXTH Town Meeting of Bradley Stoke held at Bradley Stoke Jubilee Centre, Savages Wood Road, Bradley Stoke, at 7.00pm on Wednesday 9 May 2018.

A total of twenty-nine people were present at the meeting.

Councillors attending: Tom Aditya, Roger Avenin, Keith Cranney, Daniel Hardwick, Elaine Hardwick, Paul Hardwick, Brian Hopkinson, Tony Griffiths, Gurmit Gupta, Franklin Owusu-Antwi, Ben Randles, Andy Ward and Marion Ward.

Staff attending: Graham Baker, Sharon Petela, Rachel Pullen and John Rendell.

The Mayor of Bradley Stoke, Councillor Andy Ward welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillors John Ashe and Arthur Lau

**2 Appointment of Chairman of the Town Meeting.**

Councillor Andy Ward, as Mayor and Chair of the Town Council, was proposed by Councillor Ben Randles to chair the meeting, seconded by Councillor Keith Cranney, carried unanimously and duly took the chair.

1. **Assistplus launch – Local Veteran Community Support Initiative**

The Chair called on Councillor Franklin Owusu-Atwi to explain about the Assistplus scheme.

ASSISTPLUS is a Veterans Community Support initiative, which seeks to enhance the support that our ex-Armed Servicemen and women living and working in Bristol and South Gloucestershire area receive in the local communities. Stakeholders who had voluntarily signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant give these supports in various forms and numbers of areas including, but not limited to: childcare, housing, education, healthcare, family life and employment.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly. It relies on the government, communities, businesses, and individuals of the UK to actively support it in order to make a difference. Local Authorities are at the heart of that support group, but ASSISTPLUS will be one of many who are working hard to make sure that Servicemen and women, veterans and their families living and working in Bristol and South Gloucestershire area get a fair deal.

Working in partnership with local councils, businesses, Churches and service charities, we aim to enhance the implementation of the community covenant in the local area. Specifically

* Perform reveiws with stakeholders to ensure on-going support requirements are sustainably fulfilled and plans are in place for necessary improvement to delivery if required
* Help develop and maintain support relationships among stakeholders, which facilitate the acheivement of short and long term veterans support goals locally

Whilst much has been achieved, more remians to be done. More than 2,000 organisations have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, pledging specific support for the Armed Forces community such as help with transition from service to civilian life through work placement opportunities and training courses.

ASSISTPLUS being launched today, we hope to bring together the various support organisations to understand the kind of core community issues veterans face locally, deciding which are most important and what actions can be taken collectively adding value to the day-to-day work undertaken by individual stakeholder.

So far we’ve had tremendous support from key stakeholders including: Bradley Stoke Town Council, South Gloucestershire Council, The Royal British Legion – Stoke Gifford Branch, Filton & Bradley Stoke Constituency MP – Jack Lopresti, Bradley Stoke Journal and many more.

On behalf of the ASSISTPLUS Team, myself, Councillor Gurmit Gupta and Dr Adwoa Nsor-Ambella, thanks you for your support.

Mr John Moloney, Chair of the Royal British Legion Stoke Gifford Branch was then called upon to officially launch ASSISTPLUS. Mr Moloney spoke on the work of the Royal British Legion and the support that ASSISTPLUS will be able to give.

The Chair thanked Mr Moloney and others for attending the meeting and said that he was really pleased to see this initiative come to fruition and thanked those involved for all their hard work.

1. **Minutes of the Previous Town Meeting 10 May 2017**

The Minutes of the last Town Meeting were taken as read and their adoption was proposed by Councillor Ben Randles, seconded by Councillor Franklin Owusu-Antwi, proposal carried.

**5 Reports from Committees**

The Annual Report was received *en bloc*. and the full Report is attached to these Minutes.

**5.1 Chairman’s Overview**

Councillor Andy Ward, Chair of the Council gave the following report:

In my year as Mayor I’ve been invited to some incredible events in and around the town, met some lovely people and worked with some wonderful charities run by the most selfless dedicated people I’ve ever had the honour to meet.

My wife and I sat down and shared a Christmas meal with a local senior lunch club, we even  helped to break a world record by eating a cream tea whilst raising funds for charity.

l very much enjoyed cheering on the runners participating in the annual Sole Sisters 10k run as part of the Bradley Stoke Festival Weekend, as well as presenting the prizes to young footballers during the Festivals youth football tournament.

On a lighter note I even managed to cut the ribbon and reopen my local pub.

I would like to thank everyone who invited me to come along to their events and I’m pleased to say that I managed to attend most of them.

I also need to say a massive thank you to all the staff and officers at Bradley Stoke Town Council for being so helpful and supportive throughout this last year, as the role of Mayor also means that you become the Chair of the town council, so there's a lot of administrative work involved behind the scenes.

The main thing I will take away from my year as Mayor is what a wonderful town we live in; the community is diverse yet inclusive, tolerant and caring, and the charity and support work that takes place in the town and surrounding areas has continually amazed me.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of being your mayor!

This year I chose to support two charities involved in health care both locally and nationally.

Cardiomyopathy Uk is a charity that supports people who are affected by a heart muscle condition that causes problems with the hearts ability to pump effectively.

My second charity was the Free Wheelers blood bike service, their volunteers selflessly give up their time to support the local hospitals and the air ambulance service with delivery’s of urgent medical supplies.

Both charities have touched my life at some point and I am eternally grateful for the wonderful work they do.

I would like to say a massive thank you to the residents of our town for supporting  my chosen charities this year and for being so generous when donating  to the collections made at the various community events this past twelve months.

And finally I would like to pass on my best wishes to whoever has the honour of serving our wonderful town as mayor for the next twelve months, I hope you enjoy every minute as much as I did.

**5.2 Finance Committee**

Councillor Franklin Owusu-Antwi gave the following Finance Committee report:

It has been an honour to serve as Chair of the Finance Committee again this year and to work with some very fantastic committee and staff members.

The Finance Committee had lots of fruitful discussions on the Council’s financial affairs and made decisions and recommendations to Council on all financial and policy matters under the discretion of the Town Council.

Within our remit as always is the setting of charges for the Council three main facilities at the Jubilee, Baileys Court and Brook Way Activity Centres and recommend these to the Full Council. By doing this, the Finance Committee aim to produce a balanced set of charges which are both fair to the tax payer but at the same time are competitive and represent value for money.

We also saw maturity of our two Nationwide and Cambridge & Counties Bank investments during the reporting year. Due to the low yields currently being offered by mainstream providers, we (Council) decided to maintain a balanced low-risk investment strategy with a small exposure to the riskier property sector to benefit from a higher return.

As you may be aware, challenges are inevitable however those challenges that we faced as a Committee during the year were met and overcame through the unyielding work of our fantastic finance staffs and committee members.

With increasing news of council tax increases across the region, I believe many of you are heard it, Bradley Stoke Town Council (BSTC) has always endeavoured to keep this as low as possible while at the same time providing maximum value for money.

Last year we agreed a 0.5% precept increase for 2017/18 (remaining significantly less than the current rate of Consumer Price Index (CPI) annual percentage change figure).

It might interest you to know again that we have also recently agreed a 0% increase for 2018/19 and have provisionally frozen the precept within the Forward Budget Plan for the remaining 4-year term until 31st March 2022.

The National Employers for Local Government Services released its pay offer for 2018/19 which also encompasses larger increases within the lower pay scale to prepare for the introduction of a National Living Wage (NLW) by 2020.

The publication also offers a 2% pay increase for the higher scale points which is a reversal of the previous policy of 1% p/a. Being a proactive Council, we have restructured the salary budgets within the Forward Plan for 2018/19 onwards, taking this offer into account.

The Finance Committee will continue to effectively conduct the Council’s budgetary, financial and precepting responsibilities in accordance with statutory requirements, and keep the smooth functioning of the Council’s work under review, among other areas of competence.

Overall we have a tremendous financial system in place which are only effective through the hard work of the Finance Committee members, General Council and Council staff. My thanks as outgoing Chair of the Finance Committee goes to them all and they must be congratulated. We look forward to another smooth and stable financial positions in the years to come. Madam Mayor, Chairs of Committees, fellow councillors, members of the public and the Press.

**5.3 Leisure, Youth and Amenities Committee**

Councillor Ben Randles gave the following Leisure Youth and Amenities Committee report:

Over the last year, I have been Chair of the Leisure Youth and Environment Committee. Having previously served as the Chair of Finance Committee, in comparison, it has been a pleasure to be the Chair of a committee that is very closely involved with the Local Community and well attended by members of the Public.

The Committee welcomes community organisations when they come to us for support of innovative ideas, discussing how they will take shape, what we can do to help and how we can all best benefit the community. Additionally, we see individuals come forward sharing their ideas with a view to galvanise support. Primarily, this is how many groups in our community have been formed; continue to exist and how events are supported; becoming a success. It is often underestimated how hard people work to come together to realise an idea, when also committing their time to work and family commitments. Furthermore, it’s compounded when people live with disabilities or care for those who do. Its inspiring to see these people, who step forward wanting to and improving their community; not just for themselves, but for the sake of others too.

The Committee has supported various groups and organisations through funding that totals £41,717.61 for this year. Often, people are unaware of the support they are able to obtain from the Town Council in the form of monetary assistance and therefore I would recommend contacting the Council’s Officers if you wish to find out more.

It’s been a pleasure to Chair another of Bradley Stoke Town Council’s committees for this year. I look forward to the year ahead and the business the council will conduct. I would like to thank council staff and officers for their help and support of all councillors over the years.

**5.4 Planning and Environment Committee**

Councillor Keith Cranney gave the following Planning and Environment Committee report:

It has been an honour and a privilege to Chair the Planning and Environment Committee throughout the last 12 months while serving the community here within Bradley Stoke.

The Planning & Environment Committee members meet monthly to consider Planning Applications that may affect the area here in the town as well as considering any potential impact applications may have on the local environment in the area.

Over the last 12 months the Planning & Transportation committee have received a large amount of planning applications that would seemingly continue to support the trend and willingness of property owners here in Bradley Stoke to extend their homes and remain living here within their local Bradley Stoke community by extending their liveable accommodation by house extensions, loft extensions, garage conversions and conservatories the committee have endeavoured to support the aims of our local residents.

We have received several planning applications from businesses that have expressed their willingness to set up or relocate here in the Bradley Stoke area which in turn will bring additional employment to this area.

Parking is very much something that we all need to consider here throughout the town and the committee remain conscious that development must provide suitable and adequate parking to prevent parking issues impacting on the local community.

The planning committee have received Street Trading renewal applications which continue to offer a valuable service and support the needs of our local residents.

Local residents have continued to put up with a construction site here in Bradley Stoke while supporting the implementation of the Metro Bus works and having to endure the various traffic delays and Streetworks that have accompanied the new transport links that are currently being provided, which we are informed should be operational later this year.

There have been improvements carried out by Wessex Water to implement a £15m new sewer through the area to ensure that Bradley Stoke residents and surrounding areas have adequate capacity to meet the future growth and demands of the area in the future.

There continue to be many changes in the way that local government operate, and members of the Planning & Environment Committee receive regular consultations from South Gloucestershire Council which recently consulted on South Gloucestershire Local Plan. Which will aim to determine the location of future housing projects in the future up to year 2036 also the Policies, Sites, and Places Plan was consulted last year these consultations hopefully will both model the needs of local residents here in Bradley Stoke for the future.

Credit must be given to Bradley Stoke Town Council Officers - Sharon and John, Rachel and all the Staff who work extremely professionally supporting councillors to ensure that the best interests of the town and local residents are achieved and ensuring that good governance is also achieved.

The Planning and Environment Committee receive regular updates regarding Health and Safety matters that may arise throughout the year within all the town councils’ sites and premises.

I would like to say a big Thank You on behalf of the committee to Vicky Davies who keeps a watchful eye on the health and safety of all our local parks and council sites to ensure that we all as residents and users can enjoy safe surroundings.

The Planning and Environment committee would also like to thank all the groups and volunteers that support and carry out work throughout the town, its parks, and Three Brooks Nature Reserve to make Bradley Stoke an inviting and attractive place to live.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the members and residents for supporting me throughout the last year as Chair of Bradley Stoke Planning and Environment Committee.

**6 General Discussion**

6.1 A resident from Bluebell Gardens raised concerns about the country being under a “one government for the world” plan which is demoralising the current armed forces and has had an effect on the armed forces over many years. The resident wanted to bring these concerns to the ASSISTPLUS organisation, so they were aware. He also asked whether the council had a similar strategy to ASSISTPLUS in place for elderly and vulnerable members of the community. The Chair commented that help is on offer with sign posting and grant funding to organisations who are able to assist in these areas.

6.2 Councillor Roger Avenin commented that he had given £1,500 SGC Member Awarded Funding to SSAFA and was concerned that there was an element of duplication relating to the work of this organisation and ASSISTPLUS. Councillor Franklin Owusu-Antwi commented that all similar organisations have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant and will all be working together to enhance services provided.

6.3 A resident from Juniper Way raised concerns about the lower income earned from Brook Way Activity Centre. The Chair commented that block bookers were sometimes difficult to attract as the building is used by the Scout Group every evening so there is limited availability, but the site provides a valuable resource for the Scout Group.

6.4 A resident from Juniper Way asked about the rationale to providing a flagpole. The Chair explained that the Town Council are aware that, over the past few years there have been incidents and occurrences when it would have been appropriate to show a mark of respect and support (including flying a flag at half-mast).

6.5 A resident from Juniper Way asked about the recent increase in graffiti around the town. The Chair explained that the Town Council is being as proactive as it can and has developed a hub for logging and reporting graffiti and helping to get it cleared as quickly as possible. The Town Council has now bought a piece of equipment that it is hoped eventually can be used to remove graffiti from private property (once the necessary disclaimer/waiver is in place). Generally, the town is kept clean and tidy and is a nice place to live.

6.6 A resident from Snowberry Close commented that he was not sure of the logic of block bookers not using Brook Way Activity Centre because of the scouts as they are there in the evenings not during the day. The Chair explained that the Scouts do generate an income of £5,000 per year for the council and external hirers are often put off from hiring because of the lack of parking space as the car park is often full.

6.7 A resident from Snowberry Close commented that the Town Council set a good example in respect of removing graffiti, unlike the Leisure Centre where it took over a month for them to remnove the large tag which had been drawn on the wall. He recently discovered that SGC do not report graffiti on its own property as a crime which in turn means that the police can’t investigate incidents. The resident asked Councillor Roger Avenin (his SG Ward Councillor) to take this up with SGC please.

Councillor Andy Ward thanked all for attending and, there being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.05pm.