

**MINUTES** of the proceedings of the **ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE TOWN MEETING** held at The Community Centre, Oak Street, Fakenham on **MONDAY 25 MARCH 2013** at 7.00pm, those present:

Town Councillors: J Holdom, A Vertigan, J Punchard, I Grand, C Bell, M Coates, R Crook, D Cubitt, J Cubitt, L Mallett and E Smith.

Guest Speakers: Colonel (Retired) David James OBE and Warrant Officer John Boisson

Press: Adam Lazzari (EDP) and photographer

Police: Sgt S Little & PC B Jarvis

Town Clerk: Jan Perfect

Deputy Clerk: Jane Gant

Public: 7 members of the Public

**1 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting and introduced the people sitting at the top table. She stated she was happy to have as honoured guests Colonel David James and Warrant Officer John Boisson.

**2 NOTICE CONVENING MEETING**

The Clerk read the Notice convening the Meeting.

**3 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 April 2012, having been distributed to the public, were on the proposition of Cllr Coates, seconded by Cllr Vertigan, APPROVED and signed by the Chairman

**4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman gave a Report on the Town Council's activities for 2012-2013. Four vacancies on the Council were filled by the co-option of Carol Bell and Richard Crook in June, Emma Smith in September and Richard Smith in February leaving the Council in the strong position of a well-balanced and diverse membership, widely reflecting the community represented. This year has seen a number of significant events and changes to the fabric of our public life, its established bodies and services. Fakenham Council has been engaged on these fronts and invited all candidates in the Police & Crime Commissioner's election to participation in Council discussions last autumn. Other speakers are to attend future meetings to respond to the public service issues raised in debates last year such as frontline Ambulance capacity and the concerns expressed by Council at that time, on behalf of the Community. In April and May the Council carried out a public consultation on the status of Highfield Road Car Park. Residents were asked to choose between the imposition of NNDC charges or free parking maintained by the Town Council for the cost of a £1.70 increase per household on Council Tax. Just fewer than 300 responses were received with an 89% vote in favour of the Town Council leasing the asset from NNDC and maintain the free access status until July 2014 when the situation would be reviewed again. In June, Council volunteers organised a street collection on Armed Forces Day raising money for SSAFA. The team working on the Millennium Park development has been successful with three funding bids since last June and progressed with improvements to the paved garden area and the car park, including a wider entrance. New sports pitches were marked out, the bandstand which was unsafe has been removed and a zip wire installed. A cantilever swing, some picnic furniture, benches and children's novelties are being installed this week in time for the Easter school holidays. The largest bids for a skate park and BMX track have not been successful and review will be made to the planning model and alternative sponsorship sought. Although not all requests for the siting of grit/salt bins have been allowed by Norfolk County Council Highways, the Town Council has still

installed 4 new ones this year to enable neighbourhoods to manage their own street safety in extreme weather conditions. Land at the top end of Greenway Lane Allotments, an overgrown, former orchard, has been gifted to the Gardening in Fakenham Project set up by the Learning Community and Roots and Shoots enthusiasts who have cleared the area and transformed it into 5-6 starter allotments for people to have a go at growing their own produce.

## **5 ACCOUNTS**

The Chairman read out a Financial Statement for the year up to 28 February 2013 (copies of which have been distributed to the public). Once all transactions have been completed for the financial year to 31 March 2013 the accounts will be submitted for external, independent audit and will be available for inspection by appointment with the Responsible Financial Officer from July. The precept for 2012-13 was £140,410 and the precept for the new financial year ending 31 March 2014 has been set at £145,410. This includes a transfer of £6,641 from Reserves and an increase of 3.6% on the previous year, which represents a Council Tax increase of £1.90 on a Band D property. Donations to outside bodies through Section 137 legislation have included the Fire fighters' Charity, Norfolk & Suffolk Response, the Emergency Medical Service MAGPAS and Norfolk Accident Rescue Service. Market Toll Grants awarded an unprecedented £32,000 to 16 different groups or projects this year, including support for new youth projects, sports, music, conservation and heritage groups and most significantly of all as the main sponsor of the Christmas Lights display.

## **6 FAKENHAM TOWN COUNCIL AND THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION**

Colonel James introduced himself as Chair of the Fakenham & District Branch of the Royal British Legion and Warrant Officer Boisson as Secretary of the Branch. They were here to talk about improving the operations between the Legion and the Town Council and how the partnership can be taken forward. The Legion is modernising and has a huge membership with many who served in World War II. Many young people are joining locally and there is a small hard-working Committee. The Legion is involved in funding hospitals for rehabilitation and psychiatry which is very expensive. Military Covenant: There were concerns about how ex-soldiers were being looked after and who politicians had a duty to look after. The Royal British Legion stepped in to formalise this as a proper Act of Parliament. It was decided Fakenham would like to do more than in the past – the County HQ was in Fakenham, then moved to Taverham and will subsequently be in Norwich. Warrant Officer Boisson gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding two projects: The Armed Forces Community Covenant and updating the Town War Memorial which are different projects but will run simultaneously.

### **The Armed Forces Community Covenant**

The Armed Forces Act 2011 enshrined a number of principles in law. The aims of Part 1 of the Covenant are:

- To encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in their areas
- To nurture public understanding and awareness of the issues affecting the Armed Forces Community
- To recognise and remember the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces Community
- To encourage activities which help integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life
- To encourage the Armed Forces Community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement

The Covenant was signed by Norfolk in spring 2012 with a tiered approach from County level cascading down to Town level. The Royal British Legion has given good and clear guidance – before the Covenant is signed an action plan is put in place and agreed. Stakeholders to be identified are a) The Council, b) the Armed Forces, c) Armed Forces Charities, d) the Health Sector, e) the Business Sector, f) the Education Sector and g) Local Organisations e.g. Job Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, etc.

Part 2 of the proposed Action Plan is to agree the wording to a local Armed Forces and Veterans Charter/Pledge which is what we will sign up to ultimately.

Part 3 of the proposed Action Plan is to agree strands of the Action Plan with lead civic organisations who will take it forward such as:

- Housing and related support (championed by the Council)
- Health and wellbeing (championed by the NHS/Surgery)
- Support and Advice (championed by the community legal advice centre)
- Employment, education and training (championed by the Job Centre)

Proposed timeline: advertise to the wider Fakenham Community during the next few weeks and invite all stakeholders to give feedback. The Covenant will then signed on Saturday 29 June at a Armed Forces Thanksgiving Service at the Parish Church at 11.00am) Cllr Holdom suggested if anyone knows of any organisations who would want to sign up, to let the Council know. Colonel James stated if the Covenant is signed, Fakenham will be one of the first in Norfolk to have made some progress.

#### **Updating the War Memorial**

Warrant Officer Boisson explained the aspiration is to add to the roll of inscriptions on the war memorial names of Armed Forces personnel who have fallen in conflicts/wars since World War II, whose death meets the National Inscriptions criteria and who had an affiliation with Fakenham. He is currently checking the eligibility of criteria of casualties with the Ministry of Defence. The concept of Parish War Memorials was born after World War I. As many were buried where they fell, up until then there was nowhere for families/communities to grieve. Fakenham's War Memorial was unveiled on 2 August 1921 and cost £600. The Town Council has authority of the Memorial dating back to the War Memorials Act 1923 and the Royal British Legion is the national custodian of remembrance. The public will be asked if they know of anyone eligible to be added or why someone should not be eligible.

The criteria are as follows:

- A service person must have died or been killed on duty on operations.
- Or, a service person must have died or been killed on duty as a result of enemy action
- Or been killed as a result of terrorism

A Freedom of Information Act request was put in last year to ask for a list of all tri service persons who are recorded to have died or been killed on operations from 1 January 1948 to the present day from the Fakenham & District area, postcode NR21 with the theatre of Palestine included in the search. Of the list of 14 names provided, 10 did not reach the criteria. Two names are going in the Press on Thursday and another 2 are being explored. The relatives need to be contacted to see what they want – this is not a conclusive list – others could be considered. Mr R Gibson asked why the service person who was born in North Creake should not be added to the Creake memorial. WO Boisson stated it is up to the relatives as to where the inscription should go but inscriptions will not be duplicated on both memorials. *[At the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting held on 15 April 2014 an amendment was made to these Minutes as follows: 'Following the question raised by Mr Gibson regarding names inscribed on War Memorials: since that Meeting, further information has been received from the Ministry of Defence War Memorials Office which states that a name can be inscribed on more than one War Memorial if the family so wishes.']*

Cllr Holdom thanked Colonel James and Warrant Officer Boisson for their interesting and thought-provoking presentation. Fakenham Town Council wants to continue to work with the Royal British Legion regarding these two projects.

Cllr Holdom then presented a ceremonial scroll to Colonel James as follows:

Fakenham Town Council, in recognition of the high esteem in which the Armed Forces Veterans and the Royal British Legion are held by the people of Fakenham and to confirm the bond of friendship between the Veterans and the Royal British Legion and the townspeople, are resolved to mark the occasion, by conferring on them the Honorary Freedom of the Town of Fakenham and henceforth, on all appropriate occasions, entitled to march through the town of Fakenham with drums beating, colours flying and bayonets fixed. Colonel James accepted the scroll and said it was a great privilege.

**7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS RELATING TO ANY PUBLIC MATTER OF A PAROCHIAL NATURE**

a) PC Jarvis the Beat Officer at Fakenham gave a brief report of the last 12 months. Crimes had dropped gradually with a decrease in burglary other than dwellings in Fakenham and the local area. There had been increases in detections, reported thefts, detected drug crime and theft, with one person being issued with an ASBO banning them from Fakenham. There had been a drop in calls from the public regarding anti-social behaviour. The 3 current SNAPS priorities are:

- 1 Engagement with local youth with visits by the Police to the High School.
- 2 Street Surgeries held by PCSOs and an increased foot patrol in Fakenham Town Centre which has led to a decrease in local shop theft. There are also Friday and Saturday evening patrols in Fakenham.
- 3 Parking issues in Fakenham Town Centre: drivers have been verbally warned and Norfolk Parking from King's Lynn is liaising with the Police.

There would be new priorities agreed in the next few days with the above priorities being continued as well. Days were being planned to visit the Infant and Junior Schools to discuss internet and road safety. Cllr Holdom thanked the Police for attending.

b) Cllr Holdom announced that Jan Perfect the Town Clerk would be retiring after 33 years of active service. Cllr Coates gave a tribute to the Clerk: she joined the Town Council in 1980 as a part-time administration assistant in the Red Lion when Robin Roberson was the Clerk. She has served the town religiously all this time and has been Town Clerk for just over 4 years and has accumulated a vast knowledge of the town. She has always given her service willingly and thoughtfully. Her husband Alan is a retired paramedic so the family has served Fakenham for a long time. Cllr Coates thanked Jan on behalf of the Town for all she has done and wished her a happy and peaceful retirement. Cllr Holdom wished to add her personal thanks – Jan had been a close support during her two years of Mayorship and a conscientious friend. On behalf of the Council she presented Jan with a small token of thanks and wished her a happy retirement. Cllr Punchard presented Jan with a cake he had made.

The Chairman thanked the speakers and everyone for attending the Meeting

**CONFIRMED** this

day of

2014

**CHAIRMAN**