

WARE TOWN COUNCIL

The Annual Town Meeting of **WARE TOWN COUNCIL** was held in Fletcher's Lea, Ware on Monday 30 April 2012 at 8 p.m. when the following business was transacted.

PRESENT Cllrs A Warman (Town Mayor, presiding), P Ballam, E Bedford, I Devonshire, R Lester, T Milner, M Pope, G Powell, J Shropshire, R Standley and J Wing

ATTENDING J Rowlinson (Town Clerk); East Herts Councillors M Alexander and J Taylor; County Councillor D Andrews; Dan Peters (press) and 101 members of the public

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from resident Mr D Albinson.

2. **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2011.**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 21 March 2011 were considered. Mr C McIntyre stated that his request for councillors to stand when speaking had not been included. Subject to this amendment the minutes were approved and signed by the Town Mayor as a correct record.

3. **REPORT FROM THE TOWN MAYOR FOR THE 2011/12 CIVIC YEAR ON THE WORK OF THE TOWN COUNCIL FOR THAT YEAR**

Cllr A Warman presented a report on the work of the Town Council, copy attached

4. **REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PRIORY CHARITY FOR 2011/12**

Cllr A Warman presented a report on the work of the Trustee, copy attached

5. **REPORT FROM COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN FOR THE 2011/12 CIVIC YEAR**

a) **Finance and Resources Committee – Cllr R Lester**

Cllr R Lester presented a report on the work of the Committee, copy attached

b) **Tourism, Leisure and Amenities Committee – Cllr G Powell**

Cllr. G. Powell presented a report on the work of the Committee, copy attached

c) **Planning Committee – Cllr P Ballam**

Cllr P Ballam presented a report on the work of the Committee.

6. **QUESTIONS, OBSERVATIONS OR PROPOSALS BY THOSE PRESENT ON ITEMS AFFECTING THE TOWN**

Mr C McIntyre welcomed the additional figures of actual and budgeted income and expenditure presented to the meeting.

Mr A Gubb asked for details and a timetable on the refurbishment of Tudor Square.

Cllr Ballam reported that the plans were for seating and shade but would not interfere with use of the square for events. Cllr Devonshire added that a design brief for works costing £150,000 had been put together. East Herts Council were allocating £20,000 towards this. Ware Town Council was discussing proposals for planting, trees, seating and the proposals would need to go out to tender.

Mr G Stapleton questioned the income and expenditure statements for Fletcher's Lea and the use of £16,667 from reserves for the budget for 2012/13.

Cllr Lester replied that Fletcher's Lea had been built to replace dilapidated buildings and because the Priory was having to turn away bookings. The economic downturn then started in 2007/8 and income was now substantially lower than 6 years ago. The reason for the use of reserves was that the Priory Charity was facing a drop in income of £40,000. This was being addressed by making cost savings of 5% in the Ware Town Council budget and the result was an increase in precept of £3.99 per Band D Household. Expenditure figures for Fletcher's Lea included the £96,000 annual capital and interest repayments on the Public Works Board loans.

Mr M Standley stated that East Herts Council had ignored residents of Ware and Ware Town Council in not objecting to the possibility of an anaerobic digester in the Waste Strategy and in giving planning permission for the furniture re-use scheme in Hoe Lane. He expressed concern about decisions being taken by councillors who do not live in Ware.

Cllr Warman noted the comments and replied that East Herts Councillors on Development Control Committee have to attend training courses and take advice from officers. Cllr Pope clarified that no planning application had been submitted for an anaerobic digester but if one was, both Ware Town Council and East Herts Council would be consulted. East Herts Council's reply to the Waste Strategy had been that they had no objection in principle but that there should be no unsuitable development in an area in the green belt close to schools.

Mr P Laing asked whether there would be a change in representations to East Herts Council by members following the new process where local councils would have more of a say in planning.

Cllr Ballam reported that the full implications of the Localism Act were not yet certain and that other areas were unhappy that this deed not seem to be the case.

Mrs J Belsey said that she had lodged a complaint about East Herts Council's handling of the furniture reuse application. She expressed concern about the anaerobic digester proposals especially the effect on young people.

Mr P Cockman asked that councillors as democratic members of a Council, to make their voices heard.

Cllr Warman reported that there was a petition waiting to be submitted when a planning application was received.

Mr I Howarth asked if it was appropriate for Veolia to sponsor Priory Park.

The Town Clerk clarified that the Priory Park was not sponsored by Veolia but had received grant funding from the Veolia Environmental Trust as part of the landfill tax scheme.

Mrs J Wing said that McCarthy Stone had paid East Herts Council £85,000 of section 106 money for work on highways and the roundabout. Nothing was likely to be done in 2013/13 and she asked Ware Town Council to support East Herts Council in lobbying Hertfordshire County Council to progress the work.

Cllr Powell reported that this would be looked at by the Planning Committee.

Mr D Perman expressed concern over the condition of Musley School and the handling of the situation by the owners and was concerned that it would be replaced with a non-descript residential development.

Cllr Ballam stated that it would not be replaced as it was listed. It was hard to apportion blame but the East Herts Council Conservation Officer was now taking action and had agreed with the owners what work would be done. The site would then be sold. It was unlikely to be used as a school so the Town Council would look out for a change of use application. As the land swap deal had fallen through, the site was no longer being used by Hertfordshire County Council for the community facility associated with the Trinity site development. HCC still had an obligation to provide land but not a building.

Mr A Mills said that the commitment of HCC needed clarifying.

Cllr Devonshire replied that there was still a site in front of the play area for a community centre at the Trinity site.

Mr A Lill asked about the Town Council using social media including Twitter and Wareonline.

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council was now on Twitter.

Mrs J Thorne had spoken to Highways many times about provision of a layby in Cromwell Road. Highways were desperate to put the layby there but this had been taken out of the amended planning application. People who had garages there were now applying to put crossovers to their houses and this was confusing the issue.

Mrs J Wing welcomed the Council's congratulations to Ware In Bloom. This year there would be floral displays but not hanging baskets because of the hosepipe ban. They would welcome volunteer help.

The meeting closed at 9.10 p.m.

Town Mayor

WARE TOWN COUNCIL.

Report by the Town Mayor Alan L. Warman for the Civic Year 2011 – 2012.

Ladies & Gentlemen, residents of Ware I would like to welcome you here this evening for the Annual Town Meeting 2012, which I hope you will find informative. This is your chance to raise any concerns which you may have and to receive the reports from chairmen of each Committee. I am sure that you find their report both informative & comprehensive. I would like to thank Clerk Mrs Jill Rowlinson together with the Chairman of Finance & Resources for keeping the Towns finances this past year in good order.

Congratulations must go to Ken Weeks and other members of the Ware Museum for their tireless work and dedication to bring the Great Bed of Ware back to Ware especially during the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, & the Olympic year. I and many others spent a very happy few hours on Saturday 14th April when Dr Lucy Worsley officially welcomed the Great Bed of Ware. All involved with the project must be very proud of their achievement. In today's economic climate this attraction we hope will generate an income for the shops in Our Town with many visitors who will come to Ware during the year.

We were able to extend the opening hours of the Lido this season which in turn will give the people of Ware an opportunity to enjoy this facility. Thanks should also be recorded to the Friends of Ware Lido for all their hard work in keeping this attraction open.

Ware in Bloom, once again the Town won Gold for the town with its many floral displays in making our Town very welcoming to the visitor and resident alike. We must not forget the many hours of tending to the displays and the many man hours of keeping these floral displays well watered during the hot summer. Without a hose pipe in sight.

Town Twinning continues to work towards fostering good friendships between our two Towns in France & Germany. During this current Civic year Ware, & Wulfrath signed a pledge of friendship to mark the 40th anniversary of the first signing of the very first pledge of friendship between our two Towns. I believe that Town twinning is an important part in our Towns history which in turn will lead to greater understanding between nations. We must not forget our other twin Town Cormeilles-en-Parisis. Diane & I were sorry not to have had the pleasure of meeting those friends but I am sure there will be another time for meeting during this current Council term.

During the year The Town Council was able to set up a Ware Town Youth Council. I am sure the Youth Council will make inroads into the Town with many projects for the Youth of the Town to enjoy with their various projects.

The Youth Awards for outstanding Achievements was presented in March for the first time and is now set for a year on year presentation.

In February, The Town sent loyal greetings to the Queen on the occasion of her majesty's Diamond Jubilee. In turn, The Queen sent a letter of thanks to the residents of the Town for their goods wishes. These two documents have been framed and hopefully will hang in the priory building on public display.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the Town Clerk Mrs Jill Rowlinson and her staff for all their help & support though out the Civic year now coming to a close. My personal thanks to my fellow Councillors for the honour given to me & Diane to represent the Town of Ware and its people & being part of the Town at the centre of our community & a chance to be part of the history of Ware.

Alan L. Warman, Town Mayor 2011-2012

TRUSTEE OF PRIORY CHARITY

Report by the Chairman of the Trustee 2011 – 2012.

Ware Town Council is sole Trustee of the Priory Charity which owns and manages the Priory, Fletcher's Lea, the grounds and the Lido. The Trustee meets regularly to consider matters relating to the Trust.

We rely on income from weddings, functions and conferences to keep the buildings and grounds in good repair. The economic circumstances have made the last few years particularly difficult and the Trust has seen a reduction in income. For this reason, the external redecoration of the Priory has again been deferred but money has been set aside in the budget for 2012/13 for this work to be carried out. Having said this, bookings for functions are starting to pick up and we look forward to better times ahead.

Again, we are grateful to Friends of Ware Lido for helping our staff get the Lido ready for opening on 6 June and for revamping our publicity material. Friends of Ware Lido have also raised funds to provide lockers at the Lido.

This year there have been several improvements to the Priory grounds. The children's play area had new equipment thanks to funds from Veolia Environmental Trust, GSK, East Herts Council and County Councillors Rose Cheswright and David Andrews. Ware Active Skate Group managed to raise funds for the skatepark and this is proving very popular with young people in the town. I would like to thank the U3A Active Gardeners Group who have carried out improvements to the sensory gardens and also Friends of the Ware Priory who continue to raise funds for the Priory and its grounds.

Alan L. Warman, Town Mayor 2011-2012

REPORT OF THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2011/12

Traditionally, the Annual Report has shown Ware Town Council Budgeted Income and Expenditure for the forthcoming year, as is the case with the 2012 Report. However, there has been a request that in addition, the Council publish the previous year's figures for comparison. The comparative figures for 2010/11 will be circulated to those attending the Annual Town meeting on April 30th 2012. The format of the Report will be reviewed, and any recommended changes implemented in the Annual Report for 2013. Copies of the full Town Budget are available upon request, or can be seen in the Town Library.

Turning firstly to the accounts for 2011/12, we were forced to support the budget by £16,678 from reserves to cover the shortfall in income from the hiring of the Priory facilities for weddings, events and conferences, and from the letting of office accommodation in the building. In common with other venues, the Priory charity has suffered reduction in this income due to the economic situation. In setting the budget for 2012/13 we have made the assumption that there will not be any change in the current general economic situation.

The Council continues to maintain downwards pressure on running costs, and as can be seen by comparing the figures published in the 2010/2011 and 2011/12 Reports, a saving of 5.6% has been achieved. However, the shortfall in income from hiring, which is stuck at about half that of the peak in 2007, is now realistically reflected in the budget. The precept for 2012/13 has been set at £531,847 which will result in an increase for the average Band D household of £3.99 per year, or 8p per week.

Allotments

Congratulations to Ware Allotment and Leisure Garden Society on its continued contribution to the community. There has been a slight fall in the number of people waiting for allotment plots. However, it still stands at 111, and the Council are considering a request to acquire more allotment provision.

The annual allotment competition continues to tax the judges due to the high standard of the entries, and the Council thank all of those who participate in the event.

The Council also would like to express its thanks to the Society's Chairman and Committee for their hard work throughout the year.

Staff

I would like to conclude by thanking Jill Rowlinson, the Town Clerk and Chief Finance Officer, and her team at the Priory, both in the office and out in the grounds for their contribution to the civic life of the town. Living here, many of us take our surroundings for granted, it takes the visitors we meet to remind us of what a lovely place it is.

Roy Lester

April 30th 2012

Mr. Mayor, Fellow Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have pleasure in presenting my report upon the work of the planning Committee for the civic year just ending.

During the year 2010/11 the Planning Committee has considered 137 applications, slightly down on last year, but the final total for the year will be slightly higher as the final Planning Committee meeting for this civic year is in April, when we shall consider all the additional applications to hand at that date. Unfortunately the Town Council does not have the power to grant or refuse an application, only to pass its comments to East Herts where the final decision is made. The Town Council's comments carry no more weight than those of other respondents. At one time, if the Town Council objected to the grant of an application, this led automatically to the application going before the Development Control Committee at East Herts rather than being decided by Planning Officers under delegated powers, sadly this no longer happens, although other District and Borough Councils still have this procedure. It has to be said that some planning decisions made by East Herts are displeasing, and/or puzzling to Ware Town Council and local residents.

As the then Chairman of the Planning Committee said last year, it would be helpful to the Committee if those who send objections or comments to East Herts would send a copy to the Town Council so that the Planning Committee may be aware of their concerns and, should it think fit, incorporate them into its comments to the District Council. The Committee is not always aware of specific reasons for objection or receives them only after the relevant meeting. All Committee meetings are open to the public to attend and speak, subject to the Council's Standing Orders on public participation.

A major planning application, and a number of amendments considered by the Committee, was that for the proposed ASDA development on the Rank Cintel site. This has been granted permission by East Herts, and, as the Secretary of State did not wish to intervene, there is now no planning reason why the development should not go ahead. I seem to recall that ASDA said that they would be open and trading by Christmas 2011.

In common with Ware residents, having expressed our objections, we were relieved when the County Council decided not to go ahead with plans for a waste recycling facility in Marsh Lane.

We have also discussed the sad state of the former Musley School building and made representations both to the County Council and to East Herts to endeavour to break the deadlock over the transfer of this building and grounds to the Emanuel Shared Church which has planning permission for church and community use of the building.

The call for sites and the resulting list of suggestions for Ware and Hertford caused much concern, but it must be borne in mind that this was all part of the previous government's Eastern Region Spatial policy which has been abandoned by this government, although at the moment we are somewhat in limbo between what one government planned and what this one intends to do. As with all local authorities, at whatever level, we are faced with change. The Localism Bill may indeed give us more power at local level, but counterbalancing that possibility are the proposed relaxations in planning law which will enable folk to carry out various building works and alterations which currently require planning consent without applying for such consent. Whilst this will be pleasing to those wishing to do the work, it could cause concern to neighbours and those concerned with preserving what is best in our historic town. Your Councillors will continue to do their best to ensure that such legislation benefits the town.

In conclusion, I should like to thank the members of the Committee for their work during the year and our Town Clerk, Jill Rowlinson for her help and support.

Phyllis Ballam

Chairman
Ware Town Council Planning Committee.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WARE TOWN COUNCIL TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2011 TO 2012

This Civic Year has seen a change in the way the Tourism, Leisure and Amenities Committee works. Prior to this civic year the constitution of the committee allowed any local organisation to put forward a nominee to serve on the committee and all applications were decided by the Committee itself. The Town Council had no means of limiting the size of the committee and it reached a point whereby the committee was becoming too large to manage effectively. In addition, I had been advised by two Town Clerks that the practice of co-opted members voting on financial matters was, in fact, illegal and the Committee may therefore have been acting in an ultra vires manner for some time. It was principally for this latter reason that the decision was taken to make the committee a standing committee of the Town Council and set up community forums so that those who were previously co-opted onto the committee could present their views and their activities to the Town Council. The opportunity was also taken to ensure that both the Tourism Leisure & Amenities Committee and the Finance & Resources Committee were involved in the dispensation of grants to those organisations that applied.

The first of these community meetings has been held and another is due to be held shortly. In addition, a Tourism working group has been set up to advise the Town Council on all aspects of tourism and the means of generating an increase in that economically important sector. During the previous year we engaged the

services of a student from the University of Hertfordshire and her period of employment continued until the end of July 2011. During her period of employment she was responsible for producing a professional looking What's On Guide to the town and also did sterling work in enabling us to run a vintage bus trip around the town and also river boat trips. Both of these events are to continue this year with the vintage bus trip being extended somewhat. In furtherance of this drive to promote tourism the Council having received some money from the new homes initiative promoted by the Government has earmarked a sum of money to erect brown tourist signs on the main arteries into the town so that those travelling by road will see what the town has to offer. Whilst it is hoped that the Council's tourism initiative will generate some employment within the town, it is regrettable that the Town Council does not see any of the money paid in business rates and it is businesses that will benefit hugely from these initiatives.

The Committee made vigorous representations to the East Herts District Council in regard to its decision to close the one public toilet in the town. Following the decision by the District Council to implement a community toilet scheme, the Committee felt that this was far from satisfactory and continued to make representations to East Herts. Council. To this end we have now persuaded East Herts to erect signs in the car parks showing where the premises taking part in the scheme offer toilet facilities and also to increase the size of the direction signs to participating premises which have proved to be confusing due to

overload of information. We are also looking to have them placed in more prominent positions so that visitors to the town are aware of where facilities exist. Although far from satisfactory, as the majority of premises participating in the scheme are licensed and do not always offer facilities for disabled people, at least we have achieved some improvement on the scheme as originally introduced. Whilst the ideal situation is for purpose built public toilets to be available, to install such facilities is expensive and would substantially increase the precept were the Town Council to do so.

During the past year the skateboard park has become a reality and is well used by many young people albeit with BMX's and stunt scooters. It is a fact that without the Town Council's grant and its willingness to act as an enabler this project would still not have happened. The fact is that it is now a reality and bringing pleasure to many young people. On the downside the users do not appear to have fully grasped the idea of civic pride and do not clear up or take home the litter that they generate which has generated a number of complaints from the public and imposed additional work on the Council's grounds staff.

The cinema continues to grow in popularity and caters for a range of popular cinematic tastes in the films that it shows although, I hasten to add, NOT those who prefer their films to be out of the mainstream

In addition to the foregoing the Committee has been far from idle over the past year and has made a substantial grant to the Ware Museum towards them being able to display the Great Bed in the town and has, in concert with the Priory Charity, facilitated the staging by the Museum of events within the Priory Grounds in connection with the Great Bed. In addition to this grant, other local organisations have benefitted from other grants made under the powers conferred on the Town Council under S137 Of the Local Government Act 1973.

It must not go without mention that the hard work of the Ware in Bloom Committee once again paid off with them winning another award for the town. The Anglia in Bloom competition which is entered by many towns of all sizes across the region is a prestige competition and its awards are highly sought after. Although the current drought restrictions are likely to be taken into account by the judges of this year's competition, and I am sure that the Ware in Bloom Committee will rise to the challenge, I do not think that we shall much by way of hanging floral displays this year due to the difficulties of watering them. Such is the penalty that this region and therefore the town pays for being situated in the driest region of the country.

The committee continues to look for ways to improve the facilities available in the town and is always willing to listen to ideas from the townspeople in general as well as local organisations.

I would conclude by thanking Jill Rowlinson, our Town Clerk for all the hard work she has put in over the past year and for the invaluable advice that she has given. I would also like to thank all the staff both in the office and those who work on the grounds and cemetery for their efforts which are much appreciated by not only myself and other Councillors but also the people of the town.