

## **WARE TOWN COUNCIL**

The Annual Town Meeting of **WARE TOWN COUNCIL** was held in Fletcher's Lea, Ware on Monday 29 April 2013 at 8 p.m. when the following business was transacted.

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

**ATTENDING** J Rowlinson (Town Clerk), Debra Edwards (Finance & Administration Manager); East Herts Councillor J Taylor; County Councillor D Andrews and 7 members of the public

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr G Powell resident Mrs K Sanders.

### **2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON 30 APRIL 2012.**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 30 April 2012 were approved and signed by the Town Mayor as a correct record.

### **3. REPORT FROM THE TOWN MAYOR FOR THE 2012/13 CIVIC YEAR ON THE WORK OF THE TOWN COUNCIL FOR THAT YEAR**

Cllr P Ballam presented a report on the work of the Town Council, copy attached

### **4. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PRIORY CHARITY FOR 2012/13**

Cllr P Ballam presented a report on the work of the Trustee, copy attached

### **5. REPORT FROM COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN FOR THE 2012/13 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. A. Warman, Vice Chairman of the Committee presented a report on the work of the Committee, copy attached

#### **c) Planning Committee – Cllr I Devonshire**

Cllr I Devonshire presented a report on the work of the Committee.

### **6. QUESTIONS, OBSERVATIONS OR PROPOSALS AFFECTING THE TOWN**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.

Town Mayor

## **Report of the Town Mayor on the work of the Council for the year 2012/13**

**Although the year upon which I am reporting has been a special one in some respects including the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the London Olympics, one of the Olympic Torches coming through Ware, and the presence of the Great Bed of Ware in Ware Museum, much has continued as usual. The Council has met and dealt with the normal routine matters, including Ware cemetery and the two allotment sites. Allotment gardening has seen increased interest in the last few years and there is a waiting list for both sites. Consideration has been given as to whether or not a further site is needed.**

**During the year there has been a restructuring of the Council office staff. Mrs. Joan Bevan, our longest serving employee, retired and this necessitated some rearrangement of staff duties as Mrs. Bevan was in a job-share with Mrs. Karen Johnson. As a result of this Mrs. Johnson also left us. I should like publicly to thank them for all their work over the years and particularly the part of their duties which included dealing with the Mayor's official invitations and ensuring that he or she was in the right place at the right time. Our apprentice Alex has been undertaking this duty recently and is proving very efficient. She is an asset to the Council staff.**

**After some initial hiccups, the Youth Town Council set up in the previous year has settled into its role.**

**The Council again held the youth awards for outstanding achievement. Members felt humbled by the determination of some young folk to be high achievers despite, in some cases, daunting health problems. The panel of judges had a difficult task choosing between those nominated.**

**For some time residents of Ware and the Town Council have considered what can be done to enhance Tudor Square and make it more attractive as a Town Square and less regarded as a car park. The initial problem was how to make the square appear more welcoming without putting in features which would prevent it being used as a market square and to leave the space clear for such events as Dickensian Evening, Music and Motors and similar events which the Council or Ware Town Partnership might from time to time wish to hold. The Town Council was pleased by the public response to the consultation which was held in 2012 and is now in negotiations with East Herts Council to produce a plan acceptable to all.**

**The Town Council and the British Legion are working together on plans to refurbish the War Memorial, the condition of which has been giving concern for some time. It is intended that the necessary work should be carried out before the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next year of the start of the First World War. Attractive as the trees behind the Memorial are, we have been given to understand that the close proximity of trees is not good for the stonework of the Memorial.**

**During the year our Town Clerk has been forced to spend valuable time on the issue of the Common Wharf, upon which a fence has been erected. The Common Wharf was registered as Common Land during the 1980's. The Clerk has been in contact with the Rights of Way Officer at Hertfordshire County Council who has stated that anyone wishing to fence in designated common land has to apply to DEFRA. The Rights of Way Officer is writing to the person responsible for the fence telling him this. The outcome of this situation is still awaited.**

**In addition to the work carried out by the Council, it has continued to support Ware in Bloom and Dickensian Evening, both of which make a real impact on Ware. We are also grateful to the Friends of Ware Lido for their interest in and support of the Lido and their efforts to publicise what is now a somewhat rare thing – an open-air swimming pool.**

**Ware is a Fair Trade Town and the Council supports the work of the Ware Fair Trade Committee in its efforts to raise the profile and importance of Fair Trade.**

**I have already mentioned the presence of the Great Bed of Ware in Ware Museum for just over a year. This has been a tremendous achievement for the Trustees of Ware Museum and the fact that it attracted some 30,000 visitors must have benefitted the town and its traders. It is most unusual for a museum run entirely by volunteers to be so successful. Congratulations to all concerned!**

**Finally, I should like to thank our Town Clerk, Mrs. Jill Rowlinson and all the Council staff for their hard work during the year. I should also like to thank Jan Wing and her Ware in Bloom team, Love Ware, Live Ware, and all the other volunteers who help to keep our town looking great and the members of the Scouting and Guiding organisations who spent some time on the day of the St. George's Day Parade tidying up various areas of the town.**

## **Report by the Chairman of Ware Priory Trust 2012/13**

**During the year the Town Council has met regularly as Trustee of Ware Priory. The external redecoration of the Priory has not yet taken place as it was considered prudent to check whether any other work was required, if so all works can be carried out at the same time.**

**The income from functions held in the Priory itself and in Fletcher's Lea contributes to the upkeep of the Priory, as does the income from the office suites within the Priory which are leased to various companies.**

**In addition to the lettings to outside bodies, the Priory Trustee itself makes good use of all our facilities. Regular children's film shows are held in Fletcher's Lea, with special ones at Christmas. These are proving very popular, as are the film shows organised for older folk, which provide the Trustee with an opportunity to respond to requests for classic and modern quality films. Fletcher's Lea and the Priory grounds provide the venue for the extremely popular Easter Egg Hunt and Egg Decorating Competition. This year over one hundred children took part in the latter**

**Ware Festival Carnival Day Fair fills every corner of the buildings and grounds and other events during Ware Festival are held there, notably the party for senior citizens, now called the Bus Pass Party, which takes place in Fletcher's Lea. At the weekend just passed the Rock in the Priory Roadshow was held in Fletcher's Lea, but I will not bore you by enumerating all the events for which the Priory Trustee is responsible or supports. Suffice it to say that we care for the Priory Estate and make the best use possible of all of it.**

**I cannot end this report without expressing the thanks of the Priory Trustee to the members of the Friends of Ware Priory. Over the years they have enhanced the Priory buildings and grounds in many ways and continue to do so. Without their efforts the priory and the grounds would not be as attractive as they are. Our thanks go also to the Friends of Ware Lido for all their efforts to publicise the Lido and make it more attractive.**

## **Report on the Accounts for 2012/13 and the Budget for 2013/14 – Chairman of Finance & Resources Committee, Cllr Roy Lester**

In last year's report the Council undertook to review the format and data presented at the Annual Town Meeting in response to requests from a number of members of the public. You will see the result of this change if you turn to the budgets page of the report. The first three columns of figures are the forecast of where we closed the last financial year, which can be compared with the second three columns, which show the budget for last year, so giving you a chance to see how well (or not) we performed. The last three columns are the budget for this new financial year. These figures are a synopsis of the full set of accounts that run to 11 pages and can be seen here at the Priory or in the library.

My presentation at the meeting will highlight some of the features of these figures in detail.

Ware Allotment and Leisure Garden Society continues to play its part in the life of the Town, and with demand exceeding supply the Council are continuing to explore opportunities to increase the number of plots. The Council would like to thank the Society's Chairman and Committee for their hard work throughout the year.

I would also like to thank Jill Rowlinson, Town Clerk and Chief Finance Officer, and her team for their contribution to the civic life of the town.



## **REPORT OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2012 TO 2013**

The main project that our Committee has worked on this year is the refurbishment of Tudor Square. Having secured funding for the first stage of the project, we had some initial plans drawn up and carried out a public consultation in the square. The results were very favourable and so a planning application was submitted to East Herts Council. East Herts had some concerns about the landscaping side of this and we now have a landscape designer working closely with East Herts on preparing revised plans. As this is a key area of the town it is important that we arrive at a plan that will enhance the town for years to come.

The Community Forum is starting to develop and met three times during the year. The last meeting was an interesting and lively discussion about travel to hospital appointments. We hope to have a local GP at our next meeting to discuss this from the health commissioning side.

The Committee continues to promote the town by providing a varied programme of events. We have just finished our season of Winter Talks and are looking forward to Summer with our Town Tours and the free band concerts in the Priory Grounds. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our tour guides who are so knowledgeable about the town and give their services for free. Although Ware Festival is organised by a separate committee, both Ware Festival and Rock in

the Priory bring in many people to the town and I know that local pubs and restaurants do a roaring trade during these events. We also have both children's and senior cinema programmes, Easter Activities and Christmas concerts. Thank you to our Events Organiser, Ros Montgomery, who works hard to provide this year round programme of activities.

The Town Council provides our Christmas lights which benefit traders in the town centre. We are keen to look at what else we can do to promote our High Street and this year have a small budget to look at town centre initiatives.

Ware Town Council continues to give financial support to other organisations which promote and care for our town, such as Ware Town Partnership for Ware in Bloom and Dickensian Evening. The Town Council was pleased to be able to assist Ware Museum during the year when the Great Bed returned to Ware. This was a very successful year and brought many people into our town. On behalf of the Town Council I give heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers at Ware Museum who worked so hard both in getting the bed back to Ware and while it was here.



Madam Mayor, Fellow Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have pleasure in presenting my report upon the work of the Ware Town Council Planning Committee for the civic year just ending.

During the year 2012/13, the Planning Committee has considered 184 applications, slightly up on last year. We considered all applications, from new signs on the High Street to extremely large applications capable of having a great effect on many of our residents. We do not have the power to grant or refuse applications, but only to make our recommendations to East Herts District Council, some of whose decisions we continue to find puzzling. However, in the VAST MAJORITY of cases East Herts District Council decisions are in line with our deliberations. I would remind you, if you are making representations to East Herts in respect of a planning application, that it is helpful if you can copy these comments into the Town Council Planning Committee in order that we can take account of those representations when making our comments.

I am very pleased to be able to report there have been no applications to site an incinerator at Westmill, and indeed Biffa have instead put in applications to bring in a Soil Repair Centre (SRC) and the installation of a landfill gas powered electricity generator. We continue to oppose any extension to Biffa's existing licence which expires in 2017.

Last Year a great deal of concern was expressed at the inclusion of Presdales Pit and Westmill Quarry in Hertfordshire County Council's list of potential waste sites. The Town Council expressed its objections at that time, including all the points raised by residents and Councillors in its response to the County Council's consultation document. In this case the County Council is the Planning Authority and the District Council has to express its views to the County.

Towards the end of last year Ware Town Council re-iterated its opposition to the siting of a waste development site at Presdales Pit, but this threat has not gone away and we will continue to watch this development and make necessary representations at the appropriate times.

East Herts District Council continue to write their District Plan. This is a long term Plan affecting Planning decisions within our district, looking ahead for the next twenty years. The drafting of this District Plan is currently delayed, to enable East Herts District Council more time, to resolve Education capacity issues, Transport Planning issues, Schools capacity, Strategic Green Belt review and an updated Retail and Town Centres study. This shows a sensible, measured approach to the drafting of this VERY IMPORTANT DOCUMENT.

In addition to the foregoing, the Town Council Planning Committee is taking steps to get under way the process for preparing a robust Local Neighbourhood Plan for Ware, which has to be taken into account by the Planning Authority. To this end, we have set up a Steering Group to (initially) come up with an idea of the future needs of our Town and its residents. This encompasses every aspect of our Town, including :-

- Health & Leisure Facilities;
- The Environment;
- Transportation;

- Infrastructure;
- Housing;
- Heritage & Culture;
- The Retail Economy;
- Employment from Private Business and from the Voluntary Sector.

Once we have these ideas, we can consider an **overall vision** for the future of Ware and present this to the Public for their views.

Flyposting, Graffiti and Litter is a regular item on our agenda as these can make the town look scruffy and untidy. The Town Council can now take direct action to remove flyposters and Banners. I should like to express my thanks to those members of the public who litter pick their own street or nearby open space and remove flyposting from bus stops, etc. I should also like to thank groups who help in this way, Love Ware, Live Ware, Ware in Bloom whose hard work enabled Ware to achieve a gold award in 2010, retain it in 2011 and achieve a Silver gilt in 2012.

I am also pleased to be able to report that the redevelopment of the former Musley Infants School has progressed. Two planning applications have been submitted; one for eleven houses, which was refused and the second for seven houses, which is currently being considered by East Herts District Council. The Town Council Planning Committee, together with a new group set up earlier this year, 'The friends of Musley School', are working to ensure that the former School Building will be renovated sympathetically and the development of the new houses within the grounds is kept to a scale and size which will not overpower or detract from this important local historic building. Parking is also of great importance to this development and the future viability of the school as a community centre.

I am also pleased to report that Tudor Square redevelopment is still ongoing, a Landscape Designer has been appointed and is working with the East Herts Landscape Officer to produce a detailed design that can be taken forward. The design process has taken a lot longer than we first anticipated BUT it **is** still moving forward.

Finally, I should like to thank the members of the Committee for their work during the year – this Committee meets more frequently than others in order to comply with the timescale for responding to planning applications. My thanks also go to our Town Clerk for her hard work, help and support, and to all the Council staff.