

BRANDON ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

14 May 2003

The Annual Town Meeting for the Parish of Brandon was held in the Forest School, Bury Road, Brandon on Wednesday 14 May 2003 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Mrs J A Ahern, E A Ashley, P S Baldwin, R F Banks, Ms J S Bourton, Mrs S M Dean, Mrs S Jureko, Mrs E Milner, Mrs C M Silvester, R Silvester, A P Saxby (in the chair) and N A Vant.

Local Government Electors of the Parish of Brandon:

B Elliott, P R Ridgwell, Mrs A Vant, S Dean, P I Hargreaves, A Milner, G Finch, T Riley, S Jones-Weetman and D Moon ; all eligible to speak and vote on proposals.

Members of the Press:

M Gostelow (EDP), L Davidson (BFP).

The Town Clerk advised that she wished to tape-record the meeting to assist with preparation of the minutes. Cllr Saxby wished to prevent this recording. Cllrs Mrs Ahern and Vant supported him in this attempt. The Town Clerk noted that she had been advised by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils and by her Trade Union (UNISON) that it was perfectly proper to do so and cited the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as this was a Public Meeting. The tape-recorder was switched on.

1. Chairman's Welcome to the Town Meeting

The Chairman welcomed the public and some newly-elected Councillors to the Public Meeting. The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 13 May 2002 were received, approved and signed with the amendment of one figure to 2002.

Proposed : Cllr Mrs Jureko; seconded : Cllr N A Vant; **CARRIED** majority vote of those present in 2002; abstentions Cllrs Baldwin and Milner (not present in 2002).

Resolution Record No. **ATM01/14/May/03** :

THAT THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13 MAY 2002 BE RECEIVED, APPROVED AND SIGNED AS A CORRECT RECORD WITH THE AMENDMENT DULY NOTED.

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr S J Edwards (overseas) and Cllr P T MacLoughlin (overseas).

3. Chairman's Annual Report - As attached below.

4. To receive reports from Charities and/or recipients of Brandon Town Council grants and/or funding :

The Brandon Poors Estate:

The Edmund Atmere Charity:

The Ling Heath Trust Charity

Brandon Remembrance Playing Fields

Trust: Neighbourhood Watch

Cllr Mrs Ahern declared an interest in the item appertaining to the Ling Heath Trust Charity only and left the room. The Chairman advised that all Accounts would be available at the Town Council Offices for the general public to view at any time.

The BRPF Accounts had not been received as the Chairman was overseas. The Neighbourhood Watch accounts had been tabled as a courtesy to BTC and public.

The Town Clerk advised the Meeting that the complaint which she had put into the Standards Board about the three Councillors (per the article in the press) was on the advice of her Trade Union which had expressed concern at her treatment.

5. Open Forum for Questions

(a) Mr Moon sought further information on the provision of allotments for Brandon. He praised the Town Clerk and thanked her for her efforts to date. He had looked around Brandon for suitable land for allotments. He stated that the Allotments Association would help the Council as much as possible once the land was purchased.

(b) Mr Ridgwell noted that Gas House Lane (half-way) became very muddy and would like to see tarmac placed over part of the tyre track there. Proposed:
Mr Ridgwell; seconded : Cllr Mrs Jureko; **CARRIED:** 17 for; 2 against
(because it could encourage cars to use what is in effect a footpath).

(c) Resolution Record No. **ATM02/14/May/03** :
THAT BRANDON TOWN COUNCIL INVESTIGATES THE PROPOSAL TO PLACE
TARMAC OVER PART OF THE AREA OF GAS HOUSE LANE.

(d) Mr Ridgwell referred to his 2002 query regarding the footpaths around the Brandon Library. The Town Clerk responded that his query and hand drawn map of the area had been forwarded to SCC, but it had been unable to progress the matter further because of uncertainty as to future use of the land.

(e) Mr Ridgwell noted that there were no toilets provided at the Co-op area of Brandon and wished to request some. Cllr Ashley said that FHDC should put in some public toilets at this location.

(f) Mrs Jones-Weetman noted that traffic on London Road at the Rattler's Road Junction was made increasingly dangerous by the HGV lorries' use of that road. She queried whether a weight restriction could be enforced to reduce the amount of HGV-size traffic on the A1064 London Road through Brandon. Cllr Mrs Ahern wished BTC to write again to SCC Highways in this regard. Cllr Silvester noted that the lanes were the permitted minimum width and there is no alternative route to the 1065 which is an "A" road.

(g) Mr Riley wished BTC to keep trying to alleviate this problem.

(h) Cllr expressed a wish that an entrance be created by Tesco to allow pedestrians access to the supermarket without having to walk through the petrol station.

(i) Mr Milner referred to the erratic 40 mph sign on London Road which had not worked for some time. He wished to know why it had taken so long to fix the problem (several months). The Town Clerk responded that she had spoken to SCC who would replace the sign with a new one and would also investigate the Thetford Road sign which illuminated before approaching vehicles had actually

achieved the 30 mph limit.

(j) Mr Ridgwell wished the Town Council to write to Royal Mail and ask if they could reinstate the morning collection in various parts of the town. Cllr Mrs Ahern noted that she had been told by Royal Mail staff that the possibility of vandalism existed if letters were posted and left in the boxes over the weekend.

(k) Mr Ridgwell wished BTC to request an extra letter box in Downham Way.

(l) Mr Ridgwell highlighted the problem of disabled access to the Post Office in the High Street (One Stop Shop).

(m) Mr Ridgwell reported that dropped kerbs were needed throughout Brandon. Two Councillors had previously conducted a Disability Discrimination Act (1998) survey and concluded that hundreds of dropped kerbs were required. SCC had advised that the provision of so many would be too expensive at that time. It was agreed to place this matter for discussion on the next BTC Agenda.

(n) Mr Ridgwell spoke on behalf of the residents of nos. 137-167 London Road, past Tescos, who wished to have the kerb dropped to allow access and the grass levelled to facilitate parking of their vehicles near to their properties. The land belonged to the individual owners of the properties who would need to contact FHDC in this regard and also to apply for appropriate planning permission.

Meeting closed at 6:46 p.m.

**Brandon Town Council, Annual Town Meeting
Wednesday 14th May 2003.
Chairman's Report 2002-2003**

It can be very frustrating being Chairman. With hindsight, I sometimes wonder why anyone would want to do it. I often wonder why I wanted to do it! Put 15 opinionated people in a room and the outcome is almost inevitable. In spite of that, I have tried to find the middle ground and to ensure that the Council complies fully with the letter and the spirit of the law. Sadly, I failed to anticipate being stabbed in the back as a result, and did not expect my family to be upset by a stream of unfounded allegations against me. It seems to have become fashionable to make numerous complaints against selected members to the Standards Board, regardless of whether they are valid or not. The score so far is 8 considered, 8 rejected. What has intensified the problem, is that this Council has, in a way, become party-politicised. There has been a party "block" intent upon impeding any idea which is not their own and leaving the remaining members with some difficulty. I simply hope that Councillors recognise that they are here on the say-so of the voters and that they should work for the good of Brandon, and not act on party-political lines.

Another huge frustration this year has involved staffing matters, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank our two Town Keepers who can always be relied upon to work with good will and great professionalism. The results of their efforts must be obvious to all. Our cleaner also does a very good job and deserves our thanks. I plan to champion the formation of a staffing committee as soon as possible to discuss all staffing matters fully.

As Chairman, there have been two areas involving Brandon that have given me cause for concern this year. One is vandalism, the other is policing. Vandalism in the town remains a worry. Our Christmas lights and public seating - both amenities provided for the pleasure of

residents - have been the targets of anti-social behaviour. At the same time, policing in Brandon gives the appearance of being poor - barely visible in fact. Ironically, however, at the last Council meeting, it became all-too-visible when a policeman improperly intervened in Council debate. I hope there is never a repeat of that, otherwise we'll have to consider a twinning arrangement with a town in Zimbabwe!

However, in many areas the Town Council has managed to move matters forward in the past year. New play equipment for the Thetford Road play area has been agreed and ordered and should be in place soon; we have had the town clock refurbished, plans for the bowling alley have been approved (pity about the delay); a bypass for Brandon is back in the public arena, partly thanks to pressure from this Council - we must continue to press this issue to a satisfactory conclusion; and broadband internet access looks as if it is almost here, again, thanks in part to attention being brought to the issue by this Council. All this in addition to the everyday business which goes largely unnoticed.

I would like to thank Cllr Milner for all her hard work in organising the successful Queens Golden Jubilee Celebrations, Cllr Vant for all his effort on the design and launch of Town Council's website, and my vice chairman Cllr Ahern for her loyal support during this particularly difficult year

I would like to wish the new Chairman good luck. I think he/she will need lots of it, and I would like to thank the majority of Councillors for their support over the last two years.

Alan Saxby
Chairman
Brandon Town Council