

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING held online on Wednesday 5 May 2021 at 7pm

IN ATTENDANCE:

From Felixstowe Town Council:

Cllr M Jepson (Mayor)

Cllr S Harkin (Deputy Mayor)

Cllr D Aitchison

Cllr N Barber

Cllr S Bird

Cllr S Bennett

Cllr M Deacon

Cllr S Gallant

Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)

Mrs S Faversham (Business Services Officer)

Mr S Congi (Financial Admin Assistant)

Cllr T Green

Cllr M Morris

Cllr G Newman

Cllr M Richardson

Cllr D Savage

Cllr A Smith

Cllr S Wiles

Cllr K Williams

Mrs D Frost (Deputy Town Clerk)

Mrs S Morrison (Admin Assistant)

6 members of the public were also in attendance.

603. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Mayor of Felixstowe welcomed everyone and outlined the format of the meeting.

604. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS TOWN MEETING MINUTES

Due to there being no Annual Town Meeting due to the Pandemic in 2020. the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 8 May 2019 were confirmed as a true record by those present and the Mayor was authorised to sign them.

605. REPORT BY THE MAYOR OF FELIXSTOWE

The Mayor presented the following report:

What an interesting year it has been, both myself and the Mayoress were aware when we took office that the year was going to be vastly different from previous years, in some respects it may have been more rewarding than particularly I was expecting. In total I have managed to achieve 154 'engagements', unfortunately the majority of these were virtual engagements however it gave me the opportunity to promote various businesses, community groups, volunteers and campaigns.

There are so many examples of community action from groups and individuals I will avoid naming specific individuals to avoid missing anyone, except one person, who will become obvious later.

Firstly, I would like to start my review by remembering those passed during the last year, whilst the numbers who succumbed to Covid 19 may not have been as high as we had feared any loss leaves families grieving, it is not just Covid

deaths, some people may not have been able to receive the treatment they desperately needed and may have lost their fight. Having spoken to Dr Driscoll and Dr Feltwell they both expressed concerns that people have avoided surgeries and therefore when diagnosed with particular illnesses may be too late to make a recovery. Whilst it may not be our specific role we should continue to do what we can in our communities to remind people that surgeries are safe and encourage them to have health concerns examined by their GP.

As we emerge from the restrictions, we hope our town can start to recover economically and physically.

Through my monthly articles in The Spotlight, The Flyer and the Town Council publication I have regularly thanked the front-line NHS staff operating at our surgeries, community hospitals, care homes and community staff. We appreciate it has been a challenging year, we will never forget the dedication you have shown along with the risks you initially placed yourselves in to keep people safe. The response from volunteers in making PPE for our homes and surgeries was humbling to witness. Charitable organisation both existing and newly established delivered a valuable service to families and individuals who were isolating or needed additional support.

It demonstrated our town's outstanding community spirit and on behalf of the town thank you.

This year provided me with the opportunity to get involved with different projects, this included delivering meals for the Salvation Army on Christmas Day as the usual meal at the hall could not go ahead. I know the volunteers who helped felt quite humbled by the response they received and would be keen to offer their help again.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank The Lions Club of Felixstowe who yet again provided a fabulous Christmas light display, it was unfortunate that the tree received local and national criticism which, as ever, did not reflect the whole story. The positives which emerged from the initial story were testament to Felixstowe's community spirit: offers have been made regarding the tree for this year as well as the use of a cherry picker to put the lights up. There was of course the outstanding poem written by Toni Lilley entitled *The Little Christmas Tree* which I am pleased to say also attracted not only local but international acclaim. This was just another example of how Felixstowe responds to adversity.

I assisted the Communities Officer in delivering East bags (funded by East Suffolk Council) to residents and again people were very appreciative to receive additional support.

I became a volunteer at The Grove Surgery assisting with parking when the surgery started to administer the vaccine, unfortunately the first weekend was disrupted by heaving snow. The response however on the Monday morning was outstanding, including our Cemeteries Team and Town Clerk and within two hours the car park was clear and with no disruption to the vaccination programme. The staff have made us feel very welcome and part of a well-oiled machine!

As events and civic visits have been banned this year virtual became the primary medium, I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the Visit Felixstowe staff who were committed to promoting our independent shops throughout the pandemic, it was a pleasure to speak to shop owners who agreed to be interviewed by me as one of what became many Zoom interviews. The proactivity of Visit Felixstowe when restrictions eased at different times throughout the year has probably not been witnessed anywhere else in Suffolk.

I really enjoyed the experience of interviewing some 'local celebrities' about their impressions of Felixstowe, they were all delightful to chat to and often our chat before we recorded was a lot longer than the recording itself.

One of the highlights of the year was getting to know 102 years young Joan Rich and her dedicated daughter Diane. Having first met Joan about halfway through her charity walk I enjoyed joining her intermittently to watch her progress, Joan was great company, her life story is very interesting so there was never a dull moment. The day of her 102nd birthday and corresponding lap brought both local and national media to the town. I was incredibly proud to be a small cog in the wheel, thank you and congratulations for your outstanding achievement, not only did you raise over £32,000 but you attracted significant interest to the town. I still bump into them both and I am pleased to say Joan is still doing very well. I know that Joan was delighted with the Town Council's gesture of the planting of a tree to commemorate her tremendous achievement in Allenby Park.

As the St Elizabeth Christmas Day dip was cancelled, I agreed to support them by launching a winter Ice Bucket Challenge, I am not sure what was worse, that or going into the sea!

As we expected so much was cancelled this year, our exchange visits to Wesel, the Carnival, the Mayor's Reception, and Ball along with other events hosted to raise money for the Mayor's nominated charities the CAB and the Felixstowe Carnival, both deliver a very important service to the town for totally different reasons, hopefully this coming year we can address that.

Thank you to those who have donated to The Mayor's Charity this year and please be assured your contributions will be added to this year and donated at the completing of this Mayoral year.

This year we sadly had to remember two past Mayors who died, Don Smith and Cyril Webb, both were outstanding servants of public service and I was honoured to represent the Town Council at their funerals. Being voted by the public to serve on the Town Council is a privilege and one I recognise you all acknowledge. You all serve your constituents with professionalism and commitment, you have had to adapt to virtual meetings as well as new technology, the new approach has not disrupted our ability to conduct the business we are elected to deliver, overall I think we have done very well, thank you for your flexibility and adaptability!

When we consider servants to public service I am reminded of his Royal Highness, Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, who the nation lost just a few weeks ago. What a terrific example of putting duty ahead of self. His legacy will last for many years and in a more modest way I suspect we are all aiming to

make Felixstowe a better place for people to enjoy and benefit from for the foreseeable future.

We were sent a great photo from a local resident, Mrs Helen Rose, showing the Duke opening the Coronation Sports Field 65 years ago on 1 May 1956 where her father, Wilfred Vanstone, was the Chief Time Keeper and also Second Master and Head of Science at the then Felixstowe Grammar School.

Back to the present and I would like to thank the entire Town Council team for the way you have responded over the last twelve months, you have continued to deliver a first-class service to our town and to the Committees. The support and advice I have received from the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk has always been appreciated, we were very sorry to see the Mayor's Secretary Lorna Monsen leave us after 18 years of service. Lorna on behalf of all the previous Mayors thank you for your support and good luck with your future endeavours.

Thank you to my Deputy Mayor Sharon Harkin who has always been available to support me Sharon I have appreciated your support and couldn't wish for a better Deputy for the next twelve months.

I would like to thank my wife Julie, the Mayoress for your unwavering support last year and your encouragement for me to do a consecutive year. It is a phrase commonly used but you are my rock, I know that whenever we conduct a civic engagement you are engaging to whoever we meet and you are a great ambassador for the town, I promise you will get more functions this year to enjoy.

Finally thank you Councillors, we may have different opinions at times, but we all have the best interests in Felixstowe at our heart. I believe we should feel proud how we have all responded this year and I have appreciated your support.

606. PUBLIC SESSION

The Mayor reminded the meeting that this was the Annual Town Meeting for the civil parish of Felixstowe at which local electors could speak on any issue that they wished. The Mayor enquired whether any member of the public wished to raise any matters.

A member of the public representing the Salvation Army thanked the Council for their support during the past year. Another member of the public thanked the Council for making all meetings so easily accessible to the public via online links throughout the pandemic.

607. CLOSURE

There being no other questions or comments the meeting was closed at 7.18pm. The Mayor invited all attendees to attend the Annual Council meeting via a separate link at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____