

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD AT BURNTWOOD LIBRARY, BRIDGE CROSS ROAD, BURNTWOOD ON
WEDNESDAY 24 MAY 2023 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM**

PRESENT

Mr Birch [in the Chair]
S Lightfoot, Town Clerk
Ms J Minor, Deputy Clerk
Ms A James, Finance Officer
Ms K Horner, Community Development and Engagement Officer

17 Town Councillors
1 County Councillor
1 Member of the Public

Mr Birch welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 11 May 2022 [Minute Nos. 1-4] were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr Birch made the following statement:

My year in the role of Chair of Burntwood Town Council has been an absolute privilege to fulfil and has been far more enjoyable than I imagined it would be as well as being lots of hard work at times.

I have been invited to many events locally and further afield and when deciding whether or not to attend, I always looked at whether I felt my attendance would benefit the Council or the people of the Town. I hope I managed to get the balance right when making the decisions on which invites to decline, and I hope I benefitted others when I was able to attend. One of the most enjoyable events I attended was the annual fayre of the University of the Third Age. I was amazed at the range of activities and opportunities they provide for people locally and I myself would certainly like to be able to get involved with their movement when I have the time to do so one day.

There have of course been some events which were more sombre such as those that occurred in relation to the death of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I did not for a moment envisage that I would be chairing this council in such a momentous period as saw the end of her reign. This was balanced by the coronation of a new monarch and the national celebration that we saw only a couple of weeks ago. Another celebration was, in my view, the biggest best Burntwood Wakes festival we have had for some years which we had last summer. The staff and Councillors worked really hard to deliver that event and it was a real honour for me to be able to make a speech to open the festival, even if it was a bit nerve wracking having to do it up on the stage in front of the crowds.

It has been fantastic to see the work the council has achieved over the last year with delivering additional grit bins around the town, a personal favourite subject of mine, setting up BURRT the Burntwood Response and Repair Team and equally as exciting to see what the voluntary organisations and services around the town have contributed to the community. Last year the former Chair Councillor Evans noted that the Sensory Garden at the Old Mining College was about to be commenced and I was fortunate in having the honour of officially opening it during my term of office. The town has made further progress in being dementia friendly and although there will be further to go over the coming years, everything is now moving in a positive direction. It is things like this that add up to building the welcoming, inclusive community of Burntwood.

The town market has gone from strength to strength over the last summer and as you will know it has just started again for the coming season. I would encourage as many people as possible to pop down there and support this venture. It is not only a place to buy high quality produce and crafts but also a place to meet friends for a chat and to help us all build that community spirit that makes our lovely town what it is. Lets do all we can to support the stall holders and make the market an enduring success.

Papyrus was my chosen charity for the last year which is a charity working to raise awareness of suicide in young people. This issue is one which has sadly touched the lives of too many families including some in our own town. I was keen to use this opportunity to raise awareness of this important subject as much as raise funds for the charity as it is one which is uncomfortable for many to talk about but essential that people do so. Thanks to all those who helped with the fundraising as well as thanks to the staff and volunteers at Papyrus for all they do to save lives and support young people and their families.

It would be remis of me to not mention the unfailing hard work of our staff at the council. They do so much good work to implement the decisions of the Councillors and it is largely because of their commitment and competence that Burntwood Town Council is one which is now seen to be punching above its weight. We sometimes forget we are actually the lowest level of local government as a parish council. That is a good thing as it means our ambition isn't stifled and we look at what we can do and how can we do it rather than what limitations there are on our remit.

Of course, I need to thank all the Councillors who all do their work here voluntarily and without recompense for the time they give freely. There are no allowances payable for being a Town Councillor. Being a Councillor is a great honour when local residents put their trust in you to manage their community and services, and to spend the money they entrust in you through the taxation system. It is fair to say that Councillors do not always agree but it is the debate and discussion that takes place as people with different views exchange them and thrash out their ideas that allow a consensus view to be formed and for the decisions being made to be scrutinised and challenged. I won't be on the Council during the coming term having decided to stand down, but I would hope that there will be good attendance levels at meetings, robust debate and fair challenge when decisions are being made. Like the rest of the town I will be a member of the public in a few minutes and like them I will expect no less if good decisions are to be made.

Finally I am in debt to many others for the support I received as chair over the last year. Particularly from Councillor Evans the Vice Chair and the other Councillors who have always been there when I needed advice and guidance on how to proceed. I would like to also thank Councillors Sue Woodward and Darren Ennis for their leadership of Burntwood Town Council over the last four years. They have led this

council over a sustained period of time with openness and clarity of direction and without that leadership we would not have achieved anywhere near as much as we have.

3. FINANCIAL STATEMENT/PRECEPT

RESOLVED That the Summary Budget for 2022-23 as circulated, was received and noted.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Birch informed Members that there had been no notifications received/questions raised from registered electors within the Town Council boundaries on any matter which affects the Town.

[The Meeting closed at 6.08 pm]

Signed

Date