

THRAPSTON TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor: Cllr Craig Wheeler

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**Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting
Held on Tuesday 16th April 2019 at 7.00pm at the Plaza Community Centre**

**Present: Cllrs Wheeler (Chairman), Baden, Boyd, Carter, Charles, Cribb, Draycott,
Otterwell, Read, Strode-Willis, Winter**

**Linda Marshall (Clerk), Margaret Ward (Assistant Clerk), Rosalind Kennedy (Administrator),
Emma Dugdale (Events Co-Ordinator), John Ystenes (Facilities Manager),
Janis Zakis (Facilities Assistant), Steve Caswell (Caretaker), Lauren Wheeler (Cleaner)
District & County Councillor Wendy Brackenbury and 73 members of the public**

No.	Item
	Cllr Winter opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. On behalf of the Council he gave thanks to Cllr Wheeler for his Chairmanship over the last year.
1.	Chairman's Welcome and Report for 2017/18 Cllr Wheeler delivered his report, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1.
2.	Guest Speaker – Nikki Parrott, Project Manager, Northampton & District Mind Nikki Parrott thanked the Town Council for giving her the opportunity to come and speak at its Annual Town Meeting. Nikki Parrott spoke to the audience about Mind, who they are, how they can support people and what services they offer. Guest Speaker – PCSO Natasha Fountain, East Northants Neighbourhood Policing PCSO Natasha Fountain thanked the Town Council for giving her the opportunity to speak at its Annual Town Meeting. PCSO Natasha Fountain spoke to the audience about the role of a PCSO, how they differ from Police Officers and Specials, what powers they have and how they get involved in the community.
3.	Presentation of Town Awards Cllr Wheeler presented the Town Awards, see attached at Appendix 2.
4.	Finance Overview for 2018/19 Cllr Strode-Willis presented to the meeting the Town Council's financial overview for 2018/19, as attached at Appendix 3.

5.	<p>Looking Forward to 2019/20 Vice Chairman Cllr Draycott talked about the Town Council's plans moving forwards into 2019/20, as attached at Appendix 4.</p>
6.	<p>Open Question and Answer Session</p> <p>Question Lindsey Burch: Would it be possible to have a wheelchair at the Plaza which can be used for people with limited mobility to get them in and out of the building?</p> <p>Answer The Town Council will look into this.</p> <p>Question David Manning: Are the Town Council looking at taking on the extra land, the wooded area and parking area, currently owned by Persimmon and, if so, what will their future plans be with the land?</p> <p>Answer The Council are currently in negotiations with Persimmon; if the extra wooded land is secured, the Council will consult with the community regarding the future of the land.</p> <p>Question Mark Lee: Regarding the Movie Matinees, would it be possible to include evening screenings?</p> <p>Answer Evening screenings did take place before, but the turn out wasn't great. As a trial the Council agreed to run matinee screenings, which are proving more popular.</p> <p>Cllr Wendy Brackenbury wished to respond to some points raised in the reports.</p> <p>Regarding the library, there hasn't been any discussions about mobile libraries replacing buildings. The County Council have a cabinet meeting on the 14th May – decisions on each library will be announced thereafter.</p> <p>Regarding grit bins/salt bins, this was discussed in a budget meeting and they have now been reinstated.</p> <p>Most of the council tax given to the County Council goes towards adult social services.</p>
7.	<p>Close of Meeting Cllr Wheeler thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.58pm.</p>

Signed

Dated

APPENDIX 1**Chairman's Report, Cllr Wheeler**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to our Annual Town Meeting, here at the newly refurbished Plaza Community Centre. There are no fire alarms planned tonight so if the alarm sounds please use the exits at the side's and the main entrance to leave the building. Toilets are located on the first floor with a disabled access toilet just outside the hall in the foyer.

I would like to express my thanks to the community groups who have turned up tonight, those of you at the back of the hall. Thank you.

It has been a privilege over the past year to represent Thrapston around the county although I sadly wasn't able to do as much as I had hoped. We have also welcomed representatives from other towns and districts and I have been proud to show them around our historic town.

The Town Council held open community events in the year, the Jamboree was held in the Peace Park in September, where we celebrated along with other towns the Nene Festival. Then early in November saw our traditional firework display. The event is provided free of charge and it attracts residents from the town and surrounding villages. On the night we had a voluntary collection for Dementia UK and thanks to generous donations raised £1,731.89.

At the end of November we had our Christmas Lights Event, again we listened to comments from previous years and tried to provide as many free entertainments for families as possible. The Plaza held a craft fair and we are set to continue with this again this year.

Volunteers in the community work very hard to improve this event year on year so thanks go to lots of people but especially to Charlotte Croser and David Manning for their amazing efforts and ideas.

We have also seen a number of Movie Matinees throughout the year, our most popular film screening so far was the Greatest Showman. These will continue, and this year we have introduced a Kids Film Club which will screen during the school holidays. The Movie Matinees are supported by the WI who provide the refreshments and a massive thanks must go to them for their continued support.

The Council's chosen charity for the year was Dementia UK, it is an amazing charity as it provides Admiral Nurses and support for patients and their families. We had a few fundraising events with the aim of raising money but also having fun, and hopefully welcoming and integrating some of the new residents into our community.

There was a Teddy Bears picnic in the Peace Park; a Pantomime here in the Plaza, and a Quiz n Chips night in January. These events were organised and managed by Emma, our Events Co-ordinator and supported by volunteers to ensure they were successful. Thank you to everyone who helped.

In total we raised £4,031.25 for Dementia UK. This has been sent to Dementia UK throughout the year as funds were raised – thanks must go to everyone for your generous donations.

In addition, we have collected £1,065.84 for Guide Dogs from donations for dog poo bags over the past year. Please keep this up and see if we can break this target next year – and help keep our streets clean.

Our council has once again seen some new faces representing the community so I would like to briefly introduce all of them to you, including the more familiar faces. If you would please all stand up. I would like to thank you for your support and ideas and giving up your Tuesday evenings to attend meetings. The town Council would be less effective if we weren't all motivated by the aim to improve Thrapston.

We are also fortunate to have the Town Council staff supporting the town and its residents – please stand up and be introduced. This year we expanded our staffing levels to ensure we could serve the town in the best possible way. We currently employ; Linda - Town Clerk and RFO, Margret – Assistant Clerk, Mel - Senior Administrator, Emma – Maternity Cover Events Co-Ordinator, Roz – Administrator; John – Facilities Manager; Janis – Facilities Assistant, Steve – Caretaker and Lauren– Deputy Caretaker and Cleaner. If it were not for the dedication and support from the staff our council simply wouldn't run. Thank you all for your hard work over the last 12 months.

I would now like to talk about this magnificent building. Last year the council committed to seeking funding to further enhance and develop the Plaza Community Centre. We were awarded £48,225 by WREN's FCC Community Action Fund and a further £3,756 by East Northamptonshire Council and as a council committed a further £60,000. This enabled us to carry out an extensive programme of refurbishment. From refurbished toilets to enhanced audio and visual equipment I am sure you will agree that this is a facility the town can be proud of. The venue is available to hire from the Council for personal or business use from just £12 per hour. It's a great venue for birthday parties and celebrations and business presentations or workshops.

Special thanks go to Rich from Moore Audio for his support this evening and with all matters audio and visual related that he has supported over the last year.

The future of the library is still uncertain but as a Council we have been having talks with Northamptonshire County Council regarding its future. The current situation is that the County Council have a statutory obligation to deliver a library provision in the town of Thrapston. However, it doesn't necessarily mean that it will be a library like we know it now, or even in the same location, it could in fact be a reduced service or even a mobile library. This is unknown and it will depend on the financial circumstances of the County Council – I will say no more!

BUT, if there is a community group wishing to run the library then the County Council would be happy to enter into an agreement with the community group to keep the service going.

If no agreement can be reached within the community then the County Council would have to deliver a library service, but it could be the case that they sell the current premises on the open market for redevelopment and give us a mobile library.

So, in Thrapston the Friends of Thrapston Library have said that they would like to run the library service, but what is left outstanding is the building itself and its associated running costs. We at the Town Council have been having discussions and we are keen to secure it for our community and not see it go for redevelopment. The current purchase price being offered by the County Council is £146,250 and it has been indicated that the annual running costs total around £11,154.

It has been the Town Council's strategic plan to seek to develop a community hub for the residents of Thrapston and surrounding villages. If we were to secure the library building we may look to redevelop the site as a community hub. We will however consult with you when we get to that stage.

During the last six months we have also undertaken an upgrade of the CCTV system we use. This now covers a far greater area of the town which includes the BXM Track and Skate Park, the MUGA & Outdoor Gym area and The Plaza. The system will be used by the police in the prevention and deterrence of crime, and to also aid investigations the police are carrying out in the town.

This year we have also seen the refurbishment of Conway Drive play area and ground works at Sissinghurst Drive play area. We also are currently in negotiations with Persimmon regarding the transfer of Foundry Walk and Waters Edge to the Council.

One last thing to mention is Vandalism. Over the last 12 months the council has had to repair several items of equipment, fencing and cleaned up copious amounts of Graffiti. These repairs increase insurance costs long term and directly impact the Council Tax we precept you. Please

can I encourage everyone that if you see it happening or have found some please report it to us straight away or contact the police on 101. This way our staff can action the repairs quickly and swiftly ensuring our town is safe and inviting.

Lastly a thank you to the members of the community who regularly give their time and efforts to support Thrapston and our Town Council events, they help to make this town a great place to live and, of course community events would not be possible without the support and attendance of the local residents, so thank you to everyone who attends these organised events. We are always looking to improve these where we can and appreciate your constructive feedback.

Thank you and I hope you enjoy the rest of the evening.

APPENDIX 2**Presentation of Town Awards**

It has become a tradition within Thrapston Town Council to annually mark the achievements of residents who go above and beyond the call of duty for their town, by presenting Town Awards to the chosen few.

This year was no exception and we received a large number of very worthy nominations. The Councillors and I had a very difficult task choosing the winners but eventually we narrowed down to four recipients. All our winners have, in their own ways, served the town and made Thrapston a better place for all of us.

Without further ado, our first winner of the Award for Services to the Community goes to an individual who has been integral in the planning and running of the Christmas Festival for many years. This individual's hard work and creative ideas has helped the Festival go from strength to strength, growing bigger each year. We would like to thank David Manning for his continued support and involvement in the Christmas Festival.

Moving on to our next winner, this lady has been involved for over 50 years with Evergreen, a club for the elderly that meet weekly. She is a remarkable and dedicated lady who has helped so many people. Please join me in congratulating the recipient of the Award for Service to the Community, Deena Collis.

Our next winners are a team of volunteers whose achievements and contributions to the life of the town over the past four years have included:

- Staging seven productions, for which hours of time have been given up organising the events,
- Giving free on-stage and back-stage theatre experience to children and young people of the town and surrounding areas,
- Providing those children and young people with a much-needed outlet for their creativity,
- Developing those children's and young people's essential skills, such as perseverance, teamwork, unity and confidence,
- Making entertainment contributions to a number of town events, including Charter Fair and Christmas Festival,
- Making a worthwhile addition to the arts activities in the town.

The Award for Services to the Community goes to Thrapston Dreamers.

And last, but by no means least, we have a man - a Thrapston Legend – who has been the heart and soul of Thrapston Venturas Football Club, Thrapston Cricket Club and Thrapston Sports Association for over 50 years. This man commenced his time at Chancery Lane in the 1960's as a founder player for Thrapston Venturas Football Club and was an important and immensely popular member of the successful team throughout the 60's and 70's.

He also played for Thrapston Cricket Club throughout the same time period, as well as being a committee member of the Sports Association who oversaw the redevelopment of the Sports Club building and changing rooms which saw him literally building them with his own graft and sweat for the good of the community.

Following his dedicated playing days he stayed loyal to the Club and took it upon himself to mark out the pitch, put up the nets and do all of the unsung work that needs to be done in order for the players to just turn up and play. Come whatever weather this "Legend" was there week on week without fail.

He continued to do this work for the football and cricket teams well into the 1990's but would also be committed to working behind the bar for functions, football matches and cricket matches, helping out with cricket teas etc which he still does to this day, all without ever complaining or having a bad word to say about anyone or anything.

Over 50 years later this man continues to be the rock that the Football and Cricket Clubs take for granted by being present every single weekend to open up the bar and help out doing whatever he can – well, this was until very recently when he was taken ill and admitted to Kettering General Hospital with health problems.

As a town we would now like to formally recognise this lifetime dedication, he is an absolute hero and has literally given his life to the Town and its sporting success.

Please join me in congratulating Mr Alan “Nobby” Coales for his remarkable Service to the Community.

APPENDIX 3**Finance Overview 2018/19, Cllr Strode-Willis**

Good evening and to echo Councillor Wheeler I thank you for attending. It is important that as a council we are held to account and it is great to see so many residents attending these annual town meetings.

The council finances over the past year have proven to be resilient in a time of economic uncertainty. The council has had to be more prudent with where and how it spends the resident's money. There has also been continuing problems at Northamptonshire County Council with stringent attempts to manage its budget and recommendations from Government Inspectors that the Council be abolished and two new unitary councils formed. The Town Council has had to face the prospect of meeting new devolved Council services such as the maintenance of a library provision, provision of salt bins, and possibly road gritting and other services.

The council had an opening balance of £601,192 on 1st April 2018. It received precept of £306,255 and other income of £160,117. The Council spent £406,980 giving a closing balance on 31 March 2019 of £660,584. The Council has been able to preserve its reserves in difficult times which allows it to be earmarked for new town projects each financial year. It is the case that the majority of these reserves has been allocated for such projects. The Council is still considering the potential purchase of the library building to preserve it as a community hub for the town; negotiations are still being held with the County Council.

The Council approved a precept for the coming 2019/20 financial year of £337,143. This is an increase of some 10.08 percent. This extra money will be used to further enhance the service provision in the town, including new land acquired at Oakleas Rise and further land to be transferred to the Council at Foundry Walk and Water's Edge. The precept raised will also make provision for potential devolved services on an ongoing basis, as well as a programme of community events throughout the year.

Residents will by now have received their Council Tax bills and may be querying the percentage increase by Thrapston Town Council. Each year the Town Council requests money from the District Council in the form of a precept. This money is then collected through residents' Council Tax.

Following budget meetings held by the Town Council it was agreed that the Town Council would request a precept increase of just over 10% which, when spread across all properties in Thrapston, equates to an increase of 6.46% on each bill.

For a band D property the Town Council proportion of the Council Tax bill is just 17½ pence per week, with the majority of the overall Council Tax bill continuing to go to the County Council for services including Fire and Rescue, Education, Emergency Planning, Highways and Social Services, and the remainder going to the District Council.

The Town Council is still facing a period of great uncertainty due to the prospect of Unitary. We are committed to providing the best service we can for the town, including trying to fill any gaps that the County Council may create. The Council would like to stress that all money raised through the precept is for the benefit of Thrapston and its residents.

A major part of our expense as a council is related to staff salaries who provide excellent value.

Over the past year, we have worked hard on reviewing our budget without creating a detrimental effect on the services that we provide. We are committed to keeping a watchful eye on all of our projections and exercise due governance in all our budgets, including two internal auditors. Much of the work guiding our councillors through the regulations, financial risks and controls, lies with our Town Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer Linda Marshall whose help I gratefully appreciate.

The Council has focused as always on the safety and maintenance of its parks and open spaces. During last year alone we have refurbished several pieces. Over the coming year, we hope to continue our repair or renewal as necessary around the town. We are also pleased with the help of funding from WREN and East Northamptonshire Council to complete the refurbishment of the Plaza which you can see around you. John Ystenes the Council's Facilities Manager has played a major role in managing this project and our sincere thanks go to John for his hard work and commitment. If you find anything that you want the Council to look at in relation to our services, please let us know by either visiting the office or using the online contact form.

I am also anxious to take this opportunity of thanking my colleagues on the Finance and Devolution Committee and especially to our current chairman and vice chairman for their support over the past year.

I would like to remind residents that Council information in the form of minutes, statements of account and in particular, auditors reports are available to all via our website.

Once again thank you all for attending this evening and I hope to see more residents attending our meetings over the coming year.

APPENDIX 4**Looking Forward to 2019/20, Cllr Draycott**

You may have noticed, that we in Northamptonshire have had a few local difficulties over the last period, relating to the performance, or should I say the lack of performance of our County Council.

Without going too much into the detail, which I can assure you, will not fill you with joy or pride in our County. That's as diplomatic as I am prepared and allowed to go, before the water-shed.

The County Council may be abolished, and we may have two new unitary authorities from 2020. We are expecting some (yet unknown) powers to be devolved to Local Authorities. Thrapston Council has set aside a limited financial contingency fund, but as we are still in the dark, it can only be a calculated guess. The elections for the County, District, Boroughs, Towns and Villages have been postponed until 2020. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, at least now we have located the tunnel. We will keep you all informed as and when more detailed information is forthcoming.

Our new event this year will be the 'Arts Festival Week', over 30 events in public spaces and places. A very new departure from previous community events.

It will start with a song and dance Show performed by children and young people in the Plaza during the evening of Sat 1st June and conclude in the Peace Park on Sat 8th June. Our closing event will start early afternoon with a variety of performances from bands and choirs, then conclude in the evening with a celebratory orchestral 'Proms in the Park'.

So, get out those Union flags, bring along your cucumber sandwiches, chairs, blankets and something very nice to drink!!

We remain committed to the events that have become a fixture in our Community diary, Bonfire Night-fireworks on the sports field, the Remembrance Day Parade and service, concluding with our wonderful Christmas Lights switch on and celebration event in the High Street.

As for the future, we are just beginning to explore the possibilities of the re-development of the Peace Park. In 2020 it will be 100 years since residents purchased the Park, in commemoration of the First World War.

Some of the ideas at present include a new enclosed play area for very young children, an Amphitheatre built into the natural contours of the Park, landscaping, improved perimeter fencing, lighting and electric supply to the Park.

We currently have two vacancies on the Council. These are opportunities for people of all ages to serve our community. A way in which individually and collectively we can all make a real difference to the quality of life for our Town. An opportunity to contribute in shaping our present and planning for our future.

If you would like to enquire into the possibility to serve, please call into our Town Council Office. You can either speak to the staff or/and ask to speak to a Councillor about the role of a community representative. We do support and help each other, there is no one who is the fount of all knowledge.

We do want to reach out to our Community Groups and the wider Community in general. If you have any ideas in how we can be more effective with our Community engagement, please speak to the Councillors or email the Town Council.

This Council, your Council, is here to serve, to listen and hopefully respond in a way that is in the best interests of all our Town's people. We will not always get it right, our community just like life itself, is constantly evolving and changing. The choice as always, is how we choose to respond to rapidly changing times.

Thank you for your time and attention.

It is an amazing privilege to serve your own community. This is not just a place where I live, this is a place I call home.