

THRAPSTON TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor: Cllr Craig Wheeler

77 High Street
Thrapston
Northamptonshire
NN14 4JJ

Tel: (01832) 734 673

Email: clerk@thrapstontowncouncil.gov.uk

Website: www.thrapstontowncouncil.gov.uk



Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting Held on Tuesday 18th April 2023 at 7.00pm at the Plaza Community Centre

Present: Cllrs Wheeler (Chairman), Cairns, Glover, Hawkins, Latimer, McGovern, Storey, Twigger, Wilcox, Winter, Worley

Linda Brodier (Clerk)
Margaret Ward (Deputy Clerk), Debbie Garland (Events Co-Ordinator),
Lauren Wheeler (Receptionist)
Unitary Councillors David & Wendy Brackenbury and members of the public

No.	Item
1.	Chairman's Welcome, Report & Reflection Cllr Wheeler welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the community groups for attending. Cllr Wheeler presented his report, a copy of which can be found at Appendix 1.
2.	Guest Speaker: Scott McLean, The Haemophilia Society Scott gave a presentation on what haemophilia is, the work that the Haemophilia Society does, how they support families and individuals across the county and how the money raised through the Chairman's Charity is used.
3.	Update from Souster Youth: Bex Hunter, Drop-in Lead Bex gave an update on the work of the Souster Youth Trust, a Christian Youth Charity which works mainly in schools. She talked about the purpose and vision of the Trust, and how they have created a new drop-in in Thrapston – a safe and positive space where individuals can feel supported. Bex went on to say that it is their intention to open another drop-in session soon, with their overall aim to provide a drop-in 5 days' a week. Bex thanked the Town Council for their support.
4.	Presentation of Town Awards 2023 Cllr Wheeler proceeded to present the Town Awards, see attached at Appendix 2.
5.	Looking Forward to the Next Year Vice Chairman Cllr Wilcox talked about the Town Council's plans moving forwards into 2023/24, as attached at Appendix 3.
6.	The Role of a Councillor: Former Mayor Karen Draycott Karen Draycott talked about her experience of serving the community as a Town Councillor and Mayor, that she found it a humbling experience and a great privilege. She talked about the sense of giving and sharing when volunteering – and when she questioned Why Me, Why Now it was answered with Why Not Me, Why Not Now. She spoke about stepping out and stepping up, believing in yourself, and making every hour of every day count.
7.	Open Question and Answer Session There followed a Q&A session during which members of the public were invited to address the Town Council on any specific issues they might have.

	<p>(i) Clarity was sought on whether the Town Council had supported opposing to the planning applications for the two large warehousing developments. Cllr Wheeler confirmed that the Town Council has in fact objected to the planning applications, full details of which can be found in the Minutes on our website. Thanks were given to Cllr Worley for his help with compiling the objection comments.</p> <p>(ii) The Councillors were asked if they were available to help volunteer on the barriers at Charter Fair. Anyone available to speak with Lindsey Burch.</p> <p>There were no other questions.</p>
10.	<p>Chairman to Close the Meeting Cllr Wheeler closed the meeting at 19:40.</p>

Signed

Dated

DRAFT

APPENDIX 1

Chairman's Report, Cllr Wheeler

Good evening and welcome to our Annual Town Meeting, and what another year it has been. We have mourned the loss of our beloved Queen and are preparing to celebrate a new King at his Coronation in just a few weeks.

Our office and support staff have once again gone above and beyond to ensure we have supported our residents, dealt with maintenance issues and supported the Council in delivering its objectives for another year. Thank you to Linda, Margaret, Debbie, Lauren, Janis, Mark, Steve and Karen. Also a thank you to our Grounds Maintenance contractor Nigel and his team for their ongoing support in maintaining the open spaces in our town. Without them our town really would be a different place to live.

Thank you to my Vice-Chairman Craig Wilcox and fellow Councillors for their support and contribution at full council, committee meetings and council events. During the year, we have restructured our meetings to ensure councillors also enjoy a Tuesday evening off once in a while and during the year we co-opted some new councillors - welcome to your first Annual Town Meeting Michelle Storey and Stuart Glover.

Over the year, several projects have kick-started into action with one being the Nene Valley Park project. This project has been on the cards for a while and it finally started to come to fruition this year, with the team gaining volunteers from the community to improve the open space around the River and Sailing Club. As part of our commitment to improving the area, the town council has resurfaced the car park area in Meadow Lane to support the growing number of visitors to the area. These works hopefully will support the issues seen on the Waters Edge estate during the warmer months. Alongside the park team, a new team of volunteers are forming the Friends of the Peace Park, which will consist of volunteers to support with general tidying and gardening of the Peace Park to help make it an enjoyable area for all.

Another project this year that finally got under way was the community speed watch programme. Again, a project we wanted to be part of for many years but couldn't get the volunteer numbers for has now seen two successful watches undertaken. Thank you to Carl and the other volunteers for their support and helping to keep our streets safer for our residents.

Sadly we had to cancel our Party in the Park last year but look forward to making it even bigger and better on Saturday 6th May this year to celebrate the Kings Coronation. We have a host of community groups performing as well as Thrapston Primary School Choir, fantastic live music, entertainment for the whole family with face painting, bubble stations, balloon modelling, Punch and Judy shows and so much more. We will also be ending with a 'Last Night At The Proms', performed by Thrapston Plaza Opera and Orchestra. We can't wait to see you there from 2pm – it's set to be the biggest one yet!

Christmas was a successful event once again after last years reduced event due to weather and it was great to be back on the High Street and celebrating what is quite literally the most wonderful time of the year. We had Father Christmas handing gifts out to our younger residents, the Plaza market back in full swing with refreshments, fantastic stage acts and of course a successful light switch on.

The Plaza, which is owned by the Town Council, continues to be booked by many different classes, groups and private hirers. We are continually looking to invest in the building and are in the process of having the roof replaced, which will increase the energy efficiency and protect the main building for future generations. Another project we are looking at is the introduction of Solar. The biggest energy user of the council is the Plaza and looking to reduce its dependence on the grid will be of benefit to residents in the long term. Please keep an eye out for updates soon.

The Fireworks display at the Sports Association ground in November last year was great as usual and raised an amazing £2,015.50 for The Haemophilia Society. Thank you to those who made it possible, particularly those who manned bucket collections and to the staff and Councillors for their support.

The popular Quiz & Chips night here in the Plaza in January was its usual success raising £1,369.20 for The Haemophilia Society and again just the other week we raised another £573.77. I am sure it will be repeated shortly by the newly elected Mayor.

My final fundraiser, an Abba night later this month, is set to be an evening of great music, dancing and fun. The residents of the town sure know how to support us when we put events on for you with most selling out in a matter of weeks. The money you all have raised for charities over the years is fantastic and something we as a town should be proud of.

At this moment in time the total raised for The Haemophilia Society is: £8,721.17.

Councillor Craig Wilcox has been organising regular Litter picks in town which have been well attended by families and adults, thank you. The next one is planned for this coming Saturday 22nd April. Please come along to the Town Council office at 10am and help keep our town tidy.

The Town Council are very pleased to have continued to have a Youth Forum consisting of 16 year old Prince William School students. Teacher, Jo Bennett and Councillor Sam Cribb, oversee the Forum who meet monthly. The Forum work with the Town Council to create an environment in which young people's views are heard, valued and acted upon. Students from the Forum have been very helpful at Council and Mayoral Events throughout the year, thank you.

Well, as they say, that's it from me. I have enjoyed my Mayoral year and Chairmanship but, I couldn't have done it without the support of my wife Lauren, family, friends and the Council staff and Councillors. It is an honour and privilege to represent this wonderful town.

**Craig Wheeler, Chairman
Thrapston Town Council**

APPENDIX 2

Presentation of Town Awards

Now to the exciting part of the evening ... the Town Awards. Each year the Council puts a call out for residents to nominate someone from within Thrapston who they think is worthy of an award for the contributions in the community.

This year we had an unprecedented number of nominations which made selecting the winners all the harder. However, Council narrowed it down, and I am pleased to say that tonight we will be presenting 6 awards – which, for fairness, will be presented in alphabetic surname order:

1. This gentleman is an important member of the community. He has been key in promoting fire awareness campaigns in the community, and took part in the supply and fitting of free smoke alarms to those in need. He promoted Station open days, making them fun for all the community to enjoy. More recently he can be found riding around town on his Sleigh accompanied by his little helpers, raising money for local charities whilst bringing delight to local children. This gentleman is regarded by others fondly; and we know that he takes on his role in the community with pride.

This award is for Andrew Brackley unfortunately he is unable to attend this evening.

2. This lady is born and bred in Thrapston. She has given so much of her time to being involved in the town whilst supporting and promoting the town itself. She served as a Town Councillor for a number of years and has been the Town's Mayor 3 times. She is regarded by others warmly and deserves the recognition of her services to the Town.

Val Carter, please come up and accept your award.

3. These two ladies have shown great support in the community by attending the town's events to provide first aid cover. They have contributed over 1,500 hours of responding in 2022 and give all known AEDs in the area a monthly check. They "drop everything" on numerous occasions to attend to individuals on the street when asked to help by other members of the public. All of this work is voluntary as a Community First Responder for the ambulance service, and although they "sign up" to this commitment, both ladies have done everything possible to maintain this commitment for the community whilst moving between jobs, moving house and undertaking training.

Sonia James and Emily Martin, please come up and accept your awards.

4. This gentleman dedicates much of his time to the upkeep and maintenance of the Bowls Club's bowling green, which is regarded as one of the best in the County. He can be seen most days during the summer watering the green, doing housekeeping jobs and keeping the green in superb condition. During the winter he often checks in to see what might need doing. Despite some health-related problems this gentleman continues to dedicate so much time to the Club – a facility in this town which is enjoyed by members of all ages.

Barrie Melville, please come up and accept your award.

5. This lady received a couple of nominations, from colleagues who say that she always goes above and beyond to help and support good causes in the town. She is a real community champion ... She has organised food for the local foodbanks, primary school an animal shelter and even Hamerton Zoo. She arranges raffle prizes for local businesses and events in the town. She has organised colleagues to bring in items to donate for Ukraine. She has organised litter picks to keep the area looking tidy and She has raised money for the butterfly garden at Thrapston Primary. All of this she does using her own initiative and constant positive influence for all.

Mandy Watts, please come up and accept your award.

APPENDIX 3

Looking Forward to 2023/24, Cllr Wilcox

It is a real pleasure to be standing here today as the vice chairman delivering the 'looking forward' speech for this year. It has been a huge privilege to serve as a councillor alongside this group of enthusiastic, creative, and friendly councillors, all of whom have worked really hard in their spare time to support the town alongside the amazing council staff who work at the offices.

I'd like to personally thank our chairman and mayor Craig who has not only given me a massive amount of support and guidance but has spent the last year representing Thrapston admirably at key events around the local communities & county.

He has been professional, representative, and considerate to the views of people in the town, a steady rudder in what has been at times turbulent, especially when our beloved Queen passed away.

The last 12 months has been a period of considerable challenge for everyone, and we are all finding it difficult to, not only make ends meet but also in real 'Thrapston style' make the best out of our town's wonderful amenities, facilities and beautiful scenery.

I have been personally involved in the country park project where for the last year with the help of the Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Middle Nene Sailing Club, Thrapston primary, U3A, local businesses and an absolute army of amazing volunteers have been working hard to develop council owned woodland into a usable country park that provides the town with lovely walks, beautiful spaces while developing and encouraging natural habitats for wildlife. A place we can all appreciate & be proud of. Recently new benches have been installed and enjoyed by many over the Easter break and an improved park fence entrance has been erected with donations from Scotts, replacing the old metal fence that was there before.

The next 12 months will see us clearing the river of many years of debris and rubbish, creating an accessible area that can be enjoyed by all including the natural wildlife that call the area home, the Swans will be very pleased I'm sure. We will be looking forward to further working on areas where anti-social behaviour is rife, such as to the side of the skate park and at the back of the doctors. It will mean however that sofa's that keep appearing there will have to be removed, sorry!

I have also had the pleasure of representing the town at events such as the opening of the wonderful Hermitage lodge and our fantastic new nursery Squirrels, a place that holds dear memories for many people including me, as both of my children attended and loved their time there.

It was a shame the party in the park was cancelled last year due to the queens passing, especially after the huge amount of effort that was put in by councillors and staff. It was further disappointing as the previous Christmas festival had to be scaled down due to extreme weather conditions.

Extra effort was then made for the forthcoming Christmas festival, and it really did not disappoint. The town was packed, the food was delicious, the entertainment was top class, all of which was woven together by the sounds of an amazing steel band. I truly believe it was one of the best I'd attended and definitely a tough act to follow.

Whilst I'm on the subject of town's event's I'd like to run through what we can all look forward to in the forthcoming 12 months.

In April for those that enjoy wearing spandex, Eurovision and singing into their hairbrush in front of a mirror there is an Abba tribute night at the plaza. This is now sold out and I'm sure it will be a lot of fun. Also in April on 22nd we will again be organizing another town litter pick. These have been really successful over the last year with the last event drawing in over 20 people.

It's with the kindness of these volunteers that we keep our amazing town clean, so if you'd like to come along and join in please do so, you may even get some free fruit. These are quarterly so please check our social media and noticeboards for the dates.

In June there will be the charter fair. Not a council run event but an amazing day which shows Thrapston at its best, this year's theme is Thrapston Goes Wild so get involved and have a great day. September will also see our 3rd quiz of the year held at the plaza. These have been really successful, so if you think that you are an egghead rather than have your head in the clouds come along and maybe you can win a prize, I promise not to write the questions again! Clarity needed for this paragraph.

The rest of the year will see more litter picks, quizzes, and our regular events such as the remembrance parade, firework display and the Christmas festival, all of which are firm favourites in the town.

To conclude I'd like to briefly talk about how amazing I think our town is through my years of living here. When I arrived in Thrapston over 20 years ago I first fell in love with the pubs and the warm welcome I received when visiting them. I was impressed by the amount of them for a start and it's great to see that they are still thriving and growing which is no mean feat considering the hard times the economy has been through, I know it wasn't easy.

Once I sobered up, pre kids of course, my love of the town moved to the great facilities and shops that we have here. Some of these have changed over the years and it's amazing to have a high street that is full and packed with quality shops and amenities, not something that could be said for many towns. Once the kids arrived my perspective of the town again changed to childcare, schools, and children's groups. We had and still do have a great nursery and exceptional school; they are the heart of the town and a great steppingstone to further education.

Alongside them the number of groups available for the children is second to none, so much choice and variation I'm sure is enough to drag their eyes away from their screens for a few hours a week. When my children progressed to secondary school I found I had free time again and after a few months of getting the house & garden back to the standard it was pre kids I opened my eyes again to Thrapston town and what it had to offer.

I was amazed at how much the town has developed over the years and it made me want to be a part of that growth and development. So I decided to become a councillor, and since then I've come to appreciate how much hard work goes into running the town and maintaining it to the great standard it is. Whereas before I would take for granted the Plaza, the farmers market, the local events and many parks and open spaces I now see the effort it takes to continuously move forward and grow each of these.

So I'd like to finish by thanking again my fellow councillors and the council staff for everything they do. We really wouldn't be where we are today without all your efforts and I'm glad to be a part of it. I'm very proud of our amazing town, Thrapston.

**Craig Wilcox, Vice-Chairman
Thrapston Town Council**