

DURSLEY TOWN MEETING

23rd April 2024

MINUTES of the PROCEEDINGS at the ANNUAL ASSEMBLY of the DURSLEY TOWN MEETING held at Kingshill House, Kingshill Drive, Dursley, at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, the 23rd day of April 2024.

PRESENT

Councillor A Stennett, Town Mayor in the Chair

45 people were present.

1. MINUTES

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Dursley Town Meeting held on 25th April 2023 were confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings at that meeting.

2. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

3. REPORT OF THE TOWN MAYOR

The Town Mayor, Councillor Alex Stennett, gave an overview of the activities of the Town Council during the past year, outlined in the Annual Report 2023/24.

The Town Mayor thanked the community and all the volunteers that had continued to get involved in a host of activities and events across town, in what had been challenging times. It had been a privilege to meet with groups and individuals as part of civic duties. It was recognised that such a range of events and activities would not be possible without the help and support of people who care enough to volunteer their time to make things happen.

The Mayor highlighted what an honour it had been to be the Mayor during the Coronation of King Charles III celebrations in May 2023, when Dursley residents came together to watch the proceedings at St James' Church and enjoy activities in the town centre.

The Town Mayor thanked Council staff and also fellow Councillors, including those who had stepped down from Council over the last year, for all their hard work. Those Councillors who had recently joined Council were warmly welcomed.

Those present were encouraged to pick up a copy of Dursley Town Council's Annual Report and also the 'Councillor and Community Group Reports' 2023/24 document at the meeting, both of which would also be posted online at Dursley Town Council's website: <https://www.dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk/>.

4. RESIDENTS FROM OUTSIDE DURSLEY

It was resolved to allow residents from outside Dursley to speak at the meeting.

5. REPORTS FROM GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR

County Councillor W Thomas was not in attendance but had given apologies and supplied a written report which was read out at the meeting.

This included developments related to bus transport, such as improvements to transport

reliability following a period of cancellations and extension of the £2 fare scheme; road safety including ongoing discussions related to excessive parking/speed on Parsonage Street and narrow pavements at Silver Street; highways improvements to pavements including the installation of new dropped curbs, drainage issues at Long Street/Lister Road, a new grit bin for May Lane and also a new online system for reporting and monitoring issues - <https://fixmystreet.gloucestershire.gov.uk> .

It was noted that the written report had been included in the 2023/24 'Councillor & Community Group Reports' document (page 3) (agenda item 8).

6. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

The Town Mayor welcomed District Councillors D Cornell and L Patrick to the meeting.

It was noted that both had provided written reports that were available in the 2023/24 'Councillor & Community Group Reports' document (pages 4-5) (agenda item 8).

Councillor Cornell addressed the meeting, highlighting the District Council's recently approved budget which would see investment set to directly benefit Dursley. This included a network of community hubs across the district such as GL11, climate and nature recovery projects, new Council homes such as the Cambridge Avenue redevelopment, a new Market Town Vitality Fund and more energy efficiency/refurbishment work at the Pulse.

Councillor Cornell thanked the community for support over the years, having taken the difficult decision not to stand for election in May 2024, noting it had been a privilege to serve as a Councillor since 2012 and to have seen such positive change take place. Volunteer roles with GL11 Community Hub, as Chair, and Dursley After Hours would continue.

7. TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION FROM MIKE STRATFORD, HEADTEACHER OF REDNOCK SCHOOL

The Town Mayor welcomed Mike Stratford, the Headteacher of Rednock School.

Mike outlined his background, and the reasons why he went for the job at Rednock. The presentation also covered the following:

- The most recent Ofsted inspection in November 2023, which rated the school 'good' and found it to be one which *"teaches pupils that 'everyone matters'. It is warm and welcoming place where everyone is accepted for who they are"*
- 'Darcy's Day', based on Mike's own experience as a parent and what he would want for his own daughter/children to experience on the first day of school and how this is being translated to the Rednock environment and school vision – to be safe, cared for, supported, and given every opportunity.
- Mike's time meeting people in the local community, which really helped with getting to know the school. Highlighting the importance of the school being good enough for the community, as well as the students, and having strong supportive links with the community. Also improving teacher retention. The school offers weekly tours, people can contact the school reception to book.
- The school has started to improve systems that enhance the learning environment and culture – introducing clubs and activities that inspire, developing an area of the website with past students sharing their experiences and progress, encouraging ambition and setting high standards, improving communications with a fortnightly review and video blog - Mike would be happy to help publicise activities in the wider community where possible as part of the review.

- The school's overall vision - "to be a school where everyone matters", with values that inspire children to be motivated, ambitious, tenacious, taking responsibility, exploring curiosities and respectful.

Following the presentation, the following points/public questions were raised:

Student figures at Rednock have shown to have gone down significantly from 1400 in years gone by to around 1200 today, what are the reasons behind this?

Mike explained that the school had 1235 students currently, with an entry number waiting list of 235 and when he started, he noted the hole in the budget. At year 9 the number of students drop and this is due to Rednock's unique position – at this age children (age 14) are invited to apply for places at SGS Berkeley Green UTC, which is close by for many and offers blended academic and vocational engineering/technology studies around the STEM subjects. Rednock saw 33 leave following the most recent intake. Rednock sixth form is important but at the moment with 120 students, it is too small and needs to grow. Over the next 7 years the entry growth overall in the school should be 300 with 2 extra classes, but the reception age figures are projected to be the lowest it's been.

What surprised you most when you started as Headteacher?

Mike explained that he had expected student behaviour issues to be worse at Rednock and had been preparing to have a battle to get to grips with this on arriving. This was a misconception; it wasn't the case. Time was taken to listen to the staff voice, meet individuals and progress some measures. The student's response had been amazing, it's only a small minority that need support with behaviour.

Would groups be welcome to come in and talk to students, for example as speakers involved in a particular topic/subject area, in support of curriculum activities?

Mike would welcome the opportunity to welcome speakers from the wider community and industry. It could be at an assembly or as part of the school's community enrichment events. Speakers can often bring topics to life. The school had developed an alumni website page which includes past students talking about working in industry after school. The school also works under the 'Baker Clause', supporting students to understand the full range of education and training options available out there.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN PRESENTATIONS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

The Mayor introduced the 'Councillor and Community Group Reports' 2023/24 document available at the meeting, which would also be posted online at Dursley Town Council's website: <https://www.dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk/> .

Included in the pack, reports from: **Cam, Dursley & Uley Joint Woodlands Management Committee • The Chantry Centre • Churches Together in Cam, Dursley and District (CTCDD) • Cotswold Vale Talking Newspaper • The Door • Dursley After Hours • Dursley and District Association for the Transport for the Disabled and Elderly (DATE) • Dursley in Bloom (DIB) • Dursley Male Voice Choir • Dursley Neighbourhood Policing Team • Dursley Pride • Dursley Rugby Football Club • Dursley Tabernacle Community Food Hub • Dursley United Charity • Festive Dursley • GL11 Community Hub • Great Western Air Ambulance Charity • Home-Start Stroud and Gloucester • Twinberrow Foundation.**

Those groups present were invited to add any key points not already included in the published document. The following was noted:

- Danae Savvidou from Dursley After Hours, informed everyone that the free live monthly music events would restart in the Market Place on Friday 26th April 2024.
- Philip Staddon of the DATE group made an appeal for more volunteers and drivers who had the necessary license requirements, to enable the mini bus service to continue. Mike Stratford suggested DATE liaise with Rednock to see if it might be possible to link up on mini bus use.
- Christina Carter, The Clerk of the Cam, Dursley & Uley Joint Woodlands Management Committee, gave a brief overview of the groups work and the woodland under their care.
- Theresa Kinnison, on behalf of the Dursley Sculpture and Play Trail volunteers, informed everyone of the new wonderful ceramic sculpture created and installed in Twinberrow Woods with the help of Rednock students and Cam and Dursley Creatives.

The Town Mayor thanked all for contributing, highlighting the great amount of positive work in the town that is down to hardworking, committed volunteers.

9. TO RECEIVE A BRIEF UPDATE FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS NOT INCLUDED WITHIN ITEM 8

i) **Cam & Dursley Transportation Group**

David Smith, a volunteer team member, gave an update to the County Councillor's report provided. It had just been announced that improvement to the Sunday bus service would be postponed due to a shortage of drivers, impacting the recruitment process for the Stroud area.

ii) **The Engine, Cam and Dursley**

Charlie Marwood, a founding director of The Engine Hub CIC, reported on the Escape Room which had been going for over 2 years and had recently opened a new game. Use of the empty Oxfam shop unit on Silver Street had been acquired by The Engine for a period of time and ideas were being sought from the community regarding its use e.g. as a pop-up shops/start up community interest business space, something that would benefit the community/high street for example. Ideas so far included sports equipment exchange, eco refills, sustainable projects, use as a business test space. It would be opening sometime in July.

iii) **Cam & Dursley Creatives**

Abi Nichol, from the group, made everyone aware of the exciting news that the Cam and Dursley area was one of only 18 places in the UK included on the National Gallery Road Trip celebrating their 200 year anniversary. The art bus will be visiting the area on 15th, 16th, 17th July to undertake art workshops with local schools, including Rednock. A series of activities and workshops was being planned.

iv) **The DODS**

Frankie Telford, from the DODS, thanked the community for continuing to support the DODS and attending shows, the latest being 'Calendar Girls the Musical' which would start on 6th May 2024.

v) **The Dursley & Cam Royal British Legion**

Matt Patrick, from the branch, gave an update on local plans for to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day on 6th June. It was noted that there would be a beacon on Cam Peak, ringing of church bells with Wotton Silver Band and also a pig roast at The Oak with the Rednock Swing Band in attendance.

10. TO DISCUSS TOWN MATTERS GENERALLY

The Town Mayor invited those present to raise any town matters to discuss.

The following issues/public questions were raised regarding town matters.

Please could we give an update of the Littlecombe S106 money, has the development been completed, when will the money be available?

The Town Clerk read out a response from Stroud District Council. It was noted that the completion of the house building is expected June/July 2024 time, St Modwen expects to be on site for a further year dealing with any snags and it would be another year after this before the adoptable standard with Gloucestershire County Council.

In relation to Sec106 obligations and payments to Stroud District Council, it was noted that all payments relating to recreation contributions had been made and applied to local projects (i.e. Jubilee playing fields, Dursley Youth Centre and The Pulse extension). The Community Facilities contributions (£355,000) was received in full and was allocated to 4 community buildings (i.e. The Chantry Centre, Dursley Community Centre, GL11 and Dursley Tabernacle), works to which are progressing with approximately a third of the overall amount spent so far.

There has been an increase in anti-social behaviour in the town centre, around the market place with litter and planters being vandalised, for example. It seems to be going in the wrong direction, what action is being taken to address this?

The Deputy Town Mayor responded having been part of joint agency meetings set up to deal with the recent increase in anti-social behaviour within the town centre, in particular. This group which involves the local police, is the task force looking at ways to identify the sources in our town and the actions that can be taken to drive down incidents. Dursley has good CCTV coverage which is helping.

It was noted that it can be a complex issue to deal with, many of the sources have been identified locally, action is being taken and in many cases parents are being engaged. It is an ongoing job, but it is not being ignored. The importance of people reporting all incidents to the police was emphasised (via 101 or 999 if emergency).

The Town Mayor reminded everyone that members of the public can raise matters with the Council at any time.

11. LESLIE D GALE AWARD 2024

The Town Mayor explained that this was the 30th anniversary of the Leslie D Gale Awards that were instituted in 1994, as a tribute to the late Mr Gale, who was the last Chairman of Dursley Parish Council and the first Mayor of Dursley, and who served the community in so many ways. The Leslie D Gale Award not only recognises longevity of service to the community but also impact.

The 2024 awards were announced by the Town Mayor as follows.

Anne Roberts is the Path Warden for the Cam, Dursley and Uley Joint Woodlands Management Committee and was nominated by local resident and former Cam Parish Chair, Christine Carter.

“Anne really goes above and beyond in her role by walking the paths of the areas the Committee looks after on behalf of the parishes of Cam, Dursley and Uley. She will identify, issues, such as fallen trees in the woods, broken gates and fences on Cam Peak in the kind of detail that allows the Committee to address them quickly.

Her input is invaluable when it comes to improving paths for the benefit of local residents

and visitors to the area. She not only liaises with the Committee’s Land Manager but also with other stewards of the land like the Cotswold Wardens. The last couple of years from April through to October has seen Anne lead work parties in Dursley Woods to address a spread of Himalayan Balsam there. It’s a problematic invasive plant because it spreads fast, competing with native plants for light, nutrients, pollinators and space, excluding those plants and reducing biodiversity. This work has been very important to the conservation of this ecologically sensitive ancient woodland.

It’s in Anne’s nature to be helpful and I was really impressed with how Anne stepped into the breach at last year’s walking festival, a significant event for Dursley, by not only leading her own walks but also at least one for someone who went down with covid - walking 84 miles over the week in total!”

Penny Hyde has been a member of Dursley In Bloom since 2013 and has been the driving force of the group since becoming Chair in 2017. Penny was nominated by the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk.

“Each year the town centre looks and feels much brighter by the floral display of 40+ hanging baskets and the many planters. For many years the group entered the annual Britain in Bloom competition and have won a number of gold and silver-gilt certificates. The highlight for the Dursley In Bloom team was in 2017 when the Dursley was the winner of the Best Small-Town category.

The small band of volunteers, marshalled by Penny, meet regularly to discuss plans for the future floral displays in the town and put a huge effort into many of the areas of the town that need some TLC. The team encourages local businesses and organisations to become involved in a series of ideas to brighten up our town and are always looking for new volunteers.

Penny has many other interests including helping in the gardens at the National Trust’s Newark Park, she is a member of a book club, attends St George’s Church and likes to spend as much time as she can with her family which included regular trips to Madrid”.

Maria Paoletti is probably best known for being the proprietor of the Arpers shop in the town centre but she helps the community in so many ways. Maria was nominated by Councillor Tyler White.

“Maria is always willing to offer help and support to all things happening in Dursley. She buys things off her own back to support local events such as: Festive Dursley and Pride. She discounts items for local organisations when she is a small independent business who needs to earn a living herself. You try and give her the right amount of money but she won’t take it. Or she will put the money in her many charity pots that she has on her counter.

Maria is also so community spirited. She is willing to go above and beyond for her customers. She will offer to help anyone. Cllr White describes her as “a pillar of the community. She’s in the heart of the town and has a huge heart, wanting to help everyone”.

There being no further business, the meeting closed for light refreshments at 8:08pm.

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Town Mayor

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Date