

**MINUTES OF THE 20TH ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
FOR PORTISHEAD HELD AT THE FOLK HALL
HIGH STREET, PORTISHEAD
ON WEDNESDAY
1ST MAY 2013**

PRESENT Councillor Clark, Chairman of the Town Council – Presiding
Mrs Jo Duffy – Clerk (taking Minutes)

APOLOGIES Councillor: Mrs. Lord, Sgt Jim Robinson, Martin Dolton

There were approximately 45 residents present.

MINUTES OF 19TH ANNUAL TOWN MEETING: 2ND MAY 2012 (Agenda item .3)

The Minutes of the 19th Annual Town Meeting held on the 2nd May 2012 had been circulated and presented to the meeting.

It was agreed that the Minutes be approved.

RESOLVED that:-

The Minutes of the 19th Annual Town Meeting for Portishead held on 2nd May 2012, copies of which have been circulated be confirmed as correct.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT AND REVIEW OF THE BUSINESS UNDERTAKEN BY THE COUNCIL IN THE 2012/2013 MUNICIPAL YEAR (Agenda item .4)

Councillor Clark, the Chairman of the Town Council presented his Annual Report and review of the business undertaken by the Council in the 2012/2013 year.

Councillor Clark's report is attached to and forms part of these minutes. (Appendix A)

Clerks note. These minutes record what was said during public speaking and were views expressed by the speaker named and not the Town Council.

ELECTORS FORUM - PUBLIC SPEAKING (Agenda item .5)

Mr. J Dixon wished to address the council on three matters. At last year's meeting he spoke about the bus stop at Abbotts Way. Cars are parking in the bay which prevents the buses from fully pulling into it, leaving the back end of the bus sticking out into the road.

Secondly, Portishead Railway line there has been doubt over the positioning of the proposed station. Network rail don't want a level crossing and a bridge is too expensive and will take up too much land. He suggested that a level crossing with limited access including buses could be put in at the site.

Lastly, the toilets have been closed in the town. Mr Dixon drew the meetings attention to a Community Toilet Scheme running in Bristol, where some shops and cafes allow the public to use their toilets. Could Portishead have something similar?

Mrs R. Cruse spoke in her capacity as Chair of the Trustees of Portishead Youth Centre. Mrs Cruse said without the Town Council who have been very generous and without various members of the communities' hard work we wouldn't be providing the youth service that we have today. Thank you to the Town Council and to a number of charities both inside and outside the town and lastly the press who have been very supportive.

Ms. G. Simms spoke about the Portishead bus services. Mrs Simms spoke on behalf of the Portishead Senior Citizens Forum about the changes to the bus services in Portishead, in particular the replacement of the 358 and 359 bus services with the X2 and X3. This has involved the closure of the Battery Road stop and the Lower Nore Road and Cab Stand without a service into Bristol and other destinations. The areas have a lot of accommodation for older members of the community and the changes have left the Lake Grounds without a convenient bus stop, making it difficult for people with walking issues. The change in the route, routing buses up West Hill and down Combe Road is not, sensible. The previous bus service worked well, so why change it? Mrs Simms stated that the bus groups Customers Services department is located in Southampton and went on to say the powers that be have no idea what effect they are having on Portishead. The Hopper service runs infrequently and doesn't run into Bristol. Can the council take up the issue with the bus company?

Ms. K. Chandler asked the Council what it is going to do about the toilets in Wyndham Way? These toilets were frequently used and there is no alternative. Is it right the toilets will be taken on and refurbished? Could the Council take this on board?

Mr. T. Konewko spoke about Cab Stand, when will it have its traffic island put in? North Somerset Council appears to be dragging out the installation. Can we have the island put in soon? The speed limit on Wyndham Way also needs to be reduced from either the Co-op or the Health Centre. Cars are approaching the unmarked crossings at very high speed. Lastly, the Portbury One Hundred transport café was taken away by Portbury Council and has been replaced by a tip, which is an eyesore. The site really needs screening and landscaping. Can Portishead Town Council have words with Portbury Parish Council?

Mrs E. Heinzelman spoke about the 66 bus service which was taken away from the South Road area completely. What the residents have now is a service that runs one morning a week and one afternoon a week. The service does not allow people with mobility issues enough time to do their shopping. Is there any way that something more can be done about this?

Mr. K. Smith spoke about the Lake Grounds and the bench with the shelter over it. He said it is nice to sit and reminisce about Portishead when it was a village. Was no-one concerned that there would be no toilet facilities in the town? He has read that the people who live around the Lake Grounds want to call it a village green. What does this mean? Does it mean that teenagers will be kept out of the way? He said he

violently opposes a village green if it has anything to do with the residents around the lake grounds.

Mr. S. Woodley of West Hill spoke about parking issues especially at the new Tesco. Planning permission for parking was refused on the grounds that the exit comes out on to a blind bend, the corner is dangerous. Mr Woodley said Tesco put in another application and as far as he knows the second application was not published by North Somerset Council anywhere. Tesco have told him that they have a letter from North Somerset Council authorising them to have 3 parking spaces (one disabled and 2 others). NSC has granted permission because those spaces already existed. However the land was a garden and was dug up to create a car park. He has witnessed 5 cars parked in the car park, 3 cars backing out onto the road and large lorries parked across the pavement. It is an accident waiting to happen. What grounds did NSC have to grant permission for a car park? We need to get the car park closed. Tesco have said that if they are told to close it, they will.

The issue of double yellow lines all over Portishead was raised. The police are not interested in booking people on the double yellow lines. Drivers are flouting the restrictions because they know they can get away with it. This issue needs to be raised with both the Police and NSC.

Mr. M. Cruse said it is nice to see everybody here. He thanked the volunteers who help to make the town a wonderful place. It is a pity that NSC can't think a little bit more about the volunteers who they should hold in higher regard. They take on the responsibility of those things through circumstances they can't control.

He spoke about Roath Road car park. In 1967 the car park was sold by Mr. Coburn to the then Urban District Council of Portishead. The car park is essential for all residents of Roath Road, as well as the business community and the users of those businesses. The High Street has a number of charity shops and those are run by volunteers who have raised millions of pounds for good causes both here and around the world. People use Roath Road car park because it is convenient and free for them. The thought of NSC knowing the back ground to why that car park was purchased for the community, trying to inflict charges on the residents, business users and volunteers is outrageous. What a disgrace NSC for taxing the volunteers. He appreciated the Town Council does what it can to support the volunteers. He believes that the Town Council should bite the bullet and ask NSC to transfer the freehold of the car park back to them. If NSC can't look after the Lake Grounds properly they should consider allowing the Town Council to take them on.

Mr. D. Oyns from the Lake Grounds said as he has been vilified here and on the web with some of the comments which he thinks may be actionable. He went on to say that he would like to raise a couple of things about the lake grounds. Firstly, the reason why village green status was sort is because it was felt the lake grounds should be a village green and not a village concrete. About ten years a man by the name of Mr. Styles took over the lease of the Lake Grounds and he had some wonderful ideas about what he was going to do in the lake grounds, including developing the café etc. He went on to say that often the public commented to him that it is great to come back to somewhere that hasn't changed since their youth. The village green status will protect the site.

Secondly, on Combe Road a couple of years ago he nearly had a head on collision with a van. He spoke about the retched feature in the road, which is dangerous. The feature needs to be cut before there is an accident.

Mr Oyns is President elect of Portishead Rotary. The group does an awful lot of community work including working with disadvantaged children and the memory café. His little niggle is that the previous President Derek Walters had tried to get a little Rotary Club sign by the side of the road on the approach into Portishead, without success. He asked why they can't have recognition just like the other organisations, why was this stopped.

Finally he went on to say that close to his heart, he is dead keen to get the railway back into Portishead. It costs £30 by taxi to get to Parkway Station from Portishead. Why on earth was the railway cut by that road, who authorised it? It isn't the railway company who are preventing the level crossing it is Her Majesty's Railway Executive that are preventing it. The road cuts the railway very close to the terminus and trains will be moving very slowly. Trams manage to move around towns slowly, without accidents. Why can't we have a level crossing and allow the station right into the centre of the town.

A member of the public added that in Sherringham Norfolk a level crossing has recently been put in at a cost of £100k, proving that it can be done.

Mr. P. Burden spoke about when the issue of Quays Avenue originally came up a large contingent put it to North Somerset Council that you shouldn't cross the track with Quays Avenue. The advice that North Somerset Council gave at the time was there would not be a problem because of the slow entry to the station. It was later that the Railway Executive made the decision to allow no further level crossing of heavy rail.

If the railway station isn't in the centre of Portishead it is not going to be used, if it is going to cost an extra £4 million to put a bridge in, it's not going to get built. This matter needs to be taken to the highest level because Portishead Railway Group raised this issue as soon as Quays Avenue was planned and they were assured that in no way would it interfere with the railway. We have been let down badly and we should pursue the issue at the highest level that we can.

Mr. J. Dixon proposed a resolution is passed asking the Town Council to take up the matter.

RESOLUTION that:

This Parish meeting should ask our MP Liam Fox how we can overcome the objections raised to a level crossing on Quays Avenue as we had been assured that Quays Avenue would not interfere with the running of the railway.

The meeting unanimously agreed to the resolution.

Mr. J. Rigby spoke about when they cleared the railway line. A company called Highdrex explained that they could provide machines that run both on rail tracks and roads. The Lions helped with clearing the tracks, but then gates were built across the line and no more work could be done.

Paul Maltby spoke about a volunteer by the name of Sandy Sandford who cleans the Lake Grounds. Mr. Maltby said the Town Council should write to Mr Sandford and thank him for his efforts that he puts into the town.

He spoke about the new post office in the town. Martin Dolton was instrumental in helping that. A second post office in the town is a real asset; it is a real pleasure to go in there. He went on to say thank you to Martin Dolton, the Town Council and others who were involved in the post office.

The third point is that a town of this size is without a police station. Not just the Town Council but members of the public were at fault in allowing the police station to close without even a whimper. Clevedon and Nailsea have a police station and all Portishead gets is a transit van parked outside Lloyds Bank. It is sad that we didn't stand up and be counted.

It is also sad that the Town Council did a u-turn on the skate park. It was a disappointing decision. It was only Cllrs Mrs. Cruse and Lord who stuck by their original decision in favour of supporting the skate park and thanked them. He went on to say he was also pleased to see the bell back in Portishead in pride of place and thanked Carol Thomas and Annette for their input into that.

Lastly he thanked the councillors who have worked hard for the town and not put their own interests first.

Mr Dixon spoke about getting another post office in the town.

Beverly Langdale spoke about a number of beauty spot in Portishead and raised an issue with the one at Black Nore. She has requested a number of times and taking into consideration of safety that a hand rail is replaced on a set of steps leading down to the beach front. The rail was there many years ago and was attached to the wall and a dog bin was fastened to it. When this got damaged and she contacted the council and they said that they could no-longer fund its replacement. The original hand rail is still on the beach. These steps are slippery when they get wet and muddy. On other parts of the coastal path hand rails have been added. The rail should go back along with the dog bin.

Annette Hennessy firstly mentioned that the minutes of the last People's Meeting (Annual Town Meeting) are not correct they are slightly ambiguous, but she will write to the Clerk. Mrs Hennessy spoke about the minutes not making sense and they should have read Councillor Pasley made allegations that Mrs Hennessy had attacked him again at the meeting, when all she had done was raise concerns and hadn't even mentioned his name and went on to say that the minutes do not give a true impression of the meetings.

Mrs Hennessy said that she will try not to get emotional. Portishead is the best town in the world and she would not want to live anywhere else. She went on to say that because she loves Portishead she feels over protective of it and it gives her a great feeling of pride. No one owns the town; we share it, benefit and enhance it. We have a great number of committees and groups in Portishead, that do this town credit and they are too numerous to mention, although she would like to mention some including, Portishead Christmas lights, Portishead Flower Show, Portishead Carnival, Portishead in Bloom, Portishead Rotary, Portishead Lifeboat and the volunteers for Portishead Open Air Pool. Other groups like the Portishead Skate Park Project that have worked hard for many years are robustly prevented from progressing due to local political bureaucracy, having adhered and complied with every procedure,

policy, consultation, requirement, demand and suggestion set before them by Portishead Town Council and North Somerset Council, including assessing numerous sites and investigating sites that they were told existed but didn't. Progression came down to a decision by an Executive Member of North Somerset Council, the landowner that the only site deemed suitable as a possible location was the Lake Grounds. The Skate Park Project did not decide this on a whim it was the only option given to them by the Deputy Leader of the Council who gave his officers confirmation that it could be progressed after vetoing many others. So the decision does not lay with someone that lives in Portishead, Councillor Tony Lake a Conservative, a man who made the ultimate decision, based on a political agenda. Mrs Hennessy said that she has no political allegiance, the reason she is highlighting the political party is that Portishead does not seem to be served well by local politics but it does seem to be served admirably by local people who have no wish to be a councillor of any kind, not even an independent councillor, how about that for a novel idea a town liberating itself from the political system. She was deeply saddened to hear inaccurate information given out in the last year by several councillors, but worst of all was the behaviour of one councillor on the issue of the lake grounds. She went on to say that last year she would not attend a meeting again. The reason that she has been attending meetings is to correct the inaccurate information being given out. The inaccurate information being given out by this councillor on the Lake Grounds has had the effect of turning resident against resident, which she is shocked about and she went on to agree in part with the member of the public who raised issues with the internet coverage and people have now lost sight of what the facts were. Why is the Ward Councillor for the Lake Grounds supporting the application for Town Green status at the Lake Grounds when such an idea is neither necessary nor applicable because of the categorisation this area already has? The land is already protected; a Town Green application is not applicable. She can't understand why residents are being told it is and that concerns her, why go for something that is unnecessary and it causes bad feeling in the town. Councillors said the Lake Grounds is full, please look again, we have no wheels park, other towns have, but we haven't. We now have no children's play equipment, because it has been refused consent by North Somerset Council. If a bandstand proposal finally gets resubmitted, that will probably not happen either. (Mrs. Hennessy held up a picture).

Mrs. Hennessy went on to say that she attended a Recreation and Works Committee meeting last week and was appalled by the language used towards people at Portishead who had put themselves forward to help out the Town Council. It is bemusing that some councillors object to residents raising valid concerns in this hall and indeed ran to the press to complain about personal attacks from residents without any evidence to substantiate their comments and yet some of these councillors seem oblivious to their own inappropriate language. The phrase she heard towards a well-meaning Gertie Gale voluntary Allotment Committee after the members resigned was "they have thrown all their toys out of the pram, I think there is only one answer we can give them and that's on your bike", "I'm afraid if their temperature gets high because they want more public money, then my temperature gets high as well" and "it's an absolute scandal how much money they have had out of the public purse". She went on to say that could she remind the people here that the Town Council purchased the allotments with public money. The Council has a statutory obligation to provide allotments unlike toilets, much to people's dismay. The Town Council has a written constitution on how to manage the Gertie Gales allotments and that includes asking for a voluntary committee to assist the Council.

When a group stepped forward to answer the request, to the Councillor who said the committee has had an obscene amount of money to promote their hobby, should please remember that the allotment committee that resigned were not running the allotments for themselves, they may have an allotment but they are running it for the council. The allotments are in fact the Town Council's responsibility and the committee were in fact doing the council a favour by coming forward to help, not the other way around. Perhaps the Town Councillor so despairing of our local volunteers and the allotment committee could pass ownership to the Allotment committee for a peppercorn rent or rate of £1 together with the public money the town council uses to maintain the allotments as part of their statutory obligation.

Mr. Smith interrupted Mrs. Hennessy and said it is down to the Committee to get stuck in and run the allotment site.

Mrs Hennessy said the issue is not with the Committee running the allotments but how the committee were being addressed by the Council. It is not the problem that is the issue it is the way it has been communicated and they don't feel that they have been listened to, the allotments don't belong to the committee they belong to the Town Council.

Political medalling and media medalling seem to cause local disharmony where there shouldn't be any. One year ago in this room she raised issues about information in the local media, if you want facts and accuracy she suggested that you read the North Somerset Times, which appears to be less tied into councillor's opinions, rather than the Post. If you have an interest in a topic please do not just listen to your councillor, listen to the people, those against and those for, read the paperwork and the facts, understandably many do not have the time, but it cannot be assumed that someone titled councillor has all the facts and if they do, don't expect all the information to automatically be shared. She went on to say that she was not there to have a go at the Council, she wanted to point out that the public of Portishead do an awful lot for the Council and are non-political. If some people in the town attended railway meetings Mrs Hennessy would speak in favour of the Town Council, who have been doing their utmost to make sure the railway comes back, including the issue of the level crossing. What doesn't seem to happen is the information is disseminated and the town council can't be blamed for that as certain members of the public only read what's in the paper.

Mrs Hennessy praised one Councillor Mrs Jean Lord for acting with the utmost integrity during the Wheels Park issue and challenging what she saw as inaccurate information coming from one of her own councillors. Another Councillor Mrs Ros Cruse also admirably stepped over the political party line on the Wheels Park issue, she fought for what was right for Portishead. Mrs Hennessy's daughter asked her mother what she thought she might achieve by coming to the meeting because the minutes don't always relay what happens at the meeting. Some people use political power in Portishead for personal reasons and she came here to thank all those people in Portishead who have a personal and social interest in the town and have had opportunities to influence life here for the benefit of all. Many are instrumental in making Portishead what it is today; we have a town to be proud of.

Mr. Oyns said most if not all of the Town Councillors have served the Town for some time and are pretty well known within the Town. Why then are they constantly elected by the people of the town and why it is at the last election they actually achieved

higher results? If they are not working for the town or if they are not seen as being the voice of the town, why are the people of Portishead electing them?

Mrs Reyna Knight wanted to thank everyone who is here that has raised issues that are relevant and can hopefully be followed through. It is easy to criticize. The Council quite often sit at the tables and listen to the criticism over what they have done. The Council has to follow certain rules and regulations that are laid down, including the fact that they have to have an Annual Town Meeting. Minutes of Council meetings should not be verbatim, only what has been decided in the end, so it is easy to criticize but at the same time criticism is also necessary. But it is easy to keep going back over what has happened but a lot of what has happened is because the Council has had to stick to the rules and regulations. We cannot cherry pick what we want to do; we just have to go through procedures. Mrs Knight said that no-one gets more frustrated than her when the council cannot do something quickly. She went on to say thank you again and if you think the council is doing a bad job, please stand for council.

Mr. Martin Cruse said that we should thank the staff of the Town Council. He felt that it can't be easy to deal with some people, but they are always courteous and polite, and thinks we should be proud of those people that help make this town this way.

Allan McMurray spoke about the good turnout. He spoke about councillors being individuals; forget what party they stand for. He went on to assure those in attendance, that the councillors are individually minded. Councillors from all parties have their own mind and will decide what they believe to be correct. Mr McMurray said he has never been told what to say and will make his decision on what he believes to be right.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item .6)

The Chairman asked if there was any other business.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.48.pm.

Minutes approved at the 2014 Annual Town Meeting

Signed

Dated