

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE GODMANCHESTER TOWN HALL
ON THURSDAY 15 MAY 2008**

PRESENT: M COHEN Town Mayor,

Councillors: D BROWN, H R BUTCHER, T CANT, M DOBBIE, MRS C DUTTON, J DUTTON,

A GOFF, Mrs H HULL, C R HYAMS Deputy Town Mayor, Mrs A M LOOKER, MS D MIDDLETON, C RICHARDSON, M RZYMEK, C VANE PERCY, N WELLS, G WILSON

Town Clerk: Mrs M Liddiard

Deputy Mace Bearer: Mr F Carter

In attendance: Reverend A Woodbridge

1 member of public was present

A MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL WAS HELD ON THURSDAY 8TH MAY 2008 WHEN THE FOLLOWING COUNCILLORS SIGNED THEIR DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE:

HUGH RICHARD BUTCHER, TIMOTHY CANT, MALCOLM COHEN, MICHAEL DOBBIE, BEATRICE CLAIRE DUTTON, JEFFREY DUTTON, ALAN GOFF, COLIN HYAMS, ANN LOOKER, DEBBIE MIDDLETON, CHARLES RICHARDSON, MARK RZYMEK, CHRISTOPHER VANE PERCY, NICHOLAS WELLS, GRAHAM WILSON.

All Councillors were presented with various documents for information including the Code of Conduct, a copy of current Financial Regulations relating to Godmanchester Town Council, and a copy of The Parish Councillor's Guide. Nomination papers were distributed for the position of Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor and the Town Clerk asked that completed nomination forms be returned to the Town Office no later than 14th May 2008.

Planning Applications were discussed and it was AGREED a formal decision would be taken at the Town Council meeting to be held on 15th May 2008.

The Town Clerk reported no apologies had been received.

08/35 CO-OPTION OF TOWN COUNCILLOR AND DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Mr David Brown, having been co-opted to the vacant position as Town Councillor for Godmanchester Town Council, duly read and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

7.36pm CLLR MRS HULL ARRIVED

Cllr DUTTON raised a point of order. He wished the Council to be aware that the Town Clerk had signed Cllr Wilson's nomination form to stand as a candidate in the recent District Council elections. He considered that therefore the Town Clerk was in a position whereby her impartiality could be questioned, contrary to paragraph 3(2)(d) of the Code of Conduct. It was AGREED this matter would be discussed later in the meeting.

08/36 ADDRESS BY TWO COUNCILLORS STANDING FOR TOWN MAYOR

The Town Clerk confirmed two candidates had been duly nominated for the position of Town Mayor. THE MAYOR invited CLLR HYAMS and CLLR WILSON to address the Council for 3 minutes each. Following discussion it was agreed that the Councillors would speak in alphabetical order. The candidate not addressing the meeting was asked to leave the room.

08/37 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE: MRS H HULL

Mrs Helen Hull, having been elected to the role as Town Councillor for Godmanchester Town Council, duly read and signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Following the addresses, a voting paper was completed by Cllrs. The Town Clerk counted the votes and announced that CLLR HYAMS had received 7 votes and CLLR WILSON 10 votes. The Mayor announced that therefore CLLR WILSON was duly elected to serve as Mayor for the forthcoming year. There was one nomination for Deputy Mayor – CLLR COHEN. He was duly appointed.

OUTGOING MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE MAYOR read the following speech to those present:

First, I would like to thank Godmanchester Town Council for allowing me to be Mayor of the town. With the history of the appointment, it was very warming as a relative new comer to the town - just 14 years - to be accepted. It has been a fascinating year. I have represented our town across the county at Civic, charitable and service events and, in case you doubt my geography, into neighbouring counties. From Wisbech – Queen of the Fens as she calls herself - to St Ives – calling herself the jewel in the crown of the county, although many might disagree with that – and from Downham Market to Sandy, we have been welcomed everywhere, and many have reciprocated and been to events in Godmanchester. I almost made the ton but fell just short, representing the town four times this week and six times this month to end on 99. The Mace Bearer and I attended a mace re-dedication in Wisbech, at which we were mooned – and the Lady Mayor of Kings' Lynn still dines out on the experience. Locally, the Mayor makes themselves the most unpopular person in town, judging the Guy competition at the schools in November, the children's fancy dress competition on Gala Day and even the allotment competition.

There have been some successes and some we still await the outcome. There are finally new curtains in the QES, the newsletter continues to flourish, we have a great deal of new blood on the Council, improvements continue around the town, although the jury is still out on the continued increase in new houses. And I am delighted to hand over a shield to be awarded each year to the best-kept garden, in conjunction with Godmanchester in Bloom. Twinning continues afoot, although it was the Deputy Mayor who had the opportunity to visit Szentendre this year. There was also a very successful visit by young people from Germany, Hungary and France as part of twinning. I hope that the next Mayor will continue to attend the twinning meetings.

My Charity for the year has been the East Anglia's Children's Hospice (EACH) at Milton. I had a delightful but very educational and humbling visit at the start of my year, which encouraged me to make every effort possible to help. And thanks to a great many people we have been able to. The Civic Service started the year, and the Parish Church Council was so

generous in passing the entire collection to my Charity. There was then a Concert in the Church with the Huntingdon Male Voice Choir and the choirs of the two schools. It was a great success and enjoyed by all who attended. Then the new Coop Shop put on a skating night immediately before Christmas outside the Town Hall. Unfortunately I missed it, being out of the country, but the bucket was passed round and a good collection made. In the New Year, the Coop Shop was again at the forefront in helping with the Fair Trade evening in the QES. And finally, during a quiz night at the White Hart, I spoke to a chap who said he was running in the London Marathon for fun. I pointed out that no one did that for fun so, as he had no charity lined up, he agreed to run for EACH. By the time all of the money is added up, I will have been able to give EACH in excess of £3000 – a tremendous effort from our community. And a big thanks to you to all.

But more specifically. To the Reverend Busk who, with his growing family, has settled so well in the town and to the PCC, to the amazing help from Adrian White at the Coop, to the Huntingdon Male Voice Choir and the heads and choirs of the two schools – a great credit to our community – and to Mark Beagley for a London Marathon of just over three hours and the White Hart who have been so helpful. To the Lady on my left, the Town Clerk and to her assistant David Roffe, without whom the year would not have been possible and, of course, to my wife, Anne, who has supported me throughout the year despite her initial doubts.

My congratulations to the incoming Mayor and I wish him all the best, and hope he has as successful and ultimately enjoyable year as we have had.

08/38 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th April 2008 were APPROVED and signed as a complete and accurate record. CLLR MRS LOOKER thanked CLLR COHEN and his wife for their hard work during the year. THE MAYOR also thanked the Deputy - CLLR HYAMS for his support throughout the year.

08/39 INAUGURATION OF THE TOWN MAYOR FOR 2008/2009

THE MAYOR welcomed Reverend Adrian Woodbridge to the meeting and asked him to lead the Council in prayer for the Queen, the Town, the Mayor and Councillors.

CLLR WILSON having been duly elected as Town Mayor, read and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

THE MAYOR thanked CLLR COHEN for his work during the preceding year and presented him with a Former Mayor's badge. He also thanked his wife Anne for her support and work during the year.

THE MAYOR then outlined the agenda for the rest of the meeting. Whilst referring to the item on District/County Council reports, CLLR HYAMS stated that he would not be providing feedback on District and County matters as he believed that CLLR WILSON had used the information he had previously provided at Town Council meetings in his recent election addresses. THE MAYOR asked for examples because he believed that nothing he had written was provided by CLLR HYAMS. CLLR HYAMS declined to provide examples.

CLLR DUTTON AGREED he would provide reports on County Council matters for Godmanchester. Although he is a District Councillor for a Huntingdon Ward, he would also endeavour to provide feedback relevant to Godmanchester.

08/40 INAUGURATION OF DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR

CLLR COHEN having been duly elected as Deputy Town Mayor, read and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

08/41 MAYORAL PURSE

Following discussion, it was AGREED that the current rate of £1700 per annum was acceptable and this amount would be issued to THE MAYOR.

08/42 DISCUSSION ON POINT OF ORDER RAISED BY CLLR DUTTON

CLLR DUTTON reminded the meeting of his concern regarding a breach in the Code of Conduct, suggesting the Town Clerk may have acted contrary to the Code of Conduct by acting in a biased way towards CLLR WILSON by signing his District Council election nomination paper.

THE MAYOR said that, for the benefit of the Council, he would outline the background to the issue. He said that he had asked the Town Clerk to sign his nomination form as a friend and resident of Godmanchester. He apologised if he had put the Town Clerk in a difficult position, but considered the Town Clerk had acted reasonably. He did not ask her to carry out her duties in a biased or partisan way. He went on to say that he had not asked her to help prepare party political material, or to help in the election in any way.

The Town Clerk stated she had signed the form, which merely indicated that CLLR WILSON was a fit and proper person to stand, and she would have signed other candidates' nomination papers on the same basis.

CLLR HYAMS said he had sought advice from HDC and considered that there was still an issue of transparency and, for example, the election for Mayor should have been conducted by two impartial adjudicators rather than the Town Clerk and asked if the Council could be certain the votes were counted fairly. Following further discussion the acting Mace Bearer recounted the votes and confirmed the result. CLLR HYAMS called into question the transparency of the Town Clerk, as lead officer of the Council, suggesting she could have acted with bias towards any resident wishing to be considered for a seat on Godmanchester Town Council.

CLLR BROWN stated he had total confidence in the integrity of the Town Clerk and considered he spoke on behalf of his fellow Councillors.

CLLR VANE PERCY stated that party politics has no place in the workings of Godmanchester Town Council. CLLR DUTTON said that he had wanted to raise the matter and now the Council was aware of his concerns, he would not be pursuing the issue further.

Town Clerk's Note: An issue was raised at the meeting by Cllr Hyams, which could be seen to question the integrity and honesty of the Town Clerk (Mrs Liddiard). The Town Clerk

decided, on advice, that in accordance with her Terms and Conditions of Employment the matter should, initially, be raised informally with Cllr Hyams, in order to try to resolve the issue. A meeting between the Town Clerk and Cllr Hyams took place where Cllr Hyams stated that he had full confidence in the Town Clerk's honesty and integrity and that he in no way wished his statement at the meeting to be interpreted in any other way. It was also agreed that Cllr Hyams would make a short statement to this effect at the next Town Council meeting. On investigation, it was clear that the Town Clerk had not acted illegally, immorally, inappropriately or in any way, which could call into question her honesty, integrity or her suitability for the post of Town Clerk.

08/43 MATTERS ARISING

The Town Clerk read through the list of outstanding matters and advised on the current position in each case.

CLLR BROWN advised that the Godmanchester in Bloom Committee had drawn up a list of areas within the Town that they would like to see improved. CLLR VANE PERCY suggested that some of these areas should already be taken care of by the Town Council. It was AGREED that the Town Clerk would liaise with CLLR BROWN and our Grounds Maintenance Contractor to establish costs for the works not currently covered by our contract.

CLLR BROWN has spoken with Community Services and they have AGREED to undertake the painting of the railings along The Avenue. Materials will be provided by the Town Council and it was AGREED that the costs could include say £30 for refreshments for the workforce. CLLR BROWN will advise of probable costs of materials and a timescale for the project to be undertaken.

CLLR COHEN is still working on production of Standing Orders for Godmanchester Town Council. He hopes to be able to circulate these before the next Town Council meeting.

08/44 APPROVAL OF NEW BANK MANDATE

It was AGREED that the Town Clerk could confirm with our Bankers, Barclays, details of the new bank mandate. All Cllrs would become authorised signatories and the mandate would allow any 2 of the 17 to sign cheques on behalf of Godmanchester Town Council. The Town Clerk is also a signatory for the account, but does not sign cheques. This is in accordance with our Financial Regulations.

08/45 DISCUSSION AND ALLOCATION OF AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

All Cllrs were given the opportunity to volunteer to become the lead Councillor on the subject areas currently identified by the Town Council. The Town Clerk would prepare a list for all Cllrs and with immediate effect any correspondence on these matters would be passed, in the first instance, to the Cllr accepting the responsibility.

The meeting was adjourned at 9.15pm for questions from members of the public. There being none, Town Councillors adjourned to the QES to have a group photograph taken. The meeting was reconvened at 9.30pm.

08/46 APPROVAL OF ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR SUBMISSION TO AUDIT

The Town Clerk had provided a copy of the end of year accounts for all Cllrs and confirmed the Internal Auditor had inspected the accounts and approved them as ready for submission to the external auditor. The Town Clerk advised a notice would be displayed from 20th May advising residents that the period of inspection for the accounts would be from 3rd – 30th June.

The Town Council formally AGREED 8 statements relating to the Annual Governance Statement and THE MAYOR signed the accounts as being a proper record.

08/47 CORRESPONDENCE see Appendix A

The Environment Agency has written to advise they will re-start the flood alleviation scheme appraisal process for properties in the flood risk area in Godmanchester. CLLR HYAMS will liaise with HDC on this matter. CLLR VANE PERCY and CLLR MRS HULL declared an interest.

It was AGREED to renew our annual membership of the Open Spaces Society.

08/48 ACCOUNTS

The accounts set out in Appendix B were APPROVED. A petty cash account for the period ending 15th May 2008 was presented to the Council.

08/49 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The applications and correspondence set out in Appendix C were considered. The Town Clerk would advise HDC of the Council's recommendations. CLLR DUTTON declared an interest and did not take part in any discussion on planning matters. CLLR VANE PERCY declared an interest in one application: 0801154FUL.

08/50 DISTRICT/COUNTY COUNCIL REPORTS

No reports.

08/51 WORKING PARTY (WP) REPORTS: not covered by correspondence

CLLR BUTCHER reported that the route around Monks Pitt had been curtailed considerably and that the footpath had been marked out by the Footpaths Officer and now goes around the perimeter but does not go anywhere near the water's edge. The Town Council had not been advised prior to the fencing being erected and CLLR HYAMS and CLLR DUTTON will follow this matter up at Cambs County Council level.

CLLR MRS LOOKER, who has taken on responsibility for co-ordinating celebrations for 2012, has asked that anyone with ideas of how to mark the occasion should contact her.

CLLR HYAMS and CLLR MS MIDDLETON will work on the next edition of the Town Council newsletter. All contributions to them by the end of the month please.

MISCELLANEOUS

Friends of the QES have advised they would be keen to attend a Town Council meeting to explain the work they do and provide details of the museum. Town Clerk would invite them to the July meeting.

CLLR COHEN advised that the Big Harted Bikers, whose organiser Paul Burrige lives in Godmanchester, had been raising money for Cancer Research by visiting 5 motorcycle racetracks in 5 countries in 5 days. They were returning to the White Hart in Godmanchester at 5pm on Friday 16th. He urged fellow Cllrs to be there to support their excellent efforts.

The meeting ended at 10.30pm Mayor