

RUSHDEN TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF RUSHDEN TOWN COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE CALL ON TUESDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER 2020 COMMENCING AT 7.30 PM.

Present: Councillor: Cllr Melanie Coleman – Town Mayor

Councillors:	Sarah Peacock	Carol Childs	Richard Lewis
	Marian Hollomon	Philip Humphrey	Tracey Smith
	David Jenney	Janet Pinnock	Robin Underwood
	Gill Mercer	Andy Mercer	Steven North
	Kaye Rawlins	David Coleman	Cesare Marinaro
	Paul Harley	Adrian House	Barbara Jenney

131/21 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR

It was proposed by Councillor Kaye Rawlins, seconded by Councillor Cesare Marinaro and

RESOLVED

That Melanie Coleman is to be elected as Town Mayor of Rushden for the forthcoming Council Year 2020/2021.

132/21 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Councillor Melanie Coleman signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and having done so took the Chair.

133/21 MAYOR'S ADDRESS

“ I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for the opportunity to represent our Town. It will obviously be a very different and challenging time for all Civics but, we will have to think outside the box to bring something new to the table.

We were lucky during the last year to attend a few events with Cesare and Sabina and cover events when required. I know Cesare has had a wonderful time and I have to say it's a relief to see him in one piece after his Skydive on Sunday. Many Congratulations Cesare on a very successful Mayoral term.

I think Covid has made us all think differently to re-value what matters. Therefore David and I will accept every opportunity offered to represent our town however different they may present themselves.

Family is so important and having our grandson born during lockdown was very strange, both wonderful but sad having to wait 8 weeks to hold him. I wanted to show Sebastian off tonight but that is not to be. He is on here somewhere--- and I can concur with every grandparent--- our grandchild is the best.

It is at this point I would normally tell you something of myself and my links to Rushden but in the light of the situation I decided to do something different. Please forgive the scanning..... its modern free verse.

What a Quandry

*What an honour and a privilege to be Mayor of Rushden Town
I've lived here 36 years and my goodness how its grown.*

*This year's been strange, the Covid “thing”, everyone is aware of that!
But crucially I need advice..... do I still get to wear a hat?*

*I've quite a collection, as some of you may know,
Both large and small, and some adorned with just a bow.*

*Fascinators, cloche hats some quite old, and some quite new
So many to choose from! Not forgetting recycled too.
Looking back through history, hats have always had a place
For Churchill there was a Homburg, a shape to suit his face.
Jackie K had the 'Pill Box 'an icon of elegant style,
Not a look to copy for she'd win it by a mile.
There are army and baseball, beanie hats to name a few,
Berets, boaters, fez, stovepipe and sugar loaf are in there too,
Golf caps, Pith helmets, Davy Crocket, Panamas ' ;
Fur hats and sleeping caps to wear with pyjamas
Pork pies, top hats, trilbies, bicorne and fedora
Cowboy hats and straw hats adorned with so much flora!
Now back to the question I posed right at the start,
'Do I still get to wear a hat?'
Well one things for certain I'll wear this one with pride,
You can be extremely sure of that."*

134/21 VOTE OF THANKS TO RETIRING MAYOR

Councillor Gill Mercer moved a vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor, Councillor Cesare Marinaro who had worked tirelessly during his mayoral year.

Councillor Philip Humphrey seconded the motion and when put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

That a vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor Councillor Cesare Marinaro be recorded.

Councillor Gill Mercer gave the following vote of thanks:

"When Cesare became Mayor of Rushden in May 2019 little did he or any of us know that this would be no ordinary year.

Cesare threw himself into the role and represented Rushden in lots of places, attending civic services, local sports events and of course our own town events. After initially being a bit apprehensive of how he would fit the job around his business he soon adapted and found the time.

Then in March this year, when he would have been attending the last few social events and hosting events of his own, the pandemic hit and we were all forced to work very differently.

We decided to extend Cesare's term until September so he has now had an extra 6 months of a very different world. He has still however been very active visiting businesses in the High Street and around Rushden to encourage them once they could re-open, plus congratulating those with special birthdays such as Osborne Sports and Toys. He has been clapping outside care homes and visiting residents with special birthdays- socially distanced and with a mask of course. He was even to be seen dressed as Worzel Gummidge to advertise our Garden competition and literally thrown himself out of plane with his skydive for his chosen charities.

The whole way through these turbulent 18 months Cesare has done the town proud and represented us as much as the conditions have allowed.

I would therefore like to propose a vote of thanks to Cesare and Sabina his consort for the effort and dedication that they have put into this role on behalf of the Town Council and the Town of Rushden.”

Councillor Cesare Marinaro responded with the following;

“I would like to thank everyone who has supported me during the last eighteen months. It has been a strange time for us all and I am disappointed that I haven’t been able to carry out all the duties and events that I would normally have done in a Mayoral year.

On a positive note I did manage to have my charity golf day and carry out my skydive (not to be repeated !!) and have raised in excess of £14,000 for my chosen charities. I am extremely grateful to all that have supported these events and hope Rushden MIND and The Teenage Cancer Trust will be pleased with my efforts.

I would like to give big thank you to my consort Sabina and my children, who have supported me throughout my term in office and a huge thank you goes to Jemma for keeping me on track. I would also like to thank all the staff at Rushden Town Council for their support in many ways, during this difficult time.

I wish Melanie congratulations and she and David a successful Mayoral term and hope they enjoy it as much as I have done.”

135/21 ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR

Councillor Melanie Coleman, Town Mayor proposed that due to Covid 19 a Deputy Mayor will not be elected for 2020/2021, the role will be fulfilled by a member of Rushden Town Council when required.

It was

RESOLVED

That the motion be carried

136/21 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf Councillors Ron Pinnock and Colin Wright.

137/21 ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Mayor, Councillor Melanie Coleman asked for nominations for the Leader of the Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Mercer that Councillor Sarah Peacock be appointed Leader of the Council for the year 2020/2021 and seconded by Councillor David Coleman. It was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Sarah Peacock be appointed Leader of Rushden Town Council for the forthcoming Council Year 2020/2021.

138/21 LEADER'S ADDRESS

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Sarah Peacock made the following address:

Good evening.

Firstly, may I give my thanks to Cllr Cesare and Sabina Marinaro for the past 16 months of civic duties which they have carried out in difficult circumstances. They agreed to extend their term in order to address the pandemic which we hoped would be short lived. How wrong we were.

That said they have met and greeted, at social distances more recently, to acknowledge the work that goes on in this town, to celebrate special occasions and to represent us at functions around the surrounding counties.

Cesare's fund raising has been exceptional in this terrible climate with his final one making the skies the limit, literally. The parachute jump on Sunday has never been done by a Rushden Mayor before, but I don't think Melanie will be following! But I know she has some events planned for her year and I wish her and her consort Cllr David Coleman well.

This has been an exceptional 16 months not only for this Council but the World as a whole. That said, we have continued to deliver our statutory obligations with the support of the Town Clerk, Vivienne, and all other staff members. Throughout this pandemic they have continued to work and put in place guidelines from the Government to make this town a safer place. From delivering signage to putting up sanitizers in the town centre. Supporting our local businesses and passing on, via social media, the latest information from various bodies. In return we have had some fantastic support from the community and businesses.

Members have also had extended terms of office and I thank them too, due to the cancellation of the May elections. They have learnt new skills via Zoom and are mastering the art of the "Mute" button. We have continued to meet and discuss local issues from Planning to Community and signed off our end of year finances on time.

We had a short time of a limited committee meetings, but we are now back to our normal calendar of meetings and have restarted up two working parties for Business and the High St Improvements. These, we had put on hold whilst we concentrated on Manor Park and the new Rugby Club/Community facility planning applications but now is the right time to begin them again as our High St changes and business need support. We are continually looking forward and hope to work with the new Unitary going forward.

The applications for Manor Park /Community facility have been resubmitted after a withdrawal due to a request from the planners for more information. This is a once in a life time opportunity for this council to deliver a much-needed community facility after the loss of the Pemberton Centre and enabling us to have a chance to increase our open space for future generations and provide the Town with a facility to be proud of. I would like to thank the Asset WP for their commitment to this project and we look forward to a positive outcome in a few months' time when we can start to deliver the product.

We had delivered several projects before lock down struck. One being the delivery on a new Grounds Maintenance contract. After a long process of nearly eighteen months and a lot of reading and scoring from the working party with the help of the Town Clerk and Paul Wilcox our Contracts Manager, Turney Landscapes achieved the highest score and retained the contract for a further seven years. Competition was very close

and the exercise is of course necessary to ensure we comply with strict procurement procedures. However, I am sure you will agree the condition of our parks and open spaces are a credit to them and us and have been much appreciated in these times of lock down. The flowers have also lifted everyone's spirits on these dark days. We achieved our 6th Green Flag in July 2019 which is excellent and acknowledges all the hard work put in by the staff. We are awaiting this year's results as they are delayed due to Covid 19.

Play areas in Hall Park and Tweed Crescent have finally had new equipment added. This again was delayed due to Covid.

We delivered all our usual events in 2019 Celebrate Rushden, Soap Box Derby, Party in the Park with the Beatles and Pizza, the Proms and Dog Show to name but a few and of course our family Christmas light switch on. They all seem a long time ago. A lot of work goes into everything we do, and I thank all those involved including Councillors, Staff and Volunteers from the community.

We also now support several events within the town. The Armed Forces Day, Remembrance Sunday, Destination Nene Valley Festival and the NN10 Road Run. The P & R Committee continue to monitor and review our policies annually and we have amended some this year to acknowledge the Covid regulations which have come into force. The Budget setting is always a difficult decision but one that we know helps us to deliver local services. We also reviewed our Business Plan to set out our goals and direction of travel 2020-2025.

The beginning of 2020 started off well with the addition of a member of staff joining us to help deliver the social media aspects. Little did we know how important this role was to become in the coming months. The media group had also put together some special editions of Rushden Matters to celebrate our 20th year as a council. These celebrations will now be held over and become our 21st!

With the Structural Change Order being granted by the Government that started the clock on Local Government Reforms and the formation of the new Unitary, North Northants, and the end of an era for East Northamptonshire Council. The Shadow Board is helping to set up the new Unitary and the Town Councils will become involved shortly, though they will have no jurisdiction over us, we may see some extra services come our way if we wish to take them on.

The Rushden Neighbourhood Plan was tested at an appeal against ENC regarding the development at Northampton Rd for 80 houses. The Inspector upheld the appeal and our Neighbourhood Plan was instrumental in supporting this. That said during the coming year we will start to review the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure it is relevant and remains a living document.

The Planning Committee still seem to be addressing some controversial applications and we are learning all the time, though our comments are not always agreed with we will not give up on using the policies to get the best for our town. "Flats" being a word that send shivers down the spines of us all! as we try to address what we see as an overprovision of this type of accommodation within the Town.

Cllr David Coleman and I represent the town on the Rushden East Board and hopefully this will scheme will develop into a live application shortly.

As March approached so did the Lockdown accompanied by a truly alien way of working and meeting each other. Social Distancing is now the norm. We are wary of everyone we meet which is so sad and we communicate behind Perspex screens.

Sanitize and hand washing is the norm. Here at RTC we have installed a temperature system as well as track and trace. This gives our staff extra protection, though at the moment the office is not receiving visitors in person, telephone is the first port of call. However, we are still communicating and delivering grants. We have given out 5 Community grants 6 Shop front Grants and have recently launch an emergency grant for smaller community groups who may be struggling during Covid. These are a one off £500 grant.

We have updated the CCTV in the Hall Park and supported ENC with the Drug Dogs that visit local licensed premises. These have proved very beneficial and we hope to support another one once they begin again after lockdown. Also, Avenue Rd and Newton Road have seen LED street lights installed. Others will follow in the remaining streets that we are responsible for.

There are projects waiting to be installed. New defibrillator's in the parks and some old phone boxes are being used to house them around the town. Working with businesses and community groups to provide them where there is a gap in the national list is also an option we are looking at.

The bus shelters at Skinners Hill are waiting to be replaced so hopefully that will be in the coming months now that businesses are starting up again so watch that space. Also, the much-awaited VAR cameras should soon be heading towards Avenue Rd and other areas identified in the town. Once again, we have been waiting for NCC to calibrate them and sign the off.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your support during this difficult 16 months, especially Cllr Richard Lewis who as my deputy receives some emails at odd times of the day but I think he will agree our leaders' meetings with the Town Clerk via Zoom have proved very successful.

As we move towards the festive season and the final quarter of this year, we will continue to do our best and support our community whenever we can. We have exciting times and challenging times ahead and need to keep moving forward. Hopefully 2021 will be a little more "normal" whatever that may be.

Our aim is to:-

- Deliver the new community/sports hub facility,*
- To design a new community space in the town and to work with the Unitary and other bodies to improve the offer of the High St.*
- To work with the Businesses within our town for the benefit of us all.*
- To continue to consult and make representations on all planning applications that affect our town and parish boundaries*

Rushden Town Council will keep "Looking to the Future"

139/21 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of Rushden Town Council held on 4th August 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

140/21 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES 2020/2021

- (a) Appointment of Standing Committees

RESOLVED

(a) That the Standing Committees for 2020/21 be:

- Policy & Resources Committee
- Planning Consultative Committee
- Community Services Committee

(b) Membership of committees:

RESOLVED

That membership of the committees be as follows:

Policy & Resources Committee

Sarah Peacock, Philip Humphrey, Gill Mercer, Richard Lewis, Steven North, David Jenney, Ron Pinnock, Janet Pinnock, Colin Wright, Robin Underwood, Barbara Jenney, Adrian House, Andy Mercer, David Coleman and Melanie Coleman.

Planning Consultative Committee

Paul Harley, David Coleman, Cesare Marinaro, Philip Humphrey, Sarah Peacock, Richard Lewis, Marian Hollomon, Carol Childs, David Jenney, Kaye Rawlins, Tracey Smith and Melanie Coleman.

Community Services Committee

Adrian House, Tracey Smith, Barbara Jenney, Janet Pinnock, Richard Lewis, Carol Childs, Marian Hollomon, Sarah Peacock, Gill Mercer, Melanie Coleman, Paul Harley, and David Coleman.

141/21 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members were circulated with details of proposed representatives to outside bodies as follows:

Rushden Parochial Charities

Councillor Sarah Peacock to serve until 26th May 2022 (subject to Parochial Charities approval)

Councillor Kaye Rawlins to serve until 20th May 2025 (subject to Parochial Charities approval)

Councillor Barbara Jenney to serve until 20th May 2025 (subject to Parochial Charities approval)

Councillor Andy D Mercer to serve until 20th May 2025 (subject to Parochial Charities approval)

Councillor Robin Underwood to serve until 6th May 2021 (subject to Parochial Charities approval)

Joint Action Group

Councillor Marian Hollomon
Town Clerk, Vivienne Prodger

Northants County Association of Local Councils

Councillor R Lewis

Northamptonshire Larger Councils Partnership

Councillor Sarah Peacock

Town Clerk, Vivienne Prodger

Rushden East Project Board

Councillor Sarah Peacock

Councillor David Coleman

Rushden Town Partnership

Councillor Barbara Jenney

Town Manager, Julie Thorneycroft

RESOLVED

That the list of appointments to outside bodies as mentioned above be approved.

142/21 MEETINGS OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES

The proposed calendar of meetings of the Council and its Committees for 2020/2021 had been previously circulated to members and it was

RESOLVED

That the calendar of meetings as appended to these minutes be approved.

143/21 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

Members were advised of the list of current signatories. It was

RESOLVED

That cheques and orders for payments continued to be signed by any two from the following:
Cllr Mrs S Peacock, Cllr R Lewis, Cllr Mrs G Mercer, Cllr Mrs M Hollomon,
Cllr R Pinnock and Cllr P Humphrey.

Chairman