

Rugeley Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held at Rose Theatre
7.00pm Thursday 16th May 2024.

PRESENT:

Approx 10 members of Public

Councillors: G Kirkham (Chair) K Hart J Parkes
 R Lewis J Hyden W Clark
 A Miller D Gaye (Part)

Also Present: M Matthews (Interim Town Clerk)
 Cllr D Williams (District)

Min No	Item	Action
1	Chair of Rugeley Town Council to welcome members of the public Cllr Glenn Kirkham as chair welcomed everyone	
2	Apologies Apologies from Cllrs Gaye, Hughes, Lees, Lyons and Foceac	
3	Receive and confirm minutes of the last meeting held on 21st March 2023 Cllrs Parkes and Hart confirmed minutes	
4	To receive a report on the activities of the Town Council in 2023/24 During 2023/24 the Council have: a. Resurrected the Thursday Street Market which started well and is still developing. b. Maintained the monthly Artisan Market that continues to draw people into the town. c. Held a bigger Christmas Light switch on. Well supported by local schools who came to entertain the crowds. d. Council also supported the Charter Fair, thank you to the 'Friends of the Charter fair' without whom it would not have been possible. e. Council is also proud to have been able to support the annual Remembrance Parade & Service in November. f. Following the significant investment for the installation of the insulated roofing and solar panels it first appeared that the council energy bills	

	<p>were showing no reduction. A small working party of councillors have investigated in some detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The panels are definitely working and generating electricity. ii. The energy tariff we are on is now three times higher than the previous tariff and we are tied into it until 1st April 2026. iii. Council do not have ability to sell excess energy back to the grid. <p>Council are looking at ways to either change tariff and/or gain credit for any excess energy produced.</p> <p>Council has undergone quite a number of changes during the year. Having begun the year with just 4 councillors Rugeley Town with uncontested elections and co-option it regained a full complement of councillors – with nine new councillors all with new enthusiasm and new ideas. During the year we have also had 8 councillors resign including the sad death of Cllr Mike Davey. Currently there are 4 vacancies and there now appears to be a queue of prospective councillors standing for co-option next month. Our mission going forward is to significantly expand the council’s engagement with the local community and to raise the Council profile.</p> <p>Rugeley Town Council will be firmly adhering to the principles of Honesty, Accountability, Trust, Transparency, Integrity and above all engagement with the community of Rugeley.</p> <p>Our interim Town Clerk Mel, has this month ensured central government funded grants of around £32,000 that can be spent on Community Developments for Rugeley subject to certain criteria that the grant will enhance the lives of the Rugeley community.</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>Theft of monies 2017/18 – statement to be read by the Chair of the Town Council</p> <p>In June 2019 it was revealed that RTC had been defrauded of £218,000 by a previous member of council staff. Council needs to have transparency at the root of its very foundation, therefore the final statement from the Insurers was read out:</p> <p>“Independently of the responsible employee or authorised volunteers, bank statements, receipts, counterfoils and supporting documents shall be checked at least monthly against the cashbook entries and the balance tested with cash & unrepresented cheques. Had this been complied with then the first losses would have been discovered within a maximum of a month and possibly less”</p> <p>The Council and Responsible Finance Officer are now fully confident that the existing Financial Regulations are being complied with. The Responsible Finance Officer and the Council have worked closely together to refine the Financial Controls and further consolidation of the documented Financial Regulations will take place in July 2024.</p>	

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	<p>Member of the public asked were the persons overseeing the clerk during the fraud been held accountable to criminal activity. Cllr Kirkham answered that following the investigation, no one other the one member of staff was found to have done any criminal activity.</p>	
6	<p>Rose Theatre – statement to be ready by the Chair of the Town Council A new managing body is now in place for the Rose Theatre and they are undertaking a full operations review to establish how to make best use of this undeniably valuable community asset. A significant amount of the council precept is consumed by the Rose Theatre. The review is to look at ways to achieve a near net cost neutral operation and nothing will be 'off the table'.</p>	
7	<p>Feedback on the Connected Community Event The council's original intention was to host a connected community forum before the Parish Meeting. This event was intended to gather different Rugeley societies and community groups to cross fertilise ideas, share objectives and concerns and pool resources. This years Connected Community Event was a total failure with the idea had only been agreed recently, giving very little time to engage with Rugeley groups. The intention remains to come together again in the future as a community whilst giving groups more notice and to get them actively engaging with the council and with each other. The aim is to run the event again within the next 6 months and learn from that session.</p> <p>We are also planning to set up monthly councillor surgeries on dates that will be published shortly.</p>	
8	<p>Open Forum Member of the public asked: 1. If we could get any progress on the drain covers on Greenfields Drive as they are a health and safety concern, also the road sign has gone. Town Clerk advised she would raise tickets on behalf of the member to the relevant authorities.</p> <p>2. How are you going to contact community groups or find out about groups? Chair answered by saying we will start by redoing the community list that is now out of date to update contact details. Public suggested to use local Facebook group which says what is going on around the area. Page was noted.</p> <p>3. Asked what was happening about past announcement about a Business Development Manager as an officer of the council, as traders aren't aware if we have one. Cllr Hart explained we are now supporting local businesses, that we are speaking to local traders to support Charter Fair then going further afield. Clerk explained that we will be in touch with communities more and she recently visited Artisan and Thursday market to speak to stall holders.</p>	<p>MM to raise tickets</p> <p>Community list to be updated</p>

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	<p>4. If the heritage is important, how are we going to support it including the hydro tunnels and Hagley caves? Chair confirmed that our history is extremely important and suggested that we look into it further for the possibility to use funding from Cannock.</p> <p>5. Lea Hall Band are now 3rd in the country and have no where local to practice, could we use some funding for a band stage in town? Chair confirmed we would look at funding for this idea</p> <p>6. Could the unused ground by Brewery Street be used as a bike storage to bring in bikers from the Heritage Trail into town? Chair confirmed we would look at funding for this idea. District Cllr Williams said he would investigate who owned the land on our behalf.</p> <p>7. Could we re look at the neighbourhood plan? Cllr Gaye said that it must be public led and will look at Cannock Woods as that is a good example to go from.</p> <p>8. Where did the money from the commonwealth games go? Chair said we would investigate getting an answer to this question.</p> <p>9. Who looks after the cycle track on Sheep Fair as it goes against traffic and an accident waiting to happen? Chair said we will investigate it and ticket findings to relevant authority.</p>	<p>To build funding material</p> <p>To build funding material</p> <p>To build funding material</p> <p>Council to review</p> <p>MM to investigate answer</p> <p>MM to raise ticket</p>
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The meeting finished at 7.59pm.

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