

**Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
held on **Tuesday 28th April 2015 at 7.00pm in The Institute,**  
**Yonder Street, Ottery St Mary**

**Present:** Mayor Councillor Dobson  
Councillors Holmes, Thurgood (Town Ward) Bailey, Mitchell, Talbot, (West Hill Ward) J Harding, L Harding (Tipton St John Ward) Bartlett, Hansford (North Ward) together with the Clerk, Press and 49 members of the public

**Apologies:** Councillors Giles and Pratt (Town Ward), Watmore (West Hill Ward).

The Rev. Stephen Weston led the meeting in prayer.

**1. WELCOME BY THE MAYOR – COUNCILLOR GLYN DOBSON**

Cllr Dobson welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited all Councillors present to introduce themselves. He thanked outgoing Councillors John Harding, George Hansford and Martin Thurgood for all that they have done.

**2. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2014**

The Minutes were approved and they were signed by the Mayor.

**3. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FOR THE PARISH - A PRESENTATION**

Cllr Thurgood showed a short film presentation on Neighbourhood Planning. He explained that the Parish of Ottery St Mary Town Council had been approved by East Devon District Council as the area. He emphasised that local people need to be involved as it is the Community's Plan. A Working Group has been established and it is looking for more members. Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been approved after a referendum then it must be taken into consideration by the District Council when deciding on planning applications. Developers are constrained by a Neighbourhood Plan. There is a lot to do to achieve a Neighbourhood Plan and the Working Group needs your views and your help. For more information look at the Council's website, at Community news sheets and take part in consultation events. People were asked to indicate their interest by completing a slip.

The Mayor thanked Cllr Thurgood and Cllr Talbot for their work so far.

**4. REPORT FROM DEVON & CORNWALL POLICE**

PCSO Maria Clapp gave the Police report for the area covering Ottery St Mary Town, West Hill, Tipton St John & Alfington.

“Recorded crime for last year stood at 195 compared to 185 this year. Please visualise the area I am talking about and also the affluence of the area. We do live in a very low crime area and should be very pleased. Although, we still want to make the area a perfect place. Violent Offences increased from 34- 48 Burglary decreased from 24- 7, Vehicle offences decreased from 18- 9, Shoplifting increased from 8- 10, Criminal Damage decreased from 32- 30, Other Theft (not in home, Bikes, phones etc) decreased from 51- 42. Overall Crime -12.8% .

Usually most detected crimes come from recorded assaults, where the victim invariably knows the assailant or from police generated crimes including drunk & disqualified drivers, public order offences such as being drunk & disorderly & being found in possession of drugs.

Police plans are well underway for our local events with the Special Constabulary supporting us. These events include Pixie Day & Tar Barrels.

Response Officers are now based at Ottery St Mary. They cover 24 hours a day 7 days a week, which can only be good for the town and surrounding areas. Therefore you will hopefully see the

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Police presence increased in this area. PC Chris Leisk is the Neighbourhood Team Leader (Sergeant). PC Cavin & PCSO Maria Clapp cover OSM town, Tipton St John & West Hill PC Kevin Hill (who is fairly new to the station) with PCSO Jack Stannard cover Cranbrook, Broadclyst, Poltimore, Upton Pyne, Brampford Speke, Rewe, Huxham, Stoke Canon & Netherexe, PC Simon Blyth (who is moving to Sidmouth shortly) covers Rockbeare, Talaton, Whimple, Feniton, Clyst Hydon, Clyst Honiton, Clyst St Lawrence, & Aylesbeare with PCSO Steve Trail. Patrols of the areas are conducted on a regular basis. Also officers are out in the area with the speed camera.

I will be running a cycling course at the Primary School in May. About 40 children are interested so far. This is for the reception to year 5 children, in preparation for the Bikeability Course when they are in Year 6.

Areas that we are concentrating on at the moment (due to reports & concerns) are the Land of Canaan Car Park (Boy Racers) and the Skate Park & Tennis Club area. The Tennis Club was broken into & the Skate Park has had a couple of bonfires & a huge amount of litter all over the place, even though there are bins on site.

At the Old Factory & the Salston Hotel (which are barricaded up) youths are getting in. We are really concerned for their safety. Therefore I am in the process of gathering names & going to arrange for the Fire Brigade to have words of advice with the youths and their parents and also speak at an assembly at the Kings School.

Youths are also going up to Head Weir, lighting fires & putting aerosols in them. I have seen evidence of this (on a mobile phone) - it could have been a very nasty incident!

We all know that children like to have fun and adventure, but we are really concerned for their safety. We would like to put a stop to this before an accident does happen and the parents are horrified!!”

**PC Buffie Cavin** then introduced herself and gave the following report:

“I have been in the Police for 30 years this July and have worked in both Devon and Cornwall in cities and on rural beats. I work 20 hrs a week on a rotating 4 week shift pattern. I like to think I have a common sense / practical approach to Policing and try and resolve issues before they get out of hand rather than after the horse has bolted.

Unfortunately we are still going through a period of massive change as a result of unprecedented budget cuts. However I think we have fared fairly well in Ottery St Mary as you still have a dedicated Neighbourhood Beat Manager and a fulltime Police Community Support Officer. Also there is a fulltime Beat Officer covering the rest of the Ottery patch and 2 PCSOs. Our team leader is Sergeant Chris Leisk and together we work as a team on major issues.

I took over the post at the end of last year having moved from covering Broadclyst and Cranbrook. I am really enjoying the challenge and I am looking to address several issues which appear to cause concern. One of those is Drugs. Since being in post the Ottery Neighbourhood Team have carried out 5 drugs warrants in the town. I have also organised numerous inputs to Kings School to pupils regarding the dangers and the law in relation to drugs which has had good feedback. I am actively gathering intelligence in order to do further warrants.

Another big concern is the Anti-Social Driving around the town and in the Land Of Canaan. This is very much a work in progress currently, where the whole Neighbourhood Team at Ottery St Mary will address it working alongside other agencies.

Despite working part time I am always willing where possible to change my shifts to accommodate job commitments but it will inevitably affect the amount of meetings I attend but between us generally either Maria or I will attend if requested. However I am still contactable via email or by leaving a message for me on 101. I will then address whatever the concern is when I am on duty.

I look forward to working closely with the Town Council.”

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**5. “CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2015” PRESENTATION**

The Mayor praised the large number of volunteers who work tirelessly in the Parish. Nominations for Citizen of the Year had been received for James Goddard (for his work with the Friends of Ottery Library), for Ron and Angie Miles (for their work for the Betty Williams Christmas lunch), for Ros Temple (for “doing anything to help anyone” in her Hairdressers) and for Rev. Mac Dick (for his work in restarting the Youth Club). However, the person nominated with the largest number of public votes is Barry Fearn who “spends much time, effort and expense helping others: his neighbours, fund-raisers, the Church, the TIC and others”. The Mayor presented Barry with a commemorative shield.

**6. REVIEW OF THE YEAR BY THE MAYOR**

Mayor Cllr Glyn Dobson gave the following report.

**“MAY 2014**

In May we were informed of financial cutbacks by Devon County Council with the potential loss of the Youth Club and our Library Ottery St Mary Town Council were able to negotiate the ownership of the Old Railway Station and the result of this was the building is now owned by the Town Council and I am delighted to say the Youth Club has been re-opened. There also are many community groups interested in using this building.

**JUNE 2014**

In June meetings took place regarding the closure of the Library and a group was set up to negotiate with Devon County Council in an attempt to keep our Library open. They call themselves FOOL (Friends of Ottery Library) and elected James Goddard to be Chairman. I would like to take the opportunity to thank James for all of his hard work. Then we were hit with the news that our hospital was threatened with closure. Again two Councillors were elected to sit on a Group to fight this- Martin Thurgood and Elli Pang and many thanks to them for their dedication and hard work.

**JULY 2014**

In July the Council decided to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan. This is a huge commitment involving Councillors and members of the Community and will probably take 2 years to complete. When finished we will have far greater input into how the Parish develops over the next few years, and will give us a larger share of any 106 contributions and how they should be spent. Geoff Pratt also joined the Council in July and has been very active assisting with negotiations for the Station building.

**AUGUST 2014**

In August Ottery Parish was selected to be in a government sponsored scheme to consult with the public over the many changes being forced on us by the various cutbacks.

**SEPTEMBER 2014**

Following this initiative in September the public were canvassed for ideas on how they would like to see the Parish develop and a meeting was held here in the Institute on a Saturday morning which 70 people attended.

**OCTOBER 2014**

In October the Council decided to start negotiations with Devon County Council to take over the Old Social Services offices at St. Saviour’s in order to form a Community Hub at the premises. This will involve a huge financial commitment and is still ongoing.

**NOVEMBER 2014**

In November work continued on creating an Emergency Plan. I cannot leave November without commenting on the wonderful Carnival and successful Tar Barrel night. Many thanks to the Carnival Committee for all their hard work

**DECEMBER 2014**

In December after much work was carried out at The Station building a successful opening night was held for the Youth Club.

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**JANUARY 2015**

January saw the decision to suspend the Street Market for the time being as it was not supported but many thanks to John Harding for the hard work he put in on this project.

**FEBRUARY 2015**

February saw continuing discussions taking place on the St Saviour’s building and the efforts to keep our Hospital open. I know many of you are awaiting the outcome of this and all I can promise is that we will do all we can to obtain a successful result.

**MARCH 2015**

This saw the finish of refurbishment of Offices at The Station building. There are now three Offices to let, hopefully to local businesses. There has also been a big step forward in obtaining funding to create a foot/cycleway from Butts Road to Gosford Road – thank s to Otter Nurseries.”

**7. REPORT FROM CLLR JOHN HARDING PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP (P3) CO-ORDINATOR**

“I have been the P3 warden for eight years it is time for a change. This is my final review and I wish whoever takes over enjoys the pleasure of walking the footpaths around Ottery St Mary as I do.

2014 in relative terms was a very quiet year. Yes we had some bad weather but not on the scale of previous years. In general the overall state of the footpaths in our Parish is excellent and I hope that this standard can be maintained over the coming years.

As mentioned last year there are some that do not meet that exacting standard however and work is ongoing to improve them: firstly FP 24 which runs down the western side of the River Otter from Ottery St Mary to Tipton St John. The location of the bridge was questioned by some walkers but unfortunately it was the only position we could negotiate with the landowner. The quagmire that developed on the southern end is still there, I did say we will sort it out last year as we have the finance and the design, what's missing was permission from the landowner. Well that permission did not come through, it was not through want of trying. The redirecting of the River Otter flow was attempted and trees were put into the river to stop the erosion of the railway line. It was only a partial success. It seems our knowledge base needs improving on that count. The Environment Agency and Devon County Council public rights of way need to rethink what can be done but it seems to take significantly longer to do than we all would like. However it is a problem that needs fixing and many of us are pushing. I think watch this space is the watchword.

One really positive message is that we have started the programme of replacing stiles with kissing gates. This is a major benefit for the less able and gives better access to our footpath network. We will see more in the coming years.

Last year we started our walking festival run with the help of Phyllis at the TIC. It was a great success and we will see even more organised walks this year.

Our association with Walkers are Welcome is proving very positive and this year the annual conference of Walkers are Welcome will be held in Sidmouth so we can expect a large number of walkers to descend on our footpaths in October this year.

Last year I commented on the problem of Himalayan Balsam. Although not a specific P3 issue I am personally very interested in helping eradicate Himalayan Balsam from the tributaries of the River Otter. The plant may look nice but it takes over a site if we do not control it. During the next few months this plant will take over many road edges and river banks. If you see it can you please pull it up? The root structure is very shallow so it is very simple to pull and you can leave it where it is pulled. However if you leave it and the plant seeds next year each plant can produce one hundred seeds and they seem to have an extremely high regrowth rate. If you do not feel able to pull it please do not worry but please contact the council with the location. We need to plot the areas where this weed exists.

This brings me nicely to the other key footpath for walkers down the River Otter Footpath 46. I spoke last year about the erosion to the eastern bank. Even though the last twelve months have not been as significant on the erosion front the eastern bank where we lost our footpath has had

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significant erosion over the last twelve months and the landowner on the western bank has redirected the river flow which appears to increase this erosion. Whether that will be allowed to carry on I am not sure.

So finally may I through this note thank all my walking wardens, Devon County Council Public Rights of Way Group and Ottery Town Council for all the efforts you have put into the footpaths over the last eight years. Enjoy yourself and I hope whoever takes over enjoys it as I have done.”

**8. REPORT FROM CLLR CARTER, CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

I would like to start by saying thank you to all the Planning committee for their commitment, in going around looking at all their different ward applications and having lots of excellent discussion in our meetings and the results of this enable us to put forward informed and fair recommendations to EDDC.

We have had 172 applications, 5 of which have been major in the last year, Former Gerway Nurseries, Land north of Higher Ridgeway, the London Inn, Subsequently withdrawn, Land around Island Farm (Bovis) and Blue Cedars in West Hill.

Along with the major plans we have lots of different types of Applications to consider, for example, Full, Outline, listed building consent, Change of use, Tree Preservation order, Signage and lots of Tree works.

We have had 142 Decisions from EDDC in the last year and of these 116 agreed with us, leaving 26 against.

Along with all the other council committees, the planning committee works very much as a team, with the Deputy Clerk, working in the office, dealing with the public coming into see the plans and preparing for our meetings and taking the minutes, the vice Chairman, Cllr Holmes collating all the plans online and sending out to the committee, who then have a look at the plans. Site visits are also made. These are led by Cllrs Dobson and Holmes; thanks also to Cllr Holmes for all the work with the visual plans at our meetings, putting the plans up on screen for all to see. This is a great help when looking at the details of the plans, so we are able to make informed recommendations to EDDC.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the public who have been to one or more of our planning meetings and have had valuable input with their comments which we can then consider in our debate.

We are all looking forward to another positive and proactive year with the planning committee.”

**9. REPORT BY THE TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE MANAGER**

Phyllis Baxter gave the following report:

“Well here we are again. Another year has flown and so much has happened here in Ottery St Mary. Firstly I would just like to say Thank You to the Town Council for their continued support in funding the Information Centre that is intended to benefit both visitors to the town as well for our local residents.

We carry a large range of printed material on the local area and further afield and have computer access to both visitor attractions and to a number of facilities connected with local matters. We sell tickets for National Express Coaches, Devon Country Show, Axe Vale Festival, and for many local events at the Institute and concerts at The Parish Church throughout the year.

Looking back on 2014: What can I say about last summer? We enjoyed lovely sunny days which once again attracted many visitors from far and wide to our beautiful and welcoming town. From as far as United States, South Africa, Australia, and most of our European neighbours. They tell me how much they love the surrounding countryside, the town, and the welcome they receive. They come to the town to visit the Parish Church, see where Samuel Taylor was born, walk along the River Otter, and just enjoy the town, cafes, tea rooms, public inns, and the local independent shops we have.

A new event last year was the first Ottery St Mary Festival Week 15<sup>th</sup> July to the 20<sup>th</sup> July

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This was a great success with thanks to the Ottery St Mary Town Council for sponsoring the Festival, especially to Mayor Glyn Dobson, Deputy Mayor Ian Holmes, Town Clerk Judith Reynolds, Councillor John Harding and Councillor Jo Talbot, for all the hard work they put into it. Also thanks to John Capon from Otter Windows for sponsoring Festival Week by providing all the signs you saw around the Parish and for the adverts in the local newspapers. PA System, First Aid was provided by the Free Wheelers Blood Bike organisation for Stepping in and helping with the safety on the day.

We enjoyed a week of various events. The Ottery St Mary Heritage Society organised 'Ottery St Mary and the Great War' exhibition, The Ottery Community Theatre staged a new play 'Four go en Seine' that was completely sold out each night Ottery Walkers organised all the free walks, John Champion Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce provided prizes for the Oddities Competition. A great Sunday Fun day with local stalls, dog show, and classic cars was held on the Land of Canaan. Finally bringing the week of events to an end in the beautiful grounds of the Tumbling Weir Hotel on a lovely sunny evening we enjoyed listening to Pete Allen and his Jazz Band organised by the Ottery Help Scheme.

Also last year we saw the second year of the Food & Families Festival, bringing in lots of new people to the town. We produced an Ottery St Mary Calendar for 2015. The late night shopping was very successful and very well attended. We work with the local press and supply details on all events throughout the year along with photos. . We supply lots of photos to John Gaffney and a detailed list each month on events. Finally thanks to Barrie Fearn for all his help.

Ottery has a bumper year of events planned, with the 10K Run – Rotary Festival, Food Festival, Pixie Day, various concerts at The Parish Church , Festival Week July 14<sup>th</sup> July to Sunday 19<sup>th</sup>, a new programme will be shortly available. We have the New Otterregians Summer Show 'Annie' at The King's School, Otter Vale Art Society Exhibition at The Institute in August, Carnival Week, Tar Barrels, Late Night Shopping and a Christmas Tree Festival. I hear from many people that visit the Information Centre that we are a strong community with so much going on."

## **10. REPORT REGARDING OTTERY IN BLOOM (OIB)**

Keith Spittlehouse gave the following report:

" Ottery in Bloom is currently run by a small committee together with additional helpers in summer. Planters which are located at Butts Road, Silver Street, Nat West Bank forecourt, Esso Garage, Canaan Way and St Saviours Bridge are maintained by OIB with the support of sponsors and waterers without whom we would find it difficult to continue. Ottery in Bloom and the Town Council liaise on planting of roadside verges in Ottery.

Thanks are due to many local individuals and organisations: without their support we would not exist. Apologies if I have missed anyone from this list.

- to TOWN COUNCIL for the Council Tax grant which covered the cost of the plants and compost with any balance going towards renewal of the planter stands.
- to SPONSORS Rotary Club of Otter Valley, Inner Wheel and Lions Clubs, Otter Nurseries (who plant the bridge) Ottery St Mary Garden Club, West Hill Garden Club and Hall & Scott (estate agents)
- to WATERERS , again Rotary, Inner wheel and Lions Clubs, Ottery WI, Ottery Gazette, West Hill Garden Club and OtterHayes trust together with a number of individuals.
- for ASSISTANCE WITH PLANTING to Guides and Brownies.

You will have noticed that most of the sites have been planted with spring bulbs this year. The summer bedding displays are due to be planted in early June

Some of the planter stands need replacing. We were fortunate to have two new planters supplied by Redrow and these have been sited on the Nat West Bank forecourt. With the Ottery Branch closure the longer term future of the Nat West site is unclear but is to be planted for summer 2015 For continuity of Ottery in Bloom there is a need for others to offer assistance with planting or with watering and we welcome any new ideas to enhance the Town."

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**11. REPORT FROM THE ALLOTMENT GARDEN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Chairman Carl Richmond gave the following report:

“The last year has been overshadowed by Redrow's activities and although this building work concerns the whole community I am just going to talk about how it affects the allotment holders. In case you don't know the land the allotments are sited on is owned by Redrow Homes and rented by Ottery Town Council. The terms of the lease state that Redrow can give us 3 months' notice to quit. This has produced a lot of uncertainty over the years - allotments often being a long term undertaking. (Asparagus for example takes 3 years before you can cut it.)

Redrow want to build on the present allotment site and last year they made an offer to buy the field next to where we are now, convert it into allotments and then gift it to Ottery. This would be done properly, similar to the ones at Budleigh Salterton, with a rabbit-proof fence, levelled plots, a hard road, special runways for the dormice, lockable tool boxes on each plot, enough water troughs and other stuff too.

At the A.G.M in 2014 the allotment holders were of the opinion that we should go for this as long as it was done properly with legally binding agreements etc. Planning permission was granted on March 13th 2015. Their habitat survey will be completed by the end of May, as will the purchase of the field next to the present allotments. The new site will then be prepared to give the allotment holders time to move to their new plots by the 1st of October.

I would like to finish by saying that the weather over the last few weeks has been excellent for growing things so we are off to a fine start this year. Let's hope it continues.

It remains for me thank everyone who has helped in running the show, the Management Committee, Judith and Su (Clerk and Deputy Clerk) and the Council Members- especially Ian Holmes and Glyn Dobson.

**12. FINANCIAL REPORT 2014-2015 INCLUDING PRESENTATION OF GRANTS**

Cllr John Harding gave the following report:

“Councillor Paul Lewis delivered his financial review of the year at the annual Parish meeting this time last year then during questions at the end of the meeting resigned from the council. I took over that position and it has been my privilege to be the “treasurer” for this Town Council for the year. It has been an interesting year. A new meeting schedule for the Finance and General Purposes committee was agreed to enable a more detailed analysis of the financial well-being of this council. The finances of the council were healthy at the start of the year and certainly so at the end of this year ending at the end of March. The income for the year was around £214K, slightly down on last year but expenditure was down to £180K.

However this did not stop us from spending on a number of projects throughout the year. This council has financed new Tennis Court nets, new notice boards, Christmas lights and the TIC. We have also spent money and considerable effort on setting up the new Station Centre as a community facility and youth centre: all in all a very successful year. We also supported the CAB who run surgeries every Tuesday afternoon.

So the Town Council finances remain very healthy and robust and I am pleased that this year again we are in a position to award a number of grants to various organisations in the Parish. The award of these grants is considered at great length by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Full Council and there are always groups disappointed by the outcome. These are not easy decisions but this year I am pleased that we can award grants to the following groups.

Grants were presented by the Mayor to representatives of the following organisations: *Vision.OM*, *Tipton St John Residents' Association*, *Ottery St Mary Carnival*, *Pixie Day (OSM Joint Guide & Scout Committee)*, *Ottery St Mary Twinning Association*, *Ottery in Bloom*, *Tipton St John Community Hall – Computer Group*, *Tipton Times*, *Ottery Community Theatre*, *Ottery St Mary & District Later Life Forum*, *Ottery St Mary Food & Families Festival*, *1<sup>st</sup> Ottery St Mary Scout Group* and finally *West Hill Village Hall*.

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**13. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Q. Why was there no Mayor’s Charity this year?

A. The Mayor explained that this had not been successful. Fund-raising had not been the purpose and publicising and other support of Charities had not proved beneficial.

Q. What can the Council do about increasing traffic problems with the additional housing, particularly problems on North Street?

A. The Mayor stated that the Council is concerned and that it opposed the Redrow development on traffic grounds. He suggested that possibly in the future there could be off street parking for residents of North Street.

Q. What can be done regarding danger to pedestrians from traffic at the summit of Tip Hill?

A. PCSO Clapp replied that she understood that the Crossing Patrol Officer had handed in her notice. She will note that Police observation is needed at this point.

Q. What can be done about vehicles speeding out of Ottery towards Gerway Lane which is a danger to pedestrians?

A. The Mayor replied that a footpath is to be created inside the Gerway Farm development. PCSO Clapp stated that more Police observations can be made, using the mobile camera.

Q. The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) has a campaign to remove obstacles from pavements (bollards, bins, advertising boards etc) and has said that Councils should be contactyed.

A. The Mayor stated that the responsible Council is Devon County Council.

Q. More a point of information than a question but relevant to the local charities represented at the meeting. As a Rotary member I have discovered that charitable collections at Sainsbury’s, regularly supported by the company up to now, have been severely restricted. There is a policy to support a small number of large national charities but to restrict access to local charities to one session per month, permission to be sought by to be done by filling in a form and awaiting approval. The Rotary Club of Otter Valley based in Ottery has up to now had access to collect for public appeals following major disasters such as the Nepal Earthquake which occurred last weekend. This type of support will be totally excluded by this policy. Sainsbury’s came in to the community of Ottery. Up to now they have been very cooperative but this recent policy will exclude the community from support by a significant player which is detrimental to the community and will not be good for Sainsbury community relations. This is a personal opinion and not necessarily one of Rotary.

A. A member of the public present said that she would follow up this matter with Sainsbury’s.

**14. MAYOR’S CLOSING REMARKS**

(a) Former Salston Hotel: Workers are there and progress appears to be being made.

(b) Former Factory: No further news about when work is to start.

(c) The Mayor thanked Judith Reynolds (Town Clerk) as it would be her last Annual Parish Meeting. He also thanked Deputy Clerk Su Graham.

(d) He thanked everybody for their attendance and invited them to join Councillors for tea and coffee.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.40pm.

Mayor’s signature: ..... Date: .....

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