



Fordwich Annual Town Meeting 2014. Minutes

The annual town meeting took place on May 13th in Fordwich Town Hall. The theme was “the river and flooding”. Three representatives of the Environment Agency were in attendance, as well as Mr Ted Edwards of CCC. Also present were the members of Fordwich Town Council (with the exception of the Mayor, Cllr Heren who was indisposed and sent apologies), the town clerk (who took the minutes) and around 15 residents of the town. The meeting was chaired by Philip Lewis, Deputy Mayor.

Fordwich Town Council report

Mr Lewis reported on significant events over the past year. Andrea Russo had left FTC and had been replaced by Mrs Val Clark with Mr Lewis being elected Deputy Mayor. The annual civic service had been held in the church, with canon Rosemary Walters presiding and the Fordwich Arms providing an excellent tea afterwards, for which many thanks. The Mayor had sworn allegiance and paid the 3s 4d “ship money” to the mayor of Sandwich at the annual Cinque Ports ceremony and had attended other civic functions such as the Lord Lieutenant’s civic service and the visit of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports to Brightlingsea.

County Cllr Alan Marsh had been of enormous help throughout the year, and we are especially grateful to him for securing a KCC grant of £5,000 towards the cost of disabled access to the town hall.

The website had been expanded to provide information and application forms for weddings at the Town Hall, where Melanie Eastwood is now in charge.

A meeting had been held with representatives of Kent Highways and CCC to discuss the chronic traffic problems, especially at the junction of King St and High St. Some remedial work is to be undertaken this summer, including new wooden posts to discourage lorries from cutting the corner. Apparently no money is available for more radical action. FTC is shortly to meet with the police to discuss traffic problems further, including a proposal to monitor overweight traffic on the bridge.

Floods and high water on the Stour: there had been effective liaison with CCC and the Internal Drainage Board on defence measures (sandbags plus pumping along the Drove) and thanks were due to Cllr Heather Taylor of CCC.

Mr Lewis thanked various groups of people, notably:

- Those who have cut back hedges obstructing pavements
- Those who helped with the recent churchyard clean-up
- Those who have helped publish and distribute the Fordwich newsletter

Mr Lewis referred to the meals on wheels service provided by Appetito, details of which were available on the table.

Mr Lewis also referred to a recent theft of lead from the church roof and asked people to be vigilant. He also asked them to inform the police on 101 of over weight lorries in the town.

Forthcoming local events included: a History Society meeting which would focus on World War I (July 9th); a WWI event in the church (August 4th) and a visit from a party from our twin town of Aire sur Lys, which would celebrate the 20th anniversary of the twinning arrangement.

Fordwich United Charities and Friends of Fordwich

Mr Roger Green, as chairman, reported for these two bodies. He noted:

- That several coal grants and book grants had been made to local people during the year.
- CCTV has been installed in the town hall and has been a success
- A good deal of work has gone into the matter of a town hall lift. Various options were under consideration with a final decision yet to be made, before which there would be extensive local consultation.
- The Old School Hall is almost ready for its final renovation works and its garden is in excellent shape.

Flooding

At this point, Mr Lewis offered the floor to Mr Richard Knight of the Environment Agency who was to make a presentation on the recent problems caused by the excessive rain. Mr Knight was supported by Mr Ray Foster and Mr Shaun McManus from the EA and by Mr Ted Edwards of CCC.

Mr Knight outlined the causes of the recent floods which could have been much worse had there not been some breaks between the bouts of heavy rainfall. In fact Fordwich was not badly affected; villages on the Nailbourne such as Patribourne had been hit much harder.

Mr Knight talked about the methods the EA use for forecasting flooding and the 3 different levels of flood alert, which people can register to receive directly.

In terms of preventative measures, some capital investment may be available. The EA are looking at silt levels and seeing if any specific areas need work to aid the flow of the Stour.

Some time was spent outlining measures individual householders could take to protect their premises, information on which is available via the EA web-site and the CCC web-site.

EA contact points are KSLE@environment-agency.gov.uk and by telephone on 03708 506 506.

A question was raised as to building on local flood plains. Mr Edwards said this would never happen without careful consideration and consultation with the EA. However it was suggested that a new house had been built locally across a dyke. Mr Edwards said he would be very surprised if this were true but said he would look into it.

Asked about the extent of weed cutting in the river, the meeting was told that some had been done but the process had been stopped because it had resulted in the death of some eels. However it was hoped to do more soon. The EA asked residents to inform them of any fallen trees in the river.

Local anglers were interested in forming a bund in one of the lakes but were told help with this from the EA was unlikely, although they might be able to help with modelling but in any case, EA permission would be needed to construct a bund.

There being no more questions, Mr Lewis thanked the EA and CCC representatives for so generously giving up their time, thanked everyone else for attending and declared the meeting closed.
