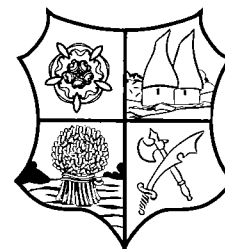


ALTON TOWN COUNCIL

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Town Clerk:
Steve Parkinson

Mr Graham Hill
Chairman - Anstey Residents Group
2 Anstey Mill Close
ALTON
GU34 2QT

Dear Mr Hill

Anstey Residents Group Concerns

Thank you for your extensive comments regarding the council's consideration of the Coors proposals. I will try to address them in the order that you raise them.

Extraordinary Meeting - 13 January 2010

Almost from the moment I signed the agenda, we had snow. During this period most of the council's resources were focused on public safety and liaising with other authorities, not on the administrative procedure of meetings. On 13 January I was unable to get to Alton in the morning and when I rang the Town Hall, I asked if we had received any consultation information before I recommended cancelling the meeting. The lack of information was certainly a factor in that decision.

On Monday 11 January my staff emailed our website provider thanking them for their assistance in getting the agenda papers on the website so I am not clear why they were not accessible. I agree that papers appearing on the day is not acceptable.

Coors have had agents working on proposals for its site since 2004. As a party that the council may enter into a contractual agreement with, it is entirely reasonable that we meet with them to see if they are satisfying the council's requirements. Similarly, the sports clubs involved are either tenants or potential tenants of the council and it is reasonable that we hold discussions with them relating to those tenancies.

By contrast the council does not normally meet with residents or pressure groups who simply want to influence council decisions. I have tried to make it clear throughout this process that the Town Council is acting as a land owner and there is no requirement to involve planning officers. The situation is different for East Hampshire District Council councillors who sit on a Planning Committee.

I was not aware of any requests made by Anstey Residents Group, prior to the meeting I had with you and your colleagues on the 19 January, so I cannot comment on this.

With regard to the meeting on 1 February, I had reserved the room for two hours and Councillor Fitzer closed the meeting after one hour because comments seemed to dry up. If you failed to make your point during that meeting, then I can only suggest that it is not the fault of the council.

Meetings are normally held in the Town Hall, that is one of its functions. The council does not often move meetings to accommodate interested spectators and is under no obligation to do so. The council chamber has in the past accommodated a considerable number of observers, with standing room only.

As I have explained now on several occasions, the 13 January date was suggested by me to Mr Glanfield, based on the gaps in the council's calendar, so that he could ensure his availability. Regurgitating this issue does nothing for the credibility of Anstey Residents Group.

As the meeting on 13 January was cancelled, there are no decisions to challenge and I see no point in going over this ground again.

Meeting on 10 February

The letters from Alton United and the Rugby Club were included with the agenda papers because they are existing tenants of the council, where cooperation is necessary to deliver the proposals. In particular, the council does not intend to force an existing tenant to move, so the agreement of Alton United is key to the agreement. The needs of Alton Town Football Club are facilities suitable for the Wessex League in which the team plays. The council's committed to achieving facilities to the published specification and a letter of opinion on the proposals is not really necessary.

With regard to the voting regarding public consultation, I am not accountable for the voting habits of individual councillors and any response to this would be pure speculation on my part.

Councillor Smith's comment regarding Sport England did prompt the Town Mayor to ask if I had a copy of their comments, but that did not put me in a position to say that Councillor Smith was wrong. Having sat through the meeting, I fail to be convinced that a mention of Sport England was an influencing factor in any of the council's decisions.

Other Issues

Many people wrote to the council and to individual councillors, not just ARG. All letters received at the Town Hall were copied to councillors and the ARG letters were sent out on Friday 5 February, as I previously told you. The fact that they were received does not make them agenda papers and we do not normally publish letters from residents.

Your letters were received on the morning of 4 February, by which time we had already published the agenda papers and were in the process of producing 100 colour copies for public use. I'm not clear what difference you think it would have made for the audience to have a copy of your letter.

I note your comment about the use of facts, however I am not answerable for the individual comments councillors make whilst representing their electorate. The only point I can offer

any confirmation on is the area of Anstey Park, which is approximately 44 acres including Diggers. Allowing for car parks and buildings, at least 35 acres of this is currently open to the public. The proposed junior football facilities would take up around 5 acres (14% of the open space), of which only 2 acres (6%) would be fenced in a way that prevented public access.

Conduct of Meetings

I am aware of some of the comments regarding the youth council representatives. Alton and District Youth Council are not accountable to me and I do not believe that any action against them, or indeed any other speaker, following the meeting is appropriate. I note your view that they should have been stopped; however, that decision was for the Town Mayor at the time and as the meeting is now over there is not much he can do about it.

The group were originally registered simply as ADYC, on one of several sheets we had available. One of my officers put the name of Katen Patel on the consolidated list given to the Town Mayor, having assumed that he would be speaking. Members of the public are not councillors and there is no requirement for them to declare anything at a meeting. If that was the case, most of you would have had to leave the room as near neighbours of the affected site.

I hope that this addresses some of your concerns, most of which I can do little about other than to note for future meetings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Parkinson', written in a cursive style.

Steve Parkinson
Town Clerk