

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL  
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING (NOTES)**

**13 MARCH 2023**

**ELECTORS PRESENT:** Town Councillors; Chatterjee, Turnbull, Foote-Wood, & Eight members of the public (Electors).

**NON ELECTORS PRESENT:** Five.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** One member of the press.

**OFFICERS:** Mr Clark (Town Clerk) & Ms Atkinson.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Cllr's Drew, Harrison & Ewart.

**2. GENERAL DISCUSSION(S)**

(i) A resident asked if the town council should consider working together with other parish councils, such as Marwood and Startforth. Whether the council can do more surrounding the proposed closure of Startforth Community Centre, issues around the Sills and the County Bridge.

(ii) A resident spoke making reference to:

- The council tax increases that the town council can do nothing about – County Durham, Social Care addition, Police and fire authority increases
- His belief the council need to produce a work plan
- The running out of available cemetery land in Barnard Castle – The former Teesdale District Council had identified a site near Newgate, with the landowner considering things prior to the change to a unitary authority. Since its inception of the unitary council appears to have stalled on this. He asked if the town council could pursue this.

*Cllr Chatterjee responded and agreed the town council would look into the matter of cemetery land.*

*Annalisa Ward from the TAP Board said they would also look into the issue*

(iii) Residents spoke on the issues referred to in the local press concerning the Castle Players and the Bowes Museum, and the unavailability of the grounds for their summer production. The Castle Players had performed in the museum grounds for many years, with thousands of people enjoying their performances. In return the 'players' had supported the museum as volunteers and extras at their events. Felt it was a sad reflection.

Hannah Fox, Executive Director from the Bowes Museum spoke in response:

- Understood the frustration that the Castle players made the decision to cancel this year's production
- The Bowes is a passionate supporter of the Castle Players and other community groups
- A number of factors this year have affected things – grounds work taking place
- As an organisation they've been through a transformation and have looked at the terms and conditions that had been in place for a number of years. It has been a culmination of things this year
- We have a conversation in the diary with the Castle Players to look at how we can continue to support them in the future
- We (Bowes) have a commitment to investing in the town

*Cllr Turnbull asked if the Castle Players had sought alternative venues for this year – Scar Top, the Castle, Barnard Castle School or the Hub.*

Another resident, involved with the Castle Players explained that changing venues was difficult because of all the things that need to have been booked, and in place in advance. The Trustees decision is not to have the summer production but they are looking to mount one in the autumn at the Witham.

A question from a resident sought confirmation from Hannah Fox that despite the Castle Players not performing in the museum this year, it would not necessarily mean they will never perform their again?

Hannah Fox responded that the door remains open. They continue to want to work in the community.

(iv) Cllr Foote-Wood referred to the issue of double taxation needing to be addressed. He wanted to also thank those that have attended in such good numbers this year.

(v) The young person in attendance was asked her views on the town by Cllr Chatterjee. Their issues were the dog fouling and the amount of litter.

*Cllr Turnbull asked those present what they considered the priorities for the council are?*

(vi) In response a resident spoke on the issue of the increase in anti-social behaviour. He referred to the possible use of CCTV in the town to deter people.

*Cllr Chatterjee responded and explained that a meeting with the schools, the Police and other organisations had taken place to look at ways the increase in anti-social behaviour could be addressed.*

The Clerk informed those present that the major issue of CCTV is how this is monitored, there is no central point like they have in larger towns.

It is important that people report issues to the Police so it is recorded. If it is not reported then the Police will not know there is a problem.

Reference was made to the reduction in youth work due to cut backs, and the night time economy in the town not being mixed. More people out and about would deter anti-social behaviour. Accept it is hard for a town council to address the high level things but was impressed by things it is trying to tackle.

An update was given by the Clerk on the work going on to secure the Lower Demesnes from unauthorised encampments.

(vii) The camera on the County Bridge was referred too, which is now under the control of Durham County Council. They are now, due to a change in the law, able to issue fines for breaking the restrictions on the bridge. Would like the County Council to look at things strategically rather than just a means to gather income as we would want to stop vehicles over weight to go across the bridge. The 3 months figures obtained from Durham for violations from 26 October to 31 December 2022 was 97.

The Town Council was thanked for organising a meeting with the Highways Department.

(viii) Ownership of the Galgate Greens was mentioned with the Clerk explaining the Land Registry have no title recorded for them. The town council, due to it maintaining them for many years would look at taking adverse possession.

(ix) The traffic management around the greens and parking in the area was mentioned as a cause for concern.

(x) Reference was made to the state of some of the pavements with leaf mould, and the Dawson Road play area suffering from dog fouling, and the town council looking at fencing the play area off.

Following the end of discussions, Cllr Chatterjee thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.