

ATC Meeting – 13th July 2107

Firstly chairman can we express our gratitude to both the town clerk's efforts and to the council as a whole for the openness and fairness it has demonstrated in attempting to respond thus far to residents' anxieties.

However, can I make two general points:

- I find the tone of the report in your agenda particularly worrying in the way it appears to hold a gun to the heads of councillors, claiming as it does that as the contract is signed, it's too late to make changes. Chairman, this is deplorable. If the district council has so mismanaged this project that they are now allowing us no options in terms of the content or design of this facility, because they themselves have locked themselves in – through no fault of Alton or its residents - what exactly is the purpose of the resolution before you? What precisely are you debating? Why are we all here? The fact is that none of us here this evening, least of all this Council chairman, should be acting as apologists for EHDC's misdemeanours.
- Secondly, in your report there are number of references to the need for the new facility to be 'future-proof', and of course the Neighbourhood Plan estimates an increase of up to 25% increase over just 13 years. However, members will be aware of the significant pressures from central government to increase housing allocations still further, and neither East Hampshire generally, or the Alton area in particular, will be immune from this. And so with the intended lifespan that's being talked about – 40 years believe - the concerns expressed by the respective stakeholders must be seen in this context.

Chairman, we have to get this project right. There are many positive ways in which residents and those engaged in sport can work with the district council in exploring options, if windows of opportunity can be kept open, and the idea of a Residents' Interest Group is just one example, but for this to happen the current plans **MUST** be put on hold. I would urge all members to act in the best interests of the residents they represent, and reject the resolution before you.

Thank you chairman.

Rod Eckles
The Alton Society
13th July 2017