

**TOWN HALL ADDITIONS.
SEWERAGE SYSTEM FOR HURN.
A "WAITING GAME FOR HIGHCLIFFE."
SIXPENCE OFF THE RATES.
COUNCILLORS ON "GAS."**

C.T. March 18, 1933

The vital point of last Thursday's Council debate was like the P.S. of an old-maid's letter, the interest was in the end. It occurred when, without discussion, the instructions were passed to the Borough Surveyor to invite tenders for carrying out a scheme for the sewerage of Hurn at a cost of £4,900.

Councillor F. D. Lane rose and asked what was the position with regard to Highcliffe's drainage scheme and what success had been reached with any Government department with a view to a loan. The Deputy Mayor (Alderman J. W. Tucker), who was Chairman in the absence of the Mayor, replied that all he could say was the Special Committee detailed to explore the possibility of a loan for Highcliffe's sewerage "were playing a waiting game." To this Councillor Lane replied with a "Thank you, sir," and there the episode of Highcliffe's drainage apparently ends for some time to come.

The most heartening decision was that the Borough are to possess a transmogrified Town Hall, equipped and rebuilt in regard to an assembly and dance hall amenities, more befitting the dignity of the ancient and now enlarged Borough. There will be an ante room at the rear of the main hall, a strong room for the purpose of storing the town's ancient and valuable documents a new oak-panelled Council Chamber on the upper floor, and a dance floor and stage for the public hall. Heated by hot water pipes and redecorated. It was also decided to make a sixpence reduction in the rates, to be levied for the period commencing on the first day of April.

Before the meeting, in the absence of his Worship the Mayor, it was resolved that the Deputy Mayor (Alderman J. W. Tucker) be appointed to preside.

RATE REDUCED.

It was decided that a General Rate of five shillings in the £ be levied for the period commencing on the first day of April, 1933, and terminating on the 30th day of September, 1933.

The Council's requirements for their own purposes amounts to 3s. 3d., whilst the County Council required 6s. 6d., making a total of 9s. 9d. The levy of 5s. for the first half of the year will therefore leave a demand at the year's end of 4s. 9d. This reduction of 6d. comes as directly passed on from the County.

The Council's estimates showed a net necessary expenditure of £12,168 for the year.

FINANCIAL SUNDRIES.

The Finance Committee also recommended that a comprehensive insurance of the Borough's fire engine be made with the Municipal Mutual Insurance Co., for a net annual premium of £9 11s. 6d., and that the Borough Surveyor's requisitions for tarred macadam, stone, bitumen and chippings for the roads, oil and sundries, amounting to £418, be agreed to.

COUNCIL HOUSES—DEADLOCK.

Councillor W. G. Spickernell, Chairman, of the Municipal Committee, reported that it had not been possible to obtain "at a reasonable price," any suitable site for the erection of additional Council houses.

Under these conditions, and in view of the fact that much trouble had been taken to thoroughly explore the question, he reported that the Health Committee advised that no further action be taken at the present time.

Alderman Miss M. B. Robinson: I am indeed sorry to hear this, but I have to admit that the officials have done the best possible to discover sites.

I would like to appeal through the Press to all owners of what I might describe as "working class property," to come forward with land at a suitable figure. Our proposition is to provide suitable houses for the working man. When a man is earning only £2 a week he cannot afford to pay £1 a week. Still I have to confess that I'm very disappointed indeed.

"SUCH A NICE TOWN HALL."

Councillor Spickernell said that the proposed erection of a notice board in front of the Town Hall at a cost of £31 be not entertained at the present time.

Councillor "Russell Oakley: What is this? Is it a board to do away with the miscellaneous selection of notice boards we have there already?

If for £31 we were going to have a proper notice board, it is well worth considering. At present the Town Hall front is entirely spoilt by the untidy collection of oddments. With such a nice Town Hall as we possess it seems a great pity to spoil the frontage with all these odd pictorial additions.

Councillor Spickernell: Councillor Oakley has mentioned the charms of our Town Hall frontage with more feeling than I am possessed of. It was suggested that we should do away with the odd number of boards and substitute one long board the length of the railings and fixed upon the top of them. The Borough Surveyor prepared a design, and he made inquiries as to the cost, which was estimated at £31. In justice to the ratepayers we feel that we cannot, advise the expenditure in such times as these. Again those who hire the Town Hall have various sized posters and bills, and possibly if this board were made many of these bills would not fit. So we came to the conclusion that we are not justified in bringing this expenditure forward.

TOWN HALL IMPROVEMENTS.

Councillor Spickernell: This, gentleman, is rather a serious matter. It will be within the recollection of the Council that at our last meeting the decision was made to inquire further into the cost and desirability of further improvements at the Town Hall. Our recommendations are before you. They are:—

That an extension of the Town Hall be made, consisting of the erection of two stories between the north east end of the large hall and the rear portion of the existing buildings, for the purpose of providing an ante room for the large hall and a strong room (on the ground floor), and a new Council Chamber on the upper floor and the provision of two additional exits to the main hall at an estimated cost of £1,200.

That the new Council Chamber be oak panelled at an estimated cost of £350. That the floor of the large hall be renovated in order to make it suitable for dancing, at an estimated cost of £100.

That a new system of heating the whole of the Town Hall premises by means of hot water pipes at a cost of £300 be installed, and that the interior of the Town Hall be decorated for £120. An estimated total cost of £2,070.

In 1929 a scheme was prepared for making an extension to the Town Hall. This also provided for a Council Chamber and an ante room and a strong room for the town's ancient documents.

A Government inquiry was held, and the official who came down did not oppose it, but stated that it would be wise to defer action until the borough had been enlarged, when we should know what our requirements would be. An estimate was then obtained, and it came out, I think, at about £1,750. The Borough Surveyor now reports that this can be now reduced, owing to the present low cost of material and labour, to about £1,550.

The heating of the Town Hall is another essential matter, and also that of a proper floor for the big hall. This is an essential matter, and we are losing many "lets" for dancing purposes simply because the floor is not only impossible for dancing but positively dangerous. Splinters came up because the wood is so worn.

Redecorations, too, are a necessity, the present state of the hall is no credit to the Council or the town. The whole of this can be done for approximately £2,070. In the Town Clerk's opinion we can arrange a loan of £1,550, with about £300 to £400 out of current rate. Rates would not have to be increased.

It will help matters to-day all round if the work can be put in hand at once, and it will be one of the best things we have done. If it is put off now, it will be put off indefinitely.

Councillor Oakley: There is nothing about a platform and stage arrangements. This is a necessity, so that it may be used for dramatic sketches and concerts. This is an appropriate time to do it. I shall give the matter my support anyhow.

Alderman Dr. A. H. Hartford: I question the oak panelling idea. Oak panelling is very nice providing it is old. The new requires at least five years in which to get rid of the very strong smell, besides it is extremely unsanitary to panel your rooms with wood.

Councillor Spickernell: It is news to me that oak panelling is unsanitary. Once it is in, the task of keeping walls nice is finished for years—just a duster over it and it looks fine, and at all times it gives an excellent inside appearance.

Deputy Mayor: Will there be an adequate cloakroom accommodation, that seems to be one of the necessities; could that be embodied in the scheme.

Borough Surveyor: That is a mere detail and could not affect the estimate.

Councillor F. D. Lane: I think it is a short-sighted policy to utilise the spare space at the rear of this hall in the manner suggested; this was expressly left for extending the Town Hall itself, and the need for a new Council Chamber is less than it was in 1929. This room is quite suitable to our purpose and remember its very inconvenient for elderly people to climb stairs. I suggest that it is a waste of money, and I think it wrong to make future generations pay by getting a loan to cover this work. That sort of thing is what we are suffering from now.

Again, I understand, that with the hall redecorated and finished as is proposed, would automatically render it too good for an exhibition like the Fur and Feather Show.

The strong room is a good idea, but if we reaffirm item 438 of the last meeting, it is the best thing we can do. (This was a recommendation from the Municipal Committee that heating to the Victoria Room and certain interior and exterior re-decorations be carried out at a total cost of £222).

Councillor Spencer: The Town Hall needs to be altered very badly. Your money is laid out, but you can't get a return for it. You want a place to appeal to people for concerts and dancing, a place people can enjoy themselves in.

As for extra accommodation, a girder would support a balcony and would give accommodation to another 150 persons. If people are prepared to take the hall week by week then we can make money instead of letting things lie as they are and going to the bad.

INTERESTS IN POLITICS HAVE WANED.

Councillor Martin: With regard to Councillor Lane's statement that we re-affirm item 438 of the last meeting, How can we re-affirm what we have never affirmed? It shows how loosely he thinks municipally. As far as my opinion goes, this hall is large enough for Christchurch.

In the old days with a political meeting, you could fill a big hall, but today the political interest of the people has waned. The hall is not too large, but it must be made comfortable.

I am convinced that this is going to be an investment—remember saving money is not economy. Here we have premises insured for £10,000, and look at the paltry income we get from it. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves as councillors, and I say we are failing in our trust. I don't care one atom whether its decked out with oak panelling or whitewash, I only know that oak panelling is the cheapest form of hall decoration you can have. I have had a big experience of utilising it, and I suggest that the smell of the new oak panelling complained of by Alderman Hartford exists only in his imagination.

I oppose anything in the nature of tinkering or tampering, as I wish to see alterations carried out so that we have premises which will answer our requirements. I don't think this a satisfactory chamber by a long way. I heartily support the recommendation of the Municipal Committee, and I hope it will be carried out.

Councillor R. Prichard: I'd like to support this, we are told it won't affect the rates, and what could be better at the moment than the work it will provide?

Councillor Douglas Galton: I also support this with a good deal of pleasure. We all, I am sure, experience a great amount of discomfort at our meetings. Now is the opportune time to carry out the work, whilst labour and material is cheap, and what is more, it gives us an opportunity to provide work.

Councillor Shave: I have been rather startled at the high cost of this scheme, but after I found out that it will not cost more than a ½d. rate, I say it is a scheme that I can very well support especially as the ratepayer won't feel the pinch a little bit.

HARD CHAIRS.

Deputy Mayor: I am personally fully in favour of this scheme, some three or four years ago I opposed it, but now I am totally and fully in agreement. This room for an instance is in a disgraceful condition.

Alderman Norman Barney: If we are going to put the Town Hall in a condition to enable us to make a revenue, we must consider the question of proper lavatory accommodation. This Council Chamber is terribly uncomfortable for us all, terribly uncomfortable for the press, and apparently frightfully uncomfortable for Councillor Lane! (Councillor Lane had been crowded out from the upholstered seats of the Councillors and was seated upon the hard kitchen chairs devoted to the press).

SUCCESS OF THE FELLOWSHIP DEPUTATION.

So ultimately and by a vote which included all the Councillors except Alderman Dr. Hartford and Councillor F. D. Lane, the decision was made to embark upon the project of making the Town Hall a credit to the Borough.

It is, of course, the direct outcome of the recent deputation from the Men's Committee of the Unemployed Fellowship, that this work needed to be done, and would provide still more needed employment. A splendid instance of self-help.

Councillor A. E. Shave: Are we going to proceed with this work with all speed?

Deputy Mayor: We are, but the plans must come before this committee, so that we can decide what shall be done.

Councillor Shave: And that will be before the next meeting.

Deputy Mayor: Yes.

"GAS."

Councillor Spickernell detailed that the Brigade requisitioned two sets of "breathing apparatus" at a cost of £35.

Councillor Prichard: How often are these things used?

Deputy Mayor: Twice, I understand, in the last twelve months, but if it is necessary for the sake of a man's life, we should not question the cost.

Councillor Prichard: Have we any real demand for this breathing apparatus?

Deputy Mayor: It is necessary, I understand.

Alderman Dr. Hartford: Does this apparatus entail the use of compressed oxygen.

Deputy Mayor: Yes, I understand so.

Alderman Dr. Hartford: Then I shall not vote for it. These things are not reliable and cannot be relied upon to function when required. Why don't they use fire helmets? Everyone knows how awkward these tube things are. Why don't they have the ordinary bellows arrangement? I certainly shall not vote for compressed gas.

Councillor Ellis Wrigley: I understand they are wanted only for purposes of the competitions.

Councillor Martin: What precisely are these things? I take it that they are to be employed in the case of a fireman getting gassed—with these he would be resuscitated?

Deputy Mayor: I think this is something they wear.

Councillor Spickernell: I must confess I'm very ignorant on this point. I understand this is an apparatus which a fireman on entering a burning building in smoke and fume will wear. They have them in Bournemouth. Also in competitions of the Fire Brigade they are necessary. There are for an instance three competitions in which the Brigade cannot enter without them at their annual tests.

Councillor Shave: The details here are wrong, if it had said "gas masks" instead of breathing apparatus we should have known what was meant. It is a normal responsibility of this Council to see that they are properly equipped.

Councillor Martin: I know by experience that all these things have a nasty habit of letting you down at the critical moment, is it safe to let a man encounter danger with such an apparatus. I would not deny our Fire brigade anything, and I know nothing about competitions.

Councillor Wyatt: It is not at all clear what this is. We have heard about oxygen, cylinders, tubes, masks, competitions. All I can say is that I am willing to agree to any amount of money if it is to save life, but we can't vote for it as it stands. I suggest it be referred back to committee for details.

Alderman Miss Robinson: I second that.

Councillor Spencer: Councillor Martin is deliberately creating difficulties. I have never seen a man go into a fire without a life-line; if he collapses he pulls the cord and they haul him out.

Alderman Dr. Hartford: We're only wasting time like this. I'd like to see this thing, we don't know what we're voting on.

Councillor Gelsthorpe: The Captain of the Fire Brigade has assured us that all brigades have these things. And with regard to gas, I have had a big experience of gas, at one time I handled three cylinders of gas per week.

Councillor Ellis Wrigley: The Council are well aware of that, sir, we wouldn't deny it.

The debate on gas having developed into a concrete example of the matter under discussion, it was referred back to the committee to amplify.

HURN SEWERAGE.

Alderman Dr. A.H.B. Hartford, Chairman of the Health Committee, introduced the recommendation that the Borough Surveyor be instructed to invite tenders for the carrying out of a scheme for the extension of the sewerage system to Hurn, at an estimated cost of £4,900 and that the Town Clerk be instructed to make application for sanction of the Ministry of Health to the borrowing for as long a period as the Minister will allow of the sum required.

He said: "This is the beginning of the drainage of Hurn, it is not very much, but it is a beginning, when we come to Highcliffe it will be ten times this amount."

Without discussion and in swift and unanimous agreement the matter was confirmed.

BEACH SUPERINTENDENTS.

Alderman Barnes, Chairman of the Beach Committee, announced that there had been 67 applicants for the posts of Beach Superintendents. These were winnowed down to nine, who were interviewed. "All," said the Alderman, "were promising men and made us wish we had sufficient jobs for all.

They eventually decided to put forward to the Council for engagement Mr. Howe, for Mundeford; he is 40 years of age, a married man with two children. For the Highcliffe Beach they recommended Mr. Dighton, whose age was 39, also married with one child.

These appointments were approved by the Council and confirmed. Councillor Derham remarked that he thought it a shame that an age limit should have been imposed, for, he declared, "this is a job that could have been done by a man aged 70."