



DULVERTON
GATEWAY TO EXMOOR

The Clerk
Dulverton Town Council
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MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 9th May 2022 in the Town Hall, Fore Street, Dulverton, commencing at 6.45pm.

PRESENT: Councillors: Mrs Christine Dubery; Mr Alan Ottey, who joined the meeting at 7.15pm; Mrs Louise Parrish; Mr John Preston, who joined the meeting at 7.30pm; Mrs Margaret Rawle; Mr Nick Thwaites (DTC & SWT); Mrs Ann Van Praag; Cllr. Mrs Frances Nicholson, Somerset County Council (S.C.C.); and three members of the public.

APOLOGIES: Mr Michael Martin, Chairman of the Dulverton Tennis Club and Mr David Boyce, Chairman of the Dulverton Cricket Club.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN: Mr Thwaites proposed that Mr Gash be invited to chair the Parish Meeting, seconded by Mrs Rawle and carried.

MINUTES of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 5th May 2021 and published on the website were read by the Clerk, were accepted and signed. Proposed by Mrs Van Praag, seconded by Mrs Rawle and carried.

MATTERS ARISING: None

REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS /CLUBS:

Heritage Centre – Mr Chris Nelder:

Those present were informed that due to the pandemic and repeated closure it has proved a difficult couple of years.

A new lease of 28 years has been successfully negotiated with Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT), the roof having been re-slatted as a condition of the previous lease.

Since re-opening visitor numbers have been relatively high. Income from donations have amounted to around £4,000; sales, a further £4,000.

A new model railway is proposed, the cost of which will amount to about £13,000. Historic England is to be approached for funding. Alongside the building of the new model railway research will be undertaken to ascertain the role that Dulverton has played in the rise and decline of the railways.

Visit Dulverton/ Dulverton Partnership Group – Mrs Ali Pegrum

The remit in March 2021 was to pull the branding together. This has been successfully achieved and various social media platforms are being used with a following of over 1,600 people. The aim being to attract visitors and boost the tourism economy.

The website was officially launched in February 2022 and provides information regarding where to shop, stay and eat and well as some historical background. It is currently free of charge to local businesses. There have been over 2,500 visits to the website since its launch, the events calendar proving particularly popular. Each event has its own page providing information and the opportunity to book or purchase tickets.

Feedback from local traders and businesses has been positive.

Several events were organised and proved popular. More are to be held this year including a Literary Festival in November.

Dulverton Gardening Club - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

Members are again enjoying talks and presentations in the Town Hall, as well as organized visits etc. A plant sale is scheduled to take place in June.

Dulverton Players - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

The Players were severely affected by the pandemic being unable to present full productions for the last two years. A limited cast produced a play last year and the annual pantomime is scheduled to take place in November.

Town Hall Committee Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

The facility has been hardly used over the past two years; bookings remain low; however regular groups are returning gradually. The upkeep of the hall has had to be maintained throughout the pandemic, the cost of which has been met by grants and income from the Thrift Shop.

Flood Action Group - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

There were no call outs last year. The Flood Plan has been revised and new equipment obtained.

Cllr. Mrs Dubery anticipates that flooding issues will occur due to surface flooding (blocked drains and gullies) rather than the rise of the river levels.

Sports Field Charity – Cllr. Mr Nick Thwaites

The Charity remains financially solvent.

Dulverton Football Club – Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

The season began with difficulties due to a lack of players, however it ended successfully. Financially the Club as just managing with funding contributions.

Dulverton Cricket Club - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery:

Player availability improved last season and the team finished third in the league and were cup finalists.

This season player availability is poor and the club are looking for more players. Young people are particularly being sought.

Various fund raising events have kept the club solvent.

Sports & Social Club - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

The club is struggling to maintain income from bar sales. Concerns exist that it may ultimately have to close which will impact greatly on the various sports clubs which use the facility.

Dulverton & District Tennis Club – Mr Bill Gash

The facilities are enjoyed by both residents and visitors. There are 32 paid up members for 2022, including individuals and family groups. There is also the opportunity to pay to play on a single occasion. Various events are held throughout the year which are well attended. However there still exists an absence of young people taking up the game and using the facilities available. Advertising of the facilities available is to be undertaken to attract new members.

Considerable expenditure is anticipated over the next two year with regards the re-surfacing of the courts and the purchase of new nets and balls.

Dulverton Netball Club - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

The club is thriving, members enjoying both playing and socialising. Training and games are taking place at the local school again, following the pandemic. The teams play in two leagues and are very successful.

Dulverton & District Young Peoples Project – Mr John Preston

Those present were informed that the project remains financially very sound, however the premises remain an under used resource. It remained empty for 18 months due to the pandemic.

The project has been outsourced to 'Young Somerset' who are doing a good job, One session is held weekly for junior children. The senior young people in Dulverton and the surrounding area are showing no interest in taking part.

The long term future of the project remains uncertain as existing Trustees wish to retire and at present no one has come forward to replace them.

Streamcombe Allotment Trust – Cllr. Mrs Margaret Rawle:

In the late 1970's the isolated redundant plot of land which formed Streamcombe Allotments, just a short distance west of Dulverton was sold for £500.00. The proceeds were invested as The Streamcombe Allotment Charity. The principal aim of the charity was to support the poor and needy in the parish. The Charity was set up under the umbrella of the Town Council. The fund invested in M & G Charifund now stands at £10,390. The current bank balance is £1,100.54.

The only grant awarded during the last financial year was £300 to the Dulverton Platinum Jubilee Celebration event being held on Exmoor Lawns on 3rd June 2022.

Trustees, Mr Keith Ross and Mrs Catherine Blundell having resigned on rota are willing to stand for re-election, which the Town Council will resolve at the Annual Meeting.

Any one in need can be nominated to receive a small grant by contacting Mr Ross, Secretary, in the first instance. The Charity works closely with the Village Agent to identify those currently living in the parish that are in need. There does exist strict criteria to be met to receive a grant.

REPORT FROM THE MAYOR/CHAIRMAN:

Once again the best part of 21/22 has been dominated by the Covid-19 global pandemic. Despite the difficulties DTC has not missed any meetings and seems to have been busier than ever with new initiatives as well as maintaining normal services. Thanks must go to the Clerk and Assistant Clerk for all their hard work in these difficult circumstances.

Somerset West & Taunton Council has supported councils over the last two years helping towns to come back stronger following the pandemic. The pandemic has again dominated the relationship but the grant of £25,000 in late 2020 has allowed the Council, through the Dulverton Partnership committee to move forward on the Development of the Website for Visit Dulverton, secure new branding for the Town, engage a marketing and destination consultant and to develop further initiatives for the Town.

- Abbots Way Pond: The pond and surrounding area was fully redeveloped during this last year, initially with the help of volunteers from the Town and Coop Staff to clear the overgrown area. Following the receipt of a grant a grant from the European Disasters Fund and UK Government we were then able to relocate the island to the side to help with water flow, remove the silt, replant the pond with native plants, plant a rear hedge with native plants, and add an additional seating area.
- Town Environment: The Town Management Committee has continued its good work in monitoring the town environment, reporting problems and chasing SW&T and SCC to fulfil their obligations.
- Car Parks: Very little to report. We await the change of the machine to take cashless payments.
- All Saints Church: The churchyard maintenance continues at a very high standard, the entire area is in very good condition. The walls of the churchyard alas continue to be a significant burden and drain on Council finances; the north wall is currently being repaired.
- Exmoor Lawns: The Lawns has been the focus of a number of projects during the past year or so. The tree work reported last year has now nearly been completed. The provision of an electricity supply to the area is completed. The plan to erect a "bandstand" was well underway at the last AGM although it will now be a demountable structure rather than a permanent one as the proposal had to be amended due to cost constraints. A solution has been found and we now have the facility to run events using our own demountable equipment.

- Cemetery: The maintenance of the cemetery continues to a good standard, the area being in good repair. Grave plot levelling is ongoing.
- Dulverton Sports Field: The maintenance of the sports field has continued to a high standard over the last 12 months. Work has been carried out by a specialist company to improve the outfield playing areas.
- Kings and Barnsclose Recreation Grounds: Within the last 12 months a new picnic bench, a second bench, plus a canopy have been installed at Kings Corner Recreation Ground. A vandalised picnic bench in Barnsclose Recreation Ground has also been replaced
- Exmoor Parish Lengthsman Scheme: Continuing to administer the scheme on behalf of the other parishes involved.
- Somerset West & Taunton Council: Dealings with SWT Council have generally been good, if a little slow to begin with, due to staff shortages.
- Dulverton Summer Festival – Lorna Doone 150: Long past now but worth reporting as a particular success. In conjunction with the Traders DTC planned this two day event to take place on Exmoor Lawns.
- Councillors: Cllrs. Mr Bill Gash and Mrs Ann Van Pragg joined the council in June 2021. Cllr. Miss Kathryn Vellacott resigned from the council in November 2021.
- Web Site: The “new” web site has been successful but is to be revised to operate in conjunction with the new “Visit Dulverton” initiative site which will carry the majority of the town information in future.
- Town Centre Recovery Grant: The Council, in conjunction with Dulverton traders and other community stakeholders, received a grant from SWT Council, which has helped to fund the employment of a marketing consultant to promote tourism in the town and surrounding areas. It also funded the opportunity to create an arts performance space on Exmoor Lawns, again to promote visitor interest, but also to provide facilities to be able to hold events and entertainment for the community.
- Welcome Back Fund: The Council were able to secure funding to improve identified areas for the use of the public in and around the town. To purchase flags and bunting to help with marketing; and to produce, in partnership with the Dulverton Development Forum, a new ‘Walks of Dulverton’ booklet, which is to be published in the near future. Finally, it helped meet the costs of the inaugural Vintage Fair held in Sept 2021. All projects have been accomplished successfully.

REPORT FROM THE CLERK:

The Clerk reiterated comments already made by the Chairman concerning the continuing impact of the pandemic and the very busy year that members and staff had experienced. She thanked members for their continuing support and hard work.

Finances – Year Ended 31st March 2022: Members will be presented with the Financial Return and a summary of Receipts & Payments as at 31st March 2022, along with the closing balances for approval at the Council meeting later this evening. The Council’s finances remain robust.

Internal & External Audits 2021/22: Those present were informed that the internal audit has been undertaken and the report circulated to members. The contents will be considered by the Legal & Finance Committee at their next meeting.

The Clerk commented that there currently existed three councillor vacancies and that as a result the existing members continue to undertake a considerable amount of extra responsibility. Members are able to co-opt at the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr Nelder wished to congratulate the grounds team on the high standards maintained on all of the spaces owned by the Council.

Members very much agreed with the sentiments and comment was made that the Council had been the recipient of awards from the Somerset Playing Fields Association for several years now thanks to the hard work of the grounds staff.

Mr Gash suggested that a 'Welcome to Dulverton' event is organised to showcase the opportunities and facilities available to those who live in Dulverton and the surrounding area.

Cllr. Mrs Frances Nicholson was congratulated by those present with regards her recent re-election as a member of Somerset County Council

MEETING CLOSED: 7.47pm

Chairman.....