



Dulverton Town Council

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The Clerk

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MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 5th May 2021 using remote video conferencing, commencing at 6.30pm.

PRESENT: Councillors: Mrs Christine Dubery; Mr Gerry Lewis; Mr Alan Ottey; Mrs Louise Parrish; Mr John Preston; Mrs Margaret Rawle; Mr Nick Thwaites (SW&T), Miss Kathryn Vellacott and two members of the public.

APOLOGIES: Cllr. Mrs Frances Nicholson (S.C.C.)

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN: Mr Lewis proposed that Mrs Dubery be invited to chair the Parish Meeting, seconded by Miss Vellacott and carried.

MINUTES of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 8th May 2019 and published on the website were read by the Clerk, were accepted and signed. Proposed by Mr Preston, seconded by Mrs Louise Parrish and carried.

MATTERS ARISING: None

REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS /CLUBS:

U3A: The club has been unable to function since the beginning of the Covid pandemic. It is intended that normality will resume in the near future.

Dulverton & District Young Peoples Project: The project has continued through the year. 'Young Somerset' is providing Youth Workers who have maintained contact with local young people throughout lockdown.

Dulverton Gardening Club: There have been no events or activities due to the pandemic. However members did meet via zoom and hope to repeat the process during May. It is anticipated that events will resume as from June

Dulverton Cricket Club: The AGM has taken place and the Vice Chair appointed. Confirmation of the appointment of Chairman is still awaited. Only six friendly matches took place last season. The first league match of this season took place last weekend.

Flood Action Group: The Flood Plan has been updated and submitted to the Environment Agency. More volunteers have come forward to help residents when there exists the threat of flooding.

Town Hall Committee: Although many activities have had to be suspended the Committee have continued to be busy. The intention is to resume activities over the next few months. Due to successful grant applications the finances remain healthy.

Dulverton Players: No productions were undertaken. However, the production of Dick Whittington intended to have taken place in 2020 is now to take place in October 2021.

Dulverton Cinema: The events are expected to resume in June.

Exmoor Community Bus: The service has been used to take local people to receive their vaccinations, who otherwise have no other means of travel. It is hoped that the regular service to Minehead will resume in June.

Heritage Centre: The Centre will re-open on 24th May 2021. There will be an Exmoor Pony Exhibition to celebrate the centenary of the formation of the Exmoor Pony Society at the Lion Hotel in 1921.

Streamcombe Allotment Trust:

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. The proceeds were invested as the Streamcombe Allotment Charity. The principal aim of the charity was to support the poor and needy of the Parish. The Charity was set up under the umbrella of the Town Council. The Investment now stands at approximately £8- £10K with £621 in the bank current account. Small grants are awarded to the 'needy' in the Parish of Dulverton only. The Charity receives quarterly dividends from the Investments which covers the cost of the Grants. There exists a very strict criteria regarding successful applications.

During the past year the Trust provided £378 as a 'Well Being Grant', to enable the Town Hall to offer free use of the hall to the users who provided exercise classes. Only Linda London and Nicola Smith were able to take up the offer. This award was granted due to the limit of 9 clients imposed in each class (due to the 2 meter rule) which meant that the classes were not financially viable if overheads had also to be met. The unused balance will be used to supplement future classes which commence again on 17th May as there will still be the 2 metre rule and 9 client limit.

If you know of anyone in need the Trust has small grants available. Please contact Mr Keith Ross, Secretary in the first instance.

REPORT FROM THE MAYOR/CHAIRMAN:

The period 2020/21 has been dominated by the Covid-19 global pandemic which is only now showing signs in the UK at least of being controlled. Despite the difficulties DTC has missed only a very few meetings and seems to have been busier than ever with new initiatives as well as maintaining normal services. Somerset West & Taunton council has been in place for two years now and has certainly shown its willingness to co-operate with Dulverton. 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 two major initiatives.

- **Abbots Way Pond:** Unfortunately not a shining example of the normally excellent grounds work of DTC. Hopefully this next year we might find a permanent solution that fits with easier maintenance while maintaining this as a pleasant garden site.
- **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, the change to SW & T was masked by almost a year of free parking due to the pandemic. The very recent problem over shopper permits however is disappointing as it demonstrates a continuing absence of sympathy with users.
- **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 with both Lady Street and the north wall requiring attention. The collapse of part of the latter is an issue to be resolved in 2021.
- **Cemetery:** The Grounds Committee re-organisation of the maintenance of the cemetery continues to yield good results, the area being in excellent repair. Grave plot levelling is ongoing.
- **Exmoor Lawns:** The Lawns has been the focus of a number of projects during the past year or so. The tree survey revealed a number of problems which have culminated in an approved application to fell 15 trees for safety reasons. The provision of an electricity supply to the area will be complete this month thanks to the generous co-operation of the Exmoor National Park Authority. The plan to erect a "bandstand" is now well underway although it will now be a demountable structure rather than a permanent one.

- Exmoor Parish Lengthsman Scheme: Continuing to administer the scheme on behalf of the other parishes involved.
- Somerset West & Taunton Council: Dealings with SW & T since its inception in 2019 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: Cllr Nick Thwaites has re-joined the council. Cllr Alan Ottey joined the council in June 2019. Cllr Kathryn Vellacott joined the council in July 2019. Cllr John Preston joined the council in August 2019. Cllr Keith Coulman resigned in December 2019. Cllr Judy Ernest resigned in September 2019.
- 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 the Dulverton Traders and other interested community organisations has received a grant from SW & T which has added funding to the employment of a marketing consultant to promote tourism in the town and surrounding areas. Part of the grant is to be used to create an arts performance space on Exmoor Lawns again to promote visitor interest but also to provide entertainment for the community.

REPORT FROM THE CLERK:

The Clerk reiterated comments already made by the Chairman concerning the impact of the pandemic and responses from both Council and members of the public who had risen to the challenges faced, enabling the continuation of Council work and the support of those detrimentally effected. Despite having been in post for nearly 20 years there had still been several steep learning curves to negotiate and she thanked members for their patience and support.

Finances – Year Ended 31st March 2021: Members will be presented with the Financial Return and a summary of Receipts & Payments as at 31st March 2021, along with the closing balances for approval at the next scheduled Council meeting to be held on 14th June.

Internal & External Audits 2020/21: Those present were informed that the internal audit has been undertaken and considered by the Council at their meeting held on 4th May 2021. There were no concerns identified.

The Clerk commented that there currently existed two councillor vacancies and that as a result the existing members are undertaking a considerable amount of extra responsibility. In the event that Somerset West & Taunton Council does not receive any requests to hold an election from residents, members will be able to co-opt at their next meeting, 12th June 2021.

GOLD STAR AWARD 2021:

To be deferred until a future Town Council meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr Armstrong – Mr Armstrong provided members with a brief family history and informed them that although he had experience working for metropolitan authorities, he wished to learn more about the Town Council and thanked them for the opportunity.

Mr Roger Watts – Mr Watts commented on the impressive workload undertaken by the Town Council and the Exmoor National Park Authority. He added that his understanding was that large events were proposed to be held during the year, which in his view will affect nature and diversity; and that he will comment publically accordingly.

MEETING CLOSED: 6.50pm

Chairman.....