



## **Minutes of the Meeting of Dulverton Town Council**

Held on Tuesday 14th September 2020 at 7.00pm, using remote video conferencing.

**Present:** Chairman/Mayor: Mr Gerry Lewis. Councillors: Mrs Christine Dubery; Mrs Judy Ernest; Mr Allan Ottey; Mrs Louise Parrish; Mr John Preston; Mrs Margaret Rawle; Mr Piers Wood; Mr Nick Thwaites, Somerset West & Taunton (S.W.T.); Mrs Frances Nicholson, Somerset County Council (S.C.C.) and one member of the public.

### **Deferment of Business for Comment by the Public:**

Mr Lesley Silverlock – Statement submitted by email, to be minuted with permission of the Chairman.

#### *A Unitary Authority for Somerset?*

*Experience of working in Herefordshire, Cornwall, and Wiltshire, where Unitary Authorities have been established, is that local Town and Parish Councils have more decision-making and resources devolved to them. Where this occurs the provisions of the Localism Act and the Power of Competence are more encouragingly worked. For an isolated hub town like Dulverton, vital to local provision for itself and its satellite parishes, a distant Unitary Authority, reliant on local knowledge, skill, and entrepreneurship, can produce benefits all round.*

*As witnessed in recent years, Dulverton has been at the end of the line for services and often the front of the queue for cuts.*

*The proposal to unify separate District Councils may not be as effective as one Unitary Authority. BANES and North Somerset have both struggled in similar circumstances by being too small.*

*One Unitary Authority for Somerset, judging from the experience of others, could benefit a strong Town Council in Dulverton. Elsewhere, where the Parish Council hasn't been strong or experienced enough, or needed an independent voice, a Town Team has also formed, supported by the local Council, to champion growth and development work.*

### **Apologies for absence and acceptance of any reasons offered if agreed:**

Cllr. Miss Kathryn Vellacott

### **Declarations of Interest:**

Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery with regards the Sports Field Management Committee.

### **Chairman's Comments & Meeting Management:**

Members were informed that the Chairman had suffered a small heart attack last week had been consequently hospitalised and a 'stent' fitted. A further problem has been identified but is to be remedied in the near future. The Chairman has recovered well.

## **Questions for County and District Councillors:**

### Local Government Re-organisation: "Stronger Somerset"

A second business case has been submitted to the Secretary of State by four District Councils proposing a two unitary system. The Government will make the final decision, the timescale of which is unclear. However, it is anticipated that there will possibly be a 'shadow council' by April 2021.

Whatever the Secretary of States decided Cllr. Nicholson considers that there exist two issues:

1. That every Parish/ Town Council should make it its business to have an input as to how things progress.
2. That decision making should be delegated as close to the people as possible and written into the constitution accordingly

### Nick Thwaites S.W.T. Council:

Kemps Way – Blocked drains: The difficulty has been convincing SWAT of its responsibility, rather than S.C.C.'s. Cllr Thwaites continues to pursue the issue.

Car Parks – Vegetation and weed issues: Several reports have been lodged with S.W.T. as to the increasing problem, which are encroaching on the parking bays particularly in the Lion Car Park. Cllr. Thwaites agreed to pursue.

### Frances Nicholson (S.S.C.):

20mph Speed Limit: To be implemented in the near future.

Schools & Covid19: S.C.C. is attempting to support schools as much as possible particularly as cases of covid19 are rising. It is imperative that the need to wash hands, wear masks and keep distanced be continuously stressed.

Church Lane: Cllr. Wood stated that he had reported to S.C.C. some weeks ago the existence of an increasing number of weeds which require treating. Cllr. Nicholson agreed to pursue the issue.

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020 as circulated:**

Were approved and signed. Proposed by Mr Preston, seconded by Mr Ottey and carried.

### **6580 Update of action points resulting from the last meeting:** None

### **6581 Accounts:**

The Financial Statement – August 2020: Appendix A

RESOLVED: That the Financial Statement as per Appendix A is approved. Proposed by Mr Preston, seconded by Mrs Dubery and carried.

Payments for Approval – August 2020: Appendix B

RESOLVED: That the payments as per Appendix B are approved. Proposed by Mrs Dubery, seconded by Mr Ottey and carried.

**6582 Committees:**

Minutes submitted for approval:

Planning Committee Meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

RESOLVED: To adopt as part of this meeting the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020. Proposed by Mrs Rawle, seconded by Mr Preston and carried.

**6583 Consultation in Planning for the Future White Paper:**

Members considered that detailed information is sparse and that the consultation document is very technical and difficult to understand.

Members hope to receive further guidance from E.N.P.A.

Cllr. Nicholson expressed her concern that the implementation of the White Paper would result in the Local Plan for the Exmoor National Park Authority being determined nationally. Local people and their representatives will not have influence over the content, unlike other parts of the country.

**6584 National Salary Award:**

RESOLVED: To implement the new national salary scales as recommended by N.A.L.C. as from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. Proposed by Mr Preston, seconded by Mr Ottey and carried.

**6585 Exmoor Lawns Electricity Supply Project:**

Cllr Parrish has taken over the project and reported that CJ Lynch have been contracted to carry out the necessary work on or after 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020. E.N.P.A. is yet to finalize the paperwork. The cabinet is to be ordered in the near future.

**6586 Emergency Town Centre Grant (£25,000):**

An application for funding has been submitted to SWAT, however the allocation of grants has been delayed as the officer responsible is currently on sick leave. The Chairman will pursue the issue next week.

**6587 Somerset Emergency Community Fund:**

The funding is a S.C.C. initiative to encourage green and sustainable projects within local communities. The Chairman asked members to consider and propose worthwhile projects and submit them to the Clerk at the earliest opportunity. The opening date for the submission of applications is 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

**6588 Website Accessibility:**

Members were informed that there existed a statutory requirement to make the website accessible or to publish a statement explaining why it hasn't been achieved, by the end of this month. The Chairman anticipates that the task will be accomplished before Christmas.

**6589 Future Council Meetings:**

The Chairman recommended, and members agreed that virtual meetings should continue for the foreseeable future. The situation is to be re-assessed at the next meeting.

**6590 Late Correspondence:**

Correspondence noted by members.

Somerset Playing Fields Association – AGM: Mr Takel is to be advised not to attend the annual meeting for health and safety reasons.

**6591 Questions for Members who have attended additional meetings:**

Exmoor Panel Meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020: Attended in person by Cllr. Mrs Margaret Rawle. Minutes and associated documents from the meeting have been circulated to members for their information.

Exmoor Medical Patient Group Meeting – 27<sup>th</sup> August 2020: Attended virtually by Cllr. Mrs Margaret Rawle who circulated a report to members. Two new G.P.'s have been appointed as from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

Town Hall Committee Meeting – 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020: Attended virtually by Cllr. Mrs Louise Parrish who circulated a report to members, including the new hirer’s agreement.

The Thrift Shop is undergoing a refit and will re-open once completed.

Starlight Committee Meeting: Attended by Cllr. Mrs Christine Dubery. The event will be very ‘low key’. A request for free parking on the day of the event has been submitted to S.W.T.

**6592 Issues to be raised with permission of the Chairman:**

Lamb Court Flower Display: It was commented on as to how beautiful the flower display looked. The Clerk was requested to write and thank Mr Fleming on behalf of members.

Cllr. Piers Wood left the meeting.

License Application WK45160 – Bank Square: No comments were forthcoming from members, who were advised to inform SWT directly with any observations they may subsequently have.

Parish Rooms Committee/ Trustee: The Committee are seeking a new Trustee. Members were requested to inform the Clerk if they were interested in filling the post.

**Chairman.....**