



MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 10th May 2023 in the Town Hall, Fore Street, Dulverton, commencing at 6.45pm.

PRESENT: Councillors: Mrs Christine Dubery; Mr Alan Ottey; Mr Bill Gash; Mrs Louise Parrish; Mr John Preston, who arrived at 7.20pm; Mrs Margaret Rawle; Mr Nick Thwaites; Mrs Ann Van Praag; Cllrs. Mrs Frances Nicholson who arrived at 6.55pm, Somerset Council (S.C.); and eight members of the public.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Mr Bill Gash & Mrs Allison Crisp, Mrs Ali Pegrum (Dulverton Partnership) and Mr Carl Hooper (Dulverton Football Club).

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

MINUTES of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 9th May 2022 and published on the website were read by the Clerk, were accepted and signed. Proposed by Mrs Van Praag, seconded by Mrs Parrish and carried.

MATTERS ARISING: None

REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS /CLUBS:

Visit Dulverton/ Dulverton Partnership Group – Mrs Ali Pegrum – A synopsis of the report was read out by the Clerk. The full version is available from the Clerk on request.

‘You will recall from last year’s Dulverton’s Annual Parish meeting, the marketing strategy for Visit Dulverton is such that a clear ‘personality’ has now been established for Dulverton as a friendly, pet-friendly, traditional, attractive, small town within the Exmoor National Park that welcomes visitors all year round, with a great community spirit and lots of places to shop, eat and stay and lots of exciting events taking place to which everyone is invited.

The launch of the website in early 2022 was very well received and it sits alongside the Visit Dulverton social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter attracting considerable traffic.

All of the events have proved an enormous success and have been run by volunteers (with paid specialist help for lighting, sound, first aid services, marketing etc.) - thanks in particular should go to Christine Dubery and Margaret Rawle for their wonderful, tireless contribution to these events.

Through my work on the Visit Dulverton website and social media, I have also been able to help promote and market Dulverton by Starlight and the Dulverton Farmers Markets to a wider audience than previously.

Sponsorship of the events held in 2022 from supportive local businesses amounted to £3800 plus VAT.

With businesses notably reducing their advertising/marketing budgets this year, sponsorship for events in 2023 currently stands at £3100 plus VAT

Please note that any support whatsoever of any of these events would be greatly appreciated from any source.

I have in 2023 contacted to date 45 local businesses/potential sponsors asking for their support.

I wrote a proposal in 2021 to request funding from SW&T/HTAP and we were pleased to receive £10,000 towards an 'Events Creation Project' for the town. This funding was used primarily towards the new event marquees and the inaugural Literary Festival, thus enabling the event to go ahead and the surplus from sponsorship/ticket sales have meant that it can again go ahead in 2023.

The Visit Dulverton website continues to grow in size and audience. If you have not yet visited the site, please do! There are pages devoted to where to eat, drink and shop in the town, as well as information and things to do pages. All of these are regularly updated – though it is difficult keeping track of the many changes in the town of retail premises etc. particularly if the traders themselves aren't forthcoming with photos and information. The vast proportion of the photos on the site have been taken by me.

The events diary is also regularly updated with events in the town and the Dulverton TA22 area.

There are now specific pages (mini websites') devoted to each of the town's major events, which can be accessed with a direct URL (web address).

I continue to make all the updates to the website myself – writing my own copy, adding images,

editing the content and adjusting the SEO (search engine optimisation) as necessary. I hope to give instruction to someone to help with this in the future – either someone from the town, or a student from a local college.

We had been considering a pay per click campaign to help with the website traffic, but for now I am focussing on improving the SEO. The traffic is impressive – with Google Analytics showing that the site has had over 19,000 users in the past 12 months, with over 59,000 specific page views.

The site also now has its own Google 'Business Profile' which I created last year.

Data shows that 2100 people have viewed this since December 2022, with 370 specific searches such as 'pubs in Dulverton', 'where to stay in Dulverton' etc. 240 people have requested directions to Dulverton from the profile using Google maps.

This is almost entirely organic traffic as we have not used any paid advertising or promotion of the site.

Referrals from partners such as Visit Exmoor are of course useful and we continue to be a Visit Exmoor member (a Gold member, not a Platinum member).

Marketing Chameleon (Devon based website builder) are paid a small annual fee (of £90 + VAT) to maintain the security of the Content Management System of the website.

Also on the website, you will find the News page, with lots of blog - type news articles about the town, such as the announcement of the winners of the Dulverton Photographic Competition which we organised last year.

These articles are often taken from press releases that I send to local newspapers, magazines, radio and TV.

Over the past year, I have built an excellent relationship with the local media and particularly with BBC Radio Somerset who have conducted a number of recorded and live interviews about the town to build footfall at our events.

Visit Dulverton's social media presence continues to grow daily and I post/share a couple of times per week – and more often when promoting certain events. For a destination marketing business, this is the best way of reaching our target audience without any direct spend, using specific tags /hashtags/links etc.

I shall be building a targeted link tree over the next couple of weeks for use on the Visit Dulverton social profile, to enable swift access to certain pages of the website.

After the success of last year's inaugural Literary Festival, with a sell-out audience for Norman Scott, the programme for the 2023 Festival is now almost complete.

Please keep your eyes peeled for news of the full line-up for this year's event – which is to be a full two day event of author/speaker talks in the Town Hall.

There is also to be a Festival Drinks Party on the Saturday evening in the Town Hall, attended by authors, speakers, sponsors and volunteers. A number of well-known writers have agreed to attend, including Sir Michael Morpurgo, Andrew Lownie, Catherine Ostler, Albert Read, Sarah Turner, Janet Ellis, Hilary Bradt and many more.'

Dulverton Gardening Club - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

The AGM has recently been held. The club has acquired 100 new members who meet on a monthly basis and enjoy talks and presentations. Any one is welcome whether a member or not. Various events are held throughout the year.

Dulverton Players - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

The group performed a pantomime last February which was very successful and plan a further production in autumn. They have amassed a spectacular collection of costumes, maintained and managed by a committed group of volunteers.

New members are welcome, particularly men, of which there is a shortage when it comes to filling male roles.

Town Hall Committee Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

The organisation has changed from a charity to a CIC (Community Interest Company).

The increasing running costs are of concern and ways of reducing energy costs in particular are being investigated. A specialist report has been commissioned.

Bookings have increased since Covid; however the facility is mainly financed by the existence of the Thrift Shop.

Flood Action Group - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

The group was called into action on one occasion during the past year. However it is anticipated that incidences are likely to increase due to climate change.

The group are continuing to look for more volunteers.

Sports Field Charity – Cllr. Mr Nick Thwaites

Those present were informed that the Sports Field Charity leases the land from the Town Council and has reciprocal leases with the individual clubs. Due to the financial difficulties some clubs are experiencing no demand for fees have been made this year.

The finances remain reasonably sound.

The pavilion remains available to hire for events.

Dulverton Football Club – Cllr. Mr Carl Hooper – Report read out by the Clerk.

The club is hanging on by a thread like most other sports clubs due to a general decline in the number of players taking part. The Taunton League is losing team's year on year.

There are not enough children to run junior sections and the players are all getting older. There is a lack of funds in the club account. The future of football in Dulverton is not looking great.

Dulverton Cricket Club - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery:

Due to a lack of committed players the club has been forced to withdraw from the local league as it has been unable to guarantee being able to field a team every Saturday, however they do plan to continue with friendlies.

Sports & Social Club - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery

As some of the clubs are struggling financially this directly affects the financial circumstances of the Sports & Social Club. The bar sales have diminished drastically reducing revenue.

Dulverton Netball Club - Cllr. Mrs Chris Dubery on behalf of Ms Katie Atkins:

This has yet again been a busy and successful year for the club. Several new members have been recruited and all enjoy a busy social calendar and competing in both the Exeter & District and Taunton leagues where they have achieved great results.

The club have been selected by the Co-op as one of this years' causes for its' Local Community Fund. Members of the C-op can select the Club as their preferred cause and every time a membership card is used 1p in every £1 spent on Co-op products will be awarded to the Club.

Members are of mixed ages and abilities are welcome to join the club. Training is held on a Thursday, commencing at 6.30pm at Dulverton School. The club can be followed on face book – Dulverton Netball Club, and Instagram @dulvnc.

Streamcombe Allotment Trust – Cllr. Mrs Margaret Rawle:

Cllr. Mrs Margaret Rawle provided those present with a synopsis of the history of the charity to date.

During the last 12 months the Trustees have awarded 3 Grants. Three hundred pounds to the Town Council towards the Platinum Jubilee Celebration Tea in June; £100 towards a Tumble Dryer for a resident in need via the Village Agent and £500 to a family whose young son is undergoing treatment for Leukaemia to help with hospital transport costs etc.

The Charity received a donation of £1,000 from PFG Fabrication being part proceeds from an Auction they organised for Local Charities last year.

Trustee Bernard How resigned on rotation and has been re-elected by the Town Council to serve a further 4 years as per the constitution.

The Trustees are Mrs Margaret Rawle as Chairman, Keith Ross who is Treasurer and Secretary, Bernard How, Catherine Blundell and Jenny Barker.

Small grants are available for those in need or are struggling. Referrals are accepted initially by Mr Keith Ross concerning anyone living in the Parish of Dulverton who is in need or struggling. The Charity also works closely with the Village Agent.

REPORT FROM THE MAYOR/CHAIRMAN:

'As another year for the Councils draws to an end we reflect back on what has been a year of trying to rebuild following the difficulties presented by Covid. The Councillors have had another busy year supporting the numerous new initiatives and making sure we continue to support those began the previous year. My sincere thanks go to them all for the unwavering support and hard work. To our Clerk and our Admin Officer, our thanks go out to you for all your support getting us through the mountain of paperwork that's needed to keep this Council running.

The DTC website and that of Visit Dulverton have continued to be developed.

The Grounds Team have worked very hard again this last 12 months looking after Jubilee Pond (renamed from Abbots Way Pond), Exmoor Lawns the two recreation grounds, the sports field, the cemetery and the churchyard.

Unlike last year we have not been able to access any grants, so have worked hard to ensure that all the events organised have been self-funding.

Like everyone, the Town Council is having to meet rising costs due to inflation, and to this end are being extremely careful when considering expenditure; at the same time as attempting to ensure that the rise in the precept is manageable for local residents.'

Councillor Dubery was thanked by members of the Council for her continuous commitment and hard work on behalf of the Town Council.

Furthermore, members were pleased to be able to congratulate Cllr. Mrs Dubery with regards her receipt of a 'Certificate of Thanks', in recognition of her service as a volunteer to the community of Dulverton, presented by Cllr. Hazel Prior-Sankey, Chair of Somerset West & Taunton.

REPORT FROM THE CLERK:

The Clerk thanked members for their continuing support and hard work.

Finances – Year Ended 31st March 2023: Members will be presented with the Financial Return and a summary of Receipts & Payments as at 31st March 2023, along with the closing balances for approval at the Council meeting scheduled for 12th June 2023.

Internal & External Audits 2022/23: Those present were informed that the internal audit was undertaken yesterday 9th May 2023. The report circulated to members upon receipt. The contents will be considered by the Legal & Finance Committee at their next meeting.

The Clerk commented that there currently existed one councillor vacancy.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Farmers Market Parking Facilities: It was confirmed that additional parking is available at Exmoor House when the Farmers Market event is held in the Lion Car Park.

Citizenship: It was confirmed that 'citizenship' is a curriculum subject taught in schools.

MEETING CLOSED: 7.40pm

Chairman