

MINUTES OF THE 2021 YEALMPTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, MAY 3rd REMOTELY BY ZOOM, AT 7pm.

Councillor Thomas was in the Chair.

Apologies from Cllrs Baldry, Cooper and Hrydziuska.

Present: 6 Parish Councillors, County Councillor and 6 members of the public.

Item 1. Approval of the minutes

The Clerk advised that there were no minutes to sign as Council had taken a formal decision to cancel the Parish Meeting in 2020 because of the Coronavirus national pandemic.

Item 2. Annual report from Councillor Thomas, Chairman of Parish Council

An extraordinary year has seen the Parish Council as busy as ever, though often working in unexpected directions. Councillors will recall that in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, Council chose in April 2020 to meet virtually, via zoom, and have continued to do so until tonight. In May, following other higher tiers of local government, we chose not to hold an Annual Parish Meeting or AGM – as such I have continued as Chairman since our last AGM in May 2019.

Covid-19 has seen the Council leading the Community in a proactive manner and in the main, it has appeared to be a success. I am particularly grateful to Dr Durman, Cllr Barton and Cllr Craddock for their administrative guidance, help and support throughout the first phase of lockdown. Many villagers benefitted from the shopping and prescription support offered and it was particularly gratifying to see over 120 volunteers sign onto our network within a 72 hour period of being asked.

The Covid Support Network was also responsible for setting up a Hardship Fund, administered by Rev Alan Ryan at the Vicarage and latterly, a second, more formal committee to deal with requests for financial support. There has been very little take-up but it is gratifying to know that a safety net exists, should it be required. As a direct result of conversations around hardship, we have also utilised the porch of the Parish Room as a drop-off for donations to the local foodbank.

Another positive legacy of Covid is communication. It became very obvious during the first phase of the pandemic that communication with residents, particularly those not on social media, was very important. As a Council, we have used the volunteer network to ensure that since May 2020, every house in the village has received a free copy of the Yealmpton Press. As we have now agreed to absorb some of the costs of printing the Press (via our precept), there is no reason why this arrangement will not continue for many years to come.

Finally, Council is extremely grateful to Dr Durman for her comprehensive re-writing of the neighbourhood plan, which (in its streamlined version) now contains updated details of snow and salt wardens, as well as those volunteers whose support would be crucial in another emergency scenario.

Other good news stories include:

- The replacement of all our village flower tubs and a new contract with Fordbrook Nurseries. We also have adopters for each of the tubs who have agreed to water them in dry weather.
- Improvements have been made to footpaths 20 and 25 with conversations continuing around footpaths 18 (kast hole) and 24 (safety rail). Issues around footpath 19 and the land at the old Shire Horse Centre continue to frustrate, despite Council's best efforts to mitigate a solution for villagers. We are now proceeding with a small working group led by Cllr Barton.
- The recreation park has received over £40,000 of improvements, with a new basketball hoop and goal, carousel and play areas for younger and older children. Since the park reopened (after the first lockdown) it has seen significantly more use, mainly as people follow the regulations and stay local.
- The mountain bike track – Council has played a small part in facilitating the creation of the new mountain biking area in Western Torr Woods, adjacent to the site of the old adventure playground and next to footpath 17. Council is grateful to Kitley Estates and Mr Michael Bastard for his generosity of spirit.
- The Environment sub-committee. The Parish Council now has an extremely active Yealmpton Environment Group (YEG). Encouraged by Council, there are around a dozen members and the group is split into 6 teams, charged with looking at green spaces, footpaths, trees, water quality, carbon footprint reduction and communications/education. It is chaired by Stan Abbott, with Kate Hopkins as Vice-Chair. YEG continues to work closely with BeeWild and is now regularly reporting to Council and advising on new initiatives.

Finally, council remains committed to supporting local residents over concerns around parking and speeding. We have worked with parishioners over the last twelve months and will continue to monitor speeding and parking issues throughout the parish. We have liaised with DCC Highways on these issues, and are grateful to our County Councillor and officers at County Hall for their continued support.

I would personally like to thank all Councillors and the Clerk for their help, advice, support and engagement over the last 12 months. Despite all, I believe we have achieved much of which we can be proud.

Item 3. District Councillors Dan Thomas and Keith Baldry Annual Report Yealmpton Parish

This is a joint report from both of us.

South Hams Council has 31 Councillors. The composition of South Hams Council is 15 Conservatives, 10 Liberal Democrats, 2 Green Party and 3 Independents. There is a vacancy. The by election is on 6 May.

Our responsibilities on the Council include the following. Keith is a Member of the Executive with responsibility for Environment. He is also a member of the Council Tax Setting Committee and the Waste Board. Dan is a Member of Overview and Scrutiny and the Licensing Committee.

The South Hams share of Council Tax agreed for 2021-22 is increased by £5 pa for a band D property. The South Hams share of Council tax is less than 10% of the total Council tax bill. The main elements are County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Chief Executive of SHDC Sophie Hosking left last year. The new Chief Executive Andy Bates started last June. The manner of his new work is very different to normal. He has had little chance to meet Members and staff in person. This has been done through the internet.

South Hams has had to concentrate a lot of attention on Covid matters. Very few staff attend the office. They work from home. Many in less-than-ideal circumstances. We have also diverted staff from normal duties into issuing government grants to businesses.

Meetings of the Council have been held on Skype and Teams. The business of the Council has continued successfully and there have been savings in transport costs and in time.

We made a successful recommendation from the Sustainable Locality Fund for payment to Yealmpton and Brixton brownies and rainbows. For the coming year in addition to our individual allocation for the ward of £2k, the Council has adopted a suggestion from Dan, that we will have £3k each to spend on local climate change and biodiversity projects. We strongly encourage early applications.

In summary this has been both a difficult year and a very different one for the Council.

Finally, my 12 years as your District Councillor particularly Sparkwell are coming to a close, less for the Parishes brought about by the boundary changes.

Item 4. Annual report from County Councillor Hosking

1. VIRTUAL MEETINGS

2020/21 will be remembered as the time of Coronavirus. The virus has prematurely ended many lives, disrupted the economy and our ways of life.

May I congratulate you all on your acceptance of and adaptation to the new circumstances and technology that has made Virtual Meetings a part of Council and everyday life.

2. PRINCE PHILIP, THE DUKE OF ENDINBURGH

I note with sadness the recent death of HRH the Prince Philip at the age of 99, and thoughts are with HRH the Queen & the Royal Family. The Duke's lasting legacy for the South West will be the Ten Tours expedition, part of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards challenge.

3. CORONAVIRUS

The Team Devon Local Outbreak Management Board has met throughout the last year to monitor, help to fund, provide guidance and intervene where necessary, the fight against coronavirus including overseeing the setting up of the Nightingale Hospital.

The UK development, procurement and delivery of vaccines has been a success story. As I write, over two thirds of the adult population in Devon have received at least their first vaccination, and the 40 and over age range are now invited to book their first jab.

The number of cases has fallen and the latest available data to the week ended 27th April show just 114 cases in Devon.

The availability of testing is increasing with the objective of identifying (if possible), those who carry the virus without symptoms.

We are all looking forward to taking the 4 steps to freedom as they progress through the early summer.

The Government responded to the crisis with financial support for the economy, and in Devon we endeavoured to make funds available where needed to avoid hardship.

There is an ongoing need for vigilance as the holiday season makes a slightly cool debut this bank holiday weekend. Good to enjoy the atmosphere of a favourite pub on Friday, however it looked more like an Everest Base Camp than a place of entertainment.

4. THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

One of the truly heartening stories of Coronavirus is the spontaneous creation of support networks by volunteers throughout the Division and Devon. Many congratulations and thanks to you all. You have made such a difference to the lives of so many people shielding, isolating and struggling.

5. BUDGET

The approximate budget headlines this year are;

- a) Devon County Council have presented another balanced budget for the 2021/22 financial year.
- b) The overall expenditure is £578.5 million, an increase of 6.6%.
- c) Within the budget there are increases of;
 - (i) £12 million for mainly increased demand for Education Health and Care plans in Children's Services;
 - (ii) £22 million for Adult Care & Health Services; and
 - (iii) 7.5% for Corporate Services;
- d) There remains a deficit of some £50 million on our balance sheet for the overspend on the High Needs Block over the last 2 years. We await Government instruction on how this is to be financed;
- e) We have increased the DCC element of the Council Tax precept by the maximum permitted 4.99%.

6. SOCIAL CARE

With the ambition of improving the integration of services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities it has been decided to take an £8.8 million contract for service provision in house from 2022. Devon is promoting an Early Help strategy in an attempt to tackle issues at source and wrap help around families to reduce the demand for Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) at a later stage. The increased number of EHCPs has put significant pressure on our budget for the last two years.

7. INFRASTRUCTURE

a) BROADBAND

Connecting Devon & Somerset has recently awarded a new contract to Airband to complete fibre to the premises connections for the 90 to 95% sector of properties that do not as yet have Superfast Broadband in the period 2021 to 2024. Maps showing planned connections across the Division are due to be published soon.

For those business premises not included in the Airband stage of the rollout do have a look at the Government Gigabit voucher scheme which can be helpful particularly for groups of premises.

b) MOBILE

Businesses in Not Spots please see the Connecting Devon and Somerset initiative;
<https://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/the-cds-mobile-booster-voucher-scheme-guide/>
which plans to benefit 1,250 premises with a voucher for a mobile signal booster.

c) RAILWAY

In the South Brent & Yealmpton Division we have made an application for a feasibility study to reinstate an active station in South Brent.

As part of the national Restore your Railway Scheme a daily railway service has been promised for the Okehampton to Exeter line.

d) ROADS

Devon County Council had a budget of £102m for roads in the last financial year, more than has ever been spent before. In the Division we have benefited from Safer Road Funding for improvements to the A3121 from Hollowcombe Cross, past Ermington to Wrangaton. This will include two new roundabouts at the junction of the A379/A3121 and the B3196/A3121 at Kitterford Cross.

8. THE INTERIM DEVON CARBON PLAN

A report on the responses to an extensive consultation are now being compiled, and we are expecting this to be published in the summer of 2021. Devon County Council remain committed to achieving net zero carbon status.

Within the County Council we continue to reduce our Carbon Footprint. As part of our strategy the conversion of streetlighting to LED should be completed in about 18 months.

9. THE ECONOMY

Devon County Council have purchased the former Flybe Training Academy and are turning it into a high-tech Future Skills Centre specialising in digital, engineering, construction and clean growth. The Centre will cater for learners of all ages, skills, and qualifications and prepare them for the economy of the future.

At County Hall we are developing online support for business start-ups, the self-employed, innovation and growth.

10. EDUCATION

This has been a challenging year for schools and we congratulate teachers who have delivered lessons online and parents who have found themselves adapting to a second career in front of a virtual blackboard. We hope their endeavour and the catch-up programme now unfolding will ensure that our children's education will not suffer.

The gradual drift to Academy status continues in Devon schools, and we remain committed to ensuring that maintained schools receive the very best support we can offer. Per pupil funding has now increased to £4,000 per primary school pupil and £5,000 per secondary school pupil. Whilst we have moved up the rankings slightly in terms of average funding we are still towards the lower end of the table. Lobbying will continue to ensure that the full costs of rurality are taken into account.

AND LOCALLY

11. SILVERBRIDGE WAY

County Solicitor confirms they have referred your questions to Public Rights of Way.

12. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER ROAD CLOSURES

The breaches of notice periods for road closures reported by Councillor Craddock have been forwarded to Highway Management Road Closure Administration with a request that they monitor. Awaiting response.

13. YEALM PARK

The condition of the roads in Yealm Park has been reported to the Neighbourhood Highways Team as requested by Cllr Hyrdziuszka.

Item 5. Any other Business

None.

The meeting was closed by the chairman at 7.24 p.m.

Michael Stickland, Clerk to the Council

May 4th 2021