

Minutes of the Annual Tiverton Parish Meeting held in the Council Chamber on Monday 25th April 2022.

In attendance: The Mayor, Cllr S Griggs, Cllrs, W Burke, L Cruwys, P Elstone, M Farrell, D Garcia-Parejo, C Harrower, I Hill, P Hill, Peter Hill, B Holdman, T Lindus, J Rendle, S Pugh, the Town Clerk, Mr J Vanderwolfe, Assistant to the Town Clerk Mrs J Hubbard, Mr R Ives, (Neighbourhood Plan), Mr I Johnson (Neighbourhood Plan), Mr C Olive of Blundell's School, Mr J Sowden of Tiverton High School, one member of press and 12 members of public.

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllrs A Berry, S Bush, N Davey, C Daw, D Knowles, A Perris, C Slade, E Slade.

The Mayor, Cllr S Griggs welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed her pleasure in seeing the number of members of the public present.

2019 Minutes

The Minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting were adopted as a true record and were signed by the Mayor.

The Mayor's report was given by Cllr Sue Griggs, she said that a lot had happened since the 2019 meeting, when covid struck, it changed the way we lived, worked and played. There was a need to adapt, with lots of positive acts of kindness, and good community spirit helping us through a difficult period. Cllr Griggs felt that the community would feel its effects for some time. She said that the Town Hall had continued to run throughout the pandemic by adapting to a phone and online service.

Town council meetings continued to run remotely via zoom. The town council continued to make our lives better such as the Amenities who worked on improvements to the council's allotment sites, putting on the Christmas Switch-on event including the town hall roof top pyrotechnics finale. The Civic & Ceremonial committee continued to organise and support events with a vintage bus day and the Eat Festival in September.

Cllr S Griggs informed the members of public that the town councillors were here to be the mouth piece for the community. She said that they could be contacted with all the details listed on the town council's website.

Cllr Griggs said as Mayor of Tiverton she wanted to encourage the footfall to the town, and support wherever she could, the local traders and businesses who were vital in ensuring a strong, vibrant and thriving town centre. She said that the town council had agreed to appoint a Town Centre Coordinator whom she hoped would prove very beneficial to the town. She explained that the town council had now partnered with MDDC to provide a new CCTV system for the town centre, the public toilets had received some refurbishments and the bus railings had received a fresh coat of paint.

The town Clerk read out his report. He said that despite the added pressures being placed upon the town and parish councils, he was pleased to inform that there had been no increase in public contributions towards the running of the council this year. Tiverton Town Council was the only authority that had been able to do this. It had been achieved by careful governance and effective budget management. The town clerk said that two long serving employees of the council who managed the New Hall had announced their retirement. Between them they had done over 50 years. He wished them a very happy retirement.

The Town clerk said that a great deal of meetings had taken place during covid remotely, and whilst there had been a few teething problems it worked well in the main. When the government announced a return to face to face meetings, there had been no allowance made for the provision of remote meetings if decisions were to be made. So in effect meant every meeting being face to face with any decisions needed.

The town clerk said that May would see the councillors entering the fourth year of a four year cycle. Elections for all of the five wards with 24 seats would take place in May 2023, he invited members of the public to consider getting themselves nominated if they were interested, to serve on the council in 2023.

Reports from the Finance & General Purpose, Civic and Ceremonial, Amenities, Planning and Climate Change committees had been circulated and were accepted as read.

The Rev. I Johnson, chairman of the Tiverton Neighbourhood said that the Tiverton Neighbourhood Plan had been 4 and a half years in the making, but that they were now on the home straits. The document was 172 pages long with two addendums, it had now been submitted to an independent examiner.

Mr Johnson said that they had received a very good response from the townspeople to the document with many making helpful suggestions. Covid, he said had prevented lots of meetings. The Town Leat was a cause for concern for many as it had not flowed for a considerable length of time. This he suggested needed to be a priority.

Mr Johnson said that it would be the town council's responsibility to see that the Neighbourhood Plan was properly utilised in planning matters and remained an active document in the coming years. The concluding referendum would take place in September this year, this would be reliant on a good clean bill of health. He paid tribute to Mr Ives who had worked very hard on the plan despite being in full time employment, he also thanked the consultant Ms Alison Eardley who had been very supportive. Mr Johnson invited the public to look at the document, speak well of it and endorse it for the next five years.

In turn, Mr Ives thanked Mr Johnson for his drive and determination to make things happen.

The Town Leat

CLRs I Hill & P Hill introduced themselves to the members of public before proceeding to present their power point report on the town leat.

CLr I Hill said that there were many elements that needed addressing before the leat would be able to run again. These were:

- Chettiscombe Wier
- The Link Road Syphon
- The town cemetery to Graham Close
- Water Lane
- Castle Street
- Coggan's Well

The first element Chettiscombe Weir. The works to the weir had been delayed due to covid, it had been responsible for causing flooding into one of the nearby houses. The levels were not maintained at the correct height because of the structure of the weir breaking down. The issue had been addressed as it was now repaired and up and running.

The second element Link Road Syphon, Cllr W Burke had in the past cleared the silt from the grill, but major excavation work was now needed to clear the silt which had built up again. This would involve draining the whole area and would be a large operation. The costs of doing this would be substantial.

The third element the town cemetery to Graham Close, the leat channel at the base of Pinnex allotment site was overgrown, this in turn runs through the back gardens of Oak Close and Cherry Close. Many residents had covered the channel sections through their gardens with structures such as sheds etc., so it would now require a big public relationship exercise to talk to the residents to get their co-operation.

The fourth element Water Lane, here the problems are very complicated, the leat channel in parts, had become linked with the drain channels and sewerage pipes had intruded into the leat pipes. The leat had in effect been commandeered as the drainage channel for Water Lane.

The fifth element Castle Street, this historic street with its cobble lined leat channel is in need of repair. Many of the cobbles having become dislodged and or now missing. It was difficult to ascertain who was responsible for this cobbled channel section. Residents who lived here were desperate to see their street improved.

Cllr I Hill said that this all demonstrated how many organisations were involved and how complex the issues were. This was why she had brought a motion to the town council to set up a charitable trust to help get the leat flowing again and to maintain it. The costs were likely to be in the region of £100,000 or more. Cllr I Hill said that none of the councils would take individual responsibility for the leat. As a charitable trust it would be easier to apply for grant funding to help towards the costs. She urged the townspeople to come forward to lend their support to this cause. She explained that in order to secure the grant funding there would be a need to demonstrate its worth to the community. Cllr P Hill had already prepared a draft constitution for the trust.

Cllr I Hill ended by saying that in order to initiate the trust there would be a need for trustees, a figure head, and partner organisations too. She encouraged highly motivated individuals to contact her and her husband Cllr P Hill or the town council and thanked all for listening to the presentation.

The Mayor Cllr S Griggs thanked Cllr's I & P Hill for their presentation.

C.H.A.T.

Alison Padfield of Churches Housing Action Trust read out her report to the members. She said it had been her pleasure to work with the town council in the last two years. C.H.A.T. had appointed a food poverty coordinator from the funding secured by the town council and this had greatly helped in their operations. Alison said that her organisation had been two times busier during lockdown delivering 115 food packages per month. The food came mainly from supermarkets and was distributed by volunteers.

Alison said that her organisation assisted people with access to services and worked with local schools to provide school vouchers. To date they had provided 500 packs to schools. Her concern now was the rising fuel costs and how this would affect the community, the town council grant of £5,000 for fuel poverty would be managed carefully in order to assist as many in need as possible. Alison thanked the town council for kick-starting the funding for them.

New High School

Mr Jon Sowden of Tiverton High School said that over the past few years it had been his privilege to bring the young people to council meetings, he felt that a forum such as the council meetings were very beneficial to them. Covid was still presenting some challenges in terms of staff and student absences but the school was coping the best they could. Mr Sowden was delighted to work with Mr Charlie Olive of Blundell's and said that both schools were involved with various projects.

Mr Sowden went on to inform all that for the past 10 years they had been promised a new school, the plans and permissions were in place but funding was needed. The current High School he said would be full to capacity in 2 years from now. This was a very worrying statistic. Mr Sowden said that the population was due to increase added to by a number of new homes being built. There was now a need for a public push for money, a bid had again been submitted but sadly several previous bids had failed. The current school is sited on a flood plain and this might now mean that a bid might be approved. This was due to a change in planning policy. There was an urgent need now for people to support the campaign for a new school. A decision on the bid would be reached at the end of the year.

Mr C Olive of Blundell's School said that he was the head of the Community Partnership and was a born and bred Tivertonian. He said it was a privilege to have this role. Mr Olive said that part of the role was to work with the local schools to strengthen links.

The school garden had developed well over the last couple of years. Mr Olive said it was important to learn about the environment and sustainability. The garden was almost now at the point of being able to be opened up to the community. Mr Olive said he was keen to be involved with any future plans for the town leat. He also expressed an interest in being involved with the proposed new high school.

The Mayor Cllr S Griggs thanked Mr Sowden and Mr Olive for attending.

Cllr Peter Hill informed the members that Heathcoat Fabrics had won the Queen's award for innovation. This was for the fabric supplied to the space mission project.

The Mayor Cllr S Griggs gave thanks to all that attended the meeting, she also thanked the Tiverton Litter Pickers for their efforts to keep the town tidy. She recognised that litter was a big problem in the town. Cllr Griggs said that the group was always happy to have more volunteers join their group.

Cllr S Griggs thanked the Town Clerk and the administration staff for all the work they carry out on behalf of the town council.

The Mayor concluded the meeting.

Signed -----

Date -----