

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON FRIDAY 26 APRIL 2019

1. **Introductions and welcome from the deputy mayor – Cllr S. Miller**

Cllr S. Miller welcomed all those attending the meeting and said he was chairing the meeting as the mayor, Cllr Mrs M. Ellis was attending twinning events in St Georges, Bermuda.

Cllr D. Turner (Dorset County Council and West Dorset District Council), Cllr Mrs C. Reynolds (West Dorset District Council), and PCSO Amanda King (Dorset Police) were welcomed to the meeting.

2. **To receive the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 20 April 2018**

Proposed by Stan Williams and seconded by Jeff Scowen, the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting on 20 April 2018 were **APPROVED** by the majority as a correct record of the meeting.

3. **To receive the Corporate Plan 2018-23**

Cllr S. Miller presented the plan to the meeting, which he said was a reflection of the four-year term of this council administration, which would be coming to an end on 6 May 2019.

Cllr S. Miller went through the highlights of the plan relating to finance, the projects the town council had completed, the commitment not to increase the precept, changes to the workforce, grant funding to local organisations, investment in the town by working with other organisations to draw in funding, and improving the council's business systems.

Cllr S. Miller said there were some ongoing issues, including proposed changes to the council's committee structure, the transfer of assets and services from Dorset Council to the town council, future funding to local organisations, the council's financial support to the Marine Theatre, the proposed café and toilets in the gardens, any actions arising from the traffic and parking study, and the future use of Strawberry Fields.

Other ongoing issues included the introduction of a new council website, the re-development of Henry's Way play park, the linking of CCTV cameras to the Dorset Police network, the installation of a cash machine, the formulation of an asset investment strategy, the replace of the roof above several Marine Parade buildings, the gardens' lighting project, the refurbishment of the council office, the leases with the powerboat and bowls' clubs, assets on-and-around Monmouth Beach car park, the replacement of the seafront railings, and improving member behaviour.

4. Feedback from local organisations in receipt of grants and support from Lyme Regis Town Council

Ray Waspe – Lyme Regis Sea School Trust

Mr Waspe said the sea school had received £3,500 from the council towards replacement dinghies. He said the school trained children and adults to go through the Royal Yachting Association training courses, who could then go on to be instructors or assistant instructors. He said several years ago the school had undertaken a replacement programme of its dinghies, some of which were up to 40 years old, and this programme was ongoing. Mr Waspe said the council's grant had been used to buy two Bahias, replacing 40-year-old Wayfarers which were past their prime and not safe or reliable enough to take people out on the water. He said the school had increased the number of people learning to sail, with around 350 at the moment, and it was increasing the number of sessions it ran with help from the council and other fundraising. Mr Waspe said the school trained around 20 children from Woodroffe School, as well as local children via the sailing club, and it was proposed to run weekend sessions this year. He said the sea school was probably the largest training organisation in the town, outside of the schools. He said the school appreciated the help the council had given.

Grenville Barr – Plastic-Free Lyme Regis and Turn Lyme Green (TLG)

Mr Barr said TLG had received a grant of £1,500 from the council to further the aim of getting plastic-free coastline status for Lyme Regis from Surfers Against Sewage. He said to do this, TLG had to engage with various businesses in Lyme Regis and help them understand how they could reduce unnecessary waste of disposable plastic. He said they had stalls at community events and engaged with other organisations to help them understand how they might be able to reduce plastic use. Mr Barr said they had engaged with holiday accommodations and managers to reduce single-use plastic and set up a website to provide information to residents, businesses and visitors. He said plastic-free status was awarded in June 2018, making Lyme Regis the 24th community in England to achieve the award and the first in Dorset, with a further 500 organisations in the UK working towards this status. Mr Barr said TLG wanted to carry on with this work this year, as well as helping Woodroffe School achieve plastic-free school status. He said they believed having plastic-free status was beneficial to the whole community, helping to raise awareness of unnecessary use of plastics and to reduce the amount of plastic in the sea and on beaches. Mr Barr said TLG was grateful for the grant and future support.

Ruth Cohen – B Sharp

Ms Cohen said B Sharp was a young person's music charity based in Lyme Regis, running music workshops at The Hub and other surrounding towns. She said they were grateful for the council's £5,000 grant and it was vital to have that level of support to lever in other national funding. It demonstrated there was support locally to convince other funding organisations B Sharp was a good asset to the community. Ms Cohen said they had worked with 60 local young people this year, as well as a much larger number through schools and preschools, including Woodroffe and St Michael's. She said young people had

had opportunities to make music with their friends, to do positive activities, to build confidence and self-esteem, and to give back to the community through performances. Ms Cohen said B Sharp had taken part in local events and were about to take part in the fossil festival and busking festival. She thanked the town council for its support.

Stan Williams – Bridport and District Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) (speaking on behalf of Rovarn Wickremasinghe)

Mr Williams said the CAB wanted to express its gratitude to the town council for supporting CAB services in Lyme Regis and the grant it received in 2018/19. He said this support was vital to the CAB at a time of great uncertainty about future core funding levels. He said the grant supported the outreach services at St Michael's Business Centre on Wednesdays, which provided a mix of appointments and drop-in advice sessions open to all, covering benefit, debt, housing, employment, relationship and consumer issues. Mr Williams said the CAB was also able to provide an additional outreach service at the Lyme Regis Medical Centre in 2018/19, operating on Monday mornings, providing triage and information to patients. He said they were hopeful of continuing this service following the amalgamation of the medical centres next month. Mr Williams said the grant had helped the CAB with the costs of providing a service to 158 residents from the Lyme Regis/Charmouth ward area. He said they had helped clients with 500 separate issues, with half of these issues related to benefit enquiries including universal credit; housing, relationships and debt were the next largest categories. Mr Williams said the CAB helped clients achieve financial gains of over £80,000; these were additional benefits the CAB had identified or helped the client claim or awarded following a successful appeal. In terms of value for money this equated to £16.51 for every £1 invested. He said the CAB had also achieved debt write-offs of £10,000 for residents. He added that over 40% of the clients seen reported a disability or long-term health problem, which demonstrated the CAB was helping some of the most vulnerable in the community.

Stan Williams – Axe Valley and West Dorset Ring and Ride Service

Mr Williams said the funding received from the council was very important to the service, which had two buses, including a vehicle with a chair lift to accommodate people who couldn't otherwise get out of their houses or go on buses. He said passenger numbers were building up and Lyme Regis was the busiest town, with 10 people applying to join the scheme within the last month. Mr Williams said the service was dependent on volunteers and there was a concern how funding would be affected with the formation of the unitary authority.

Zoe Patrick – Harbour Voices

Mrs Patrick said the council's grant would enable the group to buy props, costumes and a PA system for performances over the summer. She said she had joined the choir since moving to the area a year ago and it was a great way of integrating with the community. She said songs of the sea were particularly relevant to Lyme Regis and its seafaring tradition.

Charmouth Scout Group

A representative of the group said the council's grant had been used to buy emergency shelters, which had come in very handy and had been taken to Spain.

Adrienne Mullins – St Michael's Primary and Pre-School PFA

Mrs Mullins thanked the council for its grant of £1,000 to purchase and install a defibrillator within the school, which could be accessed by anyone in the community during the school day. She said the PFA felt it was important to have a device on the eastern side of Lyme Regis and, as the school was at the heart of the local community and an evacuation and care centre for emergencies in Lyme Regis, it was the ideal location for a defibrillator. Mrs Mullins said it was a multi-age device which could switch simply between an adult and a child to ensure the widest group of people could access it. She said first aiders in the school had seen how vital defibrillators were during their training and were keen to install one in the school.

4. Open Session

(a) Questions from young people

There were none.

(b) Questions from Lyme Regis Electors

Ken Gollop

- i) Mr Gollop asked if the meeting could have a full report on the recently commissioned traffic survey. He said he had asked the council several times if the public would be consulted but this hadn't happened, so he asked for the recommendations of the report and the cost. He hoped the council had not yet paid for the report.

Cllr S. Miller said Hydrock, the company which carried out the survey, had not provided the report the council had asked for, as agreed with them in the terms of reference, and the council had not yet paid in full. He said the council was doing everything it could to see it completed, a process which must include public consultation so views could be integrated into the final report.

- ii) Mr Gollop asked why the council rented out the Guildhall shop as it needed the space for itself.

Cllr S. Miller said the council felt it was more relevant at that point to lease the shop to generate revenue, but the whole building would be looked at when the council considered plans for office.

Nigel Ball

- i) Mr Ball thanked the council for the new Marine Parade toilets and said it was a shame it was waiting for some of the work to still be done. He thanked the council for the new benches on the seafront, which were being well used and

would not require much maintenance. He also thanked the council for the new beach huts.

- ii) Regarding the fee paid to the council for use of land during recent filming, Mr Ball said he felt the council could have dealt with this differently because people wanted to know how much had been received. He praised the clean-up of Mary Anning's gravestone, which he believed would generate a lot of interest for the town.
- iii) Mr Ball thanked the organisations who had received funding from the council for attending the meeting but it was a shame more had not attended. He said the town needed to be mindful the money might not be available one day.
- iv) Mr Ball said he hoped the new administration would try and remove exempt business from meetings, except for financial information, as this might help people understand how the council worked.

Nick Gear

- i) Mr Gear asked who was in charge of the council – the mayor or town clerk?
- ii) Mr Gear asked why when a member of the public brought an appropriate comment to a council meeting it didn't get minuted, regardless of whether it was on the agenda.
- iii) Mr Gear asked why council business was considered in exempt business when the press and public were excluded. He said taxpayers should see where their money was being spent.
- iv) Mr Gear asked why the public was only given three minutes to ask questions at council meetings as it was not enough time.
- v) Mr Gear asked why the payment from the filming of Ammonite had not been released to the public.
- vi) Mr Gear said he asked through a Freedom of Information request why the council and Ms Bolton had used the same solicitor for the last 30 years for the land dispute in Lister Gardens, which he believed was a breach of the code of conduct.
- vii) Mr Gear asked if a member of the public felt the job of the town clerk was not being fulfilled in the public interest, who should that person be reported to and how a vote of no confidence could be made against that person.

Cllr S. Miller said the mayor was responsible for the council and members, and the town clerk was responsible for the officers and delivering the processes.

Cllr S. Miller said the council tried to conduct business in the most transparent way it could, but sometimes exempt business was a requirement if sensitive information was being discussed.

Cllr S. Miller said the council would provide any information requested by a member of the public, if it was within its gift to do so.

Regarding the Lister Gardens' boundary dispute, he said the council's position was considered at length and external advice was taken, including legal advice, which led the council to decide not to pursue the matter any further. He added this matter was closed as far as the council was concerned.

Ken Gollop

Mr Gollop said he believed the public should know who owed the council money and what debts had been written off as it was taxpayers' money.

Jeff Scowen

Mr Scowen asked if the council would take on board what had been said about communication and involving the electorate more. He asked if the council would get rid of working groups and review the policy for exempt business.

Cllr S. Miller said the council would always try to improve and make council business as transparent as possible.

Nigel Ball

Mr Ball asked if the council had a contingency fund for staff dismissals, settlements and disputes. He said he understood the deputy town clerk hadn't been able to answer his questions on an ongoing personnel matter, but he asked where the money would come from.

Cllr S. Miller asked Cllr B. Larcombe to respond as chairman of the Human Resources Committee.

Cllr B. Larcombe said the council didn't have a contingency because it didn't anticipate this kind of problem, but it did have a sizeable reserve and most councils would rely on these funds in this kind of situation.

Ken Gollop

Mr Gollop asked if the public would find out how much Fossil Films had paid the council for use of its land.

Cllr S. Miller said the council was working with the film company on a joint press release, which he understood would be released imminently.

Nigel Ball

Mr Ball asked when the contract for the town bus service, which was funded by the council, would come to an end. He asked if it was known how much money was generated from the bus from Lyme Regis residents as a lot of passengers were concessions. He suggested the service could be opened up to all Lyme Regis residents to use for free, using something like the Gateway

Card, as the bus was never full and it could mean less traffic going into the town centre.

The town clerk said the council had entered into an agreement with the bus company for three years and discussions would take place about the contract renewal in the third year of the contract.

The town clerk said information was available which would allow the council to do some modelling on the bus service. He said it was known a high proportion of passengers had bus passes, so there was no reason the council couldn't explore how much was charged, and if some level of underwriting could increase the volume of use. He added that this was something for the new administration to consider.

Cllr D. Turner said Dorset County Council was talking to MPs about the idea that concessionary passengers should pay a small charge to use the bus, rather than having it free. He said if they were charged £1, this would generate an income of £3.9million. He added that this would be re-visited with the new Dorset Council.

Zoe Patrick

- i) Mrs Patrick asked if reports could be given by the district and county councillors and the police at future annual town meetings.

Cllr S. Miller said this would be noted for the future.

- ii) Mrs Patrick said one of the concerns locally was the lack of police presence in the town. She asked if this was likely to improve.

PCSO King said the situation was likely to stay the same but there was a pool of resources the police could call upon. For example, if it was known there was a drug problem in a certain area, the inspector could ask for temporary resources to tackle that problem. PCSO King said this approach had been working successfully, including in Lyme Regis. She added the police were trying to use their available resources more wisely.

Nigel Ball

Mr Ball said as a horticulturalist, he was disappointed with the seafront gardens and they were in need of major refurbishment. He believed the lighting project would detract from what was already there. Mr Ball said as there was a small amount of horticultural knowledge within the team and no head gardener, he had offered to suggest some improvements but no one had taken him up on that offer. He added that there was a lot of work to do but someone needed to take control of it and someone with horticultural knowledge was needed to advise the council.

Cllr S. Miller said Mr Ball's comments would be taken away and looked at again.

Ken Gollop

- i) Mr Gollop said he believed the council could have done more to advertise this meeting.
- ii) Mr Gollop said he didn't believe the unisex toilets were working for some people due to the embarrassment of being in them with the other sex.

Nigel Ball

Mr Ball said he would like to see more people attending council meetings and he suggested extending the time the public had to speak at the beginning of a meeting from three minutes to five, as well as the opportunity for the public to say something at the end of the meeting.

6. Lyme Regis Town Council Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2018

The document was noted.

The meeting closed at 8.26pm

Total attendance approx. 25

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