

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON FRIDAY 29 APRIL 2021 HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM

1. **Introductions and welcome from the mayor – Cllr B. Larcombe MBE**

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe welcomed those attending and clarified that an annual town meeting hadn't taken place in 2020 due to Covid-19. He said this meeting was an opportunity for the council to listen to the public.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said PCSO Amanda King had sent her apologies but had submitted a report to be read out later in the meeting.

2. **To receive the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 26 April 2019**

Proposed by John Broom and seconded by David Sarson, the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting on 26 April 2019 were **APPROVED** by the majority as a correct record of the meeting.

3. **To receive the Corporate Plan 2021-26**

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the period to which the corporate plan related included some once-in-a-generation work, such as the seafront roof and work to the Guildhall. He said the plan was an account of the things the council had done and the amount the council had done.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the plan took the council into the opening years of the next administration so the incoming council is not starting from scratch.

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

Rovarn Wickremasinghe – Bridport and District Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB)

Mr Wickremasinghe said the CAB would like to thank the council for its support and annual grants over the years and they were pleased to now receive long-term financial support, which was vital to the service. He said the grant was for the outreach service in Lyme Regis but they had to unfortunately withdraw face-to-face services from March 2020 and volunteers had moved to homeworking, which meant putting technology, internet and phone systems and laptops in place. He said the council's grant, in addition to funding from the national office, was used to put this in place. Mr Wickremasinghe said they were planning to introduce limited face-to-face sessions at their main office from 17 May 2021 and expand from there. He said during the pandemic they were providing full advice through remote channels; Dorset Advice Line, a local phone contact, email, webchat and video conferencing. He said they knew from services run across Dorset CAB that 64% of people wanted face-to-face services so it was really important to get back to this for the most vulnerable and those who couldn't use digital services. Mr Wickremasinghe

said the number of people from Lyme Regis using the service during the pandemic was down on normal, but 108 residents were helped with advice on just over 400 issues. Of those, nearly half were reporting as disabled or with long-term health problems and the main issues dealt with were around benefits. He said there were also lots of queries about the foodbank, debt and housing problems. Mr Wickremasinghe said overall they had achieved income gains of just over £30,000 for Lyme Regis and Charmouth residents, mainly from additional benefits that were identified and claimed. He said they had been in discussion with the council about new outreach premises at the council office, which they hoped to start in June. He thanked Cllr Stan Williams, who had retired this month as a trustee after many years and had been a real support and good link between the CAB and the council.

Richard Salt – St Michael and St George RC Church (read out by an officer)

Father Anthony Cockram, the parish priest of the Parish of The Most Holy Trinity in which the church is situated, on behalf of all parishioners and visitors to the church, would like to thank the mayor and councillors for their support in restoring this historic building. A generous award of £1,000 was made in the last financial year towards the costs of repairs to the roof and stonework which, with other grants and parish contribution, has enabled the exterior of the church to be restored so that it is now safe (large cracks and dangerously loose stones were found in the roof stonework), re-rendered where necessary (major areas were loose and, in some places, falling away), repainted and generally made wind and watertight. The church is 186 years old, built in 1835, Grade 11* Listed and one of the heritage buildings of Lyme Regis; it will now be protected for years to come. The work should be completed and the site cleared of scaffolding by the end of May; it is hoped to open the church to visitors and tourists when the Covid restrictions permit. It should also be mentioned that the town council has proved its support to the protection of the town's heritage by providing a further grant of £1,000 for the current financial year towards the interior redecoration and repairs which should be completed by the end of May.

Ruth Cohen – B Sharp (read out by an officer)

B Sharp would like to express our gratitude to the council for the grant received in 2020-21. As a small local charity, that works with local young people, and in a year of great uncertainty, this funding has been vital to support the organisation. The grant has supported B Sharp to adapt to Covid restrictions and continue to work with young people throughout the pandemic. We have run our after-school clubs as socially distanced face-to-face sessions when this has been permitted under government guidelines and run our groups online when meeting in person wasn't possible. We have worked intensively with our existing participants, especially those with additional needs, to try and keep them engaged in positive creative activities during lockdowns. We have also supported home learning by creating resources for children to make music at home, which have been sent out to families via St Michael's School. We have continued to provide training online to preschools and nurseries locally and across Dorset on music with children aged 0 to 5. Our older teenage trainee music leaders have continued to work with us throughout and have taken the lead in creating resources for younger

children, performing at our online Busking Festival in July 2020, and helping create our B Sharp Radio Show with Lyme Bay Radio in December 2020. The grant has also supported us to contribute to events in Lyme such as the Fossil Festival (online) and Jazz Jurassica 2021, adding value and finding ways of involving young people in these events.

Julie Sheppard – Jazz Jurassica (read out by an officer)

I would like to send many thanks to the council for the award of this year's community grant. We are very grateful for the council's continuing interest and support.

Chris Tipping – The Hub (read out by an officer)

We would wholeheartedly like to thank the mayor, town councillors and the town council staff for their continued financial support of the Hub during the last 12 months. As you will be aware this has not been particularly easy for us, and even now we are only just welcoming our groups back despite having being able to open since 12 April. However, as we have stated before, our 2021 plans now centre firmly around youth provision, and we are extremely excited to finally be able to put our plans for our Youth Academy into action. This will encompass not only youth club, but also finding those gaps for youth activity provision within the local area. We have had already had several suggestions and are working on the creation of new and exciting groups for children and young adults such as an archery group, DJ training, drone flying and lots more. Not all of these groups will form part of the youth club, however this will still remain firmly at the centre of our provision and we are delighted that we will be able to welcome back both our experienced youth leaders James and Jess who have been the bedrock of the club for some years now. We have just posted an online survey which if any parents are at the meeting tonight we would love to get your feedback from you (on behalf of your children) about what you would like to see happening at the Hub. The survey can be accessed via our Facebook page – just search for Lyme Regis Development Trust and will also feature in a forthcoming issue of the Woodroffe Rough Notes magazine.

Cheryl Reynolds – Lyme Regis Community Support

C. Reynolds thanked the mayor and town councillors for the recent grant that would help them supply internet equipment to older residents to help them keep in contact with their family, friends and the outside world. She said they had made so many of these residents their friends during the last year. While thanking the council for its help with this project, she also wanted to thank the council for the support it had given them during the last 13 months. She said the staff had been amazing, helping with all their admin and finance, and they couldn't have done it without them. C. Reynolds said the organisation was set up to help the community during Covid and with the council's help, as well as Philip Evans at Lyme Online and the Woodmead Halls, plus local chefs Alethea McLoughlin, Harriett Mansell, Dominic Moldenhauer, Lynn Martin and Tara Webb, who had made meals for both the foodbank and community support during this year. She thanked the volunteers who has shopped, collected prescriptions, sorted out and delivered birthday and Christmas meals, soup runs and advised, signposted and helped in so many ways. C.

Reynolds said their aim was to form a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and thanks to two sponsors in the town, they had been able to open a bank account so they could start to work as an organisation to provide a service second to none, that they could be proud of and show that working together provides the best results for long after Covid, to look after vulnerable, lonely, disabled residents and anyone in need of any type of help, both young and old.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe paid tribute to the residents and volunteers of Lyme Regis who had helped in the community support effort and had stepped up to the mark in an exceptional year. He said he was pleased the grant to Lyme Regis Community Support would pay for laptops to get people online because so much of what was expected today required people to be online.

Mark Jenkin – Junior Parkrun

M. Jenkin thanked the council for its kind award to Lyme Regis Junior Parkrun. He said they had been delayed by Covid and in fact, most Parkruns were not running in the UK. However, Lyme Regis Cobb Gate Junior Parkrun had now raised all its funding, it was building a core team and was working with Parkrun UK on a start date, which would be some point in the summer when the team was ready. He said they were grateful to the town council and other organisations who had helped them along the way.

4. Reports from:

Cllr Daryl Turner – Dorset Council (DC)

Cllr D. Turner said DC had set a 2021-22 budget of £312 million. He said there was extra expenditure related to Covid because Government funding had not been enough to cover all the expenses. He said DC had used reserves to balance this year's budget, but it could only spend them once and doing so reduced its capacity to respond to unexpected events in the future. He said the increase in costs in adult and children's services was going to be very difficult budget to maintain.

Cllr D. Turner said there would be a council tax increase of just under 5% to generate an additional £12 million, equating to an increase of £84 a year or 1.62 per for a Band D property. He said DC had frozen staff pay for this year as a 1% cost of living increase would have cost an additional £1 million. He said £15 million of capital funding had been allocated for specific projects, and £6.3 million for highway maintenance.

Cllr D. Turner said DC declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and established an Executive Advisory Panel (EAP), which he sat on, to strategically guide the council's response. He said the draft strategy and action plan went out to public consultation in October 2020, which had a good response. He said analysis of the results highlighted a high level of agreement on the strategy but there was some debate on dates. He said there was further consideration of over 12,000 text messages and a number of key areas for the strategy were taken forward. He said a costed action plan was presented to the Cabinet in October 2020 detailing 187 actions to 2050 with an estimated budget of £127 million. Cllr D. Turner said DC recently secured

£90 million from the government and to work with the Low Carbon Skills Fund. He said the strategy set out a number of interim targets in 2025, 2030, 2035, there was a carbon budget and an intention to achieve an 80 to 90% reduction in emissions before this date, and the target date remained at 2040. Examples of what DC was doing included reviewing the fleet replacement programme to replace with greener vehicles, discussions with public transport operators, and looking at responsive transport via technology.

Regarding the Dorset Local Plan, Cllr G. Turner said the consultation ended on 15 March 2021 and the plan, once adopted, would guide decisions on planning applications in Dorset until 2038. He said the real concern is 30% of the population wouldn't have access to online documentation so a number of hard copies were sent out. He said the plan considered a large number of statistics such as housing numbers, employment, distribution of housing. He said the plan would go to the Overview Committee later this year.

Cllr D. Turner said there was lots of information about Covid on DC's website. He thanked DC's officers for an effective operation, which continued today.

Cllr D. Turner said the harbour dredging was finished, sand from the harbour had been moved to the beach and would be levelled soon.

Cllr D. Turner said DC was looking at draft strategies on disposal of assets to town and parish councils. He said DC was also working on a draft protocol with town and parish councils looking at contact through town and parish clerks only.

Cllr D. Turner said schools had welcomed children back to the classrooms and the attendance rate had been excellent. He said the vast majority of children had secured their first choice school in the new intake.

Cllr D. Turner said a number of roads had been resurfaced or were in the process of being done, and funding was available for pothole repairs. He said defects on the roads should be reported through the Dorset For You website.

PCSO Amanda King – Dorset Police (read out by an officer)

Apologies that I am unable to be at the meeting in person but here is my police report. There were 566 recorded police incidents in Lyme Regis between January 2020 and February 2021. These can be broken down as follows:

- 128 -ASB incidents
- 57 -Violence and Sexual offences
- 25 -Criminal Damage and arson.
- 23- Theft.
- 14- Public Order.
- 8- Shoplifting.
- 8- Vehicle Crime.
- 2- Theft from the person.
- 1-Drugs.
- 1-Bicycle Theft.
- 1-Possession of a weapon.

- 1-other crime.

The highest number of incidents occurred in or near Broad Street, which includes Broad Street car park, with 43 incidents occurring in this area. The second highest number of incidents was 39 incidents which occurred in or around the Monmouth Beach and Ozone Terrace area. 21 incidents occurred in or around Cobb Gate and Marine Parade. Most of the incidents occurred in July 2020 with 38 incidents recorded – this was surprisingly very similar to July 2019 when 31 incidents were recorded. When comparing 2019 with 2020 there were nine incidents recorded in April 2019 but in April 2020 there were 29 incidents recorded despite the lockdown. Year-on-year the incidents recorded in May and June 2020 were also higher than the previous year, however after September and October the incident numbers were similar to those in 2019. It was a difficult policing year with the lockdown and the volume of visitors during the summer months, however the people of Lyme Regis made this easier with most residents adhering to the government's regulations during lockdown and some great community work was undertaken by many, ensuring that those vulnerable and shielding were given help with their shopping and obtaining prescriptions, and the food bank also did some sterling work. Policing-wise, we had some good results with some successful convictions. A big thank you to those that assisted us with our enquires and helped us in what has been a difficult year for everyone.

(b) Questions from Lyme Regis Electors

Ken Gollop

K. Gollop said the new crossing in Broad Street had brought about the loss of half of the parking spaces in upper Broad Street and if anyone wanted to go to the post office, food shops or chemist and could not park in Broad Street, Silver Street or Pound Street, those with limited mobility had to drive out of town, thus taking trade away from the town. He asked if the council would instigate a public consultation with Dorset County to see if there could be extra parking in Broad Street as he believed three or four more parking spaces could be created, with some near Sherborne Lane, another space in front of the Royal Lion Hotel and at least one more near the crossing.

Cllr D. Turner said the suggestions K. Gollop made had already been looked at by highways officers. He said the original officer report highlighted the parking impact on Broad Street but decided safety benefits outweighed the disadvantages. He said DC did look at moving the bus stop and putting spaces above it but it wasn't feasible. He said he personally didn't think there was room to get more spaces with all the legislative requirements. Cllr D. Turner said consultation would have to come in from the town council initially but he didn't think highways officers would approve any more spaces.

Nigel Ball

- i) Mr Ball said the cemetery was very well kept and he thanked the staff involved. However, he was concerned there may be suggestions to let the cemetery go wild for environmental reasons. He felt there was plenty of countryside around us and the cemetery needed to be respected. N. Ball said

he believed the council was missing an opportunity to run a tour on the history of the cemetery as there were a lot of important people buried there.

- ii) N. Ball said the gardens had come up very well, the council was probably about 85% there with the improvements and the team had worked very hard to get to grips with the difficult topography. He said it was important to keep on top of it but he believed the town could be proud this coming season that it had gardens people could come and enjoy and sit in.
- iii) N. Ball said he was glad councillors had come to see that the shelters' roof was not the place for activities as it had been a big worry to him due to issues with the glass. He said he couldn't understand why 21mm toughened laminated glass was used for Langmoor and Lister Rooms, but the glass on the shelters' roof was only 12mm toughened. He said he hoped the council hadn't put cost over risk but he was glad it had seen the risk involved. N. Ball asked how much the one piece of broken glass had cost to replace and he asked why the council had paid for this instead of making an insurance claim.
- iv) N. Ball said he was aware the council was having a purpose-built storage unit for its machinery so it didn't have to be transported around the town, but if the harbourmaster's store was being returned to the council, he asked why it couldn't be kept in there.
- v) N. Ball said he was in favour of having council meetings outside in the summer, weather permitting, or at the Woodmead Halls with social distancing and he would hope there would be a virtual video link so more people would hopefully join the meetings.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the temporary provisions which had allowed virtual meetings to take place ended on 6 May 2021 and after that date, the council would be back to physical meetings. He said there was no facility in the Local Government Act 1972 for virtual meetings, unless the Act was changed.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said N. Ball's thanks would be passed onto the member of staff responsible for the cemetery and his points on wildflowers had been noted.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the town clerk could provide an answer on the price of the shelters' roof glass.

Vicki Elcoate

V. Elcoate thanked Cllr D. Turner for the update on the climate and environmental emergency and all the steps DC was taking to address it. She asked how the town council could do more to engage the public in addressing it in Lyme Regis as she felt urgent action needed to be taken. For example, keeping homes warm, there was plenty that could be done, but some of it cost money or people didn't have the information they needed to take action. V. Elcoate said there were a lot of practical barriers, such as Western Power charged a lot of money to put in the electricity supply to have air source heat pumps. She said it was about enthusing and engaging people in the effort and she asked how the town council would suggest doing that.

Cllr D. Turner said DC was talking about going net zero by 2040 but it was important to remember DC omitted 1% of Dorset's CO2 emissions so its work was to influence others, and the town council's percentage would be even less. He said one of the issues was the grid capacity in Lyme Regis was extremely limited but DC was looking into that. Cllr D. Turner said there were boilers being made that were hydrogen ready but they weren't there yet and the question was where did the council step in along that line. He said he worried about putting electric charging points across Dorset when the range of vehicles was increasing and they may not be needed.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the town council had environmental matters on its agenda and within its objectives and it could make a contribution within its means, but given the scale and costs on households, it would be a case of government legislating and regulating. He said householders could be persuaded to be conscious of environmental matters but a lot of it would be legislation coming from central government, through DC to town councils.

N. Ball

N. Ball asked again how much the replacement piece of glass was on the shelters' roof. He asked for the costings of the whole job as a crane was required to put it in place. He also asked for more information about why the council had not made an insurance claim.

The town clerk said he didn't have that information to hand but his guesstimate would be the glass cost £800-£1,000, which he could confirm in an email to N. Ball, along with the associated costings. He said the council had to make informed decisions about when to claim and what to claim for from its insurers.

C. Armstrong (read out by an officer)

C. Armstrong said although she was not a resident of Lyme, she regularly used to bring her dogs to the beach, pay for parking and use the local businesses, but since the ridiculous PSPO not allowing dogs off lead, she has not visited. She asked why responsible dog owners were being discriminated against as 99% of dog owners picked up their dog waste as well as other litter from the beach. She said sadly, that was more than could be said for non-dog owners judging by the mess regularly left on the beach and surrounding area. She said surely any person dropping or leaving litter or causing any other breach or issue should be an offence, so she asked why wardens were only issuing fines to dog owners. She said the amount of revenue from those fines would be far in excess of just dog owners, especially as the majority of them were going elsewhere now.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said all that the restrictions required was for dogs to be kept under control but they were still allowed on the beach. He said this was not unreasonable, given the complaints the council had had.

6. Lyme Regis Town Council Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2020

The town clerk said it had been a difficult financial year, most of which was due to staffing issues, with the finance manager leaving and some interim finance managers in post. He said the final accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020 had only been signed off on an interim basis by the external auditor. This was because a local resident had written to the auditor about the accounts and while it was not part of a formal challenge, it had caused the auditor to do a review. The town clerk said further information requested by the auditor had been provided to them two months ago but there had been no response, although they had issued an interim certificate with a sound bill of health.

The town clerk said in terms of the last financial year ending 31 March 2021, it was also a difficult year. In the spring the council's finances were uncertain due to lockdowns and most of the council's operations not running. He said revenue did start coming back in during the summer and the council had been reasonably prudent in stopping any capital projects that were not contractually committed.

The town clerk said this meant that at the end of the financial year the council had a reserve in excess of £850k, which was in line with its policy to hold a reserve of 50% of turnover. He said the council had started off the 2021-22 financial year after looking at cost reduction measures and it was forecasting a significant surplus to be able to commence projects and objectives.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said council officers, staff and members had held their nerve and all the measures that had been taken had put the council in a good financial position. He said as well as making savings, a lot of work had gone into chasing debts and he paid credit to this.

The town clerk said all the issues in the finance team were now resolved and he was particularly pleased with the work that had been done over the last year to get the council to a sound position, particularly by the finance manager and assistant finance manager.

The meeting closed at 8.17pm

