

## LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON FRIDAY 8 APRIL 2022 AT THE WOODMEAD HALLS

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

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe welcomed those attending.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said no one from Dorset Police was available to attend but Sgt Mike Brown had sent a report to be read out at the meeting.

#### 2. **To receive the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 29 April 2021**

Proposed by Ken Gollop and seconded by David Ruffle, the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting on 29 April 2021 were **APPROVED** by the majority as a correct record of the meeting.

#### 3. **To receive the Corporate Plan 2022-27**

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the Corporate Plan would be available on the council's website. He said the plan outlined what the council had managed to achieve in the last 12 months and from the start of the current administration in 2019 but it also looked forward. He said the last two or three years had been dominated by Covid but the council had nevertheless achieved some remarkable things, some once in a generation projects.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe outlined some of the council's major achievements, including the resurfacing of the shelters roof, restoring the exterior of the Guildhall to its original appearance, provided security on the seafront to curb anti-social behaviour, bringing the standard of the cemetery up, installing feature lighting in the woodland walk, improving the standard of the seafront gardens, funding local groups and societies, declaring a climate and environmental emergency and creating an Environment Committee to take this forward, re-paying a 20-year loan with the former West Dorset District Council, and undertaking carbon literacy training.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said there had been issues with member behaviour but this was individually driven and not the whole council. He said despite repeated requests to curb behaviour, it had not changed.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe thanked the council staff for their support, all the organisations in the town, local businesses, residents who put up with a great deal, and those who had personally supported him, including the mayoress, Wendy Larcombe.

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

**R. Wickremasinghe – Bridport and District Citizens Advice**

R. Wickremasinghe thanked the council for its ongoing financial support in the form of a five-year grant, which provided some welcome financial stability for Citizens Advice, as well as its help with premises. He said they were grateful to be able to offer a co-located service in the town council offices from July 2021 and provide face-to-face support again in Lyme Regis, although this had at times been subject to a resurgence in Covid infection rates. They followed the council guidance earlier this year and for a short period delivered the service remotely again but were now back working from the town council office from 10am to 3pm on Wednesdays. He said their advisers provided information, advice and guidance on a range of topics including benefits, debt, housing, employment and consumer issues, also working closely with the foodbank as a referral partner. R. Wickremasinghe their users were facing increasing difficulties with the rising energy price cap and cost of living and they expected more demand on their service and sadly increasing reliance on foodbanks. He said the council's grant had helped them provide assistance to 107 residents of the Lyme ward in 2021-22 with 373 separate issues. The most common problems, in order, were around benefits, housing, debt, foodbank and charitable support. He said they helped their users achieve £30,904 income gains, 58% of the users they assisted reported a disability or long-term health problem, and the top benefit issue they advised on related to the disability benefit, Personal Independence Payment.

### **C. Reynolds – Lyme Regis Community Support**

C. Reynolds thanked the council for the very generous donation that enabled them to buy five iPads, which would be given to residents to enable them to contact friends and family living away and keep them in touch with the outside world. She said their connection with older residents in the community during the time since they set up Lyme Regis Community Support had increased and they had been able to identify people to help. She also thanked the council for all the help and support it had given them, especially with the finance side of things.

### **C. Tipping – The Hub**

C. Tipping thanked the mayor, councillors and council staff for their continued financial support of the Hub during the last 12 months. With the current cost of living crisis, he said they were acutely aware of how privileged they were to receive this support. He said following last year's consultation, they had managed to build on the demands and needs of the youth population and delivered a number of in-demand projects. The youth club had continued to build on its successes and was now almost back up to full capacity. He said both of their youth leaders were committed to the care and development of the children in the town, which in some instances had meant cooking them a hot meal, and they organised a diverse range of activities for them. C. Tipping said the non-youth club child provision continued to prosper with an art club having sold out of spaces within 24 hours and a new Saturday morning drama academy which launched in May already having limited spaces available. They had also hosted an animation workshop which was incredibly successful and they would look to repeat this again later in the year. He said the Hub was also home to the Seaside Store, a social supermarket serving the needs of families in the town. There were currently 360 people on the books, including approximately 80 children, who could go along on a Tuesday and get 10 items

of food for £3.50 with as much fruit, veg and baked goods as they would like. He said in these uncertain times, this had become an essential lifeline with one person commenting they “saved her life” as she had nothing left in the cupboards.

#### **R. Salt – St Michael and St George RC Church, Lyme Regis**

R. Salt said the council had awarded a grant of £1,000 towards the repair and redecoration works to the interior of this Grade II listed building. This enabled the parish to proceed without delay and it was completed by mid-June. He said the whole of the interior was redecorated, damp areas treated, the church re-wired and the beautiful stained-glass windows cleansed of years of accumulated dust. This work followed the restoration of the exterior in the previous year, to which the town council also contributed. He said on 25 September 2021 the parish held a service and reception to celebrate the completion of the works which the mayor and his wife attended and the mayor spoke in generous terms about the importance of this historic building to the town and of the work carried out.

#### **D. Wellman – Uplyme and Lyme Regis Cricket Club**

D. Wellman said Uplyme and Lyme Regis Cricket Club received funding of £1,000 to go towards an electronic scoreboard, which had been situated at the far end of the ground next to the old pavilion. This had been a highly successful project which benefited the whole community of both Uplyme and Lyme Regis. He said everyone from players, members and spectators had been very impressed with the scoreboard and it also enabled visitors and spectators to see if there was a game on as the scoreboard could be seen from the road. He said the club informed members and the general public of the project through the club’s website, Facebook and Twitter pages and on the club’s noticeboard. D. Wellman said they invited the mayor, mayoress and councillors to the club’s end of season fun day for cream teas and a promotional photo. This was enjoyed by all with a report and photos published in the local newspaper highlighting the council’s contribution to the digital scoreboard.

#### **T. Rattenbury – Lyme Regis Majorettes**

T. Rattenbury thanked the council for the grant, which allowed the troupe to replace its mobile music system with a much louder system which meant they could be heard over other large floats when out representing the town at events all over Devon, Dorset and Somerset. She said they had used two local companies for this project, keeping employment local.

#### **M. Dixon – Lyme Regis Gig Club**

M. Dixon said Lyme Regis Gig Club was a charity established in 2007 to enable local people to participate in the healthy sport of sea rowing as a way of keeping fit and competing in the region’s fastest growing sport. He said the grant from Lyme Regis Town Council enabled the gig club to rig one of their glass reinforced plastic gigs *Daring*, with masts and sails. This enabled the club to extend the opportunities, particularly for local young people to learn to row and sail.

## **5. Report from Dorset Police**

Crime and anti-social behaviour figures from 1 April 2021 until 1 April 2022 were given, when a total of 188 crimes were reported, compared to 122 in the same period in 2021/22. Of those, one was blackmail, the same as the previous year, two related to retail burglary, up one on the previous year, six related to residential burglary, up from four the previous year, and 20 were incidents of criminal damage, up from 19 the previous year. There were four incidences of drugs offences, up two from the previous year, 25 sexual offences, up from three the year before, 20 incidences of other theft, up from 16 the previous year, and three incidences of shop theft, the same as the year before. Vehicle crime accounted for nine of the reports, up one from the previous year, and violent offences accounted for 86 of the crimes, up from 54 the previous year. There were 12 'other' offences, up from 10 the previous year, which included offences such as breaches of orders, harassment and public order offences.

It was reported there were 45 total occurrences of anti-social behaviour, down from 92 the previous year. Of those, four related to environmental anti-social behaviour, e.g. fly-tipping, down from 32 the year before, one related to hate/prejudice, compared with two the previous year, 32 incidences were nuisance reports, e.g. noisy parties, down from 53 the year before, and personal anti-social behaviour, which was targeted towards a specific victim accounted for eight of the reports, up from five the previous year.

## **6. Open Session**

### **(a) Questions from young people**

There were none.

### **(b) Questions from Lyme Regis Electors**

#### **Ken Gollop**

1. K. Gollop asked in view of parking chaos caused by the crossing in Broad Street and the increase in visitor numbers, whether the council could update the meeting on its discussions with Dorset Council (DC) on the traffic situation.

The deputy town clerk said the council had been in discussions with DC for some time about problems caused by inconsiderate visitor parking in residential areas and elsewhere. DC had undertaken to carry out a comprehensive, town-wide review of parking, hopefully starting this year. DC agreed a comprehensive review was essential to avoid pushing problems from one street or one part of the town to another.

The deputy town clerk said the town council understood the review would include the arrangements for parking in connection with holiday lets as holiday let guests parking in residential streets had the same privileges as residents. DC said it wasn't the way the system was

meant to be working and it would review it. It was understood the review would also look at levels of enforcement and the town council had provided the enforcement team with details of all major events in the town this year, when parking problems tended to be at their worst.

The deputy town clerk said some residents had placed some of the blame for increased visitor parking in residential streets on DC's decision to significantly increase charges in its car parks. However, DC had also agreed to make reduced cost permits available for all Dorset residents, which meant any visitor from another part of Dorset with a permit could park in either Charmouth Road or Holmbush car parks for a daily equivalent of about 70p, which was significantly less than the previous daily charge. If the visit was for less than two hours, parking was free with a permit.

The deputy town clerk said to try and ease problems during the busiest periods, the town council had also agreed to run the park and ride again this year. Working collaboratively with Charmouth, the service would employ three double decker buses and, for the first time, cover both locations. It was hoped this would benefit everyone and reduce the level of visitors commuting between Lyme and Charmouth. The service would cover school holiday periods, operating every 15 minutes or so and would also be available to local residents.

2. K. Gollop asked what the current debt to the council was and what was being done to recover the sums due.

The deputy town clerk said reportable debt (over £1,000 and more than three months old) was £13,936. Of this debt, less than £2,000 was pre-Covid, it related to two debts and was being pursued.

The deputy town clerk said total debt was £60,774.91, which included debt of any kind, even if the invoice was only raised that day. The council had an annual turnover of almost £2million and the current level of debt was the lowest it had been for many years. This was thanks, in particular, to the huge efforts made by the finance manager to reduce the debt during and after the pandemic.

The deputy town clerk said the council had adopted new debt management policies and procedures, which aimed to deal with debts fairly but robustly. A copy of this document could be found on the council's website under 'policies'.

3. K. Gollop said the annual meeting of electors had not been very well advertised. He said the council used to have three noticeboards in Lyme Regis but there was now only one and if someone didn't have a computer, they wouldn't know what was going on.

The deputy town clerk said the council had a power supply and IT connection installed at Bell Cliff when it was proposed to install an extra cash machine. As the power supply was still there, the council could look at an electronic noticeboard.

## **Anne Sankey**

A. Sankey said she felt the pedestrian crossing in Broad Street was in the wrong place.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe acknowledged it had resulted in the loss of valuable parking spaces.

The deputy town clerk said the built-out area of pavement was ruled out as a location for the crossing because of the proximity to the Three Cups, which was the subject of a planning application for a major re-development at the time.

## **Philip Sankey**

P. Sankey asked about the use of bus passes on the park and ride and whether the park and ride tickets would be valid on other buses.

The deputy town clerk said bus passes would be accepted on the park and ride service. The park and ride tickets would only be valid on the park and ride bus but they were running so frequently, that unless someone wanted to travel very late in the evening, it was unlikely to be a problem. The last park and ride bus was at 7.41pm.

## **P. Benfield**

P. Benfield asked for more information about the use of the Marine Parade Shelters. She said she was a volunteer at the Jubilee Pavilion and it was a good source of information. She felt there was so much potential to bring that focus back as a showcase and shop window for council activities and local organisations, particularly to do with environmental issues.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the council was looking at better uses for the Jubilee Pavilion and Lister Room. He said he always believed the Jubilee Pavilion should have a public use and people expected to see things of interest in there.

The deputy town clerk said the council had indicated it needed to look again at the use of the Jubilee Pavilion. However, there were some water ingress issues and the council had received a preliminary report about what that might cost, although it required some further investigation. There was also some structural movement of the rooftop parapet.

The deputy town clerk said the council's decision to let the Jubilee Pavilion commercially was led by two things: there was a rota of volunteers who used to staff the building very well but this died out, and the pavilion cost the council a lot of money, not just in terms of management and maintenance, but the valuation office insisted it should be assessed as a shop, which meant it cost £20,000 in business rates.

The deputy town clerk said the council had also agreed to commercially let the Lister Room because it was under-used.

### **Keith Fleet**

K. Fleet said between Christmas and the February half term, Bridge Street was closed so works could take place to the Guildhall. He felt this was a pilot and asked if there were plans to make that road closure permanent, to pedestrianise Bridge Street and to only allow the park and ride bus through. He said the bus services still functioned, with only Charmouth Road losing out.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the council had talked about a one-way system for 50 years or more. He said the closure of Broad Street was understood to be temporary so people put up with it knowing that was the case, but there would be no appetite for it to be permanent. He said the whole area around Church Street would lose access and the bus service couldn't operate permanently on a diverted route.

### **Nigel Ball**

N. Ball paid tribute to the mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe and the hard work he had put in over the last three years, especially during the conflict which had been witnessed at a local level. He outlined some of the achievements, projects and goals which had been achieved during Cllr Larcombe's tenure.

Cllr B. Larcombe explained the reasons he had decided not to stand for mayor for a further year. He said he was proud of what the council had achieved in the past 36 months.

### **David Ruffle**

D. Ruffle said he wished to place on record his appreciation for the warmth and knowledge the late Cllr Stan Williams brought to the council. He said there was never a dull moment at a meeting when Stan was there. He said the council would miss him and everything he brought to the council.

### **Ken Gollop**

K. Gollop thanked the council's senior administrative assistant Elaine Pawsey, as she was leaving the council, and said she was obliging and hard working.

## **7. Lyme Regis Town Council Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2021**

The meeting noted the annual return.

*The meeting closed at 9.15pm.*