



ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

7:00pm, Thursday 6 April 2022

Minutes

Attendees:

Councillors M Russell (Deputy Mayor), D Budd, M Cotton, K Critchley, R Dean, B Ezzard, Z Gover, S Kemp, L Kirk, C Turner

Acting Town Clerk, Operations Manager and Operations Supervisor

12 members of the public

1. Introductions and welcome from Deputy Mayor Councillor Malcolm Russell

The Deputy Mayor welcomed the members of the public to the Annual Town meeting and advised them that the Mayor was unable to attend.

The Deputy Mayor stated that the Town Clerk was leaving the Council and introduced the Acting Town Clerk. The Operations Manager and Operations Supervisor were introduced, and staff were thanked for organising the meeting.

Members of the Council introduced themselves. The Deputy Mayor explained that over the last year several Council meetings had been held over Zoom.

The winners of the awards along with their friends and family were welcomed and thanked for attending.

It was confirmed that no questions had been received in advance and, if answers were not available for any questions raised, they would be followed up.

2. Official noting of the Town Councillors' apologies for absence:

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors K Green (Mayor), D Cleaton, H Goodinge, V Green, M Humphries and R Schofield.

3. To receive and approve the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting 29 April 2021

The minutes from the Annual Town Meeting held on 29 April 2021 were accepted as an accurate and true record and duly signed by the Deputy Mayor.

4. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by other agenda items

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

At this juncture it was unanimously agreed to change the order of the agenda to allow Sergeant Colvin to present his report next.

5. Police Sergeant Colvin addressed the meeting

Sergeant Colvin began by giving the apologies of Inspector Want.

Sergeant Colvin gave some background about himself and confirmed his temporary position had recently been confirmed, therefore the vacant PC post would be filled shortly.

Once a month a partnership community group meeting was held which set out the three local priorities, which can be viewed on the website. They were anti-social behaviour, drug dealing including county lines, and rural crime. Sergeant Colvin gave an explanation of county lines. A person relating to this issue had recently been remanded in custody. With regard to rural crime, a warrant had recently been issued and an illegal firearm seized. Some ill-treated animals had been removed.

Anti-social behaviour in the town had increased recently, especially on Friday evenings. The Police were aware of the issue and had installed extra CCTV cameras, increased patrols and were providing more outreach services. Civil powers had been used to ban a person from Purbeck.

A member of the public asked why the 101-telephone service had not improved? Sergeant Colvin shared the frustration of callers and agreed the system was easier before this service was introduced. Comments would be fed back to his Inspector.

Another member of the public raised concerns regarding the increase in anti-social behaviour. There had been an incident of a large crowd running into the cinema.

A comment was made about the lack of Police presence in the town at weekends and Sergeant Colvin stated the staffing numbers were less than ideal. The Response Officers had been moved to work out of Poole but this had not worked as they were better placed to deal with quick responses when based in Wareham.

A Councillor stated that a fracas at the Railway Station had been reported and many silver cannisters had been picked up. Anyone finding these cannisters should report it to the Police.

Sergeant Colvin was thanked for attending the meeting and then left.

6. Awards

Due to the pandemic the Council had not been able to present awards for the past two years.

The Deputy Mayor was delighted to present the following awards:

Volunteer of the Year 2020

The recipient was Joyce Spiller for her unfailing, dedicated service to the Purbeck Youth and Community Foundation for many years. The Deputy Mayor confirmed that

unfortunately Joyce was unable to attend to receive her award as she was working at the Youth Club.

Volunteer of the Year 2021

The recipient was Ross Hooper for his amazing contributions to keeping the town's floral displays in perfect condition, delighting residents and visitors alike.

Honoured Townsmen

There were two recipients of this award. Dr David and Mrs Hilary Evans were recognised for their valuable contributions to the town, including the Rex Cinema and Wareham Town Trust, and with particular reference to the production of the Wareham Neighbourhood Plan.

Dr Evans gave a short thank you speech on behalf of himself and his wife.

Long Service Award

Nigel Spiller was presented with a Long Service Award for 50 years of service as Sergeant at Mace, supporting many Mayors, and for his service to the Father Christmas Committee. Mrs Spiller was also thanked for her support.

Mr Spiller gave a short thank you speech and explained how he became Sergeant at Mace.

The Deputy Mayor invited the award recipients plus 2 guests, to attend the Mayor Making event on 19 May 2022.

7. Annual update from the Acting Town Clerk

The Acting Town Clerk presented the following report:

I started working for the Town Council as the Deputy Town Clerk in June 2021 and have been Acting Town Clerk for the past month. As the Deputy Mayor stated, the Town Clerk is leaving the Council and the Council were hoping to appoint a new Town Clerk in early May and I am sure the staff look forward to some stability.

The past year was another affected by Covid; however, the Town Council staff continued to work throughout and adapted to the changes in working requirements.

Much of the work undertaken by staff was unseen by the public. The small, dedicated operations team work hard all year round maintaining the council's facilities, which include the town's public conveniences, play areas, the Town Hall, Recreation Ground and they plant up the beautiful floral displays throughout the town.

The office staff ensure the smooth running of the Council's services and meetings and provide support to the Members. The Finance Officer is always kept busy, especially at this time of the year.

Following the improvements to the Council's governance, an application has been made to the Local Council Award Scheme for quality status, with the results due at the end of the month.

The Council achieved another successful audit for 2020/21, which was achieved due to the hard work of the Finance Officer and Town Clerk.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the committed staff who provide a fantastic service to the residents of Wareham and thank them and the Councillors for their help and support over the past few months.

8. Committee Chairmen reports

The reports of the Committee Chairmen were circulated with the agendas. Members of the public were given the opportunity to raise questions after each report was presented.

Councillor K Green – Mayor and Chairman of the Council

It was a challenging year, but we did manage to keep busy. We, myself and the Mayoress, attended lots of events including:

Beating of the retreat at Lulworth.

The Dorset Scouts and Guides awards at Blandford, at the Crown Hotel.

Bridport Civic Day.

Wareham Growers, at the Parish Hall, where I presented the awards.

We had a visit from The Moderator of Wareham Massachusetts U.S.A. During her visit a reception was held by Councillors in the Corn Exchange, followed by lunch at the Kings Arms. Then a visit to the Museum, on to Lady St Mary's Church, and rounding off the day with afternoon tea at the Priory Hotel. During her time here we arranged a visit to the Purbeck School where letters from American scholars were presented and we were given a tour of the school.

Remembrance Sunday, due to covid restrictions, was held at the Quay, followed by the laying of the wreaths at the War Memorials.

We held a bric-a-brac Sale in November to raise money for the Wareham Scouts and Guides.

We attended the Mayor's Christmas Carol Service at Weymouth and then in the evening we attended the Choral Society. We held a Christmas Concert at the Rex, which was very well received and included performances from the Wareham Whalers and the Parkstone Singers.

We attended the Christchurch Civic Service at the Priory Church, after switching on the Christmas Lights at Holmes for Gardens in aid of the Weldmar Hospice.

We also switched the Christmas Lights on in Wareham, to await the arrival of Father Christmas.

In February we unveiled a sign for Friends of Wareham Railway at the station. The Deputy Mayor and his Escort attended at Reception for High Sheriff of Dorset, at Dorchester Museum.

Finally, we had a concert in the Corn Exchange to raise money for Ukraine, which was very well attended.

A thank you goes to the staff for helping us though the year and a special thanks to Cllr Vera Green, my Mayoress and diary keeper, without whose help I could not have completed the year

Councillor Keith Critchley – Chairman of Policy, Resources & Finance Committee

Once again Covid caused disruption to our schedule of meetings, although we were able to maintain continuity by a mixture of face-to-face meetings and informal zoom meetings. Our first meeting of the new financial year, reported a general reserve of £52,793.91, this whilst an improvement on the previous financial year, was still short of the recommended 3 months working capital of £132.360 based on 2021-2022 figures.

The all-member Corporate Plan steering group placed a recommendation to committee that the plan be adopted by Council. This was supported by PR&F and later by full Council.

A request from the Town Mayor that the unspent sum of £2000 from the Mayoral Allowance should be gifted to the Purbeck Youth and Community Foundation was approved with the money to come from general reserves.

In July it was reported that via a broker the Town Hall gas supply contract had been moved to a new supplier. Members deferred a decision on moving to a paperless office until a later meeting of the committee.

At the September meeting a Hub business plan which included a start-up grant of £20,000 was brought to committee, following the closure of the Tourist Information Centre in the Library. After much thought and deliberation, committee resolved that the business case is reluctantly not supported due to the loss of income and the potential impact on the Council precept.

A member motion for a new flagpole in Town had been referred from full Council to PR&F. As this had not been budgeted for Committee resolved that no action be taken at this time.

Following a recommendation from Personnel Committee it was agreed to recommend that the training budget be increased in the next financial year and should be considered within the next budget setting process.

Policies recommended for adoption by full Council included a Community Engagement Policy, a Training Policy and a Publication Scheme. Also, an amended version of the mayor's handbook be adopted. A request that the unspent Deputy Mayors allowance of £225.00 be given to the Wareham Scout and Guide group was also approved.

A Wedding Feasibility Report was asked for by members. The conclusion of members following the report was to continue to hold weddings provided they are staffed by the Town Hall Keeper and that wedding parties provide their own floral arrangements.

Fees and Charges were reviewed with a resolution that they should remain for the year 2022/23 as in 2021/22.

The draft budget was presented to committee recommending a budget of £588,355.00 this was agreed providing the precept increase would be less than 10% the Town Clerk was delegated in consultation with the Chair of Amenities and the Chair of PR&F to adjust the budget if required, once the council tax base figure had been received.

Highlighted above are some of the main items debated and resolved this year at our meetings, the standard items of payment of Outstanding Creditors, Income Reports and Budget Comparison reports, were also regularly considered by members.

Councillor David Budd – Chairman of Amenities Committee

The Committee met on six occasions during 2021/22, including one informal meeting via Zoom due to the coronavirus pandemic.

2 Mill Lane - This Council owned building is leased to Purbeck Citizens Advice. In 2018 the western quarter of the roof was subject to emergency repairs requiring stripping off the roof tiles, replacement of the roof timbers, re-felting and refixing the existing tiles.

The remaining three quarters of the roof, which was also in poor condition, was similarly removed and rebuilt during 2021.

Town Hall - An electrical survey has been carried out and remedial works identified have been completed.

One of the two central heating boiler pumps have failed and as both are of the same age an order to supply and install two replacement pumps at a cost of £2,400 has been placed.

A Task and Finish Group has been set up to consider the future maintenance and improvement needs to make the best use of the building.

The provision of a Customer Service/Visitor Hub within the Corn Exchange has been delayed due to a number of issues including obtaining the necessary regulatory approvals.

The Quay Toilets - The cracked and loose render is to be removed and replaced, the work also includes new hardwood external doors and frames. Work is scheduled for early May.

Howards Lane Car Park - In line with previous policy parking charges have been brought in line with those of Dorset Council's off-street car parks in Wareham.

The Committee has agreed in principle to install two electric vehicle charging point at no cost to the Council, subject to agreeing the terms of the contract.

The two disabled persons parking spaces are to be repositioned to provide more space for the disabled to transfer to and from a vehicle.

The no entry signs are to be repositioned so that they are more visible to drivers to discourage access to the car park via the exit point.

A camera survey of the surface water drainage at the east end of the car park is to be carried out to ascertain the cause of flooding after moderate rainfall and the extent of any remedial work needed.

Northmoor Wildlife Haven - The Committee agreed a grant to the resident's group who do a great job maintaining the wildlife haven at Hauses Field.

Children's Play Areas - Tenders for the project to refurbish the town's four children's play areas are due to be received shortly. The Council applied for a Public Works Loan Board funding in January but is awaiting approval to enable the project to proceed.

Wheeled Park - The Committee recently considered the results of the public consultation along with other communications and resolved that whilst supporting a wheeled park they could not support reinstatement at Hauses Field primarily due to the very close proximity of residential development but would seek a suitable alternative site.

Councillor Bob Dean – Chairman of Planning and Transport Committee

Overview - The Committee has in a period of administrative difficulties and confusion caused by the Covid epidemic and its ongoing stresses on staff, councillors, and other bodies, been able to fulfil its duties as required.

Main changes - The Wareham Neighbourhood Plan has now been adopted and as such provides a legally recognised part of the Planning Legislation directing the way in which the Committee regards and makes decisions on planning applications coming before it. As such there is a stronger voice for the concerns of local residents and the safeguarding of the local environment in terms of building, conservation, green and community issues. The Plan has also been agreed by and is supported by Dorset Council forming an integral part in the overall planning decision framework.

Working within Covid - The epidemic has forced the town Council to alter its ways of working and this has been clearly evident in the practical aspects of managing planning issues and applications. When necessary, meetings have been held by Zoom and I must commend the Committee for its positive and practical approach to the use of new technology. Decision making has been smooth and unhindered by our new methods, and we have been able to involve the public as well as incorporating their views and participation in our meetings, therefore ensuring that local democracy and decision-making has continued to be a part of our meetings.

Working with Dorset Council - We have encountered some minor communication issues with DC as they have struggled with new administrative systems, staffing difficulties and wide variations in application numbers over the year but these have been overcome such as to allow us to make necessary planning recommendations on time. Importantly we have also liaised with County Planning to set up a better monitoring system to appraise whether the representations which the Town Council makes on planning applications are recognised or reflected in Dorset County Planning Committee decisions.

Applications - While a majority of applications remain related to single residential properties, larger applications have occurred i.e., the Westminster Bank proposed redevelopment (North Street), the proposed conversion of the Methodist Church (North Street) and the redevelopment of industrial units in Westminster Road. All of these are ongoing applications. Other residential infill applications within the town have also occurred and the Committee has been able to more easily guide this type of development because of policies provided by the Wareham Neighbourhood Plan.

Other issues - Traffic and Parking issues remain uppermost in the minds of many residents and in these matters the Planning and Transport Committee normally forms an intermediary to hone and clarify public concerns and requests for action, as Dorset Council acts as the Highway Authority and so therefore has a final say in such matters. In this practical context the Committee will continue to work with Dorset County to address the increasing parking pressures within the town and to hopefully create sensible working solutions. Traffic issues around speeding are also being dealt with in conjunction with Dorset Council and the Police through local area speed surveys and where possible Town Council support for these.

Future Issues - We now have in place a strong Planning Framework with the adopted Wareham Neighbourhood Plan to guide much of our local development and to influence

fundamental issues such as the Railway Level Crossing, and the development of health facilities.

Larger built schemes often dependent on extensive funding and outside agencies will continue to emerge and need to be appraised by the Town Council and probably initially by the Planning and Transport Committee.

Finally, we need to build a strong working relationship with the Dorset Council Planning Team to ensure that our voice and views on planning applications within our area are heard, and most importantly, acted upon.

Councillor Doreen Cleaton – Museum Committee Chair

It has been some time since I wrote a report for the Museum Committee, so it is lovely to report that our Museum was able to open for the last season. This could not have happened without our dedicated team of volunteers, so thank you all of you for your hard work.

We must now look forward to the next stage, hoping that the vaccine will keep the virus under control so that the Museum can stay open.

Our next season will start with an open day on Saturday 16 April 2022. This is taking place in the Corn Exchange with lots of exciting things happening, please come along.

Because more and more people are now paying by card, we are in the process of obtaining a machine to accommodate this.

During the lockdown our website manager, John Hale, has been keeping us up to date and still keeps us well informed. He works very hard and I thank him very much, he is greatly appreciated.

Our Museum could not function without Heather Scharnhorst our Curator, and Jacquie Hall our Manager, they literally run the Museum. Ben Buxton, who has been involved with the Museum for a very long time, organises the articles that appear in the magazines. I thank you all for your help while I went through our family problems. I especially would like to thank Councillor Bob Dean, my Vice Chairman, for all his help.

Now it is time to move forward.

A member of the public raised a question relating to the provision of tourist information and asked when the Council would be opening the much-needed facility. The Acting Town Clerk explained that some issues had arisen which are being looked into and a further report may need to be considered by Council. It was not possible to confirm when a facility would be open.

The Deputy Mayor thanked all the Committee Chairmen for producing the reports.

9. Open forum to discuss matters raised by the general public at the meeting

A member of the public enquired if Dorset Council could be asked to provide a street cleaner in the town on Saturday mornings.

The same member of the public stated that the proposed installation of electric charging points would not be adequate for residents in the future and asked if the Town Council could consider buying back the garages in Moreton Lane and knocking them down to build a car park with charge points.

It was agreed these matters would be included on a future Council agenda for consideration.

10. Deputy Town Mayor's closing remarks and thanks

The Deputy Mayor thanked Councillors, staff and the public for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.53 pm.

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