

1.

Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held in the Institute, Ottery St Mary on Tuesday 12th April 2011 at 7pm

Present **Mayor** **Councillor Dobson**
Councillors **Abbott, Giles, Holmes, Lewis, Pang, Williams** (Town Ward) **Mitchell, Talbot, Wright** (West Hill Ward), **Carter** (Tipton St John Ward) **Hansford**, (North Ward) together with the **Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and 38 members of the public**

Apologies **Councillors: Bloxham** (West Hill Ward), **Aherne** (Tipton St John Ward)

1. WELCOME BY THE MAYOR

Councillor Dobson welcomed everyone to the Meeting. He invited Revd Preb. Simon Franklin to say a prayer.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 27TH APRIL 2010

The Minutes of this meeting were received and agreed then signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

3. REPORT FROM DEVON & CORNWALL POLICE

PC Thomas reported that recorded crime figures for Ottery St Mary and surrounding area increased by 30% from 168 in 2010 to 234 up to 1st April 2011. There has been an across the board increase in assaults, criminal damage, theft and burglary to sheds/garages. Of the 234 recorded crimes, 48 are currently detected and others are in the process of finalisation. Local events such as Pixie Day, Carnival, Halloween, Tar Barrels, New Year's Eve and the New Year's Day Hunt Meet passed off virtually without incident.

Devon & Cornwall Police need to make savings of £50 million over 4 years. This will involve shedding 700 Police Officer posts (1 in 5) and 500 civilian posts. Currently Ottery Police comprises 14 staff but from 20th May 6 Officers will work out of Ottery (Sergeant, 3 Neighbourhood Beat Managers and 2 PCSOs). PC Thomas will also be required to man a response vehicle at times and together with a rigid shift pattern he will be a less visible presence around the town. In addition the Police Enquiry Office closed in February. Three of the Ottery Police will have to retire over the next two years as they will have completed 30 years' service.

4. "CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2011" PRESENTATION

The Mayor announced that 7 people had been nominated by members of the public: David Stevens (Boots Chemist helpful assistant), Wendy Cammock (Christmas Lunch organiser), Alita Pace (Tipton Stores), Barry Fearn (Fund raiser, helps out with many events), Ben Scott (Young Concert organiser) and Derek Baxter (Voluntary helper at TIC) had each received votes.

The person receiving most votes and therefore Citizen of the Year 2011 was announced as Ron Berry for his tireless work as Caretaker and Bookings Secretary for the Institute. He was presented with a commemorative plaque.

5. REVIEW OF THE YEAR BY THE MAYOR

The following Report was given by the Mayor:

MAY 2010

At the Annual Parish Meeting I was again honoured to be elected Mayor of Ottery St Mary. Councillor Ian Holmes, my Deputy and Councillor Paul Lewis Treasurer and Councillor Williams as Planning Chairman

JUNE 2010

Last year I stated that June is traditionally a quiet month – I should have kept quiet! The June council meeting started with a number of Kings School pupils with their Teacher addressing the

Mayor's initials:.....

2.

Council in an effort to speed up the Skateboard project. I would add that we have had several visits from the School which are always welcome.

In June we were informed that the opening hours of the front desk in the Police Station were to be reduced. I was pleased to welcome Groups from Brazil, France and Ireland to our town.

The Council also held a special meeting this month to receive a presentation from Mark Williams, Chief Executive of East Devon District Council (EDDC); the subject being their forthcoming budget and some of the implications for Town and Parish Councils.

JULY 2010

The Council agreed to have a volunteer in the Tourist Information Centre to assist Phyllis, the Manager. The Unisex Toilet at the Flexton was opened and the Council were grateful for the financial support from the Parish Church. It was agreed with Sainsbury's that the Japanese Bell would be sited on the Supermarket site.

AUGUST 2010

In August Project Managers were appointed to manage the new footbridge/cycleway at Canaan Way. Tesco, who were to appeal against the decision to refuse their planning application decided to withdraw the Appeal. It was agreed that the Town Council would submit the Lease for the Skateboard Park to the County Solicitor. The Council agreed to support a new Play Park at West Hill and approved the Head of Terms to allow this to happen. A request to start a new Croquet Club at Strawberry Lane was agreed with space initially for two courts.

SEPTEMBER 2010

This month there was considerable debate regarding a Drop-In Centre for youngsters at the old Flexton Toilets, and a working party was formed to investigate the possibility. It was resolved that the Town Council explore ideas to recognise the Queens Jubilee in 2012

OCTOBER 2010

The Full Council meeting was held at Tipton St John Village Hall which we try to do at least once a year. The LDF Strategy Preferred Approach report was now available. This is a strategy that will deal with housing needs until "2026 and beyond". This was proving to be a very contentious subject and it was agreed to hold meetings in all the Wards in order to give the public the opportunity to express their views and ask questions.

NOVEMBER 2010

November saw a new councillor join the West Hill Ward, Robin Mitchell. This ensured West Hill Ward was bought up to strength and have full complement. Discussions took place with the Heritage Society regarding the suitability of storing various museum pieces in the cellar.

DECEMBER 2010

Although it was appreciated financial restrictions would make funds limited this year the Council would still award £4,100.00 in Grants to local Clubs and Societies as it was recognised the good work they do in the Parish. The Planning application for the West Hill Play Park was submitted this month.

JANUARY 2011

The Heritage Society again approached the Council requesting they use the redundant toilets at the Flexton for storage as it would be far more accessible than the Cellar at the Town Council. This was agreed. It was also agreed to supply a number of extra Grit Bins in the town following the bad weather experienced in December

FEBRUARY 2011

In February the Council agreed that **£15,267** be allocated to the Skateboard Project. This money would come from EDDC 106 Funds which is a fund accumulated from various building projects. The Council was informed that the Police Enquiry Desk would close from the 18th February.

MARCH 2011

The Council was pleased to receive confirmation that financial support would be given by EDDC to help with the running of the Tourist Information Centre. This meant we were able to extend the Lease on the premises for a further year.

Mayor's initials:.....

3.

APRIL 2011

The Council decided not to pursue the idea of a Drop-In Centre for the youth of the town. This was only partly due to funding but one of the main reasons was the success of the Youth Club which is enjoying a very busy time with 13-19 year olds.”

**6. REPORT FROM JOHN HARDING PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP (P3)
CO-ORDINATOR**

The following Report was given by John Harding:

“The Parish Paths Partnership Scheme is an initiative to guarantee that the entire rights of way network is legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised. It has the support of the National Association of Local Councils and is government funded. Devon County Council is working in partnership with Ottery Town Council, landowners and local voluntary groups with the main aim to improve the condition of the local rights of way and keep them open and used properly. I opened my speech last year by saying “I was hoping that I could announce at this meeting that the saga surrounding Footpath 46 was finally resolved but like many sagas this continues to drag on” Never a truer word was said. I was confident that we had an excellent case for diverting Footpath 46 but this view was not shared by the Planning Inspector. So the saga continues. We still do not have the circular walk from Ottery St Mary down both sides of the River Otter. However, I will make one commitment to you tonight. I will do my absolute utmost to ensure that this path is not forgotten and extra effort is applied to work out a solution to fix this issue.

Whilst this walk has always been a popular feature it has, along with similar ones throughout this part of the county, become of much increased significance due to the recent effects of the ‘Holiday at home’ which has caused visitors to become ever more concerned with the cost of their holidays. Throughout Devon the interest in walking, cycling and other low-cost activities has increased significantly.

A large-scale map of all the walks in the Ottery parish is available for viewing at both the council offices and the Tourist Information Centre (TIC). However for those technically proficient the complete map of walks in Devon is available on the Devon County website under “Public rights of way”.

In Ottery we have over 90 paths with a total length in excess of 55 kilometres. I have eight walkers, Carol & Gerry Hather, Geoff Pinn, Ian Godfrey, Janet Bird, Janis Thatcher, Jill and Ian Pullan who regularly walk the routes advising of any problems they see to ensure that the paths are easily walked by anyone wishing to. On behalf of the Parish Paths Partnership I would like to thank them for their efforts over the last few years; they have not had the recognition they deserve.

Each year they provide an assessment of the condition of the rights of way, in order to find out what work needs to be done and advise on potential improvements that could be done to make the visit more enjoyable for the general public. Carol and Jill are also working with the TIC to set up Bluebell walks. For those interested go and see Phyllis (TIC Manager) and obtain the details.

We certainly face renewed challenges in 2011. Our budget along with many others has been substantially cut. This year will see it reduced by nearly 40% but having worked hard over the last few years our footpaths have never been in better shape. We will do considerably more maintenance ourselves to ensure the high standard we see today is not reduced. To that end if anyone would be interested in helping out let me know. In 2009 we qualified three of our walkers for use on brush-cutters and last year we qualified two for use with chainsaws so we look forward to 2011 with great optimism. All we need now is to fix Footpath 46.”

7. REPORT FROM COUNCILLOR CARTER, CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Councillor Carter gave the following Report:

“Ottery St Mary Planning Committee has met 24 times in the past year and received and considered 179 applications. Decisions that have not agreed with the planning committee are 28. We are a consultee under Planning Central at East Devon District Council and they make the final decision.

Mayor’s initials:.....

4.

We cannot grant or refuse Applications but can provide comments of support or non-support. These criteria for Parish Council comments are due to the New Thinking Approach adopted by EDDC. Members arrive early before each meeting to acquaint themselves with the paper plans. However, in the last planning year the council has acquired a Monitor in the Chamber which allows us and the public present to view the plans on line which gives a better overall view of the application being consulted on. Members of the Planning Committee always try and make a site visit in their own time prior to a meeting. We do have tight guidelines to adhere to as from the day of notification we have 21 days (this includes weekends) to hold our meetings, which are fortnightly. Agendas and Minutes are posted on our website. Applications we hear include Outline, Change of Use, Tree, Listed Building Consents, Advertising, Reserved Matters and of course many Full applications. An application can come in more than once as we deal with a great many Amended Plans as well. Residents visit our office in opening hours to look at plans and East Devon District Council will soon be providing a computer to enable us to show plans on the screen for those residents who do not have access to a computer. This it is hoped will cut down on all the paper plans and East Devon District Council are to be congratulated in their reasoning for this. There were 24 planning committee meetings held in the last council year. Some of these meetings however, we try and hold in other venues. In particular larger applications such as the Supermarket applications Tesco and Sainsbury’s (which attract a lot of residents), we try and hold in the town at The Institute. Other larger developments that we receive applications for, we try and hold in the relevant parish halls e.g Tipton St John and West Hill.”

8. MAYOR’S CHARITY OF THE YEAR

The Mayor reported on the success of the first year of a Mayor’s Charity when the Ottery and District Help Scheme was selected for 2010. Pat Lane, the driving force behind the Charity is retiring and a speech of thanks to her was given by a local resident. The Mayor presented Pat with an inscribed glass bowl recognising her outstanding contribution to the Parish of Ottery St Mary. The Mayor had shortlisted 3 out of the Charities proposed by members of the public for 2011. These were: Dance Action for Youth, Ottery St Mary Hospital League of Friends and the Later Life Forum. Those attending the Meeting voted and Dance Action for Youth received the most votes and so will be the Mayor’s Charity 2011.

9. REPORT BY PHYLLIS BAXTER TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE MANAGER

Phyllis Baxter gave the following Report:

“I would like to begin by saying a big ‘Thank You’ to the Town Council for all of the support and encouragement that they have given me over the last year and now for giving me the opportunity to continue for 2011 – it has been very much appreciated I can tell you.

For a start we sell a wide variety of tickets – for Concerts and other events at the Parish Church; for all kinds of entertainment at other venues in the town; for the summer happenings at Escot; for Yeovilton Air Day; for the Devon County Show and other festivities whenever they present themselves. At the County Show this year there is further good news for many – for the Over 60’s there has previously been an offer of ‘buy one get one free’ but only if you booked on the computer. Now this offer has been extended to the Information Centre so roll up and buy your tickets locally. Visiting Crealy, Yeovilton, Woodlands available are discount vouchers here at the information centre.

We are also agents for National Express Coaches that travel all over the country offering very competitive fares – an important consideration in view of the ever increasing costs of petrol and diesel. Tickets for destinations abroad and accommodation at hotels at Heathrow, Gatwick and elsewhere can also be arranged. Sovereign Coaches, with days out at various destinations in the West Country and elsewhere, are very popular – the pick-up point at the Land of Canaan is a very convenient feature, and, having travelled with them myself on a number of occasions I can tell you that they make you very comfortable with experienced drivers and helpful staff.

We keep a wide range of information and guides in the Centre and this year, with the generous Sup ort of the Twinning Association, we have our popular town Heritage Walk leaflets in French

Mayor’s initials:.....

5.

and German as well as English. Apart from the items on tourism there is information on Walks, Cycling, places to eat and entertainments including the Theatre and Cinemas. We also carry many leaflets and guides for the buses, railways and lots of the services available to local people. Another new feature this year is our participation on Facebook where daily additions are made showing pictures and news of events in Ottery St Mary and the surrounding area. The responses that we have received from viewers in many parts of the world have been highly encouraging. Our Mayor has featured in greeting visitors from Canada, Brazil, Ireland, and Spain amongst others – his welcome to the Spanish contingent in their own language was particularly appreciated. We work closely with the Press and other media to promote our town – we have so many things going on that there is always something to offer and they are only too pleased to use the copy that we supply. There is also a regular flow of people who have, or intend to, move into the district and in particular Ottery St Mary. When I ask why they have chosen to live here they almost always give the same answer – they find everyone so friendly and welcoming! I think that this is a great compliment to all concerned.

Do please remember to let us have details of your events – we are happy to display your posters, help with your competitions and offer advice on whom to contact if you need further assistance. With modern technology posters and information can be sent anywhere in the South West by email so that interest can be generated over a wide audience catchment area at the touch of a button. At the moment a new Town Guide is in the final stages of completion and will soon be available for distribution – more new photographs, more new ideas on how to enjoy our town and the surrounding countryside will be contained within its pages.

The Centre also sells Tea towels, maps, Radar Keys, guides for local walks and so much more – a great deal is packed in our office for you to see and enjoy – do please call and see us – a warm welcome awaits you.

This evening I have brought with me a list of events for the whole year that includes three new features: - Knightstone Manor – opening up in June, a Coleridge Weekend in October and a Christmas Tree Festival at the Parish Church. All of these are at the planning stage just now and further details will be available later.

Please remember to visit us for all your needs – accommodation bookings as well as travel arrangements, tickets for many of the events in the town and surrounds, questions on local matters are welcome and many answers found!

On one occasion I was particularly stumped however ‘In 1600 we had a Blacksmith in Ottery – do you have any details please?’ ‘Do I look that old?? Fortunately our local historian Peter Harris was on hand with some answers and no.....he is not that old either!!!!

Again my thanks to Mr Mayor and the Council – we will continue to do our very best to be worthy of your support.”

10. REPORT REGARDING OTTERY IN BLOOM

The Report from Keith Spittlehouse, Secretary, Ottery in Bloom was read by Cllr Roger Giles.

“Key facts:

2010

- The complications over the EDDC withdrawal from participating in planting and maintenance were overcome except that no hanging baskets were sited in public locations. Town businesses continued with their private hanging basket displays.
- Guides and Scouts assisted Ottery in Bloom (OIB) members with planting the tiered planters, tubs & troughs throughout the town. Thanks to Otter Nurseries the troughs on both sides of the bridge were again planted and installed.
- With a hot and dry July the regular watering was an onerous task. Thanks to Rotary and local residents the plants were kept in reasonably good condition.
- Ottery was successful in being awarded a Silver Gilt medal by South West in Bloom for the second year running in the National competition organised by The Royal Horticultural Society
- Regrettably half of the troughs on the bridge were vandalised one Monday night at the end of July requiring the remainder to be relocated to one side of the bridge.

Mayor’s initials:.....

6.

Current situation

- It came as a blow to the OIB team that our Chairman is unable to continue having moved away from Ottery and for other personal reasons. Our thanks are due to Sarah Clarke for her enthusiasm and leadership for the time she was Chair. We are actively seeking a new chairman. Why not volunteer?
- The 2011 season is not without problems. In addition to still seeking a Chairman the depleted team is hopeful that most of its work will continue. Funds are available for the plants but without regular watering the displays would be disappointing. With support from Town Council we are seeking local residents who would be able to occasionally (or regularly) volunteer to water the displays.
- We do not anticipate entering South West in Bloom unless any new Chairman wishes to do so. Deadline is 7th May.
- As I write (Thurs 7th April) the position is this:

Ottery in Bloom will plant up most of the existing tiered planters, barrels & troughs

Ottery Bridge – Otter Nurseries have offered to continue to sponsor the planting and placing of the troughs on the bridge. This will be done in conjunction with students from Kings School as in previous years.

Canaan Way planters will be planted. Two of the four planters are likely to be sponsored by local organisations who may also water them using the facility of a water butt sited outside the fire station building. The Lions will sponsor one planter and will water all 4 planters there once a week. Ottery Gazette Office barrels and adjacent Memorial troughs will be planted. Local businesses have agreed to water these.

Butts Road and Slade Road tiered planters will be planted. Local residents will water and maintain them.

Nat West Bank planters will be planted subject to getting support for watering.

The planter at Millcroft is in such a poor state of repair that it is likely to be removed.

The Service Station, Hind St is happy to have the deteriorating wooden barrels replaced by the two conical concrete planters currently sited at the entrance to Hind St Car Park. The Town Council will make arrangements for the removal.

Any assistance with the above will be welcomed with open arms. Green fingers not needed. Please contact Town Council Offices.

Apologies if I have missed thanking any individuals or groups for past efforts. Thank you in anticipation for those newly volunteering.”

11. REPORT FROM THE ALLOTMENT GARDEN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Carl Richmond (Chairman) gave the following Report:

“I would like to begin by thanking the Allotment Committee for all their hard work during the past year. There are several points to mention:

Rabbits These are an on-going problem which seems to be getting worse. We have two ferreters interested in continuing to catch rabbits when conditions are suitable. However, a lot of people have enclosed their plots with chicken wire. It is a rather expensive solution which does not solve the problem. It just moves it somewhere else.

New Posts and numbers have been procured – thanks to Councillor Ian Holmes. They are at present being put in place by volunteers.

The Bob Johnson Cup for the best allotment was won by Adrian Forster and the Best Newcomer Shield went to Marna Cole. These were presented by Les Peek who also judged the allotments.

Inspections The plots have been inspected regularly and action has been taken against anyone not keeping to the Tenancy Agreement. This has resulted in 6 warning letters being sent, giving rise to one eviction and two people giving up of their own accord.

The state of play at present is that the allotments are looking better than I’ve ever seen them. They are all let and the waiting list is now just 13.

I would like to finish by thanking the Councillors, the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk for all their assistance during the year and a special thanks to Ian Holmes for his support throughout.”

Mayor’s initials:.....

12. FINANCIAL REPORT 2010-2011 BY COUNCILLOR LEWIS INCLUDING PRESENTATION OF GRANTS

Councillor Lewis presented the following Report for the year ended 31st March 2011:

“Our precept, (the amount we collect from Council tax payers) increased last year from £116,000 to £125,500 to take account of increased expenditure that would be required on the public toilets, the legal costs of running the council and new technology that was required at the Council offices and additional staffing due to the growth in the size of the Council. Our income was also expected to stay at previous levels, due to lower bank interest and anticipated reduced letting income.

Through excellent stewardship of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Clerk I am pleased to be able report that our income was greater than I had anticipated at the beginning of the year. At that time we had no way of knowing that we would acquire the Old Town Hall (the Library building) and that our tenant income would hold up much better than we anticipated. The income from the cemetery was higher than we had expected and the appeal for the Christmas lights also helped us exceed our income target. Through careful cash management we also managed to produce a decent rate of interest on the cash we have to hold as reserves.

Our expenditure for the year came in below budget. Major items that came in below budget were cleaning costs, building and amenity expenses, the costs associated with the public toilets, and we had no call on our contingency reserve for the year. Areas where we did spend more were on the allotments, repairs to our buildings, which now include the Old Town Hall, legal and professional fees and our new computers and associated hardware at the office. We do now have an up to date computer system capable of dealing with matters in the 21st Century which was certainly not the case at the beginning of the year.

I would also point out the Councillors are allowed to claim an allowance for being a Town Councillor, which is very small for the amount of the work they all contribute to the Town. This expenditure has to be budgeted for but I am pleased to be able report that expenditure was considerably below budget for the last twelve months

Our largest expenditure, with the exception of staff wages, is the Tourist Information Centre, which came in some £2,500 below budget. I would like to extend my thanks to the Manager for all the hard work that she puts in to promoting the town which is ultimately for all our benefit.

During the year we continued with making grants to local organisations to the extent of over £5,000 and although expenditure remains tight in these hard local government times the Council hopes to keep up that level of commitment in the next financial year.”

The Mayor then presented Grant cheques to the following organisations: Ottregians Over 60s, Tipton St John Playing Field Association, Tipton Owlets Playgroup, Tipton St John Residents' Association, Tipton St John Community Hall Trust, Ottery St Mary Joint Guide & Scout Committee (Pixie Day), Sustainable Ottery, Ottery in Bloom, Ottery St Mary Twinning Association, Vision OM, Ottery St Mary & District Help Scheme.

Cllr Lewis then continued his Report:

“Next year we do have a number of items of additional expenditure which we have to budget for. The Skateboard/BMX Park will require annual maintenance, as will the Playbuilder Project in West Hill and this is budgeted at around £5,000. We have also made financial provision of additional grit bins in the parish and unfortunately due to the default of a local pressure group have had to pick up a bill for over £700 due to their collapse. However due to the financial position the Council finds itself in this year, although the precept had to rise to meet this additional expenditure and service to the parish, all other increases have been absorbed and the Council remains well within with its statutory reserves for its size.

I would however like to extend my thanks to all Councillors for their patience and forbearance over financial matters over the last twelve months. Councillors hold projects very close to their hearts and there is not always the funding to meet their wishes. This is however how it should be as we are spending public money and times are difficult for us all. However through careful financial management the Council is well placed for the years ahead as we have acquired considerable assets which will ultimately be for the benefit of all residents of the Parish.”

Mayor's initials:.....

13. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Q. What is the progress with a Bus Stop/Shelter at Butts Road?

A. Cllr Giles responded that an official stop is being created and a sign will soon be installed.

Q. How much is a Councillor’s Allowance and how many have claimed it?

A. The Mayor responded that it is £320 for Councillors and £450 for Mayor (*correct figures are £283 and £413*). One Councillor had claimed for the full year and another for a part year.

Q. When is building starting on the River footbridge/cycleway?

Q. What is happening at the old Factory?

A. The Mayor covered both these topics in his closing remarks.

14. MAYOR’S CLOSING REMARKS

The Mayor reported that the coming year will see the completion of the long-awaited footbridge/cycleway over the river with the main construction work starting on 18th April. Sainsbury’s should be open by October/November and with 3 new shops opening in the town in recent weeks he feels that confidence is growing.

With regard to the Factory area, he reported that slow progress is being made. The owner of part of the area has said that once it is clear how to deal with the sewage capacity problem a planning application will be submitted. He has met with Tesco with a view to buying back the Factory site subject to obtaining planning permission. If this is successful then the planning application will be for comprehensive redevelopment including regeneration of the Town Mill, demolition of the factory to be replaced with residential units and development of Otter View and adjacent car park, as well as the car park in front of the Tumbling Weir Hotel.

The Mayor thanked all the Councillors for their support and to Ian Holmes for his continued support as Deputy Mayor. He thanked Su Graham, Deputy Clerk particularly for her work with Planning and the Web Site which has recently been updated. He thanked Judith Reynolds, Town Clerk who has responsibility for all Council procedures which have increased tremendously since she has been employed.

Finally the Mayor thanked everyone for coming and invited them to stay for coffee and to speak to Councillors.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.50pm

Mayor’s signature:

Date:

Mayor’s initials:.....