

Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

held on **Tuesday 23rd April 2013 at 7.00pm in The Institute, Yonder Street, Ottery St Mary**

Present: Mayor Councillor Dobson
Councillors Giles, Holmes, Lewis, Pang, Thurgood (Town Ward) Talbot,
Wright (West Hill Ward) J Harding (Tipton St John Ward)
Hansford (North Ward) together with the Clerk, District
Councillor Cox and 43 members of the public

Apologies: Councillors Carter (Town Ward), Mitchell, Watmore (West Hill Ward), Bartlett (North Ward), L Harding (Tipton St John Ward)

1. WELCOME BY THE MAYOR

Councillor Glyn Dobson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Town Councillors present introduced themselves. Revd. Steve Weston said a prayer.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 24th APRIL 2012

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

3. THE FUTURE OF OTTERY'S COMMUNITY HOSPITAL – A PRESENTATION

Graham Ward, Chairman of the Ottery St Mary Hospital League of Friends stated that in his presentation he would be expressing his own thoughts and observations pointing out that he is not a member of a political party or of a union or of any NHS organisation.

“Background information: NHS is a vast organisation with a huge budget of over £3 billion, one quarter of which is spent on wages. Fifty years ago doctors were the leaders in the organisation of the NHS, then organisation was passed to full-time Managers. Since then medicine has changed. Now there are very sophisticated investigations requiring hugely expensive items such as scanners. Recent Governments have made a push towards care at home so that fewer hospital beds are needed. There is a faster turn round of beds: keyhole surgery, replacement joints, cataracts all requiring fewer days in Hospital. All this has caused a rethink in the provision of care within the NHS. There are basically 2 sides to the administration, both working in the NHS, but each looking at the other and examining the work and role of the other. There are Commissioners and there are Providers. The Commissioners are GPs and DCC. They agree amongst themselves what services are required, and then negotiate with the Providers – the large hospitals like Wonford and North Devon Trust who at the moment control the Community Hospitals. The Commissioners hold the money and pay the Providers. Another consideration is that the best care comes from those who do a particular job frequently – from bed baths to brain surgery! To get the best care patients may need to travel e.g. rationalisation of children's heart surgery. It also means that we cannot have everything in Ottery St Mary – our Hospital activity will certainly change. We have been promised that it will not close but the running of the Community Hospitals by North Devon lasts only to 2015 so what will happen then? It goes to any suitable provider, but who decides? There is definitely a need to do more with less money. Cllr Pang has been a most assiduous and persistent campaigner on your behalf in trying to get answers. The Government wants greater public input but in this area it seems to be very slow to be formed. We want a forum where our views can be conveyed and where we can respond to decisions or ideas held elsewhere. We would welcome your thoughts and support in ensuring that Ottery St Mary gets the best deal available.”

The Mayor stated that assurance had been given that there would be consultation and the Council will then hold a public meeting in a large venue.

Mayor's initials:

4. REPORT FROM DEVON & CORNWALL POLICE

PCSO Maria Clapp gave the following Report for the area covering Ottery St Mary town, West Hill, Tipton St John and Alfington:

“Recorded crime for last year stood at 210 offences. This year recorded crime stands at 218 so there has been a slight increase although this is less than a crime per day for the area. Of the 218 local crimes 3 were house burglaries and 26 were burglaries to buildings such as garages, sheds and barns. That compares to 6 house burglaries and 26 other burglaries last year – so very similar figures.

Please visualise the size of the area I am talking about. I believe 3 house burglaries is a remarkable figure for the size and relative affluence of this area. It confirms that we live in a very good area with a low incidence of crime. Thefts were also slightly down on last year from 54 to 47; criminal damage was almost the same, up one from 32 to 33. Shoplifting has increased from 1 to 13, mostly due to Sainsbury’s and Otter Nurseries.

Of all recorded crime, 25.7% is detected at the moment – and this will improve as the crime files continue to be submitted for the year up to 31st March.

As usual, most detection comes from recorded assaults where the victim invariably knows the assailant, or by police generated crimes including drunk & disqualified drivers, public order offences such as being drunk & disorderly, and being found in possession of drugs.

Violence with injury has increased by 4; violence without injury has also increased from 17 to 24. Vehicle offences have increased from 15 to 25. Possession of drugs is down 75% from 12 to 3.

Police plans are well underway for our local events this year, which include Pixie Day and Tar Barrels.

Sgt Paul Roberts is now with us and also PC Vicky Dixon as our Neighbourhood Beat Manager. Phil Thomas has recently retired, after 16 years in Ottery but will be taking up a PCSO role in July in another town.

Chief Superintendent Paul Davies reports the following for the Devon policing area: Overall there has been a reduction in recorded crime across Devon for the year 2012-2013, with over 2,200 fewer offences. Fewer offences = fewer victims. Of particular note, we have seen dramatic reductions in specific areas, including a 16% reduction in domestic burglary and a 21.7% reduction in theft from motor vehicles. Violence with injury figures have fallen; however the wider violence against the person category has shown an increase. This, along with a small increase in recorded sexual offences is concerning and these are areas that we will continue to prioritise over coming months. Overall, while we cannot be complacent in any way, these figures once again show that Devon is one of the safest parts of the UK.

The end of year figures for Devon are as follows:

- Total crime has fallen by 5%, with 2,211 fewer offences recorded in 2012/13 (in total 42,176 offences recorded)
- Domestic burglary has fallen by 16%, in total 1,561 offences recorded
- Theft from motor vehicles has fallen by 21.7%, in total 2,271 offences recorded
- Criminal damage has fallen by 9.4%, with 781 fewer offences, in total 7,550 crimes being recorded
- Robbery has fallen by 2.6% to 188 offences
- Violence with injury has fallen by 3.3%, to 5,046 offences. However, the wider violence against the person category (homicide, assaults, harassment and other violence) has risen by 5.4%. There were 6 homicides recorded in the 2012/13 performance year.
- Sexual offences has risen by 3.3% to 961 offences, with a positive outcome rate of 33.3%
- Total crime positive outcomes are 35.9%”

The Mayor thanked PCSO Maria Clapp for all that she does.

Mayor’s initials:

5. **“CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2013” PRESENTATION**

The Mayor announced that 3 members of the public had been voted for. **John Green** was made Citizen of the Year 2013 for his tireless work as Explorer Scout Leader and Group Scout Leader in Ottery St Mary. He is also the driving force behind the new building fundraising. He was presented with a plaque. John replied that it was a privilege to provide opportunities for so many young people but that those opportunities would not be possible without the 20+ adult leaders who volunteered their time. He thanked them all.

Ann Anning was presented with a bouquet of flowers for her work for the NHS for over 40years at the Hospital (League of Friends, Ambulance, Help Scheme).

Also nominated was George Anning (Feoffee Room Caretaker, helper at Hospital, Fire Service Rally)

6. **REVIEW OF THE YEAR BY THE MAYOR**

The following Report was given by the Mayor:

MAY 2012

At the Annual Parish Meeting last year I was again honoured to be elected Mayor of Ottery St Mary for the 6th time. Also elected was my Deputy - Councillor Ian Holmes, with Councillor Paul Lewis elected as the Councillor with Responsibility for Finance. Also elected again was Councillor Paul Carter as the Planning Committee Chairman.

JUNE 2012.

A decision was reached this month to honour a request to have the Citizens Advice Bureau use the facilities at the Council Offices until the 31st March as a pilot scheme. I can confirm that this has been well used so the Council will be supporting this facility for another six months. For your information the CAB’s hours are 1.15pm – 3.45pm on a Tuesday. The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Celebrations were certainly a huge success with events that took place including Street Parties, Coronation Ball and Last Night at the Proms at the Land of Canaan. Those of you that were there probably remember singing Land of Hope and Glory in the rain! Also this month we undertook the restoration of the Victoria Diamond Jubilee Monument to honour our Queen’s Diamond Jubilee. This was made possible from a donation by Kier, the Company that built Sainsbury’s.

JULY 2012

This month the Council considered a Planning Application to build a Sports Pavilion on land at Strawberry Lane which would be for sporting facilities. The vision is to have a facility for the town’s organisations: Tennis Club, Petanque and Cricket Club are all interested. The foundations for the building have been started today.

Sadly it was during this month that the late Councillor Tony Abbott passed away. After discussion with his Family, the Council arranged for a Planter dedicated to his memory to be placed near the Nat West Bank. I am sorry to report that this has been vandalised with plants being stolen.

AUGUST 2012

The demise of the Farmers Market at the Land of Canaan, but the Council commenced planning a Street Market in Mill Street once a month on the first Friday of the month. I am pleased to tell you all that this Street Market will be open on Friday 3rd May from and I do hope you will support this market. This will encourage people to come into the town centre to shop. Thanks go to Cllr John Harding who has been the driving force behind this project.

Using 106 monies from the Sainsbury’s store the council had a new bench erected outside the supermarket commemorating the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee. A Finger Posts was also erected displaying directions to the many facilities our town has to offer.

SEPTEMBER 2012

This month plans were going ahead for the Cycle Link along Canaan Way which has been completed now. September was also very busy on the Planning side with a major development at the back of the Marist Convent for 10 dwellings, 2 flats and a commercial building. You will see

Mayor’s initials:

that this development has now already started. Plans also came in for the development at the land at Barrack Road which has now been approved by EDDC.

There was an exhibition in this month in Mill Street for proposed plans at the Factory which has been heard and which we supported although there will be no community facilities which was out of the Town Council's hands.

OCTOBER 2012

A report from the "Parishes Together" was received to decide what Project Ottery St Mary along with 7 other Parishes would like to support with the £1.10p per elector provided by DCC and EDDC. The project everyone agreed on was the Ottery St Mary Help Scheme as this worthy service reaches out to the surrounding parishes. I am pleased to say this has provided £12,714 which was presented to the Help Scheme earlier this evening.

NOVEMBER 2012

During this month an additional Full Council Meeting was held this time at the Football Club in Butts Road to consider EDDC's response regarding consultation for the Local Plan on the development of our villages, Alfington, West Hill and Tipton St John following consultation meetings in all these villages.

DECEMBER 2012

We held the council meeting at Alfington this month which was the first Full Council meeting we had held in the North Ward for many years. Flooding was experienced Parish wide and many worried residents collected sandbags during this time.

During this month several organisations contacted the Council requesting use of the council land at Strawberry Lane for recreational purposes. With support from County Councillor Roger Giles the council put in for funding for the installation of water and electric.

Of course this month being our festive time the Town Council along with the Chamber of Commerce arranged our popular Christmas Fun Day combined with Lights switch-on and Late Night Shopping on Friday 30th November when shops were open until 8.30pm.

JANUARY 2013

It was this month the Council decided that the Precept for 2013-2014 should remain the same as 2012-2013.

FEBRUARY 2013

This month the Rotary Club agreed to installing a "Welcome to Ottery" sign and planter from their funds raised from the Queens Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The Town Council has agreed to use section 106 funds to purchase 3 more once permission for sites have been obtained.

MARCH 2013

We were sorry to receive PC Phil Thomas' last Report at our full council meeting in March. He has been a familiar face in our town and we wish him well. A presentation was made to him.

It was agreed at this meeting also for a new Town Clock for the town using Sainsbury's S106 funds for the improvement of the town centre. A Blue Clock face with gold lettering has been chosen and suitable inscription to commemorate the Diamond Coronation of Queen Elizabeth 11.

APRIL 2013

You will know that construction work has started now at the front and rear of the Convent building. It's very sad for us to see the loss of the beautiful garden that John Harris kept so well over the years. Whatever views one has on developments I am sure many of you will have fond memories of our Convent garden surroundings. Disabled access to the Council Offices is still available around the back.

Being a Quality Council it has been agreed the Planning Committee will be taking on decisions regarding Advertisements and we are awaiting training for this new role

We look forward to this next year working as a council for the benefit of our community. Thank you."

Mayor's initials:

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

Cllr John Harding gave the following Report:

“The Parish Paths Partnerships 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. 2012 has been the most difficult and challenging year that P3 has encountered for many years. The inclement weather has caused considerable problems and has hampered work continually.

Our plans have had to be significantly modified and just keeping footpaths open has been a major challenge. The number of footpaths we have had very serious problems with has been in double figures and we are still not there on fixing some issues. However let me assure you we are listening and we are fixing issues so if you see a problem please call the council offices.

One such problem concerns FP24 where a bridge crossing a tributary of the River Otter behind the Cricket club was washed away. We replaced the bridge as this is a popular walk only to find that the water levels gained us a puddle on one side. We do need to put in a boardwalk to overcome this problem but work can only start when the surface water drops.

I talked last year about replacing stiles with gates and work did begin on this project. The first three were installed on FP90 and we will see more this year but I do question how many.

I also indicated we had started the application for Walkers are Welcome accreditation and I am pleased to say that Ottery St Mary is now a fully accredited member of that organisation. This is important to many walkers but is also very important for Ottery St Mary in a business perspective as we should see more visitors visiting Ottery and spending money in the area.

This year there are no major plans other than to recover from the problems of the weather but our task is made no easier by the squeeze on finances. However we are considering trying to do some work on limiting Himalayan Balsam. It is not an easy task and is very people intensive so if you are interested in helping us limit the extent of this invasive species please give me a call at the council office.

We are also not sitting back as we have some alternative ideas for improving our network. We are looking at other sources of finance and using these may well prove helpful but every time we see a positive we come up against another obstacle this time we see landowners who are less than helpful. Still at least we are actively looking forward and watch this space

In Ottery we have over 90 paths with a total length in excess of 55 kilometres. There are eight walkers: Carol & Gerry Hather, Eileen Perkins, Ian Godfrey, Janet Bird, Jill and Ian Pullan and Ted Swan. 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.

Carol and Jill are also working with the TIC to set up Bluebell walks. For those interested go and see Phyllis to obtain the details.

We certainly face renewed challenges in 2013. Our budget along with many others has been reduced and we have also been asked to look after some new territory. From this year we will have to look after section 10 roads. These are unmetalled roads that Highways are not able to maintain. We will have to do considerably more maintenance ourselves to ensure the high standard we have aspired to see today is not reduced. To that end we need more helpers, if anyone would be interested in helping out please let me know.

For those that have been here before one issue is missing but believe me it is not forgotten: FP46. There is still no circular path but the river is slowly changing course and we see erosion being of benefit in this case. I will keep you advised.”

Mayor's initials:

8. REPORT FROM COUNCILLOR HOLMES, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

“I am making this report on behalf of the Chairman Councillor Carter who is on holiday. The Planning Committee of the Town Council is made up of 14 Town Councillors and meets usually every 2 weeks. This year we had 26 meetings and discussed 178 planning applications which compared to 26 meetings and 175 applications last year. We held 3 SHLAA (*Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment*) meetings in the 3 wards to give the public an opportunity to give preference to the sites they would like to see for housing. We as a Committee act as consultees to East Devon District Council and state whether we support or do not support applications with our reasons and recommendations. Of the decisions made by East Devon they agreed with us about 85% of the time. Within the last year we have dealt with several major applications: Barton Orchard at Tipton St. John, Land adjacent to Barrack Road, The Ottermill Factory, Land at the Old Convent and the Salston Manor Hotel. Last night we discussed the reserved matters for the Redrow development off Butts Road.

Members of the Committee try to visit any planning sites where it is not fully clear from the application what work the applicant intends to carry out. We also liaise with the Planning Officers at EDDC if we are unclear about any points on the application. Councillors will also attend Development Management Committee meetings at the Knowle to hear District Councillors’ decisions on applications and attend Planning Appeals on behalf of the Town Council.

Now that Ottery Town Council is a Quality Council we will in the future be able to deal with and make decisions regarding advertisements around the Parish.

I wish to thank the members of the Committee for their support, patience and understanding of the sometimes complex matters we have to deal with. On behalf of the Chairman I wish to thank the Deputy Clerk and Clerk for their help with the administration of the meetings.”

9. REPORT BY PHYLLIS BAXTER TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE MANAGER

Phyllis Baxter gave the following Report:

“My name is Phyllis and I am to be found at the Council Information Centre next to the Council Offices in the square – also known as Broad Street. The Centre is funded by the Town Council and it is intended to benefit and serve both visitors to the town as well as our local residents.

We carry a large range of printed material on the local area and further afield and have computer access to both visitor attractions and to a number of facilities connected with local matters. We also sell tickets to both national coach travel, services such as Otter Rotters and for many local events ranging from the Devon County Show to local dances, pantomimes, shows and functions in and around East Devon.

Last year we were saddened to see the wet and miserable weather that affected so many of our visitors but, happily, it did not deter them from travelling from far and wide to visit our beautiful and welcoming area. German visitors are particularly attracted and wish to see the sites featured in a series of TV films made, in German, from the Rosamunde Pilcher books that are so popular back home.

Our magnificent Parish Church is a big attraction for people all over the world as it is judged to be amongst the twenty finest in the country - whilst many also come to visit the birthplace of Samuel Taylor Coleridge whose verse is known and loved by thousands. Another distinguished one-time resident is Sir Ernest Satow who, as a diplomat in Japan, did much to bring Japan into the modern world during his service in Tokyo at the end of the nineteenth century. In retirement he lived in the town, was a Chairman of the Urban District Council and was followed on his shopping expeditions by his Japanese servant – surely a sight to be seen in Ottery a hundred years ago! His grave is in the Churchyard and it is venerated by Japanese visitors who come from far and wide. Just for your interest I am known to the Japanese as Phyllis-san – perhaps you remember the phrase and just how much it fortifies the over-forties!!

Mayor’s initials:

So many of our visitors are thrilled by the Church, the town and its shops and I wonder at the good things that so many say about the friendliness and greeting that they receive in our shops, pubs and restaurants. People come from so many countries including South Africa, the United States, Australia, Canada and most of our European neighbours. They tell me how they love the countryside, the town and the welcome – in all we greet over six thousand people passing through the Centre both from overseas and local sources.

Last year Ottery celebrated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June including a Ball at the Tumbling Weir Hotel on the Saturday followed by events on the Land of Canaan and Diamond Jubilee Street Parties on Sunday for which the weather was kind. The evening brought Songs of Praise with the Town Band and the Church Choir providing a rousing finale to the day's celebrations. Other events including a Fun Treasure Hunt, organised by Sarah Clarke and Jubilee Fair at Cadhay were enjoyed by many whilst a Children's Plate Decorating Competition made sure that the Jubilee was truly memorable.

Also of note during that weekend was the official opening of the Ottery Poetry Stones depicting the poem 'Kubla Khan' along the pathway on the Land of Canaan. This is now a visitor attraction for poetry groups from all over the country who then take time to visit the magnificent Parish Church and other attractions

Also, during 2012, we enjoyed the Olympic Games and the successes it brought to our athletes and to the country as a whole. Here our very own Rotary Club put on an Ottery Olympics and Fun Day event that was a source of pleasure to everyone.

We are fortunate that so very many events take place throughout the year in Ottery and around. Pixie Day is followed by the New Otterians Summer Show at The King's School then a Flower festival at the Parish Church and an Art Show at the Institute. We later look forward to Carnival Night, the Tar Barrels, and a Christmas Tree Festival at the Parish Church and Late Night Shopping at the end of November.

Last November saw the arrival of the comedian, Mark Steel from BBC Radio 4, in town to see the Tar Barrels. He performed a number of interviews with local worthies and then treated us to a fun evening at The King's School. He created a great comic sketch on Ottery and its people including myself and the 'Mouse Mat' that we sell in the Centre. The mat features the Tar Barrels and after the sketch sales did wonderful things as everybody wanted one and I could have trebled the price – come back Mark – we need you!! I have a copy of his show on Radio 4 in the office.

Now 2013 and almost May! Where has the time gone? I have been working on a new Pocket Guide for the town to include new features to bring in seven centuries of history together with an idea of just what the town has to offer in attractions, facilities and where to find places of interest. It is now at the printers and should be ready by next week for all to see.

This year Ottery has a 'Good Feel Factor' and, with the opening of several new shops in the town, it attracts many callers from the surrounding area who delight in its individuality. A new Food Festival is to be held on Friday 31st May and Saturday 1st of June and on the same evening there will be a Coronation Ball at The Tumbling Weir Hotel to celebrate the sixtieth year of our dear Queen Elizabeth being on the throne.

May I also tell you about Ottery Festival Week that takes place from Tuesday 16th July to Sunday 21st. We need your help and participation to make this a truly memorable occasion and to showcase all that we have to offer.

There will be a Classic Car Rally on the Sunday, with stalls on The Land of Canaan from 2.00pm. We also have a Harry Potter Day, a Coleridge Day, an Afternoon Tea Dance and much, much more. This is a great opportunity for your organisations to raise funds for your events. Let us promote Ottery to the full and show visitors and local people just what is on our doorstep. I have forms here for those wishing to get involved - come on let's put on a really magical Ottery Festival!!

Another of the new events for this year is 'Midsummer Madness' organised by Rotary International – to be held at the Football Club on 15th June. Pixie Day is on 23rd of June and there are many more attractions throughout the year. I have a list of the year's events in the office so if you would like a copy please see me after the meeting.

Mayor's initials:

Finally - please keep me informed of the events that you plan to hold and we will advertise them for you in the local newspapers, on Facebook and in the window of our Centre. I work closely with the media and with all of the organisations within the town. Take plenty of photographs that can also be sent to the media and give me information that can be included in the What's On List that is sent monthly to the Gazette along with copies of the photos.

In closing I would like to thank Cllr Jo Talbot for her help and support and to both our Mayor, Glyn Dobson and Deputy Mayor, Ian Holmes and members of the Council for making it possible for the Information Centre to continue with the service that we offer. Thank you all for your attention and support during the past year let us hope that 2013 will be even more successful and for the weather to be a little kinder to us all."

10. REPORT REGARDING OTTERY IN BLOOM

Keith Spittlehouse gave the following Report:

"Ottery in Bloom (OiB) started in the 1980's and is currently run by small committee of which I am Secretary together with additional helpers in summer. Many times OiB has been awarded medals in South West in Bloom but not for the last two years. OiB has no control over untidy factory site and poor grass verge maintenance by County Council.

Thanks go to the Town Council for an annual grant and to Sponsors: Rotary, Inner Wheel and Lions Clubs, Otter Nurseries (who plant the bridge), OSM Garden Club, Western Power, McColls (West Hill) and to the waterers, again Rotary, Inner wheel and Lions Clubs, Ottery WI, Ottery Gazette, West Hill Garden Club and Otter Hayes Trust together with a number of individuals.

Also for assistance with planting to Guides and Brownies and to Scouts who plan to paint some of the stands later this year. Apologies if I have missed anyone from this list.

You will have noticed selected sites have been planted with spring flowers or bulbs.

2012 was special since we planted some weeks earlier than normal to have flowers in bloom for the Royal Jubilee celebrations. This doubled the normal cost of annual planting.

Some of the planter stands will need replacing. The galvanised ones are fine but the painted steel ones are rusting through. It may be possible to refurbish with glass fibre inserts. I will be pleased to speak to anyone having glass fibre or metal fabrication contacts. I am in the phone book or can be contacted through Council offices.

We are always ready to welcome offers of assistance with planting or with watering and any new ideas to enhance the Town.

There is a proposal to locate 4 new planters in Ottery, one provided by Rotary from Royal Jubilee funds and the others provided by Town Council through Section 106 funding. We just await agreement for their location by the highways authority before these can be purchased."

It was pointed out by the owner of Roberts Hardware Store that the businesses in the town had also provided very colourful floral displays during the summer.

11. REPORT FROM THE ALLOTMENT GARDEN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Committee member Debbie Glanville gave the following Report:

"I would like to start by thanking the Council members for their support, especially Ian Holmes and George Hansford. Thanks are also due to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk for dealing with the lettings.

Inspections have been carried out regularly throughout the year and letters sent out to allotment holders where there was cause for concern. Unfortunately several people had to be evicted for not doing anything.

The usual pests continue to manifest themselves: rabbits, rats, mice, badgers and pheasants to name but a few and now we can add peacocks to the list! We also had a bovine incursion of about 25 cows. It's surprising how much damage cows can do trampling about, but thoughtfully they kept mostly to the paths and as the alarm was raised quickly the problem was not too serious.

Mayor's initials:

The last year was a really difficult one. The weather was extremely unhelpful and when you combine this with Redrow's activities morale fell to an all-time low. The year ended with many unoccupied plots and no waiting list which has not happened for quite a long time. However, there was a good turnout at the AGM. A Committee has been formed with some new enthusiastic members and thanks to an article in the Gazette many new people have taken up plots.

Due to Redrow's development the future of the allotments is uncertain, but we are determined to carry on (calmly) and enjoy our allotments while we can. After all they could still be here for a long time"

The Mayor stated that the Council will do all that it can to ensure that the Allotments continue.

12. FINANCIAL REPORT 2012-2013 INCLUDING PRESENTATION OF GRANTS

Cllr Lewis (Councillor with special responsibility for Finance) gave the Report.

"The last year has been a relatively quiet year for the Council in terms of finance compared to the last few years when we purchased the Convent, built a bridge and a myriad of other things. However for the year to 31st March 2013 the Council decided to freeze the Precept (the amount received from Council Tax payers in the Parish) at the same level as the previous year. This means that we have now kept the Precept for a period of two years. The amount we receive is £136,931.

Over the last few years we have been fortunate to receive from East Devon a number of assets that were previously held by them, including the Old Town Hall, which has increased our income compared to the last couple of years. In addition the finances have been transformed since we acquired the Convent, which has allowed us to take a rental income from tenants and ensured that we have a building fit for purpose for running a Town Council such as ours. Through the hard work of the Clerk and Mayor we have been able to put our cash reserves to full use and have earned interest in excess of our budget. Taking into account our income from all sources, but excluding the Tourist Information Centre, our total income amounted to £183,559.

On the cost side the majority of our expenditure is incurred in the administration of the Council. Spending on the Environment of the Parish amounted to £1,4220 and Grants were £20,360. These are not all grants made to various groups around the Parish but include monies we receive in transit to other bodies."

Cllr Lewis announced the following Grant awards which were presented by the Mayor:

The Talatones, Ottery St Mary Parish Church (Environment Exhibition), Vision.OM, Pixie Day, Ottery St Mary Twinning Association, Ottery St Mary Men's Forum, Ottery St Mary Cricket Club, Tipton Times Voluntary Service, Ottery Community Theatre, Ottregians Over 60s Club, Ottery St Mary Scout Group, Churches Together in Ottery (Youth Work Project)

Cllr Lewis continued:

" The largest items of expenditure in the year were the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and Loan repayments. The TIC is a source of information not only for visitors but for residents of the Parish. Although we can never measure the inherent value that this service provides, we remain convinced that it adds more to the local economy than it costs the Council. We are however always looking to obtain maximum value for money from the TIC and in this year reduced the "loss" to £11,602, down from a budgeted £14,000.

As a Council we did attract some criticism from the local media for holding a cash pile over the year. As a Council we are not here to accumulate cash, but we have to be sure that the action that we take is in the interest of all members of the Parish. We were therefore reluctant to pay down debt that we had raised on the Convent before being sure that this was the correct action to take. After a great deal of deliberation over future spending plans and commitments the Council sanctioned a repayment from the loan amounting to £40,000 which included the premium we had to pay for repaying the loan.

Mayor's initials:

I am pleased to be able to report that your Council remains financially sound and able to meet its commitments for the foreseeable future. Although we may not be able to hold our Precept at this level indefinitely, we do not see a situation where as residents you will be asked to make increased contributions to cover the years of static growth in our Precept.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Councillors for the patience and understanding in dealing with me as the "Treasurer" of the Council. Their views on expenditure and priorities are firmly held and backed up by persuasive argument and sometimes I simply cannot fulfil all their requests.

I would also wish to record my thanks to the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Mayor and Deputy Mayor for all the hard work they do on my behalf. I have a full time job and their assistance in helping not only with the accounts but their energy and vigour in dealing with all matters relating to the Council which saves thousands of pounds each year. It was only in the last couple of weeks in dealing with one particular matter that the Mayor was able to report that he had saved the Council a considerable amount of money, which for commercial reasons must remain confidential. However there is absolutely no doubt that without the energy the Mayor and Deputy Mayor put into the community the accounts would not be anything like as healthy as they are, and for that, grateful thanks."

13. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Q. Mrs Decent of Vision.OM asked about the markings at Canaan Way, including the footpath where she felt it should be marked to show pedestrian and cyclist areas.

A. Cllr Giles explained that it was designed to make better and safer communication for School students. ADCC audit had stated that the design was safe.

Q. Mrs Glanville spoke of the inadequate public toilet provision in Ottery and provided data from EDDC showing it does not fund toilets in Ottery. She noted that the Town Council will be earmarking funds to provide toilets and asked who was leading the project and what the time scale is.

A. The Mayor explained that he had been actively seeking a location with no success and that giving a time scale for achieving toilets was not possible.

Further discussion led to a suggestion that the Town Council should approach EDDC to ask for a site on the Land of Canaan.

Q. Barry Fearn spoke of school cyclists using the Coleridge bridge with ineffective brakes.

A. PCSO Clapp will follow up on this.

Q. The owner of Roberts Hardware spoke of several hard months for traders but that the Chamber of Commerce had been resurrected and the Food Festival will happen on June. She asked for support for all traders. She stated that the Hospital was vital and that if it is under threat then the community must fight it.

A. The Mayor repeated the assurance about a Public Meeting. It was suggested that surrounding villages be invited to any meeting and that it should be at a weekend.

14. MAYOR'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Mayor thanked his wife Gay, the Clerk for her support and advice, the Deputy Clerk, the Deputy Mayor, to all Councillors and to everyone for attending the meeting.

He thanked Roger Giles (who is stepping down as a County Councillor) for all he has done and wished Claire Wright luck in her bid to replace him.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.55pm.

Mayor's signature: **Date:**

Mayor's initials: