

**Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held in the Institute, Ottery St Mary on Tuesday 27th April 2010 at 7pm**

**Present**      **Mayor**      **Councillor Dobson**  
                  **Councillors**   **Abbott, Giles, Lewis, Pang, Williams** (Town Ward) **Talbot, Wright** (West Hill Ward), **Carter, Harding** (Tipton St John Ward) **Hansford**, (North Ward) together with the **Clerk, and 35 members of the public**

**Apologies**      **Councillors**   **Holmes** (Town Ward), **Bloxham** (West Hill 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 17<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2009**

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 for the Force area as a whole recorded crime has fallen by 9.3%. For this Parish recorded crime figures continue to show a downward trend. In 2008 there were 281 crimes; in 2009 201 (approx 30% reduction); in 2010 168 crimes (nearly a 20% reduction). PC Thomas, PCSO Clapp and Sgt Tennant are around the town more often and along with the Police Station Enquiry Office being open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, the Police are now far more accessible. The main concern from the community seems to be speeding vehicles. Numerous speed checks have been taken and the local press and Ottery Gazette has been used to educate motorists and report on actions which have included seizing vehicles from the uninsured or repeat offenders. The Police continue to make the area a pleasant place to live by utilising PCSOs, Specials, Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators and partner agencies. PCSO Clapp spoke about customer satisfaction with the Police. The Police website had asked what would improve confidence in the Police and responses included higher visibility patrols, putting good news in the press, stopping and talking to people, listening to people in the area and working with them, reassuring elderly residents. Ottery based Police try to achieve all these things. Also, in the last year a Police Cadet unit has been set up for 13-16 year olds. There are 18 who meet fortnightly. PCSO Clapp gives talks to Brownies and Cubs and teaches Cycling Proficiency at Primary Schools and visits Playgroups. The Ottery Litter pick yielded 36 bags of rubbish in 3 hours.

**4. CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2010 PRESENTATION**

The Mayor announced that 13 people had been nominated this year which is evidence of the good work carried out by many people. He announced that this year had a seen a draw with 2 people sharing the same number of nominations. The Council had therefore decided to make two awards and these were to Michelle Haywood and Flo Rowland. Michelle had been nominated for her healthy living project and support for the British Heart Foundation. Flo had been nominated for her caring nature and looking out for people, especially the elderly. Both recipients will receive a commemorative plaque.

Mayor's initials:.....

## **5. REVIEW OF THE YEAR BY THE MAYOR**

The following Report was given by the Mayor.

### **MAY (09)**

Following our Annual Meeting I was once again proud to be elected as Mayor for a further twelve months and Cllr Holmes was elected as Deputy Mayor with Cllr Lewis as Treasurer. This month we also appointed a Working Party to review the Committee Structure in the Council and to recommend any changes required to Full Council

### **JUNE**

June traditionally is a quiet month for the Council giving us the opportunity of finishing some of the outstanding work in preparation to our new offices. Cllr Bloxham was appointed Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at EDDC. As such he is no longer able to sit on our Planning Committees and his experience in planning is greatly missed.

### **JULY**

July saw the Police move into temporary accommodation in the Council Offices while the new station was being completed. We were pleased to co-opt Cllr Laitinen on to the Council to represent West Hill Ward. The Council exchanged and completed for the sale of Hill House (the old council offices) and we were grateful to the purchaser for his offer to allow us to leave the Japanese Bell in the garden for 12 months while an alternative site was located.

### **AUGUST**

In August it was decided to carry out remedial work on the Cemetery and Allotment hedges which over the years had become unmanageable. The Council were grateful to Cllr Hansford for supplying the equipment and the manpower to do this. Also thanks to Cllr Holmes for brushing up the road after receiving training for Health and Safety reasons. There are four main offices to let in the Council premises and we were pleased to report that they were all occupied

### **SEPT**

September saw the agreement in principle for the West Hill Village Hall to allow some of its land to be used for a Playbuilder project which would provide much needed facilities for the young people of West Hill. Thanks to all the West Hill councillors involved in this project.

### **OCT**

An extra meeting was held this month in The Institute to discuss the planning application from Tesco's. Members of the public were invited to speak before the Council debated the plans. The full council meeting was held in Tipton St John Ward where a warm reception was received from the residents. Many local issues were debated.

### **NOV**

This month saw a new Councillor co-opted – Mrs Elli Pang representing the Town Ward. It was also agreed to accept the Head of Terms for the Skateboard Project to ahead.

### **DEC**

Again a special meeting was held at The Institute to discuss the planning application for a Sainsbury's Supermarket at Hind Street. Members of the public were again invited to speak prior to the meeting. At the Full Council meeting the new Police Sgt Simon Tennant was welcomed and he gave a presentation on his aspirations for the town. A number of Grants to support local associations were recommended by the Council to be presented at the Annual Parish meeting.

Mayor's initials:.....

**JAN (2010)**

The meeting in January was held in West Hill and was attended by West Hill residents. It was agreed to adopt the policy on Equality and Diversity. It was also agreed Councillors would attend a training session on the Power of Well Being

**FEB**

Following the winter conditions experienced in December the Council reviewed the allocation of Grit Bins in the Parish and also the issue of gritting Car parks.

A recommendation from Cllr Claire Wright to have a Mayor's Charity was agreed.

**MARCH**

In March there was lengthy discussion on financial cuts imposed by EDDC; in particular the effect on flower beds & hanging baskets in the town. It was agreed this Town Council would support the Ottery in Bloom Committee where possible. The meeting was also attended by a number of pupils who were there to support the proposed Skateboard/BMX Park.

**APRIL**

Last month Councillor Mrs Jo Talbot was co-opted to the Council representing West Hill Ward. We look forward to working with her over the coming months.

It was agreed to accept the new Committee Structure for the Council to take effect from May 2010. It was also confirmed the ownership of Winters Lane Tennis Courts and The Old Town Hall would be transferred back to the Town Council

## **6. REPORT FROM THE PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP (P3) CO-ORDINATOR**

Cllr John Harding reported that during the last 12 months, following repair of bridges damaged in the 2008 storms the Parish footpath network (with the exception of Footpath 46) is now fully open. Through the Tourist Information Centre, Bluebell Walks are being organised in the coming weeks. Anyone who encounters a problem when out walking on the public footpath network is asked to report it through the Council Office. He thanked the faithful group of walkers who continue to monitor the Parish paths on a regular basis: Carol & Gerry Hather, Ian Godfrey, Jill and Ian Pullan, Janet Bird, Geoff Pinn and Janis Thatcher. Training in the use of brushwood cutters has been undertaken by some of the group (with chainsaw training to follow) which will enable some clearing work to be undertaken, important when there could be significant reductions in funding from Devon County Council next year. Footpath 46, on the eastern bank of the River Otter between Tipton St John and Ottery, has been closed just north of Tipton Roller Mills for several years because of erosion. In March 2010 a Public Enquiry was held at which many people expressed dismay at not being able to use this path. A decision is due with in the next month.

## **7. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Councillor Peter Williams gave the following Report:

“Ottery St Mary Town Council Planning Committee as a consultee to East Devon District Council has met 24 times in the past year - a total of around 30 hours of committee time plus whenever appropriate Committee members try to make a site visit prior to the planning meeting. Under the New Thinking Approach adopted by EDDC we are required to provide comment and support or not support each planning application. We have considered and advised on 162 application in committee, with a further 5 applications being dealt with at Full Council – a measure necessary to meet the tighter deadlines now in place for processing applications. Applications received fall into a number of classifications – Outline, Full, Reserved Matters, Conservation Area Consent, Listed Building Consent, Tree Approvals, Change of Use and Advertising,

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Decisions on 125 of the 167 applications have now been received – the balance is either outstanding, subject to amendment or in a few cases withdrawn. There are a number of applications relating to the recent Tesco, Churchill and Sainsbury developments for which formal decision notices have not yet been received. From 125 decisions in total OSMTC Planning Committee’s view did not agree with 8 decisions and a further 2 were split decisions. Without doubt the most challenging applications have related to the Churchill, Tesco and Sainsbury applications. Irrespective of a particular viewpoint the Planning Committee has considered carefully the individual applications and acknowledgment must be given to EDDC Planning Department for the considerable work done in preparing a huge amount of documentation.”

## **8. MAYOR’S CHARITY OF THE YEAR**

Cllr Claire Wright, who had proposed the idea, explained that members of the public had proposed 3 Charities. One had since withdrawn so 2 were left: Ottery and District Help Scheme and the Tale Valley Trust. She read out statements from each. After a vote by show of hands, the Ottery and District Help Scheme was selected. A meeting will be held in order to arrange methods of support for the charity by the Town Council.

## **9. REPORT FROM THE TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE MANAGER**

Mrs Phyllis Baxter gave the following Report: “Last year we had 11,642 through the doors of the Information Centre of whom 70% were locals and the remainder visitors to Ottery. They came from all over the UK and from as far away as New Zealand & Australia. Most countries in Europe were represented and it was so pleasing to hear the very favourable comments they made about the town. The connections of Ottery with the Harry Potter books and, in the case of German visitors, the sites featured in the Roasamunde Pilcher books, are another strong attraction. We are presently working with the area tourism partnership and Exeter airport to attract further visitors from Germany and Austria. We work with local organisations, churches and the Chamber of Commerce to offer a comprehensive facility to promote events and news. Local radio, TV and the media all receive a regular supply of information and photos concerning the Parish, whilst our connection with the “Ottery Gazette” ensures that full coverage of local happenings is featured prominently. We also work with monthly magazines such as Devon Life whilst we now have a new glossy magazine called Coast & Countryside that offers news on East Devon which is free and available from the Information Centre. The new Town Guide is now available and we feel confident that it will provide a real boost for Ottery and despite the prevailing problems with the economy we look forward to a good season in the months to come. The support offered by the Town Council is greatly appreciated and we have plans for further developments so that we can offer the people of the Parish, together with visitors, the best possible service.”

## **10. REPORT FROM OTTERY IN BLOOM**

Cllr Roger Giles read this Report on behalf of Sarah Clarke, Ottery in Bloom Chairman: “Ottery In Bloom went from strength to strength in the last year, achieving most of our goals. We entered the South West In Bloom Competition and were given a Silver Award in the class of Small Town. We have support from even more local organisation including the WI, Coleridge Play Group, Police cadets, Devon Youth, Sustainable Ottery and the St Loyes Foundation. Personally, I think our biggest achievement this year, which will hopefully follow into future years, is to work together with Ottery Town Council to save the council flower beds around the town. The maintenance of the Seven beds had been licensed to EDDC. Due to cuts in budgets, it was decided that EDDC could no longer afford to pay for the extra staff required to maintain the towns flower beds and baskets. Ottery In Bloom approached the Town Council in the hope

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(however high) that they may be able to include the salary cost of a temporary staff member into their budget for the year. We realised, that this was some what dreaming! However a plan was hatched for the licence to be transferred to the Town Council and the flower beds saved from the fate of being ripped out and grassed over by Devon Highways. Hoorah!! Visitors to Honiton will see that they have not been so fortunate. In March we held our Big Tidy Up. A group of 22 people from various sectors of the community came to help Tidy Up and we collected 36 bags of Litter, the remnants of a tent and two broken camping chairs. Our total has been sent off to be included with the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. This year Ottery In Bloom is following a theme to the planting. We are helping the Guides to celebrate their Centenary year by using the Guides colour scheme of Blue, Yellow and some Pink. Perhaps if people around the town wanted to also use these colours we may make an even greater impact. Perhaps the only slight negative that I have to report is that I am struggling to give as much time to Ottery In Bloom as I have in previous years. It would be wonderful if someone was able to offer to take the chair and the reins from me. We have a real network of support now, so it is not quite the struggle as in previous years. However what is really needed is for someone to steer this energy for even greater results. I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate all those involved with Ottery In Bloom on their achievements and to thank them on behalf of the town, for all their hard work.

Looking to the future, I hope that we will be able to enter the South West In Bloom competition. I would imagine that this year's competition will be very different after many councils reviewing their spending on municipal gardens. Perhaps there will be even more scope to impress the judges with volunteer projects?

If any one or other organisation would like to come on board with their own project, we would love to hear from them. Smaller projects put together will produce an impressive portfolio for the Judges. An example would be, The Coleridge Playgroup. With the help of parent, Sarah Gibbons, they have arranged to raise some funds to buy some planters. Not only will this help to brighten our town, but will help to teach the Children about growing plants and caring for them.

All in all this has been a very successful year. Here's hoping that we may have something of a summer to enjoy the fruits of our labour."

## **11. REPORT FROM THE ALLOTMENT GARDEN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

John Rogers, Past Chairman gave his Report:

He thanked the Committee for its hard work during the year. There have been several main points of discussion during the year. 1. Rabbits. They are a constant problem. A ferreter has now been engaged and also has permission to operate within the Cemetery from which many rabbits come. 2. Composting toilets. These proved to be difficult and expensive. 3. Dogs. There are ongoing differences as to whether they should be allowed on the allotments. 4. Re-numbering. The Council is sourcing the posts and numbers and plot holders will be asked to carry out this task. 5. Inspection of Plots. A team has carried out inspections and action has been taken against any plot holders falling short of the requirements of their agreement, in some cases freeing up plots for new allotmenters. 6. The Bob Johnson Cup. Best allotment presented at the summer social event to Plot 30 Mr Forster with the runner-up to Plot 25 Mrs Lowther. 7. Visit by Ottery St Mary Primary School. The pupils were very well behaved and seemed to find the visit very interesting. 8. Perimeter hedges. The earlier hedge-laying revealed some areas needing greater density and the Council has provided funding for additional whip plants.

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Unfortunately the AGM on 17<sup>th</sup> March failed to install a new Committee for this year. An extraordinary Meeting has been organised for 12<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm in the Ottery Football Club to attempt to form a new Committee.

## **12. FINANCIAL REPORT 2009-2010 AND PRESENTATION OF GRANTS**

Councillor Lewis presented the following Report:

“Our Precept (the amount received from Council Tax payers) increased last year from £103,956 to £115,727 to take account of work required on the Convent building, increased utility costs, increased cost of the toilets at The Flexton, legal costs and a new technology budget. Income was also expected to fall from other sources, particularly from bank interest.(which in 2008/9 was £3,302 and this year amounted to £89).

Cemetery income was higher than expected. Most Offices at the Convent were let for most of the year. For this purpose I have ignored the sale of Hill House, the previous Council Offices which were sold during the year. Nearly all of the sale proceeds were used to repay part of the borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board, the body used to fund the purchase of the Old Convent.

Expenditure was considerably greater than anticipated at the beginning of the year.

Staff costs and utility costs came in on budget, as did maintaining the tennis courts, toilets, cemetery and allotments. Legal fees were larger mainly due to fees payable to the Audit Commission as we became an intermediate Council and subsequently charged a higher amount. Nearly £7,000 was paid as Grants to local organisations and Grants will continue to be awarded this year although with money tight there can be no guarantees as to future payments.

*The Mayor then presented Grants to the following organisations: Ottery St Mary Scout Group, Tipton St John Playing Field Association, Ottery Community Theatre, Ottery St Mary & District Help Scheme, Ottery & District Men's Forum, Ottery in Bloom, Ottery St Mary Joint Guide & Scout Committee Pixie Day, Ottery St Mary Twinning Association, Tipton St John Residents' Association, Vision OM, Ottery St Mary Scout Group (separate application)*

Cllr Lewis then continued his Report:

The Tourist Information Centre had a very good year and though still reporting a loss this was mitigated substantially and thank go to the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and TIC Manager in helping to achieve this.

Land at Strawberry Lane was returned to the Council by the Bowling Club for future community use. However a road was needed to access it. Funding of £45,000 was obtained through the Investing in Devon Grant from Devon County Council's sale of Exeter Airport. Unfortunately an unexpected expense of £6,000 was incurred through a large hole being discovered under the road's path and a transfer from reserves is needed to cover this.

The year ahead will be challenging. The Town Council is being asked to fund an even greater number of costs previously paid for by EDDC, for example the Flexton toilets and the maintenance of flower beds around Ottery. This will put greater financial pressure on the Council although reserves are equal to recommended levels.

I would like to acknowledge help from the Town Clerk who has adapted well to new systems. Also to thank all Councillors particularly the Mayor and Deputy Mayor who work a huge number of hours. It should be remembered that Councillors receive no payment or their time and I thank them all.

## **13. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Q. From a Representative of the Vision OM group asking for a response to her questions relating to the Partially sighted sent to Hugo Swire MP.

Mayor's initials:.....

- A. The Mayor replied that her letter was an agenda item at the next Full Council Meeting.
- Q. What is happening about a footpath along the old railway track along the River Otter?
- A. Cllr Giles reported that he had tried to get funding for a path/cycleway from Feniton to Sidmouth along this route. DCC have acknowledged it as a desirable project and he hopes that it will be recognised as a cycleway in the Devon Local Transport Plan.
- Q. What can be done about items impeding pavements?
- A. PC Thomas said that the Police will deal with vehicles parking on pavements. Regarding wheelie bins/gull sacks remaining on pavements EDD Cllr David Cox said that owners can be prosecuted and asked for complaints to be put in writing.
- Q. What is being done about cyclists on pavements, particularly the wrong way up Mill Street?
- A. PC Thomas replied that a warning had been put in the local press and that it will be followed up with a more robust approach.
- Q. What are the chances of the Flexton toilets being opened again?
- A. The Mayor explained that £5,000 had been precepted to keep the toilets open. The EDDC charge is £9,600 plus another £2,500 for water, electricity and rates. A meeting had been held with the Parish Church and the next Full Council Meeting will receive further information. Cllr Giles said that now that Sainsbury’s had been given planning permission and would be taking over the Hind Street toilets, he would be asking EDDC look again at providing money for the Flexton toilets. Cllr Cox responded that Cllr Giles was being too optimistic.
- Q. Would it be possible to have coin-operated toilets and what will happen on Carnival night and Tar Barrels night?
- A. The Mayor responded that the Council will need to discuss these matters.
- Q. Thanks were expressed for the improvements to the Head Weir footpath.
- Q. In view of the events last year will the Police continue to support Tar Barrels and how can a “copycat” crime be prevented?
- A. PC Thomas responded that the Police will continue to support the event, taking part in regular meetings with the Carnival Committee and the Emergency Services, in order to make it as safe as possible.

**13. MAYOR’S CLOSING REMARKS**

The Mayor thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He congratulated the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk for both obtaining the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) which is one step to enable the Council to apply for Quality status. He spoke of the many changes in Ottery this year, the Supermarket being one of them and observed that this will bring problems but also many opportunities. He expressed the hope that the town centre will prosper with the extra footfall and free parking which is something the Council has campaigned for over the years. Finally he invited everyone to stay for coffee and to speak with Councillors.

*The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.40pm.*

**Mayor’s signature:**.....

**Date:**.....

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