

Minutes of the Annual Tiverton Parish Meeting held in the Council Chamber on Monday 12th June 2023 at 6.15pm.

In attendance: The Mayor, Cllr W Burke, S Beard, C Berry, T Bridger, D Broom, S Bush, R Clarke, L Cruwys, A Cuddy, N Davey, M Farrell, J Frost, B Holdman, D Garcia-Parejo, S Griggs, P Hill, K Lejeune, N Senik, T Wheeler, D Wulff, Ms Anna Valentine-Marsh (Tiverton Accessibility), Ms S Gray (Town Centre Coordinator), Mr J Salter (Neighbourhood Plan), Mr N Purves (Sustainable Tiverton), One Member of press and members of public.

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllrs L Kennedy, V Bagatelas, B Fish, J Lejeune and Ms S Chapman.

The Mayor, Cllr W Burke welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2023 Minutes

The Minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting were adopted as a true record and were signed by the Mayor.

Tiverton Accessibility: presented by Anna Valentine-Marsh.

Anna Valentine-Marsh introduced herself as a resident of Tiverton and explained that she spends most of her time in a wheelchair as she has limited mobility. She then proceeded to show a slide presentation in the form of photographs. This visually highlighted all the points within the town centre that currently present issues and challenges for wheelchair users.

Anna said she had attended the recent town centre events, but had been faced with difficulties in Fore Street where road closure barriers had been positioned in such a way to obstruct nearby dropped kerb access. Market stalls along Fore Street sited on pavements meant having to get onto the road to pass. Phoenix Lane tree roots have pushed up the blocked paving leading to an uneven and unsafe surface for wheelchair users. The Burma Star garden camber was currently too steep, she explained that there was a stopping distance to consider when using a wheelchair that many able bodied people did not fully appreciate. The current Marks and Spencer ramp access was currently not very accessible due to a central bollard in the ramp making it very narrow for wheelchair users to negotiate.

Anna went on to point out that new design features to enhance the town centre such as the new paved area at the Market Precinct presented challenges, as its ridged paved surface was not ideal for wheelchairs with the potential for a wheel to get stuck in one of the ruts. The main ramp section of paving within the market precinct was too steep.

The Town Clerk requested a copy of the slide presentation, he informed Anna, that he was due to meet with a Devon County Highways officer and would now highlight these issues.

The councillors thanked Anna for her informative presentation.

Town Centre Coordinator: Ms S Gray read out her report which gave a detailed update on what she had achieved to date, along with her long term vision for the town. Listing her aims and goals such as creating a family friendly shopping experience, the pedestrianisation of the high street, enhancing footfall, demonstrating greater diversity, free evening car parking to enhance night time economy, lowering rents for pop –up shops, food and crafts events, late night shopping, street security, and the revival of the Tiverton Carnival.

Ms Gray said that she was passionate about green spaces for towns to create a greater green footprint, these zones could be enhanced with sculptures, seating, and offer an interactive space.

One of her biggest challenges had come from trying to navigate through all the necessary organisations, Ms Gray said it had at times been frustratingly slow to receive responses to her requests. There had been barriers too, with requests to put on market stall type events within the town centre being disputed by the district council.

Ms Gray said that on a positive note, the town's independent trader's support had been strong, with most keen to engage with her on potential new projects and discuss longer term plans. The re-launch of the Tiverton Town Centre Partnership had been well received.

The Coronation event had been a success, the children's flag competition had attracted many entries, there had been 115 flags installed throughout the town centre to support the event, along with a commissioned piece of street artwork.

Ms Gray had plans to introduce more art and suggested that with street names such as Angel Hill, Gold Street and Phoenix Lane they lent themselves to some wonderful murals.

A survey for residents had been set up and pop up events would commence in July. This would then be followed by a Christmas Lights Switch-on event.

Ms Gray said she would like to work on longer term signage for the town too and would continue to work and develop business relationships. She was also launching a new website.

Another idea was the “10 minute Town” She went on to say that she had many other exciting ideas for the town and huge ambitions.

Cllr B Fish thanked Ms Gray for a fantastic presentation and asked what she would change if she had a magic wand.

Ms Gray replied to say attitudes. She explained that the default answer to many of her ideas was “why I cannot do something”, instead of explaining how she might be able to achieve her goal. This was a constant cause of frustration. It would be great to have more support and assistance.

Cllr S Bush said she should be cautious about using the term “10 minute town” as generally he felt that Tiverton already was, his concern was Tiverton becoming a dormitory town. Achieving more footfall through the town in areas such as the river and the canal would be worth pursuing.

Cllr S Bush agreed with free parking and felt that the district council needed to change their thinking on this. He was pleased to see Phoenix Lane being utilised as the MDDC regeneration plan had yet to come to fruition. However, he expressed concern at what the tree roots had done to the paving along this area.

Ms Gray said that although new fingerposts had been installed by the district council there were some issues with them. She felt that there was not enough included for the Westexe Quarter.

The Mayor Cllr W Burke agreed, he said he would like to see more signage for the Westexe shops.

Cllr S Griggs commended Ms Gray on all that she had achieved to date, she was pleased at the reforming of the town centre partnership.

Tiverton Neighbourhood Plan: Mr J Salter presented his report, he informed that the plan had been established despite challenges along the way. He said he was grateful for the support of the town council. The Neighbourhood Plan was first set up as a means of giving local people an influence on future developments, government grants of £10,000 or more helped to establish them. There were now over 2000 plans nationally. Governments do not specify the plans, they were community led and guided by national policies. Each plan being approved by an independent examiner of the Community and District Council. The Tiverton Neighbourhood Plan draft was completed last summer, with 18 policies and several non-policies with a strong emphasis on net zero. This plan was compliant and a referendum of November 17th 2022 resulted in 85% in favour. The plan was adopted by the district council cabinet and full council in December 2022 and now sat next to MDDC Planning on their website. The Neighbourhood Plan takes precedence over the local plan.

Mr I Johnson and Mr R Ives gave a great deal of time and effort to the plan, both have now resigned from the group. Ms S Chapman and others have now formed a committee to maintain links with the planning committee. We are all proud of what has been achieved and want to keep it alive and relevant. It should now be used when dealing with major planning applications. It is hoped that councillors will act on the non-policy actions such as green spaces, footpaths and cycle ways.

Cllr S Bush said he had been involved in planning over a number of years and was pleased to use some of the Neighbourhood Plan on applications, he was interested to see how it would work on the new MDDC Planning Committee. He said he looked forward to working on plans for footpaths and cycle ways.

Cllr B Holdman said he was relieved and pleased to see the plan go through. He informed that there was a new local plan going through at present but that it was at the early stages.

Mr Salter said that there would be a need to review the Neighbourhood Plan in 2025.

Cllr C Berry said he had read the entire plan and found it very informative. He pointed out that the wrong date had been put on the website.

Mr M Freeman asked if the town leat could be re-instated as he felt that it was an important feature of the town and should be given some prominence.

Cllr P Hill said that he had been working on this since the last perambulation took place in 2017. He explained that although some works had been carried out at a cost of £12,000 there was still a large amount of works to be completed which would be in the region of between £80,000 to £100,000. Neither the town council or the district council had that amount of money for this project. So the question now was how to raise that kind of funding.

The works would involve multiple agencies and also a considerable number of properties and would not be straight forward to carry out.

Cllr P Hill said one way forward was to establish a charitable trust and invited all interested parties to come forward. The trust would need to be formed as an independent entity with trustees and others devoted to the endeavour.

Ms Gray said that there was an opportunity to put on a large scale funding event at one of the town's parks and would explore ways of doing this.

Sustainable Tiverton: Mr N Purves presented his report, he introduced himself as a volunteer of Sustainable Tiverton and said the aim of the group which was part of the Transition Network was to reduce climate change, reduce waste and promote diversity. A number of community groups were supported, and promoted by Sustainable Tiverton.

RE-rooted run a monthly cafe utilising food that would otherwise be wasted and have a community fridge. There was also a Repair Café that is held once a month, this was a way of saving things from landfill and introducing new skills. The Community Orchard had planted up an orchard which would provide fruit and nuts for all once properly established. The Friends of the River Exe group had also been set up to promote the river.

This all relied on donations to achieve. Mr Purves said he looked forward to working with the new councillors on the Climate change committee.

Cllr S Bush said it was fantastic to watch what Sustainable Tiverton has achieved. He asked how Mr Purves saw the group moving forwards.

Mr Purves said that the groups were self-managed but there were new initiatives in the pipeline. He would like all the activities to become mainstream.

Cllr S Griggs thanked Mr Purves for all the group do and noted that the Repair workshop idea was excellent and should be commended.

Open Forum: The Town clerk read out a letter of complaint in connection to the public convenience being closed at the Westexe Recreation Ground. The building is owned by the district council and sits in a conservation area. The building is in need of major overhaul to bring it back to a useable standard. The town clerk said it would be preferable to perhaps look at installing a new toilet unit instead, in order to provide a facility for the park. He informed all that he was in negotiations with the district council but that this potential project would not happen in time for this season. He said that there had been recent bouts of vandalism and anti-social behaviour at the Market toilets and at the People's Park toilet.

Cllr J Lejeune said that the feedback from the community was the lack of toilet provision for the Westexe park paddling pool. He had been liaising with the community centre close by, but they shut mid-afternoons so not very suitable. He wondered whether the concrete platform left over from the removal of a previous shelter could be utilised for any new toilet unit. The town clerk said he would make a note of this as he was going to be meeting with a toilet unit supplier to explore all options.

A member of public raised the issue of parking at Tumbling Fields. She said that over the years many people had been booked for parking where they had been previously permitted to park. It was causing many difficulties for residents.

She asked what councillors were going to do to help.

Cllr S bush said that he was already well aware of this issue and were trying to resolve this.

The town clerk said no formal complaint had been made to the council. He advised that the correct procedure was to write to him first. The member of public said that a letter was sent in several years ago by her husband. The town clerk suggested writing another letter.

Cllr C Berry said that he was working with Cllr B Holdman and Cllr R Chesterton on this issue, he explained that it was a complicated matter and different areas of land were involved with some being MDDC owned and some DCC.

A question was raised as to whether the town council would advocate a shuttle bus to Tiverton Parkway. The town clerk said that this idea had been considered before. Cllr B Holdman said he had been trying to push for a shuttle

bus connection to the station for the last 4 years as he did not drive and it was difficult currently to get to Tiverton Parkway.

Cllr S Griggs asked if it could be an electric vehicle.

The meeting concluded.

Signed -----

Date -----