

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of
SALCOMBE
held in the Library of Cliff House, Salcombe
at 6.00 pm on Wednesday 24th May 2023

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT * - Attendance; A- Absent; N - No Apologies Received

Cllr Mrs N. Turton – Mayor (in the Chair)	*
Cllr Jasper Evans	*
Cllr Caroline Bricknell	*
Cllr Andrew Reed	*
Cllr Jess Denny	*
Cllr Eoghan Grace	*
Cllr Mark Goodey	*
Cllr Kizzy Sims-Stirling	*
Cllr Christine Milton	*

Also in attendance:

Dist Cllr Samantha Dennis	*
Dist Cllr Mark Long	*
Cty Cllr Rufus Gilbert	*
Richard Harding (South Hams Newspapers)	*
PS Peter Shotton	A
Sara Jones (Town Clerk)	*

1 APOLOGIES

No apologies received.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th May 2022 were considered and duly AGREED for the Chair to sign as a true and correct record.

3. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

This past mayoral year has been quite eventful, with Salcombe celebrating along with the whole country, Queen Elizabeth II's historic platinum jubilee in June 2022, followed too soon by her death in September. The long-prepared for protocols of Operation London Bridge swung into action as we transitioned seamlessly from one monarch to the next, welcoming King Charles III to the throne, with plans and ideas of how to celebrate his Coronation taking centre stage. Huge thanks go to the Town Council's Working Party, who pulled off a tremendous 3-day weekend of community festivities which were enjoyed by thousands, and for which the weather was extremely kind when it mattered – cream teas, picnics and children's sports would not have been so much fun in the rain!

Salcombe's affiliation with HMS Magpie continues to flourish, and despite her busy schedule surveying the coastline of the UK, we were fortunate to enjoy visits from crew and/or ship three times during the year. She also continues to forge friendships with the local primary schools, and it is hoped that this will extend to the secondary school in due course.

The Town Council is currently purchasing a new defibrillator to be located at the petrol station, with other suitable locations also being identified to host a machine to give better coverage across town. Free training courses run by the South West Ambulance Service on behalf of the Town Council have been run twice over this past year, were well attended, and no doubt will be offered again in the autumn.

Due to missing nets, being rusty, worn away and dangerous, the Town Council purchased new movable football goals for the Berry with Section 106 funding. There is also S106 funding in place to provide a 'trim trail' up at the Berry, which the new Council will be taking forward. There are further monies available through the S106 funding stream which can be accessed via the Town Council's Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Plan, which is to be reviewed by the new Council, and initial enquiries can be made to the Town Clerk if your organisation has a project which it would like be added to the Plan.

The repairs to the Shadycombe Cemetery mortuary have turned out to be much more involved than originally planned for, which is to be expected on such an historic building, but they are coming along nicely now.

Woodland maintenance continues, but the purchase of a purple beech tree to be planted at the Berry in recognition of the community's forbearance during the pandemic, with accompanying plaque, has yet to be completed. This will now take place in the forthcoming tree planting season.

As Statutory Consultees, planning is a major part of the Town Council's work, and the past year has seen around 180 planning applications, tree preservation order applications and planning appeals, and the upcoming full review of the Salcombe Neighbourhood Development Plan will be a very important piece of work for the new Council to engage with.

After the hiatus caused by the pandemic, the Park and Ride seasonal bus service will recommence this July, but for a shorter period of time than usual, covering the school summer holidays only this year. This is purely down to the UK-wide driver shortage and hopefully the service can get back on track for next season.

Finally, I wish to thank those Town Council members who resigned their seats during the past year, and those who stepped down at the end of their 4 year term of office at the recent elections, for their hard work and commitment to Salcombe. I also wish to thank our former Project Officer Pete Robinson, and Town Clerk Gill, Claydon, for their loyalty and service to Salcombe before they both retired from their positions with the Town Council at the end of 2022. We must also acknowledge the role that former District Councillor Judy Pearce played in both the Salcombe and Thurlestone Ward, and as Leader of the Council, and say thank you for her years of service, and welcome Salcombe's new District Councillor, Samantha Dennis, and returning District Councillor Mark Long. Thanks also go to County Councillor Rufus Gilbert for his never-failing assistance and guidance in all matters relating to Devon County Council.

On behalf of the Town Council, I welcome our new Town Clerk, Sara Jones, who joined at the busiest possible time in a Council's life – elections and year-end – and the new cohort of Town Councillors who will, I am sure, do their absolute best for all Salcombe's residents, visitors and businesses alike.

4. VERBAL REPORTS

Dist. Cllr. Mark Long:

The past municipal year has been marked by the sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the accession of King Charles III. Many of us attended the Proclamation of the new King at Follaton House in September. The Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June were enjoyed by many residents in most of the parishes in the Ward. As were the many Coronation Celebrations just a few weeks ago. Congratulations to all the organisers.

As we emerged from the worst of Covid, the cost-of-living crisis started to bite, following Russia's invasion of the Ukraine and the problems caused by interrupted gas supplies to Europe which saw energy prices and consequent inflation rocket. This has not been an easy year for many residents, and South Hams set up and administered several schemes to help residents who find themselves financially challenged. A complete list of current schemes is always available on the council website. There was a review of the arrangements for council tax discounts and revised the policy on additional occasional one-off help for residents with council tax payments.

Nearly two hundred Ukrainian guests have come to live with local households in the district on the six month scheme. Some are still with their original hosts and some have moved on. The SHDC housing team have been active in finding new accommodation when needed. The children have settled well into local schools. Many adults have found work and are making good progress with learning English if they were not fluent already, but understandably many long to go home.

The District Council Corporate Strategy 'Better Lives for All.' set a programme of actions which members wanted to see and was unanimously endorsed by them. There are diverse projects from climate change, conservation area appraisal reviews, helping villages deliver neighbourhood plans, to better service delivery and customer satisfaction and the building of the first council houses in the district for two generations, at St Anns Chapel.

The recent award of well over a million pounds of UKSPF funding will see projects for regenerative farming advances and decarbonisation of the marine sector in the South Hams, along with studies to encourage active travel.

The year also saw the setting up of the Freeport between Plymouth City Council, Devon County Council and the South Hams on joint sites.

Hopefully you will have noticed some improvement in the speed of planning decisions being taken as there are several new planners working for the authority, although fully resourcing the team remains a problem not just for us, but for most councils. A few applications are still caught up in the backlog, usually because they are awaiting additional information. In late spring 2022 the Council adopted a new Charter with applicants. This promises quicker decisions by the council in return for less ongoing negotiations from the applicants/agents during the life of an application – in other words applicants would have to withdraw if

there are problems and come back in when they were resolved. The first revision of the Joint Local Plan is being considered, but it may get delayed by the outcome of the proposed national planning reforms and the enacting of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. Planning activity in general continues to be very busy in the ward, but it is excellent news that all the parishes now have neighbourhood plans, even if minor modifications in Salcombe and South Milton seem to be taking an eternity to happen.

In the Ward the Council's most significant projects have been the construction of the new harbour workshop and five new employment units here in Salcombe. Both are at Batson Creek. The employment units are now let to local marine businesses and are due to be handed over imminently. There is some delay to the completion of the workshop, and it will probably not be possible to move in until the end of the summer. Construction and manpower shortages on the part of the contractor have caused the late delivery of this project.

Two public EV charging points are now operational on the Creek car park.

Housing continues to be one of the major problems in the District and this ward as even with more houses gaining permission such as the site at the top of Salcombe behind the garage, and the second phase of Alston Gate in Malborough at last being started, the number of properties becoming second homes or short term lets continues to outnumber any new houses built. Over the year evidence for owners wishing to keep their short term lets on business rates has had to be presented for them to qualify from 1st April 2023, and second homeowners will have to pay an extra 100% council tax from 1st April 2025, since it unlikely the legislation will be passed in time for this to happen earlier. Meanwhile the number of private longer-term rentals has been squeezed and rents continue to go up. Local Housing Allowance has not been adjusted since 2018 and is now totally inadequate to help meet the rents being charged. Urgent reform of the whole housing market is required and a Housing Commission is being set up by Exeter University at the instigation of all the Devon local authorities to look into the problem and make recommendations for change.

Climate change and the net zero ambition continues to occupy us. The Council has commissioned a report to find out exactly the best way of tackling its own carbon reduction problems both at Follaton House and in the workforce. It is likely that locality officers and grounds maintenance teams will have electric vehicles during the next Council term, but electric or alternative fuel for waste collection vehicles is probably further off.

The Council has set aside funding to help set up local composting schemes. Some parishes have started engaging on this to deliver locally, now that the council's brown bin service is optional. It is good to see that several parishes have established groups to work locally on climate change and carbon reduction projects.

A new Emergency climate Emergency Planning Statement has come into force and affects all planning applications submitted since the beginning of December 2022. It will make demolition and rebuilding much harder to justify, and there are much stricter rules on thermal efficiency and local energy generation, installation of EV charging points etc.

One of the biggest changes was the bringing back in house of the Waste contract, following the major problems experienced. The service has stabilised after a considerable amount of work, as well as waste collections, street sweeping, toilet cleaning, waste bin emptying and fly tipping are all part of the service that has come back. The Brown bin garden waste subscription service started and has had a good take up among residents. Work is ongoing to improve all the services.

Meanwhile the elections were held at District, Town and Parish Council just a few weeks ago. Here we saw Cllr Judy Pearce step down as District Councillor after nine years, and a term as Leader of the Council in very difficult circumstances of the pandemic, a change of Chief Executive, inflation and ever increasing budgetary pressures. We wish her well in her 'retirement'. The elections saw Cllr Mark Long being re-elected and Councillor Samantha Dennis elected to serve as the two District Councillors for Salcombe and Thurlestone Ward. At the same time many changes of District Councillors across the South Hams with a new Liberal Democrat administration running the Council for the next four years.

18:05 Richard Harding (South Hams Newspapers) arrived

18:06 Cty. Cllr Rufus Gilbert arrived.

18:07 Dist Cllr Sam Dennis arrived.

Cty. Cllr. Rufus Gilbert:

Well, 2022/23 has been another very challenging year for local authorities and government:

- The housing of our Ukrainian guests and getting their children in to school, on top of assisting the Afghans and Hongkongers has been challenging and continues to be so for DCC.
- Covid-19 - the winter did not see another major outbreak and the flu also seemed not to have been a major problem.
- Avian Influenza - this has proved challenging on top of the human virus and influenza.
- Coronation celebration road closure party applications have predominantly been going well.
- Scams are still proving a terrible blight and effecting some people horribly across Devon.

- Highways - we had made headway in catching up with potholes and clearing drainage gullies, but the winter rains and frosts have set things back a bit. We are starting to catch up again and the recently announced £200M announced from Govt. giving DCC £9.4M will help.
- We now have a new Chief Executive and head of Children's services which should prove beneficial for all and not least the DCC budget.
- This has been the most difficult DCC budget to set in memory. At one point it looked to be the end of DCC
- Devolution deal for Devon to include Plymouth and Torbay at Level 2 has been agreed by the Levelling UP Minister subject to a final business case being agreed by all parties along with parliamentary approval. This will assist in providing improved housing, public transport and Investment opportunities
- Plymouth & South Devon Freeport. This is now up and running well, with CEO and Chairman etc. being fully employed. I am a board director.
- LEPs - Local Enterprise Partnerships were dissolved at the last budget statement and the roles will be undertaken by my DCC portfolio of Economy. The reason being to make the delivery of the service more democratically accountable.
- Local issues - I have attended most of your PC's and attending too many and various matters in your parish. Too many to set down here!

5. OPEN FORUM

a) From residents:

Mary Kemp spoke as a trustee of Salcombe Swimming Pool expressing concern that the pool is not widely known about and requesting that the article in Salcombe Information Centre's Guide is promoted to encourage awareness. They have a small committee and would like a council representative on their committee as their constitution stipulates that they have one. Cllr Mrs Caroline Bricknell volunteered, which was noted that this will need to be discussed and resolved by Town Council.

Mary advised that 93 years ago today, in 1930, the first meeting of Salcombe Swimming Pool's Committee took place and that it would be such a shame if the pool isn't used because of lack of awareness. She advised that the electric covers were bought with Section 106 monies.

To attract membership they are running a scheme this year, with a card that is marked for every swim, with the 10th swim being free.

A resident requested that the Town Council ensures the streets in Salcombe are made safe and attractive for residents and visitors; specifying concerns about:

- the seagull bags being tied permanently to the gutters of the houses on Church Street, Buckley Street and other roads in Salcombe, resulting on these lying across pavements, creating a trip hazard and causing people to walk into the road.
- bins being left out permanently at the top of the lane that comes out onto Church Street and Devon Road near the park. She understands that SHDC can issue a fixed penalty fine of £80 after following correct procedures if waste collection rules have been broken. She requested that the Town Council brings this to the attention of SHDC and for them to follow through where rules are being broken.

A resident raised concerns regarding Shadycombe Cemetery. She often visits to check on the state of it and inevitably has to pick up litter, which she advised is often, notably the nylon strands from the gardening contractors' strimmers. She noted that the Town Council did request last year that they are picked up which the contractors started to do, but this has now stopped and they are being left again.

She commented that the cemetery is looking nice at the moment, with an abundance of wild flowers at the top of the cemetery, which the strimmers have left. Would like to see a metre being left around the cemetery's boundary just as a nod to the environment. Strimming can vary in how much grass is strimmed; can sometimes be very acute.

Also mentioned rusty washing line poles and netting, that could well have been there for the past 90 years from Coronation Road. Welcomes a member of Town Council to meet with her to discuss issues.

b) From non-residents

No comments, reports or questions were raised from any non-residents of Salcombe Town on matters relating to Salcombe.

Meeting Closed: 18:24p.m.

Mark Goodey 24th April 2024
Town Mayor