

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
HELD ON THURSDAY 21st APRIL 2022
AT 7.15pm
AT THE MILLENNIUM CENTRE**

In attendance: Coun.Carnell (Chairman)
Coun.Mrs.Olding (Vice-Chair)
Coun.Mrs.Calland
Coun.Palethorpe
Coun.Burnham
Coun.Smith

The Clerk: Miss.Cat.Freston

District & County Councillor: Coun.Dewhirst on behalf of the District Council

6 Members of the Public were in attendance

Apologies: Coun.Farrow, Coun.Rattlidge, Coun.Ranjit

Chair: Coun.Carnell

Minutes: The Minutes of the last Assembly held on Thursday 18th April 2019, were taken as read and approved.

The Chairman welcomed everyone present at the meeting.

SPEAKER: Tim Chapman who is a co-owner of the Italian Gardens.

Tim gave a presentation about the history of the Italian Gardens. The gardens were purchased by current owners in 2016. The owners created at CIC (Community interest company) which has 20 volunteers, five are from Ipplepen who are trying to preserve and restore the 4 acres of garden to its rightful place. They received 570 visitors in 2021 during Covid-19.

There is a tennis pavilion, observatory and a derelict swimming pool.

The Italian garden has received funding from the National Lottery towards the restoration of the pergola.

There is a staircase which has been discovered which was dug out by hand, and a series of pathways have been revealed.

The Italian Garden is Grade II listed and has a Tree Preservation Order, however they have sought permission to take down 350 trees and removed the stumps to another area within the gardens to create a stumpery.

The Italian Gardens has a Facebook and Instagram page which they welcome everyone to follow to see updates of tours and work being carried out.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Coun.Carnell

It's not my intention to report on works that have been carried out over the last 3 years but instead will leave this to the Chairmen of the relevant sub committees.

When I assumed chairmanship in 2019 I had no idea what an eventful and challenging period we were about to enter.

After a relatively peaceful first 6 months or so, along came Covid.

The Parish Councils first response was to establish deliveries of medicines and groceries to residents during lockdown. This continued for some months when it was then passed to Kerswella care, where it is still undertaken to this day.

At this time it was also necessary to establish online virtual meetings, this continued for many months, with the able assistance of Cllr. Roger Farrow as webmaster.

It also became necessary at this time to close down amenities to comply with the lockdown rules and maintain public safety.

Many of these rules are still having to be adhered to today.

The neighbourhood plan has continued throughout this period with the unwavering and dedicated assistance of Cllr. Steve Rattlidge, and I understand this is due for completion very soon.

During the past 3 years we regrettably accepted resignations from Cllr. Mandy Hutchings, Cllr Nick Courtier and Cllr. Alan Armitage who all achieved so much during their time on the PC. and welcomed Cllr. John Ranjit and David Burnham onto the team.

I would strongly recommend that anyone who has a little time to spare and an opinion on council matters to come forward and join the PC in its work.

I would like to express my gratitude for being given the opportunity to represent the PC at many civic and community events.

My sincere thanks go to my vice-chair in particular for all the extra duties she assumed during covid and all my fellow councillors along with Cat Freston our Clerk for their help and support over the last 3 years.

COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – Coun.Dewhirst

District Issues

At the start of the municipal year Cllr Colin Parker was voted to be the new Chairman of the Council and Cllr Lorraine Evans the new Vice-Chair. Colin joined the Council six months after me and is a well know Newton Abbot Councillor – it has been a turbulent year but they have coped magnificently.

In June last year it was announced that a grant of more than £9 million was confirmed from the Future High Streets Fund, enabling long planned for work to Newton town centre. This includes a new multi-screen cinema, improvements to the Market Hall and Corn Exchange (Alexandra Cinema), work to Queen Street and new cycle links across the town centre. At Council meetings in November and February it was confirmed that the Market Hall would be restored to its original design with a state-of-the-art live entertainment facility, market hall and market dining area as well as a new Food Hall.

This year has seen progress on the new Local Plan Part 2 with consultations on sites brought forward by landowners and developers, small sites, Gypsy and Traveller sites as well as renewable energy sites. The Council must ensure that we maintain our '5-year land supply' and this is part of that process. There were a number of sites in our Parish, and I am sure many residents commented on them.

Parking in Newton Abbot. The barriers from Cricketfield Road, Newfoundland Way and Sherborne Road's multi storey car park have now been removed. Residents are encouraged to use RingGo parking payment service but to ensure people are able to pay for their parking using their preferred method, each car park will retain one machine that accepts cash - all car parks now have a RingGo code.

It has not been an easy year for our waste team but four Teignbridge waste crews and lorries were deployed across South Hams last year, to support their district in catching up with its backlog following issues relating to the transfer of operator. We continue to out-perform other Districts but have been plagued by coronavirus illnesses over the last four months.

In August, the keys to the first social rented council houses to be built by Teignbridge in 25 years were handed over to their new tenants. The two houses in Drake Road have been built on the land that was formerly derelict garages on the Buckland Estate. Billed as 'wheelchair adaptable', the houses come with wider doors, large hallway and staircase and

wheelchair ramps. They include high quality fittings and extras such as garden sheds, outdoor lighting and fully fitted kitchens and bathrooms. With superb energy efficiency, the homes also boast electric car charging points, PV solar panels and an air source heat pump which provides low-cost heating. Outside there are secure gardens and parking spaces for two cars. The road adjacent to the new homes also offers a number of car spaces which will be allocated to residents, to offset the loss of the garages.

Since then, three more properties have come on stream, as well as a number of properties in Dawlish to provide short term emergency housing like the hugely successful Albany House project. This is all part of the Teignbridge 100 project to deliver socially rented properties for local residents at rents that are truly affordable.

In October, Staff at Teignbridge were given an extra day off as a thank you for their work during the coronavirus pandemic. The council's chair made the announcement at the full council meeting. He said it was in recognition of "the hours and the efforts" staff had put in to help communities across the district. Each of the council's staff of around 500 people were offered the extra day's leave at an estimated total cost of around £50,000. The following month we agreed an emergency increase in funding for our waste and recycling teams pay rates to ensure that they kept up with industry rates.

In November, efforts to reduce the number of unoccupied unfurnished homes in Teignbridge paid dividends with the district bucking the national upward trend by reporting its lowest ever total of 305. National figures show the number of empty homes – unfurnished properties unoccupied for six months or longer – have been steadily increasing over recent years. Since appointing a dedicated empty homes officer, unoccupied properties in Teignbridge have fallen year on year – with the exception of 2020 - from 735 to this year's record low of 305.

Teignbridge's 2022/23 Budget was agreed in February. The Teignbridge element rose by £5 or 2.78% - this accounts for less than 9% of the total Council Tax Bill. The overarching issue was the reductions in central government funding and the need to make efficiencies to enable the Budget to be balanced.

The Council reacted to the climate change emergency by allocating extra funds to additional staffing resources to enable the decarbonisation work to Forde House as well as the Leisure Centres and the Teignmouth Lido to take place. Other projects being undertaken by this team include targeting emissions from the vehicle fleet and to a further 15 buildings.

There is increased support of £8.5 million for housing including the Teignbridge 100 social housing project mentioned above. Additional resources have been allocated to Planning Enforcement. The Tidy Teignbridge scheme had a wide interest from Parish and Town Councils.

Increases to car parks charges have been kept to inflation only levels. The Green Garden waste service increased its charge to £50. Both of these remain very competitive against other Districts.

Finally, it is worth remembering that Teignbridge is the only Council to offer 100% Council Tax reductions to those most in need, that we have maintained all our grants to voluntary organisations and increased the Councillors' Community Fund to ensure that truly local need is fulfilled.

County Issues

At the start of the year, I was re-elected and made Chair of Scrutiny and Chair of the Corporate, Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee at our County Council.

The first year of the new Council has seen Scrutiny focus upon supporting new and returning Members to understand the Council. This is reflected in the unusually high number of masterclasses. After this focus all Committees have now moved to undertake task group investigations and spotlight reviews.

CIRS Scrutiny has continued to have a Standing Overview Group on Climate Change and established a spotlight review on loneliness as well as completing work on the highways Milestone contract.

Fourteen thousand randomly selected Devon households were invited to enter a 'civic lottery' to determine who represented the county at last summer's Devon Climate Assembly. It followed the public consultation on the Interim Devon Carbon Plan, the county's climate roadmap which outlines what every resident, business and organisation will have to do to reduce carbon emissions. The Interim Carbon Plan was developed by the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group (DCERG) – a partnership of Devon's councils, emergency services, voluntary organisations, and business groups.

Last week the administration agreed with the Assembly, after the final consultation of the Assembly's proposals, that wind farms, where sited appropriately to minimise effects on communities and the environment, can be part of providing Devon's energy needs and that the benefits of new energy infrastructure should be retained locally wherever possible. They also agreed that Devon needs better active and public transport infrastructure, and that it should be more affordable and convenient, alongside providing confidence to drivers to switch to electric vehicles. Additionally, much more must be done to support people to upgrade the energy efficiency of their homes and businesses.

Earlier this year Council leaders welcomed Government backing for a Devon, Plymouth and Torbay County Deal aimed at delivering on key economic and social priorities for the area. The announcement by Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove commits the Government to working with a strong partnership of councils as part of the Government's levelling up policy. The devolution bid was based on the strong foundation of the councils in Devon working well and closely together, as they have for many years, but especially so throughout the pandemic. A new purpose and unity has, without doubt, been forged.

I am cautious about the Combined Mayoral Authority model, believing it can lead to a situation where the districts are marginalised and decisions are taken very much more remotely from the communities they affect.

Devon is hugely short-changed by Government - you need only look at the loss of money from the rate support grant, the massive budget hole for special educational needs in Devon and so much more. For some, the devolution deal will be headlined as more money for Devon.... the reality is that we'll get back some of what has been taken.

In short, Devon is likely to find it has lost a fiver and found sixpence! However, we must be pragmatic and seize the opportunities that are available - and if we can get the additional resources we need to deliver more and better jobs, the affordable housing that is so essential and boost Devon's reputation as a place to do business, then we shouldn't stand on the sidelines but grasp what is available.

Much of my reports to this Council have been taken up with the response to the Pandemic – they chart the course of the government's response and how we interpreted that response here in Devon. The crisis has generated an amazing response from all levels of local government in Devon under the Team Devon banner. Clearly the Devon response has been exemplary with some of the lowest rates in the UK - other notable achievements have been our response to the PPE crisis and our low level of infections in Care Homes.

Finally, Devon County Council approved its lowest council tax rise for seven years – this is because councils are only allowed to increase their budget by 2.99%. In previous years they have been able to increase by up to 3% on top of this for social care- however that was spread over three years but could be used in one go – and so they did.

It means council taxpayers in Devon were asked for £1,556.46 for a Band D property to help fund vital services for the most vulnerable children and adults and our highway network on 1st April.

There will be spending increases of over 10 per cent on both children's services and adult services and health to keep up with a rocketing rise in demand. These increases mask some worrying figures – staffing levels in the Adult and children's services will rise by 498 to 3, 101. However, we will be spending not quite £1 million extra on these staff to tell people that we are cutting £3.5 million in care and support for older people, £3 million in support for people with learning difficulties and £1.4 million to support people to live independently at home.

When it comes to Highways we are cutting £250k from retaining walls and bridges, £700k from safety work, £120k from network management, £300k from drainage maintenance and £100 from cyclic cleaning (gullies) – this is on top of inflation pressures of £1.56 million. Something I feel terrible about - we are planning to increase waste to landfill by 4,750 tonnes and reducing our recycled waste by 10,000 tonnes at a time when we should be decreasing the former and upping the latter.

Finally, we are cutting £120k from our Locality budgets, £462k for grant funding to communities and £329k for community grants. I guess the one bright spot is that our Libraries are planning to purchase 200,000 children's books

The Council will take £22.9 million from emergency reserves and there will be cuts of £30 million. This is all without the Children's High Needs Block budget which is expected to reach a staggering deficit of £110 million by the end of next year. All in all, a disaster for our County – it did not have to be this way.

FINANCE REPORT - Coun.Mrs.Olding

The balance at the end of the financial year 2021/2022 stands at £32,623.27 in the working account which includes outstanding VAT of £1,823.41 The allocated reserve account currently holds £146,040.54 which includes £12.77 interest and therefore our total financial assets stand at £178,663.81.

Although our financial assets would appear to be very lucrative, this has mainly been due to various works that we had envisaged doing over the past two years have not been possible due to COVID restrictions being in place. It is therefore hoped that during this next financial year we will be able to undertake the main projects that we have been saving up to do such as the A381 Public Footpath from Ipplepen to Fermoys/Two Mile Oak and the Skatepark. Our play equipment is also needing considerable maintenance and the public toilets need refurbishment, so a busy year ahead for our Amenities Group.

We have also been able to reduce the Precept from £71,831.00 to £64,583.00 for the year 2022/23 and all rents will remain the same for this current year, paid to us by Teignbridge District Council in two instalments at the end of April 2022 and September 2022.

Finally, I should like to add my thanks to Cat for all her hard work in helping to keep our finances in good shape over the last year and to the Finance committee for their help with the precept.

PLANS REPORT – Coun.Mrs.Calland on behalf of Coun.Farrow

After the easing of Covid-19 restrictions the Planning Committee returned to 'face-to-face' meetings in June 2021 having, for the previous 12 months, had Virtual Meetings. At first Virtual Meetings were strange but as time progressed, we were able to overcome any problems and at the end it was agreed this may be the way forward; plus, it was also nice not having to go out on a dark evening and in the rain to attend a meeting.

The Planning Committee have, this year, commented upon fifty-nine planning applications, a slight decrease on the previous year; to the majority we have recommended approval, others we have not. We have, this year, seen an increase in applications for extensions and the like for private dwellings, and a decline in applications for equestrian facilities, agricultural buildings and the provision of dwellings in association with established developments. We are now seeing a marked increase in applications for Certificates of Lawful Development. The Parish Council have been asked to comment on some, but not all of these applications, which has been frustrating. Although Ipplepen Parish Council is only a consultee we like to think that our opinions and recommendations are listened to by Teignbridge District Council and form part of their final decision.

Recommendations for these and all other applications are not given without full discussion, either at the monthly Planning Committee meeting or a Full Parish Council and if the need arises a site visit. To this end, when a particular recommendation is made at a Planning Committee meeting or a Full Parish Council and to have it overturned by Teignbridge District

Council later, you could think 'why do we bother'. Your Planning Committee do 'bother' because we want what is right for Ipplepen; we love our village and will continue to fight to maintain its character and unique nature.

We are still having to review Retrospective Planning Applications. We are concerned that the attitude of 'you can build anything anywhere and get away with it' is still prevalent. In view of this the Planning Committee together with the Full Parish Council are becoming increasingly concerned at the lack of Planning Enforcement being taken by Teignbridge District Council and intend on making the necessary representations in due course.

The Planning Group are now well versed in the reviewing of Planning Applications via the Planning Portal and look forward to the introduction of an upgraded version later this year; when it is hoped we will be able to view all the information and not only part; the excuse being 'the system does not support modern browsers'.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow councillors who have served on the Planning Committee for their time and effort over the past year and would like to reassure the Parish that we will continue to look after their interests, as far as we are able, in respect of planning matters.

RE-APPROVAL OF PLANNING GUIDELINES

There were no changes to the present Planning Guidelines for Ipplepen.

HIGHWAYS – Coun.Smith

The Highways Advisory group continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis and minutes are publicised and available from the clerk.

Our County and District Councillor has given good support in trying to get essential works done around the village, but the lack of funding is being reflected in the quality and timing of the work. During the past 12 months there has been a number of road closure incidents for utilities work, some notified, and others treated as emergency but generally there has not been too much disturbance.

Our public footpaths and bridleways have been inspected by Cllr Rattlidge and I and reports sent to the County Council's Public Rights of Way with a request for some funding towards their maintenance. Footpath/Bridleway 7 has had a new horse stile fitted at Windthorn cross and footpath 9, Crokers Farm to Edgelands Lane, now has a stile half-way along its length. The highways group are currently working on the proposed footpath from Parkhill to Tozer's barn, on the east side of the A381, and currently awaiting permission from Devon County Council to carry out the works.

Parishioners can see from the Highways Group minutes, reported at the Council meetings, that some of the outstanding projects from before the pandemic are gradually being picked up. Footway maintenance has been carried out at the top of the village and it is hoped that the drainage work recently carried out to alleviate the persistent flooding at the junction of Conniford lane and Totnes Road will prove to be successful.

There are a number of issues with potholes and blocked buddle holes, and I would like to urge parishioners to report any that they come across on the County Council website. In regard to the drainage of flash flooding issues it must be recognised that priority will be given to getting the main transport routes open.

Speeding is apparently become more of an issue recently, and the Parish Council are looking at the possibility of installing urban speed limiters at 'hot spots' in the village. Our County and District Councillor has been advocating a Speed watch initiative within Ipplepen and I am sure he would welcome anyone willing to take part.

The highways group had also been discussing the potential for installing finger posts directing walkers, cyclists and other visitors to places in and around the village that may of interest.

In closing, I should like to thank the members of the advisory group for their diligence and gently remind residents, whose garden hedges and shrubs encroach onto footways, that they should keep them trimmed back to allow safe access for people with disabilities, the blind and partially sighted, and those with small children who are sometimes forced onto the roadway to avoid such obstacles.

AMENITIES REPORT – Coun.Palethorpe

It has been a busy year for the Amenity Committee against the backdrop of continuing Covid.

Play Areas.

It has been a year in which the upgrade of and installation of play area equipment has continued in addition a number of picnic and memorial benches have been installed in the play areas and around the village.

Our thanks and appreciation to the families and residents who have generously donated the benches.

Grounds Maintenance

The Parish Council Grounds Maintenance contractor has continued to provide an excellent service to the community. This year an emphasis has been placed on improving and enhancing the environment with the planting of additional trees across the village and areas left to increase diversity.

Parish Council Cleaning Contract

The village is fortunate to have two public lavatory facilities which are cleaned every day by our cleaning contractor who deserves a great deal of credit for the work she carries out.

The Recreation Ground facility will now be open from 0830 - 2000hrs daily during the summer months.

It is unfortunate that our contractor has on occasions been subject to abuse and also had to clean areas that have been smeared with human waste. This not only unacceptable but is also constitutes a public health hazard as is the disappointing fact that a number of people are taking their dogs into the Play Areas which has resulted in equipment being fouled.

We have also a problem of people 'kicking' the locked doors open to gain access to the toilets during the night.

It is hoped that enhanced CCTV coverage will enable us to identify the culprits and take action against those who choose to commit and take part in anti-social behaviour.

Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT).

Our thanks to DWT and Mrs Mabel Cheung for their work and support in providing the free trees to residents which has seen over 100 new trees provided to residents. The provision of fruit trees has now allowed us to plant the first stage of the Community Orchard.

The Parish Council has also developed a 'tree nursery' with the aim of growing trees for future planting.

Events.

Once again this year the Parish Council have been happy to support events across the village including the Remembrance Day, Lantern Procession, Carnival Procession and the Christmas Tree. It would be remiss not to thank and acknowledge all of those who plan and organise these events. The village is fortunate to have people who are willing to take the lead and give their time (the majority of which is unseen and unheralded) to making Ipplepen a special place to live.

There are many who deserve to have their commitment and support of the village acknowledged and we are grateful for the work they do.

In conclusion I wish to record my personal thanks to our Parish Clerk and all of the current and past amenity committee members, and residents who have supported us throughout the year.

OPEN FORUM

Coun.Dewhirst mentioned that there will be a Speed Watch Meeting at the Community Hub on 18th May, 2022 at 7pm if anyone is interested in coming along.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.