Chard Town Council

THE GUILDHALL, FORE STREET, CHARD, SOMERSET TA20 1PP
01460 239567 chardtowncouncil@chard.gov.uk www.chard.gov.uk
Mayor: Cllr Jason Baker **Town Clerk: Paul Russell**

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held in the Auditorium at the Guildhall, Chard on Monday 28th March 2022 commencing at 7.00pm

Cllr Jason Baker, Mayor of Chard, chaired the meeting.

PRESENT: 52 people were in attendance.

Cllr Baker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 6th September 2021 were adopted and would be signed by the Mayor.

2. MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Meeting received the Annual Report presented by Cllr Jason Baker.

The last year has been another busy year for Chard Town Council with the easing of Covid restrictions and the return to some level of normality within the community. However, cases of Covid are increasing both locally and nationally at present, so the crisis may still have some challenges in store for us in the future.

Following a period of restructuring the Town Council has now implemented its new staffing structure. It appointed a new Town Clerk in July 2021 and has since recruited a new Council Team to help deliver the wide and diverse range of services provided by the Town Council.

The Guildhall has returned to almost normal service and is available for hire but over the last twelve months has hosted both a Covid Testing Station and a Covid vaccination station. The Town Council has endeavoured to support the local community in the face of the pandemic and will continue to do all it can.

Following consideration by both Parliament and the House of Lords, the Secretary of State has made the Somerset Structural Changes Order 2022 which paves the way for the new Somerset Council to be established on 1st April 2023.

The Order came into effect on 16th March 2022 and gives approval for the local elections to take place on 5th May 2022 to elect 110 councillors to the County Council. There will also be elections for city, town and parish councils right across Somerset.

The District Councils of Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset will be replaced by the new authority on 1st April 2023. The future of local government in Somerset is changing and Chard Town Council will be as involved as it can be to enable that change to take place.

Community wise it was wonderful to see the Carnival back on the events programme in October 2021 and what a wonderful and successful procession it was.

On a personal note, it has been a great honour to serve for the last 3 years as Mayor of Chard. We have been through some difficult times and I am pleased that our town has worked so well together. We managed to support each other in the early years of lockdown with the Covid support group which showed how much community spirit is in our town. I had the privilege of working closely with our GP surgeries and volunteered in the vaccination clinic that was held here in the Guildhall. Again, this saw many people volunteering to ensure that as many people as possible could receive the vaccine. It was fantastic to see our Carnival return to the streets in

October last year, we were one of only four towns that managed to put a Carnival on and an impressive Street Fayre that was enjoyed by all. Now that we have started returning to the new normal I have been able to meet with many local community groups and clubs. It is fantastic that so many have managed to keep meeting virtually and supporting each other so that they can now continue their great work. I am pleased to say that as we move forward I feel we have grown closer and I am very proud to be part of this great community that we call Chard.

3. POLICE REPORT

The Meeting received the Annual Report presented by Beat Manager Paul Thomas.

The ‘new normal’ post the initial COVID19 impact had seen an increase in demand on Chard police department especially in the number of calls received.

There was a new Chief Inspector in place and Rachael Clarke remained in her position as Acting Inspector. Recruitment was currently underway for a relatively new role in the Police Force, Police Degree Constables. However, they would not have a full-time presence in the town due to training commitments.

There was a force wide issue regarding offenders being brought to court due to the backlog in the Justice system post pandemic, which was affecting Chard police work too.

It was anticipated that the summer months would be very busy with Beat Managers supporting the additional work required of the police due to all the events taking place in and around the town.

Beat Managers continued to work closely with the One Team. This was a multi-agency team consisting of social services, NHS, South Somerset District Council Personnel, Forefront, WATCH, Local Housing and Education, police councilors and more. It was one of the most effective groups in the area.

The Police were also focusing on gathering key data to help inform priorities including persistent offender data.

Question: Was there still a method for managing low level crime of first-time offenders?
It was confirmed that there were two such methods in place, *Restorative Justice* and *Community Resolution.*

4. GRANT RECIPIENT UPDATES

The meeting received updated from the following grant recipients:

- Chard Museum. The Chair of the Museum Trustees informed the meeting that after a long journey the ownership of the museum would soon be officially transferring from South Somerset District Council to the Museum Trustees. The Museum was now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. (CIO). It was emphasised that the Museum was for all Chard residents.

- Chard Youth Club. The Chair of the Youth Club informed the meeting that the Club was enjoying a busy time with between 50 – 60 young people age 11- 19) attending on a Tuesday and Thursday evenings each week. The sessions for younger children (age 6- 11) were also well attended with 40 regular attenders.

5. PRESENTATION OF FUNDS RAISED FOR CHARITY BY THE MAYOR

Cllr Jason Baker presented a total of £7,380 to the following charities following a variety of fund-raising events he had held over the last year:

- Cancer Research
- Chard Carnival Committee

6. PRESENTATION OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARDS

Outstanding Service Awards were presented to the following people of Chard for their outstanding services to the community:

- Barry Ebden, for the longevity of his tireless support in coordinating and running the Three County Skittles League.
- Maria Carey for her commitment enthusiasm, and creativity in developing, sustaining and supporting Chard Local Kids Society for music and Drama (CLOKS)
- Maryanne & George Adams for their dedication and hard work for raising money for the Poppy Appeal year on year;
- Pat Galpin for recognising the lack of support for those people who are Carers of a loved ones, providing support for those Carers and establishing a peer to peer Carer support group.

7. PRESENTATION OF THE MAYOR'S AWARD

The Mayor's Award was presented to The Ukraine Group:
Aga Ustrzycka, Natalia Wysoczynska, Marianna Wysoczynska, Krzysztof Pruffer, Piotr Janczak and Izabela Witkowska, who had organised and coordinated the collection and delivery of essential items and medical equipment to the people of Ukraine.

8. ALDERMAN AWARD

The Mayor explained that the title of Honorary Alderman was a new award to recognise the contribution of Councillors who had served more than eight years on the Town Council but had not been Mayor.

Nominations this year were Mrs Wyatt and Mr Mermagan.

9. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

One question was raised concerning the disrepair of the telephone box on the corner of Crowshute Rd.

The Mayor confirmed this was in hand with support from the local schools and the local Brownies. A contractor to carry out the work had been appointed.

The Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8pm.

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MAYOR: **DATE:**