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 6th September 2021 commencing at 7.00pm

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

PRESENT: 50 people were in attendance.

Cllr Baker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 20th May 2019 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.

I am very proud to be Mayor of Chard and to represent our town.

The previous year has been a very busy one for Chard Town Council despite of and because of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. The financial year commenced in lockdown and the Town Council had to put in place the infrastructure to hold remote meetings. Whilst the Amenities and Guildhall Team continued to work onsite the Office staff were required to work remotely.

The Town Council hosted the Chard Covid-19 Support Group in the Guildhall Auditorium. The Group supported many local people through the first lockdown and have continued to do so.

The Town Council has faced several challenges especially with regard to staffing. The previous Town Clerk departed in July 2020 and a Locum Clerk was appointed to enable Council to undertake a complete organisational and staffing structure review. This was completed by the end of the financial year and is now being implemented.

The Town Council has been monitoring the situation with the introduction of a unitary authority structure in Somerset. In July 2021 Central Government

adopted the proposal for a single unitary authority for Somerset, we will keep everyone updated on this as time goes on.

The Town Council has successfully applied for several grants of over £150k from:

- Heritage England
- Somerset County Council Climate Change Fund
- South Somerset District Council's Market Towns Investment Group (MTIG)
- the Welcome Back Fund

We have worked in partnership with the district council on the town centre improvements and are looking forward to the opening of the new Leisure centre, Chard has received around £20 million investment, and I would like to thank fellow councillors and officers who have made this possible.

The Town Council is about to commence works on upgrading Ashcroft Park and Jocelyn Park and continues to deliver the street cleaning contract in the town centre as well as its other responsibilities including grass cutting, weed spraying, bin emptying and reactive works.

We have not seen many of the events that are usually held in the town centre, but I am pleased that we will be seeing the Carnival return to our streets in October as well as the Halloween event and Christmas lights event in November.

It has been amazing to see how our town has come together over the last 18 months and how the community spirit has shone through. I look forward to seeing many of you at future events within the town and strongly believe that Chard will have a bright and prosperous future.

3. POLICE REPORT

The Meeting received the Annual Report presented by Sgt Jameson.

The Police experienced a dramatic change in the way they policed and the type of incidents following the first lockdown. Burglaries went down by a third mainly because more people were at home. The lockdown enabled the police to target criminals and address crimes such as County Lines. There was also enforcement of Covid restrictions and this was helped by the community policing themselves and reporting breaches.

Online reporting increased. This has improved efficiency especially bearing in mind the various issues with 101.

The Chard Covid Support Group proved crucial to the ongoing policing of the community and the Police acknowledged that they would have struggled without the Group's support. A heartfelt thanks was extended.

As part of the policing over the last year three Specials contributed many hours and there continued to be opportunities available for people to become Special Police Constables.

Two new PCSOs had commenced and some small refurbishment works were being planned for the Police Station in Chard.

The Chard One Team multiagency meetings had also been a crucial contribution to effective policing in Chard. A new Police Crime Commissioner has been elected at the last election and would be focusing on rural crime. He was currently carrying undertaking a survey and everyone was encouraged to take part. The Mayor thanked Sgt Jameson for his report.

4. GRANT RECIPIENT UPDATES

The meeting received updated from the following grant recipients:

- Newsline, an organisation that produces talking newspapers for the physically and visually impaired in the Chard and Ilminster area;
- Radio Ninesprings, the local community radio for Yeovil and the surrounding area;
- Chard Carnival Committee who organize the annual Chard Carnival;
- Chard United Football Club, who play at Jocelyn Park, Chard;
- Chard Churches Together.

5. PRESENTATION OF FUNDS RAISED FOR CHARITY BY THE MAYOR

Cllr Jason Baker presented a total of £6,372.26 to the following charities following a variety of fund-raising events he had held over the past eighteen months:

- Cancer Research
- The Alzheimer's Society
- Mind in Somerset
- Little Daffodils

6. PRESENTATION OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARDS

Outstanding Service Awards were presented to Bruce Crabb, Jonathan Warner and Christine Smith for their outstanding services to the community of Chard.

7. PRESENTATION OF THE MAYOR'S AWARD

The Mayor's Award was presented to Jason Hawkes, who was a key figure in the setting up and running of the Chard Covid Support Group to help local people deal with the Coronavirus restrictions.

The High Sheriff of Somerset, Thomas Sheppard, also presented a High Sheriff's Award to the Chard Covid Support Group for all the work it had done on behalf of the community ensuring that residents who required support were provided with that support.

8. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No matters were raised.

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

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MAYOR: **DATE:**