

# SOUTH TAWTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held in the Victory Hall, South Zeal on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at 7.30 pm.

**DRAFT** Minutes of the South Tawton Annual Parish Meeting, held at the Victory Hall, South Zeal on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at 7.30 pm

## **Present**

Councillor A White (Chairman), Councillors Cann (Borough Councillor), Darch, Pillar, J White, Sampson, Councillor J McInnes (County Councillor), Mr I Brooker (Senior Ranger DNPA), Mrs H Poustie (Head Teacher, South Tawton Primary School, PC N Wilson (Neighbourhood Beat Officer), 1 parishioner and Dr. P.N. Brotherton (Clerk).

## **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Coombs, Curtis and Souness and from Rev<sup>d</sup> J Smart.

## **Minutes**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. As the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2009 had been widely circulated and published on the website, the clerk read a précis. It was proposed by Councillor Darch, seconded by Councillor J White and agreed by all those present that they were a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

## **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **Accounts**

The Clerk circulated the audited and adopted accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 and explained various points concerning them. He thanked Mr and Mrs Davey (Internal Auditors) for their expertise and guidance in the preparation of these accounts. Councillor Pillar proposed and Councillor A White (Chairman) seconded that the accounts be adopted. All those present agreed.

## **Chairman's Report**

In tribute to the life of Councillor Clifford White, who passed away in January of this year, the Chairman asked that the meeting stand to remember the enormous contribution Clifford had made to the community over so many years. Councillor White then welcomed Andrew Sampson to the Council and stated that it was good to have had five candidates put themselves forward for election to South Tawton Parish Council.

Beginning his report he considered that the council had financially supported the community as usual this year, with grants to help the construction of the Recreation Ground play area, the car park and the football pitch. Grants had also been given to the Victory Hall towards the major works that needed to be undertaken in the near future. Further, funding had been provided for Victim Support, The Wren Music Trust, Citizens Advice Bureau, the Brownies and the Scout Group. The chairman was pleased to report that this, and so much more, had been possible whilst maintaining the precept at £11,800 for the third year running.

Turning to the implementation of the Parish Plan he thanked all those who had worked for so long helping to construct and run the Beacon Website. A separate Parish Council area on the website had now been provided and Councillor White hope that parishioners would find this helpful. Initial enquiries had been made to furnish the Croft and Hillfields with a community notice board and plans were afoot to provide a welcome pack for those moving into the parish. He was particularly pleased that, thanks to John Packer (West Devon Borough Council Housing Champion) and Councillor Pillar, the identification of sites for affordable housing in the parish was proceeding apace.

The Chairman was pleased that the 179 service bus had now become established and that there was a good bus service on the old A30. The opening of the new community bus shelter at Ford Cross had given him particular pleasure and he thanked the architect, Andrew Sampson and the builder, Julian

Pillar, for bringing this project to such a satisfactory conclusion. We were particularly grateful, he went on to say, for the funding for all this work provided by Devon Country Council Highways (North) through Mr. Bill Banting and by Devon County Councillor James McInnes.

Reflecting on environmental matters, he said that he was pleased to note the introduction of an improved waste collection service and better recycling facilities by WDBC and he looked forward to the establishment of another 'dog bin', which would be sited at Ramsley car park. He made a particular point of thanking South West Water for reimbursing the Council £1800 for a water leak in the Recreation Ground toilets and he emphasized the importance of this village facility.

Councillor White concluded his report suggesting that, considering the number of issues stated in the Paris Plan 'free-text' boxes, he hoped that more members of the community would come forward to offer help to realise the aspirations of the Parish Plan. He thanked the Vice Chairman, Councillor J White, and all other councillors and the clerk for their support throughout the year.

There being no questions, Councillor A White (Chairman) invited Mrs H Poustie (Head Teacher South Tawton Primary School), to deliver her report.

### **School Report**

Mrs. Poustie thanked the meeting for once again giving her the opportunity to talk about the school's progress. She said that the school was still able to organise seven classes in separate year groups and that most of the classes were full. This was a popular school and now had a waiting list.

Last year, she said she had reported on the range of clubs and trips that the school ran. This year had been just as busy, stating that Year 6 pupils had left for France that very evening and that earlier in the year the Year 4 and 5 pupils had stayed at Hooke Court, a Tudor house in Somerset. The school continued to have many after-school clubs. The choir had really taken off – performing at Exeter Cathedral earlier in the year. As Headteacher, she really appreciated the time given up by staff, parent and governors who organised and ran these clubs. The school was currently the Cross Country, Tag Rugby and Chess champions and had several winners in recent athletics competitions.

Mrs Poustie hoped that the changes to the school's outside environment had been noticed, as pupils, staff and parents had worked hard to make this 'outside classroom' space brighter and more user-friendly. After the playground markings had been added, we worked with the School Council to design a Trim Trail, generously funded by the PTA to the tune of £5000 with £500 from the Okehampton Rotary Club. This excellent facility addressed issues she said of health and fitness whilst encouraging team building and leadership skills.

The PTA and the Sticklepath and Okehampton Conservation Group had visited the school on several occasions to help clear the environmental area. This was an ongoing project involving the School Council to plan how to set out the environmental area for the future. She was sure that the community would have seen the solar panels at the bottom of the field. By 4.30 pm today she said, we had generated 1857 kw/hours of electricity, a saving of 800kg of CO<sub>2</sub>, which equated to flying 615 miles! A professional weather station had also been installed. The whole project had cost £32000 but the school had been able to draw down 50% from the Low Carbon Building Project, £5000 from Dartmoor National Park, £2000 from the Sticklepath Trust and £4500 from the Local Authority, so it had only cost the school £4500. The school wanted to build upon the pupils' broader understanding of sustainability and so the Summer Theme week was based around sustainability.

Turning to the recent OFSTED inspection, she said how delighted everyone was that the school had been judged to be a good school, with outstanding features in all aspects of its provision and outcomes. One of the areas judged to have been "Outstanding" was Community Cohesion and so, she said, it was appropriate that she was there to thank the wider community for their support and to acknowledge

the community's requests for the school's involvement in local projects, which demonstrated such effective partnerships.

She thanked the governors, who gave so much of their time working tirelessly to get the local authority to acknowledge that our accommodation was not suitable for education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was important, she said, that we maintained a high profile in such matter and reported that Cllr John Hart, the Leader of Devon County Council, who she hoped would champion the school's cause, had visited the school recently. However, over the past few years the school had built up funds which were now being used to refurbish and remodel parts of the school.

Mrs Poustie concluded her remarks by emphasising that, as in previous years, she was delighted to invite members of the community to visit the school as she would be proud to show people around. Staff and Governors worked so hard she said and the children were extremely appreciative of the all the opportunities that they have. It was due to the dedication of the whole school community that South Tawton Primary was such a special school and she wished to thank the meeting for letting her come to share with them some of the school's news.

Invited to ask questions, Councillor Pillar asked for further details of solar panel funding, such as the cost of installation, which Mrs Poustie supplied.

Thanking Mrs Poustie for her report, the chairman invited County Councillor McInnes to give his report.

### **County Councillor's Report**

Councillor McInnes began his address by listing the main elements of the County Council £843 million budget for the coming year, of which £374 million was ring-fenced for education, £115 million for Children and Young peoples service, £217 million for Adult and Community Services and £106 million for Environment, Economy and Culture. Council Tax would rise, he said, by 1.98%. Other County Council support included:

- £175.4 million for building programmes – schools, roads, libraries, recycling centres.
- £350,000 to match-fund European Funding to support Devon's economy.
- £8.8 million for Exeter Science Park and Skypark.
- £2.3 million set aside to fund free personal care at home as targeted investment.
- £2.5 million extra for highways.
- £2.92 million extra to support children in care and those on a Child Protection Plan.

He went on to describe how DCC Highways was organized and reflected on the additional expense caused by the recent severe weather. A special "Task Group" had been set up to look into "Winter Maintenance" of Devon's roads. He would, he said, welcome suggestions for improvements in the way the roads were maintained.

Following the recent election he listed the committees he now sat on and their remit. He now sat on the DCC Environment Economy and Culture Oversight and Scrutiny Committee. Areas covered by this committee included highways, planning, transport, economic regeneration, development management, culture and strategic waste management to name but a few! As chair of the Development Management Committee he was involved in strategic applications across Devon ranging from schools, recycling facilities to wind farms.

He reminded the meeting that he was a DCC member of Dartmoor National Park Authority. He considered this role challenging, balancing the purposes of the National Park with the needs of a living community. He also reminded the meeting that County Councillors have a small budget for community

projects, which, although not enormous, could supply a few hundred pounds that could help a project happen.

In conclusion Councillor McInnes reflected on the local government review which had seen many twists and turns in the last year. His view he said for a variety of reasons was that this was not the time for the reorganisation of local government.

The chairman thanked councillor McInnes for his report and invited Borough councillor Cann to give his report.

### **Borough Councillor's Report**

Councillor Cann prefaced his report with a broad-brush analysis of Borough Council financial matters, the main points of which were:

- That sharing services with South Hams District Council had saved £380,000.
- That next year's council tax increase would be the lowest in seven years, coming to 9p/week or 2.59% for an average Band D property and that that was below the rate of inflation.
- That the Borough Council had still managed to reduce overheads and find saving of £700,000 whilst protecting frontline services from cuts.

He then went on to emphasise a number of Borough Council initiatives that will benefit residents and businesses in the coming year, such as free travel for the over 60s and the disabled, extended to include cares/companions as well, a new, more comprehensive waste collection and recycling service for plastics, food and garden waste, the building of 172 affordable homes and a personal service to help customers apply for benefit payments.

He emphasised the fact that West Devon Borough Council is the smallest staffed 'District' authority in mainland England, with 135 full-time equivalent employees. The Borough faced challenging issues with high house prices yet below average wage levels. The Council strove to keep costs as low as possible for its residents whilst consistently continuing to improve its services.

Councillor Cann then expanded his thinking on matters concerned with the Core Strategy, which he pointed out was the result of three years work. He emphasised the point that there was more to this Strategy than just building houses in Okehampton and Tavistock, covering as it did local village housing needs, such as those in South Zeal and South Tawton, employment in the area and the provision of schools. Following this local theme, he mentioned Borough support for such projects as the South Zeal Playing Field Play Area development and services for older people in the community. He concluded his report and remarks by underlining the importance as he saw it of communities and organisations working together to solve the problems raised by the present financial climate through the South Tawton Parish Plan.

The chairman thanked Councillor Cann for his report and invited the meeting to raise questions and comments on any of the reports or other matters that occurred to them. These ranged from details of the Borough Council proposed new waste collection service, perceived problems with the delivery of the Borough Core Strategy, advice to the police about police station public opening hours, Part-Night lighting to the future of the Okehampton police headquarters. The meeting was concerned to learn that the DNPA Ranger service was under review but encouraged by councillor Pillar's comments on the progress being made to find sites within the parish for local affordable housing. After councillor Cann on behalf of the community had thanked PC Nadine Wilson for her visible presence in the parish, their being no further questions, the chairman thanked the speakers and all those who had attended the meeting and closed the proceedings at 8.55 pm.