

SOUTH MILTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of 2023 Annual Parish Meeting *under the Chairmanship of Cllr Paul Booker.*
The Parish Meeting may, by law, discuss all Parish affairs and pass resolutions about them.

Date: 24 th April 2023		Venue & Time: Village Hall, commencing at 7.00pm
Present: Cllr Anne Berryman Cllr Graham Collyer Cllr Marion Brice Cllr Paul Booker (in the Chair) Cllr Emma Halmshaw Cllr Graham Jinks Cllr Nick Townsend	In Attendance: Mrs Katharine Harrod – Clerk & Minute taker Dist. Cllr Mark Long Dist. Cllr Judy Pearce Emma Reece - NT Ranger Parishioners: 5	Apologies: County Cllr Rufus Gilbert

Minutes: Annual Parish Meeting 2023

1 THE MINUTES of the meeting held on 23rd May 2022 had already been agreed and signed as a true record.

Cllr Paul Booker, in the Chair and Chairman of South Milton Parish Council, welcomed everyone to the Annual meeting of the Parish, highlighting the fact that it was an opportunity for everyone to hear reports and comment on how the Officers of the village are doing and highlight any areas of concern or aspiration.

2 DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

Cllrs Mark Long & Judy Pearce:

This 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 we emerged from the worst of Covid, the cost-of-living crisis started to bite, following Russia's invasion of 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 has set up and administered a number of schemes to help residents who find themselves financially challenged. A complete list of current schemes is always available on the council website. We have also reviewed 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. The children have settled well into local schools. Recently the Chairman of the Council organised a day for all the guests to meet up at the Watermark in Ivybridge. It was a huge success, especially for the children, who really enjoyed meeting so many other Ukrainian children, often for the first time. 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 continues to deliver on its Corporate Strategy 'Better Lives for All.' This has 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 exciting projects for regenerative farming advances and decarbonisation of the marine sector in the South Hams, along with studies to encourage active travel. The setting up of the Freeport between Plymouth City Council and the South Hams on joint sites is another tremendous opportunity for the district.

SOUTH MILTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of 2023 Annual Parish Meeting *under the Chairmanship of Cllr Paul Booker.* **The Parish Meeting may, by law, discuss all Parish affairs and pass resolutions about them.**

Hopefully, you will have noticed some improvement in the speed of planning decisions being taken as there are a number of 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. We are starting to consider the first revision of the Joint Local Plan, 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 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. The public EV charging points are now operational on the Creek car park in Salcombe.

Housing continues to be one of the major problems in the 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 is 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. That is why the Council's offer of funding to help set up local composting schemes is a good bet. 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.

Meanwhile the elections are creeping up on us faster than we know. I have decided after 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, to stand down. It is time for someone else to take over, both at the helm and in the ward. I shall though be keeping an interested eye on how things go from here. It has been a real pleasure and a privilege working with you all over the past nine years and getting to know so many residents all over the Ward and the District.

SOUTH MILTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of 2023 Annual Parish Meeting *under the Chairmanship of Cllr Paul Booker.* The Parish Meeting may, by law, discuss all Parish affairs and pass resolutions about them.

Cllr Long: The new bin service has stabilised and targets are being met – the current target is for a maximum of 80 missed bins per 10,000 collections. When FCC had the service the missed collections were in the region of 4,000.

There is also a six-week program for street sweepers – meaning that (providing the weather is appropriate) each parish should see a sweeper every six weeks.

It was also noted that public toilet access is now free of charge

Cllr Booker thanked Cllr Pearce for all her help and support over the years and presented her with a gift from the Councillors in appreciation of everything she has done for South Milton Parish Council.

3 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

Received from Cllr Rufus Gilbert:

2022/23 has been another very challenging year for local authorities and government.

- 1) 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.
- 2) Covid-19 The winter did not see another major outbreak and the flu also seemed not to have been a major problem.
- 3) Avian Influenza. This has proved challenging on top of the human virus and influenza.
- 4) Coronation celebration road closure party applications have predominantly been going well.
- 5) Scams are still proving a terrible blight and effecting some people horribly across Devon.
- 6) 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 of Govt to help, giving DCC £9.4M will help.
- 7) 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.
- 8) This has been the most difficult DCC budget to set in memory. At one point it looked to be the end of Devon County Council
- 9) Devolution deal for Devon to include Plymouth and Torbay at Level 2 has been agreed by the Levelling UP Minister subject 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
- 10) Plymouth & South Devon Freeport. This is now up and running well with CEO and Chairman etc being fully employed. I am a director.
- 11) LEP’s. 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.

4 PARISH COUNCIL REPORT –

Chairman, Cllr Paul Booker:

Firstly we must remember and pay tribute to Cllr Tim Lewis who was an integral member of both the Parish Council and the village. Tim is, and will continue to be, greatly missed.

During the year we have had to deal with the Lane End “swimming pool” which has now been closed down due to the blockage finally being cleared!

New signage, created by the Thurlestone Primary School students has been ordered and is soon to be erected.

The celebrations for the Platinum Jubilee went well and were well received by all who joined in.

SOUTH MILTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of 2023 Annual Parish Meeting *under the Chairmanship of Cllr Paul Booker.* **The Parish Meeting may, by law, discuss all Parish affairs and pass resolutions about them.**

The Dairy Farm site, proposed development, remains ongoing with plans being drawn up and reports being produced.

There have been improvements with the internet thanks to BT Broadband, unfortunately the Airband upgrades have been delayed until late 2023.

It was another big summer at the beach with the Rockbox set up and trading at two different locations for approximately one month at each site. The beach steps at the Thurlestone end continue to cause concern, however, these are privately owned and liability rests with the owner.

Covid continued to impact the area and local businesses are still struggling to find staff.

The waste collection was taken back in hand by South Hams District Council following the, some would say, disastrous performance by FCC. The service is now much improved although the garden waste service has now been changed to a pay for service.

New benches have been installed at Links Court & Devon Birds.

We saw the creation of the parking taskforce to review the areas around the parish with parking issues.

Salcombe Rotary donated 1,300 crocus bulbs which were planted in seven locations around the parish.

The Council declared a climate emergency and created a Climate Emergency & Energy Group. Localities funds enabled us to purchase a thermal imaging camera which has enable us to give advice to parishioners on saving energy.

The bus routes may be impacted by Tally Ho handing back some contracts. We await developments.

Potholes around the parish remain a significant problem, hopefully, with the extra government funding recently agreed, this situation will improve.

With regard to planning, in the last year we have received 24 applications, 10 of which have been Conditionally Approved, 4 have had discharge of conditions approved, 1 was refused a certificate of lawfulness, 1 was approved a certificate of lawfulness, 1 permitted development, 2 were withdrawn and 5 have decisions outstanding.

Sadly, we have two long serving members of South Milton Parish Council stepping down this year:

Graham Collyer has been a councillor since 2011. He is a very active village member, responsible for the newsletter and various village events throughout the year. Cllr Booker then presented a gift on behalf of those present.

Marion Brice joined South Milton Parish Council in 1983 and has served for over 40 years, an incredible achievement! This includes being a Chairman for 8 years – having returned from holiday one year to find she'd been nominated for the "promotion" in her absence. The commitment and dedication to hold the role for so many years is a fantastic achievement and a real credit to her loyalty to the Parish. Cllr Booker then presented a gift to Marion on behalf of those present.

5 NATIONAL TRUST REPORT

NT Ranger, Emma Reece:

Last year the Trust were able to get the outfall repaired at significant expense, it has been working well but there are undermining issues which are now being viewed by the contractor.

SOUTH MILTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of 2023 Annual Parish Meeting *under the Chairmanship of Cllr Paul Booker.* The Parish Meeting may, by law, discuss all Parish affairs and pass resolutions about them.

The summer was very busy and we had some amazing beach weather. The team continued to work with restricted staffing and there were additional business operating from the site which were causing issues with things like shutting the overflow parking at night.

There is now a new General Manager on the team and the hope is for improved staffing budgets to enable the National Trust to give all visitors a better experience when they get to the site.

The main boardwalk from the car park will be finished within a couple of weeks, this will give a platform on the beach for people with mobility scooters or similar.

The top boardwalk opposite the toilet block is currently being replaced.

Unfortunately we were badly hit with Bird Flu last year and saw a large number of gannets washed up on the beaches around the county. This was incredibly sad for all concerned, we hope that the situation improves in future years.

Cllr Townsend confirmed that the new carpark full sign seems to be helping with the issues.

6 TREE WARDEN REPORT – No report received.

7 OPEN FORUM AND GENERAL DISCUSSION OF PARISH AFFAIRS: No comments were received from the floor.

AT 19:24hrs the Chair, Cllr Paul Booker, closed the meeting with thanks to all those that had attended.

Signed as a true record: _____

Print Name & Date: _____