

WEST ALVINGTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Date 6th April 2023		Venue & Time: WA Village Hall, 7.30pm
<u>Present:</u> Cllr Stephen Lees (in the Chair) Cllr Kathryn Rawlinson Cllr Helen Rhymes	<u>In Attendance:</u> Kathy Harrod (Parish Clerk) Dist. Cllr Mark Long Dist. Cllr Judy Pearce DCC. Cllr Rufus Gilbert Parishioners/Guests: 3	<u>Apologies:</u> Cllr Leanne Carr Cllr Liz Chin Cllr Andrew Pascoe Cllr Rachel Saunders Cllr Derek Winser

REF 2023/24 MINUTES

001 Welcome & Apologies

002 County Councillor Report – Cllr Rufus Gilbert

Well, 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.
- 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 to 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.

003 South Hams District Council Report: Cllr Judy Pearce & Cllr Mark Long

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 the 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.

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 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.

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.

004 West Alvington Parish Council Report – Chairman, Cllr Stephen Lees

The year started for WAPC with the Village Hall Committee handing back control of the hall to the Parish Council. Since then, we have been operating the hall, taking bookings and dealing with the repairs and maintenance required. We have been building up the bookings and, once new licenses are in place, we will be commencing some fundraising evenings which we hope the community will fully support. We are now looking to build up the new Village Hall Committee and hope that members of the community will step up to join the team.

We also installed additional play equipment plus some adult gym equipment on the village playground. The good news is that there is still more equipment to be installed and the surrounding area will be undergoing a small upgrade.

In June we experienced an event like no other with the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. With the support of our County and District Councillors we were able to provide the children at the primary and pre-school with a water bottle each. The bottles were very well received by all, it was lovely to see so many smiling faces!

Sadly, in September, we received the news of the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the nation collectively mourned the loss of this unique monarch. In May this year we will see the Coronation of King Charles III, once again with the support of our County and District Councillor we will be giving a commemorative gift to the primary school aged children in the parish, this time we will be presenting them with a heavy duty cotton drawstring bag. We will also be holding an event at the playing field for all parishioners to join in with.

We have continued to issue a Parish Newsletter to help keep everyone informed of what's happening in and around West Alvington, the most recent of which (detailing how you can become a Parish Councillor) has just been distributed.

In addition to the newsletter we are also about to agree the purchase of a new community noticeboard -the old one had rotted away and was no longer considered safe to use so had to be removed. We hope to have this in place within the month.

The greatest achievement of the past year has to be the referendum and acceptance of the Kingsbridge, West Alvington and Churchstow Neighbourhood Plan. The plan provides a development framework which will sustain a balanced community and a varied and vigorous local economy for the long term with development only identified where necessary to ensure the future wellbeing of all sections of the community.

In conclusion, it has been a year like no other and I must express thanks to everyone who has given their time and support to West Alvington Parish Council. I would especially like to thank Liz Green for her interesting and comprehensive reports regarding the Salcombe and Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum and Cllr Rufus Gilbert for his assistance with the West Alvington Traffic issues, we look forward to working closely over the next year. Also, to our SHDC Ward Councillors, Judy Pearce and Mark Long who have both supported us with funding from their localities monies in addition to the usual assistance and advice we receive from them. Cllr Pearce steps down from her role at SHDC this month and we wish her a very long and happy retirement!

Mostly I would like to thank my fellow Councillors and the Parish Clerk for the time they willingly give to the community. We are sorry to be saying farewell to Cllrs Carr, Pascoe and Saunders from the end of this month, but look forward to welcoming potential new councillors from our May meeting.

West Alvington Parish Council is a proactive council with some exciting projects in the pipeline. We look forward to another year of positive achievements and hope that everyone will join us in a Parish celebration of the Coronation of King Charles III in May.

005 Primary School Report: Katie Coombs West Alvington Church of England Academy

Head Teacher's Report for Parish Council, April 2023:

School Numbers

- We anticipate a full reception cohort in September 2023.
- Chestnut Nursery has 14 children aged 2-4.
- Hazel and Oak classes have 33 children aged 4 –11.

Staffing

Due to maternity leave and relocation within our Trust we have two new class teachers at West Alvington this year, Miss Cose and Mrs Hatch both of whom were previously based at All Saints Thurlestone and therefore know our hub family of schools well. Due to the internal promotion of Lesa Garside in Autumn 2022, there will be a new leadership structure in the hub from September 2023. Katie Coombe will take up the role of Head Teacher at All Saints Thurlestone West Alvington whilst Karen Southard, will be redeployed to the role of Head Teacher at Charleton. This year we have also been joined by Betty our new school dog, Betty is a 6-year-old Cairn Terrier, an ideal breed for a school pet due to their friendly, placid and patient nature.



Trust News

Over the last year our Trust family has continued to grow and now includes thirteen Primary Academies. Our School Trust serves a range of distinctive communities across Cornwall, Devon and Torbay. Several of the new schools in our Trust are small rural primaries providing us with opportunities to collaborate and learn.

Our academies take a collective responsibility for all children in our school Trust family and we do this by working together to enable children to flourish academically alongside the range of experiences and opportunities that we offer through the curriculum so that children's horizons are not limited, and aspirations and expectations are high.



Our academies are proud to work in an aligned way whilst recognising and celebrating the individual, distinctive communities that they serve.

Curriculum Enrichment

Our children have benefited from many memorable trips, experiences and visitors linked to the curriculum this year. Highlights include:

- Plymouth Aquarium and Paignton Zoo visits linked to our science curriculum.
- Visit to the fire station and a visit from the RNLI and Dog's Trust to learn valuable life skills.
- Bike ability and sailing sessions.
- Residential trips to Grenville House in Brixham and Forest and Beach at Beesands where our children climbed rocks, built rafts, explored caves, listened to the echo waves of bats, cooked outdoors and spent time with friends from our hub schools Charleton and All Saints Thurlestone.
- Visit from Martin Bush a local Artist who held workshops with the children.
- Our talented children have sung, danced and acted their way through a summer performance (Jonah and the Whale), Harvest Festival, Christmas Nativity and Easter Service.

Our Friends of West Alvington group continues to hold fundraising events to enable our children to have access to these wonderful experiences.



Community partnership

- Visit from our local MP Anthony Magnall who toured the school and met with pupils who had lots of questions for him!
- Community Jubilee event attended by the Parish Council who kindly gave a commemorative gift to each child, we all enjoyed the lawn games, delicious buffet and singing.
- Our children joined the Royal British Legion to lay a wreath on Remembrance Day.
- Mini Chestnuts family and toddler group meets regularly and is well supported by families from the community.
- Our children have benefited from the new play equipment facilitated by the Parish Council.

Awards and Grants

- Soil Association Bronze Award for meeting standards in sustainable food sources, healthy lunches and educating our children about food origin.
- We achieved a successful bid for £5300 from our school Trust to enable our children to access wider enrichment opportunities.



WEST ALVINGTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

006 Open Forum & General Discussion:

Cllr Lees thanked Cllr Judy Pearce for everything she has done for the parish over the past few years and wished her well with retirement.

007 Close of Meeting: At 19:50hrs the Chairman declared the meeting closed.

Signed as a true record: _____

Print Name & Date: _____

Agenda Items and Updates; where possible please submit to the Clerk by the last Wednesday in the month to ensure time for inclusion, circulation, and study. If a Council Member is unable to attend a meeting it would be appreciated if they could submit a brief précis of progress on their actions, if applicable, (to the Clerk for distribution) together with their apologies.

Distribution List: All WAPC Councillors. **For Information to:** County Cllr R Gilbert, Dist. Cllr Judy Pearce, Dist. Cllr Mark Long, Parish Tree Warden, WAPC Notice Board.