

**Minutes of the Ilchester Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday May 20th 2021
at the Town Hall, Ilchester at 7.30 pm.**

The meeting was held with strict Covid regulations, social distancing & masks being worn.

Present: Mrs. H. Panter, Chairman, Mr. G. Bushell, Mr. A. Litwinek, Mr. L. Midwinter, Miss J. Stapleton, Mr. H. Williams, and the Clerk to the Parish Council, Mr. P. Horsington.
Mr. G. Mottram. Chair of the Ilchester Town Trust also attended.

Apologies were received from Mr. S. Marsh, Mr. G. Pope, Mr. A. Capozzoli, District Councillor, Mr. N. Bloomfield, County Councillor, Mr. C. Hull, District Councillor, Mr. P. Rowsell, District Councillor, Mr. R. Graydon, CRO, RNAS, PC. Stefan Edwards & PCSO Tim Russell & Rev. B. Faulkner.

The Chairman opened the Meeting and welcomed all present.

The Minutes of the previous year's meeting held on April 11th 2019, having been circulated and with copies being available for the members of the public, were signed as a correct record.

Chairman's & Councillors' reports.

Chairman's report, as received -

Firstly I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their work and support over the last year and the Clerk . As you can imagine the last year has not been easy for anyone and we have been doing our best with zoom meetings. We didn't have an APM last year because of the lock down so I hope we Councillors can remember everything as we have continued to work hard for the village.

I will run through a few things with you before I go to my councillors for their reports.

Parking

This is a huge issue everywhere up and down the country but Ilchester is my only concern. We really do need to think of others when we are parking our cars on corners and on pavements . Graham Bushel will have more information on this subject and on numbers of cars going through the village.

Police

Well not a lot to say, it has been a while since we have seen anyone at our meetings but that could be a good thing as they are catching criminals or busy doing other things maybe like investigating or interviewing or whatever they do . We do get crime figures every month which is interesting and good for Ilchester our crime rate is very low. Also we have 2 new PCSO so keep a lookout , have a chat to them if you can.

Flooding

Well everything is on hold to do with the 303 flooding in 2013 – 2014. It is still apparently ongoing and the modelling is in progress. Although apparently a new modelling is in the pipe line so we wait and see and hopefully no more flooding while we wait.

Planning

Planning is always a challenge. Nothing is happening to do with the digester that gave us a headache 2 year ago, the traffic management plan is still in place. The holdup is to do with Phosphate in the soil, Tony can give you more details about this. So no tractors should be coming through the village or around us. The next planning issue we will have is the Country Park with 200 houses at the top end of the village at Fosse Way.

The planning of 150 houses at the top end of the village has been passed and is in the construction phase as we speak.

Dog Fouling

Well very much ongoing

Armistice

The Armistice service was celebrated but with a much small gathering because of Covid so hopefully this year (with our masks on) we can enjoy it better with teas and coffee in the Town Hall afterwards.

The year 2020 was amazing, with it being 100 year it was a special celebration for the village. We thanked Yeovilton camp for all their support and Bruce (the vicar) for all the work he put in to making this extra special for so many parishioners. The teas and coffee's in the Town hall after the service was very busy but good to see.

Surgery

We have Steve who is on the PPG so he will let us all know how things are going especially with the Covid vaccine. As we all know the doctors surgery was taken over by Symphony , we were told nothing would change . Things did change drastically .If you have a problem and not sure who to go to, please tell us or Steve Marsh no names will be given out . The rumour's that have been going around the village about the closure of *Ilchester* surgery isn't true , we contacted the manager and the reply was they have no intentions of closing the practice.

Mr. Bushell gave the following reports -

Finance

Preparing the yearly budgets / Precept.

The Precept for the year 2021-22 is £26,000 a £500.00 increase on last year.

Monitoring and producing the financial accounts in conjunction with the Clerk.

The 2020-21 spend was as expected with the main areas being the Clerk salary and expenses, mowing the public areas together with the planned Mead play area equipment, the refurbishment of the skate park and the purchase of one speed indicator device (VAS).

We started with a reserve of £31,682 and finished with a balance of £26,125.00 a reduction of £5,557.00 of the year to 31/03/20.

Speed Indicator Device (VAS)

Installation of the VAS in various locations in and around Ilchester.

We purchased the VAS in October 2020 at a cost of £3,060.00 gross but we were supported with £944.00 grant from SSDC. It has been installed 9 times since January 2021.

* 5 times in Northover where 85% of vehicles travelled between 25 - 35 mph.

* 2 times in Church Street where 82% of vehicles travelled between 20 - 30 mph.

* Once in Podimore where 78% of vehicles travelled between 30 - 50 mph.

* Once in Bridgehampton where 63% of vehicles travelled between 30 - 40 mph.

We are now considering other locations such as the Mead, High street, Lymington Road and by the Cheese factory.

Data will be passed onto the Police to help them target hotspots.

Other Highway matters

Mr. Bushell reported on behalf of Mr. Marsh, whose report highlighted the ongoing problems of parking, speeding and volume of traffic through Ilchester. Two Electric Charging hook up bays have been installed in the Limington road car park. Finally, the use of overweight HGVs through Ilchester are a constant problem.

Cemetery

Recently given the responsibility for the maintenance and repair work in the Cemetery.

Currently managing the rebuild of the central wall, which fell down in January, and a new pathway together with re-hanging the main gateway. Unfortunately this has generated an unexpected spend for the coming financial year.

Numerous other tasks have been identified with a survey now required of the perimeter walls. Note the cemetery is over 120 year old.

The Mead Play Area

Over the past year we purchased new play equipment and a new safety surface around the swings at a cost of £11,850.00 gross which was installed during October/November 2020. Mr. L. Midwinter reported that the new equipment at the Mead, has been well received by residents, and there is a new sign in place. There are a couple of works, painting & fencing that need attention.

The Ilchester Skate Park

This was refurbished at the end of last year at a cost of £2,760.00 inclusive of VAT, which is all reclaimed.

We are currently looking at the future as the skate park, at some point it will need replacing within the next 5 to 10 years at a cost of £100,000.00. Mr. Midwinter stated that the Skate park continues to be well used and thanked Miss S. Pack-Stone for keeping the area tidy.

It was noted that Mr. Liam Midwinter & Mr. Grahame Pope have both recently taken over the responsibility for the Mead Play Area and the Skate Park.

Allotments

Mr. H. Williams reported that the Parish Council now own the allotment area, all the allotments are taken, but sad to report that there had been break ins to sheds, but nothing had been taken and the Police have been informed.

Rights of Way

Mr. Litwinek informed the meeting that the Rights of Way were well used.

Youth Parish Councils

Miss Stapleton reported that during these difficult times due to Covid 19, no face to face meetings have been allowed to take place, this affecting the number of members, going from 12 down to only one. Recently online communications have picked up two more members.

The members have been helping the Schools in looking into a food bank, plus volunteers for the village as well as looking at Young Somerset's online Mental support for young persons.

Police matters

The Council noted that regular Crime stats are being received.

RNAS report as received from Mr. R. Graydon, CRO RNAS

Looking at the events of the last year, here is a brief report covering points that may be of interest to the Parish Council and any members of the public attending. A lot of the points have been covered in previous years but remain relevant.

Change of Command

Cdre Nick Tindal departed the air station in July last year and we know have Cdre Niall Griffin at the helm. He is no stranger to Yeovilton, and I am sure would be pleased to attend a PC meeting to introduce himself.

Low Flying

As has been discussed on several occasions, the air station has an ongoing obligation to maintain the currency of our aircrew. Necessarily some of our flying will be at low level and at night. We recognise fully the impact that this can have on our neighbours and take steps to ensure that any intrusion is kept to a minimum. Our crews are regularly reminded to vary their routes to mitigate the level of disturbance. If any member of our local community has concerns, either generally or what they may judge to be a specific problem, these should be addressed to me. My permanent telephone number is now 0300 1578069 and my email address robert.graydon422@mod.gov.uk. As ever, for specific enquiries, dates and times are crucial to enable us to investigate. At the Yeovilton Parish Council Annual Meeting, I was asked a question concerning a number of additional aircraft to be based at RNAS Yeovilton. There is certainly an aspiration to relocate the Bristol University Air Squadron on the southern site. However, a number of different locations are currently being considered and I would stress that currently it is nothing more than a possibility. As and when (or if) a plan emerges, I will brief out the relevant information to interested parties.

Air Day

As you know, last years RN International Air Day was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There will be no Air Day this year either and I have no news yet on what the plan is for next year.

Remembrance events

In recent years our focus has very much on supporting Remembrance events in Yeovil. We have had a change of Command since last November and I will make representations to him about a better presence in Ilchester.

Local Incidents

Many local residents will be aware of the issues after the first Lockdown last summer with high spirited disturbances outside local hostelrys. We accept that these were alcohol-related and that some of the disturbances would have been caused by personnel from the air station. Whilst the issue remains in the territory of the civilian Police, we have been active in re-briefing our people on expected standards of behaviour. Also, and when resources allow, we have deployed our own Military police to monitor the situation on selected dates. However, I should stress that we have no legal authority outside the air station, our only ultimate censure being to place a bar on our people visiting hospitality venues if the behaviour cannot be managed by local landlords own in-house checks and controls. Certainly this would be a last resort, it would be unpopular, and it would not be our wish to deprive any local businesses of regular custom. I am not aware of any issues since the recent opening up of outside venues and with clubs and other venues about to open again in Yeovil, there should be less pressure on pubs in the village.

County Councillor's report - Mr. N. Bloomfield - as received

It's certainly been a year like no other, and hopefully we can see some light at the end of the tunnel. Most of the last year has seen the county council deploy significant numbers of its staff into the front line battle against Covid. That continues with the vaccination program but to a lesser degree now. I'll admit to finding the public health briefings distressing at times, at the pandemic peak. Reports of the Somerset Health care system close to failing, the new cases and fatalities. I cannot overstate the massive efforts by the county council in using its significant resources to prop up an unprecedented demand on services.

You'll be fully aware that a consultation was undertaken to determine the shape of local government in Somerset for a generation. Two plans being put forward where the Secretary of State will make a decision on which plan to adopt. Having known for some months the timetable set out by the Secretary of State, the four district councils have now committed to a referendum, or an advisory poll. With a total price tag of up to £1 million the poll will report well after the consultation is closed. The secretary of state as indicated he will not change the timetable so we wait to see if this is £1 million of our money well spent.

I'm a firm believer in doing what the public want but ask when it's relevant. Not so much barn doors and bolting horses-the horse has long been turned into glue and the barn door hasn't been made yet. Whatever happens in a couple of years time things will be rather different. There should of been County Elections this month but the government extended the four year term to 5. I voted at county Council in favour of this action as it was sensible and the right thing to do. It was not done as some suggest to line our own pockets and to hide from the electorate. To say to the contrary is just playing politics and is what gives all politicians a bad name. People should have the courage of their convictions and not just jump on a passing bandwagon.

Even during Covid the normal business of local government continued albeit at a slower pace. So from parking issues to land acquisitions to schooling and childcare in empty schools things have carried on. The thing about being a county councillor is it doesn't give you magic powers but what it does do is give access to departments and officers in the authority. Over the last few years I've built relationships with many council officers and it's become very clear that is how things can be progressed much quicker. Someone once said to me that you don't win elections by attending meetings. If the only purpose is to win and not work, what's the point? Being a councillor is not a job, if done properly it becomes a huge part of your life. I've been county cllr 4 years and district cllr 6 years. I'm also chairman of Martock Parish Council. The lower down you go in local government the more you can achieve. It's ironic an unpaid group of Parish Cllrs can actually achieve more than an MP and that's a message that needs to be hammered home. Parish councils can do so much locally and shouldn't be afraid to do so.

District Councillors' report as received from C. Hull, A. Capozzoli & P. Rowsell New Unitary Authority Proposals

An 'advisory resident's poll with respect to this is imminent, which you will soon be receiving notification of. It should be concluded by June 7s and we are expecting the Secretary of State's decision mid/late-Summer. Just a reminder of the political preferences in the county for this, in terms of how elected representatives responded: For the 'stronger Somerset case; creating twin unitary Authorities on an East/West basis: 159. for the 'One-Somerset ; creatng a single unitary authority for the entire County: 56. All three of your District Councillors voted for 'Stronger Somersesf. The majority who voted for 'One Somerset' are serving County Councillors. Clearly, 75% of elected councillors from across the county representing their varied communities does, at least give the twin unitary proposal a fair degree of democratic legitimacy. We all feel that there are more opportunities than threats contained within the twin unitary approach, not least in tackling the pressing problems experienced by adult social care and children's services. The devil, as ever, will be in the detail. It is too early to be speculating on exactly where and with whom specific responsibilities would lie, but the underlying approach agreed on by all is to keep key decision-making processes as locally based as possible. Planning The planning department is still under exceptional strain, as you are no doubt aware. Whilst local area committees are now beginning to reconvene after several months off, this is still monthly via zoom. However, many key officer personnel, including those with in depth and specialist knowledge of our patch, have sadly left or will be doing so shortly. Factor in Covid19, the delays created by the Phosphates issue, uncertainty over the Government's 'new revised' planning ideas and the looming unitary decision and we are still left with a situation that can only politely be described as 'challenging.

You should have been sent the S-year housing supply document from the council which gives a good indication of the current state of play, and further supporting materials can be found on the SSDC website. The debate and focus now is as much concerned with housing 'type'as it is to 'numbers'. Due to the ageing demographic of the county and pressing environmental concerns, along with other predominantly rural areas there is a recognition that smaller scale developments with a minimal carbon footprint (particularly reference transport) are perhaps the optimum way to meet local need. Another polite reminder on a procedural issue; kindly note that it is always wise for us elected members to wait for the officer's report before we add any considered comments on individual planning applications. Due to the current situation, these reports are taking longer to finalise than usual and so we thank you on behalf of the council for your continued patience.

Environment We are delighted that the electric car charging points are now installed in Ilchester and will be monitoring their usage closely. With further roll-outs expected across the county this is a very positive development that will lessen our dependence on fossil fuels, creating cleaner air. However, the biggest barrier to electrification remains cost, and SSDC are shortly to conclude a consultation into an electric car-share scheme for small communities as one way of mitigating thing which does hold some promise. The electric scooter in Yeovil and Chard appear to be gaining in popularity, especially with Summer approaching although we are mindful that walking, cycling and public transport should always be promoted first. Transport is a county council issue at present but we remain keen to establish the extent of local need for local bus services and alternative routes.

The Parish tree planting scheme was highly popular and I shall be encouraging further such schemes in the future. Somerset lags a long way behind other predominantly rural counties in terms of tree cover, and if ever there was an easy and popular win for any new unitary authorities then this is surely it. The Environment Champion scheme is progressing well, and several new individuals with exciting ideas have recently volunteered. Some are already having a significant impact in their communities, engaged on projects that bring people of all ages together and receiving near unanimous support. Once we all 'open up' I suspect there will be many productive face-to-face meetings over the next year which should certainly give all the micro-schemes under consideration a great boost. Council Tax Support The new support scheme for South Somerset residents should make it far easier for households in straitened financial circumstances to manage their payments more easily. The Scrutiny committee and officers have worked over the year to make this fit for purpose. When the furlough scheme is finally ended by the Government, we anticipate there will be many additional households experiencing financial distress, so this reform is timely.

Meetings The 'Hybrid' model, as with the rest of the country is emerging as the favoured option reference the future holding of all council meetings. Remote 'Zoom', Teams' etc. technological platforms have worked very well for some bodies and committees, less so for others. It is felt that contentious large planning decisions, for example, may be more efficaciously dealt with via the traditional face-to-face model, whereas sub-committee work actually benefits from meeting remotely, not least environmentally and in terms of operating costs. As we approach Summer, the wish to re-establish the human interactions of meeting face to face is only natural. We've all been cooped up a long time. However, we would suggest that the option of meeting remotely should always be available, and mindful of those who find attending in person problematic, whether due to distance, health or mobility issues. And, perhaps, recognise that we might all feel differently about meeting again in the community or village hall on a cold, dark, wet/snowy evening in January or February compared to a balmy June or July, knowing that the remote option is always available.

Reports from Village Organisations.

Ilchester Town Trust

Mr. G. Mottram gave a report on the past year of the Town Trust activities, these included

The Trust, like many other businesses across the country, had to close its doors for much of 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. We were sadly unable to hold the sports activities, classes, social events, and meetings that many of the local community and beyond rely on.

During lock down all standard regulatory maintenance and inspection routines were carried out at both the Town Hall and the Pavilion. In addition, the Pavilion had a kitchen refurbishment, and the Hall had a few smaller refurbs, including internal repairs caused by an external leak. The Hall has also had a new electronic door locking system installed.

A meeting was held in early 2021 to discuss the rebuilding of the Market Cross on the Green outside of the Town Hall. The Architects of the Project have informed The Trust that because the Market Cross has collapsed once and has also been knocked down, both in fairly recent years, a metal structure is required in the centre of the Market Cross to act as a "backbone" when it is rebuilt. We were also informed that, along with the many damaged ham stones, some of the carved stones were cut on the wrong grain, and also need replacing. Once the support post and replacement stones are ready for shipment to Ilchester, work will begin on the rebuild of the Grade II Market Cross. It is hoped this will start in the summer months and be complete by the autumn.

The Trust has met with an Inspector of Ancient Monuments from Historic England, with a view to turn the Roman Cemetery into a public space for people to enjoy. A management plan will be used to guide the Trust through the process and The Trust is being supported by Historic England throughout the Project.

The Trust now has a new Clerk with Mrs. Louise Davis, being succeeded by Mrs. Maxine Read.

Mr. Mottram was thanked for his report.

IDCA report as received from Mr. P. Simpson, Chair of IDCA

General: Our last major function was in December 2019. This was a joint venture with Revd. Bruce Faulkner and consisted of a procession through Ilchester and the turning on of the Christmas tree lights outside the Town Hall.

Since then, there have been only 3 notable events: these being -

Colouring competition Dec 2020, Valentine's Day poems (Feb 2021) & Easter Bunny hunt (Mar-Apr 2021). All three were fairly small affairs designed to give residents something different to the usual lock down routine.

Future.

We are hoping to get back to the usual routine routine once lock down is eased, however, lack of volunteers will be a problem as well as new Chapter 8 requirements requiring even more resources.

The IDCA AGM is to be held on June 7th 2021 and hopefully, we'll get a better turn out than usual.

Newsletter.

We managed to get a winter edition out, however, there has been none since due to the following reasons: No access to the town hall during lock down. The printer we use now requires an expensive part replaced & I have not yet received enough content to compile a newsletter. The future of the newsletter will be in digital form, we managed to put a copy of the winter edition onto our webpage hosted on your website and put a copy on to our Face book page. It, however, is acknowledged that some still wish to be able to obtain the printed copy, and this will remain an option.

IRINEC

The Clerk reported that the Charity continues to provide Relief in Need to residents of Ilchester and secondly assist with Grants to students either by assisting transport costs or grants each term to those attending Higher Education.

Ilchester Community Primary School: Report from Mr. N. Heath -as received

This has been the most challenging year for our school in the 15 years I have been involved. Covid, associated lockdowns and managing children's return have all brought about new, unforeseen challenges. Throughout this period our school has remained open; in fact we have been open for more time over the past twelve months than at any previous point; keeping school open during the Easter break of 2020 for the children of key workers to enable them to undertake their vital roles.

In total more than 150 children attended school whilst we were partially open; leaving us with the dual roles of providing education for children in person and supporting those parents for whom home school became a daily reality. Thanks to the generosity of IRINEC we were able to provide laptop devices and internet connections to a number of our local families; no Primary School age child in Ilchester missed out on the opportunity to engage with remote learning through a lack of technology.

Our children have shown remarkable resilience and it was a joy to be able to welcome them back to school on March 8th. Careful curriculum planning and the use of recovery materials have allowed us to help children rebuild their connections and rediscover their inter-personal skills. The impact of enforced isolation on children should not be underestimated.

Our parents have been fantastic throughout; having to take ten days at home when a positive case is found in your child's class is both a worry and hugely disruptive. Staff too have shown integrity and great dedication in the way that they have gone about their work; their selflessness has allowed school to continue to function and given children opportunities to continue to learn and grow during this period. As we emerge for this period of disconnection I look forward once again to our children re-joining local events and seek more than ever to put our school in the heart of our community.

St Mary Major PCC report - as received from Rev. B. Faulkner

What do we say about 2020? All started well and then there began rumours of an epidemic, a flu-like bug which quickly turned into a pandemic with severe consequences for all nations.

The government considered a complete closure of places of worship whilst everyone worked out what ways we could live life safely whilst research into possible vaccines began. Soon risk assessments followed and our churches became demarcated with rows in use and social distance stickers applied here and there.

Face covers were to be worn; some are better at this than others and how the glasses steam up. Singing was banned for the year, save for a possibility to stand in the cold outdoors at Christmas to sing carols.

But this has not stopped us being the church in Ilchester and Northover; after all being church is more than services in the building on a Sunday. The Rector organised the Ilchester District Community Volunteers to ensure that every part of the parish had volunteers ready and prepared to help those in need with shopping and the like. Over the year we worked with referrals from family members worried for a relative, with Village Agents and the YDC Hospital Trust to assist in every way possible.

In 2020 there were 20 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll eligible to vote for PCC members. As with most all charities the PCC were severely restricted from their fundraising activities and revenues were down. Reserves are for rainy days, and did it pour in 2020! As such, the PCC dug into reserves to the tune of £7,500. After an 18 month journey the churchyard associated with the closed church of St Andrew's Northover was itself closed for further burials by an Order in Council.

As well as our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of the journey through life. Through baptism we thank God for the gift of life, in marriage public vows are exchanged with God's blessing, and through funeral services friends and family give thanks for the life which is now complete in this world and to commend the person into God's keeping. We held 2 baptisms, no weddings (all cancelled or postponed due to Covid-19) and 4 funerals in 2020.

The *harvest festival service* was still held and collections of produce were taken up and delivered to the local food bank – The Lord's Larder in Yeovil. Thankfully, it was still possible for the village to mark Remembrance although on a much reduced size of gathering and outside alone at the memorial. At Christmas we still managed to hold a lessons and carols service and Communion was celebrated on Christmas.

Other issues.

There were none raised and Mrs. Panter thanked those present and the meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Signed.

Date.