

Hatherleigh Town Council Chair Report May 2018

Welcome everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting 2018. I present this report having completed a second year as chair of this Town Council and Mayor of Hatherleigh. And once again I hope everyone feels my position in these roles have been satisfactory.

As Mayor for a 2nd year I decided to attend less far flung town visits concentrating on giving my time to the various projects we're dealing with here. Some events which I did attend were mayoral fundraisers in Okehampton and Torrington for North Devon Hospice and the FORCE cancer charity. More local events were Carnival Day judging and the school Town Crier competition. I also went on the Royal Oke 'special' train day away organised by OkeRail to Oxford and Stratford-upon-Avon (with expenses unclaimed!).

This report is a brief review of the past years tasks, issues and achievements undertaken by this Town Council team. For the majority of the time we have consisted of only 8 members though we now welcome 2 new Councillors onboard giving us a full compliment for the future year.

If I can begin with an overarching issue that often dominates topics of conversation – planning. This year sees two major planning applications bringing our attention. The first being the proposed market development. Kingswood Homes approached this Council and West Devon Borough Council and began engaging in pre-application discussions and meetings; they also held a public consultation.

Their proposal triggered the owners to close their business operations of weekly livestock auctions, historically a significant feature of the life of this town. And of course led us to have much discussion (and some disagreement) on what the Councils' position and involvement should be with the challenge to preserve the Tuesday pannier market. With our position decided as facilitators, a working group was formed to look at the key issues as they arise and help bring the different parties together for discussion.

The whole challenge has been more straightforward than imagined, with Kingswood Homes keen to see the market continue with as least disruption as possible; Ruby Country becoming the temporary manager of the market; and the fur/feather and bric a brac auction continuing under new management. We still await formal submission of their full planning application.

The other large planning proposal is for a housing development on Runnon Moor. The whole West Devon / South Hams region is currently undergoing a strategic planning review, called the *Joint Local Plan*, this includes an assessment of how legal and sound WDBC 5 year housing supply stands. The conclusion of this review will likely be a factor in the decision of the Runnon Moor application. The Town Council submitted its disapproval to WDBC and the JLP consultation phase, highlighting that with the market development plans this would bring unsustainable housing growth in too short a time frame for our small town.

Other major town issues is the traffic and parking topic. The traffic order has moved a few steps closer with Councillors spending time compiling / creating / submitting a comprehensive account in a suitable format, for the Devon County Council traffic team, of the parking issues and our suggested requests for appropriate restrictions. This hasn't led

into a full traffic order as was initially expected, but we are told the 'list' will likely be broken down into blocks of work. Some of the less controversial issues have recently been completed, ie the loading bays and new yellow lines around town.

For the benefit of new Councillors and the room it should be noted that our policy at present is that proceeding towards the full Traffic Order is considered dependant on the acquirement of a free car park. The view being an alternative should be provided if restrictions and penalties are introduced.

Negotiations have been continuing with West Devon Borough Council over a suitable arrangement for any 'free' car park. We welcomed Cathy Aubertins' attendance to our June meeting which gave us a better understanding of WDBC position, we have maintained dialogue, obtained financial figures, and after reviewing the detail created a proposal whereby we compensate WDBC for lost revenue and they retain ownership and upkeep. The situation seems positive and we would hope to engage in some form of contract in the coming months.

One item of particular note this year has seen investigations begin on a future air ambulance night landing site. Focus had been on the cricket club but due to problems and costs associated with rerouting electric cables and delays to their clubhouse extension attention switched to the football club pitch. A special thanks must go to Mrs Munn who kindly organised a fundraising quiz night which received great support.

Another outside organisation we help to support is OkeRail and its campaign continued this year spurred on with good news that the Government is looking favourably at the Devon Northern line reinstatement.

Island Park has seen a completion to the picnic area with two concrete picnic benches and two granite seats installed. We owe particular gratitude to the Moor Management Committee for the generous donation towards this equipment and to Mr Horn of the skatepark group for facilitating the fund request. Following an unfortunate graffiti attack to the new items we ensured to coat the seats and tables with a top spec anti graffiti product and looked at the need for (though decided against) CCTV of the area.

The town has seen the replacement of some of its lampposts turning the night street light glow from amber to white. And in order to continue hanging the flower baskets in summer new brackets have been fitted.

Some smaller items of interest to report are the tree-ring being re-discovered - its case given a revamp and a new home found on the Community Centre wall. And the war memorial in the churchyard has been listed as having 'special architectural interest'.

The summer brought the recurrent problem of how to deal with weeds and some 'weed pull' days took place which a few residents helped with. This matter is also helped by some householders taking the time to keep their street vicinity weed and litter free, thank you.

A small word on our general housekeeping affairs. We made the decision to keep the town precept the same this year on account of predicted raises of 4.99% for Devon County Council and 2.99% for West Devon Borough Council. We have changed our insurance company from AON to BHIB. We're investigating the idea of online banking. We've

completed an asset review and update. And our burial fees have been reviewed and increased in line with other parishes.

An important highlight to note this year has been the introduction of our first volunteer Road Warden. I'm sure I speak for full Council in offering appreciation and gratitude to Mr Farley. He deals with any drain issues we throw at him with a swift, thorough response. Not content with this role he also offered to become Hatherleighs Snow Warden, just in time for our two episodes of snow fall. Mr Farley has also created Hatherleighs first Emergency Extreme Weather Plan and reviewed the grit bin situation.

Thanks and appreciation must go to Mr Cole for garden maintenance, Mrs Rewse for cleaning toilets, Mr Edwards for strimming small areas and particularly Mr Moorcroft for litter picking. We felt considering Mr Moorcrofts long standing commitment to keeping the entire area in and around Island Park litter free often over and above what is required he should receive a gift as a token of our appreciation.

This is also an opportunity to thank the many groups in Hatherleigh for keeping our traditions alive and us all entertained – the Silver Band, Carnival Committee, Festival Committee, the Players, Rotary Club, Community Centre Trustees, Parish Pump, Walruses and many more. The Cricket, Football and Bowls clubs also provide great sports facilities and encourage young and old to engage in sport.

That is said in mind of the sad and worrying trend developing of the lack of people willing to step forward and volunteer to help some long standing groups in Hatherleigh. The Ruby Run, Walruses and the Parish Pump are all in critical need of volunteer support and may disappear in future.

And finally bringing focus back to the Council I'd like to end with a few thanks yous. Although I feel we're a team, as individuals we do take on board particular tasks. Firstly to Rosemary as exemplary clerk and for her invaluable advice and support. Rachel for being deputy. Deb for keeping the footpaths under watchful eye. Claire for her time attending Destination meetings and reporting potholes. Andrea for her time attending Community Centre meetings. Ian with the lights committee. Peter for his time over the air ambulance project and cleaning road signs. And Ben for festival reports.

And in particular thank you to our WDBC representative Patrick Kimber for all his help, advice and support.

Clare Tyson
Chairman
May 8th 2018