

Hatherleigh Town Council Chair Report May 2021

As I wrote my report last year we were in the grip of a national lockdown due to the Covid-19 virus, a full year later we have just passed a milestone in the relaxing of restrictions following a successful vaccine roll out, and set for complete release of lockdown on June 21st.

And once again considering the impracticalities of face to face meetings we will hold our Town Council AGM remotely over Zoom, though this year we include our Annual Parish Meeting. We are holding this a week earlier than usual taking in an advance of the change in law after May 7th which will see the return to legally binding face to face meetings.

The impact of covid in this community has been huge for some and we have lost some well respected individuals, for others it has meant adjustment to work, family life and for businesses. We had our contractors on furlough for some of the time but I'm pleased to say the episode has caused little disruption for council business as we all adapted well to our online meetings over Zoom call.

On behalf of the council we pay tribute to the Covid-19 volunteer group who helped those vulnerable residents needing help with shopping and supplies. As reported last month this is now being wound down.

This report marks my 5th year as Mayor! And so another year where I sum up the range of topics and issues Hatherleigh Town Council has dealt with.

To begin with, this year we welcomed new Councillors Paul Bolland, Callum Entwistle and Ellie Holland, following resignations from Netty Holwill and Iain Crockatt.

Street Caretaker

Following the introduction of a new 'street caretaker' role, I'm pleased to report this has been a great success with Chris Peters keeping the town looking clean and tidy, and taking on a range of maintenance and repair tasks.

Mr Peters has now being trained as an official Routine Playpark Inspector and has also volunteered to take on the role of volunteer Road & Snow Warden when covid restrictions allow for training to resume. We will say goodbye and thank you to Stefan Farley who wants to step down after his several years of service.

Recreations Areas

The Toddler Park in the Community Centre has now been completely refurbished and looking fantastic with new equipment, safer surfacing, and new fencing. This is all thanks to Cllr. Donna Lewis and Adam Hill running the project and fundraising campaign.

At Island Park we had a new wooden fence installed next to the skate park. And we are currently investigating options and quotes for updating some of the equipment, particularly the zip wire following the Annual RoSPA Safety Report.

Town Survey

Following a 'High St Support Grant' from West Devon Borough Council we undertook a consultation project seeking views from town centre businesses on the most beneficial way to utilise the grant to support town businesses. From the survey two main targets were identified – a Hatherleigh website and better signage. A working group has been formed to take this forward.

Hatherleigh Market

The development on the market site has been making steady progress and we now have a number of newly occupied houses bringing an increase in residents to the town. We saw a slight planning

amendment to the scheme and were again consulted on the naming of three remaining streets. The Tuesday market has had its challenges this year due to lockdown restriction but has continued to operate when regulations allowed. In recent weeks we've learnt the developer is bringing forward the phased build of the new market area and demolition of the last old market building is set to begin in June. The Tuesday market will move to a temporary marquee home. And our working group continues to offer what support it can to help the market manager – at which point I will say on behalf of the council and town we express our thanks and gratitude to Debbie Kimber for her sterling efforts in keeping the towns market ticking along through this very difficult period.

Environment

A project in its early stages is to see the council formally adopt a community orchard started some 25 years ago by George Tucker. This will ensure its future management is catered for.

And recently we have begun investigations into how we can increase the number of allotments for the town.

The Jubilee footpath is awaiting works to be started on the replacement of the metal fence, a project funded by working in partnership with Devon County Council.

More generally we have continued to liaise with Devon County Council and West Devon Borough Council on maintenance matters including: works to footpaths; traffic issues; litter and dog bins. We have meetings planned this month with WDBC and DCC to highlight a number of road safety concerns - for the road from Bridge St to the market; the pavement outside the vets; and the road towards Island Park.

Support

Donations have been awarded to Hatherleigh Primary School to support the childrens IT equipment; to Okehampton Community Transport and to the ladies who plant the flower beds in the Town Square.

We continued our support to groups *OkeRail* and *Bude Connect* in the campaign to see a return to a regular rail service for the region. And this year brought a momentous decision by Government to fund network improvements between Okehampton and Exeter. Following this the focus now switches to lobbying bus companies to improve service connectivity.

Finally ...

On behalf of all Councillors, thanks and appreciation to Rosemary our clerk for her invaluable advice and support; to Mr Cole, Mrs Rewse, Mr Moorcroft, Mr Peters for all their work keeping Hatherleigh clean and tidy and looking its best.

Thank you to the many groups and individuals in Hatherleigh volunteering their time to keep Hatherleigh such a safe, fit, lively place to live.

And to repeat what I said last year, a thank you to all councillors, remembering this is a volunteer role, for their commitment to the council and attendance as representatives in other organisations: Moor Management, OkeRail, Community Centre, Sportsfield, Allotment Association, Parish Path Scheme, Northern Parish Link, and Environment Forum.

Clare Tyson
Chairman /Mayor
May 4th 2021