

Report of the Verwood Town Assembly held in the Council Offices, Vicarage Road, Verwood, on Tuesday 4th May, 2010 at 7.30p.m.

1. The Chair was taken by the Mayor of Verwood Town Council Cllr. Michael Dolan who was supported by 14 Members of the Town Council.

2. The Mayor opened the proceedings by welcoming Cllr. Mrs. P. Reynolds, Chairman, East Dorset District Council, Town Councillors, Staff, Mr. Duncan Flint, Dorset 2012 Public Relations Officer and 25 members of the public. The Mayor invited members of the Town Council to stand and introduce themselves to the members of the public.

3. **Statement of Accounts 2009/10.**

A summary of the Town Council's accounts for the year ended 31st March 2010, which had not yet been audited, were submitted and duly accepted.

4. **Mayor's Report.**

During my term as Mayor the Town of Verwood and Three Legged Cross has shown itself again to be a rich community of initiative, goodwill and talent. We have exceeded our reputation as one of the most desirable towns in the County and we have continued to welcome those who have come here to live, whilst keeping strong ties to our rich heritage.

Of course, the recession has taken its toll on a few local businesses and there have been one or two building developments which have suffered a hiatus but these have been far outweighed by the number of new businesses and improvements to the Town.

The Verwood Hub, which had its share of controversy at the beginning, is continuing to improve as an excellent venue for many community events as well as high quality entertainment; I have had many expressions of admiration from Mayors across Dorset. The Verwood Town Plan has grown from a small handful of committed volunteers to a large well-run project and is on track to develop a well thought out vision for the future, with widespread support from across the community. An Allotments Association has been formed and the Town Council have made great efforts over the year to support it and acquire a suitable site.

The Verwood Leisure Centre and the facilities at Potterne Park continue to be well used and have contributed greatly to the wide variety of activities on offer to all people. There is still a degree of uncertainty regarding the future of the Morrisons development but the Town and District Councils are working together to ensure that Verwood will be well placed to receive the maximum community benefit. There are so many great things that have come into being this year, far too many to list them all, but among them I will mention the excellent Sensory Garden at the Verwood Day Centre; the superb Hillside Pre School Centre; the admirable housing development at Montrose; the opening of the extended Town Council Help Centre; the spectacular Christmas Extravaganza which takes place on Ferrett Green an area which is once again making this a busy and welcoming town centre.

Three Legged Cross has been the venue for three meetings of the Town Council in the Village Hall; it is always good to include this lovely village in our 'circuit'. Charlotte's Place, the excellent play area for younger children, is into its third year and is rightly very popular, and the earlier closures of the Filling Station and the Woodcutters Arms pub are now undergoing a metamorphosis into new assets for the area. The Three Legged Cross Fun Day has grown yet again and is an excellent example of what can be achieved by a community determined to celebrate itself.

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In July last year, Verwood was selected to be the host town for the BBC Radio 4 programme Any Questions. This was held in the Methodist Church which was celebrating its Centenary in Verwood. The event was well attended and gave a commendable showing for the characteristic humour and wisdom of the Town.

We suffered the loss of one of our young men last November whilst on active service in Afghanistan. It was particularly poignant that the news of Philip's death reached the Town on the morning of our Remembrance Service. Naturally this was a devastating loss for his family, and one which was keenly felt right across the Town. The response across the community and beyond was commendable; Rifleman Philip Allen's name is added to those of the brave men and women on the War Memorial for future generations to see and pay their respect.

We continue to enjoy the lowest crime rate in Dorset, which itself has one of the lowest crime rates in the country. This is due to both the excellent work done by our Police Officers, with the valuable Police Community Support Officers, and the exceptional integrity of all who live in the Town. It is one of our defining characteristics that we all look to the wellbeing of the Town and each other. Indeed, as I have had over the year the privilege of meeting so many people in the Town, it is clear that there are many people who go out of their way to help others, without the need for recognition or reward.

In October 2009, we held a Civic Service in St Michael and All Angels church which was attended by many civic dignitaries across Dorset as well as a large number of people from the Town. All the Verwood and Three Legged Cross churches took part in the service. This event showed with outstanding clarity the strength of togetherness and mutual respect that we have in the Town. The many letters and messages of appreciation from visitors and residents alike made me, as Mayor, very proud indeed of you all.

By the end of my year I will have been privileged to represent Verwood and Three Legged Cross at something like forty occasions outside the Town as well as over sixty local events! Verwood and Three Legged Cross is such a beautiful place that it has been so very easy to speak highly of the Town to Mayors and Civic Dignitaries in Dorset and Hampshire. In the Town, there are so many groups, societies, events and activities that there is plenty to do for everyone; your hospitality has been overwhelming.

It has been a great privilege to serve on your Town Council as Councillor and Chairman. The Council has worked very hard to meet its obligations fairly and to uphold the interests of the people of the Town. Party politics do not play a role at this level of local government and at Town level we do not receive any recompense or expenses. It is our primary concern that the revenue from local taxation is spent in the most prudent way to benefit the whole community. The Town Council staff, led by Val Bright, has also worked extremely hard all year; the service they provide to all the people of the Town as well as making sure that we work and integrate well with other towns and the District Council cannot be overstated. Thank you from Judith and myself for the great honour of representing you all as Mayor and Mayoress; your support has been invaluable and inspiring.

5. **Chairmen's Reports.**

The respective Chairmen of the Town Council's Committee's submitted their reports, giving a brief resume of their activities during the year as follows:-

Finance and General Purposes Committee

The main tasks of the Finance & General Purposes Committee are

- To monitor Council income and expenditure
- To deal with correspondence
- To consider highway matters

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- Most importantly, to receive and consider annual estimates from the other spending committees and make recommendations for the ensuing year's precept.

The committee has 12 members and meets 11 times a year.

Mr. Trevor Steel was appointed Internal Auditor due to the retirement of Mr. Mike Preston. The Town Council extension to the Help Centre was opened in September, the money for this had been allocated over some years into a fund. Members of the public who have visited the office have said what a pleasant atmosphere there is and a better environment for the staff.

A Working Party was set up to investigate the Lengthsman Scheme after a letter from Dorset County Council was sent. The Working Party has met three times and their report will be considered by this Committee when completed.

The Town Council after over 80% of the Councillors were trained, resolved to take on the Power of Well Being in December after producing a Community Engagement Statement of Intent. The Town Clerk also had to be trained and complete section 7 for the Certificate in Local Government Administration (CiLCA)

Quotations were sought for the Grounds Maintenance Contract for land owned by the Town Council and Dorset Works Organisation was awarded the contract for three years.

Quotations for a new boiler for the Town Council Offices were sought as the old boiler was not energy efficient. This has now been installed.

Consideration was given by the Committee on public participation at meetings and it was agreed no changes would take place.

A request was made for a flag pole to be erected and after consideration Members felt that a pole should be attached to the Town Council Offices. This has now been erected.

Members considered Estimates for Expenditure and the Council's spending requirement for 2010/2011 is £262,942. The charge for a Band D property has increased by £1.55 for the next financial year. This represents a basic Council Tax charge for a Band D property of £41.97 (2009/2010 - £40.42). The Town Council is continuing their commitment to the Verwood Hub Community Centre & the Verwood Community Association and 13 other clubs and societies through the Grant Aid system.

Due to the extreme winter weather last year discussion took place regarding the provision of grit bins around the main shopping area of Verwood and the Clerk was asked to investigate this matter with Dorset County Council.

A request was made for a memorial seat for Rifleman Phillip Allen to be erected on Ferrett Green which was agreed. Also an appeal to the public for funds for a memorial plaque with Rifleman Allen's name on was made, which has been added to the War Memorial at St. Michael & All Angels Church.

The Risk Management Statement was reviewed, as it is annually.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) have provided a new model of Standing Orders. The Committee have now set up a Working Party to compare them with the Council's existing ones and provide recommendations to the Committee.

The Committee commented on the provision of bus routes to the East Dorset Community Partnership – Traffic and Transport Themed Action Group.

The Amenities Committee agreed that three of the roundabouts in Verwood should be taken over by the Town Council and this Committee have considered quotations for the work to be done.

Councillor B. Mortimer

Chairman Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Amenities Committee

The Amenities Committee is responsible for managing and maintaining all the green spaces and amenity land that Verwood Town Council owns. It has met four times this year, as usual.

Allotments

The committee has worked in partnership with the Allotment Society throughout the year and has continued to investigate the availability of land for allotments. Two pieces of land were considered; one on Blackmoor Road opposite the Ebblake Industrial Estate and one adjacent to Emmanuel Middle School. The Blackmoor Road land, which is owned by the District Council, is available now and was investigated further. However the Allotment Society has now decided that it would prefer to wait until the current lease expires on the Emmanuel site, which is owned by the County Council. On the request of my committee, £10,000 has been added to the amenities fund. This fund could be used towards the provision of allotments in future.

Cemetery

No major work has been needed in the Cemetery over the past year, although a small amount of tree work was done in the autumn. The memorials were safety checked in the summer – this checking is done every three years. The charges were reviewed and some were raised from the 1st April by a modest amount in line with inflation. These charges are income for the Town Council which can be offset against our precept. We continue to offer much lower charges for Town Residents.

Recreation Grounds and Open Spaces

All our recreation grounds and open spaces remain in good condition as a result of our planned maintenance throughout the year.

A new seat has been sited at the ‘Doorstep Green’ in Three Legged Cross and an additional picnic table has been installed in the play area adjacent to the Verwood Memorial Hall.

We have investigated sponsorship of our roundabouts, but this has proved not to be commercially viable. In the coming year, we plan to plant three of them with low maintenance shrubs to further improve the appearance of our town at minimal cost.

A tiered planter was installed opposite the green at the end of Edmondsham Road throughout the summer and moved to the forecourt of the Town Council for the winter. It will be replanted and moved back to its summer position soon.

In addition to their primary use for informal recreation, a small number of functions are held on our Recreation Grounds during the year:

- The annual Companion Dog Show on the Verwood Recreation Ground, organised
- by the Twinning Association
- Story telling on the Verwood Recreation Ground in summer 2009, organised by Banardos
- A Fun Day on the Three Legged Cross Recreation Ground in August, organised by our Police Community Support Officer.

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- A summer fete on the Verwood Recreation Ground, organised by St. Michael and All Angels Church, is planned for June 2010

I should like to mention our contractors for the excellent and professional job which they do to maintain Verwood & Three Legged Cross as a green and pleasant place, and also those contractors who carry out emergency maintenance at short notice.

I should also like to thank my committee for working hard to maintain the high quality of amenities within the town of Verwood & Three Legged Cross.

Lastly I should like to thank Val Bright and her team, Joyce Gaskell & Rosie Kingsnorth for their professional advice, good humour and for assisting me and my committee.

Councillor V.Redpath
Chairman, Amenities Committee.

Plans Consultative Committee.

Our role is to scrutinise planning applications which affect the Civil Parish and to forward our comments to the Local Planning Authority.

In my 2009 report I stated that Verwood is tightly constrained by Green Belt policy and that development had taken place within the urban area up to the edges of the green belt, leaving little opportunity for further new dwellings. It was anticipated at the time that as demand increased we should expect to see more applications from developers for high level blocks of flats but that some delay could be expected due to the effect of the recession on the housing market.

While the economy is emerging from recession, we have not yet seen any appreciable affect locally on applications for new developments. The number of plans coming before us in the past year was as low as 100, of which we objected to 19. The largest was for the 40 bed care home to the rear of the Bethel Chapel in Ringwood Road which is now under way. We raised no objection to the original proposal but did to some minor amendments where we had concerns for the amenities of neighbouring residents.

I wish to thank the Town Clerk, Val Bright and her team, Joyce Gaskell and Rosie Kingsnorth, for their professional advice and hard work in supporting the Committee and my fellow members for their dedication and good humour.

Cllr. Peter Baker
Chairman, Plans Consultative Committee

6. The Mayor presented the allocated Grant Aid cheques for 2010/2011 to the various organisations.
7. Mr. Duncan Flint, Dorset 2012 Public Relations Officer gave a presentation on ‘Dorset 2012, An Olympic Update, what does it mean for Dorset?’ He explained that the Olympic Games being held in the United Kingdom were not just for elite sport but about what opportunities and benefits there would be for Dorset in the long term as one of the venues. The Games would promote Dorset as a great place to visit, to live in, for local businesses and to invest in and it was estimated that up to £400 million would be invested in Dorset because of the Games. He spoke about the cultural Olympian core values which included:
 - i) welcoming the world;
 - ii) inspiring young people;
 - iii) delivering a legacy.

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Mr. Flint gave details of the timescale of the Games which would run from July 2012 to September 2012 and information on the Torch Relay which would take place over 60-80 days with 3 days guaranteed in the South West region. Information was also given on The Inspire Mark Programme which recognises outstanding non-commercial projects and events inspired by the Games and sport, culture, education, sustainability, volunteering and business opportunities all feature. The key messages are that the eyes of the world will be on the UK and Dorset, that the Olympic Games offers the UK and Dorset the opportunity of a lifetime to promote and celebrate the richness and diversity of our culture. Dorset is already working together to get the most from the Games and put Dorset's best foot forward.

The Mayor thanked Mr. Flint for attending the meeting and for his interesting and informative presentation.

8. Questions.

A question was asked why cattle grids had been put in place near the Cross Keys Public House at Mannington. Information was given that the Forestry Commission would be grazing cattle in the area in the near future.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.25p.m.

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Mayor