

## LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON FRIDAY 19 APRIL 2024 AT THE WOODMEAD HALLS

#### 1. **Introductions and welcome from the mayor – Cllr D. Sarson**

The mayor, Cllr D. Sarson welcomed those attending.

#### 2. **To receive the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 21 April 2023**

Proposed by K. Gollop and seconded by J. Robinson, the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting on 21 April 2023 were **APPROVED** by the majority as a correct record of the meeting.

#### 3. **To receive the Corporate Plan 2024-29**

The Corporate Plan 2024-29 was received.

The town clerk said the plan reflected on the last five years of the council's achievements and he referred to some of the highlights.

#### 4. **Feedback from local organisations in receipt of grants and support from Lyme Regis Town Council**

##### **S. Causley – Lyme Regis Pantomime Society**

S. Causley said the pantomime had been running for 30 years and it relied on fundraising and ticket sales to put on shows costing £12,000. She said the grant from the council was extra money they could use to buy things they wouldn't normally have, which on this occasion was stage risers to create different levels. She said the risers were portable, they didn't take up much space and were loaned to other groups. She said groups were important in a small town, especially in recent years with the rise in depression and other mental illnesses, but the pantomime was fully inclusive. She thanked the council for the grant on behalf of the society.

##### **S. Causley – Curtain Up Theatre Company**

S. Causley said the company was formed in 2021 in the wake of Covid by a small group who were fed up with theatre productions being cancelled. Their first show was in August 2021 in a variety format. She said it was something to focus on after the pandemic and great for the community. They had used the council's grant to buy a star cloth with LED lights, which added to the atmosphere. She said the cloth was loaned to other groups. She thanked the council for the grant, it really was appreciated and they didn't ever take it for granted.

##### **D. Tucker – Lyme Regis Development Trust (read out by an officer)**

D. Tucker thanked the council for its term grant of £10,000 a year. He said the last year had been an interesting and challenging time. They had made

significant improvements to the Hub, including the restoration of the 100-year-old sports hall, delivered projects combatting social isolation and fuel insecurity, and increased bookings. The hall had recently become the home of the pickleball club, complementing keep fit, kickboxing and badminton groups. He said their flagship activities continued to thrive, with the continuing cost of living crisis resulting in demand for the Seaside Store increasing. The community café continued to provide good, affordable food and companionship for local people. The Welcome Café was going from strength to strength, supporting older people and carers at its monthly events at the Football Club. He said they continued to support young people with their Art Club and Youth Club. As funding from Dorset Council for youth provision had declined to historically low levels, he said the funding of the Youth Club was becoming increasingly challenging. He said they were working on a funding submission to the government for up to £200,000 to improve the Hub and make it sustainable for the future. Funding remained a challenge, and they continued to rely on their reserves to balance the books, but they were doing all they could to reduce their dependence on their savings. He said they would continue to work with the town council and others do their best to adapt to needs in Lyme and support local people. On behalf of the trustees, volunteers and staff, he thanked mayor, Cllr David Sarson for his ongoing support for their activities and his resolute service to the town and to wish him well for the future.

#### **L. Noel – Turn Lyme Green/Plastic Free Lyme Regis/River Lim Action Group**

L. Noel said they were just about to publish their annual report, which they would send to the council. She talked about some of the events they had run, including recycle sewing, litter picks, beach cleans, and seed swapping. The group aimed to extend knowledge of environmental matters through interesting talks and events, joining in fetes and community projects, producing a newsletter, using social media, and putting on films. They continued to run initiatives including Boomerang Bags and making draft excluders. She said they were leading on the cleaning up of the River Lim, planting sunflowers and members were making their own homes sustainable. She thanked the town council for its support and funding, which had been spent on revamping the Turn Lyme Green and Plastic Free Lyme Regis websites. She said there had been many generous grants to the River Lim Action Group from the council and they reported regularly to the Environment Committee. This included an ecological survey of the river, costing several thousands of pounds.

#### **J. Law – Lyme Regis Sea School**

J. Law said the school's old dinghies were big, cumbersome and always breaking so they were aiming to replace them all. Every year since 2018 they had received a grant from the town council to help them do this. The boats were also used by the sailing club, they offered bursaries and were involved with Woodroffe School. She said it was worth it to see a child's face or the positive reviews from parents. She said it wasn't just about the instructors getting qualifications, it was also about the mental and emotional benefits, having fun and improving emotional wellbeing. She thanked the council for the funding.

### **K. Skardon James**

K. Skardon James thanked the council for its generous grant of £500 towards the ongoing maintenance costs of the public access defibrillators they managed in Lyme Regis. In the past 12 months, they had secured funding to install an additional five units in the town to further increase coverage, bringing the total number of defibrillators they managed in Lyme up to 12. Each of these units required regular checks and must be registered with the ambulance service. Each unit had a rescue ready kit containing medical supplies and single use pads, which must be replaced after two years if not used. She said since March 2023, their defibrillators had been allocated to 30 incidents. She said the town council's grant had enabled them to purchase six sets of replacement pads and would help them to continue their vital work going forward.

### **Sarah Dean – Powder Monkeys Explorer Sea Scout Unit (read out by an officer)**

S. Dean said the unit was very grateful to the town council for its support and the generous grant they were awarded, which enabled them to purchase four larger tents. She said the tents were fantastic on their unit camps, allowing them to have more flexibility and larger groups of Explorers camping together. They provided more space, as well as a sheltered area where the young people could socialise while being protected from the elements. She said the tents had proved very useful to date and were an invaluable addition to the unit's equipment. She said they were looking forward to getting them out and back into use again during the summer term. She thanked the town council for its ongoing support of the unit and said it was appreciated by them all.

### **G. Warr – Lyme Regis Town Band (read out by an officer)**

G. Warr said with the help of grant funding from the town council, Lyme Regis Town Band organised a workshop for brass band players in October 2023, which was attended by their members and also players from other brass bands in the south west. The workshop was led by professional musicians from the nationally acclaimed Flowers Band, who spent the day with them sharing their expertise. She said they welcomed 35 players from 11 brass bands across four counties who joined them for a whole day of playing and learning. She said they felt the workshop not only raised the profile of the band but also that of the town.

### **R. Cohen – B Sharp (read out by an officer)**

R. Cohen expressed the organisation's gratitude to the town council for the term grant received in 2023-24 and for its ongoing support. Within the current financial climate, they were very aware of how privileged the charity was to receive this support. She said B Sharp worked with local young people in the community to support their personal and social development through making music together. The grant had supported B Sharp to run after-school music

clubs for young people aged eight to 18 and supported their work with local pre-schools and schools. In the last year they had supported St Michael's, Charmouth, and Woodroffe Schools with music provision. The grant also supported holiday activities for teenagers in the form of a Music for Video games club, and a healthy lunch as part of the Dorset Council HAF scheme, as well as the annual Busking Festival, and the traineeship scheme. This provided local young people with work experience, transferable skills, and young musicians with employment that allowed them to stay working locally. The grant had also supported their ongoing work with the youngest children in the community through early years music sessions with babies, toddlers and families at Lyme Regis Library and in the Children's Centre. These free sessions were aimed at families who are feeling socially isolated, and parents experiencing stress and anxiety. She said parents and carers told them they had helped them bond with their children, and build strong links in their community. In 2023-24 B Sharp worked with over 900 young people, and supported 450 in their regular clubs in Lyme, in local schools and preschools, in early years sessions, and through one-to-one work. Nearly 40% of the young people who took part in the music-making sessions this year were experiencing challenges including special needs, mental health issues, economic disadvantage or had experience of the care system. She said parents had told them that coming to B Sharp had particularly helped young people who struggled with social anxiety, vulnerabilities and special needs. She said having a term grant settlement had provided stability in a difficult and fragmented funding climate. Most grant funding that was available was for short term projects, so having the stable bedrock of support from the council had been invaluable to help B Sharp lever in additional funding for young people in the area.

**R. Wickremasinghe – Bridport and District Citizens Advice (read out by an officer)**

R. Wickremasinghe thanked the council for its ongoing support and long-term funding of their outreach work in Lyme Regis. The grant enabled them to provide a weekly outreach session by appointment, based at the town council offices on Wednesdays, 10am to 3pm. He said the grant helped towards the costs of volunteer training and expenses, supervision, management time and equipment costs. Generalist advice was provided on a broad range of issues. In 2023/24 they had 74 client contacts at the outreach. Overall assistance by Bridport and District Citizens Advice for Lyme and Charmouth ward residents in 2023-24 showed 131 clients were helped with 485 separate issues. The top three issues people contacted them about were: benefits (39%), housing (13%), and charitable and food bank support (12%). He said the top benefits issues they assisted with were Personal Independence Payment and general benefit checks to try and maximise income. He said 54% of the people they saw reported a disability or long-term health problem and 33% were 65 or over. Housing related enquiries had increased from the previous year and included actual or threatened homelessness, access to accommodation and disrepair. They helped residents achieve £73,000 in additional annualised income, mainly benefits identified and claimed or awarded following a dispute or appeal, and £70,000 in debts written off.

## **5. Report from Dorset Council ward member – Cllr Belinda Bawden**

Cllr Bawden spoke about how things moved very slowly in local government and there appeared to be a frustration and apathy in local politics, but councillors were trying to do their best for local communities. She spoke about the local elections in May and encouraged everyone to get involved. She gave the following updates on local issues:

- Dorset Council (DC) had agreed a surcharge on second homes. The Liberal Democrats had proposed 40% of any income from this was set aside for affordable housing, amid high numbers of homelessness.
- DC had charged the maximum council tax this year as it was ineligible for government emergency funding. However, DC was in a good financial position compared to lots of other local authorities, although the situation would be different in a few years if nothing changed. Only 0.2% of DC's funding came directly from the government, with 82% coming from council tax, compared to a national average of 62%. Per head, DC received less than many other unitary authorities but the MP was working hard on getting more funding to rural areas.
- She and others had overturned a planning officer's recommendation not to approve plans to improve the park and ride site.
- Lyme Regis Town Council had become the first parish council in the world to be accredited as a carbon literate organisation. This meant 70% of councillors were trained in carbon literacy and over 50% of the organisation overall.
- Events had been held to progress proposals for a 20mph zone and a local transport plan.
- The Clappentail junction had been on the list for repair for a long time. She encouraged people to report issues with roads online.
- DC was getting the message about how much of an issue traffic and parking was in Lyme Regis.

## **Report from Dorset Police – PC Kirsti Frecknall, Lyme Regis neighbourhood policing officer**

PC Kirsti Frecknall said although she was the Lyme Regis neighbourhood policing officer, she spent a lot of time in Bridport and covered other areas too. She worked closely with the Sherborne Neighbourhood Policing Team and the West Dorset Neighbourhood Policing Team, but they would come to Lyme Regis to do targeted anti-social behaviour policing and licencing checks on establishments in the town. Foot patrols had taken place in areas where anti-social behaviour had been reported, such as the skatepark, Anning Road playing field and Langmoor Gardens. She said they hoped to do more of this now the weather was improving.

She gave some crime statistics for Lyme Regis since September 2023:

- Four incidents of anti-social behaviour, including nuisance, car alarms and people shouting.
- Five incidents of personal anti-social behaviour, all neighbour related. They continued to do joint visits with Magna and Sovereign to address these issues.
- Three burglaries, including two to beach huts and one to a business.

- One residential burglary, a break-in to a shed.
- Eight incidents of criminal damage, including a smashed shop window, a damaged fence, and damaged vehicle tyres, a lot of which were neighbour related.
- Two incidents of drugs possession, which were dealt with positively.
- Nine incidents of fraud, all online, including telephone banking scams, scams on Facebook and email, including three fraudulent ticket sales.
- Six incidents of shoplifting.
- Six incidents of other theft.
- 50 incidents of violent crime, including harassment, stalking, breach of bail conditions and assault.

PC Frecknall encouraged people to report anything, even if they didn't think it was relevant, because if it wasn't reported, the police couldn't put any resources in. She said PCSO Kat Newman was mainly based in Bridport but did come to Lyme Regis when she could. The other PCSO was off on long-term sick but would hopefully be back in the next couple of weeks and would help to cover Lyme Regis.

## **6. Open Session**

### **(a) Questions from young people**

There were none.

### **(b) Questions from Lyme Regis Electors**

#### **J. Robinson**

J. Robinson said there was a lack of provision in public transport in the town and felt finances should be focused on buses, instead of park and ride.

Cllr B. Bawden said the town council's Traffic and Travel Working Group was looking into the route of the town bus and whether it could also go to Uplyme. She said the DC portfolio holder had set up a panel to meet bus operators to try and get more co-operation from them on the routes they operated. She added DC had applied to the government for funding for a bus improvement plan but was not successful.

The town clerk said the town council funded the town bus by £17,000 a year. If the bus was to run seven days a week, it would cost £100,000, which was a significant amount of money for a small town council.

#### **A. Robinson**

A. Robinson was concerned there was no community and business resilience plan for Lyme Regis. He referred to constant closures of Church, Bridge and Broad Streets and closures of the A35, all taking business away from the town. He said public transport was affected when roads were closed, especially in the east of the town. He said there needed to be some planning to minimise the impact on businesses, residents and visitors because of road closures.

The town clerk said there were lots of emergency works that had to be responded to and when there was a proposed road closure, lots of consultation was carried out locally. He said there wasn't a broad strategy related to it and the town council was not responsible for road closures. However, behind the scenes, people did talk to each other about programming works during road closures. He added that the council produced a business briefing, which included advance notice of road closures.

## **J. Breeze**

J. Breeze asked the following questions:

1. Could the town council spend some parking revenue on signage on the three main routes into town, informing people which car parks were full as a lot of traffic went around the town looking for spaces?

The town clerk said the town council's powers were limited as to what signage it could place on the highway; National Highways determined signage on the A35 and DC determined signage on other roads in the town. He said he was sure the town council would be happy to pay for signage and perhaps DC could jointly fund this. He added that the town council would be happy to consider proposals.

Cllr B. Bawden said this kind of signage had been included in the community transport plan submission to DC.

2. With regards to delivery vans in Broad Street, she understood there were restrictions on when they could deliver. She said they caused congestion and safety issues for pedestrians.

The town clerk agreed deliveries seemed to be taking place almost any time of day. DC was responsible for enforcement of restrictions but enforcement officers were only periodically in the town. He said the town council had asked DC to delegate enforcement powers to its staff so they could deal with these kinds of issues but there had been no commitment from DC.

Cllr B. Bawden said if people reported a specific issue to DC they would send enforcement officers to Lyme Regis but they didn't stay for long. She encouraged people to report problems to DC online or by phone, or to report risks to Dorset Road Safe.

3. Was there anything the town council could do to encourage a post office and chemist into the town centre?

The town clerk said the council had had conversations with others about the provision of a post office but it hadn't materialised. But the council would continue to keep it on the agenda.

Cllr B. Bawden said people operating other post offices locally had hoped to run a service in Lyme Regis, but the start-up funding of £20,000 was an issue. She said there wasn't a lot the council could do about a chemist.

4. She asked what the council's plans were for 2026 to 2029?

The town clerk said as there would be a new administration, the council was keen to put plans in place for 2025 but the next corporate plan would contain more detail about future years. He said it seemed right that the new administration had an opportunity to craft that.

### **K. Gollop**

K. Gollop asked the following questions:

1. He asked if a 'car park full' sign could be placed at the top of Cobb Road when the seafront car parks were full?
2. He felt notification for this meeting was not adequate. He said notices should be around the town, including in the Broad Street noticeboard. He asked if that noticeboard could be kept just for town council notices?

The town clerk said the council had a residents' newsletter so notification of the meeting could be included in that. The council could also look at publicising it at publicly used buildings, such as the Woodmead Halls and the Hub.

K. Gollop asked if members' profiles could be included in the next newsletter.

3. He asked what was being done about the east wall of the Guildhall, which was flaking away?

The town clerk said the council had a programme of repairs for all its assets.

### **N. Ball**

N. Ball thanked the police for their work in the town and raised the following points:

1. DC was not taking responsibility for drainage in the town. It was causing a lot of problems and needed to be addressed.
2. He thanked the town council for all it did in the town. He said the seafront gardens were improving, but repairs to the paths and the Jubilee Pavilion roof were still needed. He also thanked the council for its grants to local organisations. He was pleased to see things had calmed down in the council chamber and he hoped the council could move forward.
3. He felt more people needed to be encouraged to use the town bus service instead of using their cars.
4. He said the dog bag dispensers needed to be filled up with bags.



**c) Questions from others present at the meeting**

There were none.

**7. Lyme Regis Town Council Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2023**

The meeting noted the annual return.

*The meeting closed at 8.25pm.*