MEVAGISSEY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN S REPORT 2022

Over the last council year business has been slowly coming back to normal with face to face meetings at the MAC and site meetings where possible, the same cannot be said for Cornwall Council where many officers and staff are still working from home and in many councillor’s opinion this has resulted in less efficient working and communication difficulties, it is to be hoped that normal services will be resumed very soon. The parish council’s workload on the other hand shows no sign of diminishing resulting in a separate meeting on the third Friday each month to deal with planning matters only. It appears to be working well but inevitably does mean longer hours for councillors. During the year we lost Clrs Hereward and Tonks but welcomed Katherine Chamberlain and Anna Christy, however we are still unable to fill the last vacancy on the council.

As usual council has dealt with all the usual duties and responsibilities that go unsung and generally unappreciated so I will simply highlight some of the more important events dealt with such as:-

With Covid regulations still is force the one-way system through Fore Street was reinstated and operated until September, in the meantime council continues to explore a long term solution to this perennial problem starting with a full traffic survey. A bid to the Network Highways Improvement scheme proved successful so with funding in place it will be interesting to see whether there is a realistic chance to solve the problem other than by a one way system or complete bypass.

Discussions with Cornwall Council on the devolution of certain services have continued throughout the year without a great deal of progress, not helped by the change in the community network officer Helen Nicholson moving to another area and being replaced by Caitlin Lord who has had to virtually start from scratch. In the meantime County Councillor James Mustoe has enabled several meeting with cabinet members in an effort to make progress.

Following numerous complaints about the state of Ocean’s Meadow and Wesley Court’s Flats and the allocation process a meeting was held between members of the parish council and Mark Gardner MD of Ocean during which questions and complaints were thoroughly discussed. Mr Gardner promised to look into the points raised and respond accordingly. This was duly received some time later and did little to dispel the concerns highlighted. It did, however, prompt Cllr Jon Gann to embark on a very radical course of action by securing council’s permission to investigate the possibility of the flats been acquired by the parish council, while this is somewhat of a long shot and fraught with difficulties if possible it would ensure local housing for local people, so well done and good luck with your efforts Jon.

During the year three sub-committees were working on different projects with varying degrees of success

The Community Land Trust group continued in their quest to provide affordable homes with the biggest stumbling block finding suitable sites, nevertheless their efforts continue.

Climate Change. Much information is being amassed through consultant surveys that eventually will enable policies and strategies to be adopted by the parish and will provide guidance for residents and businesses. Full details are available on the parish website.

Housing Group. In order to acquire more accurate information on the needs of the parish this sub-committee under the chairmanship of Garth Shepard was charged with the task. After several meetings it was agreed the only accurate way to obtain this information was by a survey similar to that carried out for the MNDP and with the prospect of changes or updates to that plan the survey be expanded to cover other matters as well. With thanks to Cllr Leister grant funding was obtained covering the total cost of promoting and managing the whole exercise. The results have now been analysed with councillors been given an advance copy. After been formally approved by council at the next meeting full details will be available on the parish website.

Setting the precept for the coming year proved rather more contentious than usual and debate on priorities resulted in the proposals for the upgrading of the Valley Road toilets being put on hold for the present, however, at some point this will have to be revisited.

It is also worth mentioning that the usual remembrance service in November coincided with the 100 year anniversary of the war memorial, with the help of a grant from the parish council volunteers helped create a memorable occasion, attended by the largest number ever, with an exhibition in the Jubillee Hall afterwards, a special thanks to all involved.

In February of this year Dr, Murphy of St. Austell Healthcare addressed council with an update on Mevagissey Surgery, after explained the current operation of the surgery he outlined the difficulties regarding the tenancy of the building that made for long term arrangements unpredictable, there was currently a 2 year contact in operation and when questioned he saw no reason why it should not be renewed. It is to be hoped he is correct.

PLANNING

As mentioned earlier, planning matters are now debated at a separate meeting allowing more time to debate the more contentious applications and there is no shortage of those.

The long running saga of 15 Polkirt Hill (Anchor Cottage) is still dragging on, however, council have now accepted the current application but are still concerned about the traffic management plan and road closures and have asked that this issue be resolved before approval.

Another area of concern has been the spate of application for change of use from hotel to flats or other use.

The two notable applications are the Mevagissey Bay Hotel and Trevalsa Court, while council has objected to and CC refused the Mevagissey Bay application it s far from over and the future of Trevalsa Court remains to be seen, it would seem unlikely to be an accommodation provider. The loss of hotel type holiday accommodation is of concern both from an employment point of view but from attracting more visitors to stay in the area, however it would appear market forces will dictate.

Work is now underway on the old Hollies site much to the relief of most people and it is to be hoped that the final result will be an improvement even if there is an increase in the density. Unfortunately it is a shame permission was granted before the primary residence condition came into force.

Another area of concern but beyond our control is the scourge of Ash Dieback disease effecting the stand of trees around Ava House resulting in many having to be felled. While there has been tree and planting schemes approved for the area there is concern as to whether they are being implemented. That leads on to the whole question of enforcement, or rather lack of, where various sites round the parish have issues not being addressed in the way they should be, Polkirt Heights as an example where it appears planning officers have taken a rather too lenient view from that of the parish and the conditions imposed in the original planning approval. Officers working from home has not been helpful in some of these issues.

Again after many years, numerous meetings and many setbacks the Kiln Close development is just about finished but still the subject of complains from new owners regarding access rights and fulfilling of conditions, while some are civil matters there may be a need to monitor the planting conditions.

Overall parish decisions are in line with officer recommendations particularly where case officers are prepared to meet parish councillors on site, some, however, seem reluctant to involve the parish.

Finally I would like to thank all councillors for their work (unpaid) over the last year in giving time to serve the community, together with County Councillor James Mustoe for working with the council to ensure good relations between the two authorities and to keep Mevagissey in the forefront of local government. Last but not the least our clerk Phil Howson whose work in providing guidance to members and keeping them informed of legislation, rules and regulations as well as preparing planning presentations at meetings is invaluable to the smooth running of the council.

I trust the coming year will see a continuation all your hard work and look forward to normality.