

**MINUTES** of the **Annual Town Meeting** held on Thursday 19 March 2009 at 6.00 p.m. in the Shire House Suite, Shire House, Bodmin.

**PRESENT:** Councillor R J Micek, presiding; together with Councillors C R Bell, E T Denholm, OBE DL, M Denholm, M E Dominey, M J Griffiths, F M Hancock, R Solomons, L A Spear and H G Vanderwolfe.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr P O'Callaghan (Town Clerk), Mr S Facer (DCE), Mrs A McAuley (Responsible Finance Officer), Ms L Hancock (Executive Assistant) and Mrs J Perrins (Committee Clerk), plus one Member of the Public.

**CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & APOLOGIES:** The Mayor had no announcements but welcomed the press and public to the meeting.

The Mayor also welcomed Mr Dean Ashton, Corporate Director for Children, Schools and Families for the new Cornwall Council who was in attendance as guest speaker.

The Town Clerk advised the meeting that apologies had been received from Councillors A J Coppin, A Duffin, J H Hartill, L G J Kennedy, P Kerridge and K W Stubbs.

ATM/2009/001      **Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 8 May 2008**

The Town Clerk informed the meeting the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 8 May 2008 had been approved and passed for signing at the Adjourned Annual Meeting held on 22 May 2008 (item C/2008/100 refers). These Minutes were acknowledged as a true record.

**Matters arising: Page 1-2 (Item ATM/2008/002) -** The Town Clerk informed that he had written to NALC as directed querying the necessity of holding the annual meeting. The Town Clerk advised that there appeared to be little appetite to abolish the requirement to hold Annual Town Meetings as Councils find them to be a useful arena to take questions from members of the general public. This seemed strange when following the adoption of para 12(2) of the Revised Code of Conduct there were many meetings throughout the year at which Members of the Public could come and ask questions or raise matters of interest with the Council.

ATM/2009/002      **Questions from Members of the Public**

The public present advised that no questions had been detailed in writing prior to the meeting and they had no questions to raise.

ATM/2009/003      **Presentation entitled 'Some Numbers' made by Mr Dean Ashton, Corporate Director for Children, Schools and Families for the new Cornwall Council**

Mr Dean Ashton received a warm reception to the Bodmin Annual Town Meeting where he was happy to impart the 'Some Numbers' presentation which provides an overview of the challenges faced by the new unitary authority and outlined its aspirations for the future.

Mr Ashton explained that he was 'standing in' for Kevin Lavery, Chief Executive of the new Cornwall Council who wanted to attend the meeting but

had prior commitments. Dean Ashton informed that Kevin Lavery had produced the 'Some Numbers' presentation in January 2009 effectively putting it two months out of date; however, it is an analytical, hard-hitting, embryonic presentation which gives key issues and key points.

A decision had been made by the Executive of the new Cornwall Council to appoint five Corporate Directors, each taking a specialist role plus responsibility for a specific area; and Dean Ashton was pleased to announce that he would be taking responsibility for East Cornwall.

Mr Ashton considered this to be a high level point of contact where issues can be resolved within an on-going relationship whilst helping to take matters forward. It is anticipated that this role will help to put things right where they have been going wrong.

Mr Ashton played the DVD to the meeting which followed the format of the 'Some Numbers' presentation previously circulated to Councillors at the February 2009 Full Council meeting (copy attached).

Following the DVD presentation Dean Ashton highlighted the areas that require consideration:

- Where is Cornwall County Council within the new Council;
- The need for a high quality modern infrastructure as this had not been available within Cornwall Council previously;
- Provision of a quality frontline service;
- Power issues of adult social care within the Council;
- Rapid improvement towards change being made;
- Relationship issues between officers and members;
- Efficiency issue of a single council; as there will be a single Council for Cornwall on 1 April 2009 - can the new Council work more efficiently with Town and Parish Councils.

Mr Ashton advised that within this diverse role relationships are crucial and must pull in the same direction; errors will happen along the way but this is a natural progression and mistakes are to be learned from. The localism agenda is a critical part of this. It can be strategic and can be communicated to community networks but it cannot be delivered without the town and parish councils.

It was acknowledged that there may be a strain placed on relationships between town and parish councils as the seats available within the new Cornwall Council are reduced.

Mr Ashton referred to pay levels within Cornwall being generally low whilst the cost of living remains high. As the country comes out of recession it is hoped that there will be an opportunity to reduce the issue of low wages and to utilise a combination of universities supporting businesses enabling both to gain whilst allowing students to complete their education.

The proposed Wave Hub had been viewed as an issue – this provides the potential of acceptable energy production, but Cornwall is also an excellent tourism draw and care needs to be taken in this area, therefore all avenues need to be explored before decisions are made.

As Corporate Director for Children, Schools and Families, Dean Ashton informed that adult education skills are being seen as a frontline issue with education and skills being pushed forward by Council. With the economic generalisation, responsibility next year for the provision of 16-19 year olds will move to the local authority. With this in mind, Cornwall Council needs to review the scale of young people in this age group for whom adult education provision may be required.

Mr Ashton reported that an important part of Kevin Lavery's proposed changes to the new unitary authority had been a new 'Cornwall Council Management Structure'. Following on from this it was considered that staff would need to be settled swiftly into the new organisation. It had been thought essential to bring in 'fresh blood' to the Cornwall Council Senior Management Team, which is now complete with the most recent appointment due to start on 1 April 2009. At the next tier, two-thirds of the staff had been recruited internally. There are 13,000 staff employed within schools but still require stability – it is planned that this will be achieved by 1 June 2009. It is also planned to ensure that, in areas where Regulators had expressed concern, stability will be achieved before the year end (31 March 2009).

In summary, Mr Ashton referred to the Fire Service where note had been made that much had been promised but little delivered. The Audit Commission and OFSTED were also mentioned. It was considered that the measurements of the Council's performance will need to be reviewed over a period of time and within the presentation document a 7 year timescale had been proposed.

Finally, Mr Ashton stated that he is delighted to hold responsibility for the East of the County and was happy to take questions from the room.

- Q.** Councillor L A Spear welcomed Dean Ashton to Bodmin Town Council and referred to Kevin Lavery's visit to NCDC to make his 'Some Numbers' presentation. At that time communication within the Council was raised. At the section '8 underlying causes' – silos culture is mentioned. Councillor Spear advised that she is Chairman of the Bodmin Inter-agency Locality Group (BILG) but the professional group members see aspects of the work as being solely their jurisdiction; they need to be shown that they must share its budget and resources – it is a provision for the people of the town and they have a right to say how it should be managed to best effect.
- A.** Dean Ashton agreed implicitly with this point. Mr Ashton explained that there is a Trust element contained within such local authority meetings, which enables these groups to take matters forward. It will be necessary to implement a management review and Mr Ashton acknowledged that attitudes will not change overnight when they have worked in a certain way for 25 years. There is a transformational way forward which allows

areas to be managed in certain ways; i.e. at local level - Neighbourhood Children's Trust – to link community networks to give authority to resources. This is a complex system which will require changes over a period of time.

The Town Clerk informed that he and his Senior Officers had recently met with the newly appointed Community Network Manager for Bodmin and Wadebridge – Sarah Sims. The Town Clerk reported on a most positive meeting; and following some previous less positive meetings with the OneCornwall Team welcomed the new Community Network Manager whose thoughts on area growth and partnership were extremely meaningful and positive. This needs to be consolidated into a meaningful and workable Localism Charter.

Dean Ashton relayed his thanks to the Town Clerk for such a positive report on the changes coming through. He continued to refer to the Partnership Culture and stated - "it is what you give up and not what you take that is important"; partnership working must work both within and outside the public agenda.

Mr Ashton continued to advise that there are skills and expertise working within neighbourhoods / town and parish councils – where quality is needed. Each division of the Council level has a defined skill to bring to the partnership and each should be accepted for the skills they have available.

The Town Clerk concurred that this works really well where the partnership ends up being more than the sum of its parts, but it is heavy on Senior Officer time. The key element to this discussion revolved around town and parish councils being treated as equal partners by Cornwall Council.

Dean Ashton referred to the creation of Management Development Centres - each part previously ran on its own, not as part of a product – do we have the skills to keep the product working once it is created. It is expensive to retain expertise therefore the benefits must be seen to be good and worthwhile.

- Q.** Councillor L A Spear asked whether as the employer / contractors of staff who are not working well something else would be tried.
- A.** Dean Ashton responded that brutal honesty and truth would be used. What is it that has been learned? Use it!

The Mayor thanked Mr Ashton for attending this meeting and stated that the case put forward was of a significantly strong management team.

The Mayor advised that the issues contained within these discussions would not work without a 'Partnership Culture' and that culture needs to be based on an 'equal partnership' basis. It was thought that the one-to-one situation had occurred in the past and had been seen to help things work well.

The Mayor expressed his pleasure that stability was to be offered to staff – particularly in view of the fact that silos tend to implode - this would not be a good comparator with Cornwall Council staff.

Once again the Mayor thanked Mr Ashton for attending at such a busy time and stated that BTC look forward to him returning to a future meeting to report on Cornwall Council's achievements.

ATM/2008/004

**Any other urgent/relevant items which the Chairman considers appropriate**

There were no other matters discussed.

There being no other items the meeting closed at 6.55 p.m.