

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SOUTH MOLTON TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE GARDEN ROOM, THE AMORY CENTRE, SOUTH MOLTON ON TUESDAY 28TH FEBRUARY 2023 AT 7.00PM

Present: In the Chair: Town Mayor Cllr S. Lock
 Cllr P. Bishop Cllr M, Bushell
 Cllr M. Cornelius Cllr P. Henderson
 Cllr R. Herniman Cllr M. Hulland
 Cllr Mrs. C. Lock Cllr M. Way
 Cllr. D. Worden

In Attendance: Mrs Carol Bere – Responsible Finance Officer
 The Honourable Ebenezer Dabzie - Mayor of Sharma District
 Mr Abu Muhammed – District Development Officer of Shama District
 Ruth Agyeiwaa Badu – District Physical Planner (Town Planner)
 Mr Francis Mensah – Sister City Coordinator
 Lisa Bousted and her family

1. **PRAYERS**

The meeting was opened in prayer by Reverend Grandey

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllrs Footman and Kingdon.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Henderson – Agenda Item 8 – Personal – Supplying publications

4. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman apologised for the slight delay in commencing the meeting due to high level of attendance. He also welcomed the attendance of the Ghanaians from the Shama District. Their presentation would be included under Public Participation.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Town Council

24th January 2023

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes be approved. Cllr Bushell abstained as he was not present at that meeting.

6. **DCC TO REPORT TO MEMBERS**

On behalf of Cllr Yabsley, in his absence Cllr Henderson informed Councillors of the following:

BUDGET 23/24

1. Our council members have agreed a 4.99 per cent increase in council tax for the coming financial year.
2. It comprises 2.99 per cent for general services with an extra two per cent for adult care.
3. It means an extra £1.49 a week for the average Band D householder.
4. There will be increases of 18.4 per cent in spending on children's services and 8.8 per cent on adult services to keep up with a rocketing rise in demand.
5. And Councillors also agreed an extra £2 million for roads and drainage since the target budget was set last month to tackle the increase in

potholes caused by this winter's icy spells and torrential rainfall.

6. Our revenue spending on services will increase from £629 million to £696 million in 2023/24. That's an overall rise of 10.5 per cent in spending. In addition, Councillors approved a capital budget of £172.5 million for investment in infrastructure such as schools and roads.
7. The council tax for an average Band D home will rise by £77.67 to £1,634.13 – an extra £1.49 a week.
8. The budget includes savings, alternative funding and additional income of £47.5 million
9. The budget was approved by 40 votes to 13.
10. The young, the old and the vulnerable account for some 79 per cent of this budget.

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

11. Donna Manson, who joins us as our new permanent Chief Executive.
12. Donna joins the County Council from her role as Chief Executive of The Highland Council, Scotland's largest rural authority.
13. There since 2018, Donna led the Highland Council in developing an ambitious, sustainable, and connected vision for the Highlands during a time of immense change and challenge. Prior to this, Donna was a Director of Children's Services and a Head Teacher.
14. Her top priority for Devon is to deliver significant improvement to Devon's Children's Services. But more broadly, Donna wants to re-energise Devon as a caring and inclusive place for young people and families, the elderly and vulnerable, and as a forward looking place to work and do business with opportunities for all to thrive and do well.

7. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

On behalf of the Ghanaians, Mr Abu Muhammed gave a detailed presentation on the work that was carried out in the Sharma District and how they had developed over the last 15 years since their first links with South Molton Town Council. A copy of the presentation will be circulated.

No other public participation,

8. **SOUTH MOLTON SWIMMING POOL**

A passionate presentation was given by Lisa and her family regarding their purchase and their reopening of the South Molton Swimming Pool. They have set up a new Company to run the Pool with a new name South Molton Aquatics, Recreation & Training (SMART). Their philosophy for the business is as follows:

- SM – South Molton
- A Aquatic – Teaching to all
- R Recreation – Including over 50's, Aquafit, After School Club.
- T Training – On the job staff training, Life Guarding, First Aid, Safe Guarding

Launched that evening at 7.00pm on Social Media, this was the first marketing of the new venture. The Councillors thanked the family and wished them all the best of luck and that the Council would endeavour to support them as much as possible.

Cllr Henderson left the meeting at 7.45pm.

9. **KING CHARLES III CORONATION**

It was unanimously RESOLVED to approve the Town Clerks request for maximum of £2,000 spend to pay for activities.

10. **QUEENS MEMORIAL**

It was RESOLVED to approve the proposal for a memorial stone in memory of Queen Elizabeth II to be sited at the Recreation Ground. Cllrs Hulland and Herniman abstained. It was further agreed to bring to the next Council Meeting costings for a plaque or engraving (no Councillor names to be included on the plaque).

11. **DCC HIGHWAYS**

After a brief discussion it was unanimously agreed to ask the Town Clerk to send a letter of complaint to the DCC Chief Executive on behalf of the Town Council regarding issues highlighted. Copying in The Leader, Salaine Saxby and Chief Engineer.

12. **REPRESENTATIVES TO REPORT ON MEETINGS ATTENDED**

- a) Cllr Worden advised South Molton Community Gardens AGM had been successful and they were up to 10 Committee Members, and he remained the Chairman. South Molton in Bloom also had their AGM. Sue Harrison was elected Leader, they would not be entering Britain in Bloom this year, but would concentrate on beautifying South Molton for the Community. Cllr Lock discussed the Minutes of the last Friends of the Community Woodlands meeting, copy of Minutes to be circulated.
- b) Cllr Worden reported on the District Council, as follows:

South Molton Town Council.

Community Gardens AGM was held on the 10th February in the Methodist Church Hall and was a very successful event. We now have ten committee members whereas before we only had six. I remain as Chair and Fran Sendell is the main coordinator of the garden but some of her jobs have now been delegated to other committee members. Karolina Andreasova gave a very interesting illustrated talk about her photography particularly concerning bees.

South Molton in Bloom AGM was held on the 20th February with a group of enthusiastic members. Sue Harrison was re-elected as the coordinator and various members volunteered to be the primary person looking after the different areas in the town.

North Devon Council Report

1. NDC set their element of the Council Tax at 2.99%. That is the equivalent of about 11p increase a week for a Band D property. Taking into account the County, Police and Fire increases the overall situation will be about a 5% increase this year.
2. The car park charges will increase from 15th March. That will mean 60p an hour in South Molton etc.
3. The major renovations of the Barnstaple Pannier Market are now well under way. Some of the traders are temporarily having their stalls in Green Lanes.
4. A motion condemning the introduction of photographic ID for voting was passed at Full Council. Also the one which I presented asking the government to treat rural areas as fairly as urban ones with their Local Government support.
5. Four Ghanaians arrived in South Molton last Friday. One is the Mayor, two are Shama District Council planners and the fourth is Francis Mensah who frequently visit South Molton as part of the Shama – South Molton Sister Cityship relationship.

13. TOWN CLERK’S REPORT TO MEMBERS

There was no report from the Town Clerk.

Cllr Cornelius left the meeting at 8.40pm.

Finally, the Mayor presented gifts to the Ghanaians on behalf of the Town Council, thanking them for their visit.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.47pm

Chairman.....

Date.....