

**Minutes of Chard Annual Town Meeting
held at
Chard Guildhall on Wednesday 11 May 2005**

**Present: His Worship the Mayor, Councillor A. J. Prior
21 Members of the Public
Town Clerk**

1. Minutes of the 2004 Annual Town Meeting

It was agreed that the minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 12th May 2004 were an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

Cllr Dave Bulmer pointed out that it was reported at the meeting last year there were five Police Community Support Officers, but that number had since reduced and that there should be a fight for more Police Community Support Officers.

3. Presentation of Outstanding Service Awards to the People of Chard

The Mayor presented Outstanding Service Certificates and Badges to:

Hillary Mead – for running the Chard 7.30 club for 16 years until December 2004. This involved meetings every fortnight plus taking the members to pantomimes, etc. Hillary not only ran the club she also fund raised for it, for example taking a stall at the Chard Christmas Fayre and busking in the Street.

Brenda Gillard – for ongoing support and services as a volunteer at Chard Tourist Information Centre. Brenda has been giving help and advice to residents and visitors for over 16 years and thanks were extended for her dedication and tireless enthusiasm.

4. Mayor's Annual Report

The Mayor stated that it is an honour and a privilege to serve Chard Town and that there are many citizens of Chard who deserve this honour but it is restricted to a councillor of the Town Council, who also serves as the chairman of the Council. The Mayor pointed out that his election to office took place last year on the date of his 21st anniversary of election to Mayor in 1983.

Councillors Martin Wale, Dave Bulmer and John Malcolm had been elected as Chairmen of the Council committees. Cllr Mrs Rita Wickenden had joined the Council during the year.

The Mayor stated that the year had been a tough one for the Town Council.

He explained that to most people Chard Town Council is 'the Council' and that numerous calls and correspondence to the office are actually problems which must be dealt with by the District or County Council. Our dedicated staff are reluctant to have to tell people to call a different number as it is recognised how frustrating this can be both for members of the public and councillors. The district and county call centres have not eased the problem.

Thanks were extended to the Town Clerk, Mrs Sally Bing and the Mayor said that Sally in turn would like to acknowledge the work of Sandra Pittwood and Kate Forsyth, and also Cecily Downing for her valuable help during staff shortages.

The new Guildhall and Publications Manager, John Evans was introduced and it was explained that John is responsible for the Guildhall, its lettings, contracts and problems as well as the Guildhall staff, the Tourist Information Centre and Town Council publications.

The vibrant Tourist Information Centre, that serves both local people and visitors to the town, returned to the Guildhall this year. The TIC is run and managed by Sue Wrigglesworth. Sue and the team of volunteers were thanked for their dedication and the service they give to the town.

Paul Thresher, the Amenities Charge Hand was asked to take thanks back to the Amenities team for all the hard work they do looking after the cemetery, greenspaces, flower beds, hanging baskets and play areas. They also clean the streets, empty the litter and dog bins and carry out many other tasks around the town.

Steve Rooney is the Mayor's Mace Bearer and his initiative has brought formality back to the Town Council meetings as he processes the Mayor in with the Mace. The tables now also have covers, suggested by Steve Rooney, paid for from the Mayor's allowance and made by Sandra Pittwood.

Chard Town Council has a dedicated band of employees and volunteers and the Mayor also extended thanks to Terry Cutler for all his work dealing with the Town Council finances.

Financially, Chard Town Council ended the year in a much more comfortable position than it was at beginning of the fiscal year. For the current year, as Chairman of the Finance Personnel and Licensing Committee, the Mayor reported that he tried to engineer a standstill position while keeping the finances in order. There were fewer new band D properties in Chard than had been anticipated. Therefore town council tax went up by 81 pence per year. Unfortunately, in order to prevent council tax rises the Town Council were unable to award grants to voluntary bodies. Also, the dispute with the contractor is ongoing.

The Mayor thanked the numerous volunteer groups in the town as well as the professionals, the business people and the local clubs and societies that make Chard what it is. Thanks were also extended to the thousands he had not mentioned.

The Mayor stated that he is proud to have the privilege of wearing the historic chain. He said to undertake the responsibility of being a councillor you have to have broad shoulders, but occasionally there is a card or letter that counteracts the negative side. He read a few examples and explained that these represented the nice side of Chard – 'Chard the friendly Town' as stickers on the shop windows used to say when the Mayor came here 30 years ago.

The Mayor said he thought that the staff of Chard Town Council serve the Town well and that he is delighted to be their employer as we strive to make Chard a better place for one and all.

5. Matters Raised by Chard Residents

No matters were raised by Chard Residents.

Cllr Dave Hill thanked Cllr Tony Prior and Mrs Margaret Prior for all the work they have done over the past year.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.50pm