

Chairman's Report for the One Ilfracombe 2020 AGM held on 24th March 2021.

As the infamous football saying goes this year has been a 'game of two halves'. Leading up to March 2020 we had continued and consolidated our usual business and our 'Living well' and 'Town Team' meetings maintained a good attendance. We had established our Community Developer who was busy supporting local groups and had set up a 'Men's Shed' in the Town to provide activities to mainly retired males who maybe were susceptible to social isolation. The Community Developer was also the route for the setting up and support for local activity groups to encourage older residents to become and stay more physically active. This was with the support of Devon county Council and their Active Devon initiative.

The staff continued with the ever popular Out of the Blue scheme which had been booked up months in advance with children wishing to partake.

We were working with the police to address mental health and anti social behaviour in the Town and had directed funding to Belle's Place who were in a position to provide a meeting place and a meal for vulnerable adults, many of whom suffered with alcohol and mental health issues.

Our Community Connector was as busy as ever with the social prescribing for people referred by the GPs and with those who had self referred. The importance of this activity had been recognised by the Primary Care Network and we entered an agreement with the North Devon Coastal PCN to roll out this initiative to Lynton and South Molton with the staff being managed by ourselves.

In association with the Town Council we were administering the Hospital Car Scheme where volunteer drivers would transport patients to hospital to meet appointments.

The Town Team maintained a strong relationship between the County, District and Town Council and with volunteer groups. This was exhibited in the Town once more achieving a Gold award in the the South West in Bloom competition. The co-operation between the agencies has highlighted problems and dealt with them in a speedy manner to ensure that fly-tipping and other waste related problems were addressed promptly. Traffic related issues such as illegal or inconsiderate parking could be fed into the system for action. We continued to organise 'Beach Cleans' and provided advertising and equipment so that individuals could partake on an ad-hoc basis.

Our commitment to Government when we received funds to set up One Ilfracombe was that we would share our experience and expertise with other Towns who wished to set up a similar organisation. This has been achieved by the evolution of One North Devon which is becoming an overarching body to support the individual Towns. One of our staff has been seconded for a second year to OND to help set up the groups in other Towns. We are now being commissioned by OND to carry out work that is better controlled at a local level and in general One Ilfracombe has become a vehicle to deliver the priorities of our Partners where a local input is more effective.

Then in March, Covid 19 and the subsequent restriction affected all our lives. Most 'activities' had to cease and volunteer groups were curtailed. This made life difficult for our Community Connector and our Community Developer and our campaign to address social isolation became even more difficult.

Our staff, however, sprang into action, and with the networks built up over the years, we were able to take meaningful steps to identify and address, as far as possible, the effects of the Government 'lockdown'. Volunteers were recruited and managed. Funds were sourced as available and support was provided to those who were self-isolating, those who needed medication collected, and to those who needed questions answered. Local groups and Charities were assisted and the Town was kept informed through social media and the website. We were also in a position, where a local input was required, to support our Partners who sit on the One Ilfracombe Board.

The relaxation of the restrictions during the summer were appreciated and many relationships forged during the 'lockdown' have benefitted all parties concerned. With the upturn in the incidents of Covid infections that have been evident from November 2020 onwards we were in a good position to maintain our support to the residents of Ilfracombe.

The winter months have had an extra effect on those who are isolating and it is fortunate that we have been able to maintain a low level of infections here in Ilfracombe. We have however continued to stress the importance of the publicised safety measures. We have also continued to work with North Devon Council in their support for local businesses to mitigate the problems caused by the virus restrictions. Despite some of our volunteers returning to work we have been able to sustain a good level of support to our more vulnerable residents

We have been able to re-start our 'Living well' meetings via Zoom. The town Team meetings have not resumed but the ITC front line staff have been in close contact with the NDC staff to deal as best as possible with day to day problems of fly tipping and graffiti.

Our Hospital car scheme has been adapted to the vaccine roll out and has been a great help to those without means of transport.

The fact that we have had to stop the 'Out of the Blue' scheme has been a great blow to our youngsters but it is planned that the Academy will resurrect the activity as soon as they can.

Life has not been easy for our Community Connector with so many voluntary groups and activities closing due to Covid. Referrals for those suffering social isolation and mental health issues has been very difficult and those organisations that are still operating are totally over subscribed. Our Community developer is trying to find organisations that can still function but this is almost impossible with social distancing rules. However, the value of cold water swimming to a person's mental health has been very evident and this activity continues to grow.

Because of Covid, this report covers almost two years and so much has happened in this time. I refer you to the monthly report provided by Steve Seatherton for all the items that I have been unable to include in this report.

To conclude I want to thank all of our staff for the initiatives taken in the light of the Covid crisis and for their ongoing commitment. I would like to ensure all of our Partners that we are committed to improving the lives of those living in Ilfracombe and are here to help in any initiatives that may be under consideration.

R. E. Donovan, Chairman 2020/21.

