



Wimborne Minster Town Council



Annual Report May 2023 to April 2024

Summary of the reports presented to the Annual
Town Meeting at Allendale House in Wimborne
Minster on 2nd April 2024 7pm.



Town Mayors Report – Councillor Diann March

Following on from last year's very busy year which saw many new protocols brought into being, even more have been made throughout this year, and once all have been completed this will mean they will only need up-dating and ratifying each year, thus freeing more time for the general day-to-day council business to take place.

I started to work out how many meetings I have attended and the number of hours I have given to Town Council work and then reminded myself why I became a town councillor. It was not about me but because I wanted to put something into the community.

I will not dwell on what the Town Council has done and achieved this year as this falls under the individual committees and the relevant chairman will report on. I would, however, mention that this year we have appointed our Community and Events Liaison Officer, Mr Gary Mason.

Over the last year some councillors have not been able to attend some meetings. However, I, the Deputy Mayor, and other core councillors have regularly attended our meetings which ensured our meetings were quorum and could go ahead. Two councillors recently resigned so the decision was taken, with it being so close to an election, that the Town Council would not co-opt and these positions would be left vacant.

The Town Council put out a consultation on our Draft Strategic Plan for 2024 to 2029 and asked for your feedback, having identified seven strategic priorities to deliver between now and 2029. This consultation aims to help us identify and understand whether these priorities are in line with those of our community so we can ensure that delivering on those priorities forms the core of our work. Once the consultation responses to our draft plan have been reviewed and agreed upon, we will formally adopt our plan in April 2024.

The Town Council held an information day for prospective town councillors on Thursday 29th February 2024 enabling prospective councillors to find out more about the role and how to put themselves forward for election to the Town Council. I attended the annual Dorset Association of Parish and Town Council meeting for councillors on 8th March where I received the 'Single Star Award for Councillor Development' on behalf of the Town Council.

Although I have attended fewer civic engagements this mayoral year, I have learnt so much more about our beautiful county of Dorset and have met many lovely people. Once again, I have felt very humbled by the magnificent work carried out by so many volunteers. Without them, so many things would not exist. My favourite events to attend are the military ones, especially the two minutes silence and Remembrance Day Service as I am so proud to be a resident of Wimborne Minster when representing the whole town as Town Mayor and First Citizen of the Town at these most notable events on our calendar. On behalf of the Town Council, I also signed the Armed Forces Covenant Pledge.

On Thursday 2nd May 2024 the council elections will take place and, due to a change in our boundary, this will mean we will have two more councillors bringing our number up to sixteen. Hopefully, enough residents will put themselves forward to stand to become a town councillor but please bear in mind that being a town councillor needs commitment so the Town Council can work together as a team.

This year my Civic Service will take place Sunday 28th April in the Minster at 3pm and, as usual, everyone is welcome to attend.

I would like to thank my fellow councillors, especially my Deputy Mayor as well as my escorts who have accompanied me on various civic events and all staff members, for all their hard work and commitment throughout this past year. After 33 years as a town councillor, I am not standing for re-election and trust that over the years I have acted in the best interests of the whole of the parish of Wimborne Minster



Planning and Environment Report - Councillor Simon Wheeler

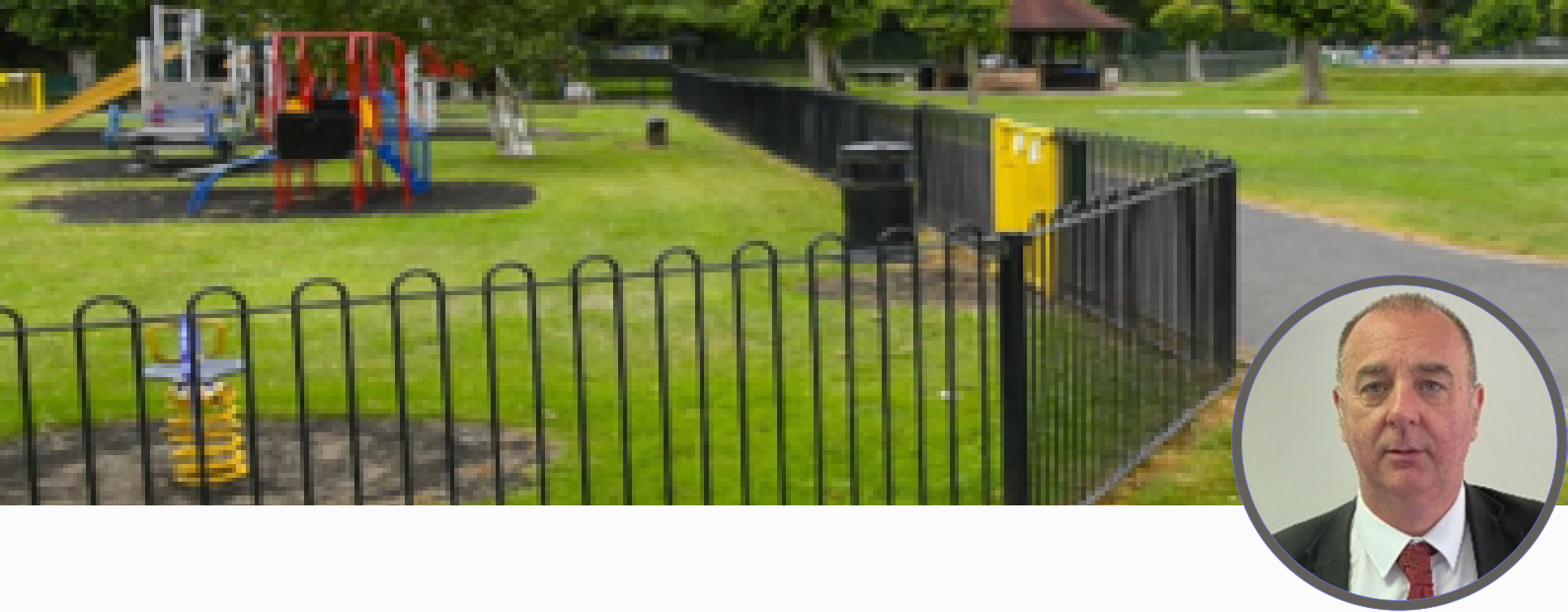
As the Chairman of the Planning and Environment Committee, I am pleased to report on an active and productive year. We have tried to balance environment with planning as well as working with the Police and Dorset Council to improve the safety and vibrancy as well as the environment of Wimborne Minster.

We have been fortunate that many residents have attended our Planning and Environment Committee meetings and feel able to talk about concerns that they have or to raise points that they wish us to be aware of. We enjoy this type of interaction and work hard to ensure Dorset Council are aware of our towns concerns, whether it be around a sitting out licence, a planning application, swift boxes or general issues with the Infrastructure of Wimborne Minster. We will continue to try and forge a relationship with Dorset Council and build on the start we have made this year. We are beginning to be able to arrange site visits, so that Dorset Council officers can see for themselves the issues that we face and strengthen their decision-making process.

We have acted for the safety and health of our roads, and through the hard work of the Deputy Clerk, we have been able to apply for and be shortlisted for some 20 mph zones in the more built up areas of the town, we still have crossings, which are progressing and speed indicator devices and Community Speedwatch initiatives that is starting to gain momentum, so we will keep our focus in that area.

On the environmental front, we have begun the task of mapping the trees of Wimborne Minster and through initiatives such as the late Majesty's Green Canopy Tree Trail project spearheaded by Councillor Richmond, we want to maintain and grow the trail in Wimborne Minster. In addition, we have found through the School Council that our younger residents are equally keen to do more for the environment and have come up with some really great ways to take this forward, so we will look to work closely with them on this.

In summary, this year has been active and progressive. We are confident that we can continue to build the relationship with Dorset Council in the coming year and continue to ensure that Wimborne Minster is a great place to live and visit.



Recreation, Leisure & Buildings Report – Cllr Shane Bartlett

My name is Cllr Shane Bartlett, and I am Chairman of the Recreation, Leisure and Buildings Committee, what follows is a report from this committee for the 2023-24-year period.

The CCTV system in town is working well, a decision will need to be taken at a non-determined date in the future for its control centre as the police station no longer meets the forces operational need.

The Redcotts and Tennis Task and Finish Group is still working through current ideas and shortlisting them before undertaking public consultation.

Developers are progressing with the new Rugby Sports Facility and Wimborne Rugby Club will still have the first option to move there.

We continue to work with Dorset Council on the legal transfer to the allotments at Parmiter Drive.

The Queens Jubilee Tree Trail has now received plaques on all the trees giving details of species type and date planted.

The Town Council Town Hall and Committee Room continue to be a popular site for weddings and civil partnership venue as well as hiring for various activities providing a much-needed revenue stream into the Council's finances.

Like many town and parish council's since COVID there has been an unfortunate increase in anti-social behaviour within our recreation grounds. This has had a significant negative cost impact to the Council due to mindless vandalism and graffiti. Due to much of the antisocial behaviour in Redcotts Recreation Ground being focused on the toilets the Town Council will be trialling a CCTV system to try and curb anymore damage being done to this facility, if this proves unsuccessful then the Town Council will have to give consideration to closing the toilets at night.

Redcotts play area will see this year some refurbishment. Amongst these will be the instillation of roof panels on the small toddler climbing frame and remedial work that is needed on the doughnut.

The last year has been a difficult time for the Committee, having to deal with a constrained budget. This has been further hampered by escalating material and construction costs due to global factors outside of the Committee and Town Council's control. This has contributed to the Committee not being able to progress with some of its projects that it would like to have seen initiated. However the Committee has agreed a way forward to manage the Jubilee Garden at the Town Hall and the Working Group is considering a number ideas for Redcotts including a new garden area for sensory and reflection purposes.

I would like to thank the ground staff and the committee for all their hard work over the last year and the Committee Clerk, Kevin Brooks, for all his work and support.



Finance & Governance Report – Cllr John Morgan

I must thank the Town Clerk and the Finance Manager for their work during the year, and the Chairman, Councillor Carole Chedgy for her hard work and support. My thanks also go to the members of the Committee who have continued to scrutinise and contribute to our discussions.

At the start of this financial year the Committee's title was changed from Resources to Finance and Governance. Both can be extremely dry topics but they each involve a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes to ensure we operate well and transparently. This last year many policies and procedures have been produced which all go through the committee - and they can be found on our website.

This Committee is also responsible for receiving the monthly accounts, administering the budget, considering audit reports, considering grant applications, and dealing with land and leases.

We had also decided to invest in a new accounts package. This is suitable for councils of our size and income and provides better information, and assistance with long term financial planning. Such a package was also recommended by our auditor. We changed over to this system at the beginning of the year and my special thanks to our Finance Manager for her hard work, commitment and positive approach to the new system.

This year we have approved spending for a system to live stream council meetings. This will provide more access and accessibility for our community.

The annual grant awards for 2023/2024 totalled £18,117.45 from a budget of £20,000. The grants budget for 2024/25 is £27,000. The grant application forms and procedures available on our website digitally, and in the office.

This time last year I reported "We are continuing to chase Dorset Council about the land transfers agreed with EDDC in 2019. Whatever the response, and whenever we receive it, any proposed transfers will be reviewed under our current financial regulations." Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report, I can only reiterate this comment.

We received monies via Dorset Council's Community Infrastructure Levy which arises from developments and we have to spend within certain time frames. We cannot just use the money for day to day expenses: there are detailed rules, but essentially it has to be for long term capital infrastructure expenditure. At present we hold £80,923.23 and we have asked our other committees for their ideas as to how this should be spent.



Human Resources Report – Cllr Jeff Hart

The Human Resources Committee has met seven times in this year's cycle.

This is a fairly new Committee that fulfils an important function in the Town Council's work. Work at these meetings has included:

- a review our all HR policies and procedures;
- reviewing and advising on the recruitment process for the new post of Community Events and Liaison Officer which was filled by Gary in July;
- undertaking the appraisal of the Town Clerk;
- reviewing and updating practical support for our lone workers (specially our grounds staff);
- budget agreement for the forthcoming financial year;
- agreeing staff salaries in line with national pay agreements, and
- monitoring staff leave, performance management, support and training.

The Committee has been pleased with the morale and quality of work of staff who clearly enjoy working for the Town Council.



Community Events and Liaison Report – Cllr Diann March

My name is Cllr Diann March and I am the Chairman of the Community Events and Liaison Committee. This is a new Committee that has met four times this year following the appointment of Gary our Community Events and Liaison Officer earlier this year.

The Committee's terms of reference are to manage, deliver and review all Council events which this year included:

- our Remembrance Day parade and service in partnership with the Royal British Legion and the Minster, which took place on 12th November;
- our Christmas Lights Switch on in partnership with the BID, which took place on 25th November;
- our New Year's Eve celebrations in partnership with the Militia and King's Head, which took place in the Town Square;
- my 1960s and 70s clothing Fashion Show at the Allendale Centre on Friday 8th March where I raised money for my two Mayoral charities, Riding for the Disabled Association and Wimborne Model Town, and
- my Civic Service which takes place in the Minster on Sunday 28th April which you are all most welcome to attend.

The Committee has also organised an event to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of D-Day on Thursday 6th June with other local organisations including the Museum of East Dorset, The Minster, the Royal British Legion and the Militia. Our event will take place on Willow Walk from 4pm to 9pm and culminate with the lighting of the beacon at Wimborne Cemetery and a salute by Wimborne Militia. We have also organised a poetry competition for our local schoolchildren. We will be publishing more information about this event nearer the time.

The Committee has also secured sponsorship for bunting to be displayed in the town for the D-Day event and throughout the summer which has saved the Town Council £5,000. The bunting has been made by Linda and her team of ladies from Wimborne War on Waste who also make the boomerang bags for the Foodbank.

The Committee directed office staff to undertake public relations work to promote our consultation on our Draft Strategic Plan from 2024 to 2029 which we have copies here for you if you want to and the forthcoming councillor election on 2nd May by designing posters for regular use on our website, social media sites and noticeboards.

Finally I and the Committee would like to thank the Gary for his work and support in getting this new Committee up and **running**.



School Council – Cllr Jeff Hart

Many town and parish councils have established school councils to encourage youth participation at local government level by enabling local schools to nominate students to represent their school at regular parish and town meetings.

The Town Council agreed to support a school council to:

- enable young people to find out what we do and help shape the local provision of services and facilities provided by the Town Council;
- inform the Town Council of our local young people's priorities and thinking;
- improving the engagement of the Town Council with the local community especially children and young people;
- encourage young people to eventually engage in local democracy by becoming councillors or holding political office, and
- enable students to improve their knowledge and oracy skills.

The Town Council has hosted two school council meetings on 21st November 2023 and 12th March 2024 in the Council Chamber to which all the schools in the area nominated up to three students to take part take in.

The agendas for these meetings included a welcome and introductions by the Deputy Town Mayor Deputy Town Mayor Councillor Simon Wheeler and myself Cllr Jeff Hart, information of the Town Council's work, debates on key issue (for example local youth provision, climate change and sustainability projects) and proposing, seconding and voting on a motion related to these key issues.

Around 20 students come to our last meeting supported by their parents and teachers along with some of my fellow councillors and representatives from Planet Wimborne who provided an informative and engaging presentation on the work undertaken by various groups in the town which the students enjoyed.

Our next meeting is on 11 June 2024 and is open to members of the public so please come along.