



WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

JOINT REPORT OF THE TOWN MAYOR, COUNCILLOR DAVE MITTON AND THE TOWN CLERK, GREG DYKE

1. Introduction

This Annual Report of the Council will be available on the Council Web Site and at the Town Council Offices. The summary of funds which is submitted separately to the Council forms part of this report as will the Audited Accounts when they have been received from the Council's external auditors.

2. Town Council

The Town Council comprises the following 15 members who were all elected for a four year period at the local elections on 5 May 2011 with the exception of Councillor Andrew Sully who was elected in July 2013 to replace the former Councillor Alison Osmond.

Wellington East

Councillor Peter Critchard, 41 Jurston Lane, Wellington TA21 8DW Tel 668698

Councillor Ross Henley, 20 Trinity Close, Wellington TA21 8TZ Tel 665988

Councillor James Hunt, 49 Millstream Gardens, Tonedale, Wellington TA21 OAA
Tel 664400

Councillor Andrew Sully, Kernow House, Dabinett Close, Norton Fitzwarren,
Taunton TA2 6RT Tel 276299

Wellington North

Councillor Gloria Copley, 60 Waterloo Road, Wellington TA21 8HY Tel 662849

Councillor Andrew Govier, 47 Laburnum Road, Wellington TA21 8EN Tel
667589

Councillor Jackie Govier, 47 Laburnum Road, Wellington TA21 8EN Tel 667589

Councillor Dave Mitton, 17 Queens Road, Wellington TA21 9AW Tel 666233

Wellington West

Councillor Robert Bowrah, BEM, 30 Holyoake Street, Wellington TA21 8LD Tel
666739

Councillor Janet Lloyd, Hazelwood, Whiteball, Wellington TA21 0LS Tel 672877

Councillor Janet Reed, 10 Bulford, Wellington TA21 8DE Tel 660584

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams, Lane End House, Northend Lane,
Nicholashayne, Wellington TA21 9QZ Wellington Tel 673244

Rockwell Green

Councillor Terry Milton, 30 Parker Close, Wellington TA21 8SY Tel 662911
Councillor Bill Sparrow, 5 Frank Webber Road, Rockwell Green, Wellington
TA21 8TZ Tel 660381
Councillor Nicola Wilson, 20 Trinity Close, Wellington TA21 8TZ Tel 665988

The Council have three part time employees. The Town Clerk (Greg Dyke - 30 hrs pw), Assistant to the Town Clerk (Debbie Bere – 30 hrs pw) and Finance Assistant Janet Palmer who is employed for 11 hours a month. The nature of the work Debbie now undertakes has gradually evolved since her appointment just over four years ago. She is now a vital part of the Town Council office, has her own areas of responsibility and is an able deputy to the Town Clerk in his absence. In the circumstances the Council might like to consider re-designating this post to Assistant Clerk. The officers can all be contacted at the Council Offices, 28 Fore Street, Wellington TA21 8AQ Tel 662855. The hours that the office is open to the public has also been increased and is now 9a.m. to 12 noon Monday to Friday.

3. Committees

We continue to operate a formal committee system with specific councillors being given responsibility for certain areas of the Council's business. A committee delegation scheme is in place which allows the committees to make decisions in accordance with their agreed terms of reference. This speeds up the decision making process. Decisions of the committees are implemented as soon as they have been made without having to wait for the formal agreement of the Council. The committees currently operating are:

(a) Finance

This meets on a monthly basis and is responsible for overseeing the financial affairs of the Council. This provides the opportunity for members to undertake the necessary checks and balances of the Council's finances on a regular basis. The aim is to make all financial transactions as transparent and accountable as possible. Agendas and minutes of all its meetings are circulated to all councillors so that everyone has an opportunity to scrutinise the finances. The Finance Committee becomes involved early on in the budget setting process. This initial work has allowed better consideration of the setting of the precept. It also gives initial consideration to any applications for grant prior to a decision being made by Council. The Council's Financial Regulations have recently been revised and updated. Chair: The Mayor

(b) Emergency

This Committee has close links with the Emergency Planning teams at District and County level so that it knows what response would be expected of the Council in the event of an emergency. The Committee has in place a Winter Weather contingency plan which aims to help maintain access at certain locations in the town during bad snow conditions. A Community Resilience Store for use in times of emergency continues in place at Wellington School. The Committee met just once during 2014/15 to deal with the above issues and to update the Wellington Emergency/Contingency Plan. Chair: Councillor Jackie Govier

(c) Footpaths Committee

Somerset County Council has overall responsibility for Footpaths and Rights of Way and this Committee continues to work closely with their team. We receive a small grant from Taunton Deane towards the cost of footpath maintenance to which this Council add a sum of its own if necessary. The maintenance of public rights of way is very important to the local community. The Committee has previously inspected all the definitive footpaths within the town boundary and drawn up a schedule designed to keep them clear and passable. It is also fortunate to have a very active Parish Path Liaison Officer (Councillor Dave Mitton) who keeps the Committee up to date with any problems. The “Strimmer Project” set up a couple of years ago by the County Council continues to be a great success. This involves the Town Council being supplied with its own strimmer and associated equipment and volunteers being trained to operate it. In addition to this being the least expensive option it has allowed us to react to any unplanned maintenance that has become necessary. During the past year the Committee has been successful in ensuring that all definitive paths within the town boundary have been kept clear and passable. The number of complaints received has been much less than in previous years. With new building taking place throughout the town as new residential developments are established the Committee will continue to be vigilant to ensure that long established footpaths are not lost. The work of the Committee has been undertaken sufficiently efficiently throughout the year for it to have met only once.

Chair: Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

(d) Environment Committee

As well as dealing with all environmental issues affecting the town this committee also has responsibility for the production of the town guide and promoting and encouraging tourism. In this respect the Committee are once again working in partnership with the publishers of The Edge to produce a new Town Guide. The 2015 guide, which costs the Council nothing, will be published shortly and the Committee are confident that it will be as well received as previous editions. Reports on the work of the Council are also submitted to the “Around Wellington” web site as a way of reaching out to a larger segment of the community. The splendid information boards in various car parks within the town have been provided by the Council working closely with Richard Coupe, the Editor of The Edge. Sponsorship was received towards the cost of the Boards from Waitrose and TDBC. Part of the Council’s “Devolved Services” budget has been used to pay for additional cuts of highway verges now that the County Council have reduced the number of cuts it makes.

The Committee has a busy time ahead. Early discussions will need to take place with TDBC regarding the suggestion that responsibility for the Wellington Playing Field be devolved to the Town Council.

The Council own and are responsible for the Tonedale Play area and consideration will need to be given to the condition of the rather tired play equipment at the site.

Chair: Councillor Gloria Copley

(e) Community Safety

The Council are keen to ensure that it does everything it can to help the Police reduce the perception of crime and reduce incidents of anti social behaviour. It wants to make Wellington a safe and pleasant place in which to live and work.

Sue Mountstevens, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset paid a visit to the Council to talk about the priorities for the police, community safety and criminal justice services for the next three years. Concern was expressed by the Council that the planned, significant restructuring of the local Police would affect the policing of Wellington in the future. Despite assurances to the contrary these fears appear to have been realised to a certain extent. Unfortunately the restructuring has led to the close working partnership we had with the local Police being significantly diminished. Previously the Council had the benefit of regular attendances at its meetings by local police officers. This went a long way to keeping the Council informed of the work of the local police and, in turn, kept the police informed of the challenges faced by the Council and its community. The new policing arrangements have so far meant that this close collaboration no longer exists. The Council are doing all it can to ensure that this situation improves.

We continue to work with the Licensing Authority in relation to the town's night time economy. Chair: Councillor Andrew Govier

(f) Staffing and Training Committee

Staffing issues together with training of both staff and members is the responsibility of this committee. The Committee has not met during the year. Chair: Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

(g) Allotments Committee

This has been another very busy year for this Committee. The Council own an allotment site at the Basins with just over 100 allotment plots. It has worked hard to establish good relations with its allotment tenants and to ensure that all the plots are actively used. There are currently 14 people on the waiting list. With new developments taking place the committee continue to look at possible additional allotment sites within the town. Regular inspections of the allotments ensure a high standard of most of the allotment plots. As part of its aim to be an allotment site for the community, two plots have been re-developed for use by persons with disabilities. One plot has been allocated to Court Fields School and the really young generation have been catered for with the letting of a plot to the Waterloo Road Pre School Playgroup. The Committee meetings continue to be open to all tenants and it enjoys a significant level of attendance from keen allotment holders.

Chair: Councillor Janet Lloyd

(h) Neighbourhood Plan Working Party

Little progress has been made in respect of the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. There is insufficient enthusiasm within the Council for the exercise to continue. Events have overtaken us to such an extent that any Neighbourhood Plan would, to a large degree, be meaningless and could only affect very minor areas of development. The three major developments on the east of the town are now proceeding apace and will be/are quite independent of the requirements of a Neighbourhood Plan. In addition the Deane's own Site Allocation and Development Management Plan has been finalised which means that there is little left for the Neighbourhood Plan to do.

The whole point of a Neighbourhood Plan is to have something that will work and will influence decisions that are made. Clearly any Plan that would now be developed would have much less influence than was originally envisaged or

hoped for. There are still some things that a Plan could achieve. It could include Design Guides, detailed uses of land and/or buildings and general policies regarding social/transport/leisure/economy general policies. It is doubtful that this would be enough to justify moving forward and completing a Plan.

Consideration could, however, be given to developing a Parish Plan which would not have the same impact as a Neighbourhood Plan but would at least set out the aims and aspirations of the Council.

Chair: Councillor Dave Mitton

As well as the formal committee structure, the Council form working parties and sub committees to deal with single focus issues.

The Council also nominate members to represent it on a variety of local committees and organisations.

The Committee structure has been in place for many years. It is clear that it would benefit from a revitalisation. The work of some committees could quite comfortably be absorbed by others. The Town Clerk aims to give consideration to something which more accurately reflects today's issues and priorities.

4. The Mayor

The office of Mayor continues to be used to achieve its original aim to promote the town, raise the profile of the town council and represent the local community. Civic events such as The Two Minute Silence, Remembrance Sunday and Armed Forces Day have become regular parts of the Mayor's calendar. This year the Mayor has used the position to focus on volunteering in the community. He has also worked to go some way towards making Wellington a Dementia Friendly town

The Mayor has continued to undertake the usual wide variety of engagements and represented both the Council and the community throughout the year.

5. Financial Support

The Town Council have a proud record of giving financial support to many local clubs and organisations. It has also used its limited finances to support a number of initiatives which all help to make the town a better and safer place in which to live. This year has been no different. Despite pressure on its finances grants this year have included:

Taunton & District CAB (Wellington Outreach)

Wellington in Bloom Committee

Inspire Hope Today (Kings Church):

The Big Tent

Wellington Museum and Local History Society

Wellington Whirlwinds Trampoline Club

Wellington Cricket Club – Youth Coaching

Wellington Quakers – Celebration of Light

St John's Primary School (crossing patrols)

Wellington Community Support Services (Youth service)

Life Education Wessex

Reminiscence Learning

The Whiteball Tunnel Project

Rockwell Green Institute

Churches Together

The Council consider applications on a regular basis. It aims to ensure that finances are directed to the most needy organisations and those whose proposals are in line with the Council's aims and aspirations.

6. Communication

As can be seen from the report from the Environment Committee, the Council have continued to work with a local publisher to produce the Guide in 2014. A new Guide will be produced in 2015. The Council have continued to produce a regular newsletter. We have continued to work in partnership with "The Edge" (a local service directory) which is distributed to over 6,000 households in the town and surrounding area. This has proved to be a most efficient way of ensuring that the Council's message gets to as many members of the local community as possible. In addition we now submit regular reports on the work of the Council (not the agendas and minutes) to the "Around Wellington" web site. We also rely on more traditional methods of publicity by the use of press releases and are fortunate to have regular, balanced reports in the local Wellington Weekly News. We continue to make good use of modern technology. We have a web site, a Facebook page and Twitter account. These methods of communication continue to grow and are an increasingly good way of bringing up to date information to the community as and when it happens.

7. Planning

The Town Council have devolved planning powers from TDBC which enables it to make decisions on certain categories of minor planning applications. All councillors are required to undertake specific training before they can exercise this devolved power. It also considers and makes recommendations on all other planning applications that are made within the town. This year has seen a number of controversial applications, not least of which was the proposed development of 650 houses at Jurston Farm and an additional 103 houses at Cades Farm.

8. Working Together

The Council have always been keen to work with other agencies so that a joined up approach is taken to the problems and issues that arise in the area.

We continue to have a very active public participation time at all of our Council meetings. Indeed, there are many larger local authorities in the area who would be pleased to receive the level of interest that we get at our meetings. Apart from interested individuals having the opportunity to make their views known at our Planning meetings we have a good number of local people regularly attending meetings of the Council to make representations or purely to take an interest in local proceedings. This has gone a long way to keeping councillors in touch with local views and giving local people an opportunity to see what the Council does to address issues of interest and concern. It all helps in developing mutual understanding and in managing expectations.

This report also gives details elsewhere of how we work with local agencies and organisations all with a view to addressing common problems, responding to community concerns and sharing aims and aspirations.

The Council hopes to continue to encourage interest in the community and civic affairs. The **civic award scheme** which we run with Beech Grove Primary School and Rockwell Green Primary School continues to be successful and encourages Year 6 pupils to improve their skills and use them to impact on their

community. This year we have been pleased that St John's School have also joined this scheme.

Following the County Council's decision to change the way it funds the Youth Service we have continued to work actively with interested parties and have made a significant grant to ensure that this service continues to be delivered in the town. The **Youth Voice initiative** continues to develop thanks to the enthusiasm of the Assistant to the Town Clerk. It is hoped that this will continue to evolve so that the young people will have an opportunity to make their views known on local issues that concern them.

The Town Council took part in a recent **Health and Well Being** exhibition organised by the Our Place project which is funded by Wellington Community Support Services where we had an opportunity to draw attention to the work we do to promote an active lifestyle.

We have worked closely with the Highway Authority on a variety of **traffic issues**. Arrangements were made to monitor vehicle speed in some areas and made use of its Speed Impact Devices at various locations including Bagley Road, Pyles Thorne Road and Bulford. We have also lent support to the "20's Plenty" speed limiting campaign.

The Town centre traffic continues to be a problem and, together with County Councillor Andrew Govier, we continue our prompting of the Highway Authority to try and find a solution.

Wellington One - Wellington has been successfully included in a bid by TDBC to the Police Crime Commissioner for funding to roll-out the 'One Team' model which has been successful elsewhere. This project, which involves taking a multi agency, one team approach to statutorily provided services has now been launched and is developing. The Council have already joined together with Wellington One with a view to jointly providing a number of defibrillators in the town. It is hoped that its co-ordinator, Paul Chamberlain will be able to attend a future meeting to explain how the project is progressing.

We have also been involved with **Our Place, Wellington** which is a Project Group working towards creating more joined up and integrated services for children and families in the Wellington area. This has enabled consideration to be given to gaps in provision and agree priorities for projects to take forward.

Wellington in Bloom continues to work hard in and around the town and we have shown our practical support for it when councillors and officers joined in a litter pick in Rockwell Green.

The Council are always keen to ensure that the local community have every opportunity to raise concerns and influence the decisions that it is able to make. It has also tried to give residents the chance to indicate what areas they feel we should be focussing our limited budget on. To help with this we held a couple of **Drop In Surgeries** on Saturdays at the Farmers Market which gave people this opportunity.

9. Promoting Wellington

A number of events have taken place during the year which has either been promoted by the Town Council or which it took part in. For instance, the Mayor used the annual Carnival reception to network with a variety of other councils, civic offices and local organisations. The Council continue to fund the Christmas Lights and the Switch On ceremony has become a regular event in the town calendar.

10. Times they are a' changing

The Council have recognised that changes in legislation and in the funding of principal authorities are likely to result in a reduction in the services they have traditionally provided. This could be seen as an opportunity for this Council to take on some of those services so that they might continue. We have made gradual increases in our precept so that we might be in a position to consider taking them on.

We already fund extra cuts of highway grass and next year we anticipate taking on responsibility for the three sets of public conveniences in the town.

It is true to say, however, that there will need to be greater communication between the Town Council and the principal authorities in the future. The lack of consultation in respect of changes in local services has meant that on occasions we have had to be reactive and have not been able to take a planned approach to any increase in our responsibilities.

The "new" Council will need to look at and identify its' aims, aspirations and priorities for the town for future years.

11. Conclusion

The public expenditure cuts introduced in recent years continue to impact greatly upon the local council sector. Changing legislation also provides the Town Council with the opportunity to take on services or facilities previously operated by larger authorities. This will continue to have implications for the Council's finances and its resources, particularly as some of them will involve ongoing commitments.

Fortunately local councils are not currently reliant on Government grants to meet their expenditure and have the ability still to set a precept in order to raise funds to meet revenue expenditure, although this is something that may change in the future. The Council have shown that it wants to follow the principles of financial prudence. It has therefore made certain reductions in its planned expenditure and increased slightly its level of Council Tax. By doing this it hopes to be in a position to deliver effective services in response to local needs and aspirations and meet any challenges that might arise.

We all look forward to another busy year.

Dave Mitton
Town Mayor

Greg Dyke
Town Clerk

18 May 2015

