



WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

JOINT REPORT OF THE TOWN MAYOR, COUNCILLOR JANET LLOYD 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 15 members who were all elected for a four year period at the local elections on 7 May 2015. The names, addresses and telephone numbers, together with the Wards they represent are listed at the end of this report. The political composition of the Council is Conservative: 7, Liberal Democrat: 3, Labour: 3, Independent: 2.

The Council have three part time employees. The Town Clerk (Greg Dyke - 30 hrs pw), Deputy Clerk (Debbie Bere – 30 hrs pw) and Finance Assistant Janet Palmer who is employed for 11 hours a month. Debbie is currently on maternity leave and her post is being covered by Gill Croucher. The officers can all be contacted at the Council Offices, 28 Fore Street, Wellington TA21 8AQ Tel 662855. The office is open to the public between 9a.m. and 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. 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 2015/16 to deal with the above issues and to update the Wellington Emergency/Contingency Plan. Chair: Councillor Bob Bowrah

(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 found a new Parish Path Liaison Officer to replace former Councillor Dave Mitton. The new PPLO is Tom Borg who aims to keep 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. New volunteers have been trained this year. 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. Also looking forward the Committee intends to repeat the successful Beating of the Bounds exercise on 2 October 2016. The work of the Committee has been undertaken sufficiently efficiently throughout the year for it to have met only twice.

It has a new Chairman this year in Councillor Gary James

(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. The officers are currently working in partnership with the publishers of The Edge to produce a new Town Guide. The

2016 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. Although the Committee has only met once during the year it anticipates a busy time ahead. TDBC are in the process of developing a Playing Pitch Strategy and once that has been completed conversations will take place 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 have considered the condition of the rather tired play equipment at the site. Rather than carry out a wholesale replacement of the equipment it felt that efforts should be made to refurbish it. It also explored the possibility of reinstating the zip slide 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. Concern continues to be expressed by the Council at the level of policing in the town which has resulted from the re-organisation of the district. The existing "No Drinking Order" for Wellington was found to be somewhat anachronistic as the boundary was drawn before some housing developments took place. We are therefore working with TDBC to provide a new, more relevant Order.

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 met on three occasions during the year. It reviewed the job title of the Deputy Clerk, considered Code of Conduct training, adopted a Discretions Policy under the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations and put in place arrangements for maternity cover during the absence of the Deputy Clerk on maternity leave.

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 works hard to establish good relations with its allotment tenants and to ensure that all the plots are actively used. There are currently 21 people on the waiting list. 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 plots to the Waterloo Road Pre School Playgroup and the Children's Centre. 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

Nothing has been done this year 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.

It was considered that this would not be enough to justify moving forward and completing a Plan.

Chair: Vacant

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 Council previously recognised that the Committee structure has been in place for many years and 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 but unfortunately work on this has not yet started.

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. The Mayor has continued to undertake the usual wide variety of engagements and represented both the Council and the community throughout the year both locally and at many locations all over Somerset.

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. Grants this year have included:

Taunton & District CAB (Wellington Outreach)
Wellington in Bloom Committee
Wellington Museum and Local History Society
Wellington Cricket Club – Youth Coaching
Wellington Quakers – Celebration of Light
St John's Primary School (crossing patrols)
Wellington Community Support Services (Youth service)
Churches Together
Genesis Youth Theatre Group
St John's Community Support Group
Wellington Wildcats Girls Football Team

Wellington Bowling Club
Basins Volunteer Group x 2
Wellington Tennis Club
Transition Town Wellington
WHERE
Friends of Wellington Library
Wellington Community Centre

A total of £14,247 has been awarded from the annual budget of £15,000. It can be seen from the wide variety of organisations that have successfully applied for grants, that many different parts of the community have received financial help from the Council. The Council consider applications on a regular basis. It aims to ensure that finances are directed to the neediest organisations and those whose proposals are in line with the Council's aims and aspirations. The Finance Committee have recently reviewed the Council's Grants policy.

6. Communication

We have continued to work with a local publisher to produce the Guide in 2015. A new Guide will be produced in 2016. 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 7,000 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 have undertaken specific training so that they can exercise this devolved power. It also considers and makes recommendations on all other planning applications that are made within the town. A total of approximately 172 applications have been dealt with during the year. Of the decisions made by the Council under delegated powers just one has been overturned on appeal.

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 and 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, St John's 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.

We continue to work actively with interested parties in an effort to maintain a meaningful youth service in the town. We make a significant grant to Wellington Community Support Service to ensure that this service continues to be delivered. The Youth Voice initiative continues to develop. In the absence of the Deputy Clerk we have had the help of Charlotte Bligh from Somerset Rural Youth Project to ensure that the momentum generated so far continues. The location and time of the Youth Voice has changed. It now takes place in Court Fields School during school hours. This has generated a much greater attendance. 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.

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 make use of its Speed Impact Devices at various locations. A financial contribution has been made to the County Council to provide "wig wag" lights close to Wellesley Park School.

The town centre traffic continues to be a problem. The Council are aware of work being undertaken by the County Council in monitoring use and modelling a re-sequencing of the traffic lights at Longforth Road, we were surprised, however, that the emphasis appeared to be on replacing the crossing at the top of Longforth Road. We maintain that the main thrust of this scheme should be to improve traffic flows through this junction by incorporating right-hand turning lanes into Longforth Road and Waitrose.

Wellington One – During the year the nature of Wellington One has changed a little. Paul Chamberlain the original Co-ordinator has returned to his duties in the Fire Service. Despite the lack of a full time co-ordinator, this project, which involves taking a multi agency, one team approach to statutorily provided services continues to make progress. The Council work with Wellington One, in particular on the Community Team. Unfortunately we have made little progress on the provision of defibrillators in the town. The One Team has asked to make use of one side of the Community Notice Board to advertise local job vacancies.

We maintain a connection with the National Trust regarding the repairs to Wellington Monument, we are working with TDBC regarding the possibility of a Town Centre Enhancement Scheme and the County Council are working on our behalf to test the cost of an evening bus service.

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. Devolution and Transformation

The Council recognise 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 is seen as an opportunity for this Council to take on some of those services so that they might continue. The Council's decision to raise its element of the 2016/17 Council Tax reflects its aspirations, takes into consideration the likely reduction in income from other sources and is considered to be the level of increased precept necessary to fund the provision of services. A Working Group of councillors has been formed to prioritise and cost any additional services that might be undertaken by the Town Council.

The Council has identified the following areas it wishes to focus on:-

- Improving the environment
- Co-ordinating support for older people
- Supporting families and young people
- Be proactive in getting people into employment

It also still wants to be effective in:-

- Promotion of Wellington
- Health and Well Being
- Supporting traders and businesses
- Transport issues
- Community Safety

There are a number of these areas where results would be very visible. These are mostly environmental issues such as grass cutting, weed spraying and gully emptying. There are, however, less visible areas that are considered to be equally important. These less tangible areas surround the provision of support for a wide range of social care – areas that the Town Council has not traditionally become too involved in but to which it now wishes to make a contribution.

It continues to be difficult to identify precisely what services are to be discontinued and just how this Council might best make any contribution to the areas on which it wants to focus.

Arrangements have already been made to fund extra cuts of highway grass and weed spraying next year. We are also taking on ownership and responsibility for the Longforth Road public conveniences.

We continue to support the call for the re-establishment of a Railway Station in Wellington whilst being mindful of the need to manage expectations in view of the many challenges that face this particular aspiration.

Efforts continue to be made to ensure 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.

11. Conclusion

As a Town Council (and as individual councillors) we have a record of being an active pressure group. We have had varying degrees of success during the year in a number of areas. Bus Shelters have now been provided on Taunton Road, we resisted the offer of Fields in Trust to become involved in Wellington Park and we are pressing the bus companies to consider introducing a service which would benefit some of the residential areas.

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. By doing this the Council are getting itself into 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.

Janet Lloyd
Town Mayor

Greg Dyke
Town Clerk

9 May 2016

Town Councillors

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 Gary James, 6 Blackmoor Road, Wellington TA21 8ED. Tel 662112

Wellington North

Councillor William Brown, 8 Chelston Terrace, Chelston, Wellington TA21 9HT
Tel 661602

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

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

Councillor John Thorne, 3 Rose Mews, Fore Street, Wellington Tel 663146

Wellington South

Councillor Charles Biscoe, 10 Station Road, Wellington TA21 8JZ Tel 660228

Wellington West

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

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 Marcus Barr, 16 Brooklands Road, Rockwell green, Wellington TA21
9DJ

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

Councillor Bill Sparrow, 5 Frank Webber Road, Rockwell Green, Wellington
TA21 8TZ Tel 660381

