



WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

JOINT REPORT OF THE TOWN MAYOR, COUNCILLOR BOB BOWRAH BEM 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 elected for a four year period at the local elections on 7 May 2015. Bill Sparrow resigned from the Council on 14 December 2016. Following a by-election, the vacancy was filled by Lynda Russell-Cairns who we welcomed to the Council in February 2017. Long serving councillor Gloria Copley sadly passed away in March 2017. This vacancy remains to be filled. The names, addresses and telephone numbers, together with the Wards they represent are listed at Appendix A to this report. The political composition of the Council is Conservative: 8, Liberal Democrat: 3, Labour: 2, Independent: 1, 1 vacancy

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 returned from maternity leave in November. During her absence her post was 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 (although you will usually find someone in the office outside of these hours).

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 most committees to make decisions in accordance with their agreed terms of reference. This speeds up the decision making process. Decisions of the committees are normally implemented as soon as they have been made without having to wait for the formal agreement of the Council. Details of the committees that are currently operating are attached as Appendix B to this report.

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 the Council and the community throughout the year both locally and at many locations all over Somerset.

During the budget setting process councillors pointed out that it was now 9 years since the Town Council introduced a Mayoralty. Since that time the former Chairman's insignia had been used. Apart from the fact that this did not represent the current position the insignia was beginning to show signs of wear and tear. It was considered appropriate to update the chains of office for both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and consideration is currently being given to the likely costs.

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:

Citizens Advice Bureau – Wellington Outreach
Wellington Churches Together – The Big Tent
Wellington Museum and Local History Society
Wellington Bowling Club
Wellington Operatic Society Touring Group
Wellington Flower Show
Wellington Football Club
Reminiscence Learning
Wellington Wildcats Girls Football Team
Wellington Squash Club
Wellington Business Association
Wellington Cricket Club – Youth Coaching
Wellington Churches Together – Howard Road Fun Day
Wellington Quakers – Celebration of Light
St John's Primary School (crossing patrols)
Wellington Community Support Services (Youth Service)
St John's Community Support Group
WHERE
Wellington Children's Centre
Skintight Samba Band
Superact
Wellington Silver Band
Life Education Wessex
ReadEasy
St John's Community Support Group

A total of £14,686 has been awarded from the annual Grants 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. In addition to the Grants budget, funds have been used from the Devolved Services and Promotion of Wellington budgets to assist organisations that support those services that the Council have identified as ones it wished to focus on. A further £5,100 has come from this source.

6. Communication

It is important for the Council to be as clear, open and transparent as possible and to make details of its work readily available. We have continued to work with a local publisher to produce the Town Guide in 2016. A new Guide will be produced in 2017. The Guide is produced at no cost to the Council. The Council produce a regular newsletter which we include in "The Edge" (a local service directory) widely distributed in the town and surrounding area. In addition we have a presence on 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 and Somerset County Gazette.

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. The town continues to develop and grow. The Town Council, therefore take a keen interest in all planning applications that affect the town.

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 original format for delivery of the Youth Voice did not develop as expected and we were unable to maintain momentum. We remain keen, however, to ensure that young people have an opportunity to make their views known on local issues that concern them. We are therefore trying a different approach. The Deputy Clerk has been working with pupils at Court Fields School to find out their views on topics the Town Council discuss.

It is hoped that by working together this not only gives the Town Council an insight into the views of young people but can also help shape some of the Personal Development curriculum at the school as well as create a closer working relationship between Court Fields School and Wellington Town Council. We maintain a connection with the National Trust regarding the repairs to Wellington Monument. We shared their disappointment that the bid for Heritage Lottery Funding was unsuccessful.

Wellington One – this project, which involves taking a multi-agency, one team approach to statutorily provided services continues to make progress and is a significant example of working together. The Council part fund the employment of the Co-ordinator and have made additional finance available this year to provide extra services. By working with a multi-agency group such as this the Council are beginning to be in a position to realise some of its aspirations and focus on the areas it considers to be important.

9. Transport

Town centre traffic continues to be a problem. The Council are liaising with the Highway Authority to improve traffic flow at the Longforth Road junction but progress is slow. We are also talking to the Highway Authority regarding delivery of the Longforth Farm link road to Relyon.

During the year we looked into the possibility of funding an evening bus service. Unfortunately this proved to be too expensive an option for the Council to consider.

We also listened to and supported a petition aimed at the re-introduction of a direct bus service from Wellington to and from Musgrove Park Hospital. Unfortunately the outcome of the discussions was that it was made clear that there were no plans to provide this service. The County Council had no funds to subsidise the route and there was no commercial benefit to the bus company in providing the service.

10. 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. This year we further supported the promotion of the town by making it possible for the Wellington Operatic Society Touring Group to host a similar

group from Portugal and by contributing to the costs incurred by the Wellington Business Association in producing a town map.

11. Devolution and Transformation

Over the past couple of years there has been a reduction in the services traditionally provided by TDBC and SCC. This is seen as an opportunity for this Council to take on some of those services. We are positioning ourselves to be ready to respond to the new possibilities offered by localism and the increasing opportunities for devolution from principal authorities. This might, at times, be difficult for a Council of our size with limited resources so we need to be open to different ways of working. We need to remember that Council tax payers don't look at tiers of local government – they look at the quality and provision of services.

The Council wishes to focus on the following areas:-

- Improving the environment
- Co-ordinating support for older people
- Supporting families and young people
- Be proactive in getting people into employment
- Promotion of Wellington
- Health and Well Being
- Supporting traders and businesses
- Transport issues
- Community Safety

Arrangements have once again been made to improve the environment by funding extra cuts of highway grass and weed spraying next year. TDBC will be reducing the frequency of collection of their dog bins but ours will remain unchanged.

We are now the proud owners of the Longforth Road public conveniences. A service we have saved from being discontinued. The TDBC cleansing contract has recently been taken over by I D Verde and we have already negotiated a reduction in the cost of cleaning the toilets.

We are working in partnership with I D Verde to appoint a Community Warden for 12.5 hours per week. It is anticipated that the person employed will supplement TDBC's street sweeping service and undertake certain jobs like collecting litter, weeding and cleaning bus shelters, picking up litter and inspecting equipment at Tonedale Play area. The duties would be sufficiently flexible to allow the Council to react to unforeseen situations that might arise

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.

We are also working closely with the Wellington Sports Federation and Sports Clubs to develop and hopefully achieve the vision identified in the TDBC Playing Pitch Strategy.

12. 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. The work of the Council continues to increase and has become much more diverse

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. Life with the Town Council continues to be varied and is never boring.

We all look forward to another busy year.

Bob Bowrah BEM
Town Mayor

Greg Dyke
Town Clerk

8 May 2017

APPENDIX A

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

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

One vacancy

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 Tel 666470

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

Councillor Lynda Russell-Cairns, 6, The Corams, Waterloo Road, Wellington
TA21 8JQ Tel 974305

APPENDIX B

(a) Finance Committee

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. 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 Committee

This Committee continues its 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 (fortunately it was not needed). The Committee met just once during 2016/17 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 definitive footpaths within the town boundary are regularly inspected and a schedule prepared designed to keep them clear and passable. It is also fortunate to have found Tom Borg who, together with his wife, Eunice, has proved to be an excellent Parish Path Liaison Officer. They 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. It has allowed us to react to any unplanned maintenance that has become necessary. The Beating of the Bounds exercise took place again on 2 October 2016.

Chair: 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 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 works in partnership with W.A.G to encourage responsible dog ownership.

Chair: Councillor Janet Reed

(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. During the year a Public Spaces Protection Order was introduced prohibiting the use of intoxicating substances in public areas.

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. During the year it gave consideration to the staffing structure following the Deputy Clerk's return from Maternity Leave, the terms and conditions for the appointment of a Community Warden and authorised improved IT facilities and equipment so that a more efficient service could be provided.

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 22 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.

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.