



WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

JOINT REPORT OF THE TOWN MAYOR, COUNCILLOR MRS JANET LLOYD AND THE TOWN CLERK, KATHRYN HEMENSLEY

1. Introduction

This Annual Report of the Council will be available on the Council Web Site and at the Town Council Offices, when open. 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 approved by the Council's external auditors.

2. Town Council

Wellington Town Council has 15 Councillors in total with elections taking place every four years. The current Council was formed in May 2019 when elections last took place. Nine previous Councillors stood and were re-elected together with three new Councillors. Unusually, and reflecting a national trend in the May 2019 elections, many seats were uncontested. Additionally, following the election 3 Councillors vacancies remained. These were advertised and a recruitment took place which resulted in a successful co-option of applicants to these vacancies. Councillors' names and contact details are listed by Ward at **Appendix A** to this report. The political composition of the Council is Independent: 6, Conservative: 4, Liberal Democrat: 3, Labour 2. Importantly however, Councillors work together to serve the town without political bias.

3. Generally

Apart from welcoming its newly-formed Council, the past year has seen major restructure of the Council's resources and close review of the services it provides. In particular, dated IT systems, devices and support services have been upgraded to enable the implementation of more modern working practices and procedures. Policies, procedures and governance documents were reviewed and rewritten where appropriate, then re-adopted by the Council. A full staffing review was also identified as essential as the year progressed.

4. Council Staff

The past year saw significant changes in staffing. A need for additional staff was identified to support the new Council's aspiration to extend and diversify Council activities of benefit to the local community. The Assistant Clerk left the Council's employ in July 2019. With a significant change in roles and responsibilities, job

descriptions needed to be re-written, and posts professionally re-evaluated, as these had not been reviewed for a considerable time. To ensure successful, long-term recruitment several temporary staff were engaged via an agency whilst a full review of staffing needs and job roles took place.

The Town Clerk, Kathryn Hemensley is also the Council's Responsible Financial Officer, and works 30 hours per week.

A permanent Deputy Clerk, Annette Kirk, started in post on 17th February 2020, having first joined the staff team in November 2019 on a temporary basis. Assistant Clerk, Alice Kendall was recruited at the end of the financial year with a scheduled start date on 6 April 2020. Public events relating to Covid-19 meant the post could not start as planned.

Finance Assistant Janet Palmer remains in the Council's employ, working around 11 hours a month to carry out accounting activities and manage payroll.

5. Council Offices

Expansion of the staffing team during the year led to a need for additional office space. Fortunately the opportunity arose to lease an additional room at 28 Fore Street and a 3-year leasing arrangement was entered into. The search continued for alternative offices with ground floor access, which might serve as a hub shared with other local services (including a new post office) continued. No suitable opportunity has yet come to light.

Under normal operations staff would be contacted at the Council Offices, 28 Fore Street, Wellington TA21 8AQ Tel 662855. email info@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic however (see below) contact telephone numbers are:

Kathryn Hemensley, Town Clerk 07983 697740

Annette Kirk, Deputy Clerk 07968 529321

Alice Kendall, Assistant Clerk 07591 819989

The office would normally open to the public between 9 a.m. and 12 noon Monday to Friday. This had to be downgraded to providing a telephone service between, but available over the longer period of 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. under the current arrangements.

6. Covid-19

The advent of the Coronavirus pandemic meant that the Council had to react quickly, in mid-March, to implement business continuity within a safe environment, as directed by central government. This regrettably meant that the Council offices were obliged to close to the public from 28th March. To enable home working for staff the Council purchased 2 new laptops, new IT software, and 2 mobile telephones as an alternative to paying to redirect landline calls to the office. This allowed callers to have an immediate response to email or telephone enquiries during office hours, as well as evening or weekend access to staff for urgent issues.

Many Council events and activities (including all Council meetings) were by necessity placed on hold at the year end. They remain so pending further government advice

around commercial, social and community activities. The safety and wellbeing of the town and all its residents has been of critical importance to Councillors and staff. To enable the Council to mobilise quickly should the need arise, a Coronavirus Budget of £10,000 was agreed at a special Council emergency meeting on 19th March. This meeting replaced a scheduled public meeting on 13th March, cancelled for health and safety reasons. The replacement meeting was not opened up to the public due to health risks and the short notice required in setting up the meeting.

A key focus of the Council's emergency planning was to ensure those with vulnerabilities – and particularly those without access to computers, social media or similar – had access to essential information, adequate food supplies and medications, and equally importantly, social support. To ensure key messages were received by one and all, the Council produced a professionally-printed leaflet containing key information and contact numbers. A team of Councillors, staff and volunteers delivered the leaflet (in line with social distancing regulations) to all households in the borough at the end of March.

At this meeting Councillors also agreed proposals, later ratified by electronic vote by all Councillors, to ensure the Council could continue to operate lawfully. These included delegated authority for the Clerk, Mayor and Deputy to collectively approve Council expenditure up to £5,000. Also, that most Council decisions could be agreed by electronic voting, with full records maintained on every matter put to the vote. These records will be made available to the public.

Throughout the pandemic the Town Council has worked closely with all relevant parties – other Councils, local groups and charities etc. Working together has ensured a joined-up approach and enabled better all-round support for the town and residents.

7. Budget and Precept.

In January the annual budget (2020 – 2021) was approved by Councillors. The budget reflected the Council's priorities of continuing to support the success and wellbeing of the town, as well as providing funding to enable new areas of operation or the acquisition of new assets of benefit to the community.

As with many Councils nationwide the budget resulted in an increase in the annual precept, charged to parish residents via their Council tax.

The precept for the 2020 – 2021 was set at £352,939.00 which resulted in Council tax of £66.91 per household for the year – an increase of 30 pence per week (31%) on the 2019 -2020 Council tax. The Council also agreed to draw down £80,000.00 of reserves to support its work over the coming year.

8. Committees and Working parties

The Council has a range of formal committees and working parties with specific Councillors having responsibility for certain areas of the Council's business. A committee delegation scheme is in place to enable committees (where appropriate) 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.**

9. The Mayor – Councillor Janet LLoyd

The Mayor is the Chairman of the Council. A specific aim for the Mayor, alongside other Councillors, is to promote the town, raising the Council's profile of the Town Council and represent the local community. Civic events such as the Two Minute Silence, Remembrance Sunday and Armed Forces Day are regular engagements in the Mayor's calendar, as well as an annual Civic Service. Over the past year the Mayor has continued to undertake the usual wide range of engagements. She has represented the Council and our community both locally and in other locations all over Somerset occasions being accompanied by her Consort, Ian Lloyd.

10. General Power of Competence

Following study, the Clerk gained the CiLCA qualification (Certificate in Local Council Administration) in January 2020. The Council resolved at its January meeting to adopt the General Power of Competence. This legal power extends the Council's range of activities by enabling it to carry out any activity or operation that an individual might do, as long as it is lawful and not expressly prohibited through other strands of legislation.

11. Financial Support to the Community

Unlike many other Parishes the Town Council seeks to support the wellbeing and success of the town by giving financial support to many local clubs and organisations through its grant system. This enables a wide range of activities and events to take place which otherwise might not be possible. To be successful, applicants need to demonstrate that there is demand for the activity/event for which funding is requested, and that there will be a positive benefit to residents within the parish. Councillors make decisions on applications at their monthly Council meetings. Applications are determined against the Council's grants policy and funds are directed to organisations needing financial support, and whose proposals are in line with the Council's over-arching aims and aspirations. Organisations receiving grants are expected to give feedback at the end of the year as the success of their activity or event.

Around £17,000 was paid out in grants over the past year, Below are the community groups who successfully bid for an award in the 2019-20 financial year, together with the amount received. Where appropriate some awards have been allocated to alternative budget headings:-

	£
Court Fields Pre-school	500.00
Waterloo Road Community Pre-School	250.00
Wellington Museum and Local History Society	750.00
Wellington Majorettes	1000.00
Wellington in Bloom	1500.00
Reminiscence Learning (Defibrillator)	1301.00
Skintight Samba	500.00

Churches Together in Wellington	500.00
Wellington Counselling CIC	6000.00
Family Counselling Trust	2997.07
Resilience Voyage Drugs Bus	920.00
Life Education Wessex	900.00
Wellington Tennis Club	5000.00
Transition Town Community Garden	1679.60
Jackdaws Educational Trust	200.00
Wellington Boots Walking Football	118.93
Quakers Celebration of Light Garden	241.00
Wellington Cricket Club	1050.00
Wellington Choral Society	1547.45
Churches Together Wellington – Howard Road Community Fun Day	250.00

The Council also has in place three Service Level Agreements, each with a three-year term. This enables a financial commitment for a longer support period for these charities as they work to help local people. The 2019 – 2020 financial year represents year 2 of each SLA. The recipients are:-

- Citizens Advice Bureau £3,000 – Wellington Outreach Group, offering advice and support to local people on a range of subjects (2018 - 2020)
- Reminiscence Learning £3,000 – Supporting local people with dementia (2018 – 2020)
- WHERE (West Country Health Education and Research Enterprise) £2,000 – offering support to local residents with any sort of disability (2018 - 2020)

The external climate remains volatile with continuing cuts in County and District Council budgets and reduction in many areas of operation. For example, whilst the District Council maintains most existing street lighting, any new provisions must be funded by the Town Council. The same situation applies for the provision of dog waste bins, formerly provided by the District Council.

The Town Council remains committed to supporting groups which promote the town, and the safety and wellbeing of parish residents. Funding is available through the Council's 'Promotion of Wellington' budget and the 'Health and Wellbeing' budget, formerly named 'Devolved Services', then 'Community Services'.

Additional funding provided to the community through other budget lines included:-

- St John's Primary School (crossing patrols) £357.00
- Wellington Community Support Services (Youth Service) £26,200
- Wellington One Group £11,000 (bringing together a wide range of community services)

12. Communication

It is important, and in fact a legal requirement, for the Council to be clear, open and transparent in all its activities, and to make details of its work, decisions, and finances readily available to the public.

Website

The Council undertook a major review of its communications over the past year. The Council's website was nearing the end of its working life, and therefore could not be upgraded and maintained with the latest information. The Council therefore commissioned a new website. Staff worked with the Council's IT consultant to build the new site which would contain not only statutory information, but have an active and dynamic interface with the public and could report on key local issues.

The website was launched earlier than planned, in mid-March, to enable the Council to post up key community information relating to the Coronavirus pandemic. Following launch, all areas of the website have been populated so the public can have easy access to Council information, and contact through a simple web-based form.

Further development of the website will continue periodically so that it remains up-to-date and an effective tool of communication. Several compliments have been received about the new webpage, which is pleasing.

Other communications

As a result of the development of the new website, a decision was taken to step down the Council's newsletter, The Edge, previously delivered to all households every 2-months. The use of the special webpage on the 'Around Wellington' website was also discontinued during the year.

There has been a concerted effort over the past year to promote the good work of the Council through regular press and media releases, most frequently using the Wellington Weekly and the County gazette. Articles have focussed on Council services and activities and aim to be 'good news'.

Town Guide

This remains a highly popular annual publication, containing a huge range of local information and contacts. Entries include schools, sports and social clubs as well as faith organisations, local charities and the like. The Mayor includes a foreword by way of an address to local residents. The guide is free, and is available from a wide range of outlets around the town.

Social Media

As part of the overhaul of Council communications, the Council's Facebook page was reinstated in full. This continues to be a highly successful method for communicating topical issues. The Council has a social media policy and does not enter into public debate on contentious items.

The Council's Twitter account is available but not being actively monitored. This will go live again once there is a full staffing team.

13. Planning

The Town Council continued for most of the year with its devolved planning agreement from Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT). The agreement enables the Town Council to make decisions on certain categories of minor planning applications. All councillors undertake specific training before they can exercise this devolved power. The Council also considers and makes recommendations on all other planning applications that are made within the town.

The Agreement lapsed in January 2020 and was placed on hold by SWT in March 2020 due to the fact that in-person Council meetings were no longer able to take place. The decision as to whether to continue with this somewhat costly arrangement will be taken at a later stage.

An issue of significant borough-wide controversy this past year was the unilateral decision of SWT to no longer provide paper copies of plans to Council staff. These were formerly held in the office to enable public inspection, and were displayed at each Council planning meeting. The instruction was that Councillors and the public should access these drawings through SWT's website. Whilst some plans could be printed off, the advice was that they would not necessarily be to scale. The restriction of paper size in domestic photocopiers also compromised the ability to have accurate, scaled drawings to hand.

Development

The town continues to develop and grow and the Town Council, take a keen interest in all planning applications that affect the town. There have been a range of meetings between Councillors and Developers, including EG Fry (Jurston Farm), Bovis Homes (Bagley Road), House of Somerset (retail). Councillors have also attended public consultation meetings relating to the Bagley Road site and the new school on the Longforth development.

Over the past year we have seen further development of the Jurston Farm site where a total of 650 new homes are planned in phased handovers. This will incorporate a specially managed 'Dormouse woodland', which it is intended will eventually pass to the Town Council for ownership and management.

The commercial estate at Westpark continues to be developed with a range of businesses. A planned site visit for Councillors in March was deferred on account of social distancing regulations.

Neighbourhood Plan

Councillors resuscitated the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Working Party during the year and had several meetings to scope out key themes and ways of engaging with the public. Some progress was made. However advisory guidance appeared to emerge suggesting that NPs might not hold the same degree of influence in future in areas where housing need significantly outstripped building provision. As a result several members stepped down from the Working party in November 2019. Following a presentation to the remaining members in February 2020 further reservations about continuing were expressed and a proposal was suggested to discontinue with the working party. This would be voted on at a

later stage and any alternative proposals for shaping the development of the town would be considered going forward.

14. Working Together for the good of the community

The Town Council is an important part of local democracy and the tier of government closest to local people. Councillors and staff continue to work hard to encourage social inclusion and engagement with the widest possible range of residents. Other key objectives remain to have a say in future development locally, to support and advocate for local business, and to promote the success and wellbeing of the town and its residents.

There is an ongoing commitment to ensuring that essential local facilities continue to be available in their fullest range. These include direct provision of discretionary services such as public conveniences, dog waste and litter bins. Or pro-actively advocating on residents' behalf for community services or health facilities. Wherever possible Councillors and staff seek to work closely with other agencies so that a joined up, effective and value-for-money approach is taken to the problems and issues that arise in the area.

As part of the annual budget setting process, Councillors agreed a principle of striving to acquire new and additional community assets should any realistic opportunities arise. A budgetary sum of £50,000 was therefore set aside for 'capital projects' with £20,000 contingency for professional fees to support any assessment or purchase.

Open and Accountable

Council meetings, and Committee meetings are always open to the public, and people are actively encouraged to come along to hear about local issues. Each meeting schedules a slot for Public Speaking to enable members of the public to address the Council or Committee on matters within their particular interest.

We continue to enjoy good numbers of public attendance, and participation at all of our Council meetings. The Allotments Committee and Environment and Open Spaces Committee meetings are particularly well attended by individuals or representatives of local groups. Planning meetings are a welcome opportunity for residents to express their views on specific planning applications, which helps inform the Council's decision or comment.

Public participation at meetings provides a valuable opportunity for Councillors to be in touch with local views. It also gives local people an opportunity to see what the Council does and to understand issues of interest and concern. This assists in developing mutual understanding and in managing expectations.

Working with Others

Included in this report are details of how we work with local agencies and organisations, with a view to addressing common problems, responding to community concerns and sharing aims and aspirations.

Young People

The Council aims to encourage interest in the community and civic affairs. The civic award scheme which we run with Beech Grove and Rockwell Green Primary Schools continues to flourish and encourages Year 6 pupils to improve their skills and use them to impact on their community. The scheme has now been running for a sufficient period of time and remains highly popular. This year's presentation in July 2019 was extremely well attended by children and their families.

A key Council priority remains to continue actively working with relevant parties so a meaningful youth service can be maintained in the town. The Council has a three-year agreement in place which provides annual funding of around £26,000 to Wellington Community Support Service. This ensures that youth services are delivered and the young people's centre remains open. This agreement comes to an end with the close of the financial year, but proposals for a new Service Level Agreement will be considered once received.

We are keen to ensure that young people have an opportunity to make their views known on local issues that concern them.

This past year also saw a new outreach project operating on Monday evenings and seeking to engage young people who would not normally attend the youth club. A vehicle operating as a 'youth pod' comes to the town and invites young people to have a drink and a chat with specialist outreach workers. Ideas shared are fed into mainstream youth services provision.

Local Groups and Charities

The Council maintains a close connection with a number of local groups working for the benefit and wellbeing of local residents.

We continue to work closely with the National Trust regarding the Wellington Monument. Great progress was made during the year with restoration starting in earnest. Councillors had VIP invitations to the site prior to works commencing and there two significant Council-led events at the site (see below Promoting Wellington'.

Wellington One – this service, which co-ordinates a multi-agency, 'one team' approach to statutory services and local charities, continues to meet monthly and is a significant example of working together. Following the Somerset West and Taunton merger this vital service was to be discontinued. However, a range of local bodies, including the Town Council agreed to provide funding to save this extremely valuable service.

By retaining this multi-agency group Council are able to realise many of its aspirations and focus on the areas it considers to be important, such as welfare and wellbeing, as well as support for vulnerable residents and reduction in crime.

Wellington Heritage - Dr Joanne O'Hara remains with Somerset West and Taunton Council in her Heritage Conservation speciality role. Ongoing projects include a number of high-profile projects including Wellington Mills and The Basins. Her support is greatly appreciated.

Plans for a range of improvements to Wellington's park, which has heritage status, were on hold at year end due to Coronavirus regulations.

Alongside organisations already mentioned, the Council is indebted to the many groups and charities around the town who give much free time to provide or support activities and opportunities for the public, or who advocate for pleasant, safe and environmentally-friendly surroundings.

15. Transport

As in previous years there have been some significant roadworks including the town centre, and particularly construction of the new roundabout on the (A380) relief road for the Jurston Farm housing development.

The proposed link road from Relyon through the new Longforth Farm development has not yet been completed and with the sale of the Pritex site, there is uncertainty as to whether this new road will come to fruition.

The Railway

There were further meetings of the Devon and Somerset Metro group which specifically looks at reinstating a railway station for Wellington. The Town Council's representative on this provides feedback, and there has been progress with the scheduling of signalling works into a firm 5-year plan, as well as a grant bid for funding to further develop the project. Currently the group have submitted a successful bid to the Department for Transport for the sum of £50,000 to further the development of the proposed railway station.

Cycling

The Town Council jointly, with Somerset West and Taunton Council, funded a professional feasibility study for a cycle route between Wellington and Taunton. This had been commissioned by the local 'Wellington Wheelers' group and findings would be presented to the County Council for consideration.

16. Promoting Wellington

With the advent of a new Council with aspirations to have a greater profile within the local community, the previous year has seen an enhanced range of events seeking to promote the town and the Town Council's work. In addition to regular media reports there have been many events during the year arranged and promoted by Councillors. Examples include the annual Carnival reception which enables the Mayor to network with a variety of other councils, civic offices and local organisations. The Council once again funded the town's Christmas Lights. The Switch On ceremony with input from local schools and groups was very well-attended.

There were also two very special events held at the Wellington monument – the first in September 2019 was a visit by the Duke of Wellington for a trip to the town to mark the 200th anniversary of the original Dukes one and only visit to Wellington. Local schools attended this event which included a buffet reception in the town centre followed by a VIP visit to the Museum for a review of Duke of

Wellington-related artefacts. The party then transferred to the monument for a special tour. Many members of the public joined the celebration.

The second event, in March 2020, was the naming of a newly-qualified police horse to be named Wellington in honour of the town. A donation towards the horse's tack purchased a blanked emblazoned with the town's crest. The event was once again attended by local schools and many members of the public. A member of the mounted police rode Wellington from the car park to the monument along with a second police horse. The children particularly enjoyed the chance to meet, and be photographed with the Wellington.

September 2019 also saw the first time the Council took a stand at the annual 'Eat' festival. This was attended by Councillors throughout the day who made use of the significant footfall to promote the work of the Town Council, and to encourage local residents to take part in a 2-minute survey about their priorities for the town.

Wellington was honoured with a visit by The Countess of Wessex, as patron, to the Reminiscence Learning Centre in September. The Mayor was delighted to be a guest of honour and other Councillors also represented the Council at this event.

Town Centre Working Group

Continuing its work to promote the town and encourage local business the Town Centre Working Group met every four to six weeks throughout the year, reporting back to the Council on the current issues faced by shops and businesses in Wellington. The group's priorities remain:-

- Shops and other commercial premises which are currently vacant;
- The problems and issues faced by the businesses already operating in Wellington;
- Proposing practical solutions to issues identified which are affordable and within the scope of the Council's powers

The Group is delighted to be joined by representatives from local businesses and has successfully progressed three key projects.

Pop-Up-Shop

With much celebration and a successful and enjoyable launch the Council's pop-up-shop opened for business on 14th October 2019, the culmination of many months' dedicated work to set up the operation.

The premises at 31 Fore Street is available for sub-let on short-term licences to fledgling business wishing to trial running a shop, as well as local charities or non-profit organisation. Care is exercised so that any activity will not directly compete with existing town centre businesses. Also, that there is a healthy balance between commercial and charity hiring.

The shop featured in many press articles and was an instant success with virtually a year's worth of advance bookings within weeks of opening. Although the shop was forced to close at the end of March due to the Coronavirus

pandemic, it will re-open as soon as government guidelines permit, and a high level of interest is anticipated to continue.

Film Festival

Plan for the 2020 film festival were progressed with dates and venues identified by the specialist company commissioned to run the festival. As with other public events the film festival, scheduled for September, has been put on hold and may not ultimately be able to proceed this year due to Coronavirus restrictions.

Town Centre Promotional Space

The town centre promotional space is another Council activity which saw significant progress during the year. Signage was installed advertising the space for hire, and documents developed to enable the space to be hired safely and legally. This resulted in a number of enquiries and some new usage.

The promotional space provides an opportunity to enhance the vibrancy of the town centre through use by local groups for selling, promotion, fundraising or entertainment purposes. The Council does not charge for charitable use, but a small amount of income is gained through the weekly commercial letting of the space, which again needed to be stepped down at the end of March due to Coronavirus.

Being in the heart of the town centre the promotional space is a great location for activities including those directly organised by the Town Council.

17. Devolution and Transformation Services

Service provision, at all tiers of local government remains in a state of flux with constant reviews. The advent of Coronavirus will no doubt accelerate further service reviews whilst organisations develop new, safe ways of working, and assess the impacts of home-working on service delivery.

Towards the end of the year the proposal to consider a Unitary Authority for Somerset was tabled by the County Council. District Councils followed with alternative proposals to work together more effectively and cost-efficiently. Discussions are likely to continue over coming months.

District Council merger

The merger completed in April 2019, creating the new Somerset West and Taunton Council. Significant service impacts have been felt across a wide range of activities as a result of the changes, particularly with delays around invoicing. The local Community Office was frequently closed in the early part of the year as SWT responded to its staffing needs. This service settled down into a pattern of opening to the public Tuesdays to Fridays, until temporarily closing in March 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic. These changes resulted in a significant number of additional calls or visits to the Town Council office by customers who could not get the service they sought from SWT. Again, this situation did settle down somewhat over the course of the year.

The Town Council maintained close contact with SWT's Localities Engagement Team, and several liaison meetings were held, including one with the Leader of the Council and its Chief Executive in May 2019.

The changing role of the Town Council?

As services change there is greater responsibility on the Town Council to be the voice of Wellington and represent its views; also to seek or enable solutions which help residents thrive despite the challenges of the day. Changes in the services provided by others also represents an opportunity for the Town Council to grow its range of services and activities to better meet local need and aspirations.

The Council remains open to new possibilities, particularly as housing development progresses and the population continues to increase.

18. Council Priorities

The Council continues to consider the following as priorities for the town:-

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

19. Other Service considerations

Once again provision has been made in the Council's budget to fund extra cuts of highway grass and weed spraying next year, should this prove necessary. The Council also provided 3 new litter bins during the year – either side of the road at Cades Farm and Coles Farm, liaising with West Buckland Parish Council regarding a fourth bin which fell just inside their parish boundary.

The Council also purchased grit for use in the main streets in the event of severe winter weather, and made funding available for clearance of some local roads should heavy snow fall. Happily, neither was needed.

The Allotments

The Town Council's allotments (101 plots) at Corams Lane continued to prove extremely popular and at year end the waiting list totalled around 20 applicants. Plots are allocated in strict order of application date, with an annual review of the rental fee in September. Tenancies are brought to end by hirers giving notice, or less frequently when plots are not maintained to a satisfactory standard despite requests to do so. All indications suggest growth in demand in the year ahead.

Longforth Road Public Toilets

The past year has seen the need for a full review of the Longforth Road public conveniences. This service was saved from closure only by the Town Council

taking over the facility in 2017. The toilets are very well used, but running costs are considerable, and the overall condition of the building has seen deterioration through aging and wear-and-tear. A number of cubicles have become inoperable as the services within (flush, soap, handwash) are faulty but cannot be repaired due to the equipment being obsolete.

Regrettably, the facility was subject to an arson attack in July 2019. Luckily the damage was minor, but this left just one open cubicle while safety checks, cleaning and repairs were carried out. The cost of remedial works was in the region of £1,200 to be met via an insurance claim.

The Council identified a need for refurbishment of the facility, and meetings had commenced with a specialist contractor looking at future provision and possible additionality in the use of the building. Any works will be at significant cost and it is anticipated that specialist professional assistance will be needed to oversee any project incorporating major building works.

Community Warden

Hours for the Community Warden remained at 22 hours per week, used to provide additional services which contribute to the overall appearance of the parish. The warden attends the town on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, providing street cleaning plus a wide range of other services such as – litter-picking, strimming, weeding, clearing bus shelters, inspection of the Tonedale play area, cleaning town signs, and repainting street furniture.

Duties remain flexible so the Council can react quickly to unforeseen situations that might arise, or request one-off tasks (where appropriate) brought to the council by the public. Weekly contact is maintained with the Warden, and a monthly liaison meeting takes place with ID Verde who host this post on our behalf.

Community safety

The Council has two community defibrillators, one at the Longforth Road public toilets and the other at the Rockwell Green Christian Fellowship Centre. Free training, attended by the Clerk and a handful of members of the public, was provided to instruct people how to use a defibrillator. A defibrillator at the Reminiscence Learning Centre was funded through a Council grant.

The town is now very well-provided with defibrillators at many locations, good news considering that survival rates increase hugely where heart attack victims are given 'shock' treatment.

Once again funds were put aside in case of severe winter weather, which in the event, did not occur.

Sports provision

Infrequent meetings of the external Playing Pitch Strategy Steering Group took place during the year. Council representatives continued to work with the Wellington Sports Federation and Sports Clubs to develop the vision identified in the 2017 Taunton Deane Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy. Consultation with the land-owner of the preferred site took place, funded by the Town Council.

At year end no formal resolutions had been put in place to progress any potential sites for sports development.

Footpaths

Somerset County Council has overall responsibility for Footpaths and Rights of Way. We receive a small grant from Somerset West and Taunton towards the cost of footpath maintenance and contribute extra sums as required.

Walking remains popular and the maintenance of public rights of way is very important to the local community. During the year the Footpaths Committee was merged with the Environment Committee to form a new Environment and Open Spaces Committee.

The Council and walkers continue to benefit greatly from the services of local volunteer Tom Borg who, together with his wife, Eunice, acts as an excellent Parish Path Liaison Officer. They are supported by two footpath volunteers who, like Tom and Eunice, generously give their time to surveying, strimming and clearing footpaths. The work of all four is greatly appreciated by the Council.

Regular visits by the Community Payback team have contributed to the upkeep of some paths, which represents a valuable low-cost service. All definitive footpaths within the town boundary are regularly inspected and a schedule drawn up to keep them clear and passable. There is also an interactive online map showing Wellington's public rights of way.

The Council jointly funded, with the County Council, a section of tarmaced footpath linking the new Heritage Mills housing development with existing routes into the town. This has proved to be a well-used route.

20. Conclusion

The past year has seen the formation of new 4-year Council with a great wealth of ideas and vision to both maintain and expand existing Council operations, and to work closely with others to achieve maximum benefit for residents of the parish.

Cuts to public expenditure have continued and the Council has pledged to be open and receptive to changes. It is committed to regular review of the services and activities it provides.

Looking forward the Council seeks to acquire appropriate land or assets which will enhance the town's amenities and maintain a pleasant and attractive environment. Where possible the Council will seek value-for-money assets with the potential to increase the Council's currently very modest income so as to reduce the demands on the public purse whilst maintaining a high degree of service.

By reviewing and restructuring the Council has positioned itself to be resilient and flexible to meeting resident's' aspirations and help counter the challenges that might arise. Representing the Town Council, at whatever level, remains an interesting and varied experience, one that constantly puts the wellbeing of the

town at the heart of activities and where achievement for parish residents is the ultimate reward.

Janet Lloyd
Town Mayor

Kathryn Hemensley
Town Clerk

Review the numbering
8 June 2020