



WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

JOINT REPORT OF THE TOWN MAYOR COUNCILLOR MARK LITHGOW AND THE TOWN CLERK MR DAVE FARROW

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 Council will also publish an annual summary of funds report as part of the internal and external audit process. This is due to be presented to the June meeting of Full Council and will also be published online accordingly.

2. Town Council

Wellington Town Council has 15 Councillors. As a result of the decision to restructure local government in Somerset, the previous Council only sat for three years with elections taking place in May 2022. The new Council will sit for five years rather than the usual four, again because of local government reorganisation in Somerset. Councillors' names and contact details are listed by Ward at **Appendix A** to this report. The political composition of the Council is Labour 5, Liberal Democrat 5, Conservative 4 and Independent 1. Importantly however, Councillors work together to serve the town without political bias.

3. Overview

This year has seen the Council return to normal meeting and working arrangements following the lifting of lockdown legislation put in place because of the COVID 19 pandemic. It returned to face to face meetings from the beginning of June with Finance, Planning and Council meetings initially being held at Court Fields School, to allow for social distancing, before returning to the United Reformed Church Hall in April 2022. The Council Offices reopened on 13 September 2021 with extended opening hours so that the office is now open to the public from 9.00 am – 2.00 pm.

During the year the Council has adopted a Work Plan which sets out the various workstreams and projects that the Council staff are working on. This is reported on at each Council meeting through the Town Clerks Report and forms the basis of the work of each of the Council's committees (see below).

4. Council Priorities

In March 2022 the Council agreed a Vision for the Town Council that will form the basis of its work. The Vision states that the Council will work with and offer support to all members of the community as needed with the aim that Wellington is or becomes

- An inclusive, safe and secure town where everybody is supportive of each other and offers particular care for the more vulnerable members of our community
- A town with a diverse, thriving, and resilient local economy
- A town with vibrant cultural, sporting, and social communities
- Proud and protective of our heritage, green spaces, and biodiversity
- Committed to becoming a net carbon neutral town
- A destination of choice for people to live and work and for businesses to be located.
- Connected with the Blackdown Hills AONB and surrounding communities

These priorities will inform the annual work plan for the Council which was developed during 2021/2022 (see para 3 above).

5. Council Staff

In July 2021 the Council appointed Rebecca Hunt as a full time Administrative Apprentice. She is studying for a Level 3 Business Administrator Standard qualification with Somerset Skills and Learning and has one day a week release to do that.

The Deputy Clerk and Deputy Responsible Financial Officer/Assistant Clerk have both increased their hours to 35 hours per week from March 2022 in recognition of the amount of work being undertaken and following an assessment of hours being worked.

In January 2022 the Town Clerk successfully completed the Certificate in Local Council Administration which was a condition of his employment when he was appointed.

6. Council Offices

As stated above Council offices reopened on 13 September 2021. In addition to this, the Town Council reached agreement with Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) to occupy the former Housing Office next to the Town Clerks Office with a commensurate review of the lease. The Deputy Clerk and Deputy RFO/Assistant Clerk moved into the office and their previous office became a reception area of the Town Council offices.

7. Budget and Precept

In December 2021 the Council approved the budget for 2022/23. The budget was set to reflect the work that the Council was planning to undertake in 2022/23 and the need to plan work arising from the implementation of the new unitary council in Somerset. The Precept was set at the January 2022 meeting of the Full Council at £413,677 representing a 15% increase on the previous year (there was no increase in the Precept in 2020/21). Council balances remain healthy.

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. The Council's method of working has developed over the last year. The working principle is that all recommendations to the Town Council should, wherever possible, first be considered by the relevant committee. This allows the committee to comment on proposals and shape them before they are presented. This is not intended to limit discussion at a Town Council meeting but rather to ensure that any proposal presented has had some scrutiny in advance of that meeting.

There will be occasions when, because of the timing of meetings and the need for decision to be taken, it is not always possible for proposals to be taken through the committee process first, but these occurrences should be the exception rather than the rule. Details of the committees that are currently operating showing membership, along with Council representation on Outside Bodies, is attached as **Appendix B to this report**.

The Council welcomes public participation at all its meetings as it provides a valuable opportunity for Councillors to keep 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.

The Allotments Committee, Town Centre Committee and Environment and Open Spaces Committee meetings are particularly well attended by individuals or representatives of local groups. Planning meetings provide an opportunity for residents to express their views on specific planning applications, which helps inform the Council's decision or comment.

9. The Mayor – Councillor Mark Lithgow

The Mayor is the Chairman of the Council. A specific purpose 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. In November we were able to hold a public Remembrance Sunday event in the park for the first time in two years which was well attended. The Mayor reports the events that he has attended to the Council every month.

10. General Power of Competence.

The Council resolved at its January 2020 meeting to adopt the General Power of Competence (GPC) following the previous Clerk gaining the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification. This legal power extended the Council's range of activities by enabling it to carry out any activity or operation that an individual might do, if it is lawful and not expressly prohibited through other strands of legislation. Now that a new Council has been formed, and the Town Clerk has gained the CiLCA, the Town Council will resolve to re-adopt the GPC at its Annual Meeting on 16 May 2022.

11. Financial Support to the Community

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 town. Councillors make decisions on applications at the monthly Finance 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.

Grants awarded in 2021/22 were:

Wellington Mills CIC	£2,500.00
Transition Town Wellington	£1,446.17
Life Education Wessex	£860.00
Churches Together (Howard Rd)	£100.00
Skintight Samba	£1,040.00
Wellington Cricket Club	£876.00
Avtar Indian Dance CIC	£613.99
Wellington Produce Market	£3,300.00
The Welly Hopper	£1,100.00
Wellington Basins Volunteer Group	£1,808.40
Total	£13,644.56

The Council also has in place four 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 recipients are:-

- Reminiscence Learning £4,000 – Supporting local people with dementia
- WHERE (West Country Health Education and Research Enterprise) £2,500 – offering support to residents with any sort of disability. WHERE is ceasing to operate from the end of May 2022.
- Wellington Community Counselling £12,000 – providing free and affordable counselling services for the people of Wellington, taking referrals from GPs, PFSAs, and directly from individuals.
- Citizen's Advice Taunton £5,000 – delivering free, impartial and confidential welfare advice both in person and via digital outlets

12. 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. The Council also advocates 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.

13. Climate Change

In September 2021 the Council resolved that it and the town should take rapid steps to reduce carbon emissions going forward, so that becoming carbon neutral by 2030 in line with local, national and international government commitments is achievable. It tasked this Environment and Open Spaces Committee with developing a strategy that sets out how this could be achieved both in relation to the Council's own activities and across the town given the Council's role in place leadership.

A Climate Change Strategy was subsequently agreed by the Council at its March 2022 meeting.

In February 2022, the Council purchased a field at Westford to protect it from development and to enable the Council and local groups to use it to enhance biodiversity as part of the Climate Change Strategy.

In addition to this, the Council is working with SWT to secure the purchase of around 62 acres of land linking Tonedale Mill to The Basins and then over to Rockwell Green and Hill Head. This will then be leased back to the Council, along with Fox's Field, to manage. This will contribute significantly to the delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

The Council provided funding to enable a feasibility study to be undertaken in relation to the establishment of a Community Farm on part of the above land and this project continues to progress.

The Council will continue to work in partnership with transition Town Wellington and other community groups to deliver the strategy.

14. Young People

The Council aims to encourage interest in the community and civic affairs. The Civic Award Scheme has been run this year with Beech Grove Primary School and a Year 6 Children's Parliament is planned for July this year involving all primary schools.

Year 8 students from Court Fields were invited to make a presentation to The Council on research they had carried out in relation people's thoughts about the town centre

The Council agreed to provide annual funding to Court Fields School to enable pupils to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme who may not otherwise be able to do so due to cost.

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. Unfortunately, it has been unable to recruit youth workers this year, but funding has remained available to support projects when required.

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

15. Local Groups and Charities

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

We continued to work closely with the National Trust regarding the Wellington Monument over the last year and received regular updates on progress at Council meetings. The Council is delighted with the progress that has been made and the fact that the project is soon to be completed. It hopes to be able to relocate the original Pyramidion of the Monument and is grateful to the National Trust for providing them with the opportunity to do so.

16. 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 the Council can 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.

17. Wellington Heritage

Dr Joanne O'Hara remains with Somerset West and Taunton Council in her Heritage Conservation speciality role. Ongoing projects include several high-profile projects such as Wellington Mills and The Basins

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.

18. The Local Police Team

Sergeant Dan Bishop attends every Town Council meeting and provides a report on the team's activities and any emerging issues within the town. As a result of this the relationship between the Town Council and the team is effective and ensures that matters of mutual interest are shared and acted on in a timely way.

19. Transport

The Railway

Progress continues to be made on reinstating the station in the town. Earlier in the year the project was awarded £550,000 funding by the Department for Transport for the next stage of the process. A site has been identified and work continues to deliver the station in 2025. New project management arrangements have been established and Network Rail is now the project lead. The Town Council will continue to be represented on the oversight body through Councillor Marcus Barr and the Town Clerk.

Cycling

As reported last year, the Town Council jointly, with Somerset West and Taunton Council, funded a professional feasibility study for a cycle route between Wellington and Taunton. This was commissioned by the local 'Wellington Wheelers' group and carried out by Sustrans. The Project Group has been meeting regularly through the year and will continue to do so in 2022/3. The group is reviewing route options and the Council is represented on the Group by Councillor Janet Lloyd and the Town Clerk.

In addition to this the Council allocated £3,000 to a project working in partnership with Somerset County Council and SWT Council to develop a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan that will identify key routes in the town and will place the Council in a strong position to apply for funding to improve cycling and walking infrastructure in the town as and when opportunities arise.

20. Town Centre

The Town Centre Committee has been at the centre of the Council's work to enable a thriving town centre and to encourage people to visit it. The Council were very fortunate to be awarded Emergency High Street Recovery Funding in the sum of £100,000 from Somerset West and Taunton District Council. In addition, further funding was available from the Government's Welcome Back Fund. The funding allowed the Council over the year to complete the following: :

- New Town Centre Notice boards and plans
- Delivered a Street Fair as part of the Welly Welcome Weekend and supported the introduction of a monthly Produce Market in the town.
- Replaced and refurbished street planters and street furniture in the town centre.
- Continued to improve the Christmas Lights infrastructure.
- Refurbished and replaced cycle racks in the town
- Installed a new bus shelter and stoned the adjacent flowerbed at the Coach Park, Longforth Road
- Four Fingerposts to be erected around the town centre
- Engage with the people of Wellington in a Town Centre Survey. The success of responses received, enable us to present the Town's primary schools with book vouchers.

Pop-Up-Shop

The Pop-Up shop has continued to operate and over the year and was booked for 39 weeks in 2021, a booking rate of 75%. A new lease was entered in to in October 2021 for five years with a break clause in October 2023.

The shop is offered for free to organisations who are fund raising for themselves or other charities. The Town Council utilised the Pop-Up Shop when it was not booked in February 2022 to work with Transition Town Wellington and Wellington Community Food to promote climate action and the Council's "Vision for Wellington". The community groups that shared the space were grateful for the opportunity and are now considering renting the Pop-Up Shop for their future projects

Town Centre Promotional Space

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. 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.

21 Local Government Reorganisation

In July 2021, it was announced that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' preferred option for the reorganisation of local government in Somerset was for there to be a single unitary Council. This was put into effect by a Structural Change Order in March 2022 with the unitary authority coming into existence in May 2023.

The Town Council welcomes the potential opportunities provided by this change to play a greater role in the delivery and management of services for the town's residents and to take more responsibility for the management of public assets in Wellington.

The Town Council is well placed to develop its role and will work with the local community and neighbouring Parish Councils to ensure that, whatever the outcome of the Government's review, the residents of Wellington are properly represented in shaping the future delivery of services in the town.

22. 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 has a stock of 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.

23. The Allotments

The Town Council's allotments (100 plots) at The Basins, 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.

We are also working with Bloor Homes in relation to the area of land that has been set aside for allotments on the Longforth Farm development. This is taking longer than we

had hoped because of a few issues including one relating to the S106 Agreement and water supply to the site.

24. Longforth Road Public Toilets

Following a review, the Council has agreed that the best option for the future of the toilet block is to demolish it and rebuild a new block with a Changing Places facility in it. Changes to the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy funding income meant that final decision on funding the work was delayed until after the election. Concerns regarding the cleaning of the toilets has led to a decision to put the cleaning contract out to tender.

25. Community Warden

Hours for the Community Warden returned to 22 following the lifting of coronavirus restrictions. The service is 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, 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.

26 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. 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.

27. Sports provision

During the year, SWT Council agreed to transfer the Beech Grove playing field to the rugby club to enable it to develop its facilities and subsequently agreed to provide £80,000 of Section 106 funding to support that work.

The football club made progress with its intention to relocate its senior playing pitch to Longforth Farm and applied to SWT Council for £250,000 to support that work. SWT Council subsequently awarded £200,000 for S106 funding and the Town Council agreed to fund the £50,000 shortfall from its Community Infrastructure Levy Budget.

Court Fields School is looking to build a 3G pitch on the school site for school and community use. The Town Council agreed to contribute £150,000 towards the cost of that.

28. 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.

The Council and walkers continue to benefit greatly from the services of local volunteer Steve Saunders who replaced Tom Borg and his wife, Eunice, as Parish Path Liaison Officer. He is supported by two footpath volunteers who generously give their time to surveying, strimming and clearing footpaths.

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.

29. Conclusion

This has been a positive year for the Council as the community came out of lockdown. As can be seen from this report, the Council has been proactive in running events, supporting local sports clubs and community groups and securing land for the benefit for the whole community. It has developed further its partnerships with Somerset West and Taunton District and Somerset County Councils and local community groups and will continue to do so to reflect its developing role as a service deliverer, place shaper, culture creator and builder of community resilience. Internal systems and processes have been developed to enable the Council to better monitor its work and this, along with a healthy budget, puts it in a strong position to take advantage of the opportunities that will come its way through the restructuring of local government in Somerset and any other opportunities that present themselves to enhance the quality of life for the residents of the town.

Mark Lithgow
Town Mayor

Dave Farrow
Town Clerk

APPENDIX A

WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL COUNCILLORS LIST

Rockwell Green

Zoe Barr 21 Meyer Close Wellington TA21 9FE Tel: 07510 872972 zobarr@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk	Andrew Govier 47 Laburnum Road Wellington TA21 8EN Tel: 01823 667589 andrewgovier@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk
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Wellington East

Wayne Battishill 31 Aspin Road TA21 9EE Tel: 01823 975424 waynebattishill@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk	Ross Henley 20 Trinity Close TA21 8TZ Tel: 01823 665988 rosshenley@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk
Janet Lloyd Hazelwood, Whiteball Wellington TA21 0LS Tel: 01823 672877 janetlloyd@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk	Nancy Powell-Brace 3 Clifford Mews Wellington TA21 8QJ Tel: 07565 688827 nancypowell-brace@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk

Wellington North

Samuel Booker 23 Old Court Mews Wellington TA21 8FR Tel: 07999469540 samuelbooker@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk	Mark Lithgow 17 Clifford Terrace, Scott's Lane Wellington TA21 8PQ Tel: 01823 662540 marklithgow@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk
Kieran Canham 38A Church Fields Wellington TA21 8SE Tel: 07879 441516 kierancanham@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk	Mike McGuffie 13 Tone Hill TA21 0AU Tel: 07922 831733 michaelmcguffie@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk
John Thorne 3 Rose Mews, Fore Street TA21 8AA Tel: 01823 663146 johnthorne@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk	

Wellington South

Marcus Barr 16 Brooklands Rd, Rockwell Green Wellington TA21 9DJ Tel: 01823 661817	Chris Booth 25 Stoneleigh, Tonedale Wellington TA21 0AR Tel: 07956 607829 chrisbooth@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk
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Wellington South East

Keith Wheatley 9 Wellesley Park Wellington TA21 8PT Tel: 07710 326698 keithwheatley@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk	
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APPENDIX B

COMMITTEES WITH MEMBERSHIP

Finance Committee: Councillors M Barr, Z Barr, S Booker, A Govier, M Lithgow, J Lloyd, M McGuffie, N Powell-Brace and J Thorne

Environment and Open Space Committee: Councillors M Barr, C Booth, K Canham, C Govier, M Lithgow, M Lloyd and M McGuffie

Policy and Resources Committee: Councillors M Barr, S Booker, K Canham, A Govier, M Lithgow, J Lloyd, M McGuffie, J Thorne and K Wheatley

Allotments Committee: Councillors W Battishill, C Booth K Canham, C Govier, M Lithgow, and J Lloyd

Town Centre Committee: Councillors M Barr, C Booth, K Canham, C Govier, M Lithgow, J Lloyd, N Powell-Brace, and K Wheatley.

REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Wellington Twinning Association (2 members) Councillor J Lloyd and one vacancy

Wellington Community Association (2 members) Councillors C Govier and M Lithgow

Somerset Association of Local Councils (2 members) Councillor J Lloyd and one vacancy

Hospital of Sir John Popham Knight (3 members) Councillors M Lithgow and M McGuffie – one vacancy

Friends of Wellington Park (1 member) Councillor M Lithgow

Wellington Museum and Local History Committee (1 member) Councillor K Canham

Devon and Somerset Metro Group (1 member) Councillor M Barr

Representative Governor at Wellington School Councillor K Wheatley

Wellington One (2 members) Councillors C Booth and C Govier

Basins Volunteer Group (2 members) Councillors M Barr and N Powell-Brace