



DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL - ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Annual report. The Town Council is the parish authority for Dorchester. We are the most local tier of government, and work closely with the county council and the district council. With a population approaching 20,000 we provide a range of social and recreational facilities, while also promoting and representing the town with other national and statutory bodies. We provide most of the public open space and sports grounds in the town, three cemeteries, over 300 allotments, we operate the Municipal Buildings and support many of the town's community and civic events. In short we do many of the things that make Dorchester the special place it is, even down to providing the hanging baskets in the town centre.

There are 20 Members on the Council who are elected for a four year term, the most recent period starting in May 2015. The Mayor is elected by the Council every year in May and also acts as Chairman to the Council.

This Council operates a Committee structure with each Committee having specific functions. We have three Committees; Management, Planning and Environment and Policy, and reports from the chairmen on the work of these Committees are set out in this report. Agenda for the Council and its Committees are available online three clear days before meetings, which are held in the Council Chamber (upstairs in the Corn Exchange building) and residents are welcome to attend and speak at any of these meetings.

It is important for us to receive your comments, queries and complaints on the services provided by the Town Council so that we can endeavour to serve you well. The Council welcomes your help to highlight any problems around the town – whether the responsibility of this Council or not – let us know what the problem is. If it's our responsibility we will endeavour to sort it out and if it's not we will contact the appropriate authority on your behalf.

Thank you for your time in receiving and reading this report and we would welcome any response you might make.

Town Mayor

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE - *Councillor Robin Potter*

The committee has been as busy as usual this year, maintaining and improving the facilities of Dorchester. Of course the actual work is done by our excellent teams supervised by the Deputy Town Clerk, Steve Newman. Our thanks are due to him and all the workforce for all that they do.

One particular change this year has been the retirement of Pete Mullins and his replacement in charge of the outdoor services team by Carl Dallison. Carl has already made his mark with several useful suggestions and we look forward to working with him. We have also had two successful apprentices with us this year and hope that this can be repeated for next year.

Our main outdoor provision is, of course, the Borough Gardens but we must not overlook all the work that goes on in other sites around the town such as the play areas, allotments, Maumbury Rings with its very successful musical activity over the Summer Bank Holiday weekend, and some improvement and refurbishment at the Skate Park. One other site I must mention is the Riverside Walk, where, with in partnership with the Friends of the Riverside, there is a new recycled boardwalk and extra facilities which I urge you to go and enjoy. And Salisbury Field saw its beacon lit again to celebrate the Queen's 90th.

The Borough Gardens now has its borehole to provide water, a repainted bandstand and some additional benches as well as all the beautiful beds. Some longer views along its length have also been opened up. Last summer again saw

many spectacular events held in the Gardens – all of which were free to attend. We are making good progress towards the resiting of two tennis courts onto the old bowling green, which will enable the land from the old tennis courts just outside of the Gardens to be used for much needed affordable housing in the town.

Indoors at the Corn Exchange our collaboration with Dorchester Arts continues to be successful and there have also been a number of special events, such as the commemoration of the battle of Kut and Holocaust Memorial Day. Next year will see some repair and refurbishment in the building.

I repeat my thanks to all staff of the Town Council, especially perhaps those who enjoyed themselves so much on their Carnival float!

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - *Councillor Susie Hosford*

The past year has been another busy one for the Committee and our monthly meetings have had full Agendas covering a wide variety of topics. We have also commented on a consistently high number of Planning Applications from all parts of the Town and the local knowledge that Members bring to these discussions is often invaluable. We encourage opportunities to work in partnership and we have been very pleased to welcome Officers from Dorset County Council and West Dorset District Council to our meetings to provide briefings and discuss proposals that impact on Dorchester. Their inputs have been most helpful and are much appreciated.

Dorchester continues to thrive and grow and it has been another year of exciting opportunities for our Town. The major developments at Poundbury and Brewery Square are progressing steadily and the housing at Red Cow Farm is now completed. These very different projects benefit us all through the contributions that they make to the economy and social vibrancy of the Town as a whole.

The Application for the development of the former Dorchester Prison has finally been agreed. It is disappointing that there will be no affordable housing on the Site, but sadly changes in Government Policies make it increasingly difficult to achieve delivery of this much needed resource. We can expect some logistical difficulties and disturbance for local residents whilst this important Town Centre site in the heart of the Conservation Area is being built, but we are confident that the long term benefits will outweigh the temporary disruption. It has been a lengthy process of consultation and negotiation and the Developer has worked hard to address concerns raised and to respond to them by amending the proposals where possible. This approach of actively consulting residents and taking account of local concerns has also worked well on a smaller, but significant, site on the Western boundary of the Town. Both outcomes owe their success to the hard work and commitment of local residents and to the willingness of the Developers to listen and be flexible in their approach.

The issue of on street parking in residential areas of the Town continues to be a major area of concern for residents and we have received increasing numbers of requests for Traffic Regulation Orders as the problem shifts from one area to another. Dorset County Council and West Dorset District Council have commissioned work to produce a joint strategy which it is hoped will address the whole range of both short term and long term parking needs within the Town and at the time of writing we are awaiting the report from this work with interest.

The Review of issues and options currently being undertaken for the Local Plan will potentially have a very significant impact on Dorchester. The possibility of a substantial new development on the edge of the Town will place an extra burden on existing infrastructure, some of which is already stretched to its full capacity. On a more positive note, the right type of additional housing could provide much needed opportunities for young families to live in the Town and contribute to our Community. The implications for Dorchester are so important that we are taking professional advice to support our response to the Consultation and to ensure that we clearly identify both the opportunities and the threats that an expansion of the Town would bring.

The coming year will see the delivery of the long-awaited pedestrianisation of Lower South Street and also some enhancements within other parts of South Street. Further junction improvements are also planned which it is hoped will ease the flow of traffic through the Town Centre. West Dorset District Council are developing new proposals for the Charles Street Site and are also considering the Fairfield and Trinity Street car parks as part of this process. I am pleased to report that there is a clear acknowledgement of the importance of retaining adequate car parking provision both in the longer term and during the potential construction process.

As always, I am grateful to Members of the Committee for their input and the knowledge and expertise that they bring to meetings and also for the preparation that they do before Meetings to ensure that they are fully briefed. Without this commitment we would never get through our busy workload! I would also like to thank Councillor Richard Biggs who has been an active and supportive Vice-Chairman and our Town Clerk, Adrian Stuart, who has provided very helpful briefings on the more strategic aspects of some of the issues we have considered. I am sure that I speak for all Members of the Committee in once again thanking our Clerk, Louise Dowell, and commending her for the exceptional level of professionalism and dedication that she brings to her role.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE - *Councillor Gareth Jones*

This has been another year of considerable activity and good progress for the Policy Committee, helping to put the council in a stronger position to take Dorchester and its community forward.

In terms of financial management we have continued to deliver both permanent reductions in our operating costs and a stable budget for the coming year, achieved with a modest rise in precept.

The medium term financial plan has continued to evolve with a main feature being the strengthening of the Corporate Projects Reserve which was created last financial year.

Using this reserve the Council allocated £500,000 to new projects

- £190k towards the paving of lower South St
- £150k to deliver new tennis courts, freeing up land for affordable housing
- £70k towards Heritage Tourism, the first project being to improve the town's signage
- £40k to help respond to the Local Plan Review and develop a Neighbourhood Plan
- £50k for grants to support partners improve their infrastructure, from which we have already given support to Dorset County Museum and Maltings Arts

At the end of March 2017, along with monies transferred from the General Reserve, the unallocated balance is £325,000. The forward allocation of this Reserve will be considered as part of a wider review of the Corporate Plan due in the next few months.

In addition to the finance activity, the Policy Committee has continued to monitor and develop the Council's Corporate Strategy with its suite of themes, and to support projects within those broad themes of Economy, Housing, Community, Environment, and Traffic & Highways.

Ongoing projects include:

- Heritage & Tourism Strategy with Capital grants to facilities
- Affordable housing strategy and projects
- Community Plan, through our new Community Officer
- Dorchester Traffic & Environment Plan – various highway improvements incl South Street paving & enhancement
- Future growth of Dorchester

The Committee has recognised that- in the continuing climate of austerity leading to Local Authority service cuts, whilst some of our own plans and aspirations are best achieved by working with others, others might be best achieved by delivering on our own. Work has started and will continue to identify needs and develop appropriate service opportunities.

Finally, the Policy Committee and indeed the Council is regularly monitoring developments in Local Government Reorganisation and will move purposefully on the opportunities and threats that this may present.

Having made significant progress so far, I am confident that we will continue to work to develop our role and capabilities to contribute to this town's future, and make a real difference for its communities.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL OPERATIONAL BUDGET SUMMARY

	2015-16 Actual £	2016-17 Budget £	2016-17 Latest (Wk50) £	Under/ -Over Budget(Wk50) £
Parks & Open Spaces	538,569	576,572	576,028	544
Allotments	3,707	5,729	3,615	2,114
Municipal Buildings	137,726	134,894	140,579	-5,685
Cemeteries	53,239	80,815	68,982	11,833
Cultural & Twinning Activities	52,724	70,091	61,444	8,647
Corporate & Democratic Management	194,865	226,392	211,481	14,911
Other Services	155,714	82,400	67,400	15,000
Operational Budget	1,136,544	1,176,893	1,129,529	47,364
Precept	1,209,555	1,251,000	1,251,000	0
Transfer to General Reserves	73,011	74,107	121,471	47,364

The report will be updated when the Council's final position is known. A full Financial Statement 2016-17 will be available at www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk soon after the financial year end.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCILLORS TO MAY 2019

EAST WARD			
Tim Harries 8 Dunnabridge Street DT1 3TQ	07970 653796	Fiona Kent-Ledger 78 Casterbridge Road DT1 2AG	01305 250253
Stella Jones MBE Syward Cottage, Syward Road DT1 2AJ	01305 264335	Tony Lyall 13 St Georges Road DT1 1PA	01305 266254
NORTH WARD			
Barry Armstrong-Marshall 20 Fordington Dairy, Athelstan Rd DT1 1FD	01305 269921	Susie Hosford 1 Meadow Cottages, Martinstown DT2 9JL	01305 880102
Richard Biggs 20 Bridport Road DT1 1RS	01305 260156	Tamara Loakes 3A Holloway Road DT1 1LF	01305 757526
Andy Canning 11 Alfred Road DT1 2DW	01305 261592	Kate Rice 70 Eddison Avenue, DT1 1NY	01305 265853
Alistair Chisholm 9 Orchard St DT1 1JH	01305 268603	David Taylor 4 Normandy Way DT1 2PP	01305 263382
SOUTH WARD			
Carolyn Biggs 20 Bridport Road DT1 1RS	01305 260156	Robin Potter 22 D'Urberville Close DT1 2JT	01305 264416
Gareth Jones 21 Martel Close, Broadmayne DT2 8PL	01305 854915	Molly Rennie 13 Alington Road DT1 1NS	01305 268572
WEST WARD			
Gerald Duke Grove Hill House, Martinstown, DT2 9JP	01305 889480	Trevor Jones OBE Syward Cottage, Syward Road DT1 2AJ	01305 264335
Janet Hewitt 6 Garfield Avenue, DT1 2EX	01305 266175	Peter Stein 51 Woodlands Crescent DT1 3RQ	07777 652034