



# **DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to our Annual report.

The Town Council is the parish authority for Dorchester. We are the fourth tier of government after parliament, the county council and the district council. Our legal powers are granted and regulated by various government acts. With a population of over 17,500 we are the largest town in West Dorset. We supplement the provision of local government services in Dorchester and provide a range of social and recreational facilities, while promoting and representing the town with other national and statutory bodies. For example we provide virtually all the public open space and sports grounds in the town and provide the hanging baskets in the town centre; in short we do most of the things that make Dorchester the special place it is.

There are 20 Members on the Council who are elected for a four year term with the next elections being held in May 2011. 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; Policy, Management and Planning and Environment and reports from the chairmen on the work of these Committees are set out in this report. The Council also appoints a number of Panels which meet as and when required to discuss particular issues and report back to the appropriate Committee. Agenda for the Council, Committees and Panels are all available to the public three clear days before the meeting at the Council offices. Meetings are usually held in the Council Chamber (upstairs in the Corn Exchange building) and you 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 has a feature in its regular newsletter asking for your help to highlight any problems around the town – whether the responsibility of this Council or not – let us know what the problem is and 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 accordingly welcome any response.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Rosie M. Phillips'.

Town Mayor

### **REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** *Councillor Andy Canning*

Once again it has been a busy year for the Management Committee.

The Borough Gardens has won a Green Flag Award for the third year in a row in recognition of the excellent condition that our staff have helped to keep it in. On top of this the Gardens have also been recognised as a Green Heritage Site. Further improvements this year include additional children's play equipment, a new picnic table and adult fitness equipment. Unfortunately the Bowling Club has closed due to falling numbers but this does present us with an opportunity to transform the bowling green. Eventually we would like to create a mini golf course here, once funds allow, but in the meantime a putting green is being created with a very reasonable hire price!

There was a very full programme of musical and arts events in both the Borough Gardens and at Maumbury Rings last year. In particular the music on August Bank Holiday Monday was well attended and enjoyed by thousands. If anything we will be aiming to do even more this year!

The lift in the Municipal Buildings has finally been made to work after some early difficulties which make the Buildings more disabled friendly. The major change this year has been the appointment of a new franchisee to run the bar and, for the first time, an agreement to share the profits with the Council. It is still early days but the relationship appears to be working well for users as well as creating a tidy profit for us!

In addition to our main buildings bookings and use of the Borough Gardens House and the Weymouth Avenue Pavilion have continued to grow over the last twelve months.

We continue to strive to improve our range of facilities for teenagers. In addition to the still extremely popular Skate Park and the existing facilities at Kings Road we have recently added a zip wire and will shortly be adding a trampoline. The latter came about thanks to an idea emerging from Democracy Day when a group of young people spent a day learning about the Town Council and what it does.

Our allotments continue to be heavily oversubscribed and although we have spent much time looking for new locations we have been unable to find any site that would be cost effective to develop.

Finally, I would just like to end by thanking all of the partners and funding organisations that have worked with us over the last twelve months to help us achieve so much while enabling us to freeze our Council Tax.

## **REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

*Councillor Fiona Kent-Ledger*

I would like to thank my fellow councillors who sit or attend the Planning Committee for all their help and support in the last year. For their considered and useful opinions and for their understanding on what can be quite a trying committee to be a member of. Thank you also to Councillor Susie Hosford as my Vice Chair for all her support and for being able to stand in when needed and to the clerk to the committee, Sue Cheeseman, for all her hard work and patience.

During the 2010-11 year the committee considered a total of 198 planning applications, no objection was raised by the committee to a 163 of these applications but it was felt necessary to recommend refusal on 34 applications for a variety of planning reasons. The committee declined to comment on one technical application.

As always we welcome public participation. We regularly have local residents attend our meetings where they are able to express concerns on planning applications and the impact upon themselves or the town. Emotions can run high when there is an issue that affects where you live and the impact a development could have on an individual. I am still sometimes surprised at the number of local people who may attend a particular meeting, as we may not be aware that there is an issue or how strongly people may feel. However it always pleases me to see them there no matter how heated a discussion might get – it is important for residents to feel they can express themselves and have their concerns addressed whilst looking to the Town Council for support.

It has been an interesting and productive year for the committee; we can feel proud that we have had a hand in helping shape the look and future of the town.

## **REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE**

*Councillor Trevor Jones*

I am pleased to be able to continue the practice of recent years and report a very satisfactory state of affairs in that:

- the Council has determined its priorities for the next few years; and
- has enough money to deliver them even though our Council Tax for 2011-12 has been frozen and we are on course to do the same again next year.

Over the last twenty years or so the Council has delivered a string of projects for the benefit of the Town:

- the ongoing refurbishment of the Municipal Buildings, probably West Dorset's highest quality and best-used suite of public rooms. The latest improvement, the installation of the lift gave us

(almost) as much grief as the rest of the works put together but eventually the job was completed which means that, for the first time, disabled people have proper access to the first floor and attending to the staircase. We can never relax, though, as keeping a Grade II\* listed building in good order requires constant attention and expense. Should problems occur in the forthcoming year we have an earmarked reserve of around £40,000 to enable them to be tackled. There are no plans for further significant enhancement in the pipeline: the task we set out on more than 25 years ago to put these buildings in good order so as to be a credit to the County Town has, I think, been completed – it has been a long haul;

- the refurbishment of the Borough Gardens;
- the significant improvement of Weymouth Avenue Recreation Ground and the provision of the new pavilion there;
- the modernisation and improvement of all the children's play areas in the Town, most recently the introduction of a cable rider at King's Road Playing Field;
- the creation of the phenomenally successful skatepark at Maumbury Cross;
- the successful partnership with Dorchester Bowling Club to deliver together the excellent facilities which are available at Sandringham Sports Centre; we will all be aware of the recent fire which has put the indoor bowling facility out of action for the summer. However, remedial costs will be met by the Club's insurers;
- the creation of a new cemetery at Poundbury which should meet Dorchester's burial needs for fifty years or so;
- the provision of a new building at Maumbury Rings which facilitates their use for public events;
- the provision, with partners, of a permanently-monitored CCTV system in the town centre; currently we are discussing its future given that the equipment is five years old, may require attention, and funding decisions have to be taken;
- the creation of a bright new website;
- the enlargement and modernisation of the Council Offices at 19 North Square;
- the development of a new depot for our outdoor staff and equipment.

I may have forgotten something, but it is a pretty impressive list by any standard.

The total cost of all these good works comes to well over £4 million, some of which was met by grants, most notably a contribution of £950,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the costs of the Borough Gardens refurbishment. We paid most of the balance outright but, as in financing any such programme, some £1,150,000 has been borrowed over varying periods, the longest ending in 2028-29. The shortest loan will be repaid in three years time. This ensures that the burden on Council Tax payers is not disproportionately high over a short period but spread out over the longer term.

Proper provision for the repayment of capital and interest is embedded in our financial planning and, as a safeguard against the unexpected, we have reserves of something like £850,000. Our finances are healthy.

Meanwhile the Council is currently progressing schemes to improve Maumbury Rings and the River Walk, the latter being well-advanced.

This last year we have combed through our expenditure and identified some possible savings, one of which is a reduction in administration costs by doing away with the Dorchester Joint Burial Committee and bringing the ownership, operation and management of Dorchester's cemeteries under direct Council control. While none of the savings are huge they are useful in the battle to prevent the Council Tax from rising. I have no doubt that the new Council elected in a few weeks time will want to continue to keep a watchful eye on our levels of spending but many of the achievements set out earlier in this report were in response to the poor state of public facilities which previously existed.

What has been done has clearly met with the approval of Dorchester people and we can be justly proud of what we have achieved. After all, in a couple of years time, we could be a city!

## DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET

The cost of the Town Council's Services can be summarised as follows:

2010/11			Service	2011/12 Estimate		
Expenditure	Income	Net cost		Expenditure	Income	Net cost
14,826	4,802	10,024	Allotments	14,861	4,951	9,910
622,433	35,713	586,720	Parks & Open Spaces	632,053	35,528	596,525
395,233	79,826	315,407	Buildings & Cultural Activities	384,381	83,663	300,718
315,249	271,759	43,490	Corporate Management	299,387	267,847	31,540
69,105	0	69,105	Democratic Representation	72,815	0	72,815
3,634	0	3,634	Twinning	4,099	0	4,099
21,721	0	21,721	Planning	29,339	0	29,339
115,786	39,318	76,468	Cemeteries	121,375	40,496	80,879
<b>1,557,987</b>	<b>431,418</b>	<b>1,126,569</b>	<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>1,558,310</b>	<b>432,485</b>	<b>1,125,825</b>

You will be able to view the Council's draft final accounts for the year ended 31st March, 2011 online at [www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk](http://www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk) or at the Council Offices as from early July, 2011.

## DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCILLORS \*

### East Ward

Mark Allwood 29 South Walks Road DT1 1ED	259991
Tim Harries 9 Brookhouse Street DT1 3GL	07970 653796
Stella Jones Syward Cottage, Syward Road DT1 2AJ	264335
Fiona Kent-Ledger 28 Olga Road DT1 2LX	250253
Tony Lyall 13 St. George's Road DT1 1PA	266254

### North Ward

Richard Biggs 20 Bridport Road DT1 1RS	260156
Vicki Black 4 Ashington Street DT1 3GJ	261574
Andy Canning, 11 Alfred Road DT1 2DW	261592
Kate Hebditch 8 Friary Hill DT1 1JG	268603
Les Phillips MBE 17 West Mills Road DT1 1SP	264030

### South Ward

Carolyn Biggs 20 Bridport Road DT1 1RS	260156
Susie Hosford, 1 Meadow Cottages, Martinstown DT2 9LJ	880102
Tess James 70 Monmouth Road DT1 2DG	262359
Robin Potter 22 D'Urberville Close DT1 2JT	264416
Molly Rennie 13 Alington Road DT1 1NS	268572

### West Ward

David Barrett 41 Holmead Walk DT1 3GE	259269
Anita Harries 9 Brookhouse Street DT1 2GL	261354
Leonard Heath 1 Maen Gardens, Culliford Road DT1 1PU	757313
Trevor Jones OBE Syward Cottage, Syward Road DT1 2AJ	264335
Peter Mann 13 Beech Court DT1 1DX	266796

\* There are Council elections in May 2011