



DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL - ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

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 at around 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.

The past year has been the first of five for the Council elected in May 2019. We have seen six new Councillors among our twenty, which also means we said goodbye to six colleagues, to whom we offer our sincere thanks for their service. Among them was Trevor Jones, who we were delighted to honour by making him an Honorary Citizen of the town at a special meeting of Council in December.

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 Fiona Kent-Ledger

Being Chair of Management is a bit full on, lots to take on and lots to remember. I would not be able to do it without the hard work Steve Newman puts in as Clerk to the Committee, his knowledge is amazing, and appearance of calm is very reassuring. Steve thanks for keeping me on the straight and narrow.

Thank you to my fellow Councillors and committee members for their commitment to get things done and their help and patience while we work through scheduled and surprise items.

In all honesty it is the staff who run and manage our assets, they do this so well that it is not a chore to Chair this Committee. At every meeting we considered a report from the Outdoor Services Manager updating us on the work undertaken and the achievements made by the Outdoor Services Team since the last meeting.

There has been the appointment of the new Head Gardener, who along with the team, has made huge improvements and changes in the Borough Gardens, the area around South Gate onto the Walks/ Princes Street junction was much improved and notices put up so the public were informed about areas being developed for wildflowers.

At every management meeting the Committee receives the monitoring reports for the Municipal Buildings and Borough Gardens House. These reports show the number of rentals and income of the buildings owned by the council. We also receive reports giving details of interments of burials and ashes at the 3 cemeteries owned by the Town Council.

There have been lots of projects and activities this year, here are just a few:

Health and safety issues that arise from owning land that is used by the public, of which a good example is the Elizabeth Place Play area and the bonfire that has historically appeared there every November the 5th. This is not an official bonfire authorised by the Town Council and every year the Council has to deal with the gradual build-up of materials, combustible or not, that starts on the land in by mid-October. The management committee has taken the opinion that this is something that cannot be stopped. There is not the manpower to enforce the dumping of material onto the land. So, in order to make this as safe an event as possible we manage the site during this period of time with safety fencing and frequent visits to remove unsuitable items that are essentially fly tipped there.

Work at the Great Field is progressing and there has been approval from all parties involved of the play equipment and initial tree planting schedule. The Duchy has nearly completed the drainage works. The Pavilion at the Great Field will be built and run by the Alcohol Education Trust, not only will this provide a new social space but also a provision of toilets on the Great Field.

The Committee had a report by the Town Clerk on the establishment of a new five-year corporate plan for the Council. It was noted that the largest part of the Council's budget and staff resources were focused on those things that the Council delivered operationally such as parks, open spaces and play areas. Members felt it would be worthwhile to review the operational services on a site by site (or event) basis and through that process agree direction for each element. In order to assist Officers with this work it was felt appropriate to establish a task and finish group.

Moving forward this year there are lots of projects and planned works in place, on-going discussions with the Dorchester Arts and future usage of the Corn Exchange. The Corn Exchange roof! The list goes on...

One final thing as I was finalising this report the sad news came through of the death of Sid Atkinson the Depot Supervisor. I felt it was only right to mention it in this report as a dedication to his 20 years or service to the Town Council. Our thoughts are with family and friends.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - Councillor Robin Potter

The elections last May brought several new councillors to the committee and they were given (and continuing councillors were reminded of) suitable training on how to comment on planning applications, particularly those within their electoral ward. This training proved to be one of the last contributions made by our most excellent clerk, Louise Dowell, whose expertise, persistence, accuracy and encouragement have been so valuable to the committee

over the last years. We were very sorry to see her go but are now being well served by Georgina Wakely, who is rapidly getting to grips with all the complex needs of our remit.

The committee meets on the first Monday of every month to discuss matters concerning our town. A major part of our agenda is to discuss planning applications which have been submitted to Dorset Council during the month and submit appropriate comments to the planning authority, detailing any concerns and objections if we think this is necessary. This can result in a change to the application to address our concerns or it can mean that the application is called before a committee of councillors at Dorset Council rather than being decided under their scheme of delegation. Of course many applications are considered entirely satisfactory and no objection is raised, but when we have concerns, we state them clearly.

The agendas for the past year have also included a number of items with wider implications. A continuing bugbear is the problem of inconsiderate parking on residential streets around the town. We have persuaded Dorset Council of the need for action in some small instances, such as around Manor Park Schools, Fordington Green and Wessex Road, but there are many other streets which have grounds for concern and complaint. We have been promised a comprehensive review of parking strategy in Dorchester - but this promise remains unfulfilled at present.

The committee has persuaded the Town Council to purchase a SID (Speed Indicator Device) and this is being placed in various locations around the town for a few weeks at a time to encourage drivers to obey the limits. We have also tried to get Dorset Council to address problems in Lubbecke Way and Victoria Road and some progress has been made. Two areas where progress has been less than swift are at the prison site and with the disabled access ramp to Dorchester West Station. We find this entirely regrettable.

We expect the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan to be a major item next year, but this will not stop us continuing to address the concerns of Dorchester. As ever, my thanks go to all members of the committee who contribute their local knowledge and to Georgina for gathering together our thoughts into coherent minutes.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE - *Councillor Susie Hosford*

Our main task this year was to be the development of a new Corporate Plan. We started work in July by giving both new and returning councillors the chance to identify opportunities either to deliver our existing community and cultural services, or identify areas where we can seek to influence partners.

The ideas have been developed into our High Level Focus document, on which we consult this Spring. At the same time we have put in place our Medium Term Financial Strategy which will help us fund any new services we offer. We have, however, recognised that we can't make any firm decisions until we know the intentions of the Dorset Council to any locally valued services.

The work on the Corporate Plan has been overtaken by the Council's decision to declare a Climate Emergency, necessitating a big shift of resources to consider the implications for the services we operate and come up with a deliverable plan to respond to the emergency. Again we have produced a high level preliminary response to the emergency and are inviting comment on it. We are already investigating how to reduce the carbon footprint of the Municipal Buildings and working closely with several community groups to help them to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels or capture the CO2 they produce through tree planting,

In January we set the first budget of the new Council, in line with our Medium Term Strategy, which set aside significant sums to respond to the Climate Emergency and at the same time ensured we can give a flexible response to priorities coming through the new Corporate Plan process.

Meanwhile we continue to embed and strengthen good financial and operational governance, including the monitoring of financial budgets, our risk registers and procurement processes. The Committee continues to deliver projects, in partnership with the Dorset Council, to improve our public realm; we completed the final phases of the Walks refurbishment in the year and have now started to prepare for a major public realm improvement at Cornhill.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL OPERATIONAL BUDGET SUMMARY

	2018-19 Actual	2019-20 Budget	2019-20 <i>Latest (Wk50)</i>	Under/ -Over Budget(<i>Wk50</i>)
Parks & Open Spaces	510,463	598,791	580,503	18,288
Allotments	3,289	4,952	4,308	644
Municipal Buildings	202,438	312,528	319,076	(6,549)
Cemeteries	42,284	51,407	53,905	(2,499)
Cultural & Twinning Activities	67,045	57,770	59,681	(1,911)
Corporate & Democratic Management	213,132	226,981	215,363	11,618
Other Services	113,545	136,483	107,696	28,787
Operational Budget	1,152,198	1,388,911	1,340,532	48,378
Precept	1,388,243	1,463,971	1,463,971	0
Transfer to General Reserves	236,045	75,060	123,439	48,378

The report will be updated when the Council's final position is known. Our draft Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019-20 will be available at www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk soon after the financial year end.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCILLORS TO MAY 2024

EAST WARD			
Tim Harries 8 Fordington Hill House DT1 1LZ	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
Rory Major 15 Orchard Street DT1 1JH	07758 914767		
NORTH WARD			
Sue Biles scbiles@aol.com		Andy Canning 11 Alfred Road DT1 2DW	01305 261592
Alistair Chisholm 9 Orchard St DT1 1JH	07419 589005	David Taylor 4 Normandy Way DT1 2PP	01305 263382
POUNDBURY WARD			
Richard Biggs 20 Bridport Road DT1 1RS	01305 260156	Frances Hogwood 8 Hintock Street DT1 3FB	fmhog@onetel.com
Susie Hosford 1 Meadow Cottages, Martinstown DT2 9JL	01305 880102	David Leaper 33 Peverell Ave East DT1 3RH	01305 757047
SOUTH WARD			
Gareth Jones 21 Martel Close, Broadmayne DT2 8PL	01305 854915	Robin Potter 22 D'Urberville Close DT1 2JT	01305 264416
Molly Rennie MBE 13 Alington Road DT1 1NS	01305 268572		
WEST WARD			
Barry Armstrong-Marshall 20 Fordington Dairy, Athelstan Rd DT1 1FD	01305 269921	Les Fry	lesfry.lf@gmail.com
Janet Hewitt 6 Garfield Avenue DT1 2EX	01305 266175	Ralph Ricardo 25 Shaston Crescent DT1 2EB	01305 584878

Adrian Stuart – Town Clerk, 19 North Square, Dorchester DT1 1JF

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