

ANNUAL REPORT

2020–2021



CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

This past year has been a challenging for everyone. None of us have seen the like of Covid19 before and it has impacted on the town and on your town council. The community in Warminster has responded to the many huge challenges people have faced with a real sense of cooperation and community. I wish to thank everyone for the part they have played. Like everyone, I am hoping that soon Covid19 and lockdowns will soon be a thing of the past.



Due to social distancing restrictions, I have not been able to undertake as many functions as I would have wished. I have continued with my other Mayoral duties and to raise money for my chosen charities. Throughout the year the council has had to switch to online meetings, which bring their own challenges. The council has continued to provide services with many staff working from home. The Cafe and the Lake Pleasure Grounds have been a haven for residents amongst all the disruption. Warminster is truly lucky to have that green heart in our town.

The town council is preparing to take on the provision of more services currently provided by Wiltshire Council. Other towns have faced the same decision - increase council tax or stand by and watch services decline. It is not an easy choice but one that had to be faced.

We have been making extensive preparations and believe that we can provide better quality services for Warminster residents. The experience built up since taking on the Lake Pleasure Grounds and eight children's play areas has been invaluable. Last year we started our road sweeper, Basil Brushes, and he has made a considerable difference to the town. Where new service have been taken on by the town council, improvements are underway.

Due to the importance of the responsibilities that these services impose on us we are reviewing our staff and committee structure. The whole process over the past few years has been a huge change for the town council and our budget has gone from £500,000 in 2016/17 to over £1.2 million for this financial year. We will always strive to ensure value for money.

Some Councillors have decided to step down, often after long years of service, and all of them will be missed for the contributions they have made. The Council has adopted a Vision Statement, setting out its plans for the future, you can read more about that on the next page.

Mayor of Warminster
Councillor Chris Robbins

Vision and strategy – for Warminster Town Council

We are proud to have adopted our new vision and strategy, which will guide us over the next five years. Our vision is *Community and council in partnership, building a vibrant and flourishing town, proud of its heritage, delivering quality services today while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow. Actively embracing a brighter, greener future for all in Warminster.*

It means we will ensure all our services, now and in the future, continue to be delivered effectively and efficiently. Acting with integrity and openness in all we do. Minimising our impact on the environment, locally and globally, doing the right thing to create a world for our children. To be a learning council, building on Warminster's history, to be flexible and ready with fresh thinking whatever tomorrow brings. Working closely together with our community and whoever can help us make Warminster a town with energy and a positive future. Put simply we want to be a council delivering the best we can for you, our community. To support our vision we have four strategic priorities - the key things we want to focus on:

- Taking on new services, assets and responsibilities
- Reducing our environmental impact
- Enabling the new normal
- Building a strong, healthy community

Words can be powerful but meaningless unless backed up by actions. We are making a start. Just one example, everyone loves our road sweeper Basil Brushes, and from April 2021 we have taken on more services with our own team providing the town's hanging baskets, cleansing the town's public conveniences and caring for the Lake Pleasure Grounds. Wherever possible we will be using all-electric tools to reduce our environmental impact.

If you want to know more, our strategic plan is on our website. Why not have a read and let us know how you'd like to get involved.

New Services

Later this year the town council expects to take on further services from Wiltshire Council, these include: many verges, grass cutting, hedges, shrubs, shelter belts, trees, amenity footpaths, leaf clearance, balancing ponds, fencing, cuttings removal and disposal, litter picking, bin emptying, fly tipping, graffiti removal, hazardous waste, waste disposal, dead animals (road kill), road sweeper. The Council is preparing for this and believes local control and civic pride will enable us to provide better services.

Warminster Civic Centre



The Civic Centre is a popular venue for community events with a large number of regular and casual hirers providing diverse weekly, fortnightly and monthly activities for residents of Warminster. Obviously Covid19 has massively impacted on that this year. We have worked with hirers to make sure that events have taken place in line with Government Guidance and with Covid19 precautions in place.

The Civic Centre is the perfect venue for conferences and meetings, as well as for private functions such as weddings and birthday parties. It is easily accessible for people of all abilities, and

with the Western car park immediately adjacent to the building there's never any problem finding a parking space.

The coffee bar in the foyer provides a warm and safe place to meet friends and colleagues. Events have ranged from blood doning to Zumba, childrens' parties to wedding receptions, conferences to martial arts, U3A to pilates. Whatever your event, chat to us and see how we can help.

Our male and female toilets both have baby changing facilities and there is a standard disabled toilet. We also have a fantastic fully equipped Changing Places Personal Care Room for use by adults and children with profound disabilities. This includes a height-adjustable adult changing bench, and a shower and a tracking hoist system. There is sufficient space for a wheelchair plus any carers to accompany the user.

Events

Most of our usual events such as Spring in the Park and the Christmas Market had had to been cancelled over the last 12 months. Events that the Council supports with grants - such as the Carnival, The Wobble and Inspire also had to be cancelled. The Christmas Lights switch on had to take place without the usual crowds. One bright spot The Christmas Window competition which was well supported by shops and businesses. Our congratulations to the winner Bride by Design.

A Remembrance Day Service was recorded and made available online. Our thanks to the Royal British Legion for organising this.

Looking Ahead

We remain hopeful that some events may be able to go ahead in the Autumn of 2021, but that will be very dependant on the situation with regard to Covid19.



Christmas Window Winner Bride by Design

Town Development

The Town Development Committee, was chaired this year by Cllr Paul Macfarlane. It deals with issues relating to the town's infrastructure, many of which are projects requested by residents. This year these have included the following:

- No.3 The High Street has been sold and we hope the new owners will quickly act to remove this eyesore from our town centre.
- The Regeneration Working Group has been meeting with Wiltshire Council and the owners of Three Horseshoes Walk to progress our longer term aspirations for the the area around the Community Hub Building, by Cornmarket.
- Highways issues can be referred to the Community Area Transport Group of Wiltshire Council for decision based on feasibility and cost. Once schemes have been approved the Town Council would normally be expected to contribute 25% of the cost.

Planning Advisory Committee

The Planning Advisory Committee, chaired by Councillor Tony Nicklin, met more than any other committee of the Council, coming together every month to consider all planning applications submitted to the planning authority, Wiltshire Council.

The Planning Advisory Committee can only object to planning applications on planning grounds. These are set out in law. They can take into consideration the policies in the Warminster Neighbourhood Plan.

The committee can make site visits if they think it will assist with their deliberations.

The Town Council is only a consultee, it can comment on planning applications but, the ultimate decision rests with Wiltshire Council and they have to follow national planning laws.

The Committee has put environmental concerns higher up their agenda.

Environmental Services Committee

The Environmental Services Committee, chaired by Councillor Sue Fraser, was set up to assist in taking on new services from Wiltshire Council. Covid has delayed the transfer of services, but the committee has used that time to work on policies and other preparations so the transition will be as smooth as possible when it happens.

Climate Change

WARMINSTER CLIMATE CHANGE PLEDGE

We are asking people to try some of these easy changes, and help us to make Warminster a cleaner, greener, healthier place to live.

Switch your energy provider to a renewable tariff - one of the biggest impacts we can take as households.

Switch off! save energy and save money - Switch off, turn things off standby, turn your thermostat down.

Move your money - Many banks and pension providers are investing in the fossil fuel industry. Put your money to green use.

Cut your digital footprint - Delete any e-mails, photos and old files you no longer need

Reduce your food waste 50% of all food waste occurs in the home!

Plant a tree and 'rewild' your garden - A tree is one of the best ways to remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Travel smart - Could you commit to walking, or cycling a proportion of your shorter journeys say under half a mile? Can you car share or take public transport to lower the impact of your daily commute?

Reduce and re-use - Think reduce and reuse whenever you can – whether that's coffee cups, water bottles, shopping bags, or face masks.

Eat smart - Reduce that impact by trying meat-free Monday, swap one regular product for an organic or Fairtrade equivalent, support local producers and retailers, this often results in lower 'food miles'

Use your voice - And share your changes with your friends and family, your school, your workplace, businesses and elected representatives. Share the Warminster pledge too - invite them to get involved!



Warminster Parking Partnership

The Town Council runs the Warminster Parking Partnership, allowing shoppers to reclaim their first two hours of parking costs by taking their refund vouchers to those retailers who display the Parking Partnership sign in their windows. The maximum refund for two hours is now £1.30. There are currently a dozen businesses signed up to the partnership. The Council welcomes any independent business who wish to join the scheme.

HR

The HR committee is comprised of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and chairs of committees, and meets quarterly to discuss any issues relating to staffing and to monitor the Council's risk assessments.

Finance and Audit Committee

The Finance and Audit Committee was chaired by Councillor Chris Robbins. It monitors all the Council's financial procedures and approves relevant expenditure. It scrutinises the draft budget before making recommendations to Full Council. The Council has had very good reports from both the internal and external auditors.

Full Council

Full Council meetings oversee reports from committees and it deals with issues that need decisions from all members. The most important decisions it took this year was to take on the running of some services historically provided by Wiltshire Council. The choice facing councillors was to take on the services or let them decline still further. The consequence has been an increase in Council Tax.

Parks and Recreation Committee

The Parks and Recreation Committee manages the Lake Pleasure Grounds, 8 play areas and the public toilets. It was chaired by Councillor Denis Brett.

Highlights of the past 12 months have been:

- Continuing to develop the Pavilion Café. It is run by a Café Supervisor with assistance from seasonal staff. Sales in the Café were up on last year and we will work to help them to continue to grow.
- Reapplying for Green Flag status for the Lake Pleasure Grounds. Being awarded Green Flag status in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 was a fantastic achievement and we hope to repeat the success in 2021.
- Signs have been put up to ask people to stay covid safe while using our play areas and an outdoor gym has been opened. (pictured right) New equipment has been battery powered where possible to cut our carbon footprint. It is also quieter and we expect to save money over the long-term.
- Flower beds are usually planted by pupils from local schools, in 2020 this was not possible so we used a wild flower mix instead. We will be trialing alternatives to pesticides over the coming year to try and reduce our already low use of pesticides even further.
- The council has been working on a replacement for the paddling pool a decision on whether to commission a splash pad is expected soon.
- Further improvements to the Lake Pleasure Grounds are being considered for future years. These include improvements to the tennis courts and the boat house.



The new battery powered mower (left)
and the Green Flag Award (above)

Communications

Communicating with residents is a key part of the Council's activities, and it takes many forms. There is an increasing reliance on social media with the Town Council and Civic Centre having Facebook pages and Instagram accounts to communicate information on the latest news and activities. There are also Facebook pages for the Lake Pleasure Grounds and the Pavilion Café.

The newsletter is usually distributed to 7,800 homes but Covid19 has meant that we have had to place them in the *Warminster Journal*. You can also see them on our website.

The town council's website contains the timetable, agendas and minutes of council meetings, and also has a calendar of events at the Civic Centre and elsewhere in the town. The council is happy to advertise charity events in the town if the groups send us the relevant information. The Data Transparency Act 2018 is recognised by the town council and it observes the requirement of getting as much information uploaded onto the website as possible.

We advertise all our meetings weekly in the *Warminster Journal*, as well as posting notices on our internal and external notice boards at the Civic Centre. Many events are advertised in the *Warminster Journal*, such as the Remembrance Service, Civic Award and Christmas Market. The Council sends out regular press releases to the media. We obtain coverage in local papers and across many parts of Wiltshire. We feature on local radio, in magazines and occasionally on TV. It is important to keep Warminster's profile high and spread the word about local achievements.

CCTV

Warminster's CCTV operations are an important part of the Town Council's activities. Headed by supervisor Mike Herriott, a dedicated small team of staff and volunteers situated in Dewey House work closely with the local community police team as well as agencies from further afield. The Council is currently looking for volunteers to join the team. Anyone interested should contact Mike Herriott on 01985 217604.

The cameras situated in the town are working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and the team also covers the monitoring of Westbury town and the West Wilts Trading Estate. In addition close working relationships with Warminster Garrison and Battlesbury Barracks enable a wide range of issues in respect of prevention of crime to be covered. The CCTV team continues to be involved in the local Pubwatch and Shopwatch schemes and supplies radios to participants. These help reduce shoplifting, vandalism and other crimes.

The Town Council supports volunteer activity such as the Community Litter Pick and Community Speedwatch. We recognise the huge importance of voluntary work to the well being of our town.

Grants

The Town Council agreed and paid for grants from the Town Council budget. Recipients were from a range of organisations from support services, sports clubs and the arts. They have included: Help Counselling Services, Jacobs Ladder Wiltshire CV, Warminster Athenaeum Trust, Warminster Group Diabetes UK, Warminster Flers Association, Warminster Philharmonic Orchestra, Warminster and District Stroke Club. The Town Council also makes recommendations to the Dewey Trust, which gives grants to local organisations.

If your organisation has not had the benefit of a grant, please contact the Town Council to discuss your requirements. Grant application forms are available online at www.warminster-tc.gov.uk or can be picked up from the Council offices. Grants for this year will be decided by the Finance and Audit Committee on 5th July 2021.

WCR

Warminster Community Radio (WCR) has a service level agreement with the Town Council. In return for the Council providing an annual sum of £10,000 to WCR for five years from April 2021, the period of a full broadcasting licence, WCR assists at all Council events including the provision of a public address (PA) system and outside broadcasts for the Civic Service, Remembrance Sunday and the Christmas Lights switch on. They will be providing the PA for Spring in the Park. They are available to support and advertise other events in the town.

Mayors Charity

The Mayor has supported two charities this year, Alzheimer's Support at the Silk Mill and The Warminster and District Stroke Club.

Covid 19 has restricted the usual fund raising events, but the Mayor has been selling jigsaws from his shop in the town centre to raise funds. The Mayor also opened the water refill station by the Library and marked the retirement of our Town Crier with a special book of memories.



Phil Seddon - Our Town Crier for many years



Freedom of Information requests received 01/04/2020–31/03/2021

One - 20th October 2020 regarding the Folly Lane, Rehobath in the Neighbourhood Plan.

List of complaints received 01/04/2020–31/03/2021

None



Southleigh Woods - photo by Chris Williams

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the staff at the Civic Centre, CCTV and in our wonderful Lake Pleasure Grounds, for the support I have received from them in my term of office. It has been an honour for me to represent Warminster as Mayor. It has not been the usual Mayoral year and social distancing has reduced the opportunity for me to meet as many of the residents as I wanted to. It never ceases to amaze me how many diverse organisations there are in the town and how much they rely on support from volunteers, people who give up their time so selflessly for the benefit of others. I would also like to thank my family for the support they have given me throughout the year.

Mayor of Warminster,
Councillor Chris Robbins

FINANCIAL REPORT 2020-2021

The end of the Council's financial year is 31st March and shutdown of the accounts will take place in April 2021 to account for all expenditure and income. This report gives details of the income and expenditure to 31st March 2021 with a breakdown of our current situation. Once the accounts are completed these figures may have changed. The full audited accounts are available to the public and the details are advised on completion of the process which will take place by the end of June 2021.

The Councillors will make declaration through their annual governance statement that they understand their responsibility to have and maintain a sound system of internal control which includes the preparation of the accounting statements. This means they followed the Accounts and Audit Regulations, made proper arrangements for the safeguarding of public money and have only done what they have the legal power to do and have complied with proper practices in so doing. The Council has the general power of competence 'The power to do anything that individuals may generally do'.

An assessment of the risks facing this smaller authority has been undertaken and the Councillors have taken steps to manage those risks including internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.

Throughout the financial year an effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems has been carried out by the appointment of a competent independent person to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority. Appropriate action was taken on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audits.

Throughout the financial year this smaller authority has disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year-end if relevant.

Fiona Fox BA (Hons) MCIPD FISLCC
Town Clerk and RFO
31st March 2021

SUMMARY OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE TO 31st March 2021

Due to the timing of the Town Meeting this set of figures represents 12 months' Income and Expenditure. The final figures will be established following the closedown operation in April 2021. Completed accounts are likely to be available in June 2021 and will be available for the public to inspect.

	Budget 2020-21	Actual 2020-21
Expenditure at 31st March 2021		
Administration	£262,360	£273,808
Properties, buildings and town amenities	£949,558	£805,155
Town development, grants and projects	£117,600	£104,393
Total gross expenditure	£1,329,518	£1,183,356
 Income at 31st March 2021		
Miscellaneous	£148,852	£82,057
Precept	£1,180,666	£1,180,666
Total income	£1,329,518	£1,262,723

	£
The Precept amounted to	1,180,666
Long-term Liabilities	
Public Works Loan Board	309,702
General Reserves	209,948
Earmarked Reserves:	
Capital Projects	191,614
Services to be Devolved	254,235
Elections	13,962
Tennis courts	10,000
CCTV	5,829
Climate Change	2,000
Open Spaces	20,663
Catenary Cables	3,168
Depot	25,000
Sweeper	3,000
Training	2,062
Play Areas	50,310
Town Crier	2,261
Website	863
CIL17/18	4,912
CIL 18/19	88,156
CIL 19/20	12,372
CIL 20/21	1,755
EMR S106 Grant	814
Capital Financing Accounts	1,077,060

Warminster Town Council is composed of 13 councillors. The town is divided into four wards: Warminster West, Warminster East and Broadway, each with four councillors, and Copheap with one councillor. The Council is led by the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor, who are elected each May at the Annual Meeting.

Warminster Town Councillors elected on 6th May 2021

WARMINSTER WEST

Stacie Allensby
2 Copheap Rise,
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WARMINSTER EAST

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WARMINSTER BROADWAY

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WARMINSTER NORTH

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Bill Parks
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Town Council meetings and committee meetings are normally held at the Civic Centre and are open to the public. The public are welcome to attend the majority of council meetings, either to listen or to speak in the public session. However, during Covid19 the Government changed the law to allow councils to meet online. Members to the public have been able to watch the meetings online either live or afterwards on the councils website. The public have still been able to contribute to meeting with statements submitted in advance being read out during meetings.

Dates and times of meetings and agendas are posted on the notice boards at the Civic Centre, and are listed on our website at www.warminster-tc.gov.uk. Meetings are also listed in the *Warminster Journal*.

Minutes of Council meetings can also be found on our website or requested from the Civic Centre.

The Town Council offices at the Civic Centre are open Monday–Friday, 9.00am–4.30pm, and the public are welcome to call in during those hours.

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