

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023–2024







## **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

I have devoted my year as Mayor of Warminster to council business and events but also to meeting with residents and businesses to address their concerns. Every occasion has been worthwhile, and I can say with pride that the town council constantly works hard to provide a good service to the town and is currently working on several major projects for its residents.

The tennis courts in the Lake Pleasure Grounds have been upgraded through a joint project with the Lawn Tennis Association. The newly refurbished tennis courts and MUGA are now being well used and enjoyed. Our Town Centre CCTV has also been upgraded to a digital system. Work will begin in the Spring to replace the Under 5s multiplay area with a similar but modern piece of equipment.



Cllr Phil Keeble

I am delighted that the Lake Pleasure Grounds have once again been awarded Green Flag Status. This is testament to the council team's ongoing work and commitment to this wonderful asset for the Warminster community, and the continued involvement of volunteers from the local community. Our volunteers are invaluable, but we would always welcome more!

The town council recently adopted its Climate Strategy Action Plan for 2024 – 2029, which follows on from its Climate Change Strategy and the Warminster Pledge. The plan sets out a series of projects and the tasks/ steps that need to be carried out to reach the goals. The council aims to lead by example and engage with partners and the community to inspire action and provide information. The council also adopted its Community Resilience Plan in November 2023. The purpose of the plan is to provide a local coordinated response supporting statutory authorities and the emergency services in a variety of emergency situations, hopefully reducing the impact to peoples' lives. In December, the council adopted its Strategic Plan for 2024 – 2029, setting out the direction of travel for the council over the next five years. Finally, the renewal and upgrading of the Neighbourhood Plan continues. The final document will help pave the way for the development of Warminster in many ways, whether planning issues, heritage, commerce, green spaces and more.

In September 2023, the council announced the passing of Cllr Rob Fryer. Rob was first elected to the council in 2007, representing Warminster Broadway, and was twice elected Mayor of the town. A few months later, the council announced the passing of Cllr John Syme, who also represented Warminster Broadway. John had been reelected to the council in 2021 and represented his ward enthusiastically. We were pleased to welcome Russell Hawker and James Kirkwood as the new





Delivering a brighter, greener future for all councillors for Broadway ward.

Events in the town and the Lake Pleasure Grounds are highlights of the council year. These include Spring in the Park, the Lions Book Festival, the wonderful Carnival procession, Remembrance Day, Shop Window Competitions, and Pumpkins in the Park. Record numbers of people attended the Christmas Lights Switch On Event and newly introduced markets organised in conjunction with the Warminster Business Network with stalls throughout the town centre, and planning has already begun for further seasonal markets throughout the year and for Christmas 2024 to make it even bigger and even better! We are also looking forward to the centenary celebrations for the Lake Pleasure Grounds on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2024, with an Elton John tribute act, a Beatles tribute act, and an airborne pyrotechnic display.



Left: Switching on the Christmas Lights

The finances of the town council remain in good shape; the council increased our portion of Wiltshire's council tax by 1.73% for 2024/2025, the equivalent of £3.68 for a Band D property per annum. This below inflation increase will allow the council to maintain and improve the services which it provides for its residents, whilst recognising the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our residents. We recognise there will always be progress to be made and opportunities to be taken but I must praise and thank my fellow councillors, the very welcome volunteers, our managers, and staff for what we have achieved thus far.

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Councillor Phil Keeble Mayor of Warminster







Above: Aerial shot of refurbished tennis courts and MUGA

## WHAT DOES WARMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL DO?

Warminster Town Council's responsibilities include:

- The Civic Centre
- Tyning Allotments
- Eight Play Areas
- The Public Toilets in Central Car Park
- The Obelisk
- The War Memorial
- Dewey House
- CCTV Control Room and Systems
- Boreham Road Closed Churchyard
- Yeates Meadow
- Ashley Place Amenity Space
- Our Road Sweeper 'Basil Brushes'
- Awarding grants to local organisations
- The Hanging Baskets
- Commenting on Planning Applications and advising on Highway Improvements
- Events e.g., Spring in the Park, Markets, Pumpkins in the Park, Remembrance Parade and

Service, Christmas Lights.

# The Lake Pleasure Grounds:

- The Pavilion Café
- The Skatepark
- The Splash Pad
- The Putting Green
- The Lava Trail
- The Children's Play Area
- The Boat House and Boat Hire
- The Tennis Courts and MUGA
- The Flower Beds and Wildlife



Above: the Green Flag Award 2023/24.





## **WARMINSTER CIVIC CENTRE**



The Civic Centre is a popular venue for community events with many regular and casual hirers providing diverse weekly, fortnightly, and monthly activities for the residents of Warminster. It is the perfect venue for conferences and meetings, as well as for private functions such as wakes, weddings, and birthday parties. It is fully and easily accessible for people of all abilities, and with the (Wiltshire Council run) Western Car Park immediately adjacent to the building there's never any problem finding a parking space.

Events have ranged from blood doning to Zumba, children's parties to wedding receptions, conferences to martial arts, U3A to Pilates. Whatever your event, chat to us and see how we can help.

In addition, the Civic Centre is now hosting quarterly markets showcasing the remarkable breadth of talent amongst our local entrepreneurs.

The Coffee Bar in the foyer provides a place to meet friends and colleagues. 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 severely limited mobility. This includes a height-adjustable adult changing bench, a shower, and a tracking hoist system. There is sufficient space for a wheelchair and carers to accompany the user.





#### **EVENTS**

Spring in the Park 2023 was a great success with many groups attending celebrations linked to the Coronation of King Charles III. The Carnival, Inspire, the Lions Book Festival, and other popular events also took place in the Lake Pleasure Grounds.

The council held its first Pumpkins in the Park event in October; this is now set to become a feature of the calendar.

The Remembrance Day Service was attended by thousands - a strong reminder of Warminster's links to the armed forces.



Above: Spring in the Park 2023

The Christmas Lights Switch On Event was considered to be the best ever. The town council worked with Warminster Business Network to arrange for the closure of the High Street and bring a Christmas market and other attractions to the town centre. Residents enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and flocked to the Christmas Markets in the town centre and at the Civic Centre. Wonderful music was provided by various bands and the joyful gospel choir. The whole town was exceptionally busy with an amazing vibe; a memorable day was had by all.

The Christmas Window Competition was well supported by shops and businesses. Our congratulations to the winner, the Wessex MS Charity Shop. I think that everyone appreciated the immense effort that must have gone into their Elf on the Shelf entry.

The council organised several events for young and old alike to participate in, in conjunction with local businesses. These included a Quest for the Crowns Hunt to celebrate the coronation, an Ice Cream and Bubbles Hunt, a Pumpkin Patch Hunt, the Christmas Window Competition, and Santa's List.

We look forward to 2024 with high hopes for the many events planned which include the Ice Cream and Bubbles Festival, with masses of different ice creams and bubbles for people to enjoy, and the eagerly anticipated Centenary Celebrations for the Lake Pleasure Grounds.





## **COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

Warminster Town Council has a Full Council plus six committees.

## **Full Council**

Full Council meetings oversee reports from committees and deals with issues that need decisions from all members. The most important decision is to set the council's budget (the precept) for the forthcoming financial year which forms part of the council tax figure set by Wiltshire Council.

## **Finance and Audit Committee**

The Finance and Audit Committee is chaired by Councillor Andrew Cooper. It monitors all the council's financial procedures, approves relevant expenditure, and checks that the council is on track against the budget throughout the year. 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.

## HR

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

# **Highways Advisory Committee**

The Highways Advisory Committee was created in 2023 and is chaired by Councillor Andrew Cooper. It deals with requests for improvements to the highway and for waiting restrictions. It can also make referrals to the Local Highways and Footpath Improvement Group of Wiltshire Council for decision based on feasibility and cost. The committee can also make requests for traffic surveys when considering requests made by residents.

If schemes are approved, the town council is normally expected to contribute at least 25% of the cost.

## **Parks and Estate Committee**

The Parks and Estate Committee is chaired by Councillor Sue Fraser. The committee manages the park and recreation related assets owned or maintained by the town council. These include the Lake Pleasure Grounds, the Pavilion Café, the Boat House, Play Areas, Closed Church Yards, the War Memorial, the Obelisk and Yeates Meadow, Boreham Cemetery and Ashley Place amenity space. The committee is also responsible for the public toilets, and our road sweeper. The committee manages projects which directly affect these assets and services, and requests to use said services or assets.





# **Planning Advisory Committee**

The Planning Advisory Committee, chaired by Councillor Steve Jeffries, meets more than any other committee, coming together every month to consider all planning applications submitted to the planning authority, Wiltshire Council. In total, it has considered 99 planning applications this year and commented on them to 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 must follow national planning laws.

# **Town Development Committee**

The Town Development Committee is chaired by Councillor Chris Robbins. 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:

**Warminster's CCTV operations** have moved to a new suite of rooms with an upgraded system. The new system is already being used to great effect, providing better quality images, and helping to keep our town safe. The total number of cameras in operation has increased from 42 to 162.

**The Warminster Community Resilience Plan** - this has been reviewed and updated and replaces the Flood and Emergencies Plan. We currently have five volunteer flood wardens. The plan is a working document and will continue to be updated and developed going forward.

# **Working Groups**

A Cycle Route Improvements Working Group is working on proposals to improve the local network and a new working group, the Car Parking Charges in Warminster Working Group, has been created to bring forward proposals to alter parking charges in Warminster to encourage people to spend longer in the town.





## **HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023:**

- The newly refurbished tennis courts opened in the spring. They can be booked online via the council's website.
- The refurbished courts tennis courts have been well used and tennis coaching is being arranged for the in 2024.
- The refurbishment of the multi-use games area MUGA (football and basketball).
- The Splash Pad continues to be a fantastic success.
- Extra temporary toilets were installed in the summer.
- The new picnic benches shaded by the trees by the putting green have been especially used in the summer months.
- Flower beds were planted by pupils from local schools.
- A wildflower area has been created and wildflower seeds have been sown in some of the flower beds.
- Incredible Edible continue to maintain a bed with edible plants and herbs.
- Ongoing improvements to the Pavilion Café. It is run by a café supervisor with assistance from seasonal staff. The café provides seasonal hot and cold drinks, ice creams and snacks. The more people use the café, the more we can reinvest in the Lake Pleasure Grounds.

## THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2024:

- More events will be held in the park in 2024 including Spring in the Park, the Ice Cream and Bubbles Festival, Pumpkins in the Park, as well as bands and choirs performing at the bandstand.
- 2024 marks 100 years since the Lake Pleasure Grounds were first opened. The celebrations for the anniversary include Elton John and The Beatles tribute acts with traditional fairground games and street food stalls throughout the Park.
- Being awarded Green Flag status for the Lake Pleasure Grounds for yet another year. Being awarded a Green Flag is public recognition that we have a high-quality park with dedicated staff and an excellent management plan in place.
- We continue to use alternatives to pesticides wherever possible, to keep our use of pesticides to a minimum.
- Further improvements to the Lake Pleasure Grounds are being considered for future years, including the replacement of the under 5s multiplay area and the renovation of the boat house.
- More youth activities will be provided in 2024 including 100 hours of free tennis coaching for young people and free canoe taster sessions in the Park.





## OTHER PROJECTS

## **Warminster Business Network**



The town council seeks to support local businesses and is delighted to have worked with local businesses in setting up the Warminster Business Network, which has now been successfully operating for over a year.

# **Warminster Markets**

The town council is working in conjunction with the Warminster Business Network to hold quarterly markets throughout the year. It is hoped that the wide range of attractive, independent market stalls will draw people into Warminster.

# **Warminster Neighbourhood Plan**



A steering group of councillors and local volunteers have been working with consultants to review the Warminster Neighbourhood Plan. Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan should be considered when planning applications are being reviewed. The focus of the review has been on:

- protecting green spaces, biodiversity, and heritage assets,
- promoting the best environmental practices and designs and
- promoting regeneration and vitality in the town centre.

Surveys and consultations are continuing to take place, and residents are invited to engage with all aspects of the review. It is hoped that the updated plan will be adopted by the autumn of 2025.

## **Lake Pleasure Ground Tennis Courts**

The council is proud of its high specification tennis courts which were refurbished with the support of the LTA. They are enclosed and incorporate a gate-access system which works with the online booking system.

Courts can be booked via the LTA website and the town council website.







## **CCTV**



Our CCTV has been upgraded to a state-of-the-art system in partnership with Westbury Town Council and West Wilts Trading Estate. Warminster's CCTV operations are an important part of the town council's activities. Headed by a manager, a dedicated team of staff and volunteers work closely with the local community police team, local shops, pubs, and businesses. The CCTV operations also provide a service to Westbury Town Council and the West Wilts Trading Estate. The cameras situated in Warminster are in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The CCTV team continues to be involved in the local

Pubwatch and Shopwatch schemes and supplies radios to participants, which helps to reduce shoplifting, vandalism, and other crimes.

## **Solar Panels**

The town council has already invested in solar panels on the Civic Centre, the public conveniences in the Central car park and the boat house in the Lake Pleasure Grounds. As part of its ongoing commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030, the council is planning to install solar panels on the Community Hub building and for the splashpad in 2024.



# **Warminster Parking Partnership**

The town council has run the Warminster Parking Partnership for several years now. The scheme allowed shoppers to reclaim their first two hours of parking costs by taking their refund vouchers to the dozen or so retailers who displayed the Parking Partnership sign in their windows but ended in its current format on 31 March 2024.





The council is currently looking into replacements for the Partnership in conjunction with the Warminster Business Network, which will maintain the aim of encouraging shoppers to Warminster, be simpler to administrate, more inclusive, and remove the reliance on vouchers from Wiltshire Council parking machines.

## **Communications**

Warminster Town Council's social media engagement and ability to reach residents continues to grow. Facebook reach increased by 418.3% in 2023 compared to 2022 with content interactions up by 136% - more people are now seeing updates and more importantly engaging with the work of the council. Link clicks also increased by 52.5% - with more people now directed to the Warminster Town Council website.

The Warminster Town Council and Civic Centre Facebook page has 3.2K followers and is used every day to communicate council news. A social media post launching the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lake Pleasure Ground event in December reached more than 26,000 people. A consultation on a possible road closure for toad migration season reached more than 24,000 people. A press release on a 'Happy to Chat' bench in August 2023 reached more than 297,000 people with more than 5,700 people engaging with the post. Interaction on Instagram was up 100% in 2023 – another useful tool to update residents with 1.3K followers currently. The page regularly posts pictures from around Warminster as well as using Instagram stories to promote local events in real time, such as updates from the Christmas Lights Switch-On event.



Social media improvements in 2024 will include a more joined up approach to our output, scheduling content consistently at set times and spreading content throughout the week. More video content will be introduced into the social media schedule, as a combination of methods is used to reach a larger audience.





## WARMINSTER COMMUNITY RADIO

Warminster Community Radio (WCR) has a service level agreement with the town council. In return for the council providing an annual sum, WCR assists at all council events including the provision of a public address (PA) system and outside broadcasts for Remembrance Sunday and the Christmas Lights Switch On. They also provide the PA for Spring in the Park and other events in the Park. They are available to support and advertise other events in the town.



## **MAYOR'S CHARITIES**

The Mayor's, Cllr Phil Keeble's, chosen charities this year are Myeloma UK and the Chat Café in Warminster – both causes are very close to his heart. The Mayor's charity raffle raised in excess of £900 for both charities. Fundraising will continue until the end of his term of office.









## **GRANTS AND VOLUNTEERING**

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. Groups given grants last year were Alzheimer's' Support, Bradley Road Community Garden, Carer Support Wiltshire, Groveland Countryside and Wildlife Volunteers, Walled Garden Project, Warminster Action Group, Warminster & District Amateur Swimming Club, Warminster Community Choir, Warminster Flers Twinning Association, Warminster Health and Wellbeing Group, and Warminster Open Door. Many other groups have been supported over the years.

The town council also supports volunteer activity such as the Community Litter Pick, loaning litter pickers to local schools and volunteers for their litter picking events; Warminster takes part in the Great British Spring Clean each year. We recognise the huge importance of voluntary work to the well-being of our town.

The town council works closely with many volunteers' groups. Have you considered if you could help? If we all do our bit, it makes a massive difference. Full training is provided for all volunteers. Contact the town council if any of the following groups interest you:

**Flood Wardens** - Could you keep an eye on an area and report incidents of flooding?

**CCTV** - Fancy putting your powers of observation to use? We look for a commitment to do a regular four-hour shift.

**Copheap, Warminster Common, and Grovelands Volunteers** - Does keeping trees, grass, and hedges in order appeal to you?

**Community Litter Pick** - Protecting the environment and wildlife and improving the look of our town.

**The Lake Pleasure Grounds** – Could you take over responsibility for the Elisabeth Collyns Garden – planting and maintaining the beds?

We would also welcome grant applications from our local volunteer, community groups and charities. If you would like your organisation to benefit from 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. The first set of grants for the 2024-2025 year will be decided by the Finance and Audit Committee in June.





## STATISTICS AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Freedom of Information requests received 01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024: Five.

List of complaints received 01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024: None.

# Financial Report 2023-2024

The end of the council's financial year is 31<sup>st</sup> March and shutdown of the accounts will take place in April 2024 to account for all expenditure and income. This report gives details of the income and expenditure to 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 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 2024.

The councillors will make a 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 that they followed the Accounts and Audit Regulations, made proper arrangements for the safeguarding of public money, 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, as a smaller authority, the council has disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year-end if relevant.

Tom Dommett BA (Hons) CiLCA





# SUMMARY OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE to 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Due to the timing of the Town Meeting this set of figures represents 11 months' Income and Expenditure. The final figures will be established following the closedown operation in April 2024. Completed accounts are likely to be available in June 2024 and will be available for the public to inspect.

Expenditure	Budget 2023 - 2024	Actual at 29/02/2024
Administration	£354,936	£344,020
Properties, buildings, and town amenities	£828,398	£742,191
Town development, grants, and projects	£170,852	£656,250
Total gross expenditure	£1,354,186	£1,742,461
Income at 29/02/2024		
Miscellaneous	£200,130	£556,606
Precept	£1,333,548	£1,333,548
Total income	£1,538,678	£1,895,154





The Precept amounted to	<b>£</b> 1,333,548
Long-term Liabilities Public Works Loan Board	232,053
General Reserves	311,586
Earmarked Reserves: Capital Projects Services to be Devolved Outside Services Elections Tennis courts CCTV Climate Change Neighbourhood Plan	314,435 498,075 75,473 30,000 3,579 5,498 10,000 12,000
Sweeper Cyclepaths Training Play Areas Town Crier Youth Provision Website Rugby Club CIL 21/22 CIL 22/23 CIL 23/24 Market Towns Programme Capital Financing Account	3,000 20,000 2,062 48,145 2,261 5,000 863 6,573 2,544 98,279 84,783 32,098 1,339,562





## **COUNCILLORS**

Warminster Town Council is composed of 13 councillors. The town is divided into four wards: Warminster West and Warminster East, both with four councillors, Broadway with three councillors, and North with just two councillors. From the May 2025 local elections, Broadway will have four councillors. The council is led by the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor, who are elected each May at the Annual Meeting.

# Warminster Town Councillors - March 2024

WARMINSTER EAST

## WARMINSTER WEST

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# **WARMINSTER NORTH**

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Above: the Town Crier - Rick Johnstone - in action!





## **COUNCIL MEETINGS AND CONTACT DETAILS**

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 most council meetings, either to listen or to speak in the public session.

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 advertised 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. The public are welcome to call in during those hours.

You can contact the town council at:
Warminster Town Council
Warminster Civic Centre,
Sambourne Road,
Warminster,
BA12 8LB

Tel: 01985 214847 What3Words: ///restores.committee.scripted

Email: admin@warminster-tc.gov.uk facebook.com/warminstertowncouncil

<u>www.warminster-tc.gov.uk</u> instagram.com/warminstertowncouncil

To stay in touch, please sign up for the town council's <u>newsletter</u> on our website at www.warminster-tc.gov.uk.

