



WINCANTON TOWN COUNCIL

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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING REPORTS

25th May 2022

Town Councils Chairman's Review - Cllr Howard Ellard

I am conscious that the last Annual Parish Meeting was held in 2019 when it was one of the last meetings that I chaired during the term of the 2014-2019 Council.

No Annual Parish Meeting was held in 2020 due to COVID restrictions. In 2021, no meeting was held, although I cannot honestly tell you why that was.

It would be usual for this meeting to be held in April, prior to the election, as it was in 2019. On this occasion the meeting is being held in May, after my election to the position of Chair of the Town Council. On behalf of the Town Council, I would like to apologise for the lack of a Parish Meeting for 37 months.

It would also be usual for the Chair to report the activities of the Town Council since the last Annual Parish Meeting. For the vast majority of that 37-month period I was not a Councillor at all, although I was elected in a by-election 12 months ago. Consequently, my knowledge of the precise goings-on within the Council since 2019 is somewhat limited.

You will be aware that the Council has not been a particularly harmonious body in the last few years. Whilst meeting the electorate whilst canvassing recently, it was clear to me that they had their reservations about the Council. I will endeavour to ensure that the Council undertakes its statutory duties as well as required; I will also endeavour to make the Council listen and respond to residents and to ensure that all Councillors are treated equally in any decision-making forum.

During the last 12 months, various events have taken place that have been supported or organised by the Town Council, including:

- A family day at the recreation ground, including the formal opening of the new skate park.
- A Xmas lantern parade and official switching-on of the Xmas tree lights by a visiting dignitary from Lapland, supported by the Silver Band and a local business.
- Planting of trees to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- The distribution of Xmas-themed hampers to the over-70s after the planned Xmas lunch had to be cancelled.

The Town Council has been involved in the planning of the proposed improvements to the town centre under the banner of "Wincanton Regeneration" being taken forward by the District Council. What exactly this produces remains to be seen, however.

One of the consequences of re-organisation of local government to focus on a Unitary Authority (Somerset Council) is the emergence of a pilot scheme called the Local Community Network (LCN); Wincanton is grouped with Bruton and Castle Cary in this regard. The initial meeting was held last week. I will endeavour to ensure that Wincanton is represented as fully as possible and will try to shape this group to reflect the needs of all residents. As far as I can tell, the aim of the LCN is to fill the perceived "democracy deficit" that moving from a two-tier local government system to a unitary authority.

Wincanton Town Council wish to thank our staff for continuing to deliver a high standard of services over the previous year and to all those that have given their time for the benefit of others.

Town Councils Chair of Open Spaces – Cllr Ray Tudgay

No report received

Town Councils Chair of Personnel – Cllr Lizzy Ralph

Despite a tumultuous year within Wincanton Town Council we would like to thank the Council's Administration Officer Harriet for her unwavering hard work and support. Harriet has overseen the Town Council office and continued its operations. Further thanks are given to Steve Lee, the Council's Works, and Maintenance Supervisor who, along with his team Shaun and John, have maintained the towns open spaces to a high standard.

Throughout the year the permanent town council team has been supported by a team of qualified Locum Clerks and RFO's. The recruitment efforts earlier in the year for a new Town Clerk and RFO was unsuccessful. One of the first tasks once the new Council is formed is to revisit the recruitment process and find suitable candidates for the posts. The Locum Clerk team is currently reviewing Personnel policy and procedure and will undertake staff appraisals in due course

Balsam Centre Report – Sue Place

Much has changed in the last year at the Balsam Centre as we have moved from the lockdown situation of Spring 21 to activity that has started to look and feel quite 'normal' in Spring 22 with Painting and Drawing and the Men's Shed leading the way.

The transition from staff working entirely from home to working entirely at the Centre has been gradual and led primarily by our beneficiaries' needs and wishes for face-to-face support and group activity. Our nursery, Conkers has followed government guidance throughout and was only closed for a short period during the initial lockdown.

As a place-based community charity we are committed to using our human and financial resources to improve the quality of life of the people of Wincanton and surrounding areas through a range of community based, participatory, purposeful and life changing activities in a supportive and safe environment and this is what we have done.

The Centre continues to provide activities to support its four main priorities: The Best Start in Life, Social Inclusion, Mental Health and to act as a Community Hub. We meet these priorities through identified need, working with people of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances. The broad outcomes we aim for are: Improved physical and mental health, reduced social isolation and loneliness, a stronger and more resilient community and greater social and community cohesion.

Since the pandemic demand for mental health services and support for young people has increased significantly and we have been very grateful for the Town Council's support for the Hive Youth Club and youth provision in the town. Our services and activities for families have been particularly intense with many babies, young children and parents experiencing adverse effects from successive lockdowns and missed developmental opportunities.

In the last year, following on from its successful collaboration with the NHS and other charities in Open Mental Health, the Balsam Centre began working with Somerset County Council on a new multi-agency project designed to prevent children being taken into care.

After a lengthy application process, the Balsam Centre is delighted to announce a completely new National Lottery Community Fund project for Wincanton, due to start in June. The project will work alongside the town's larger regeneration initiative, to support the regeneration of the health, social, cultural, employment and environmental fabric of the town – we are nothing if not ambitious!

The first phase of the project will involve further consultation with residents and potential users of the project to establish a baseline of information from which to develop a new programme of activities and support.

Please, as always, contact us about this and any other aspects of our charity's work.

Choral Society

I'm afraid neither the Secretary nor I can attend in person but we are very happy to report that our efforts to develop our social media presence are cranking up. Please feel free to relay the following to the Meeting. We are extremely fortunate that a recent new member has serious and current professional expertise in online publicity/public relations/marketing and is willing to use it in a sustained and active way for the Choral Society's benefit. Results for our Facebook page are already promising but we intend making our first paid 'boost' in the next few days to reach up to 1500 potential participants to our 'Come and Sing Day'. We would be very happy to give more detail at a future Town Council meeting, when there is more to report.

Our recent concert at the Parish Church was a great success, and most importantly we gave a good account of ourselves in our singing, which is the most important thing in sustaining our numbers

Wincanton Recreational Trust – Chairman Howard Ellard

I am writing on behalf of the Wincanton Recreational Trust who own and manage the activities at the Sports Ground.

Thank you for the grant received during the financial year 2021/22. I can confirm that the monies received were used to part fund the following items:

- replacement commercial windows and doors to the side entrance of the pavilion building (glass cracked and dangerous in the door)
- replacement CCTV cameras
- upgrades to the security access fob system
- addition of a CCTV camera (number plate recognition) to help report those acting inappropriately
- the purchase of an additional ride on mower.

Obviously, the grant received did not cover any of these items entirely, but its receipt was used against all these items to a degree. The total expenditure above amounts to in excess of £30k.