



Wincanton
Town Council



WINCANTON TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024



Wincanton
Town Council

THE MAYORS REPORT

Cllr Howard Ellard

At the Annual Town Council meeting in May 2023 I was re-elected as Mayor and it has been my privilege to Chair the Town Council over the past year supported by my fellow Councillors and Deputy Mayor. It is heartening that discord within the Council has dispersed and we look forward to a proactive and positive future. Following a few Cllr resignations throughout the year the Council has successfully co-opted new Cllrs and currently has a full 15 members.

Wincanton Town Council are lucky to have a truly amazing team of staff led by the Town Clerk. The team works tirelessly to carry out the requirements of the Town Council for the community. At the time of writing this report the Council is currently fully staffed having recently welcomed a new Administration Officer. After dealing with a large backlog of tasks officers are now commencing work on new projects to move the Town Council forward. The Works and Maintenance team did a fantastic job throughout the year in maintaining our open spaces in an excellent condition, in addition, they continued to undertake tasks above and beyond their statutory remit in a successful effort to keep the town looking as good as possible. The office-based staff continuously strive to improve administration functions and improve the governance and transparency of the Council. The RFO/Deputy Clerk ensured the Council again had a successful audit and Annual Governance and Accountability review. I applaud their abilities to deal with work pressures so successfully in a small team with limited funds.

The Council has achieved many accomplishments this year which will be detailed in the Town Clerk's report so to avoid repetition I will focus on the financial pressures that local government currently finds itself and the dire straits of Somerset Council, we certainly live in turbulent times. It seems likely that over the next few months some services will be devolved from Somerset Council to the Town Council which will put increasing pressure on Wincanton Town Council's budgets and workloads. Inevitably there will be a sense in the community that they are being asked to pay twice over for these devolved services. Sadly, as Somerset Council will be unable to perform them, it is probably the only way in which these services will be undertaken.

During the Town Council's 2024/2025 budget setting discussions it became apparent that an increase in precept was required to meet its agreed budget of £479,805 which includes £20,000 for devolved services from Somerset Council. The result is a precept request of £442,352, an increase in the Band D equivalent (the average householder) of £12.67 for the year, an additional monthly cost of just over £1.05. A Budget and Precept Report has been prepared by our Deputy Clerk/RFO with further information.

I am always happy to meet with members of the public to address their concerns and contact can be made via the Town Council office, which is open Monday to Thursday, 9am to 1pm. Councillor contact details can also be found on the Town Council website

<https://wincantontowncouncil.gov.uk/>

I conclude by repeating my thanks to all the Council's staff for their hard work and determination during the year and my Councillor colleagues for their support and volunteering their time for the good of the community.

TOWN COUNCIL/CLERK REPORT

Emma Curtis

I am immensely proud of the progress Council staff have made over the last twelve months. Following a period of substantial change and complex issues the newly established team have overcome difficulties, additional workloads and responsibilities to work hard for the community of Wincanton and will continue to do so into the coming months while facing increased burden on the Council's budget and capacities.

We face financial uncertainties affording local government at all tiers, this will likely include devolution of assets and services from Somerset Council. As Town Clerk I will navigate the Council and staff through these stormy seas, I am determined to do so with a sense of pride and positivity knowing I am supported by a great team of staff and Councillors. Together we will continue to work collaboratively for the good of Wincanton society.

Town Council Accomplishments in 2023/24

During the past year the Town Council has effectively completed the following projects, works and events – list not exhaustive:

- King Charles III Coronation event
- Cale Park Events including Family Fun Days and Inflatable sessions
- Review of and implementation of new regulations, procedures and policies
- Commencement of the Community Plan/Review
- Community Awards
- Successful grant application of £5,000 from the Police Community Trust to purchase a Speed Indicator Device
- Allocated £3,000 for Highways safety improvements including signage and lineage
- Christmas Light Switch On and Over 70's Christmas Lunch events
- Introduction of new Easter event
- Memorial Headstone Safety Testing by SIAM trained staff
- Attendance at LCN meetings and implementation of Youth Contract
- Finalisation of new Town Centre map and footpaths
- Installation of Bleed Kits
- Successful Internal and External Audits and Annual Governance and Accountability Return
- Extended hedge cutting
- Continuity of the Community Fridge Scheme
- Cemetery Pathway Resurfacing
- Cale Park Car Park Resurfacing
- Trialled electric vehicles for the Grounds and Maintenance Team
- Clearance of ivy and other growth from the churchyard wall

Grants Awarded in 2023/24

The Town Council awarded grants to the following organisations:

- Wincanton Tennis Club
- Wincanton District Museum
- Home Start Blackmore Vale
- The Balsam Centre
- MHA Somerset

- Wincanton Choral Society
- Wincanton Football Club
- Wincanton Recreational Trust
- The Growing Space

Looking into 2024/25 and Beyond

The Council along with all other tiers of local government within Somerset is entering uncharted territory. It is difficult to envisage how the next few years will pan out, but highly likely that services and assets will be devolved to Wincanton Town Council.

Work has commenced work on a preliminary Strategic Plan with the view to producing a final plan upon completion of the Community Review. The Community Review will provide much needed up to date information on the needs and wants of the Wincanton community which will be fed into the Strategic Plan to provide objectives and financial priorities for the coming years.

Other projects in the pipeline include:

- Improved communications via an email newsletter
- Expenditure of CIL funds to improve community infrastructure
- Commemoration events for 80th anniversary of Old Faithful and D-Day
- Christmas Light Switch On event
- Over 70's Christmas Lunch
- Lease of an electric vehicle for the Works and Maintenance Team
- CCTV installation for Cale Park
- Installation of a new flagpole at the Market Place
- Commencement of the LCN Youth contract
- Cleaning and maintenance of the War Memorial

The Town Council always welcomes ideas and contributions from members of the community. The Town Clerk can be contacted on townclerk@wincantontowncouncil.gov.uk or by calling 01963 31693. The Town Council office is open Monday to Thursday 9am to 1pm. Further information on all Wincanton Town Council business can be found on our website <https://wincantontowncouncil.gov.uk/>

Budget and Precept setting for 2024/25 can be found in Appendix 1.

Adopted by Wincanton Town Council on Monday 25th March 2024.