



Wincanton
Town Council



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Appendix 1

WINCANTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING REPORTS

20th MAY 2024

TOWN COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

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. Discord within the Council has eased, 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. There is currently a vacancy which will likely be filled through the co-option process. If any residents would like to apply, please get in touch with the Town Clerk.

Wincanton Town Council are lucky to have a great team of staff led by the Town Clerk. The team works tirelessly to carry out the requirements of the Town Council for the community. The Council is currently fully staffed having welcomed a new Administration Officer in January. 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 while under financial and local government pressures. 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. Indeed, we have already taken over the funding for the cleaning and maintenance of the Memorial Hall toilets. 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 is available on the Council's website or by emailing the office. An Annual Report has also been prepared by the Town Clerk and copies are available here this evening.

Events and Projects during the past year

During the past year the Town Council has effectively completed the following projects, 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

In addition, 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. Please look out for the survey which will be live within the next couple of months.

Other projects in the pipeline include:

- Improved communications via an email newsletter
- Expenditure of CIL funds to improve community infrastructure
- Commemoration event for 80th anniversary of Old Faithful
- 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

Final Remarks

Personally, I would like to thank all the Council's staff for their hard work and determination during the year and my Councillor colleagues for their voluntary support, particularly to the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Dawn Old.

WINCANTON AND DISTRICT GARDENERS' ASSOCIATION

Wincanton and District Gardeners Association welcomes both town residents and those from the surrounding area. We have several monthly meetings with diverse talks, visits to gardens and our Annual Show. This hosts a wonderful variety of entries, showing a wide range of interests and skills. During the 2023 show Sara Beeny filmed part of a judging session for a future programme.

Members work together to plant nineteen assorted containers around the town, twice a year. It is becoming increasingly difficult to plant the two square containers in Carrington Way as the tree roots fill more and more of the space.

Without the generosity of Totally Floored in allowing us to use their water supply, we would be unable to keep the Carrington area containers alive. The Library staff also top up the four planters by the Library wall. Other volunteers keep the rest of the containers in good shape, using their own water.

Recently the Council have replaced the wood surround to one planter as the broken pieces were a public safety issue. Another planter was also replaced as it was on the point of collapse.

As a small group we would be unable to continue plantings without the generous funds we receive from the Council, including a small extra amount to help with the rising costs. We very much appreciated this as we are aware of how difficult things are for everyone.

We are always heartened by the people who stop to thank us for doing the flowers. For many, who can no longer garden, the planters give great pleasure and brighten up the town.

We would like to thank Steve Lee for collecting our plan orders from Otters, thus saving delivery charges.

This year, as part of Otters 60th Celebrations, they have given a donation towards our Summer Planting. This has meant some extra plants for the summer, plus stretching the money for the Autumn Planting.

YOUTH CONNECT SOUTH WEST

Rob Rumming-Pain explained that Youth Connect South West (YCSW) would be delivering youth work in Wincanton as part of a Local Community Network (LCN) contract with other Town Councils. The project is being funded by Wincanton Town Council on a three-year term. Currently YCSW are going through a mapping process to decide upon youth delivery within the town. YCSW are in working in collaboration with local police to provide a data sharing agreement. Youth delivery work will take place on Thursdays in Cale Park during the summer months and a location will be found for indoor activities during winter months.

WINCANTON NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

PCSO Amanda Ware introduced herself as the new PCSO Supervisor for Wincanton and confirmed that a meeting had taken place with the Town Council to ensure closer working between the two bodies. Amanda confirmed they would be working closely with Youth Connect South West including introducing a data sharing agreement so names can be shared by the two agencies to assist with targeted work. Following recent crime within Wincanton Amanda confirmed that some ASB and crime interventions had been served and that the new Police and Crime Commissioner was keen to move forward in improving community work and neighbourhood policing. Information was provided on how best to contact the local team.

SOUTH SOMERSET COMMUNITY ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT

Ian Broad from the CAT Bus confirmed that the previous year had been the busiest the CAT Bus had ever had and that it would be celebrating its 21st birthday this year. Passenger numbers have risen by 40% since January 2023 and there are around 900 active members who use the five wheelchair accessible buses. It is hoped that two new buses will be purchased in the coming months. Ian stated that servicing and maintenance costs had increased, and that maintenance was now undertaken in Bruton with the buses being parked at Wincanton Racecourse overnight. A breakdown of funds was provided along with information about day trips and passenger and driver relations. Information about the social car service was provided.

THE GROWING SPACE

Nick Truman from The Growing Space confirmed that the scheme was increasing rapidly and was being used by various groups of people. Nick stated that the wildlife garden was nearing completion along the pond which was funded by a Town Council grant along with hosting some young people's sessions. Nick reported it was his intention to try and start increasing the usage of the garden, pond and seating areas around the Balsam Centre and would welcome ideas on how to promote use of the gardens more.

BLACKMORE VALE READ EASY

Richard Porter provided information on the Read Easy scheme and how it benefits adults, including some in Wincanton, from the ages of 18 to 89 learn to read. Richard provided statistics on adults who are unable to read and reasons for it and concluded by stating that they required an administrator for the Wincanton area.

WINCANTON RECREATIONAL TRUST

Cllr Ellard spoke as Treasurer to Wincanton Recreational Trust confirming that the trust had performed significantly better over the previous year and income now exceeds outgoings providing a small surplus, but not enough to refurbish the 20-year-old building. Cllr Ellard reported that invoicing procedures had improved, with no cash being taken and there has been an increase in users along with a forest school located on the premises. The Town Council were thanked for previous year's grants.