



## Wimborne Minster Town Council

### Annual Report May 2022 to April 2023

Summary of the reports presented to the Annual Wimborne Minster Town Council Assembly at Allendale House in Wimborne Minster on 18 April 2023.

#### **Town Mayors Report – Councillor Carol Butter**

I will focus on a summary of the wider Council and Mayoral activities for the current Civic year. Firstly, to start off with some interesting figures relating to our overall activities. The Council and Officers have in addition to the day-to-day activities held fifty Council meetings in the year, including the Joint Management Cemetery Committee, with a total of three hundred resolutions passed which took 4160 minutes or seventy hours.



Sadly, we lost two Councillors during the year however following resulting elections we are now back up to our full complement of fourteen.

At the beginning of the Civic year, we were below staff complement. Our first task was to find a new Town Clerk and Deputy. Louise Harrison was appointed as the Town Clerk in June and Kevin Brooks has most recently been appointed her Deputy.

Following a review of our procedures and processes, the Town Clerk has recommended a significant number of new guidelines and a revised Council structure. It was the role of the Personnel, Policy and Strategy Committee to vet the changes prior to adoption by the Full Council. This was a labour intensive and time-consuming task and I thank my fellow Councillors for their perseverance and co-operation during times of uncertainty and change. The final piece of the jig saw is to appoint a Community and Events Liaison Officer and I am hoping we can announce an appointment shortly.

As you will appreciate, much of my focus has therefore had to be on the significant changes within the Town Council and I am thankful for the support of my Deputy Councillor Diann March who has been a stalwart in providing a backup to me. Between us we will have attended more than seventy civic events on behalf of the Town Council and our residents.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> June we celebrated the Queens Platinum Jubilee starting with a Beacon Lighting event with a huge crowd processing from the Town Centre to Wimborne Cemetery where we lit the beacon. What an amazing turnout we had which was followed by The Queens Big Jubilee Lunch on the Sunday. The town was buzzing with laughter and excitement. Our celebrations quickly turned to nationwide mourning following the sad passing of our late Sovereign Queen Elizabeth II on the 8<sup>th</sup> September. I was humbled to represent the town during our period of mourning. On the 16<sup>th</sup> September I was proud to read the proclamation of King Charles III on the

Minster Green; the same proclamation that was delivered throughout the United Kingdom.

(Above image - King's Coronation Proclamation on the Minster Green, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022)

There are so many other highlights this year. To mention but a very few:



- Representing the town by attending and laying of wreaths at the Falkland's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service and at the Remembrance Day Parade in November.
- Having a cup of tea and a mince pie with the residents of Street's Meadow and their families on Christmas morning, which was very special.
- The wonderful New Years Eve celebrations in the Square, there is nothing quite like it. Wimborne Minster knows how to party!
- In November we held the "Volunteer of the Year" award at the Christmas Lights switch on which proved to be very popular.
- My Civic Service was held early this year on the 12<sup>th</sup> March, an amazing and heart-warming event supported by many dignitaries from around Dorset many of whom want to come back to visit us. They will be made most welcome.
- The Town Council ran a Volunteer's Information Day in the town on the Bank Holiday Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May to support the nationwide initiative by their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

In summary, it's been a challenging but productive year for the Council and we now have sound foundations to build upon as we move forward towards the new civic year. A reminder that in May 2024 we will have full council elections and due to a change in our boundary. This will mean we will have two more councillors bringing our compliment up to sixteen. Hopefully, residents will be encouraged to stand for Council, please feel free to contact the Town Clerk for more information.

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### **Planning and Environment Report - Councillor Simon Wheeler**

As the Chairman of the Planning and Environment Committee, I am pleased to report on an active and productive year. Our committee has reviewed and commented on numerous planning applications to ensure the growth and vibrancy of our town while balancing the needs of our residents.



We have strived to ensure that all residents feel listened to and included in our decision-making process. We have worked hard to forge better engagement with Dorset Council and will continue to strengthen this relationship to give our town a real voice, with due consideration given to our residents when planning applications are made.

We have acted for the safety and health of our roads, including asking for crossings, bollards, signage, and roadway openings when residents raise concerns. We remain deeply concerned about the impact of increased residential housing with a seemingly reduced growth of infrastructure, and we will continue to raise this with Dorset Council. On the environmental front, we have been working closely with Wimborne environment committees to strengthen our position on this subject. We have recently secured a position for a water fountain within the town centre which if successful with funding, will be a big step in reducing single-use plastics in our town. However, we recognise that more needs to be done, and we are committed to doing so.

In summary, this year has been active and progressive - despite some frustrations with the Dorset Council relationship. We are confident that we can make inroads to improve this relationship in the coming year and continue to ensure that Wimborne Minster is a great place to live and visit.

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### **Recreation and Leisure Report – Cllr Shane Bartlett**

As the Chairman of the Recreation and Leisure Committee, I can report that the Recreation and Leisure Committee has reviewed and acted on the towns CCTV improvements, where new and updated cameras are to replace the Town Square and Rowlands Hill cameras thus providing enhanced coverage for the Police in their duties. Additionally, the work continues to recruit additional volunteers to fill the requirement for CCTV operators in the town. The recent removal of the fencing around the old grass tennis courts at Redcotts Recreation ground has been completed and a decision on the future of the space is to be decided.



Work continues around the recreation ground in sowing and planting of wildflower seeds and plants by our industrious grounds team.

The town's skate park continues to be well received and is highly regarded amongst the residents of Wimborne Minster and beyond.



The Committee was also responsible for delivering the Green Canopy tree trail in commemoration for Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Twelve trees were planted around the town to celebrate this event - the image opposite shows the planting of a 'Persian Ironwood' at Leigh Park Community Centre on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023 by the Town Mayor Cllr Carol Butter and Wimborne Food Bank Manager Sharon Keenan, accompanied by the Town Crier Chris Brown, volunteers from Wimborne Foodbank

and Cllr Bill Richmond who was responsible for the Green Canopy tree tail project.

Looking forward, plans are afoot to move Wimborne Rugby Football Club to a new location east of the town with better facilities which will be a welcome addition to the town's infrastructure.

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### **Resources Report – Cllr Carole Chedgy**

As the Chairman for the Resources Committee I can report that the Committee has continued to be responsible for receiving the monthly accounts, administering the budget, considering audit reports, considering grant applications, and dealing with land and leases.



Working backwards we had kept the average band D council tax rise in previous years to 3.00%, 0.00%, and 3.00%. For this year commencing April the average rise is 4.27%. This is largely down to inflation and the cost of living rises we are all too familiar with. We do continue to look at ways to generate income in addition to the precept.

We have reviewed many core financial procedures, including our Financial Regulations. We have outsourced the pay roll. We are also decided to invest in a new accounts package. This is suitable for Councils of our size and income and provides better information, and assistance with long term financial planning. Such a package was also recommended by our auditor.

The annual Grant awards for 2022/2023 totalled £19,079 from a budget of £29,670. Due to increasing costs, and not wishing to increase the precept any further, we were subject to spending constraints when setting the budget. This is also reflected in the grants budget which for 2023/2024 is £20,000.

The grant process has been reviewed in readiness for the new grant year which commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April and is available on our website digitally, and in the office. We are continuing to chase Dorset Council about the land transfers agreed with the previous East Dorset District Council. Whatever the response, and whenever we receive it, any proposed transfers will be reviewed under our current financial regulations.

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