

ANNUAL REPORT 2010–2011



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The last municipal year has been one of the most challenging for Councillors and we have debated some difficult decisions regarding the Council's future operations, but overall it has still given me the opportunity to meet so many new people through the 109 events I have attended. Warminster is full of volunteers giving freely of their time and service to help a huge amount of people, whether it is through charity work, educational activities, adult and children's groups, advice and support services or support in cleaning our town. Nothing is ever perfect, but many people quietly support all sorts of organisations with their time and skills that go unnoticed but help to keep the town running on a day-to-day basis. I am thankful and grateful for all of those people who have welcomed me into their groups, organisations, events or services in the last twelve months, and it has been a privilege to represent Warminster Town. As a Council we are delighted that we can continue to support many activities with grants which are decided in July each year. If you are a group that has not benefited for funding from us then please come and talk to us.

In this report we take a look back at our activities over the last twelve months and what we have achieved.

Assembly Rooms

At the start of my Mayoral year, the results of a Parish Poll outlined that there was disagreement with the suggestion that the Council should move its offices to a refurbished Assembly Rooms. However, there was also a need to consider moves towards localism which would mean that as a Town Council we would be required to consider taking on additional services from Wiltshire Council in the future and also provide new services to our residents. A new civic centre for the benefit of the town and surrounding community area would be a great asset, and the members felt that the Assembly Rooms facility should not be removed. The Council carried out its own consultation exercise which outlined the facts about the plans and actual costs. This resulted in more positive comments and a desire that residents wished to see a facility of this kind continue for future generations. The proposed plan is to refurbish the building to bring it up to date in all the elements of Health & Safety and lowest possible carbon footprint. Although 40 years old, the building is still structurally sound but built to standards that are no longer used. The Council looks forward to providing a civic centre from the end of October for many diverse groups and individuals to use.

As we finish this municipal year, the contract has been signed and work will begin very shortly. Wiltshire Council has contributed to the refurbishment project and has asked us to provide a Personal Care Room which will be one of only three in

the county, and will provide those people with restricted movement and disabilities with a place for supported care whilst using washing or changing facilities in a clean and safe environment. This new care room will conform to the 'Changing Places' specification. The Council hopes that this will provide a facility that enables individuals to benefit from going out in the town knowing that services are available in an easily accessible venue.

The cost of the refurbishment will come from a loan that has been taken up through the Public Works Loan Board and the repayments have already been incorporated into the budget. A copy of the Business Plan adopted by members is available on request, or can be downloaded from our website.

Warminster Town Plan

Warminster Town Plan is in its final stages, although completion has been delayed due to potential changes in the Government's Localism Bill. Changes to the planning system might have meant radical changes to the plan, however it has been established that this will not be the case. Look out for the final consultation event.

Town Development

The Town Development Committee has continued to look at various projects suggested by the public.

The Fore Street Working Group has concentrated on flooding issues and has continued to work closely with partners from Wessex Water, Wiltshire Council's Highways & Drainage departments and the Environment Agency to find ways to support the areas at risk within the town. This group has produced and tested a Flood Plan for the town, highlighting the vulnerable areas and the people at risk. Three volunteer Flood Wardens now assist the Town Council in communicating the self-help plans to residents and putting together a suitable support network when any type of flooding occurs, and the Council is grateful to them for giving so much of their time to volunteer for this role. Work on the Flood Plan culminated in March 2011 in a desktop exercise held at Dewey House, as part of the Environment Agency's 'Exercise Watermark', which put the plan into practice to establish whether it would work. The event was a great success, but it did highlight the need for Deputy Flood Wardens. If you would be interested in volunteering for this role, please contact us at Dewey House.

Bus shelter requests have become more frequent in the last twelve months; a new one has been fitted at West Parade and a further three requests are being considered at Imber Road and St Andrews Road.

A mini roundabout was considered and debated for Copheap Lane, but after discussion with Wiltshire Council through the Community Area Board the cost of installing it was found to be prohibitive and the benefits were felt to be too small.

The outcome of the Grit Bin review meant that although there were many requests for new bins it was not possible to satisfy all of those requests. All relevant sites were considered on a priority basis and four extra bins provided.

New trees were planted at Boreham Road, Deverill Road and Victoria Road as part of a project to improve the five entrances into the town. Three trees were removed from pavements in Boreham Road and Church Street which were hampering pedestrian access. With additional signage provided at Bath & Westbury Road, the Town Development Committee have now completed this project but is working on the maintenance of the areas in questions to provide a pleasant welcome for visitors and residents into the town.

Copheap Memorial has not been clearly identified to visitors and pedestrian signage was installed during last summer. This was completed with an information board at the entrance to the path which documents the purchase of the site and how it was built.

The search for additional allotments has taken place over the last two years, and by summer last year two possible sites were identified. The existing allotments have a three-year waiting list and, with the resurgence of 'grow your own', local residents are keen to have plots. There is a

large expanse of land adjacent to the existing allotments at Bradley Road, which were originally part of the allotments. This was listed as a Town Green some years ago and therefore it cannot be used. However, the Armed Forces were approached and a section of land at Battlesbury Barracks was identified. After closer inspection, access to the site for cars and water would need to be provided and the cost was prohibitive. The second site was



Yeates Field in Boreham Road. This is owned by the National Trust and discussions took place with them. If any conversion was agreed the NT would want to see a community garden approach and Wiltshire Highways would require access into the site for cars. Again, water access for users would be required. The cost of such a scheme would be expensive but considerations and designs are being considered for future discussion. At this time there are still no firm plans in place for the provision of any additional allotments. St John's School invited the

Council in to discuss the proposals with the students and they are currently carrying out their own consultation exercise on people's views. If anyone has any suitable land for this type of use, then the Council would love to hear from you.

Funds were obtained through the Playbuilder Scheme to provide new play equipment at Queensway. Consultation has just been completed and it is expected to build the play area during 2011.

A new cycle route is to be made available in Fairfield Road as part of enhancements in connection with the new Waitrose development. Local cyclists had also put together a consultation in the library for suggested routes in the town to assist access to various parts of the town without the need to use major roads. One identified area was the link between Portway Lane and Newopaul Way. With Dents moving their operations to the site, this cycle/footpath development would be a great benefit to the local workforce. On investigation by the Town Council it was found that this area should have been developed as part of the original planning consent but since this was not implemented 30 years ago, Wiltshire Council felt that it could not be enforced now. We are trying to ascertain a way forward to mark out this route and are currently in negotiation with the local Area Board.

Two reports were published in relation to Taking Action on School Journeys from Sambourne School and St George's School. The Town Development Committee was pleased to see the recommendations which included a future crossing at Sambourne School. The Town Council has offered financial support towards this part of the plan and it is hoped that the project can go ahead when budgets allow at Wiltshire Council.

The Town Council has been involved in projects with Wiltshire Council using the outstanding funds available through developers making contributions under Section 106 agreements. These contributions have enabled the Town Clerk to negotiate funding for projects at Smallbrook Meadows in conjunction with Wiltshire Wildlife which will enhance the pedestrian access to ensure ease of transfer for wheelchair users and enable a route into the reserve from the town park, and will include carrying out ditch enhancement on wet meadows to improve grazing for cattle.

Another project involves work at the Fore Street junction to increase the size and depth of the underground pipework, which should improve drainage and reduce the prospect of flooding.

Planning

The Planning Committee continues to be very busy, meeting every three weeks to discuss plans put forward for development within the town. As always there are some controversial plans that bring representation to meetings. The new housing estate at Victoria Fields has caused much debate but 190 houses have nearly been completed. There have been issues surrounding the new balancing pond, which is needed to support the flood relief sites around the town, boundary issues following the removal of hedging and the demolition of an old farmhouse at the entrance to the estate. Members fought hard and put forward the Committee's objections when the application to replace the farmhouse with modern units went to appeal, but it failed. The current situation is that the house has been put up for sale so maybe it will be saved yet.

Battlesbury Barracks has continued its planned refurbishment and new buildings on site and part of this was to build a new community centre. This has transformed the facilities available to Service families and includes a new nursery school. Members of the Council were invited to the opening of the site and it was a pleasure to see better facilities provided for the serving personnel.

Planning permission was also granted for a new Waitrose Supermarket on the Dents Site. The move will take place this year and we should see the new supermarket open in October 2011.

A biogas plant is to operate from the old farm site at Deverill Road. Planning permission was granted for this, despite a high level of concern having been expressed by those residents living in the surrounding estate.

Beeline Coaches, currently based at Bishopstrow, would like to expand their operations but cannot do this from their current site. They approached the Planning Committee with their thoughts on a potential move and asked for opinions. It is thought that additional employment opportunities would be available as a result of any move. This was supported in principle by the members who look forward to an official planning application in the near future.

Crime Prevention

A designated Public Place Order has been put in place throughout the town and signage denotes the area it covers. This gives police the additional powers to withhold alcohol where the threat of antisocial behaviour is evident.

CCTV continues to prove a valuable asset to the local constabulary. The additional cameras fitted in the Mall by the owners Stockland and given to the Town Council have proved invaluable since installation in apprehending suspects in shoplifting expeditions. The new camera at Portway also added increased visibility to the area which gave the CCTV operators a continuity of tracking when footage has been requested by the police. Many local people have requested personal footage of incidents they have been involved in and the protocols surrounding the release of images is strictly monitored to protect all parties. No footage is allowed to be viewed unless specifically requested by a senior officer of the police force when it has been determined by them that a criminal act may have taken place. A full report will be produced in CCTV's own annual report. The Council is extremely grateful for those local residents who give their time freely to monitor the control room on a voluntary basis. This support enables the Council to provide an excellent service to the police and their operations.

Car Parking

Car parking charges continued to be one of the biggest discussion points during the year as Wiltshire Council undertook a consultation exercise on the uniformity of charges across the county. By April 2011, there would no longer be an opportunity to provide the free parking spaces that Warminster Town Council had always provided, and a new scheme was debated. A new parking partnership has been established which will enable local traders to refund the first hour of parking charges and claim that cost directly from the Town Council. It is hoped that this will be up and running by June 2011, and there are already 21 local businesses signed up to the scheme.



Events

St George's Day in 2010 saw a fantastic march through the Market Place and High Street which was the start of the town recognising and celebrating this event on a regular basis. Unfortunately it will not be possible to arrange a military march-through in 2011, due to other commitments of the serving forces, but local businesses will once again be flying their flags on St George's Day and a shop window competition will take place.



Planning for events in 2012 is starting to be considered by various committees and groups. A Council working group has been set up to try and co-ordinate a 'What's on?' type of list so that we can publicise all of the different plans and encourage residents to get involved. Plans started are the bi-annual Arts Festival, Town Criers competition, Warminster in Bloom, Warminster Wobble, as well as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics.

Warminster in Bloom will concentrate their entrance into the National Competition on community involvement and encourage planting and a cleaner environment. The group would like to strengthen pride in the town as well as showing people that Warminster is a great place in which to live, work and run a business. If you are interested in getting involved, please let us know.



The council has supported Warminster Community Radio in their bid to have a full-time licence, and it is hoped that this will come to fruition before the end of 2011.



The Mayor greets Cpl Andy Reed of 3rd Yorkshire Regiment at the Warminster stage of his 'Numbumrun'.

Communications

The Communications Committee has worked on progression with the website and most of the original plans for this have been implemented. The Information Centre has not yet delivered its pages so there are gaps including a suitable events diary, map and places to visit. Work is ongoing in relation to the commercial pages.

The newsletter, issued three times per year, is a requirement of the Quality Status scheme and the Council has changed its printers and cut down the pages which has had an overall effect of reducing the budget spend by half.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Town Clerk, Heather Abernethie, and her staff at Dewey House, CCTV and the Assembly Rooms for the support received during my term of office. It has been a delight to represent the Town at so many varied functions and meet new people and I wish my successor good luck for next year. I also thank my fellow Councillors for the time and work put in to this voluntary role which is often difficult when certain decisions are debated.



Councillor Sue Fraser
Mayor of Warminster
31st March 2011

FINANCIAL REPORT 2010/2011

On 13th August 2010, Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG), announced plans to disband the Audit Commission. The intention is to have new arrangements in place for auditing England's local public bodies by 2012/13, although it is expected that normal arrangements will apply for this financial year.

The end of the Council's financial year is 31st March, and shutdown of the accounts will take place on 6th May 2011 to account for all expenditure and income. This report gives details of the income and expenditure to 31st March 2011, with a breakdown of our current situation. Once the accounts are completed some of these figures will have changed. The full audited accounts are available to the public, and this is advertised on completion of the process.

Members of the Council acknowledge that they are responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including checking that the accounting statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit regulations and proper practice. Warminster Town Council has made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge. The Town Council has only carried out the activities that it has the legal power to undertake, and has conformed to codes of practice and standards so doing.

I have given all interested persons the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about the Council's accounts, considered the financial and other risks the Council faces in its business and dealt with them properly, and disclosed everything I should have about Council business during the year, including events taking place after the year-end, if relevant.

The Council's activities are audited on an internal basis, with an auditor appointed by the Council, and externally. The Council will take appropriate action in response to matters brought to its attention by the auditors but there have been none raised. Last year's audit was signed off and showed that Warminster Town Council kept appropriate books of accounts throughout the year. The financial regulations have been met, payments supported by invoices and expenditure approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

The Council assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these. This includes internal controls and additional insurance cover where appropriate. A Health and Safety policy is in place and reviewed each year in May.

The annual precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process, progress against the budget was regularly monitored and reserves were appropriate to the projects in hand.

Expected income was fully received, based on correct process, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts; expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.

Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with Council approval and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied. Asset and Investments registers were completed accurately and properly maintained. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations are carried out. The Council runs an internal audit of its own which is carried out during the financial year by appointed members of the Finance and Assets Committee with a final executive check which this year will be undertaken by the Chair of the Finance and Assets Committee.

Heather Abernethie
Town Clerk & RFO
31st March 2011

**SUMMARY OF INCOME & EXPENDITURE
TO 31st MARCH 2011**

	Actual YTD £	Annual budget £
General Administration		
Expenditure	151,116	163,135
Income	411,432	409,779
Grants & Projects		
Expenditure	71,422	78,000
Income	0	0
Leisure and Tourism		
Expenditure	27,081	28,760
Cemetery/Churchyards		
Expenditure	16,733	14,895
Income	6,541	1,265
Capital Expenditure		
Expenditure	501,335	439,075
Income	551,846	400,000
Civic and Democratic		
Expenditure	8,219	13,000
Income	250	
Finance Expenditure	775,946	736,865
Income	970,069	811,044
Net Expenditure over Income	– 194,124	–74,179

The Precept amounted to £447,279

Total Current Assets amount to	930,723
Creditors	1,728
Net Current Assets	928,995

Represented by:

Current Year Fund	79,582
General Reserve	235,442

Earmarked Reserves:

Capital Projects	64,057
Finance & Resources	8,310
Town Development	13,150
CCTV	13,135
Town Plan	15,319
Assembly Rooms Refurbishment	500,000

Warminster Town Council is made up of 12 Councillors. The town is divided into two wards, Warminster West and Warminster East, and six members represent each ward. The Council is led by the Mayor, Councillor Sue Fraser, and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Pip Ridout.

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Town Council Meetings and Committee Meetings are held at Dewey House and are open to the public.

The public are welcome to attend the majority of Council meetings, either to listen or to speak in the public session.

Dates and times of meetings and agendas are listed on our website, www.warminster.uk.com, and are also posted on the notice board at Dewey House.

Meetings are also listed in the *Warminster Journal*.

Minutes of Council Meetings can also be found on our website, or requested from Dewey House.

Dewey House is open Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm and the public are welcome to call in during those hours.

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