

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL



THE 17th ANNUAL REPORT 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017

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OPENING REMARKS BY THE LEADER OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AND REPORT OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE 2016/2017

It has been a pleasure to lead Weston Town Council and I take this opportunity to thank all my councillor colleagues, officers and staff for their contribution in making this year a success.

The Town Council has supported the on-going regeneration of the town centre and there is a new optimism in our town as the new Dolphin Square leisure development is rising from the ground; Weston College is moving towards the opening of the University Centre, and the Italian Gardens improvements are underway. As well as supporting the regeneration strategy for the town centre, we are directly contributing with the £1.5 million HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) supported project with Weston Museum which continues on schedule. Following a successful season in 2016 the Visitor Centre is reopening at Easter; Love Weston goes from strength to strength and work to further improve the Blakehay Theatre is near completion. Best of all we have achieved all this whilst holding the Town Council's share of Council Tax to a standstill for the coming year.

REPORT OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 2016/17

LOVE WESTON WEBSITE AND VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

As part of the Town Council's on-going strategy for servicing the tourist sector and supporting the local economy by increasing visitor numbers to the town, further resources were allocated to tourism by opening a seasonal Visitor Information Centre (VIC) following the closure of the Winter Gardens.

The Town Council's destination marketing and website, under the branding of Love Weston, was further enhanced by a valuable 'in-resort' facility delivering key, front-line visitor information to the local and wider community. New staff were engaged in readiness for the official opening by the Town Mayor and Chairman of North Somerset Council on the 6th June 2016 at newly refurbished premises within the Tropicana building on the seafront. The VIC remained open throughout the summer of 2016 receiving almost 25,000 visitors in 14 weeks and delivering both a professional service and growing the Love Weston initiative.

During the winter months the tourism team have focussed on business engagement with a wide diversity of local accommodation, restaurant, shopping and entertainment services, and implemented a second search engine optimisation (SEO) campaign to further increase site content and website traffic.

Town Council investment and high commitment levels have seen the Love Weston website profile rise to No.1 on Google rankings with a 20.8% increase in organic sessions. August 2016 saw a 72% increase in traffic to the site over August 2015 (when Dismaland was in situ). Due to the importance that event searches have on website traffic, our website offers an event submission facility, enabling event organisers to upload and promote their events well ahead of time.

Targeted advertising and marketing campaigns are driven by website statistics and demographics provided by Google Analytics as well as data analysis from brochure requests. In 2016-2017 our seasonal campaigns included Birmingham International Airport; Gloucester Quays and Merry Hill shopping centres capturing peak Easter and Christmas/New Year shoppers at major retail centres where footfall is high; sports team sponsorships with Weston Rugby and Football Clubs and Uphill Castle Cricket Club; New Year advertising with Sedgemoor Radio targeting the Bridgwater area where website hits are rising; key tourism events including Weston Air Show, Bristol Balloon Fiesta, Royal Horticultural and Three Counties regional shows and the Best of Britain and Ireland Exhibition at the NEC (National Exhibition Centre) in March 2017.

The Love Weston accommodation accreditation scheme continues to promote quality in tourism and is affiliated to Visit England. Love Weston membership has increased with a mix of accommodation providers including caravan and campsites, shops, restaurants and attractions.

PARKS AND PLAY AREAS

Our parks and play areas have continued to receive regular routine inspections and maintenance during 2016. There has also been significant focus on progressing the refurbishment of Hutton Moor Skate Park where the Town Council was successful in attracting valuable external funding from Sport England. Implementation of the new skate park commenced in February 2017 and it is anticipated that work will be completed by the end of May 2017. Other key activities have included the procurement of works to deliver the first year element of the 5 year play area improvement programme. Once again it is hoped that work to replace worn out items of equipment and surfacing will be completed during the current financial year or very early into the next year.

WATER ADVENTURE PLAY PARK

The service level agreement with North Somerset Council operated successfully during summer 2016. The Town Council's Grounds Team managed the Water Park plant room having undertaken additional formal qualifications to further supplement their existing knowledge. Good collaboration between Town Council staff and North Somerset Council's team resulted in an effective service being provided.

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE 2016/2017

The Community Services Committee continues to work to meet the aspirations of the town with awards of grants to local groups and organisations totalling £4,824 to date.

More detail of the Committee's work is given under the headings below:

THE BLAKEHAY THEATRE

The Blakehay Theatre has continued to build on its offering to both the community of Weston-super-Mare and surrounding areas. After a thorough review in 2016 of the Blakehay Theatre and its service, the council have agreed to make positive changes to the theatre over the next five years. In January 2017, renovations in the Upper Studio commenced to create a new Studio Theatre or two new Studio spaces. This will create more opportunities for smaller productions and hire of the spaces available.

The theatre looks forward to an exciting 2017/2018 year to be able to provide the local community with a venue that is both flexible and central for the town.

WESTON MUSEUM

The refurbishment of the main building by John West Contractors has continued over the winter months and is due to be completed early spring 2017. This includes new bridges and a glazed roof to the courtyard, stair cases and the creation of the seaside gallery which previously was a store area not open to the public. The next phase will be for the fit out of cabinets and design interpretation which is being led by Imagemakers. This will commence early spring with South West Heritage Trust bringing back the collections in early summer. We are on schedule for a late August opening as planned (exact dates will be confirmed).

The Museum team itself has moved its focus from a busy outreach and events programme in 2016 concentrating on keeping the museum 'alive', to now working on the new business plan model and activity plan. Our Learning and Events Officer has been recruited and is working with schools and the community with the aim of filling the education room with education offers for all. Volunteer engagement is vital to the future plans and a dedicated member of the team focuses on how we work with our volunteers. The business model is going from strength to strength with a huge percentage of our volunteers actively working for us – despite the building itself not yet being open.

Community engagement also plays a big part in the future and we are successfully working within the community to ensure that people from all walks of life are able to access the new facility, with many groups including Dementia Alliance and young people groups already hoping to use the exciting new spaces we will have.

MILTON ROAD CEMETERY

All plots in the new burial area that were released in 2016 have now been purchased and utilised. Following further investigations another two areas within the cemetery are to be utilised for future burials together with a number of scattered burial plots that are available throughout the cemetery. Plots for cremated remains are still available in the Memorial Garden. The positive work within the cemetery continues to be recognised by South West in Bloom by awarding it a level 5 (outstanding) 'It's your Neighbourhood' award.

ALLOTMENTS

Key achievements during 2016 have included the humane removal of badgers that were undermining the access track to Hutton Moor Allotments. This involved gaining a licence from Natural England, clearance of vegetation and re-grading of the banks as well as installing steel mesh with non return gates. In addition we have also undertaken a survey of all the trees on our Allotment sites and established a new service level agreement with the Allotments Club.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

QUEEN'S 90TH BIRTHDAY PICNIC IN THE PARK

The Queen's Picnic in the park took place on Sunday 12th June in Grove Park. The event ran from 2.00 pm to 4.30 pm and was very well attended. The weather stayed dry and sunny and the park was full of families with picnics, enjoying the day.

The arts and crafts which were run by the Multicultural Friendship Association (MFA) proved very popular with the children who enjoyed decorating biscuits and making birthday cards for the Queen. A large card was made by the members of MFA which was decorated by the children and posted with a letter from the Mayor to the Queen.

A bouncy castle was provided all afternoon and the balloon man went around the park making balloon animals for the children. A large crowd of families gathered to watch the puppet and magic show and the children all got involved.

King Alfred Concert Band played from the bandstand and the day finished with a chorus of Happy Birthday for the Queen and the National Anthem being sung throughout the park.

FLOWER SHOW

The Weston Horticultural Society's Annual Flower Show took place on Saturday 13th August and the event was a brilliant success with a continuous flow of people looking at the displays and stalls. The main tent opened at 10.00 am for entrants and the public to view the displays. With such a variety of entrants, there was plenty for people to look at, ranging from baked goods, flower displays and photography. There was also a tombola for people to take part in which raised £423, and the sale of Show Schedules raised £110.

There was face-painting for the children, and Love Weston had a stall explaining all about The Year of the English Garden. Avon Wildlife trail also joined us on the day for people to learn more about conservation and how they could get involved.

Burt Filer, a volunteer with Weston in Bloom, said “I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who entered Weston Flower Show and all the helpers who worked so hard to make it a success. I would also like to thank Weston Town Council, BID and Weston in Bloom for supporting the show. It is good to see we are all working together to make Weston a better place and the community sports the show generates”.

As well as awards being given by the Horticultural Society, the Town Council’s Allotment Certificates and Trophy were awarded on the day and all the entrants were pleased to receive their award from the Mayor. The event was a great success and Weston Horticultural Society was extremely grateful for the support they received from the Town Council.

YOUTH CAFÉ AND YOUTH SERVICES

The Town Council has continued its commitment to Youth Services through the partnership with YMCA Somerset Coast which began in 2013.

Based at the YMCA, Weston-super-Mare, the Youth Café provides a safe and fun space for young people after school and on Saturdays with additional opening during school holidays. Young people can seek support and engage with a programme of activities, events and projects. Young people benefit from the wider networks of support and opportunity across the YMCA Somerset Coast, which encompasses accommodation, health, wellbeing, employment, training and education.

The value of the service is extended to support and serve the community at times outside of its primary focus on youth provision. The facility has been used by a wide cross-section of the local community and has a much increased use by families and young children through activities such as the regular soft play morning each month.

The following groups regularly use the facility as visitors or as a platform for their own services in partnership:

- Home School Network
- Youth Twinning Exchange
- Town Council - Christmas Lights Switch On/Macmillan Coffee Morning/Training
- Street Pastors
- Toy Library
- Adults with Learning Disabilities
- Civic Society
- Carlton Centre
- Art Co-op
- Church Groups
- Skate Park Forum

The Youth Café team again led on the Summer Starter event which also incorporated a celebration of the 10 year anniversary of Street Pastors and their work. The event engaged with over 500 people, including young people and families with the Youth Services and other youth and community groups including the Skate Park forum and Weston Museum.

During the summer of 2016, 7 young people, mostly from Weston took part in a survival camp for 3 days and 2 nights in the woods, sleeping in shelters and utilising survival skills they had been taught to function independently as a team. They filmed their adventure and formed a video diary of their experience.

The Youth Council has formed recent links with Priory School and currently has 17 members. The Youth Council has continued to award grants to groups working with young people and members have been preparing written pieces giving an insight into their work to be published in the Weston Mercury.

The core team working with young people were able to support youth provision in a wider area. In particular in South Ward where YMCA Coleridge Road Youth Centre now has 191 young people registered to attend the Friday session. Through partnership there are now 6 regular sessions per week for children and young people.

WESTON IN BLOOM

Weston-Super-Mare was selected to enter the 'Champion of Champions' category this year after their National Entry in 2015 when they claimed Silver Gilt, and Gold in the regional category, for a 4th year. Weston had its judging day on Tuesday 12th July 2016. The day ran smoothly with the judges impressed with what they saw. The Regional Awards Ceremony was held in Taunton on the 6th October at the Somerset Cricket Ground. Weston in Bloom received Gold for the 5th year in a row entering Britain in Bloom, South West division. This is an amazing achievement for all involved. The judge John Wheatley said, "Weston-super-Mare can be proud of its entry. It is great to see how your success at National level in 2015 has been sustained. The whole team approach has resulted in major improvements, often over and above what could be expected within the timescale you have set yourselves". Also brought home were a total of 15 'It's Your Neighbourhood' awards, this year achieving 9 Outstanding and 6 Thriving. An awards' lunch took place on the 16th November at Grove House for all the community groups who took part.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2016/2017

| Cost Code | Expenditure £ | Income £ | Net£ |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Allotments | £27,307 | £600 | £26,707 |
| Blakehay Theatre | £141,056 | £93,900 | £47,156 |
| Capital Projects | £146,410 | - | £146,410 |
| Civic Support | £74,727 | - | £74,727 |
| Community Services | £220,363 | - | £220,363 |
| Democratic Representation | £109,406 | - | £109,406 |
| Museum | £166,919 | £4,000 | £162,919 |
| Milton Road Cemetery | £179,218 | £50,000 | £129,218 |
| Other Costs & Income | £93,085 | £5,000 | £88,085 |
| Parks & Play Areas | £300,193 | £31,300 | £268,893 |
| Planned Maintenance | £114,877 | - | £114,877 |
| Planning | £16,450 | - | £16,450 |
| Strategic Planning | £78,143 | - | £78,143 |
| Street Furniture | £34,779 | - | £34,779 |
| Toilets | £72,107 | £6,500 | £65,607 |
| Tourism | £182,180 | £26,800 | £155,380 |
| Youth Services | £68,304 | - | £68,304 |
| TOTAL | 2,025,524 | £218,100 | £1,807,424 |
| Less NSC Grant reduction | | | £170,334 |
| PRECEPT 2016/2017 | | | £1,637,090 |

Weston-super-Mare Town and Ward Councillors, 2015 - 2019

Conservative

Clive Webb – Leader of the Town Council - Uphill
 Michal Kus – Deputy Leader - South Worle
 Jos Holder – The Deputy Mayor - Central
 Clive Darke – Worlebury
 David Hitchins – South Worle
 Frederick Parsons – North Worle
 Ian Porter – Worlebury
 James Davis – South Worle
 Jan Holloway – North Worle
 Len Purnell – Winterstoke
 Lisa Pilgrim – Worlebury
 Martin Williams - Milton
 Peter Crew – South Worle
 Peter Fox – Uphill
 Richard Nightingale - Central
 Robert Cleland – Mid Worle
 Roger Bailey – Uphill
 Roz Willis – Milton
 Sarah Codling – Winterstoke
 Steven Kane – Winterstoke

Liberal Democrats

Mark Canniford – Hillside
 John Crockford-Hawley – Hillside
 Raymond Armstrong - Hillside
 Robert Payne – Central

Labour

Alan Peak – The Town Mayor - Bournville
 Catherine Gibbons - Bournville
 James Clayton – Bournville
 Michael Lyall – Milton
 Richard Tucker – Milton

Independent

Derek Mead – North Worle

UKIP

Anita Spencer-Johns – Mid Worle

CONTACT DETAILS FOR COUNCILLORS
 ARE ON THE TOWN COUNCIL'S WEBSITE
wsm-tc.gov.uk

Officers of the Town Council

The Town Clerk – Malcolm Nicholson
 Assistant Town Clerk – Tania Middlemiss
 Responsible Financial Officer – Sarah Pearse

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