

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL



THE 21st ANNUAL REPORT 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021

Malcolm L Nicholson LLB DMS PSLCC
Town Clerk
Weston-super-Mare Town Council
Grove House
Weston-super- Mare
Somerset BS23 2QJ

Telephone 01934 632567
Email: admin@wsm-tc.gov.uk

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL



THE 21st ANNUAL REPORT 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021

OPENING REMARKS BY THE LEADER OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AND REPORT OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE 2020/2021

It has been a pleasure to lead Weston Town Council since I was elected Leader in May 2019 - but how the world has changed in the last 12 months! No one could foresee the worldwide Covid19 pandemic that struck us in early 2020 and resulted in much of our normal life, and many businesses, being compulsorily closed down in March. Over a hundred thousand people have died of the virus in the UK since then, including some locally, and my heartfelt condolences go out to all who have lost loved ones.

In these circumstances it's the job of a local council to do everything it can to support its local community. I can honestly say I am proud of how this Town Council has responded and I thank my councillor colleagues of all political groups, officers and staff for the way they have pulled together to help the people of Weston-super-Mare during this crisis. The Town Council has worked hard to offer continuing services where possible, to deliver other services virtually, and to use its resources to provide new support mechanisms.

Services which have continued have included parks, play areas, grounds maintenance, the emptying of dog bins, and the operation of the Milton Road Cemetery which has been busier than usual this year. Others, like the Weston Museum, the Blakehay Theatre, the Visitor Information Centre and many Civic functions could not remain open in the normal way last year. While civic functions had to be curtailed, the Blakehay Theatre and Weston Museum quickly began providing virtual art, heritage and cultural output through streamed shows and productions. You can read more about these later in this report.

Following emergency talks with the Town Clerk, a cross-departmental team of 8 staff led by the Deputy Town Clerk was created within ten days of the spring lockdown to meet the new needs of the community during the pandemic. Working along with three brilliant groups of volunteers who formed themselves and North Somerset Council, the team received and re-directed over 1,300 requests for help by people during the lockdowns and beyond, such as help with collecting prescriptions, delivering food, walking the dog and much more.

Finally, while doing all this we have achieved efficiencies by holding back on new projects, keeping vacancies open and reducing the use of casual and seasonal staff. As a result, and recognising the financial pressures on the local community, and despite a reduced council tax base, the Town Council has limited its precept increase for the coming year to a modest 1.8% in January and we can look forward to the coming year with confidence in a sound financial basis to continuing leading Weston, as its motto goes, 'ever forward.'

CIVIC FUNCTION

Weston-super-Mare has had a Mayor since 1937, when the Town was granted Borough status. The Mayor is the Town Council's chairman, ceremonial figurehead and the first citizen of the town of Weston-super-Mare. The Mayor, Councillor Mark Canniford, has been supported by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor James Clayton. In March 2020 the Town Council re-elected The Mayor and Deputy Mayor to serve a second term in office. This was due to the anticipated restrictions that the Covid19 pandemic would place on the Mayoralty.

During the year the Mayor and Deputy Mayor have physically attended a small number of engagements, when easing of restrictions allowed, including the unveiling of 3 Blue Plaques. The Mayoralty has adapted to the restrictions, where appropriate, by having a 'virtual' presence at engagements and events. Many of the Mayor's engagements and significant events have had to be cancelled, including the planned VE 75 commemorations in May, Armed Forces Days in June and the Christmas Lights Switch-on Ceremony in November 2020. The Annual Mayor's Charity Ball has been postponed.

The Mayor hosted a wreath laying ceremony to commemorate VJ 75 and attended the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Several other commemorative events were delivered in different ways. The Service of Remembrance was held, in advance of Remembrance Sunday, with a small number of wreath layers. The Service was recorded and streamed on the internet on Sunday 8th November. On Armistice Day the Mayor handed over a wreath, on behalf of the people of Weston-super-Mare, which was taken by train to London and laid at Paddington Station at a wreath laying ceremony. Virtual tours of Grove House were streamed for Heritage Open Days in September.

The Mayor's Charity has been 'In Charley's Memory' for a 2nd year. It is a small local charity that works to raise awareness with young people about mental health, helping to reduce the stigma that is still attached.

Mayor's Awards will be presented to people in the community who have undertaken charitable and voluntary work. The Mayor will recognise the efforts made by the people of our Town during the Covid19 pandemic.

REPORT OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 2020/21

The Tourism and Leisure Committee continues to promote the town as a visitor destination supporting jobs and businesses in the local community. It also looks after the Water Park on the seafront and the Council's other parks and play areas. Details of the Committee's work is given below.

DESTINATION ADVERTISING, VISIT WESTON WEBSITE & VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

By servicing the tourism sector the Council is supporting the local economy and jobs by increasing visitor numbers to the town. The tourism team deliver several key functions including destination marketing to a global audience via the Visit Weston website and targeted specific national and regional advertising campaigns. A seasonal Visitor Information Centre (VIC) serving the local, wider and business communities is located on the seafront and also home to first-aid and lost children and is jointly resourced as part of our ongoing partnership arrangement with North Somerset Council. This facility was not opened during Summer 2020 due to the physical constraints of the building preventing all

possibility of social distancing within its narrow space and one door that is also the only fire escape. So Visit Weston became a virtual VIC with telephones diverted to staff mobiles.

2020 necessitated a re-focus due to the Covid-19 lockdown that commenced at the end of March. Whereas Visit Weston focussed on business support to the hospitality sector, digital initiatives and partnership working which has increased website content, traffic and social media activity, much publicity was gained due to a very successful “Don’t Visit Weston” campaign that attracted media coverage from all major TV stations including Sky TV that broadcast worldwide. This showcased Weston-super-Mare to advantage and gained free publicity that the council could not have afforded to pay for. Publicity continued once the “Don’t Visit” campaign ceased in early June in preparation for lockdown being eased in mid-July.

The Visit Weston website profile continues to feature highly in Google rankings due to continued investment in website enhancements, search engine optimisation campaigns and an events submission facility for event organisers to publicise and promote events early. The events pages have been redeveloped to permit users to select Weston-super-Mare events separately from events in the surrounding area, making it more user friendly and more appealing for event organisers to upload their details. The image gallery has been redeveloped to create a modern and fresh approach to showcasing the town.

Targeted advertising and marketing campaigns, driven by website statistics and demographics provided by Google analytics have influenced our choice of seasonal advertising campaigns. These are poised to go for 2021 as soon as it is safe to do so and will target areas that have proven to show results. It is the intention of Visit Weston to ensure that we stand out from the competition, that visitors are encouraged to select Weston-super-Mare as their choice for leisure visits and holidays in an environment which will be fiercely competitive for those who choose not to travel abroad.

Our in-resort accreditation scheme promotes the standards of quality in tourism and is affiliated to the AA. With 83 current partnerships, which includes a wide mix of accommodation providers, shops, restaurants and attractions both within Weston-super-Mare and within an hour’s drive, Visit Weston constantly strive to increase the partnerships and to provide a real range of appeal to visitors from the town and outside. Reacting to popular demand, the VIC has produced a number of bespoke leaflets specifically for frequently asked questions, for example dog walking and disability friendly establishments.

PARKS AND PLAY AREAS

Further progress has been made in delivering a programme of works for refurbishing play areas. This year we were faced with challenges of managing play areas through an ever-changing time during the pandemic. The safety of the community was our priority and we followed the government guidance issued to keep those community spaces safe. As well as this, routine inspections and maintenance continued. The Play Area Essential Maintenance, Repair & Replacement Programme continues and is based on a five-year timescale and considers the works required to maintain the play areas in a safe and operational condition.

WATER ADVENTURE PLAY PARK

This popular play area was faced with challenges of an ever-changing time during the pandemic. Unfortunately, the splash pad was unable to be turned on however, the routine monthly laboratory testing of the water quality has been continuing and helped safeguard against contamination. Repairs and maintenance works have been carried out throughout the year.

BLAKEHAY THEATRE

The award winning theatre in the heart of Weston-super-Mare went virtual in 2020. The theatre shut its doors on Tuesday 17th March 2020, due to the Worldwide pandemic, and during this time the theatre has been busy reaching out to its audience, by creating an online platform. The theatre's website and social media pages have reached over 287,000 users over 2020, with blog posts, streamed performance, quizzes and community classes. At the beginning of 2021, the theatre started to record and stream performances from the Blakehay Theatre main stage and look forward to building this during 2021.

During this year, the theatre has been awarded 'Theatre of the Year!' from the South-West Prestige Awards and nominated for a South West Business 'Leisure & Tourism of the Year' Award. Our in-house technician has also won 'Best Lighting' award at the David Beech awards, as well as the theatre winning the 'Best Evening Out' at the Weston Business Awards in February 2020.

After the success of being awarded a 'Culture Recovery Fund' grant from central government on October 2020, the theatre is on track to be back, stronger than ever, when it is allowed to re-open in 2021.

WESTON MUSEUM

Weston Museum celebrates the history of Weston-super-Mare and its surrounding areas from prehistoric times to the present day, using the distinctive historic building that houses the Museum and the diverse Museum collection of North Somerset Council. Through inspiration, learning and enjoyment, we will help the local community and its visitors to understand their past and ask questions about the present and future. Although the Museum has been necessarily closed for much of the last year, we have been producing and streaming online content around the heritage of Weston and North Somerset instead.

Our volunteer team continue to be an integral part of what we achieve here at the museum and we continue to work with our community partners to expand the volunteer opportunities available.

The museum has worked closely with several local organisations through our community and outreach programme. The museum is also growing in popularity as a hireable space for both commercial and private hires. Alongside this, family activities such as History Week have again been very popular with the local community. The learning team continues to improve its reputation throughout the area as an excellent resource for supplementary education. The options of on-site or off-site education and handling boxes continue to be popular.

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE 2020/2021

The Community Services Committee continues to work to meet the aspirations of the town with awards of grants to local voluntary groups and direct expenditure on a more focussed range of services for the community. More detail of the Committee's work is given under the headings below:-

WESTON IN BLOOM

Due to the pandemic the Royal Horticultural Society took the decision to postpone Britain in Bloom. Behind the scenes lots has been happening to plan our entry for coming years, adapting to the current climate and developing a more resilient volunteer structure.

ALLOTMENTS

The Town Council continues to meet demand for allotments with the provision of 6 sites around the town at Hutton Moor, Rectors Way (off Drove Road), Bournville, Lower Kewstoke Road, Church Road and Old Mill Way. Day-to-day management of the allotment sites is delegated to the Weston Allotment Club while the Town Council assists with major work required. Our allotments stayed open throughout 2020.

STREET FURNITURE

The dog bin emptying being carried out in-house is resulting in both a more reliable service and efficiency savings. Watering of planters and flower beds has been brought in-house and is achieving further efficiency savings.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

The pandemic meant we were unable to host a community event this year. Behind the scenes lots has been happening to plan events for the future year, adapting to the current climate. More information on future events will be released soon through our social media platforms and website.

YOUTH CAFÉ AND YOUTH SERVICES

Due to the Covid19 pandemic, 2020 saw a change in how the YMCA Dulverton Group continued its partnership with the Town Council. Based at the YMCA Weston-super-Mare on Bristol Road Lower, the youth and community café closed to the public due to government restrictions. However young people continued to benefit from the wider networks of support and opportunity across the YMCA Dulverton Group remotely. Homelessness prevention services including Nightstop and supported housing services also continued from the café site.

Youth Services adapted their delivery to online, allowing young people to continue to access support, advice and youth groups remotely, keeping a channel of communications open and enabling weekly contact with young people in the town. Having built relationships within the local communities the YMCA Dulverton youth team worked with local businesses, helping to identify families in need and then delivering over 10,000 free lunches and food packages. This also gave them a chance to check in on some of the more vulnerable young people as well as offering care packages and activities to many families to help eliminate boredom.

The Youth Council has continued to meet online while working on projects to enhance the local area. New members have joined from schools within the catchment areas as well as the Home Education community.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2020/2021

Cost Code	Expenditure £	Income £	Net £
Allotments	£12,268	-	£12,268
Blakehay Theatre	£207,198	£132,050	£75,148
Capital Projects	£173,000	-	£173,000
Civic Support	£75,479	-	£75,479
Community Services	£472,720	-	£472,720
Democratic Representation	£178,547	-	£178,547
Museum	£443,561	£135,852	£307,709
Milton Road Cemetery	£205,185	£59,250	£145,935
Other Costs & Income	£73,383	£3,000	£70,383
Parks & Play Areas	£407,041	£37,000	£370,041
Planned Maintenance	£135,497	-	£135,497
Planning	£14,457	-	£14,457
Strategic Planning	£71,725	-	£71,725
Street Furniture	£73,424	-	£73,424
Toilets	£80,041	£5,500	£74,541
Tourism	£183,907	£46,600	£137,307
Youth Services	£79,089	-	£79,089
TOTAL	£2,986,522	£419,252	£2,567,270
PRECEPT 2020/2021			£2,567,270
Cost Code	Expenditure £	Income £	Net £

Weston-super-Mare Town and Ward Councillors March 2020

Conservative

Marc Aplin – North Worle
Roger Bailey – Uphill
Gill Bute – Mid Worle
Sarah Codling – Winterstoke
Peter Crew – South Worle
Peter Fox – Uphill
David Hitchins – South Worle
Jan Holloway – North Worle
Marcia Pepperall – North Worle
Lisa Pilgrim – Worlebury
Ian Porter – Worlebury
Sonia Russe – MidWorle
Roz Willis – Worlebury

Liberal Democrats

Raymond Armstrong – Hillside
Mike Bell – Central
Mark Canniford – Hillside – Town Mayor
John Crockford-Hawley – Hillside
Robert Payne – Central – Deputy Leader of the Council
Ella Sayce – Central

Labour

Dorothy Agassiz – Milton
Gillian Carpenter – South Worle
James Clayton – Bournville – Deputy Mayor
Ciaran Cronnelly – Winterstoke
David Dash – South Worle
Catherine Gibbons – Bournville
Pete McAleer - Milton
Alan Peak – Bournville – Leader of the Council
Timothy Taylor – Milton
Helen Thornton – Uphill
Richard Tucker – Milton

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

Officers of the Town Council

The Town Clerk – Malcolm L Nicholson
Deputy Town Clerk/RFO – Sarah Pearse
Assistant Town Clerk (Admin & HR) –
Tania Middlemiss
Assistant Town Clerk (Operations) –
Fay Powell

CONTACT:

Weston-super-Mare Town Council,
Grove House, Grove Park,
Weston-super-Mare, BS23 2QJ
Tel: 01934 632567
Email: admin@wsm-tc.gov.uk

