

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL



THE 22nd ANNUAL REPORT 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022

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OPENING REMARKS BY THE LEADER OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AND REPORT OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE 2021/2022

I was elected Leader in May 2019. It has been a pleasure to lead Weston Town Council since then - but 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 and sixty thousand people have died of the virus in the UK (within 28 days of a positive test) since then and my heartfelt condolences go out to all who have lost loved ones. The pandemic continued through 2021 and will be with us for a long time, but vaccination programmes seem to have at least blunted its worst effects.

Just as we felt we were coming out of the pandemic, we now have a terrible situation in eastern Europe with the brutal invasion of Ukraine, a free, independent, democratic country, by Russian armed forces directed by Vladimir Putin. Terrible suffering is being caused to ordinary women, men and children and is on our TV screens and in our newspapers and social media day after day. It's very upsetting and worrying and people fear that the war could spread. We feel powerless to do much but at least the council and the local community have shown our support and sympathy for the suffering people of Ukraine with vigils, raising the Ukraine flag and generous donations of money and goods to be sent to the Polish/Ukraine border.

The essential job of a local council is to support its local community and provide services and facilities that make its area a better place to live, work and play. I can honestly say I am proud of how this Town Council has approached its task. 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 again this year. We have recruited town rangers to pick litter, remove weeds and generally tidy up the town. The Visitor Information Centre could not reopen but tourist information has been imaginatively provided using two electric tuk tuks. The Weston Museum has reopened and is acting as a community centre and an all-weather tourist attraction in the town. The Blakehay Theatre remained closed during 2021 for an Arts Council grant funded major refurbishment.. You can read more about these services later in this report.

Through good financial management we were able to pass a near-standstill budget while still being able to increase support for homelessness charities, provide litter bins and employ two extra officers to carry through our climate change and anti-racism commitments and other development projects. We have much to look forward to in the coming year: the Queen's Platinum jubilee and the See Monster art installation on the sea front.

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. In 2021-2022 The Mayor, Councillor James Clayton, has been supported by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Roger Bailey.

Many of the Mayor's engagements and significant events in the town were delayed to Covid restrictions in spring/summer including Weston Air Days. Following soon after during the autumn/winter by the arrival of storms Arwen and Eunice and the Omicron variant which created challenges for our Christmas Lights Switch-on Ceremony and the Mayors visit to our twin town Hildesheim.

During the year the Mayor and Deputy Mayor attended 165 engagements, along with Blue Plaques unveilings and tree plantings in readiness for upcoming Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Mayor hosted several events to acknowledge the hard work of NHS staff and recognise the tremendous efforts of the voluntary sector organisations across Weston. Remembrance Sunday was extremely well attended this year with the Mayor laying a wreath, on behalf of the people of Weston-super-Mare at the cenotaph in Grove Park.

The Mayor's Charity this year is ROC a charity whose main aim is community transformation. Highlights still to come are the Charity Ball and the Mayors Awards where the efforts of people and organisations of our Town during the last year will be recognised.

REPORT OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 2021/22

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. The seasonal Visitor Information Centre (VIC) located on the seafront was opened during Summer 2021 from early July when central government lifted restrictions on public spaces resuming business. Visitor numbers in the shorter than usual season were only 2,000 down on the entire summer numbers in 2019. This will not be open for 2022, so the Council will react accordingly, see below.

2020 and 2021 necessitated a re-focus due to the Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions, so 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. 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.

In December 2021 after a period of procurement as the incumbent supplier's contract was up for renewal, tenders were received and interviews held, resulting in Simpleview being re-appointed. We are working on a fresh new design for the website that will focus on a new approach with angular images that mirror the new logo of Weston Place Agency's WSM. An annual SEO contract has also been re-instituted to maintain our strategy of remaining at number one in Google search rankings for everything to do with Weston-super-Mare. The new website will be launched in the first half of 2022 and the current website will remain in place until then.

Targeted advertising and marketing campaigns, driven by information collected in the VIC website statistics and demographics provided by Google analytics have influenced our choice of seasonal advertising campaigns. For 2022/3 these 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. New target markets were identified in 2021 from visitor surveys and these will be targeted with the aim to increase visitors with longer stays due to their distance from us.

Our in-resort accreditation scheme for accommodation suppliers promotes the standards of quality in tourism and is affiliated to the AA. 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, is aimed to be increased now that all partners will recommence paying from 1st April 2022 after a 2-year payment holiday. Tourism & Leisure Committee mandated an introductory special offer rate for Food & Beverage Outlets and for Retail Shops so that we can support their recovery from an 18 month enforced closure. It is expected that this will achieve an increase in partnerships from those areas whilst providing the opportunity for our caring council to assist with re-building their businesses.

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. Going forward from April 2022 and the installation of the See Monster at the Tropicana in summer 2022, the VIC will not be located with a fixed establishment in 2022 until such time as the Council has confirmed a relocation date. We will therefore offer a mobile service with the use of two branded electric Tuk Tuks being strategically positioned around the seafront and town centre, supported by a cohort of Welcome Hosts who will be on foot and around the Tuk Tuks. The visitor information service will go to the public in the absence of a permanent base to which the public can come for assistance. There will also be a satellite VIC at the Waterpark, which will serve the dual purpose of controlling entrance to the play park, taking entrance fees and servicing public inquiries.

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

After Closing for the Pandemic in March 2022, the theatre was delighted to re-open their doors in February 2022. The theatre has undergone extensive renovation over 2021 with a complete re-wire of all electrics and the installation of a fresh air ventilation system in the Main House and Studio Theatre. The dressing rooms have also been redecorated and split so that the theatre can accommodate backstage for all performers with four dressing rooms.

During 2021 with the help of the Cultural Recovery Fund Grant the theatre was able to stage 'Comedy at the Quarry' for two evenings in June at The Old Town Quarry. The evenings consisted of professional comedians and were well attended.

The theatre is looking forward to welcoming old and new faces back into the theatre in 2022.

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.

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 has opportunities as a hireable space for both commercial and private hires. Alongside this, events such as History Week have again been very popular with the local community. The options of on-site or off-site education and handling boxes continue to be popular whilst the shop continues to strengthen its offer.

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE 2021/2022

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

Weston In Bloom took place and the Volunteers worked hard under pressure with part of the year still subject to Covid restrictions, the Grounds Team worked alongside the volunteers to achieve the best outcome under the circumstances.

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 2021

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 being planned will be released soon through our social media platforms and website.

YOUTH CAFÉ AND YOUTH SERVICES

As we entered the second year of the Covid 19 pandemic, YMCA Dulverton Groups partnership with the Town Council continued.

Based at the YMCA Weston-super-Mare on Bristol Road Lower, the youth and community café remained closed to the public due to government restrictions. The Youth & Community team used this time to redecorate the inside ready for when the restrictions began to lift. Although shut to the public, 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. Towards the end of the year the café was able to start welcoming local community groups back.

Youth Services adapted their delivery to a mix of small group work and online sessions, allowing young people to continue to access support, advice, and youth groups remotely in the event restrictions changed. Having built greater relationships within the local communities over the past year, the YMCA Dulverton youth team continued to work with local partners to support families who still needed the extra support. This also gave them a chance to check in on some of the more vulnerable young people who have felt socially isolated during the pandemic as well as encouraging more young people to access our services.

The Youth Council has continued to meet online and towards the end of the year began to meet in person once again. As many of members left as they were too old the Youth council recruitment was the main aim for the year, resulting in an influx of new members. A new Chair was elected and has led the youth council to be more youth focused by concentrating on projects like producing a newsletter and promoting the work the youth council do.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2021/2022

Cost Code	Expenditure £	Income £	Net £
Allotments	£16,984	-	£16,984
Blakehay Theatre	£209,789	£103,171	£106,618
Capital Projects	£145,000	-	£145,000
Civic Support	£77,979	-	£77,979
Community Services	£533,633	-	£533,633
Democratic Representation	£166,662	-	£166,662
Environmental	£125,259	-	£125,259
Museum	£461,145	£108,615	£352,530
Milton Road Cemetery	£194,034	£67,250	£126,784
Other Costs & Income	£43,385	£3,000	£40,385
Parks & Play Areas	£345,727	£37,000	£308,727
Planned Maintenance	£129,346	-	£129,346
Planning	£14,361	-	£14,361
Strategic Planning	£94,841	£7,624	£87,217
Street Furniture	£57,212	4,356	£52,856
Toilets	£63,952	-	£63,952
Tourism	£176,917	£17,900	£159,017
Youth Activities	£79,261	-	£79,261
TOTAL	£2,935,486	£348,916	£2,586,570
PRECEPT 2021/2022			£2,586,571

Weston-super-Mare Town and Ward Councillors as at March 2022

Conservative

Marc Aplin – North Worle
 Roger Bailey – Uphill – Deputy Mayor
 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 Russé – Mid Worle
 Roz Willis – Worlebury

Liberal Democrats

Raymond Armstrong – Hillside
 Mike Bell – Central
 Mark Canniford – Hillside
 John Crockford-Hawley – Hillside
 Clare Morris – Central
 Robert Payne – Central – Deputy
 Leader of the Council

Labour

Dorothy Agassiz – Milton
 Gillian Carpenter – South Worle
 James Clayton – Bournville – Town 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:

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