

# **WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL**



## **THE 23rd ANNUAL REPORT 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

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### REPORT OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE 2022/2023

The Policy and Finance Committee is responsible for the council's overall financial management and has closely monitored expenditure and income through the year with detailed monthly reports, considered auditor reports and scrutinised and approved its annual accounts. It adopted a revised investment strategy to ensure value for money from the council's savings, and recommended a budget to the full town council which identified savings enabling the council to adopt a budget below inflation for the coming year.

On the policy side the committee approved amendments to the town council's long-term Strategy. The committee pledged continued commitment to the council's anti-racism pledge, and continued to support the council's climate pledge to work towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030, for example by approving a tree planting fund to replace lost street trees around the town and continuing to work towards the installation of solar voltaic panels on Weston Museum's flat roof. Recognising the cost of living crisis affecting residents, the committee has agreed funding for the Food Bank and two Food Clubs offering free or very cheap food for people in need of help.

The committee identified and approved an additional £46,000 towards the major project to provide an SEN play area at Castle Batch in Worle. This will be only the second specialist disability friendly play area in the whole of North Somerset. The Committee also approved completion of the freehold acquisition of the former Mercury Building at 32 Waterloo Street, agreed by council the previous year, at a reduced purchase price of £400,000. This represents an excellent investment in the future and for the first time since its creation in 2000 the town council will have its own permanent HQ. This will be far more than offices, including a central information point for residents as well as visitors, a council chamber and community group meeting spaces and room for important community records. It also ensures the long-term preservation of a historic listed building in the town centre. Procurement is now ongoing to improve the building's environmental performance and get it ready for occupation in early summer 2023. The committee also approved the procurement of new pump room equipment in the Water Park. The original equipment being over 10 years old had reached the end of its working life and the replacement will ensure the continued operation of this well-loved facility for many years to come.

Despite inflationary pressures not seen for many years, last December the committee members, by working together to identify savings, were able to recommend to council a budget which is increased below inflation (at the date it was set). The budget adopted by the council for the coming year 2023-24 is set out at the end of this report.

## **CIVIC FUNCTION**

Weston-super-Mare has had a Mayor since 1937, when the Town 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 2022-2023 The Mayor, Councillor Sonia Russé, has been supported by Deputy Mayor, Councillor Peter McAleer.

During the year, The Mayor and Deputy Mayor have attended 195 engagements (to date), including tree planting and business openings as the Town recovers from the pandemic. The Mayor hosted a Jubilee Picnic in the Park to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee in Ellenborough Park West, which was acquired by Town Council in 2020. The Mayor has run sessions to teach non-swimmers how to float safely, together with Hutton Moor. Remembrance Service was very 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. At Christmas the Mayor visited Hildesheim our twin town and movement has been made to reintroduce the Youth Exchange programme. A Christmas Lights switch on event was able to take place this year.

Due to the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Council implemented its plan for Operation London Bridge. The official proclamation was held in the Town Square and was attended by the Deputy Mayor and dignitaries from the Town. A Book of Condolence was taken to schools and care homes in the town to be signed. To mark The King's Coronation on 6<sup>th</sup> May, The Mayor will host a street party at Weston Museum where local community groups will be invited to celebrate the occasion.

The Mayor's beneficiary this year is NSPCWT (North Somerset Parents Carers Working Together) whose role is to support parents of children with un-measured disabilities. The Mayor's Nautical Cocktail Party took place at Weston Museum in place of The Charity Ball, and a highlight to come is a combined Civic Service and Mayor's 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 2023/4**

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) has been located at the Water Park on the seafront for the last 2 seasons, supported by a team of Welcome Hosts who position themselves in key locations around the town such as the railway station and the promenade coach drop-off points.

The Visit Weston website was upgraded, redesigned and modernised in June 2022. Its profile continues to feature highly in Google rankings. Features include an events submission facility for event organisers to publicise and promote events early. The image gallery has been redeveloped to create a modern and fresh approach to showcasing the town and features angular images that mirror the new logo of Weston Place Agency's WSM.

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. During 2022 a new campaign aimed at professional bloggers and influencers was launched around the attraction of the See Monster. For 2023/4 these will target areas that have been proven to show results, for example hosting family bloggers during school holidays.

Visit Weston develops strong working partnerships with other agencies such as Culture Weston to support the Town Council's resolutions to develop cultural events in the community. We also work closely with NSC's Seafront Team, their events team, the BID and the Weston Place Agency.

### **PARKS AND PLAY AREAS**

Further progress has been made in delivering a programme of works for refurbishing play areas. A council wide effort saw the start of the development at Castle Batch play area, to facilitate a new SEND play provision in Worle. Working with the community and local partners a multi-agency approach following extensive consultation, has been used to deliver this programme of works which will be completed in 2023. On-going maintenance and repairs took place throughout the year.

### **WATER ADVENTURE PLAY PARK**

This popular summer attraction had a successful season, with the satellite Visitor Information Centre welcoming thousands of visitors to the park. The Grounds Team operated seven days a week throughout the season ensuring it was open for residents and visitors. The site received multiple TripAdvisor reviews from the public who were impressed by this facility. We look forward to another successful season in 2023.

### **BLAKEHAY THEATRE**

Over 2022/2023 the theatre has re-opened after a two-year closure with performances, events and classes. There have been challenges, for the industry as a whole with rebuilding capacity, and the 'Cost of Living' crisis making hirers nervous of commitment but booking enquiries for hire of the theatre have increased. The theatre has welcomed an array of new hirers as well as loyal companies, both locally and nationally, returning to the theatre to put on their performances.

Studio Classes are thriving with adult dance classes taking place regularly in the studio on a Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

There are lots of community events and performances planned for 2023 and we look forward to welcoming new and old faces.

### **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.

The Museum is becoming increasingly popular for weddings, parties and evening events although we have had to out-source the catering for these. The recent completion of the new function kitchen enables us to cater in-house for such events going forward.

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 or off-site education and handling boxes continue to be popular, whilst the shop continues to strengthen what it has to offer.

## **REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE 2022/2023**

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 will be relaunching in 2023 with a strong focus on community engagement and promoting cleaner, greener and sustainable planting across the town. With the rising temperatures over the summer of 2022, a lot of plants struggled due to drought conditions, this refocused our approach to planting and will see an array of drought tolerant plants used in future.

### **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 2022.

### **STREET FURNITURE**

The Town Council continues to operate a dog waste service across multiple parishes and has installed additional bins in the town.

Street furniture including benches and litter bins have been maintained across our sites. With the installation of new bins and benches installed on North Somerset Council land obtained by a successful grant application.

### **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

The council continues to work with Culture Weston to support community events such as the superb Glow festival in February, and Weston Waltz in which talented local, national and international artists are painting murals on walls through the town centre, making it more attractive for visitors and residents and supporting businesses and jobs.

## **YOUTH CAFÉ AND YOUTH SERVICES**

The town council's partnership with YMCA Dulverton Group has continued this year. Based at the YMCA Weston-super-Mare on Bristol Road Lower, the youth and community café have reopened for local community groups to use. The majority of those who used this space before the pandemic have returned.

Like many others, the Youth & Community team have struggled to recruit after the pandemic. This has restricted the youth sessions that we have been able to run from the café. However, young people have continued to benefit from the wider networks of support and opportunities across the YMCA Dulverton Group both remotely and by accessing our other youth sessions. The youth centre at St John's (Bournville) has also re-opened, offering more family community projects throughout the holidays, by working together with partnerships like SWAN, Transend and Culture Weston we have been able to provide a greater amount of activities for young people to attend.

Homelessness prevention services including Nightstop and supported housing services have also continued from the café site. Residents use the space to socialise and cook together, whilst the Homeless team still use the facilities for some of their clients when needed.

The youth team have returned to delivering all youth groups fully again. The online service for young people accessing support from a youth worker has remained, as many young people continue to use this way of communicating with the team.

At first numbers were low as parents were still concerned about Covid-19, however we have seen a steady rise over the year, in some cases group membership have been at an all-time high. The team believe this is due to the continuing support they offered families throughout the pandemic.

As many young people relied on social media as a way of communicating with others through lockdown, the youth team have been working on ways to ensure young people know the risks and use these platforms safely.

The pandemic has had a great effect on young people's mental health and the coming year will be spent ensuring young people have continued access to information, support and guidance when needed.

The Youth Council lost a number of its members through lockdown, some leaving as they went on to jobs or university. It was a struggle to recruit at first, however they are now welcoming new members and have found a passion to make a difference to their community.

## WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2023/2024

Cost Code	Expenditure £	Income £	Net £
Allotments	£35,399	£400	£34,999
Blakehay Theatre	£311,808	£113,370	£198,438
Capital Projects	£145,000	-	£145,000
Civic Support	£166,024	-	£166,024
Community Services	£516,755	-	£516,755
Democratic Representation	£188,373	-	£188,373
Environmental	£92,261	-	£92,291
Museum	£521,832	£133,557	£388,275
Milton Road Cemetery	£221,269	£58,025	£163,244
Other Costs & Income	£49,758	£6,000	£43,758
Parks & Play Areas	£384,016	£52,000	£332,016
Planned Maintenance	£153,992	-	£153,992
Planning	£22,578	-	£22,578
Strategic Planning	£63,906	0	£63,906
Street Furniture	£86,800	£14,538	£72,262
Toilets	£79,595	-	£79,595
Tourism	£209,176	£24,500	£184,676
Youth Activities	£84,586	-	£84,856
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£3,348,628</b>	<b>£412,390</b>	<b>£2,936,237</b>
<b>PRECEPT 2022/2023</b>			<b>£2,631,385</b>

### Weston-super-Mare Town and Ward Councillors as at March 2023

#### 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 Russé – Mid Worle, Town Mayor  
 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  
 Ciaran Cronnelly – Winterstoke  
 David Dash – South Worle  
 Catherine Gibbons – Bournville  
 Pete McAleer - Milton - Deputy Mayor  
 Alan Peak – Bournville – Leader of the Council  
 Timothy Taylor – Milton  
 Helen Thornton – Uphill  
 Richard Tucker – Milton

#### Officers of the Town Council

The Town Clerk – Malcolm L Nicholson  
 Deputy Town Clerk/RFO – Sarah Pearse  
 Assistant Town Clerk – Fay Powell

#### CONTACT:

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Contact details for councillors  
 are on the Town Council's website  
[www.wsm-tc.gov.uk](http://www.wsm-tc.gov.uk)

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