



Didcot Town Council Annual Report 2018/2019



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Mayor's Report

As we draw to the end of another year of change and improvement in Didcot, I will take this opportunity to thank the elected members of the Council for giving me the chance of representing the Town over the past year as the Mayor.



The Mayoress has accompanied me on nearly all of my duties, with visits as far afield as Staffordshire to watch our Army Cadets on their summer camp, to Banbury in the North of the County for the Town Mayor making; a visit to the St Georges Barracks in Bicester for the Mayor's Charity Dinner. We have attended Civic Services in Wallingford, Thame, Abingdon, Bicester and Witney and also Witney Mayor's Charity Fashion Show; opened a nursery on Great Western Park; celebrated birthdays and anniversaries with local communities, attended a picnic (with our wonderful summer heatwave, it was a lovely afternoon); we have had the honour of presenting well-earned certificates to local school children and fund raisers for charity.

We have also attended several services and concerts in both Dorchester Abbey and in Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford, where we were treated to a wonderful performance by our very own Girls School Orchestra. We have attended many, varied fund raising events from horse racing nights to Bingo and quizzes, each and every one bringing fun and enjoyment to one and all.

We started our fund raising year here in Didcot for my two charities with a Lawn Bowls Gala Day at the Didcot Bowls Club, which was a tremendous success, a scorching day added to the enjoyment for all bowlers, even those who had never bowled before. My two chosen charities are locally the Didcot Volunteer Centre, who do sterling work by driving local residents to medical appointments (who are unable to make their own way there and back) and SSAFA who look after our armed forces and their families both past and present.

I must mention the generosity of our local businesses and residents who have given donations towards the many raffles and fund raising events throughout the year, which goes a long way in supporting those in need across the Town.

The Summer Fayre was a lovely day out for the whole family in Edmonds Park and which showcased our local businesses, charities, clubs and of course local talent performing on stage musically and our fantastic dancers.

There are many events coming to our Civic Hall and across the Town, not forgetting our fantastic theatre - Cornerstone, for all to enjoy. So please keep a close eye on the local press and posters.

Our celebration dinner in November was a huge success, This was to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the cessation of hostilities in First World War and was marked by the unveiling of a stained glass window in the Civic Hall by the deputy Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Elizabeth Paris. (The window was commissioned by ourselves, the Mayor and Mayoress, to the memory of the fallen who gave their today so that we can have our tomorrow). The Artist was Rosalind Duffy from Eynsham, so take a trip along to the Civic Hall and have a look above the door when entering the bar area.

Lastly, I will say a big thank you to all of our Council staff both inside and outdoors who have all helped enormously in making my year as the Mayor very enjoyable. It has been an honour and privilege for both Angela and myself to represent Didcot.

Councillor Bill Service
Mayor of Didcot Town Council
March 2019

Leader's Report

This has been an extremely busy year for the both Didcot and the Town Council so instead of trying to talk about everything that we did I thought it may be more useful to focus my report on a few of our key projects.

First, I met with both SODC and the County Council to discuss bringing parking enforcement back to the town, something which had not progressed in close to a decade. I am glad to say that the legally required business case was given funding and once complete will go to the Secretary of State for official approval.



The second project that the people of Didcot had been promised over and over was a new sports pavilion for Edmonds Park. This year for the first time the Town Council took the large step of allocating funding to the project and stated categorically that this is something we want to do.

The third project was our decision was taken to bring the Civic Hall in house. Although this may sound like a small decision it is actually extremely important for the people of the town. With this decision the Council is now in a position to ensure that the building can be run for the community and remain an asset for the town.

Other slightly smaller actions such as improving green spaces across the town were also given priority. Whether it was our decision to allocate funding to repair the skate park on Ladygrove, replacing all the old equipment at Marsh Recreational Ground with brand new ones, bringing the grass cutting contract back in house, funding the cleansing of Ladygrove lakes or signing official contracts protecting green spaces from development, the council has worked hard to ensure the best for Didcot.

On a separate note you may be aware the vast majority of large councils in the UK (Town, District and County.) have cut services, raised taxes or carried out both actions. I am happy to say that Didcot Town Council have provided the above projects and many more without you, our residents, being asked to pay us a single penny more in Tax.

Finally as this will be my last Annual Town Meeting I would just like to take the opportunity to personally thank all of our staff, the councillors who voluntarily give up time with their families and of course the residents who provided us with the opportunity to make Didcot better.

Thank you,

Councillor Steve Connel
Leader of Didcot Town Council
March 2019

Report from the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Once again, a busy year for Didcot Council and the Finance Committee.

Most importantly is that we have not increased Council Tax, for you, the residents of our Town.

Project work is underway within Edmonds Park. The dilapidated Outside Services depot has now been demolished and its replacement is progressing well. The walls have been erected and roof put on, and the flooring is currently being worked on. The anticipated date of practical completion is July this year.



The Town Fayre held last year run by Play 2 Give and Sustainable Didcot, with help from Council Funds, was a great success in bringing the Town together and we are continuing to support this event.

In the financial year to date, almost £27,000 has been allocated towards applications to our Grant Aid fund. These grants benefit charities and community groups within the Town, who, without our help, may no longer be able to keep going or would have to cut back on the amazing work they provide.

A few that have benefitted from our help include Revitalize and Be Free Young Carers, providing support and respite and support to disabled people and their carers, and young carers respectively, Oxfordshire South and Vale CAB for the provision of advice services in Didcot, and the Free Christmas Lunch initiative providing lunch and company for those without friends or family on Christmas Day.

This year the Town Council has also funded speed surveys along speeding hotspots in the town, and has continued to part-fund the Police Community Support Officers in the town.

A successful year for the Town which I hope will continue in future years.

Councillor Jackie Billington
Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee
March 2019

Report from the Chairman of the Environmental Committee



Being the Committee responsible for the Town Council's outside spaces the work of the Environment Committee is some of the most visible in the Town. Over the last year the Committee has worked hard to protect and improve the services we provide to residents.

In September the Town Council joined with the British Legion and a number of local schools to dedicate Smallbone Recreation Ground as a Centenary Field. In addition to being dedicated to the memory of those who died protecting our freedom in World War 1, the designation means that the recreation area is now held in trust, meaning it cannot be developed and its status as a recreation area for Didcot is safeguarded into the future.

Two other areas of responsibility for the Environment Committee are the Council's cemetery at Kynaston Road, and its allotment sites. Over the last year the Town Council has finished its review of the workings of the cemetery; feedback from the local funeral directors and memorial masons has been very positive. Didcot Town Council is considered one of the preferred cemeteries to deal with already, but the changes coming into effect in April will mean an even better service is available to residents at a time when it is needed.

Likewise, a number of decisions have been made to improve our allotments. Following feedback from allotment representatives we will from April be running a trial to allow allotment holders to have dogs on their allotments, Town Council staff have begun to take responsibility for cutting the pathways, and we have updated our eligibility criteria to reflect Didcot's changing landscape by allowing Vale of the White Horse residents of Great Western Park to apply for allotments in Didcot. The Environment Committee has also led on taking an application to the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government to enable RESTORE to build a more suitable building on allotment land at New Road.

In the last year the Environment Committee has received a petition regarding adding end panels to the bus stop on Station Road. Due to a number of legal issues this has proven very complicated, but a lot of progress has been made and the Committee will continue to work on it. Also regarding bus stops, the Committee has used part of its budget to fund a new bus stop outside the Bingo Hall on Broadway.

Looking to the future, the Environment Committee has made a number of important and exciting decisions. It has recommended that the Town Council take on

responsibility for the land and play area at St Hugh's Rise, meaning the Town Council will be the owners of the play area. Likewise, an application for £50,000 of grant funding has gone in to refurbish the play area at Smallbone Recreation Ground. The response to our consultation was fantastic and we feel we have got a really good steer on what people want there.

From next year the grass cutting in Ladygrove will no longer be undertaken by external contractors but by Town Council staff. This decision was made to ensure that the Town Council had control over the cutting and ensure that the quality of service we wish to provide to our residents is upheld.

Finally, the hot summer we had meant that we had problems with our flower beds and lakes. For the former we did not have sufficient staff or resources to give them the near constant watering required. As such, to safeguard this from happening again the Environment Committee has agreed that more robust perennials will be planted instead.

The hot summer also meant that water and oxygen levels at Ladygrove Lakes fell, leading us to close the Lakes for a time in June on the advice of the Environment Agency. The Lakes were reopened to members in September, but the Environment Committee has made budgetary provision for a long term plan to install aerators which will reoxygenate the water and safeguard the wellbeing of the fishstock.

Overall it has been a very productive year for the Environment Committee. We hope that our residents enjoy the work we have done to improve our open spaces in the present, and look forward to seeing our plans for the future come to fruition for the benefit of the whole Town.

Councillor Alan Thompson
Chairman of the Environmental Committee
March 2019

Report from the Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee

Didcot Town Council's Planning Committee usually meets every 3 weeks, on a Wednesday. The main agenda item is to discuss any new or, recently amended planning applications, received by South Oxfordshire District Council. The Committee will also discuss and respond to correspondence from the Town Council's own Traffic Advisory Group as well as external consultations. The meeting is open to the public and any attendees may address the Committee on any agenda item. The Committee is an advisory consultee to South Oxfordshire District Council. It is South Oxfordshire District Council who make the final decision.



The vast majority of applications the Committee see are household applications for extensions, conservatories and such like. We have also continued to see a significant number of applications for infill dwellings. These are the addition of homes in the gardens of existing dwellings or on land in an otherwise built up frontage. The Committee assesses these applications to ensure they provide adequate parking, amenity space and that they do not pose an unacceptable loss of privacy or light to neighbours.

Spring last year saw an outline application for 903 homes on fields between Didcot and West Hagbourne, The application was strongly objected to by the Committee. The Committee considered the speculative application to be damaging to the view from the AONB. It was felt that the development would erode the green space between Didcot and the Hagbournes and put additional strain on the narrow roads through West Hagbourne. The application was later withdrawn by the developer.

Planning permission was granted in November for a 70 bed care home next to Marsh Bridge. The Committee originally had some concerns over the possibility additional traffic movements and the loss of land for employment. The Committee met with the developers numerous times to discuss our concerns. The Committee was latter satisfied, that the proposed care home would not lead to any major increase in traffic movements relative to the movements of the existing businesses. It would also provide an increased number of Jobs. The Committee was also glad to be able to work with developers to deliver a living wall on the side of the building in an area that has been identified with high air pollution. Due to these meetings the Town Council has also ensured that there will be bus shelters at the existing bus stops.






November also brought the long awaited application for GWP health site. The Committee was very glad to see the application finally come forward for these badly







needed facilities. However the Committee decided that proposed plans needed to be revisited and improved. It was felt that the proposed 3 story building was close to nearby dwellings and some neighbours had raised concerns that it would be overbearing. The Committee also felt the number of parking space was inadequate although it acknowledged that due to space restrictions, little could be done. The Committee now looks forward to working with stakeholders to improve on the current designs.

In January Didcot Town Council defended its decision at an South Oxfordshire District Council Planning Committee to recommend refusal of the extension of opening hours for a takeaway on the lower Broadway. Didcot Town Council's Planning Committee felt that the proposed opening hours (as late as 3:30am) were unacceptable in a semi residential area. It was felt that it would lead to addition disturbance to local residents and the possibility of antisocial behaviour. The South Oxfordshire District Council Committee agreed with Didcot Town Council and the application was refused.

Councillor Anthony Dearlove
Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee
March 2019

Councillors

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- Chris Wayman ~ Town Clerk
- Tom Hudson ~ Deputy Town Clerk
- Tony Rudge ~ Outdoor Services Manager
- Sharon Hickman ~ Finance & Administration Officer
- Andre Silva ~ Civic Hall Manager
- Adam Duncan ~ Deputy Civic Hall Manager
- Beth Gillham /Lucy Griffiths ~ Information Centre Manager
- Teresa Tye ~ Administration Assistant
- Chelsey Lordan ~ Civic Hall Assistant
- Jack Greene ~ Civic Hall Assistant (bank staff)
- Dan Furby ~ Grounds Supervisor
- Richard Dowling ~ Grounds
- Steve Andrews ~ Grounds
- Darryl Way ~ Grounds
- Sam Cobb ~ Grounds
- Cameron Stephens ~ Apprentice
- John Jones ~ Gatekeeper
- Neressa Copley ~ Pavilion Cleaner

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Balance Sheet

Year End	Unaudited Accounts as of 07 March 2019	
2018		2019
£		£
	Current Assets	
23,134.00	Debtors	129,512.00
1,130,080.00	Cash at bank and in-hand	1,219,121.00
1,153,214.00	Total Current Assets	1,348,633.00
	Current Liabilities	
50,417.00	Creditors and accrued expenses (repayable within one year)	145,772.00
1,102,797.00	Net Current Assets (Total Assets less Current Liabilities)	1,202,862.00
	Capital and Reserves	
37,580.00	Current Year Fund	77,035.00
432,720.00	General Reseve	493,330.00
100,000.00	Building Repair Fund	100,000.00
400,000.00	Depot Fund	400,000.00
17,348.00	Skateboard Fund	17,348.00
44,380.00	Building Maintenance Fund	44,380.00
20,000.00	Ladygrove Lakes Staging Fund	20,000.00
20,060.00	Building Project Fees Fund	20,060.00
5,709.00	CIL 2008	5,709.00
10,000.00	Election Fund	10,000.00
15,000.00	GDPR Fund	15,000.00
1,032,028.00	Total Equity	£ 1,202,862.00

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Feedback

Please use this form to provide feedback or ask a question about any service provided by Didcot Town Council, South Oxfordshire District Council or Oxfordshire County Council. You can also include any comments you may have on the Annual Town Meeting.

Name:	Telephone:
Address:	
Email:	
Comment:	

Return to:

Didcot Town Council
Britwell Road
Didcot OX11 7HN
E-mail: council@didcot.gov.uk
Telephone: (01235) 812637

or deposit in the box located in the entrance hall.

For Office Use Only

Response Required: Y/N
Date Responded:
Forwarded to:
Actioned by: