

ANNUAL REPORT 2012 – 2013



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INTRODUCTION

Mayor/Chairman of Whitchurch Town Council May 2012 – May 2013

Cllr Peggy Mullock



This has been the second year of my term of office, and I feel privileged to have been the Town Mayor, a role I have enjoyed immensely.

The Mayor's Charity 2012 – 2013 is a project very close to my heart, raising funds to create a Sensory/Therapeutic Garden at Whitchurch Community Hospital, and the charity drive has had a very successful year. I would like to thank all of my helpers, fundraisers and the people who have donated to such a worthy cause. The Mayor's Garden Ball which was held at the Civic Centre in November 2012 was a sell-out event and I was conscious to choose local suppliers for both the catering and the decorations. The total amount raised is £10,607, which will be of fantastic benefit to the new garden.

The Sunday parking charges were successfully revoked earlier in the year, which I hope will encourage more weekend tourism into the town centre. The new Sainsbury's store which opened in December 2012 and the new McDonald's Drive-Through are helping to encourage more visitors into the area.

Over the past year, legislation has opened up new opportunities for Town and Parish Councils to take on additional functions and really lead the community, and Whitchurch is keen to take advantage of these. It has recently affirmed its first Corporate Strategy for public consultation and considered a number of policies which will make it much more accessible. I feel sure that the Town Council will move forward with ambitious objectives rooted in the community.

HERITAGE COMPLEX COMMITTEE



After much time and effort the Heritage Centre alarm system was finally taken over by local firm Securasound in March 2013, which should cut the Centre's costs for overpriced alarm call-out fees to the previous company, which were based in Midlands.

The Archive Group now have a separate, light-controlled, and dedicated storage space, housing historic editions of The Whitchurch Herald, thanks to a grant received from the Local Joint Committee of Shropshire. The newspapers are available for the public to view and supervised visits can be arranged. Whitchurch Library also offers micro-filmed editions of the Herald dating back to 1869.

Staff members are experiencing higher volumes of Shropshire Council enquires as the Centre offers a wide range of services including: blue badges, concessionary travel passes, missed waste collection, copies of birth certificates and faulty street light reports. The staff also receive constant training in order to keep up with the ever changing technology and demands of Shropshire Council's services. The small glass office in the Heritage Centre is well used by local community support groups such as Stonham Housing, who also help to ensure that a steady flow of visitors pass through the Heritage Centre on a daily and weekly basis.

The enabling power for a museum has proved a grey area, but the Town Council has resolved this issue.

When Phase 1 of the refurbishment work at the Civic Centre is completed in January 2014, the Tourist Information Centre will be re-located into the main entrance of the Civic Centre. This will necessitate a review beforehand of how the museum is operated. October will also see the start of the process for re-accreditation of the museum which will be due for renewal in 2014.

CIVIC CENTRE & MARKET COMMITTEE



In March 2013 the new Town Council Market Policy was adopted by Full Council and the policy has been implemented into the running and management of the weekly Friday Market, as well as the Original Saturday Market. We have also set up a regular meeting slot with the weekly traders to encourage an ideas forum, ensuring that any queries or concerns that the traders may have can be addressed more effectively.

An exciting agreement has been reached to hold a regular Flea Market in the Sports Hall every second Saturday of the month. We are hopeful that the first event will take place in June 2013 and encourage visitors from near and far into the Town Centre on weekends.

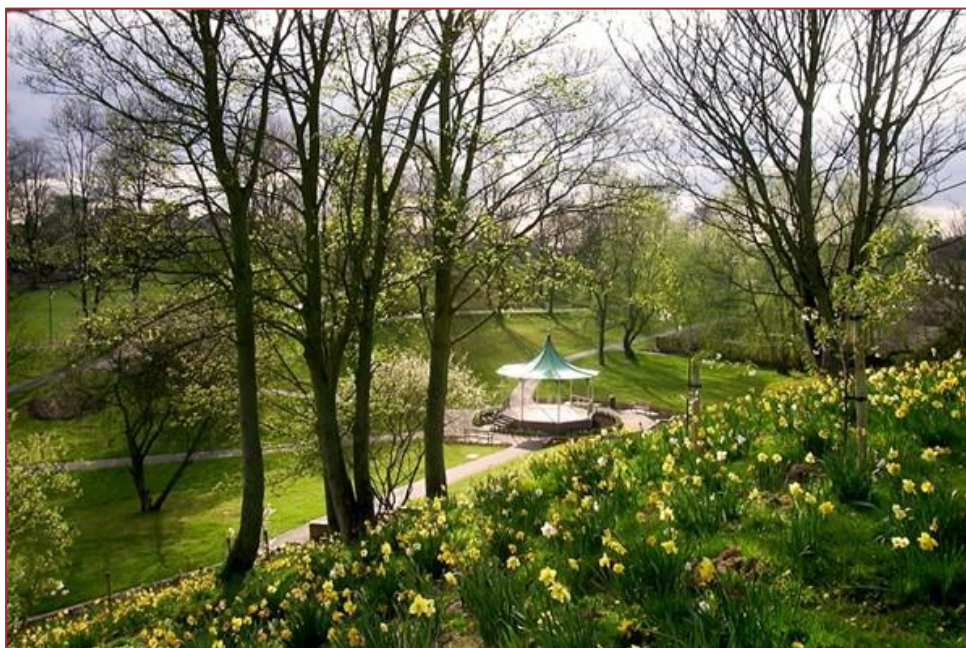
The Farmers' Market Social Enterprise, in partnership with the Town Council, keeps growing from strength to strength, with a waiting list for new traders. It is hoped to hold an additional market with a full High Street road closure on Saturday 22nd June 2013, to support National Market Day, which was celebrated for the first time last year, with much success.

The volume of Civic Centre bookings has been very high so far this year, especially throughout February and March, with most weekends being fully booked. However, the Centre will unfortunately suffer from loss of bookings through the unavoidable delays of the development works. However, planning permission has now been granted for Phase 1 of the refurbishment of the building.

It is anticipated that the regeneration project will commence at the beginning of August 2013, with the work to be completed during January 2014. During this time, we will need to relocate the Town Council office, with the other Civic Centre facilities being closed for the majority of the building work. However, the Sports Hall and market will only be out of use for about two weeks. It is an exciting project which will result in a new external façade and public realm area, a new Town Council Office, Shropshire Council Information Point and Tourist Information Point. Other necessary works will include new toilets, an improved upstairs fire escape and roof repairs.

We have also commenced the process of consultation over the Communities' Priorities for Phase 2, so that the Town Council can apply for grant support.

PARKS & OPEN SPACES



The Town Council's grounds maintenance is undertaken to a high standard by local contractors. The contract will be due for renewal in 2014, and the Council will review its specification and standards during the coming year.

The Council is anxious to increase facilities for young people in Jubilee Park, and is currently undertaking a feasibility study to ascertain where either a skateboard park and / or an amphitheatre may be located. We understand that it is important to users of the park, not to interrupt the informal, but well used sledging area.

The Parks and Open Spaces Committee have approved plans for two new pieces of outdoor fitness equipment which will be installed imminently in Jubilee Park, once three quotations have been received.

On the first Saturday of June 2013, Jubilee Park will welcome the second year of 'Party in the Park' celebrations – an afternoon of fun outdoor activities, music and stalls. The group originally set up the event last year to coincide with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, and it will be a very positive boost to the town if events like this, and more, are encouraged to thrive.

FINANCE



The Council's accounts are prepared in accordance with the Audit and Audit regulations 2003 (amended 2006). They are subject to an independent Internal and External Audit.

Copies of the accounts can be accessed upon request.

The final audited accounts for 2012/2013 will be available for inspection in June 2013.

Section 137 Grants

Available Amount	Year 2012/2013	Year 2011/2012
Age UK	-	£3000
Chamber of Trade	-	£250
Blackberry Fair	£400	£900
Parish Plan (PIC)	£500	£1000
Whitchurch Air Cadets	£1,000	-
Severn Hospice	£100	£360
Queensway Association	£850	£40
First Whitchurch Guides	£100	-
North Shropshire Driving Group	£150	-
Beechtree Summer Youth Project	£1,000	-
Jubilee Celebrations – Party in the Park	£2,000	-
Whitchurch Rugby & Hockey Club	£250	-
Whitchurch Cricket Club	£250	-
Young Achiever Award	£100	-
Whitchurch Youth Choir	£350	-
Whitchurch Alport for Clatterbridge Cancer Care	£100	-
North Shropshire Oswestry Tourism	-	£1500
Owen Paterson HP Donation	-	£100
Zumbathon	-	£500
Whitchurch Band	-	£1500
Royal British Legion	-	£235
Help for Heroes	-	£100
Marie Curie Cancer Care	-	£360
Whitchurch Charity Concert	-	£400
Waterways Trust	£1,192	£2650
Holiday Play Scheme	£2,500	£2,500
Totals	£10,842	£15,395

Section 137 enables the Council to spend up to the product of £6.44 per head of the electoral role in any one year; this is for the benefit of some or all of the people of Whitchurch. This money can be spent on projects that may not be authorised by other statutory powers. The Council is hoping to become eligible for the wider general power of competence, which will become the power of first resort for the majority of its activities.

HEALTH & SAFETY, CCTV, CHRISTMAS LIGHTS & PUBLIC CONVENIENCES



To celebrate the Christmas Lights Switch On 2012, the Town Council joined forces with the Chamber of Trade to create a day to remember. The morning of 1st December 2012 started with the monthly Farmers' Market in the Bull Ring and the General Market outside the Civic Centre. A full road closure was in place from Green End, leading to the top of the High Street, which created a central area for extra stalls in the parking bays. Mid-afternoon the Farmers' Market amalgamated into a special Christmas Market, with some non-perishable goods stall holders opting to trade all day. Hot food stalls and a glow stick stall also added to the occasion when they joined the market at 3pm.

A stage was erected outside the Civic Centre as a focal point for the evening's entertainment. Throughout the day a number of local groups provided entertainment, including the Community Choir, and disco music was provided by Andy Hall. A Slade Tribute band, 'Slyde' performed later. Local children took part in a homemade lantern parade, with members of the Blackberry Fair group, which led the procession up to the Civic Centre, where huge crowds gathered for the Switch On. The Mayor, Peggy Mullock, along with actor Ian Bartholomew, pulled the lever to turn on the lights for the 2012 festive season.

The Town Council's Christmas Lights, provided by L.I.T.E Ltd, proved to be very successful for the second year running, out of a four year contract.

On 5th March 2013 the White Lion Meadow Public Conveniences were re-opened to the public with much success. The doors are now operated through the use of coin boxes, and thus far they have received very little vandalism.

Arrangements are being made for all Civic Centre and Heritage Staff to have first Aid Training with Shropshire Council.