



HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2016/2017

Harwich Town Council consists of 16 members elected to serve the interests of local residents and address the communal needs of the town. The following members have been elected by you:-

Councillor	Ward	Party
Simon Ashley	East Central	UKIP
Barry Brown	East Central	Con
John Brown (Deputy Mayor)	West	UKIP
Garry Calver	East Central	Lab
Sean Fay	West	Con
Maria Fowler	West Central	Lab
Ivan Henderson	East	Lab
Jo Henderson	West Central	Lab
Dave McLeod	East Central	Lab
Pam Morrison (Mayor)	West	Lab
Charlie Powell	East	Lab
Fiona Powell	West	Lab
Geoff Smith	East	Lab
Stephanie Struth	West Central	Lab
Alan Todd	East	Lab
Maison Urwin	West Central	Lab

Representation on outside bodies (subject to change in 2017/18)

Organisation	Councillor
Age Concern	Cllr D McLeod
Ark Family Resource Centre	Cllr P Morrison and Cllr S Struth
Henry Smith's Charity (Ancient Parish of Dovercourt)	Cllr S Fay
Harwich & District Community Association	Cllr M Fowler
Harwich & District Crime Prevention Panel	The Mayor
Harwich & Dovercourt Tourism Group	Cllr I Henderson and Cllr C Powell
Harwich Community Consortium	Cllr I Henderson
Harwich Conservation Panel	Cllr M Fowler
Harwich Festival Committee	Cllr D McLeod
Harwich Mayflower Project	The Mayor
Merchant Navy Welfare Board	Cllr A Todd
Neighbourhood Network Meetings	The Mayor and the Clerk
Petrochem Carless Environmental Liaison Committee	Cllr B Brown and Cllr C Powell
Royal British Legion Services Committee	Cllr M Fowler
Tendring District Council Parish and Town Council Community Resilience Meetings	Cllr C Powell
Teen Talk (Harwich)	Cllr J Henderson
Tendring District Association of Local Councils	Cllr D McLeod
Tendring District Council Transport Liaison Group	Cllr S Fay
Tendring Older People's Forum	Cllr D McLeod
Parish Transport Meeting	Cllr S Fay
Port Liaison Committee	Cllr M Fowler Cllr C Powell Cllr A Todd Cllr P Morrison

Mayor's Report

It has been a great pleasure and privilege to serve as Mayor of Harwich for the civic year 2016-17, particularly after having served as Mayoress to my late husband, Andy, on three occasions.

Without doubt, the highlight for my Mayoress, Kim, and me has been to attend so many fantastic local functions in support of so many wonderful local organisations and to learn of all that they do on behalf of the local community. We are blessed in Harwich and Dovercourt with a remarkable community spirit that is the envy of many towns and villages and, as Mayor and Mayoress, we have had the opportunity to see that spirit in action and to do our best to support it. We wish to place on record our gratitude to all of the charities, clubs and organisations who have invited us to be part of so many special occasions and for the warm welcome and hospitality that we have received wherever we have been.

Another privilege to being Mayor and Mayoress is having the honour to represent our town at events outside of its boundaries and to be recognised in so many places. Of course, it isn't the Mayor who is recognised – it is our magnificent chain of office and there have been countless occasions when I have been greeted with, "We know you are the Mayor of Harwich because you are wearing that splendid chain!"

While it is not usually wise to single out a particular event it is impossible not to make reference to the truly unique occasion when we accompanied the Harwich Society to St Paul's Cathedral and sat directly under its magnificent dome alongside the family of Captain Fryatt as prayers were said in his memory to mark the centenary of his execution.

Another very special occasion was the 'Illuminate' procession which allowed me the honour of becoming one of the very few mayors to have led a civic procession out of both the Guildhall and the former town hall (now Quayside Court). This was also the first occasion in living memory when a civic procession took place after dark by torchlight and was incredibly atmospheric and memorable.

The other key role of mayor is to act as chair of Harwich Town Council and I am extremely grateful to my fellow councillors for their support and co-operation in dealing with the business of the Council. It has been a busy and productive year which I am sure will be evident from the other reports within this annual report. Much has been achieved and very little of this would have been possible without the fantastic administrative team of Lucy, Michelle, Briony and Peter. We are all very proud of them and grateful to them for their expertise, commitment and dedication to Harwich Town Council and, as a result, the entire community. This also applies to my chaplain, Rev Rosie Tallwin, who has been a great friend, confidante and inspiration throughout the year. We have a very talented team of clergy serving the Harwich Peninsula and they are having a very positive impact on our local community.

In closing, may I thank the Council for placing its trust in me to serve as Mayor of Harwich and thank the entire community for the friendship and support that Kim and I have received throughout the year. It has been very rewarding and humbling and we are both very grateful.

Cllr Pam Morrison

Town Mayor and Chair of Harwich Town Council

Allotments Committee Report

Harwich Town Council manages 7 allotment sites and plots are rented out to residents who wish to grow their own fruit and vegetables. Harwich Town Council ensures the rent is affordable and offers a discount to state pensioners. The Council is aware that large plots can become unmanageable for some plot holders and the opportunity to halve the size of such plots is available to those tenants who request it. At present the Council has more than 220 plots and this year, in particular, the Council has seen an increase in the number of new tenants. Many plot holders are long-standing tenants and help newcomers when they arrive, as working a plot is hard work and needs commitment. Should you be interested in obtaining an allotment plot, please contact the office on 01255 507211 where we will be happy to give you details of available plots or record your details on the waiting list. To view the sites please go to www.harwichtowncouncil.co.uk and click on 'Allotments'.

The Committee is always open to suggestions and ideas to help with the smooth running of the sites which has resulted in numerous repairs and general upkeep such as fence repairs, boundary hedge reductions, external path clearance and tree management. The meetings of the Committee are public and questions and queries can be voiced.

Specific issues addressed by the Committee in the past year have included the following:

- The installation of boundary plot markers on all allotment plots to ensure easier navigation of the sites.
- Whilst fencing and hedging is an ongoing general maintained requirement, one specific project this year has resulted in the reduction of height and density of the redoubt boundary hedge incorporated with the installation of new metal posts and security wiring.
- The Committee was made aware of a larger than usual number of vacant plots within the Council's allotment stock and acted to promote local allotments. This included changes in policy to allow existing allotment holders to take on more than one plot and for residents living outside of the parish to become allotment holders within Harwich and Dovercourt.
- One proviso to the change in policy for non-parish residents was that anyone taking on a plot living outside of the parish would not be entitled to the subsidy for those of a pensionable age. In accordance with the Council's existing policy, rent continued to be reviewed annually and was again increased this year. The decision was also taken to introduce a policy under which rents may only be paid electronically.
- The Committee is extremely grateful to its site representatives who worked alongside the Committee to formalise the role of the site representatives, within the management of Harwich Town Council allotment stock.
- The Committee introduced the policy under which, when appropriate, vacant plots will be strimmed by the Council, to prevent inconvenience to neighbouring plot holders. To facilitate this a strimmer was purchased and the necessary policies regarding use and health and safety were introduced.

Harwich Town Council identifies key priorities each year and included the management of its allotment stock as one of the priorities for 2017/18.

Every day there is something that needs attention and is administered from the office in the Guildhall by our Assistant Clerk, Michelle Townsend, supported by Briony Burrows and our Estates Supervisor, Peter Barrenger, who deals with the 'hands on' side of things.

Everyone associated with Harwich Town Council wishes to place on record their sadness and condolences at the passing of the Site Representative for the Long Meadows allotment site, William McCoy. Bill has always been a dedicated and passionate Site Representative providing a valuable contribution and both the Council and plot holders at Long Meadows allotment site have benefited from his knowledge over the years. He will be greatly missed.

On behalf of the Committee and myself, may I thank the staff for overseeing the wide-ranging issues and administrative matters that are necessary to ensure the smooth running of Harwich Town Council's allotments? I wish to also place on record our gratitude to our volunteer Site Representatives for all that they do on a day-to-day basis. As Chair of the Allotments Committee, I would like to thank all the Committee members for their commitment to the decision-making process that enables Harwich Town Council's allotment stock to be successfully managed and for our tenants to continue to have the quiet enjoyment of their allotment.

Cllr Alan Todd

Chair of the Allotments Committee

Environment & Community Committee Report

The proactive members of Harwich Town Council's Environment & Community Committee have worked hard to achieve positive results for the Town.

The Committee has continued to oversee Harwich Town Council's Emergency Plan to ensure it is kept up to date and fit for purpose. The Council's Emergency Plan would only be implemented on receipt of instructions from the relevant authorities.

The Committee has been aware of the opportunities to bring to fruition projects through the Local Highways Panel and as a result a number of projects were successfully approved:

- **No Through Road Sign – King Georges Avenue** – The replacement of the 'no through road' sign at the junction has been agreed. Similar signs have been requested to be added on to the road name plate.
- **Williamsburg Ave – parking restrictions** – complete. Members felt that the provision undertaken has not been successful as many HGVs have been seen parking in this area and will continue to report the matter to NEPP.
- **Parkeston Road** – LHP have approved and installed flashing warning signs. Cllr I Henderson has been approached by local residents who feel that this measure is not adequate and a zebra crossing should be installed. Not only does this road have a school, nursery, Scout Hut and shop located on it, but has a cut through to a housing estate and recreation area.
- **George Street Junction** – Road markings have been repainted to increase visibility.

At the time of writing it is hoped that proposals from Harwich Town Council will lead to:

- **Blue Roundabout** – The foundation design is complete and the road space and traffic management will be arranged.
- **Bus Stop Cage – Main Road** – This has been fully validated by the Passenger Transport Department and is awaiting panel consideration for funding.

The Committee also sought the following projects undertaken through the Local Highways Panel, but unfortunately were unsuccessful in getting the panel to agree:

- **Cycle Racks Dovercourt Town Centre** – ECC does not own the land for the three locations specified therefore land dedication or adoption must take place before any asset is implemented. As Network Rail have now updated their cycle rack and there is a further cycle rack at the library, it was agreed not to proceed with this further. With pending public realm investment, HTC would be looking to suggest a future site for cycle racks.
- **Church Street/ Wellington road** – Priority of the traffic flow.

The most prominent project undertaken by the Committee in 2016/17 was to bring to fruition the Council's decision to provide the residents of Harwich and Dovercourt with self-help emergency guidelines in the form of an easily read Z-card. The information for this was gathered in consultation with Emergency Planning department at Tendring District Council, The Environment Agency, The Met Office, UK Power Network and the Emergency services. At the time of writing, these cards are being printed and will be distributed to every residential property in Harwich and Dovercourt.

The Council has also undertaken a large tree planting scheme in conjunction with Tendring District Council, numerous voluntary groups and residents, benefiting many locations throughout the town.

We are pleased by the very positive response that we have had from residents to the installation of a number of community notice boards and the Committee was pleased to be able to roll out this program by installing an additional notice board adjacent to the entrance to Dovercourt cemetery.

The Committee has also been very grateful for the ongoing efforts of its voluntary Horticultural Advisors, Mr Chris Greenfield and Miss Cheryl Thompson, whose positive contribution has been of great benefit to the work of the Committee.

I would like to thank Committee members, Michelle, Briony, Lucy and Peter for their support and hard work throughout a very busy year.

Cllr Maria Fowler

Chair of the Environment & Community Committee

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report

Harwich Town Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee oversees the Council's finances and internal processes including the running of the Hill School site and the upkeep of the Guildhall.

For the year 2016-17 its members have been Cllrs Ashley, B Brown, J Brown (ex officio), Calver (Chair), Fowler, Erskine (replaced by Cllr. Urwin), I Henderson, J Henderson, Morrison (ex officio), C Powell (vice chair).

The year 2016-17 saw the completion of the refurbishment of the Guildhall with the external works completed and the installation of a hearing loop completing the upgrade of facilities for those with disabilities. The maintenance of the building is, of course, ongoing but it is fair to say that the Guildhall is looking better than it has done in years and is more user friendly for both our staff and the public.

Towards the end of the year 2015-16 the Council arranged for an external review of its working practices and, having received its findings and recommendations, the task of implementing them has largely fallen to the F and GP Committee. This has been a major behind the scenes task requiring specifically targeted training for both councillors and staff and requiring the drawing up and implementing of a number of policies. This task is almost complete and I would particularly like to thank Cllr Pam Morrison and Cllr Charlie Powell for the many hours they have put in to implementing the recommendations and to all of Harwich Town Council's staff for embracing the new ethos and working so hard to put in place the foundations for a new, positive and effective approach to the work of the Council.

A key aspect of this was the taking on of a Career Track apprentice which was a trailblazing decision for a minor authority and which is already proving to be a great success. Briony has settled in extremely well and the appointment is proving mutually beneficial which is exactly what is required from an apprenticeship. As Harwich Town Council could not offer sufficient hours to meet the Career Track requirement we are 'gifting' a number of her hours to the community hub operating out of Dovercourt library which is adding to her experience and CV and also providing additional resource to this valuable community asset.

In 2016-17 the Council again funded the hanging flower baskets in Dovercourt Town Centre and paid for the provision of Christmas lights both in the town centre and on Harwich Quay. The Council funded shuttle busses to bring cruise ship crews into Harwich and Dovercourt to shop and provided the funding to allow the town's public CCTV to be fully monitored in order to support the police.

The Council provided a £40,000 Grant budget in order to assist and support local clubs, societies and charities and this resulted in grants being awarded to: The Harwich International Shanty Festival, The Children's Carnival, The Harwich Festival of the Arts, Harwich in Bloom, The Ark Family Resource Centre, Horse Rangers, Harwich Quay New Year Fireworks, The Harwich Society, Arrival of St Nicholas Committee and the Harwich & District Social Stroke Group.

The Council's finances are on a sound footing which meant that the Council was able to produce a balanced budget for 2017-18 that was passed in January 2017. The budget will result in an increase in council tax of only 96 pence per year for a Band D household and will allow £56,000 to be added to the earmarked fund towards the provision of a new skateboard Park, the Council's commitment to this £220,000 project now totalling £100,000.

In closing, may I thank the members of the Committee for their hard work and support, in particular Cllr Charlie Powell who has worked alongside me as Vice Chair of the Committee and Cllr Pam Morrison who stepped in for Charlie during his enforced absence following an accident. It is also a fact that the Committee's efforts would have come to nothing without Lucy, Michelle, Briony and Peter. It has been a particularly challenging year for them and they have responded magnificently. They take great pride in the service that Harwich Town Council gives to the local community and are always prepared to go the extra mile to maintain the Council's standards.

Last but not least, a big 'thank you' to all of the individuals and organisations who have worked alongside the Committee in a variety of ways throughout the year. It has been a very successful year and that success has only been possible because of the support and partnerships that have made such a positive difference.

Cllr Garry Calver

Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Planning Committee

Harwich Town Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications for the parish of Harwich.

The Committee consists of all 16 elected / co-opted members of the Council and it is a convention of Harwich Town Council that the Planning Committee is chaired by the Deputy Mayor.

The Committee has considered in excess of 80 applications during the year since June 2016, ranging from home improvements such as extensions and dropped kerbs, to Tree Preservation Orders, applications to support the Gateway Retail Park and new Wetherspoon, as well as new dwellings and housing developments. The Committee has raised no objection to the majority of applications that it has considered. However, there have been a number of proposals that have led to constructive debate including the developments on the former Health Centre site and Pound Farm.

There have also been a number of changes in our town over the past year, with the completion of the new Rosebank development adjacent to the hospital, that now sees new residents moving in giving a much needed facelift to that part of our town. We also see the application from J.D. Wetherspoon PLC fast approaching completion of the old Co-op site in Kingsway, Dovercourt that will provide much needed employment and much needed hotel rooms in our town and again will improve the look of that part of town significantly.

The Committee endeavors to keep abreast of developments with the emerging Local Plan and will continue to respond to the various stages of the consultation in order to help shape the future planning needs of the parish, in the best interests of the community

I wish to place on record my sincere thanks to all Committee members for their diligent consideration of all applications and to Cllr Dave McLeod, my vice Chair, for standing in for me on a number of occasions during the year due to my work commitments, and to Lucy who has endeavored as always to ensure that all relevant information has been available to the Committee members to allow them to deliberate on each application and to reach an informed decision in the best interest of our town.

Cllr John Brown

Chair of the Planning Committee

Clerk's Report

2016-17 has been a busy year for the Council. Only 4 months into the Municipal year two West Central Ward Councillors resigned and, for the first time in Harwich Town Council's history, the positions were filled by co-option. As a result, Stephanie Struth and Maison Urwin became members of the Council. Cllr Struth took up the vacant seat on the Allotments Committee and Cllr Urwin on the Environment & Community Committee and Finance & General Purposes Committee.

In August, Harwich Town Council became the first parish council in the Tendring District to appoint a Career Track apprentice and welcomed Briony Burrows to the team as an Administrative Assistant. The apprentice is based in the Guildhall for 25 hours per week and at the Harwich Festival's box office for 5 hours per week and Briony is working towards an NVQ Level II in Administration. Briony has settled in to the team very well and is expected to remain with the Council until at least September 2017.

The Council's four key priorities for 2016-17 were Putting Green Improvements, Guildhall Refurbishment, Hill School Refurbishment and the Skate Park and the Council's administrative team has been active in delivering the Council's objectives on these priorities as well as the day-to-day administration. Much of this work goes on 'behind the scenes' and to ensure that sufficient time is available to allow this work to be completed the Council has continued with its policy of closing the office to the public on two days each week. The new telephone system has been a success as it enables members of the public to be directed immediately to the local authority most suited to deal with their enquiry, thus saving time for both the resident and our office team.

The major refurbishment of the Guildhall is close to completion and has received much favourable comment. The refurbishment programme has resulted in a complete redecoration, the installation of a Hearing Loop System and the installation of an accessible toilet along with the introduction of a number of energy efficiency measures. The refurbishment of the Coat of Arms and the reinforcement of the Flagpole are under way and will complete this key priority. Most of the work has been carried out 'in-house' by Estates Supervisor, Peter Barranger.

The Council's new website went live in June and has made it much easier to keep information up to date. As a result, in addition to posting information such as meeting dates, agendas and minutes it is now possible to include weather alerts and other more immediate issues that may assist local residents.

The Council remains committed to the personal and professional development of its staff and Peter, Michelle and I have all attended training courses to ensure that we are up-to-date with the latest best practice. On the subject of 'best practice' I am pleased to report that the auditor is content with the internal practices that the Council is following and, once again, the Annual Report sailed through its external audit. The Annual Report and accounts can be viewed on the Council's website at www.harwichtowncouncil.co.uk

In closing, I wish to personally offer my gratitude to Michelle, Peter and Briony for their hard work, dedication and commitment and I look forward to working with each of them and the members of Harwich Town Council to serve the local community in the coming year.

Ms Lucy Ballard

Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer