



**HARWICH TOWN
COUNCIL**

ANNUAL REPORT

2017/2018

Harwich Town Council consists of 16 members elected to serve the interests of 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 (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	West	Lab
Charlie Powell (Deputy Mayor)	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 2018/19)

Organisation	Councillor
Age UK	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 Community 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 Networking Meetings	The Mayor and the Clerk
Petrochem/Carless Environmental Liaison Committee	Cllr S Ashley and Cllr C Powell
Royal British Legion Services Committee	Cllr P Morrison
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 privilege to have been given the opportunity to serve Harwich Town Council as Mayor for the Civic year 2017 – 18. My sincere thanks go to all the Councillors of Harwich Town for affording me that pleasure.

Carol and I have, as Mayor and Mayoress, had the opportunity to meet some wonderful people and organisations, both locally and further afield. We have made many memories that we will cherish long after our term of Office is over.

Like my predecessors, it would be wrong of me if I didn't refer to the community spirit that we have here in Harwich and Dovercourt, it really is second to none. We are the envy of many towns and villages within the district of Tendring and further afield, it's what makes Harwich the place it is.

Carol and I as Mayor and Mayoress, at the start of our year said that we wanted to be more involved with the Youth and Senior Citizens of our town. We have had the honour and pleasure of visiting many schools and care homes in and around Harwich, meeting many of the pupils, teachers, residents and staff. Over the past twelve months, at events throughout the town, we have also had the opportunity to meet children from further afield. One event in particular was the orphan children from Watoto Village from Uganda that spent three days in Harwich - listening to some of their stories was heart breaking. We also had the opportunity to visit Lime Court Care Home on a number of occasions. On one occasion a dear old lady (Dorothy) asked if we would come to visit to celebrate her one hundredth and sixth birthday, a truly wonderful experience.

Another event that both Carol and I were amazed with was the Sea Shanty Festival. Over the four days we had the pleasure of meeting lots of people from USA, Spain, France, Holland, Russia and from all over the UK, it truly is an international event and is good for business in our town.

As Mayor, one of my main roles is to Chair the Town Council Meetings. It has been another busy year and I'm extremely grateful for the help and advice of my predecessor Cllr Pam Morrison, and to my fellow Councillors for all their co-operation and input in dealing with the Council business. It would also be a miss of me if I didn't mention our brilliant administrative team Clerk Lucy, Assistant Clerk Michelle, Apprentices Briony and Shannon, and Estates Supervisor Peter, without all their help and input we wouldn't achieve the workload we do. My fellow councillors and I are so very very proud of them all for their commitment and dedication to Harwich Town Council.

My thanks also go to my chaplain, Rev Rosie Tallwin, and Margaret Shaw and her team for all their help and advice. Having friends like Rosie and Margaret that you know you can call on when the going gets tough gives you the strength and confidence that you need as Mayor.

May I also thank the many clubs, associations and organisations that Carol and I have had the privilege to have been involved with over the past year. Their dedication and help to the young, the old, the sick and the disabled leaves you feeling very humble when you find out just what they do and the help they give. Most of the work and help is given voluntarily as I mentioned previously, Harwich really does have a good community spirit that is always there to help those that are in need.

May I once again thank my fellow Councillors for placing their trust in Carol and me to serve this wonderful town of Harwich as your Mayor and Mayoress. It has been a wonderful year and a great pleasure and privilege to have had the honour to serve the town and to have had the privilege of wearing that magnificent Chain of Office. It really has been a humbling experience.

Cllr John Brown

Town Mayor and Chair of Harwich Town Council

Allotments Committee Report

Harwich Town Council manages 6 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.

The meetings of the committee are public, and questions and queries can be voiced. 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 and tree management. This year, a review of the site notice boards was undertaken resulting in all notice boards being brought up to a satisfactory standard and size.

The changes made to our policies last year which allowed 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, have proved successful, and, as a result, the number of vacant plots is very low. In accordance with the Council's existing policy, rent continued to be reviewed annually and were again increased this year. 2017/18 was the first year where yearly rents may only be paid electronically. The new system worked very well, and we very much appreciate the cooperation of plot holders in assisting with the bedding in of this new method of payment.

Harwich Town Council identifies its key priorities annually and the management and administration of the allotment stock was made a key priority for 2017/18. This has resulted in good progress and has again, been made one of the council's key priorities for 2018/19. Under this key priority, the documentation involving ownership of land, access rights and land registry issues are under review and files are being updated accordingly.

The major decision taken under this review, was to relinquish the management of the Willow Way site and return the land to Tendring District Council who are the land owner. This site (8 plots), had been significantly under used. All attempts to attract new tenants had failed and it was becoming a significant drain on financial and administration resources.

At present the Council has more than 215 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'.

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 Shannon Lenyk and our Estates Supervisor, Peter Barrenger, who deals with the 'hands on' side of things.

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 also wish to place on record our gratitude to our volunteer Site Representatives for all that they do on a day-to-day basis.

As Chairman 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 is aware of the opportunities to bring to fruition, projects through the Local Highways Panel (LHP) and as a result a number of projects were successfully approved:

Bus Stop Cage – Main Road – This has been completed.

Gateway Sign – This has been installed at the entrance of Historic Harwich.

Williamsburg Ave – Parking Restrictions – Members felt that the provision undertaken was not as successful as originally hoped as HGVs are still parking in this area and the committee will continue to report the matter to North Essex Parking Partnership.

Parkeston Road – The LHP has approved and installed flashing warning signs. The Committee, on behalf of the Council, are still campaigning for additional traffic calming measures and is supporting our local county councillor's work to bring this about.

Blue Roundabout – Work has started on this site. The base has been laid and the project has now been passed to Tendring District Council to complete.

Church Street/ Wellington Road – Changes to the priority of traffic flow. Still ongoing.

A self-help emergency guidelines card was designed by Harwich Town Council and distributed in April 2017. As new properties are built locally, the Council has ensured that any surplus cards are delivered to new residents.

The Committee continues to lobby Tendring District Council regarding untidy sites and is pleased to see the improvement that has occurred at the Old Victoria Hotel Car Park. The Committee continues to lobby in regard of:

20 Victoria Street

79 Stour Road

Co-op Building, Church Street

20 Market Street

8 Church Street

The Council has also undertaken some tree planting in conjunction with Harwich Secret Gardens and the Harwich Town Residents Association and in partnership with Tendring District Council, numerous voluntary groups and local school children have been involved with planting around the town.

The Committee is very grateful for the ongoing efforts of its voluntary Horticultural Advisors, Cheryl Thompson and Chris Greenfield, whose positive contribution has been of great benefit to the work of the committee. I would like to thank committee members, Michelle, Shannon, Lucy and Peter for their support and hard work throughout a very busy year.

Cllr Charlie Powell

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 2017-18 its members have been Cllrs B Brown, J Brown (ex officio), Calver (vice chair), Fowler, J Henderson, McLeod, Morrison (chair), C Powell (ex officio), F Powell, Urwin.

Without a doubt, the project that dominated the committee's year was the new skate park. The ability of Harwich Town Council to increase its own contribution towards this £220,000 project to £100,000 prove to be a game changer and enabled us to attract external grant funding that covered the remainder of the cost. This being the case, the project moved into the delivery stage which involved an enormous amount of paperwork dealing with grants, leases, contracts etc. The majority of this work fell to our clerk, Lucy Ballard, and we are extremely grateful to Lucy and her team for a remarkable effort. The new skate park is already attracting envious glances from neighbouring authorities and it has truly resulted from great team work within Harwich Town Council, led by Cllr Jo Henderson.

The project to upgrade the Putting Green site on Dovercourt Seafront took another major step forward with the opening of the new Crazy Golf and this new facility is already proving to be very popular.

In 2016 Harwich Town Council took on a Career Track apprentice and this has proved to be very successful. Our first apprentice, Briony Burrows, moved on to full-time employment with the Essex Fire Authority in late 2017 and our new apprentice, Shannon Lenyk, has settled in very well.

In 2017-18 the council again provided 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 entered into the partnership overseeing the foot ferry service and has also made funds available for work being carried out by the highly successful Tourism Group, another group that includes Harwich Town Council as a partner.

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: Harwich International Shanty Festival, Grand Theatre of Lemmings, Harwich Festival of the Arts, Harwich Quay New Year Fireworks, Harwich and District Bowls Club, London Bus Theatre Company, Teen Talk, Community Voluntary Services Tendring, Arrival of St Nicholas, Harwich and District Stroke Club and the Dovercourt Theatre Group.

The council's finances are on a sound footing which meant that the council was able to produce a balanced budget for 2018-19 that was passed in January 2018. Although the budget includes a slight increase in Council Tax, a Band D household will still only pay 66 pence per week and the budget will ensure that all of the council's commitments, key priorities and support for the local community continue to be funded as before.

In closing may I thank the members of the committee for their hard work and support, in particular Cllr Garry Calver who has worked alongside me as vice chair of the committee. It is also a fact that the committee's efforts would have come to nothing without Lucy, Michelle, Shannon 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, in spite of a boiler problem meaning that the Guildhall had very limited heating during the coldest part of the winter, they have again risen to every challenge.

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 Pam Morrison

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 numerous applications during the year since June 2017, ranging from home improvements such as extensions and dropped kerbs, to tree preservation orders, applications to support the Skate Park, which has now been completed, as well as some 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 of the Cliff Hotel site, the Hotel Continental site, the McDonald's and Costa site and the application for 300 dwellings at the low road site and some other applications for smaller housing development.

There have also been a number of changes in our town over the past year, with the completion of.

Electric Palace Cinema: Construction of new timber finial.

Morrisons Supermarket: Construction of a new plant room.

Dolphin Sails Ltd: Change of use of land and erection of new building for the manufacture of tensile awnings and marine covers.

Former Public Conveniences Marine Parade: Change of use from redundant public conveniences to cafe/restaurant.

Harwich Quay Public Conveniences: Update

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, the Vice Chair, for standing in on a number of occasions during the year 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 Charlie Powell

Chair of the Planning Committee

Clerk's Report

2017-18 has been a busy year for the Council. Our most notable achievement was the installation of a new skate park in Wick Lane, adjacent to Dovercourt Lifestyles. This is the biggest project that the Council has managed, and it took 5 years to bring to fruition, but it goes to prove that hard work, determination and persistence really do pay off as the new facility has proven very popular. The official launch event was held on 14th April and was a real success and I'd like to personally thank everyone involved for their support and assistance. Our monitoring commitments will continue for some time in line with our grant funders' requirements.

Following the success of the Council's first ever Career Track apprentice appointed in 2016/17, it was again decided to appoint an Administrative Assistant and in November 2017, Shannon Lenyk joined the team. Shannon spends 25 hours per week at the Guildhall and 5 hours per week at the Harwich Festival's box office and is also working towards and NVQ Level II in Administration. Shannon has settled in to the role very well and is expected to remain with the Council until at least October 2018.

The Council's four key priorities for 2017-18 were Putting Green Improvements, Skate Park, Hill School Refurbishment and Allotments, and the Council's administrative team did a sterling job in assisting in their delivery. Whilst the skate park project still has ongoing administrative commitments, the Hill School Restoration and Allotments have been identified as the council's Key Priorities for 2018-19.

In the latter part of 2017, notification was received of a major change in Data Protection legislation which is expected to come into effect later this year.

Over the last few years, there has been a growing emphasis on transparency and accountability and The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) is just one of the many measures put in place which will assist the Council in meeting their obligations in this area. As such, the team has been working hard over the last few months to implement the necessary changes and ensure compliance with the new regulations and I'm pleased with the progress being made.

The Council's ongoing commitment to the personal and professional development of it's staff has led to a number of training courses having been attended, including customer service courses, Moving & Handling and Equality & Diversity. Going forward, staff and members will be renewing Emergency First Aid at Work. The receipt of an Employer Grant has enabled more funding to be allocated to training and further training courses have already been secured in the areas of GDPR, Health & Safety and Risk Assessment. In closing, I would like to offer my personal thanks and gratitude, one again, to Michelle Townsend, Peter Barrenger and Shannon Lenyk who have worked tirelessly to support me in the delivery of the Council's work, and I very much look forward to working with them along with members in the ensuing year.

Ms Lucy Ballard

Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer