



Didcot Town Council Annual Report 2017/2018



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Mayor's Report

From the moment I became Mayor, in May 2017 I have had the most amazing, interesting, busy, rewarding and exciting year in my term of office.

My Mayoral year began with great interest in Didcot from around the UK and abroad, because Didcot had recently been classified as the most normal town in the UK! I was invited to speak on a documentary being made for Dutch television, with regards to being the Mayor of the most normal town in the UK. This in itself was an exciting challenge as I had never been interviewed for a TV program before! Radio and newspaper interviews also followed!



I will still say that, we may have been seen as normal to the outside world due to the statistics, but Didcot is far from that. Many residents within the town each have their own unique capabilities and quirks. We have a great shopping centre that is expanding rapidly and many shops will soon be opening in the spring of this year. We have the Cornerstone Art Centre, a Cinema, we have leisure facilities, and an abundance of parks and open spaces to be enjoyed by everyone, whether from Didcot or further afield. So I'd say look beyond normal and really see what Didcot has to offer!

As my term started, I began to get inundated with invitations to attend events both in and around Didcot and from other Towns in Oxfordshire. I have been extremely lucky in receiving these invites, from organisations which otherwise I would probably never have heard about. The amazing school's choir of Voices in the beautiful Dorchester Abbey, an evening spent with Oxfordshire's finest young musicians at their yearly Awards Ceremony, Beat of the Retreat at the Bicester Army Barracks, historical walk around Banbury, and so much more.

I have interacted with many amazing local organisations, attending their functions and hopefully raising awareness of their fantastic work wherever possible - RESTORE, Meadows Care Home, TRAIN youth project, Didcot Hospital, Balsam Family Project, the local business community, and many others, where I have enjoyed getting to know new people and representing Didcot at their events.

I've "tried" to dance at the local Silver Slipper Club, though successfully failed, however I do have a knack of winning raffle prizes!

I would like to mention my 2 nominated charities - Crohns & Colitis (Oxfordshire) and Didcot (2410) Air Cadets - for whom I have been raising both awareness and much needed funds for them. Both are very close to my heart - my dear friend Julie Andrews suffered with Crohns, and actively raised funds during her lifetime. Unfortunately Julie passed away from pancreatic cancer, and asked that I continue with fundraising, hence I nominated the Oxfordshire branch of Crohns & Colitis as one of my Charities. Then the Didcot Air Cadets, my son attended here from age 13 up until he turned 19. The opportunities available to our young in Didcot are second

to none - flying, gliding, shooting, swimming, radio controls, aviation studies, first aid, road marching, so much is offered. Then the other side is how the Air Cadets help locally, marshal events, litter pick, assist putting up tents at the hospital fete, and again removing, they give back to the community in several ways.

It has been an absolute honour and privilege to be Didcot Mayor for the year, I have thoroughly enjoyed my time representing the townsfolk of Didcot. It has also been an honour to have officially opened up new premises, The Station Garden restaurant, the new Asda store, Martin & Co Estate Agent, the refurbished Didcot Pet Store, every opening brings success, business and customers into Didcot. Didcot is a growing and thriving community, one which I am proud to be associated with.

I would also like to thank all the hard-working staff from the Didcot council offices, and those that work at the Civic Hall, as without these wonderful people it would've been much more hard for myself to keep on top of my diary etc! And finally, thanks to both of my children who have been a great asset to me during my term in office.

Councillor Jackie Billington
Mayor of Didcot
March 2018

Leader's Report

This time last year the Town Council unanimously voted against the SODC plans to build on our green open space on Ladygrove, which resulted in the District Council removing the proposal from the Garden Town Project.

The Didcot Garden Town Project is still very much alive. It may seem that there is nothing going on, but I can assure our residents that the District Council are working vigorously to move the project forward.



With the growth of the Town beyond its current boundary, I will be lobbying both South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils to move the Town Boundary to include both Great Western Park and the planned Valley Park developments up to the A34.

The Town Council are investing in 3 projects of its own this year:

- The rebuilding of the Council Yard, associated storage and welfare facilities on Edmonds Park
- Undertaking a public consultation on the dilapidated changing and shower facilities on Edmonds Park
- Undertaking a public consultation on the dilapidated changing and shower facilities on Lloyd Recreation Ground

I would take this opportunity to thank the Officers, Civic Hall Staff and our Outdoor Team for another excellent year.

I also thank all of the Armed Forces and their families, Police, Fire Brigade, NHS and Schools as well as all of our volunteers, for the hard work they put into making our Community a safe and better place to live.

Councillor Bill Service
Leader of Didcot Town Council
March 2018

Report from the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee



Last year, I highlighted the sorry state of the sports changing facilities on Edmonds Park and Loyd Recreation area. They're currently in a terrible state, give a really bad impression of the town and will eventually become completely unfit for purpose. It would be unacceptable not to do anything, as that would deprive local sports teams of the opportunity to compete in their respective leagues. Didcot Town Council will move forward with the re-development of these facilities.

Didcot Town Council's sources of income are limited, with the vast majority of its funding coming from Council Tax receipts. This year, the Finance and General Purposes Committee recommended a modest increase of 5 pence for the entire year, for an average band D property.

The Town Council's objectives are, as you would expect, addressed by this budget; as well as continued support for the Civic Centre, it provides for a Town Fayre, which is in the process of being planned by a committee of the Town's residents, and it will improve Didcot's recreational areas. Smallbones recreation ground will see new facilities installed, refurbishments will be made to the skate park and the playing fields at Edmonds Park will be re-seeded. Works will be carried out to improve our allotments and new bus shelters will be installed at certain places around the town. CCTV cameras covering Cow Lane bridge and the surrounding area of Ladygrove Park will be installed with the aim of improving residents' personal safety and reducing antisocial behaviour.

The proposed budget also continues to provide sizable community grant aid support. As I've outlined previously, Didcot's budget remains relatively generous when compared to other large town councils in Oxfordshire and over the coming year I hope to see more applications where part funding has been secured before an application has been made to Didcot Town Council.

Councillor Dr Simon Clarke
Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee
March 2018

Report from the Chairman of the Environment Committee



Anyone who's involved with the council will be well aware that over the past year the environmental team have been subject to more speed bumps than in recent memory.

That makes me all the more proud when I say that the combination of both Conservative and Labour Councillors (who freely gave up innumerable hours with their families) and the Officers (who went above and beyond) have managed to turn this challenging period into one of the best years this committee has ever had.

I appreciate that a statement like that is easy to say and to be honest probably expected within a document like this, but the sheer number and quality of the town improvement projects completed/budgeted in the previous 12 months really is quite astounding.

I have listed what I feel to be some of the Key projects below and why I felt they justified our 5p annual increase in tax.

Allotments:

- New fences installed at New Road Allotment
 - A security risk that we felt was overdue being replaced
- New Water troughs on hard standing bases
 - They hadn't been replaced in years and most were sinking, as they weren't on an appropriate base
- New Notice Boards at each site
 - Plot holders had said on more than one occasion that they wanted to be kept aware of rules, key dates, and contacts. These notice boards will provide them with all the information they need
- Half sized plots introduced to encourage new users and retain the less able
 - One of the key factors in people not becoming an allotment holder was the inability to take on a full plot. So the committee agreed to simplify the process and then promote half sized plots, which could be managed with a reduced time commitment
- Re-pegging of each allotment plot to standardise them
 - Holders were paying the same amount despite the plot's being of differing sizes. Budget and time was allocated to rectify this
- Creation of pathways that could be used by people of all mobility levels
 - The Re-pegging project will also enable the Council to reinstate suitable pathways and reduce the risk of injury. These will then continue to be cut by the council to ensure on-going risk mitigation
- A fairer deposit scheme was instigated to ensure new holders receive a higher standard of plot
 - New holders will pay a small deposit similar to that paid when renting. If the

plot is returned in a similar state to when it was given the deposit is returned if it isn't then that money will be used to pay for the work to bring it back up to a suitable standard for the next Holder

Parks and green spaces:

- Marsh Rec – New play park installed with partial funding from WREN
 - To me the importance of this project is easily seen if anyone has walked or driven past the park. Local families now have somewhere to go that does not require travel or spending money
- Smallbones Rec – Allocated funding for a new play park
 - This is the last park in Didcot to be refurbished by the council and will ensure that families across the town have parks they can be proud of
- Smallbones Rec – Designated this land as a Centenary field
 - Given the amount of development within Didcot I am glad to have been involved in placing protection around Smallbones Rec from future speculative development
- Ladygrove play area – Budget allocated to repair the large climbing frame
 - Without this investment the climbing frame would have been closed off and unavailable for use
- Edmonds Park and Loyd Rec – Football pitches are to be treated and reseeded
 - Didcot has a tremendous sporting pedigree and our youth deserve suitable pitches to play on
- Edmonds Park and Loyd Rec – Professional fees for developing new Pavilions
 - Having used these changing rooms many years ago I strongly felt something desperately needed to be done to improve the quality. This budget will enable that process to move forward
- Stubbings land – Removal of barriers
 - Initially implemented when mobility scooters were not as prevalent the council chose to rectify this limitation around access
- Didcot Skate Park - Budget allocated to its refurbishment
 - Last refurbished in 2011, the Skate Park is one of the areas most utilised by teenagers from both Didcot and the surrounding villages. It was starting to badly show signs of wear and tear from 7 years of usage so in a pre-emptive act we chose to refurbish it before something broke or cracks appeared
- Didcot War Memorial – Budget allocated to the refurbishment of the garden of remembrance
 - Given the increasing number of people turning up to show their respect to the dead each year the committee felt it would be prudent to improve the area

Miscellaneous:

- New bus shelter installed opposite Ladygrove shops
 - Residents were asked to put forward existing bus stops that they felt adding a shelter would make a significant impact
- Budget allocated to another bus shelter for the upcoming year
 - The positive response to the 2017/18 project let us to renew it for another year
- CCTV cameras covering cow lane bridge and the surrounding area
 - As one of the two key routes linking Ladygrove with the rest of Didcot it is

regularly used by people at all times of the day and night. I hope that this project will dramatically increase the feeling of safety from those people using the tunnel

- Ladygrove Lakes – New signage and eco-tablet treatment of the water.
 - To continue improving the quality of the Lakes the council invested in eco-tablet treatments and after seeing significant improvements agreed to renew this process. The signs will look to inform what foods are most suitable for the birds and should reduce the damage caused by bread
- Depot Rebuild - Project fees and Temp accommodation
 - A recent review of our facilities showed that our outdoor services staff were not being provided with appropriate equipment or base of operations. To ensure this was rectified as rapidly as possible the council have begun to undertake a project to rebuild the Depot to meet appropriate standards

Key improvements to council procedures

- Sports teams now have 30 days following the first booking to pay for the pitches rather than having to find the money in advance
 - The hope is this will help with the teams cash flow and provide the a more predictable schedule of income for the council
- Clause added to credit bookings that were cancelled by the referee
 - Teams should not be penalised for situations out of their control
- Reduction in overall park and allotment maintenance budget
 - Actions were taken to review where we could save money by using our own staff rather than external workers and a number of savings were identified which would not impact the quality of service provided
- Recurring events (if the same as the last years event) can now follow a simplified booking process
 - This was a relatively small change but it should significantly reduce the workload on both the organisations trying to book an event and the officers who process them

Councillor Steve Connel
Chairman of the Environment Committee
March 2018

Report from the Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee

Didcot Town Council's Planning and Development Committee typically meets every 3 weeks, usually on Wednesday evenings.

The committee is a statutory consultee to South Oxfordshire District Council. The committee does not determine the final outcome of applications, instead it makes a recommendation to SODC for consideration. Any applications where the recommendation of DTC and the assigned SODC officer conflict will usually then be determined by the SODC planning committee. In these instances one or more DTC Councillors will attend to present the committee's case.



For the committee to recommend refusal of any application, we must be able demonstrate sound material planning considerations. The committee may also pass comment asking for certain aspects to be considered, without a recommendation for refusal.

This is my second year as the chairman and each year has brought its own challenges.

The vast majority of the applications reviewed, are house-holder applications for extensions, conservatories etc.

We have continued to see a substantial number of applications for infill development. Infill development is the construction of one or more dwellings in a gap in an otherwise built up frontage of closely surrounded other buildings.

The committee finds most infill development acceptable but, we are looking to ensure such applications meet the required number of parking spaces, as set by Oxfordshire County council, the minimum amenity space and distances to neighbouring properties as set out by the SODC design guide. The committee will also consider if the application is likely to cause a loss of light or privacy to neighbouring dwellings.

We have seen 2 larger scale housing applications decided over the last year.

We saw the approval of an application for up to 166 houses on land between the A4130 and Great Western Park.

The committee accepted the principle of development on that site but, recommended refusal on the grounds of Highways safety. The application proposed a new un-controlled junction onto the A4130 and it was felt that due to traffic levels and speeds on the A4130 the proposed access would be unsafe. The committee requested that the developer consider consulting with the land owner, to take access from the roundabout at the entrance to GWP. Regrettably the developer refused and the application was approved at SODC committee as there was no objection from

Oxfordshire County Council Highways.

The refusal of 135 homes on land to the south of Park road was gratefully received by DTC and residents. The committee had recommended refusal on the grounds of traffic generation and impact on the view from the North Wessex AONB. The application was refused by the SODC planning committee after a recommendation for approval by the SODC case officer. The application is currently under appeal with a hearing expected later this year.






The application for Park Road is a good example of one of the issues currently facing Didcot Town Council. With most of Didcot's boundaries being the built up to the boundary line, the applications coming forward for housing around the town are actually falling within to the neighbouring parishes of, East Hagbourne and Harwell; this leads to DTC having a limited representation at a SODC committee meeting.







An application for 84 homes on land East of St Hughs is currently under consideration with SODC with a decision expected in the coming weeks. This application is another example of an application that falls within the parish of East Hagbourne but directly borders Didcot. DTC's planning committee is supporting East Hagbourne parish council in its recommendation for refusal.

With development due to begin on Ladygrove North East later this year, the committee has already started to receive reserved matters applications, these are likely to continue throughout the build out.

Councillor Anthony Dearlove
Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee
March 2018

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- Tom Hudson ~ Deputy Town Clerk
- Tony Rudge ~ Outdoor Services Manager
- Sharon Hickman ~ Finance & Administration Officer
- Beth Gillham /Lucy Griffiths ~ Information Centre Manager
- Teresa Tye ~ Administration Assistant
- 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

Unaudited accounts as at 7th March 2018

Year end 2017 £		2018 £
	Current Assets	
86,908	Debtors	15,340
1,052,643	Cash at Bank and in-hand	1,270,361
1,139,551	Total current assets	1,285,701
	Current Liabilities	
152,343	Creditor and accrued expenses (Repayable within one year)	52,470
987,208	Net Current Assets (Total Assets less Current Liabilities)	1,233,231
	Capital and Reserves	
123,072	Current Year Fund	246,023
864,136	General Reserves	432,720
	Earmarked Reserves	554,488
<u>987,208</u>	Total Equity	<u>1,233,231</u>

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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: