



**BIDEFORD TOWN COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL**

**PARISH**

**MEETING**

7.00 pm on Tuesday 18 April 2023

Bideford

Councillor Mrs Jude Gubb chairing

## Bideford Town Council

### Summary Income & Expenditure Account

01/04/2022 to 31/03/2023

Last Year Ended 31st March 2022		Current Year Ended 31st March 2023
	<b><u>Income</u></b>	
518,223.00	Precept	551,805.55
2,840.80	Allotments	3,608.25
49.41	Bank Interest	934.46
71,346.05	Pannier Market	78,697.42
32,978.21	Welcome Back Fund	6,891.58
3,000.00	Loan repayments	3,000.00
0.00	Wayleave	0.00
5,634.84	Grants received	4,010.94
0.02	General Fund	0.00
£ <u>634,072.33</u>	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	£ <u>648,948.20</u>
	<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>	
295,152.32	General Administration	312,079.52
0.00	Long Term Loans	0.00
56,443.77	Town Projects	60,319.09
2,220.54	Ceremonies	3,406.87
1,396.70	Environmental	5,592.91
8,165.00	Ford House Woodland	1,435.00
86,335.00	Grants	82,702.82
62,895.32	Tourism & Public Realm	82,768.20
39,869.79	Welcome Back Fund	0.00
12,137.50	Projects from Earmarked reserves	17,340.15
641.44	General Contingency	0.00
75,915.42	Pannier Market	76,234.98
465.11	Bank Charges	2,594.77
£ <u>641,637.91</u>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	£ <u>644,474.31</u>
-7,565.58	Net Income / Expenditure	4,473.89
	<b><u>General Funds Balance</u></b>	
463,472.93	Balance at 1st April 2022	455,907.35
634,072.33	Add Total Income	648,948.20
1,097,545.26		1,104,855.55
641,637.91	Less Total Expenditure	644,474.31
455,907.35		460,381.25
0.00	Transfer To/From Reserves	0.00
£ <u>455,907.35</u>	Balance at 31st March 2023	£ <u>460,381.25</u>

Bideford Town Council Committee Members:

Allotments Committee:

Councillors: J Craigie, Mrs J Gubb (Chairman), Mrs L Hellyer, J Herron, S Inch and J McKenzie.

Plot Holders: Tricks: Mr S Long and Mr K Jackson.

Planning Committee:

Councillors: D Bushby, P S Christie (Chairman), Mrs J Gubb, Mrs L Hellyer, Mrs S Langford, and T Johns.

Market Management Committee:

Councillors: D Bushby, C Hawkins, Mrs J Gubb, Mrs L Hellyer, S Inch and J McKenzie (Chairman).

Traders/Tenants: Mrs E Hilton

Staffing, Finance and General Purposes Committee:

Councillors: D Bushby (Chairman) P Christie, Mrs J Gubb, C Hawkins, Mrs L Hellyer, S Inch, D McGeough, P Lawrence and J McKenzie.

Tourism Committee:

Councillors: D Bushby, Mrs J Gubb, C Hawkins, S Inch (Chairman), P Lawrence and Mrs S Langford.

Decarbonisation and Environment Committee:

Councillors: J Craigie (Chairman), Mrs R Craigie, Mrs L Hellyer, J Herron, J McKenzie and Mrs S Langford.

## AGENDA

1. Welcome by the Town Mayor.
2. To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19 April 2022.
3. To receive the report from the Town Mayor on the activities of the Council during 2022/2023.
4. To receive a review of the work undertaken by the Council's Committees during 2022/2023:
  - a. Staffing, Finance & General Purposes Committee.
  - b. Market Management Committee.
  - c. Planning Committee.
  - d. Tourism Committee.
  - e. Allotment Committee.
  - f. Decarbonisation and Environment Committee.
5. To consider any matters raised by Registered Electors who reside within the parish of Bideford.



2019—2023 End of Council Term photograph courtesy of Graham Hobbs.

## Minutes of the Annual Parish (Town) Meeting

held in the Town Hall, Bideford on

Wednesday 19 April 2022 at 7.00 pm.

Councillor D Ratcliff (Town Mayor) presided.

**ATTENDANCE:** 13 people attended the meeting.

### 001 WELCOME BY THE TOWN MAYOR

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that all parish electors are entitled to attend the Parish Meeting and vote. The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 provides for the general public and the press to attend.

He noted that there were two non-Council employees / councillors in attendance and that they were from outside the Parish.

Having conferred with a fellow councillor, he suggested to the Members as each had a copy of the Annual Parish Meeting Report there was no need for him nor the respective Committee Chairmen to enunciate their review of the past year.

Members expressed their wholehearted agreement.

### 002 MINUTES

Minutes of the Annual Parish (Town) Meeting held on 20 April 2021 were approved.

### 003 REPORT FROM THE TOWN MAYOR ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL DURING 2021/2022

Detail contained within the Annual Parish Meeting Report (available on the Council website).

### 004 REPORTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL DURING 2021/2022

Detail contained within the Annual Parish Meeting Report (available on the Council website).

### 005 MATTERS RAISED BY REGISTERED ELECTORS WHO RESIDE WITHIN THE PARISH OF BIDEFORD

There were no Members of the Bideford Electorate.

The business of the meeting having been completed the Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and the Meeting concluded at 7.03 pm.

Signature of Town Mayor:

Date:

Councillor Attendance 8th April 2022 - 13 April 2023													
	Town Council	S.F & Gp	Mkt Man	Planning	Allotment Tourism	Decarb & N.Plan	Environ	S.Group	Total Meetings Attended	Total Meetings Possible	No. of me not attend by dlr	Overall attendance %	Subbed
Cllr	Bushby D	8	9	12	12				49	56	7	88	
	Christie P	9	10		16				36	36		100	
	Corfe K	5	1		1				7	14	7	50	
	Craigie J	6							7	11	4	64	
	Craigie R	7							8	11	4	73	
	Gubb J	9	10	9	15	1	8		53	55	2	96	2
	Hawkins C	8	7	9	9		8		32	37	5	86	
	Hellyer L	8	8	6	11		1		35	49	14	71	
	Herron J	1	1	2					3	21	18	14	
	Inch S	8	6	1	1	1	7		24	29	5	83	4
	Johns T	8			11				20	22	2	91	2
	Langford S	9			16		8	1	35	35		100	
	Lawrence P	9	10				6		25	27	2	93	
	McGeough D	6	4						10	18	8	56	
	McKenzie J	9	8	12		1			31	33	2	94	3
	Ratcliff D	6	1	1	2				10	13	3	77	
<b>KEY</b>												<b>77</b>	
<b>1</b>	Total number of meetings attended by councillor in 22-2023												
<b>2</b>	Total number of meetings possible to attend by councillor in 20 022-2023												
<b>3</b>	Unattended meeting number												
<b>4</b>	Overall attendance percentage												
<b>5</b>	Total number of meetings attend by councillor as a sub												
<b>6</b>	**Mayor's attendance including meetings missed due to Mayoral duties												

## **ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2022 - 23**

The Annual Parish Meeting is the occasion where the Chairman provides an account of the Council's activities during the past year and when the Committee Chairmen also report on the activities of their Committees. Registered electors are also able to raise matters of importance in the parish. This Annual Report is based on the reports provided for the Annual Parish Meeting and will be presented in the Town Hall on 18 April 2023. It will be available from the Town Clerk's Office and on the website.

### **Mayor's Annual Report - Councillor Jude Gubb**

Good evening, I was immensely proud to be made Mayor in May last year, the first lady Mayor for 14 years and the third in my family.

2022 was a whirlwind of a year, with a lot of "firsts" for the Bideford Mayor. We plunged into events, the first being the celebrations for the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee, I think Bideford did her proud with the Procession, the Port Memorial Decorative Bed, Bideford Fair and the Beacon Lighting in the evening. A good time was had by all, and the weather was fabulous.

Following closely on that was the Mayor's Introduction and Parade and then the very sad death of Her Majesty. Another first, was the Accession Proclamation, not read out by a Mayor since 1952.

The Mayor's diary filled quickly as 2022 was the first real clear year from Covid and other Town Mayors were also getting their functions and events in, so I was busy. One of the most unusual duties as Mayor was to accept the Rotary Toilet Twinning Certificates – Rotary raise funds to provide loos in areas where there is no sanitation – we take our own loos so much for granted.

The Allotment Sites remain ideal places for fresh air, exercise, whilst enjoying the produce and the fruits of the individuals' labours.

### **Decarbonisation and Environment Committee - Councillor James Craigie (Chairman)**

This year the Decarbonisation and Environment Committee has supported the Atlantic Coastal Express Railway campaign in demonstrating the carbon savings that can be made from re-linking Bideford to the national rail network.

We have also supported energy efficiency to limit the impacts of the high gas and electricity prices, by granting the Pannier Market funds to install LED lighting that has previously been difficult to replace due to accessibility.

We continue to look for ways we can support residents and community groups within the Town to reduce their carbon emissions.

It was good to see so many of the recent presentments on environmental matters.

The Tricks Site remains the marker to be judged by. There is continued excellence invested in the Plots. The Maintenance Team cut the hedgerows along the two footpaths but in addition this year, following a survey, the Site had tree / boundary works that included: the felling of a number of dead trees including Ash, Hawthorn and Elms.

The Handy Cross Site has full occupancy. The Committee Members take the lead in site initiatives including grass cutting and attending to the entrance. The Site also was the subject of tree / boundary works that required the felling of groups of dead / dying trees. Generally, the Site is looking good.

The Pollyfield Site has had a reasonable year despite the weather providing for a hard season but picking up at the end. The Season started well with good weather allowing for potato crops to be planted early. A late frost did provide a setback although there was a brief recovery with the warm weather. The consequence of hotter weather saw runner beans suffer badly!! As rain returned late August / early September there was some success with the planting of late crops of runner beans; winter cabbages and sprouts did show signs of recovery. The Site generally is looking better with good participation from new tenants.

The Allotment Committee resolved to make no change to the rents for the 2023/2024 of £37 for a full plot and £19.50 for a half plot; the deposit rate remains £25.00.

A budget of £6,395.00 for 2023/2024 was set the shortfall of £3,000.00 requested from Central Funds combined with an expected income of £3395.00.

We are very appreciative towards the Representatives who help manage the Sites providing a link between Council (Landlord) and Tenants, the Chairman of the Associations, also.

We have held two Bingo nights here in the Town Hall, for my charities and I believe that is another first!

I have thoroughly enjoyed my term so far as Mayor, it is so varied and interesting. It has given me a great opportunity to promote Bideford when I have visited other Towns or indeed attended events for other organisations.

As a Town Council, we continue to deliver where we can on projects and the Maintenance Team have been brilliant, working on keeping the Town looking trim and pretty during the summer months with the planters, tubs, flower beds, benches, gum removal and little jobs that most people don't notice. Oh, and all that bunting for Jubilee! The Team were stars when we had the cold snap in November, salting the pavements and the areas outside schools and residential homes, as well as public buildings, filling up the salt bins and making sure as many areas as possible were safe.

As we continue forwards to the elections in May, it remains for me to finish on a sad note, and that is to say that our long-standing (some may say long-suffering) Town Clerk, Heather Blackburn, is leaving us in May. She has decided to hang up her gown and wig and pursue her love of travelling – I believe there are many holidays booked!

Good Luck to Heather. Our next Town Clerk, Paul Swan, will be starting in August and in the interim Richard Coombes, who is currently the Deputy Town Clerk, will be Acting Town Clerk. The office will be busy with 3 staff members covering the work of 4 – but they are a great team and work well together for our benefit.

We are in for a busy and exciting time ahead; it just remains for me to thank my fellow Councillors for their support. Thank you also to the office staff, civic officers and of course the Maintenance team – all of them are always so very helpful.

### **Staffing, Finance & General Purposes Committee - Councillor Doug Bushby (Chairman)**

The SFGP Committee is responsible for progressing Council projects, scrutinizing all major financial commitments and projects to ensure they fit with best value, as well as monitoring the financial affairs of the Council. This committee prepares and recommends the annual budget, considers the grant applications, looks after staffing issues and oversees the implementation of the Manor Court presentments.

Bideford Town Council has set its budget for the financial year 2023 / 2024 at £593,835, which is an increase of 6.9 % (or 13p per week) on a band D. The Town Council continues to undertake much of the maintenance work around the town, all of which needs to be financed via our precept.

During the last year our Maintenance Team have continued to undertake routine tasks, as well as support projects and events initiated by the Town Council. Regular routine tasks include the maintenance and refurbishment of the town benches, finger posts and bus shelters, grass cutting, weed removal, watering the floral planters, maintenance work at the Pannier market and work at Ford Woods.

The woodland is well cared for by the Town Council and provides a valuable green space for all. The woods are used by dog walkers, ramblers and forest schools amongst others. In 2022 The Town Council bid for, and were granted some sapling trees, and these have been planted in a nursery area by the Maintenance Team.

A project that I'm sure you will all have noticed is the repair of the underbridge lights. The yellow sodium bulbs were replaced with white LEDs, which look lovely and use less electricity.

also welcomed as we strive to bring entertainment for all to the Town.

### **Allotment Committee - Councillor Simon Inch (Chairman)**

The Allotment Committee oversee the gardening opportunity which remains popular with the Pollyfield, Tricks and the self-managed Handy Cross / Marland Sites.

In the last year the staff have visited each of the Sites witnessing the industry and application of the Allotment Tenants. The Sites genuinely have moved forward and have raised their game; they are all looking impressive. The Chairman of the Associations have provided a vision and commitment that has seen a self-help development and good husbandry run throughout their respective Sites.

A new Committee was elected last September for at the Marland Site. They have expressed their appreciation of the Council Maintenance Team who, in addition to repairing a gate post, cut back the very neglected and overgrown hedge. The Association felt they had done "a fantastic job;" a community bonfire was lit on 5 November to burn the 'mountain' of hedge cutting."

A number of (Marland) community events were held in the last 12 months: an afternoon tea to celebrate the late Queen's Jubilee, a barbecue, bonfire party and Mulled wine and mince pies on Christmas Eve. A community work day was held also to paint the Communal shed and clear an overgrown area next to Union Close. It is slowly being developed into a wild life area.

The Committee are keen to encourage individuals with disabilities to become involved at the allotments and are currently working on the final stage of a National Lottery Community Fund grant to enable raised beds to be built.



In July – something very new – Bideford’s Got Talent! Up at the Pannier Market on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> July – judging, cash prize, smoke, music and a great fun evening is planned. If anyone here comes from Bideford and thinks they have what it takes to be a Star, please get in touch with the Office.

And Chudleigh Picnic will go ahead in September with stalls, music, food, ice-cream and lots more.

Finishing the year off we will be celebrating the actual date of the Charter signing, with a special evening here in the Town Hall – a ticketed event – with Prof Mark Horton. Some of you may remember him from the Time Team on TV. He has a great interest in Elizabethan Bideford and the exploits of Sir Richard Grenville’s visits to the Americas.

The Committee are working towards a special occasion in 2024 – a Beacon Lighting to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> year since the D-Day Landings. This will be a National Beacon Lighting event and plans are already in place. The date will be Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

The Committee greatly appreciates the support from the Office Staff. They also thank the Maintenance Team for their design work and planting of the Decorative Bed at the Port Memorial each year. I would personally like to thank my fellow Councillors for their commitment and for supporting the events that we organise as a Committee.

The Tourism Committee continues to welcome suggestions from fellow Councillors, and the public, for other activities it could explore, especially as it is this time of year, we start to look at 2024 for events. Any comments on its work to date are

I am sure many people also spotted that the entrance sign to Bideford on Kingsley Road was stolen during the summer months. The Town Council replaced all three parts of the sign due to the colour fade of the two sections of sign that were not stolen. All parts of the sign are now securely rivetted to the posts.

Following a request by a Member of the public and some investigation by Councillor Christie, the SFGP committee commissioned two Roll of Honour boards to record the names of those Bidefordians who have died in conflict since the First World War. The Roll of Honour boards have been sited in Victoria Park and Chudleigh Fort.

The installation of lighting to facilitate helicopter landing at Pollyfield was completed at the beginning of 2023 in conjunction with Devon Air Ambulance and Shamwickshire Rovers. This involved the installation of three LED floodlights which can be operated remotely in an emergency. The lighting will assist the Air Ambulance by illuminating the pitch during landing and take-off, as well as helping medical teams when carrying and loading a patient into the helicopter.

The Town Council has awarded grants to 36 voluntary organisations during the last year, the majority of whom are here this evening to collect their cheques. Thanks, must go to these volunteers for the sterling work they do within our community. As well as grants to local organisations, the Town Council has also made a contribution of £15,000 towards the Short Close and Chestnut Drive play areas and contributes £4,000 annually towards maintaining the Town’s historical documents which are looked after by the South West Heritage Trust.

One of the major projects currently being undertaken by the Town Council is the build of a permanent Maintenance Team

Facility. At present, the team are operating from rented accommodation and require a permanent housing solution where The Town Council has permanency of tenancy. As we will be starting from scratch, the Town Council will construct a bespoke, future proof solution, to meet the current and future requirements of the Maintenance Team. A suitable area of land has been identified for the build at Caddsdawn and a price agreed with the current owner. A design has been drawn up and planning permission submitted. Once the planning permission is granted, The Town Council will apply for a Public Works Loan and then the build process will go to tender. This is an exciting project which will not only give the team security of tenure, but once the facility is built, the value of the completed unit will be greater than the build costs, therefore providing the Town Council with a significant asset.

Following the Manor Court presentments that were submitted at the Ceremony in March by Bideford Electors, we have some new projects to consider and progress and look forward to another productive year for both Town and Council.

The next few months will bring significant changes to the Town Council, because as you know, the local elections take place on 4th May. We already know the results for Bideford Town Council as there were no contested seats, so the fourteen applicants will be elected unopposed. Amongst this number are ten of our existing Councillors, four new Members, and we currently have two vacancies on the Council, so we will be carrying out a Co-option process following the Annual Town Council meeting in May. We will also be welcoming a new Town Clerk, Paul Swan from the 1 August, following the retirement of our current Town Clerk, Heather Blackburn.

### **Market Management Committee - Councillor Jamie McKenzie (Chairman)**

The Market as a centre for typical market trading in the Town

We ran Chudleigh Picnic for its second year, with more people getting on board. This seems to be a popular event especially for East the Water folk and we hope to continue with this in the future.

Unfortunately, the Cream Tea Festival was shelved, but we hope to bring this to life again, especially with the re-purposing of the Pannier Market Hall. It will be a great venue for a potentially great event.

With a more certain future, plans have been forging forward for some great events this year.

Of course, we have the Coronation at the beginning of May, and the Tourism Committee are arranging for a tree planting in each of the Primary Schools. We will also be installing two Celebration benches and looking at decorative railings at Victoria Park. We are also looking at a Coronation gift for the Primary School-aged children.

Bideford celebrates its 450<sup>th</sup> Charter year – when Queen Elizabeth I signed a Charter giving the Town the right to have a Mayor, a Council, one Market Day per week and three Fairs a year.

The Committee have been working on events to keep this in people's minds. Starting off with Bideford Fair and a Procession, it is hoped to have a re-enactment of the Signing of the Charter throughout the day and a great day of entertainment and activities in Victoria Park. That will be Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

The committee, unlike Torridge's Planning committee, look at every single planning application in Bideford before sending their recommendations to Torridge. Councillors are now examining applications in the light of the climate emergency whilst we have also queried the way in which large sums of money are being ring-fenced to pay for as yet unexplained 'improvements' to the Heywood Road roundabout – bearing in mind that the biggest problem at this roundabout is that the Torridge Bridge is only a single lane carriageway.

I have said before that planning is never boring – and this continues to be proved true.

#### **Tourism Committee - Councillor Simon Inch (Chairman)**

The Tourism Committee has continued to deliver planned projects and to work on new initiatives aimed at enhancing the Town for both residents and visitors.

The Committee plan for events several months in advance and so it was a little bit tricky to get started for 2022, with Covid lurking in the wings and still unsettling times.

Over the past year, the work of the Committee has included:

Arranging the celebrations for the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee which included The Mayor's Procession, full programme of events at Bideford Fair, (thanks go to Lucy Lowe of South West Event Management for pulling everything together), the Beacon Lighting in the evening and another entertainment packed event. There was the Port Memorial Decorative Bed and the Bunting throughout the Town, a Souvenir Programme was produced and special Jubilee bookmarks for every Primary School-aged child in Bideford – we included St Mary's School, also.

has stumbled and fallen over decades in part due to change of legislation, buying opportunities, consumer choice, aggressive impact of the supermarket (there are ten national chains within an eight-mile radius), and online shopping. Energetic Traders associated with a thriving market, seeking to make a living from their craft are not attracted, nor the young (the future of) entrepreneur.

The Market Trader income / numbers have considerably dropped, latterly to one or two traders in addition to the Market Hall Tenants. The Torridge Arts Group do join the Market every six to eight weeks, on a Saturday, boosting the numbers and showing the potential for the Market. They are, though "Hobbyists," and not (individually) given to trading in the Market on a regular basis.

The Butcher's Row and Market Place Shops remain popular with tenants, many long term. Their offer sees a mix of Artisan / Arts and Crafts with a highly successful niche IT / gaming operation, grocer, hairdressers, popular sweet / fudge shops and a fishing / angling / shooting outlet.

In light of the poor market trading numbers the Market Management Committee set out to "repurpose" the Hall by removing the Studio Units, making an undertaking to provide the tenants with other trading opportunities.

The Hall will be developed and promoted as an Event / Community Hall available for hire / use.

Use of the Hall on Saturdays will be limited to the aforementioned events and specialist Markets. (Torridge Arts Crafts will next be joining us on 27 May 2023.)

A commitment has been made also to work with South West Entertainment Solutions in providing regular specialist markets and events in the light of the Development Officer relinquishing his

role. They would look to pursue a Crafts / Food offer on Tuesdays in the Hall.

It is early days, concerns have been raised, however, the Council are committed to making the change work; poorly attended markets were failing they could not be sustained, a change was needed.

Several Events have been staged including the use of the Cinema screen for themed showings and also early England matches in the World Cup.

This can be developed. Facilities will be improved, and promotion will be worked upon.

Licensing will soon be obtained that will also provide for the sale of alcohol on the Premises which could see a wider more diverse use of the Hall, including receptions.

In summary, the Market trading experience has not recovered from the Lockdown period. The changes will allow for new opportunities providing Bideford with an events space for all to use.

### **Planning Committee - Councillor Peter Christie (Chairman)**

Currently the Town Council is a consultee for all planning applications in the Bideford area which means that our powers only extend to either recommending approval or refusal of each application. At the beginning of each meeting there is the opportunity for members of the public to put their views on particular applications with the total session time being limited to 15 minutes.

Given Covid, Brexit and the economic downturn of the last year has been unusual to say the least, but the committee now meets regularly in person to discuss applications which have fluctuated both in size and number. A few such applications have been 'called in' by town councillors who are also members of Torridge District Council – thus ensuring they will be discussed by the Torridge Plans Committee which is the final arbiter on all applications.

The Torridge & North Devon Local Plan which allows for the development of up to 4000 new houses in Bideford by 2030 was seriously undermined by a planning appeal at Torrington and parts of it are now being rewritten following changes in planning laws by the Government. At the moment very few new builds are actually being started – an issue blamed variously on the uncertainties associated with Brexit-influenced supply chain problems and the spiraling price of raw materials. Some developers have blamed the planning laws, but this is just not true.

As a council we continue to press for the associated infrastructure that will be needed, as for example, new doctor's surgeries, new primary schools, shops, and roads etc. – and have been intrigued to see claims by the NHS for funds from developers to enlarge local Health Centres to cope with the inevitable increase in patient numbers. We have also been very aware of the extra traffic flows that will be generated from these new estates and how these might be mitigated. The on-going battle to provide affordable homes is being lost but as yet there seems no way to improve on current numbers.