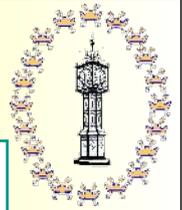


# Downham Market Town Council

## ANNUAL REPORT 2015 ~ 2016



### 2015-2016 Mayor's Report

For those of you that are new to the Town Council system here in Downham Market. Here are some of the facts. The Town Council is made up of 20 councillors covering the four wards of the Town. There are 5 Standing Committees of the Council covering Community Development, Finance, Planning and Environmental, Property and the Town Hall.

Throughout this report there are items from each of these Standing Committees explaining some of the work that they have been involved with during the past year. For the various projects that the Town Council gets involved with there are working parties and sub committees – each of which are answerable to one or other of the Standing Committees.

At the beginning of my year of office I picked a few objectives for the Council. These are they:

To continue to work towards the Local Government Award Scheme Gold Award: This work entails ensuring that the Town Council deals with all matters in an open and proper way, in line with other councils. We already have the Foundation Award and are working to improve to the Quality Gold Status.

To continue to Improve / Develop communications with Borough Council: I thought that this would be a reasonable target with regular meetings with the Borough Council Leader and Borough Mayor. The Leader has, however, been very involved in many projects, not least the one concerning "Devolution" and has not been able to meet us as regularly as I had hoped.

To work with the Council and public to sort out the Car Park Management scheme to the satisfaction of the majority through fair discussion, debate and communication: this is very much "On Going" and I must thank those who have put in many hours – I believe that there are still many more hours to go before we get a final, agreed solution.

To continue to develop the publicity and communications between the Town Council and the public: I think that communications and publicity are still not as good as they could be. Certainly pre publicity for events still needs developing. Not everyone remembers what happened last time!

The opening of "Discover Downham" – the Heritage Centre at the old Fire Station and therefore the return of the balcony in the Town Hall to Town Hall usage: Discover Downham has opened and I commend it to all. It is really worth a visit. It is also great to get our Balcony back at the Town Hall.

As you can gather we have not had a totally achieving year, but we are moving forward.

During the Mayoral year Margaret and I have managed to visit a number of events both in the Town and throughout the wider area always representing the wonderful Town of Downham Market. We have met a wide range of interesting people but I think that the highlights of my year have been here in Downham Market with the presentation of the salver to RAF Marham to help commemorate their Centenary and then the lighting of the Beacon to acknowledge the 90th birthday of the Queen. (Interesting to note that the last time that I was Mayor we celebrated the 90th birthday of Prince Philip by attending a dinner in his presence in King's Lynn. The next time I'm mayor will be when we celebrate my 90th birthday!!!! I don't think.)

I also had the opportunity to pay a special tribute to Councillor Tony Stacey. A member of this Council who, early in May, completed his first 30 years of unwavering service to Downham Market Town Council.



Cllr John Fox and Cllr Tony Stacey



Gp Capt Rich Davies and Cllr John Fox

## Community Development Committee

Community Development is a committee made up of 8 councillors, plus two student leaders from Downham Academy. The 20 to 45 age group is glaringly missing so this is a plea to you all out there to join your Town's council, or community in as many ways as you can and make this Town yours.

Our intent is, as it says on the tin, to develop the community, in various ways appropriate to our Town and to do this in conjunction with the residents of the Town.

From the committee, various sub-committees and working groups have been created, which are:-

**Events:** looking after Chinese New Year, St. George's Day and Halloween - all of which are run very specifically for, and I believe greatly enjoyed by, the school children of the Town.

Last May, on the 8th and 9th events were run both by the Council and also various businesses (Social Club, Montessori School, Paradise Garage, Tescos) around the Town to celebrate the 70th anniversary of V.E. Day with gratitude for our freedom so dearly won. There were musicians around the Town, a dance where Singers Inspired sang some amazing songs and most of the attendants were in appropriate dress as were lots of the people working in the shops around the Town, The Water Festival has become a great yearly event and this year will be its 10th anniversary, held on the 14th August with even more entrants. Christmas



Halloween 2015

Event - which has proved to be a very popular event. The actual lights have been provided year after year by the Chamber of Trade and we extend our sincere thanks to them. The rest of the event is a joint effort of Borough Council, Town Council and the residents and businesses of Downham Market.

Stand-alone Committees which have emerged from Community Development are:-

**Town Team:** This is headed up by Simon Prior and is well worth being part of if you are a Town business as both timely information and support are supplied by the members.

**Downham Market Arts:** This is a truly dynamic committee which is bent on bringing theatre, dance, musicians and film to the Town for the delectation of its residents. During the month of July they will be organising an art trail and various events on the Town Square, which will include public participation, for both children and adults.



Downham in Bloom  
Best Kept Garden

**Downham in Bloom:** This committee has members of the public who are very involved and work very hard. It isn't stand-alone because we are hugely indebted to the Borough Council which supports us in so many different ways. However, an enormous amount of effort is put in by a wide variety of residents. You may be aware that last year Downham Market received a Gold Award by Anglia in Bloom. This does mean that we shall have to work twice as hard to maintain the standard. I do hope (1) that you enjoy Downham as it is now, against how it looked when the committee first started and (2) that you will enter into the spirit of it and keep us clean and tidy and maybe join us. If you would like to enter your front garden into the competition to find the best one in several categories i.e. Traditional, (Gravel/Paved/Courtyard, Baskets and Containers) please collect an entry form from the Town Council Offices.

**Dementia Cafe:** Is being run by a plethora of volunteers and recently was presented with a cheque by Mayor John Fox for money raised by the Santa Fun Run which was sponsored by Morris Armitage. It seems to be going from

strength to strength and they hope to be employing a cafe manager very soon as the number of people attending has greatly increased.

**The Twinning Club:** This year, the 40th Anniversary of this twinning between Civray and Downham Market, will be marked by a weekend visit from 32 of the French members 20th May to 23rd May. A packed itinerary has been prepared by the Twinning Club in celebration of this amazing milestone including a Civic Reception dinner/dance in the Town Hall organised by Downham Market Town Council.

**Downham Games:** This committee sponsored the Downham Games with £500.

As you can see, we have our fingers in many pies and if you would like to join us as we are, or if you have a pie or a brand new idea you would like to get off the ground we hope to hear from you.

**Cllr Marion Ross** - Chair Community Development Committee 2015-16

## **Planning and Environmental Committee**

The Planning & Environment Committee has met twenty five times this year and cancelled one Mini Planning meeting. We have considered sixty-nine planning applications, visited/viewed forty-five planning sites of which we advised agreement for fifty-seven and refusal on twelve. We abstained from comment on two applications because of Town Council interests and deferred any comment on one as the drawings did not match the written application.

As a committee and as individuals we have attended various lectures. Seminars and training sessions on the Government's changing planning rules & regulations.

We have been represented at the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk's Planning Committee on five occasions and voiced the Downham Market Planning Committee views.

We have been in attendance at a BCKL&WN information seminar on the reason as to why the Government says the West Norfolk Borough Council does not have a five year building land supply.

We, as a Committee, have welcomed and heard two developers on their views and aspirations for the Town of Downham Market and the surrounding area as regards what housing development should be, in their view.

We, as a Committee, still rely on you, the residents of Downham Market, to voice your views on planning matters which can be forwarded to the Planning Committee in a letter or e-mail through the Town Clerk.

There appears to be a growth in the Town of a trend of car owners and drivers who feel they have the right to park on the pavements and verges around the Town. I must point out that is, in fact, an illegal act and as such they could be prosecuted for obstruction.

We still have a problem with litter and dog fouling around the Town there are sixty six litter bins and thirty six dog poo bins within the Town boundaries.

There still is an ongoing problem with people dumping garden surplus, fern cuttings, unwanted plants, tree trimmings and grass cuttings in the Drovers, Lanes, Streams and Dykes of the Town this costs the ratepayers up to £150.00 a time to remove and it is fly tipping.

We have, with cooperation from other bodies, managed to sort a problem left by developers with the footpath in the Chervil Walk area.

There is a Norfolk County Council waste collecting site at Crimplesham village for the disposal of oddball items i.e. electrical goods, glass, metal, builders rubble etc. open Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday - 52 weeks a year.

We as a committee will continue to strive to operate to the best of our ability in the planning field for the benefit of Downham Market as a whole.

***Cllr Frank Daymond*** - Chair of Planning and Environmental Committee 2015-16

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## **Town Hall Committee**

We have made some progress in making the Town Hall better. We have finished the Assembly Room and the Bar Room and we now have the Balcony back since the Heritage Centre has moved to its new venue at the Old Fire Station. The stage curtains have been renewed and we are applying for a grant to replace the stage lighting.

We have quotations to modernise the toilets when the finances are available.

We have applied for a license to hold wedding ceremonies in the Town Hall so now we can offer the complete package of service and reception in the Town Hall.

We have held the price for the hire of the Town Hall to last years' prices.

Now the bulk of the work has been done we hope the public will use the Town Hall more for Coffee Mornings and functions.

Thanks to our Mayor's efforts we have ordered a digital keyboard to replace our old piano, this will help the performing companies that use the Town Hall.



I would like to thank the young artists from Downham Academy who have allowed us to display their works of art in the Town Hall, this is something we would like to encourage as time goes on.

I would also like to thank a member of the public who donated the bar in the Bar Room.

***Cllr David Sharman*** - Chair of the Town Hall Committee 2015-16

## Property Committee



It has been a moderately busy year for the Property Committee.

Firstly the pleasant news. Due to the reasonably mild weather this winter the Town Council has been able to save money on our yearly gritting programme. This is always a difficult item to predict and budget for as it is always an unknown quantity.

During the year the Committee sanctioned Building Condition Reports on the buildings that the Council owns. Apart from the Council Offices the buildings that are let are held on full repairing leases, but it is still our duty to see that these premises are well maintained. On most of the buildings the reports were favourable with only minor repairs. Some of the drainage at the Council Offices had to be repaired and replaced but all is OK now.

New lighting was installed in the Town Hall Car Park and also the Hollies Car Park.

The Town sign was showing slight wear from the sunlight and this was remedied with a further coat of paint.

The Town Council Garden has been redesigned and refurbished with new plants and a Memorial Bench was put in place in memory of Councillor Sheila Nunn who had passed away and had served the Council for many years. We have also had the War Memorial garden near the old Post Office redesigned and refurbished with new plantings.

Over the Christmas period the Town Clock was once again feeling its age and had stopped working. We had temporary repairs done and we have now sanctioned a refurbishment of some parts of it to keep it in the best condition possible.

The carpets in the Town Council Offices were replaced recently after many years of heavy use. We also had to replace the heating unit in the reception office.

The Market is still thriving, although from January to March some of the traders take a break and that is why the market sometimes looks a little sparse. However, whenever a space becomes available it is often filled promptly and there is usually interest to keep the market viable.

The car parks are still in need of some remedial attention and some of this work is in hand. Which leads on to the subject of car park charging. This is still an ongoing project and there is no firm decision on anything that you may have heard or may believe. We are still looking at the proposals and the effects and pros and cons, ultimately this will be a full Council decision in the future.

The Property Committee will continue to do its job and keep the properties in as best a condition as it can and maintain the Town to a standard worthy of Downham Market.

**Cllr Robin Pegg** - Chair of Property Committee 2015-16



Downham Market War Memorial

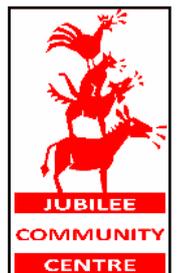
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## Jubilee Community Centre Management Committee

I am pleased to say that things are moving to improve the Jubilee Community Centre or the Howdale Centre as most of you will know it.

As you will know we have a thriving Boxing Club and the Skateboard Park is in regular use.

We have a large group of organisations that use the hall and the football pitches, and now we have had discussions with them to ask what we should do to improve things. After a number of meetings, we have arrived at a scheme to improve the facilities within the building and we have come up with some proposals.



For the outside we are looking to change the football pitch to a G3 multipurpose pitch and to construct a running track around this pitch.

Both of these projects will cost a great deal of money but we will be looking for grants to carry out this work.

**Cllr David Sharman** - Chair of Jubilee Community Centre

## Finance Committee

The Financial Objectives of the Town Council for the financial year are:

- To understand the current Financial situation - Income against Expenditure
- To project forward to understand the possible end of year situation
- To receive proposals from Standing Committees for forthcoming Year to formulate a Financial plan in order that Downham Market Town Council can fulfil its obligations to the residents of the Town
- Provide the best levels of service and value, without unnecessary burden.

Some of the Current Assets of the Town Council include Town Sign, War Memorial, Town Hall, Town Clock, Jubilee Community Centre and Town Council Offices as well as the Paradise, Hollies and Town Hall Car Parks. These assets, all of which have had condition surveys carried out on them, show that money will need to be spent on their upkeep and repairs.

This is a simple spreadsheet showing the income and expenditure for the standing committees for both the current year (16/17) and the previous year (2015/16) so a comparison can be made. It also shows special projects. These projects will be progressed through a budget plan which the committees will provide.

DOWNHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL 2016/2017							
	Expenditure		Income		Net /Exp / Inc		
	Budget 15/16	Budget 16/17	Budget 15/16	Budget 16/17	Budget 15/16	Budget 16/17	
Finance*	£236,404.00	£242,119.00	£54,100.00	£44,800.00	£182,304.00	£197,319.00	
Property*	£51,400.00	£55,700.00	£9,370.00	£7,480.00	£42,030.00	£48,220.00	
Comm Dev*	£13,300.00	£12,800.00	£6,500.00	£6,500.00	£6,800.00	£6,300.00	
Planning*	£16,900.00	£18,600.00	£2,000.00	£2,500.00	£14,900.00	£16,100.00	
Markets*	£3,500.00	£3,500.00	£37,000.00	£37,000.00	-£33,500.00	-£33,500.00	
Jubilee*	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	
Town Hall*	£97,801.00	£102,960.00	£43,050.00	£43,100.00	£54,751.00	£59,860.00	
Special Projects_TH					£10,000.00	£20,000.00	
Future Dev Town Hall					£5,000.00	£5,000.00	
JCC Future Development					£5,000.00	£5,000.00	
Stage Equipment					£3,500.00	£3,500.00	
Car Park Development					£5,000.00	£5,000.00	
Town Clock Project					£2,000.00	£5,000.00	
Office Building Development					£1,000.00	£2,000.00	
War Memorial Upgrade					£4,000.00		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£424,305.00</b>	<b>£440,679.00</b>	<b>£152,020.00</b>	<b>£141,380.00</b>	<b>£307,785.00</b>	<b>£344,799.00</b>	
					<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2 - 2%</u>
Grant					£20,684.00	£17,641.00	
Combined Grant/Precept					<b>£300,894.86</b>	<b>£312,124.31</b>	£317,989.62
Reserve + or -					<b>-£6,890.14</b>	<b>-£32,674.69</b>	<b>-£26,809.39</b>

**Council Precept:** For the last year there was a small increase to the ratepayers of Downham Market. Again with the Borough Council grant being further cut and the likelihood of repairs and maintenance needed on the town's assets it was felt prudent to increase the figure for a band D property from £85.35 to £87.05 per annum an increase of 2% (this equates to £1.70 per annum per band D property)

If you need any specific information regarding the finances of the Town Council this is available in the Council Offices. Please contact Mrs Jean Markwell, Town Clerk.

**Cllr Charlie Pyatt** - Chair of Finance Committee 2015-16



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