

# Tiverton Town Council Annual Report 2011

The Mayor from May 2010 until May 2011 was Councillor Lester Crocker. The reports below have been taken from the minutes of the Annual Town meeting which was held on the 4th April 2011.

The Mayor stated that it had been a busy year. Tiverton in Bloom had received Silver Gilt with Cllr W Burke receiving a special award for all his efforts over many years. The local schools had also received awards.

The Mayor had visited both our twinning partners and had very much enjoyed both visits. The Perambulation of the Leat had gone well with a record number of people both attending and completing the walk.

He had been touched by the numbers attending the Remembrance Service last November with every seat taken in the church.

The Head Boy and Girl from the High School had attended the recent Council meeting, where they were able to update the Council on the many activities taking place. The Trade Association was now running well. He thanked Cllr S Griggs for all her efforts in building on the foundations which he had set. The Christmas lights switch on had gone well and would pave the way for future expansion of this event in the future. Funds for the new Hospicecare Day Centre were going well, and he looked forward to the day when this facility would be available in the town. Finally, the Mayor thanked the councillors, staff and the people of Tiverton for their support during the year.

From May 2012 the Mayor of Tiverton is Councillor Neal Davey and the Deputy Mayor is Councillor Tom Lindus.

## Town Clerk's Report

The Street Litter Pickers scheme is working well. There are seven people employed on the scheme, which is a partnership between Mid Devon District Council and the town council. During the adverse weather the workers had helped clear snow and ice from the pavements and other areas around the town. The council had worked in conjunction with both the County and District Council to try and keep pavements and roads clear during the snow period. This had resulted in some very positive comments from traders and members of the public.

The Council had recently re-submitted its application for Quality Status. This is required every four years. At present we are awaiting the result.

The Council has agreed to rent some land at the Walronds for allotments. The waiting list for allotments is now at a far more manageable level.

The nominations list for both district and town elections closed at noon and we now have to wait to know who has put themselves forward and to find out if there will be an election in any of the five wards. Elections are due to be held on the 5th May. We then start the busy period of installing the new Mayor and providing induction training to our new councillors.

## Localism Bill and the Big Society

The Localism Bill was published on the 13th December. It aims to shift power from central Government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has been involved in extensive activity to promote the interests on local councils. The bill provides a far greater recognition of the role of local town and parish councils.

The Town Clerk went through a number of items that were highlighted in the bill including the power to veto excessive council tax rises and the right for voluntary and community groups to challenge a local authority by expressing an interest in running a service. Local Councils would also be able to apply to have the General Power of Competence, which is believed to be similar to the present Power of Well Being.

Two items that are to be changed as a result of the bill are the Standards Board and the Audit Commission. Both will disappear.

The Standards Board was set up some years ago, and whilst having some good points, especially around accountability, it has been a vehicle for petty and vexatious complaints about councillors conduct which consume a great deal of time and resources. Whilst some system will be put into place to ensure that councillors do not have the opportunity to obtain unfair advantages as a result of their office, which may well have a legal standing, it is hoped that there will be more opportunity for councillors to get on with the job.

Another area of concern has been around predeterminations. Councillors are being warned, often by myself, about having an open mind about things, especially where planning applications are concerned, yet the Government wants applicants of large developments to consult with the local people concerned; which of course by definition must include the local councillors. For that reason predeterminations are to be done away with.

The Audit Commission is to be closed and at present there is a consultation document in circulation regarding the way ahead for audit. The model used by the Charities Commission is at present being favoured.

The bill also seeks to give more power to people over local planning rules, but also seeks to introduce enforcement rules for those who deliberately try to flaunt the system by running retrospective planning applications and enforcements appeals simultaneously.

There will also be reforms in Social Housing, the homelessness legislation and the National Home Swap Scheme.

## **Quality Council Status**

Tiverton Town Council was granted Quality Status in December 2006. We have recently been re-accredited for a further four years. Tiverton remains as one of only two councils in Mid Devon that has this status, although there are quite a few within Devon. Tiverton also has the Power of Well being, which permits it to do far more than a council without this authority. At present, due to a number of new councillors joining, there is a need to train up some of these councillors, because we are required to have 80% of our councillors trained in the use of this power.

## **Elections 2011**

Tiverton Town Council has five wards. Elections were required in three wards, with the other wards having vacancies which were filled by cooption. A full list of Councillors is shown at the back of this report.

## **Tiverton in Bloom**

Tiverton received a Silver Gilt award in 2010 and preparations for the 2011 competition are well in hand. At the 2010 Britain in Bloom presentation Councillor W Burke was presented with a special award for all his years of service to Tiverton in Bloom. Councillor Burke has been involved with Tiverton in Bloom for over 30 years, so the Council were very pleased to see him presented with this well deserved award.

## Civic Events

2010 saw the Perambulation of the Leat, an event that is celebrated every seven years. The day commenced with crowds of people being lead by the Tiverton Town Band to hear the Bailiff of the Hundred, Brian Homer, read out the proclamation in Fore Street. Hundreds of people took part in this event which follows the leat all the way to its source. The weather was very kind to us all, and everyone seemed to enjoy the day, although some people did have a few blisters by the end of the walk.

## Christmas Lights

It was very festive weather for the turning on of the Christmas lights. The event was slightly different from past years, with a real nativity theme to it. Everyone gathered at Lowman Green to see Mary, Joseph and the donkey arrive. The parade went up Gold Street into Bampton Street and then passed through the market to arrive in Fore Street. The Mayor then, at the allocated time, turned on the Christmas lights. Following the switching on of the lights many people went to St Paul's Church where there was a Dickensian fair and a welcome cup of tea.

## Allotments

The Allotment waiting list has been significantly reduced partly due to the recent introduction of two new sites recently. The most recent of these being at the Walronds. Following discussions a new policy was introduced for bonfires. Bonfires can now only be lit on the first weekend of the month. It is understood that bonfires may be the only way of disposing of garden waste that shouldn't be composted, like diseased wood. Naturally you need to warn neighbours beforehand and think about when you could light the bonfire so that the least number of people are affected. Avoid lighting a bonfire when air pollution in your area is high and only burn dry materials as damp materials cause more smoke.

## Accounts 2010 - 2011

### *Income*

Administration	5,937.90
Allotment Receipts	2,157.28
Bank Interest	2,093.03
Cemetery Grant	180.00
Christmas Lights	1,760.28
Civic & Ceremonial	140.00
Mayor's Charity Fund	2,494.70
New Hall	23,844.30
Precept	224,520.00
Street Cleaning	6,000.00
Tiverton In Bloom Income	3,598.68
TTC Share of Town Hall Letting Income	685.39
Letting Income from Town Hall for MDDC	2,546.95
Total Income	275,958.51

## *Expense*

Administration	5,364.67
Allotments	2,240.86
Christmas Lights	16,760.28
Civic & Ceremonial	12,771.20
Community Garden	1,000.00
Grants	15,495.11
New Hall	63,915.52
P3 Footpaths	250.82
Payments from Mayor's Charity	471.99
Projects	30,532.55
Public Works Board Loan	9,669.88
Tiverton In Bloom	7,234.27
Town Hall	11,770.00
Town Hall Letting	2,966.95
Total Expense	260,444.10
Surplus for year	15,514.41
Carry forward + income - expenditure	128,621.15
Closing Balance for 2010 - 2011	128,621.15
To agree with Balance Sheet	