



**Chard Town Council**  
**Annual Report**  
**2015/2016**



# Mayor's Annual Report

It has been a very interesting and challenging year for me as Mayor and as the Chairman of Chard Town Council. Only a short period of time has elapsed since the local elections when a number of new councillors were elected to serve our community, and I must say I am looking forward to working with them over the next four years. Once again it is very refreshing to know that our new and re-elected members offered quite a wide range of different skills that collectively brought together created a healthy and comprehensive focus that is necessary to making good decisions and delivering vital services to our community.

I have always supported the view that working collectively to enhance our town is always the best way forward. A good example of this is the Jocelyn Park changing room project; this is a project that is very close to my heart, a project that engaged in partnership with two local football teams. Together we have delivered a facility that has the opportunity and benefits for use of the wider community.

When I say it has been a challenging year, I say this in the context that in early June myself and fellow Councillors realised that we were in a period of transition after receiving a letter from the then Town Clerk tendering her resignation. That effectively meant that much of the everyday internal workings of the Council had to be refocused whilst the process of appointing a new Town Clerk took place. An appointments committee was set up which included myself three other Councillors and under the sound leadership of the finance and personnel Chairman we started the process searching for a new Town Clerk. At this point, given the work load of the Town Council we also appointed an acting Town Clerk to cover much of the everyday tasks undertaken by a Town Clerk. I would therefore like to thank Mr Robin Williams who came in to assist us during that period; his contribution to us was invaluable. Early in December 2015 we were pleased to see the successful appointment of Zoe Truong who started work bringing a vision and a range of different skills that can enhance our town.

As Mayor I have always sought a cohesive happy working environment within the town Council, I hope that collectively we have achieved this for the greater good of Chard Town Council and our residents who we serve.

Whilst all the internal work appointing a new Town Clerk was going on, I as Mayor had the pleasure of attending many invitations within and outside our town, this is a vital part of the role as Mayor. I have counted up the number of events in my diary over the year which will be well in excess of 120 Mayor related events. It has been a privilege and honour to attend such an extensive variety of events. It has also been a pleasure to welcome representatives from other countries this included a visit from representatives from one of our twin towns Helmstedt in Germany, and a group of Rotarians from Sri Lanka. Both groups were delighted with the hospitality they received from us during their visits.

Promoting our town by inviting other civic dignitaries to Chard is also a key role as Mayor, Carnival was one event that we received so many compliments from Mayors across Somerset and Devon, I would therefore like to thank everyone involved with Chard Carnival, we all can be so proud of our town.

During the run up to Christmas was a particularly busy time visiting residential homes and listening to Christmas Carol concerts, this was very moving to me personally as I took time to listen to peoples different stories of their lives, and how so many children were looking forward to Christmas. I would like to thank everyone involved with these engagements, their participation certainly made my Christmas.

As I write this report I am also preparing for a visit to one of our other twin towns Seica Mare in Romania. The reason for the visit is the fact that 2016 is the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Chard forging links with Seica Mare. It will be a pleasure to report back to residents on my return.

Finally I would like to thank Marilyn my Mayoress, Father Jeffery Williams my Mayor's Chaplin, Mr Clive Sanders the Mace Bearer, Cllr Garry Shortland the Deputy Mayor of Chard, Judy Addicott, and all town Councillors and town Council staff for their support during the last year.

Councillor Dave Bulmer  
Mayor of Chard

April 2016

# The Town Clerk's Report

This last year brought many changes to the Town Council, both to the Members of the Council and also within the management structure at The Guildhall.

May 2015 saw local council elections taking place, there were 5 former Members who either chose to stand down or lost their seats and with 2 vacancies this resulted in the Town Council having 7 new Members. These changes and the introduction of so many new Members brought an opportunity to listen to fresh views and ideas and be challenged about how and why we do things!

Another departure was Sarah Robson the former Town Clerk, who resigned from her position in the summer after nearly five years at the Council in order to take up a similar post in Wales. This provided the Members with a chance to look at options for changing the management structure of the Council. The last few years had already brought some significant changes, and cost benefits, and again this occasion enabled the Council to review the structure to ensure there was sufficient and adequate capacity to take the Council forward. The net result was the development of a new administration structure in the office and the creation of a Responsible Financial Officer/Deputy Town Clerk's role which was filled internally by promoting the current Financial Officer to the post. I was delighted to interview for and be offered the post of Town Clerk, and formally took up the position in December.

As this is my first Annual Report for Chard Town Council it has been interesting to look back and reflect on the activity that has taken place; noting the many achievements and developments that have been brought about over the year. It has also been my opportunity to turn my thoughts to the projects and plans that are in progress for the future and consider how we might work together to shape development in Chard for the benefit of all the residents and visitors to the town.

Two exciting long-term projects I have had the privilege to see come to fruition are the construction of the much needed changing facilities in Jocelyn Park and the installation of new Solar Panels on the Guildhall roof which will certainly be an asset for the future as they will not only make free electricity for the Guildhall but within seven years the investment should be paid back and then it will start making money for the people of Chard.

It has taken many years for this project to come to fruition because the Guildhall is a listed building and the Council had to work closely with the planning authority to ensure the panels and the fixings would not make a significant impact on the building. Since the panels have been installed we have already generated 832 kwh, at 10.9 p per kwh which will generate £90 in income under the Government Feed In Tariff, plus it should reduce the Council's electricity bill.

The Town Team continue to be busy in their work to support local events in Chard. As well as the Halloween Night and the Annual Christmas Lights Switch on they have recently been involved in the organising of the Earth Hour event in Chard, part of a World Wildlife Fund national initiative to drive public awareness and promote action on key climate issues that reached across 178 countries worldwide on a single day in March.

Two new initiatives that I am pleased to be involved with focus on engaging with the young people in Chard to help create new opportunities for them to participate in their local community.

StreetSpace is a youth organisation working with young people in the area by providing a number of youth work services including regular detached youth work sessions. They are at the start of a project looking to expand the Skate Park in Lower Henson Park, creating a facility that will be of regional significance in the area. In support of the initiative Chard Town Council have granted them use of additional land in the park to be able to extend the existing provision and we look forward to seeing how this work develops over the coming months.

The other project is a South Somerset District Council pilot exploring the promotion of Democracy in Schools as part of the National Curriculum citizenship programme. Working with Holyrood Academy we hope to forge closer links with the leaders of tomorrow and help them better understand the role of local government in their town.

One of the real bonuses of being Town Clerk is meeting with a large number of people of all ages and it is a heart warming to see the real sense of community that exists within the town. I am humbled by the large number of people who are willing to give their time voluntarily to make where they live a better place and improve the lives of others. It has been rewarding to be involved in the giving of Community Grant Awards to some of the numerous local organisations in Chard, as well as reading the nominations for those who have been put forward for an Outstanding Service Award from the Mayor. Chard Town Council, its Members and Officers, is committed to serving our community and has a real desire to see it continuing to develop and flourish.

Zoe Truong  
Town Clerk

April 2016

## Organisation and Accountability

Chard Town Council is comprised of fifteen elected members each representing one of five areas of the Town. These areas are known as wards. Each ward has three members; the wards are Combe, Crimchard, Avishayes, Jocelyn and Holyrood. This arrangement makes sure that we have a truly local government in Chard. The Council Committees for 2015/2016 were Guildhall & Amenities, Finance & Personnel and Planning & Highways. There is also an Allotments Sub Committee which works closely with the Allotment Holders Association and a Personnel Sub Committee with some delegated responsibility for the Town Clerk. This year has also seen a number of working parties that have been set up on a task and finish basis as and when necessary. These included the Chard Market working group, the Tourist Information Centre working group and the Skate Park Improvement working group.

All meetings of the Council and its Committees are open to the public and press to attend. There are some occasions when for reasons of confidentiality members of the public and press are excluded. This is by means of a resolution in accordance with the requirements of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. These matters are usually, but not restricted to issues such as 'Staff in Confidence' or 'Commercial in Confidence'. At most meetings time is set aside, usually fifteen minutes, before the meeting starts for members of the public to address, make statements or ask questions of the Council. Changes to legislation in 2014 now means that public meetings can be recorded, filmed or photographed and the Council has adopted a policy to ensure it can safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

In accordance with statute, at the end of each financial year the accounts of the Council are available for public inspection for a period of twenty-one working days. This period is advertised and facilities are made available for members of the public to come and examine the Council's accounts. As the Council is committed to a policy of openness and transparency any reasonable request to view the accounts, or any other aspect of Town Council work, will try and be accommodated at any time of the year. The External Audit last year was completed by Grant Thornton and there were no matters of concern identified or reported.

The Council's website contains a lot of information about services and functions of the Council and there are many downloadable forms available relating to allotments and the cemetery. All of the minutes of the Council's meetings and also its policies are available and can be downloaded in a PDF Format. If you do not have access to a computer and wish to see copies or extracts of minutes these can be made available for you to view at the Guildhall upon request in advance. Recent news events are also uploaded and details of any vacancies that occur within the Council. There is also a comprehensive list of groups and organisations on the website – if you know of a group that isn't included please let us know as we'd like to ensure information is easily accessible for the many organisations based in Chard.

## Chard Town Council – How to get in touch

### Town Councillors

Your Town Councillors are elected democratically by the people of Chard. They are not paid and do not receive any allowances. It is the Councillors that make the decisions and steer the direction in which the Council goes.

#### **Avishayes Ward**

Mrs. Cath Morrison	01460 239120
Garry Shortland	01460 61592
Dave O' Brien	01460 66104

#### **Combe Ward**

Andy Kenton	07921 574019
Mrs. Amanda Broom	01460 62102
Steve Warwick	01460 61977

#### **Crimchard Ward**

Mrs. Jenny Kenton	07921 574019
Martin Carnell	07411 696725
Mrs. Jenny Orchard	01460 67760

#### **Holyrood Ward**

Mrs Sue Wyatt	01460 61370
Jason Baker	07736 310805
Vacancy	

#### **Jocelyn Ward**

Dave Bulmer	01460 67917
Mrs. Sara Dowell	01460 261898
Mrs. Irene Glynn	01460 238417

Details of Councillors' addresses, and email contact may be obtained on request from the Town Clerk and are also available on the Chard Town Council website under the page 'Council'.

### Council Officers

The Town Council's team of staff, which currently stands at 19, is led by Zoe Truong, the Town Clerk. Tracy Lamb is the Responsible Financial Officer/Deputy Town Clerk with specific duties relating to the budget, annual accounts and audit to ensure proper financial management and transparency.



## How to contact us:

Visit us at: Chard Town Council  
The Guildhall  
Fore Street  
Chard  
TA20 1PP

Tel: 01460 239567  
Fax: 01460 261661  
email: townclerk@chard.gov.uk  
email: operationsmanager@chard.gov.uk  
email: financeofficer@chard.gov.uk

Other Council officers may be contacted through [chardtouncouncil@chard.gov.uk](mailto:chardtouncouncil@chard.gov.uk) or by phoning the reception desk on 01460 239567.

## Finance

The precept for the year 2015/16 was set at £489,822 equating to a local parish precepting charge of £122.20 for Band D properties. In addition to this SSDC awarded £55,930 as part of the Precept Support Grant, a transitional arrangement that has come about since Central Government imposed changes in the way council tax benefits are paid. This was a rise of £0.77 increase from the previous year as Members wanted to minimize any additional burden to local council tax payers.

With the changes in policy at Central Government being imposed on district councils, South Somerset has fared better than other areas where the district council has not passed on any of the funding to the parish and town councils. However the Precept Support Grant is reducing annually and reluctantly for 2016/2017 the Members felt there was no alternative but to increase the Band D percentage in order to mitigate the reduction in the grant. The Band D Equivalent for 2016/2017 is £124.04 an increase of £1.84.

Chard's town precept continues to be in line with other towns of similar size within the South-West Region.

## Council Tax

Council Tax for the three Local Authorities responsible for Chard has been set for the year 2016/2017 at the following levels:-

- £124.04 for Chard Town Council
- £152.48 for South Somerset District Council
- £1060.84 for Somerset County Council
- £20.80 for Somerset County Council Adult Social Care
- £178.26 for Avon & Somerset Police Authority
- £79.98 for Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue
- **£1,616.40 in total and based on Band D Properties**

The average bill for South Somerset is £1,569.96

Tracy Lamb  
**RFO**

April 2016

## Summary of Accounts for 2014/15

<b>Item</b>	<b>Expenditure £</b>	<b>Income £</b>
Amenities Including Capital	157,382	11,560
Street Cleaning	61,554	55,705
Cemetery	26,689	27,211
Allotments	3,730	4,000
Market	2,180	8,500
Guildhall	284,115	38,700
Tourist Information Centre	23,268	9,530
Support & Other Services	174,340	7,300
Grants	20,000	0
Precept Support Grant	0	67,650
Precept	0	478,102
Contribution from reserves	0	45,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>753,258</b>	<b>753,258</b>

## Summary of Budgeted Accounts for 2015/2016

The Accounts for the year ending March 2015 have not been finalised and audited. The figures below are the budgeted accounts for 2015/2016.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Income</b>
Amenities Including Capital	216,716	12328
Street Cleaning	71,552	55000
Cemetery	26,465	20,711
Allotments	4,170	4,300
Market	1,890	6,000
Guildhall	199,258	43400
Tourist Information Centre	18,196	9,740
Support & Other Services	182,945	6650
Grants	20,500	0
Precept Support Grant	0	55,930
Precept	0	489,822
Contribution from reserves	0	37,811
<b>Total</b>	<b>741,692</b>	<b>741,692</b>

## Other Legal Requirements

Chard Town Council is registered with the Information Commissioners Office to enable it to hold information under the Data Protection Act 1998, The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and has adopted the Model Code of Conduct for the conduct of its Councillors.

The introduction in 2011 of the Localism Act saw many changes to democracy at a grass roots level with the need for wider engagement with the electorate on a range of issues. This new legislation has enabled greater opportunities, with provision under the General Power of Competence, for town and parish councils to take responsibility for a broader range of services and a greater freedom to act.

Zoe Truong  
**Town Clerk**

April 2016