

# Annual Report

2022–2023



**CHIPPENHAM  
TOWN COUNCIL**

Improving the quality of town life

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## Welcome from the Chief Executive

Thank you for taking the time to read this Annual Report, I hope that it will provide a flavour of the Council and the key events and achievements of the Town Council during 2022/2023.

Global events, soaring inflation, a cost-of-living crisis have created some tough financial pressures for the Town Council. In recent years, Government measures to tackle Covid-19 had a significant impact on the Council's ability to generate income directly from the services and activities it delivers. However, all of Chippenham Town Council's venues and facilities are again fully open and increases in income in this area are budgeted for this year.

The budget for 2023/24 of £4.6 million was agreed by Full Council in January 2023 with £4.0 million coming from residents via the Precept (the Town Council element of the Council Tax). The Precept for 2023/2024 was set below inflation but will enable for the continuation of services and facilities whilst helping to fund an ambitious capital programme over the coming year.

The Council does not receive any external financial support either directly from central government or via Wiltshire Council. However, we are an ambitious council and remain committed to delivering real results for Chippenham across our six corporate strategic priorities.

The Council now has a brand new Corporate Strategic Plan to take us through to 2026. The new plan is very much viewed as continuing the great work of the Town Council, through the provision of services and facilities to our residents but with an added focus on becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030.

I continue to be immensely proud of the staff that I have now led for the last six years, we consistently invest in the training and development of our staff as we consider them to be our single greatest asset. We have a one team ethos and work well with our committed councillors and a range of partners and stakeholders across the town.

This past year was another extremely successful year for the Town Council, we were reaccredited with Purple Flag for the night-time economy, we were also reaccredited with a 'Green Flag' for John Coles Park and received Green Flag accreditation for Monkton Park. We also won Southwest in Bloom awards for our High Street, John Coles Park and Stanley Park Sports Ground.

One of the objectives of the Corporate Strategic Plan 2018–2022 is to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for Chippenham, although this is not yet ready for adoption, significant progress has been made and we hope to go to referendum in early 2024.

I hope that you enjoy reading this Annual Report.



**Mark Smith**  
Chief Executive

## Mayor's Report

It's has been a huge honour to be Mayor of Chippenham over the past year, representing the town as Mayor, meeting many of you while carrying out my duties.

I have been delighted to have the opportunity to visit many of the local community groups and individuals across the town, seeing the excellent and diligent work paid staff and volunteers are undertaking to ensure Chippenham is a vibrant and welcome place to live and visit.

As Mayor I have had to play my part in 3 major national occasions. In June we celebrated HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and all the associated wonderful events planned by the Town Council and local groups to mark this wonderful anniversary, which was followed by the sad news when we were all informed about her death. I was proud to see Town Council staff move quickly and respectfully to put into place plans so residents could share their memories and mourn her death.

Of course, it was a great occasion to host a proclamation service in the Town when King Charles III was proclaimed King. This led to HM The Kings Coronation in May. Alongside these events I have also led the town on other ceremonial occasion such as Remembrance Sunday, Armed Forces Day and Wiltshire and Swindon Pride.

I would like to thank all Town Councillors and staff for their continued hard work to ensure the Town Council events are run smoothly and effectively. The positive impact for residents can be seen across the town.

**Councillor Liz Alstrom**  
Mayor of Chippenham



## Leader's Report

As we all settle into post pandemic living, we continue to be faced with challenges to overcome. The need for close working relationships with our local community are as important as ever. In 2019, Chippenham Town Council set up a multi-agency, Community Safety Forum to facilitate local partnership working for the well-being of the residents, visitors, and business owners in the town.

This very successful forum meets 4 times a year and has enabled effective lines of communication and a safe space to address and discuss issues of concern. Forum attendees are from local organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors all with varying roles to play in taking a proactive approach to tackling challenges that are being faced locally.

As Chair of this forum, I am proud of the relationships which have developed which has led to a supported network across the town.

A vital factor in strengthening our local community is the extensive network of CCTV cameras across the town. The Town Council has invested in this service and hosts a team of volunteers working alongside the CCTV Supervisor to monitor live stream images with the aim of preventing, deterring, and detecting crime and anti-social behaviour.

Ultimately this supports Chippenham to be a safer place to visit, work, and live. Hundreds of hours of recorded CCTV images support Police investigations and are instrumental in securing convictions in court.

The staff team continue to deliver fundamental services including, London Road Cemetery, the Friday and Saturday Charter Market, Environmental Services, parks, and outdoor spaces.

Our venues continue to operate successfully with the Neeld, Stanley Park Sports Ground, Chippenham Museum and the Yelde Hall offering events and activities.

Your Town Councillors are here to represent you, so I encourage you to continue engaging with your Town Council, contact your ward councillor to discuss local issues, attend or watch council meetings on our You Tube channel, look at our website for a wealth of information.

**Councillor Desna Allen**  
Leader of Chippenham  
Town Council



The HR Committee regularly review updates on starters and leavers, sickness and absence levels and training and development. I reported last year that our sickness absence levels were below the national average, and I am pleased to report this is still the case. Training highlights this year include the introduction of a team of mental health first aiders, and training for staff and Councillors on using social media effectively.

The current appraisal process for staff was launched in 2020 and has since been refined based on feedback. The process starts in March with a meeting of the Chief Executive's Performance Panel and finishes around the end of May for the rest of the workforce. All staff are given SMART targets which are reviewed every six months, and have the opportunity to talk about their achievements and development.

As part of the appraisal update, we refreshed the Council's 'values and behaviours', a set of principles that outline how we expect our employees to work, and launched a recognition scheme where staff can receive postcards with anonymous compliments from their colleagues.

New policies have been introduced this year, including a Menopause Policy which acknowledges the significant impact the menopause can have, and seeks to reduce the stigma of asking for and providing help as needed. The Council committed to becoming a White Ribbon Supporter Organisation which encourages people to never use, excuse or remain silent about violence against women, and our new Domestic Abuse Policy advises how to recognise signs and assist potential victims of any gender. A Volunteer Code of Conduct was also developed following the introduction of a new CCTV volunteer team, joining our wonderful volunteers already working for the Museum, Stanley Park and Neighbourhood Plan.

**A key achievement this year was the completion of an extensive job evaluation process, which sought to ensure that the salary and grading of each role match the nature and scope of the work, and there is no discrimination in our pay structure. This has now been completed for the whole organisation.**

Following the Council's declaration of Climate and Ecological emergencies, in 2022 the Committee agreed to recruit a new Climate and Biodiversity Officer to help us deliver our objectives. This led to achievements including the launch of our first Eco Future Fest in April 2023. We have also created an opportunity for a new Apprenticeship at Stanley Park in collaboration with Wiltshire College.

**Councillor Desna Allen  
Leader of Chippenham Town Council  
Chair, Human Resources Committee**

## Strategy and Resources Committee

The Strategy & Resources Committee meets four times a year and serves an important role in relation to the Corporate Governance, Risk Management, Internal Control, Corporate Strategic Planning and Financial and Democratic processes of the Council.

The Committee oversees the work of the recently established Finance Sub-Committee, in particular its work in developing the Annual Budget. At its November meeting it considers the final draft budget and makes recommendations to Full Council on the Income & Expenditure budget, the level of Precept and the Capital Expenditure for the following year commencing 1st April.

This year's budget process has been particularly challenging in order to accommodate the strategic priorities of the Council and the exceptional level of inflation. The fact that the budget set by Full Council resulted in a precept increase well below the current level of inflation is creditable. A lot of work has also gone into the Capital Expenditure budget process and delivering upon the capital expenditure priorities of the Council.

At the beginning of last year Full Council adopted a new Corporate Strategic Plan covering 2022 to 2026. This has a particular focus on accessibility, inclusivity and well-being, collaboration in the future development of the town, helping to create a carbon neutral and environmentally sustainable future, maintaining and enhancing our green spaces, and providing a clean and safe environment. Also, promoting Chippenham as an attractive and vibrant town, celebrating its rich history, heritage and culture, as well as maintaining effective and efficient governance and management of resources.

In this regard, the Council continues to maintain a healthy level of financial reserves. There are Capital Ear Marked Funds to enable the Council to sustain its infrastructure and facilities well into the future and a general reserve allowing the Council to withstand the impact a perfect example.

**Councillor Desna Allen**  
Leader of Chippenham Town Council  
Chair, Strategy and Resources Committee

**Chippenham Town Council is ever mindful of how it protects and spends the income that it receives from tax payers to deliver services and facilities to the local community. The Council particularly recognises the impact that the Cost of Living Crisis is having on its residents and communities.**

Each year we conduct a thorough, comprehensive budget setting process that is open to public scrutiny. This year's budget round has been especially challenging given the current levels of inflation and the consequent impact on the Council's running costs. Heads of Service have sought to identify budget savings or to maintain budgets at current levels to achieve real-term savings, where possible, in order to mitigate the overall impact of the cost increases.

In recent years, Government measures to tackle Covid-19 had a significant impact on the Council's ability to generate income directly from the services and activities it delivers. Thankfully, all of Chippenham Town Council's venues and facilities are again fully open and increases in income in this area are budgeted for this year.

This year's Income and Expenditure budget for 2023/24 of £4.6 million was agreed by Full Council in January 2023 with £4.0 million coming from local residents via the Precept (the Town Council element of the Council Tax). The Council does not receive any external financial support either directly from Government or via Wiltshire Council.

Of the two large capital projects in last year's budget, the upgrade to the Neeld to create a new entrance, bar and kitchen facilities was completed at the beginning of this financial year 2023/24 and the project to make environmental energy efficiency improvements to the Stanley Park building is due for completion in the middle part of this financial year.

The Council continues to maintain the award-winning John Coles Park and make improvements to Monkton Park, recently added to its responsibilities, and is responsible for litter collection, grass cutting and road sweeping across the town. It also operates the cemetery at London Road, the town's excellent Museum and sports pitches at Stanley Park, and provides an impressive range of events and shows that take place at the Neeld. It will also be making more use of the historic Yelde Hall as an arts and entertainment venue this year, following a refurbishment last year. This range of facilities and services is quite rare for a Town Council.

In addition, the Council organises an important range of Civic Events, including Remembrance Sunday and Commonwealth Day, and community events such as the Christmas lights switch on. In this municipal year, the Council organised a Kings Coronation event on the back of very well attended events last year to mark the Queens Jubilee and a Civil War Re-enactment event.

As Chippenham Town Council continues to make improvements to our services and to the town, as a responsible public body, we are mindful to ensure that our finances can sustain this level of quality and improvement well into the future, whilst at the same time minimising the impact of any Precept increases on our residents.

**Nick Rees**  
Director of Resources



## Planning, Environment and Transport Committee

The municipal year 2022/23 was my second as Chair of the Planning, Environment and Transport (PET) Committee. My fellow members of the Committee and I have continued to engage positively with relevant local issues on behalf of our wards and the wider town.

The Town Council acts as a statutory consultee on any planning application or application relating to tree works within Chippenham. At each meeting the PET Committee considers, with technical input from its planning and arboricultural officers, the Town Council's response to these applications and agrees any comments to be made in relation to them. The PET Committee's comments had a significant impact in the subsequent determination of several planning applications this year. Our objection on heritage and design grounds, to the demolition of the Former Technical School (old Wiltshire College site) and its proposed replacement with a retirement complex, was a significant factor in Wiltshire Council's Northern Area Planning Committee subsequently refusing the scheme. The Committee, by raising objections to major residential schemes at Rowden Park, Foundry Lane, the former Ambulance Station site and Saltersford Lane, continue to push hard for improvements to be made to the sustainability, biodiversity, active travel and design elements of these schemes.

The PET Committee has continued to consider highways improvement requests submitted for determination by the Chippenham Local Highways and Footway Improvement Group. The Town Council receives these requests in the first instance and the PET Committee evaluates their suitability for passing on to Wiltshire Council's LHFIG. Where the LHFIG indicates that a request could be implemented, the PET Committee considers the proposed solution and a financial contribution. In 2022/23, the Committee made contributions towards cycle and pedestrian infrastructure upgrades on Parliament Street, Forest Lane and Minster Way, amongst others.

Two formal public consultations have been carried out on the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan and a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Plan has been prepared this municipal year. Over 400 individual public responses were received during the first public consultation, and the Plan amended accordingly to take account of many of the useful comments raised.

I look forward to the Neighbourhood Plan being adopted and its planning policies being used by both the PET Committee in their responses to planning applications and the Local Planning Authority in determining planning applications in Chippenham.

As well as receiving pre-application presentations from applicants looking to engage with the PET Committee, such as Abbeyfield School and Barratt David Wilson Homes, the Committee welcomed many members of the public to meetings to make statements or to ask questions in 2022/23. This interaction with the public is an essential part of the work that the PET Committee undertakes and further representations by members of the public are welcomed.

**Councillor Gemma Grimes**  
Chair, Planning, Environment  
and Transport Committee



## Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee

The Amenities, Culture and Leisure (ACL) Committee continues to oversee and deliver a diverse range of services across Chippenham, improving the quality of town life for present and future generations. The Committee held its first meeting of the year on 25 May 2022.

This year's highlights include:

- The delivery of a new entrance and bar for The Neeld & Arts Community Centre. This major capital investment has seen a disused space repurposed into an exciting new community asset.
- Further investment into the Towns state of the art CCTV system, which will include the use of two ANPR cameras, further improving the safety of our residents.
- The investment of post Covid 'Welcome Back' Funding to help develop of more vibrant Town Centre offer through the creation of a 'Pop Up Park' and colourful street banners and dressing.
- Working in partnership with the Chippenham Civic Society and Friends of Chippenham Museum to support their vision for a public artwork to celebrate the role the people of Chippenham played in caring for WW1 wounded soldiers while they were patients at the town's Red Cross convalescent hospital, situated in our Town Hall.
- The creation of a Public Conveniences Working Party to look strategically at the provision of public toilets across the town. Plans include the potential refurbishment and management of the Borough Parade Car Park toilets.
- Approval for capital funding towards a second 3G all-weather pitch at Stanley Park Sports Ground in partnership with the Football Foundation. This development will help us provide much needed capacity, reducing the need for players to travel outside of Chippenham to access facilities.
- The ongoing updating of play equipment within play areas including Monkton Park, Gascelyn Close and Woodlane.
- Agreement to invest in a 3-year plan to reglaze the Towns bus shelters, which will improve their appearance and help us remove graffiti should it occur.
- Approval to extend our much-loved Museum further into the ground floor building of the existing building creating improved gallery space;
- Further investment into the electrification of our vehicle fleet, helping us to achieve our Climate Emergency commitments.
- Implementation of various measures to progress the Council's Ecological Emergency declaration, including the implementation of various measures to progress the Council's Ecological Emergency declaration, including the creation of new areas of wildflowers along Pewsham Way, and open spaces at Ivy Field Court, Kingsley Road and Blackberry Close. In addition another tranche of tree planting took place over the winter in Monkton Park as well as the Residential Tree scheme which gave away 768 trees to residents.
- Delivery of a wide range community events programme including the English Civil War 'Battle of Chippenham', Chippenham Riverfest, the late HM Queens Platinum Jubilee, our Autumn Pumpkin Patch and the 'Festival of Christmas' – a celebration which included the Christmas lights switch on, Artisan Market, Street Performers and the popular 'Winter Wonderland' light walk through on Island Park.

I am proud of what we have achieved this year and pleased to see a range of new projects in progress. I would like to thank members of the committee for their valuable their input, as well as the Council's staff and officers for their professionalism and flexibility in delivering such excellent services for the Chippenham community.

**Councillor Nick Murry  
Chair, Amenities, Culture  
and Leisure Committee**







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