

MAYOR'S REPORT  
2021/22

As it draws near to the end of my term as Mayor I am looking back through the last year.

Becoming Mayor was for me a great honour and privilege, and it has been a very interesting yet difficult year in some ways.

With the Covid restrictions only being lifted fully towards the end of February, it was not surprising that some events were low attendance or cancelled completely.

I have attended as many events as possible up until the end of January, where I then had to isolate ready for surgery. If that wasn't bad enough I was advised that my situation is a lot more serious, the surgery was called off and I was told to rest.

This meant not doing my Mayor's duties or meetings which is very saddening for me but was beyond my control. Thank God for Phillip, Angie, and all those involved for their help.... It was well needed and appreciated.

My car was also not working so I have been almost housebound since the end of January, but hopefully that is now sorted.

There have been a few events that I have attended however, and I'm very pleased to pass on the very positive feedback that I received from outside our town.

There were numerous comments of how beautiful our town is, how friendly and polite our people are, and the events we have put on have been well attended and appreciated by people from well outside our area. There were also praises of a great job done by our Clerk, our office staff and groundsmen.

Some great pictures and descriptions were posted on social media by Harold ( Dave ) Sparrey who attended quite a few events that I was at, and so thanks to Harold also.

I'm now trying to very gradually return to some form of normality and see how things go.

I shall end by saying that I have met a huge amount of very nice and positive people which has been a pleasure for me.

Thank you all very much.

Best regards, Andy Manns, Mayor, LTC.  
2021-2022.



## Report to Annual Town Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022

### Economy and Tourism Committee

This is the first annual report by a Chair of a newly constituted and convened Economy and Tourism Committee. The adopted terms of reference make it clear that the purposes of the Committee have evolved from earlier work of the Planning Committee who previously had responsibility for encouraging economic development and the enhancement of the town's offer as a tourist destination. There remains a substantive overlap with the work of the Environment and Leisure Committee.

The purposes of the Economy and Tourism Committee are to:

- i. promote events and businesses which attract visitors to Ledbury and boost the local economy; and
- ii. develop programmes and actions to support local businesses, and attract grants and inward investment.

The majority of the day-to-day work in pursuance of these purposes is completed by an officer of the Council, the Community Development Officer, directed and supported by our Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk. This was a new appointment to the staffing structure of the Council and we have been most fortunate in the engagement of our substantive CDO and, in due course to recently welcoming her temporary replacement.

We were able to identify twenty-three key objectives from the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2022 that could reasonably be adopted by the Economy and Tourism Committee, although it soon became clear that to actively pursue this many objectives would be counterproductive. It was agreed to concentrate the work of the Committee into three main areas:

1. To promote the Charter market and other 'speciality markets' in the town, concentrating effort into the market pitches under and adjacent to the Market House.
2. To promote the work of the guides of the Painted Room, the custodians of other historic attractions and organisers of other cultural and community events. Part of this work is to replace the Tourist Information Centre in the Homend with firstly, one much enhanced TIC in the Reception area of the Council Offices; and secondly, when feasible with a second TIC in our iconic Masters House as part of the development of the area at The Barn end of St Katherine's Car Park, adjacent to the Masters House.
3. To look to the feasibility of building on the huge success of the Poetry Festival and further enhance Ledbury as a Festival destination. This work was begun and has since been subsumed into the work of the Events Working Group of the Environment and Leisure Committee.

To this was added a fourth workstream as two funds from Central Government were released by Herefordshire Council to Parish and Town Councils. The two funds were the *Welcome Back Fund* with up to £20,000 available as an opportunity to enhance and develop, post-COVID our High Street. A second 'windfall' was the *Great Places to Visit* fund with up to £90,000 available to further enhance our town as a tourist and shopping destination. Work on the use of these funds continues but it should be noted that the timeframes imposed by the administrators of the funds has created seemingly insurmountable challenges to make best or indeed full use of the opportunities offered.

Looking forward, there remains significant challenges to properly co-ordinating the mission and work of our community organisations; to harnessing the Herculean effort of so many individual members of our community and particularly those who aspire to work with our young people. I am unsure that the Committee has yet proved its worth when the work involved in clerking and administering an additional committee is weighed against outcomes. However, achievements to date are best credited to the hard work and enthusiasm of our Community Development Officers and our Town Clerks.





# Environment and Leisure Committee

## Report 2021/2022

The Committee's responsibilities include a wide variety of concerns from the physical infrastructure of the town to cultural events and activities. The following three Working Parties have undertaken considerable work during the year under the oversight of this Committee:

The Events Working Party

The Markets Working Party

The Climate Change Working Party

We record our appreciation of the work of the Chairs of these Working Parties, and the support of the Town Council staff. The Deputy Chair of the E & L committee, Cllr Dee Knight, has had to do more than her fair share of the work, due to the unavoidable absence of the Chair from two meetings.

Our remit covers the Recreation Ground, including the Skateboard Park, the Children's play area, the 'half-dome' Shelter, the CCTV coverage of the area, and the routine maintenance and repair thereof. Vandalism has been a continuing problem, and liaison with the Police has been regular and constructive. There are signs that the worst forms of misbehaviour are now abating. The upgrading of CCTV equipment, here and elsewhere in the Town, is a priority. A substantial sum has now been committed to the installation of new play equipment, which should be installed during 2022.

The other significant 'green space' for which we are responsible is Dog Hill Wood, above the town to the east. The Woodland Management Plan has highlighted necessary improvements, and we have set in motion the restoration of some of the seating and the signage in this area.

The Cemetery Chapel has been opened for visitors on Remembrance Day and Mothering Sunday. A digital mapping system has been proposed, to improve information and records of the cemetery contents. A tree survey was conducted, and some safety work carried out as a result.

A new contractor was engaged to install Christmas lights for the next three years. The first installation, for Christmas 2021, was not entirely satisfactory, though the contractor responded to our requests for rectification – and has submitted revised and extended plans for the next two years. Overall the lights

were well-received by the public and are restrained in character to suit our town's ambience!

The Events Working Party has promoted a Book Fair, a Careers and Jobs Fair, and has co-ordinated plans for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022. The Working Party includes representatives of the traders, and organisers of the Community Day, the Carnival, Poetry Festival and other town events.

The Markets Working Party has sought to clarify and update the town's Charter Market regulations, and has experimented with a Craft Market. Funding has been obtained, through the Welcome Back initiative, to purchase several gazebos which can be used to house Town Council stalls at town events, and may also be made available to volunteer organisations and market traders.

The Climate Change Working Party supported an event to coincide with the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November 2021. Several volunteer groups have been encouraged in tidying and clearing the Town Trail, and equipment has been purchased to support this work. The WP aims to encourage recycling (and cycling!), the avoidance of waste in commercial and domestic premises, the reduction of carbon fuel pollution, etc.

The E & L Committee is responsible for the town's War Memorial, though this has been such a complex and long-standing problem that its progress has essentially been taken over by the Full Council. At the time of writing a financial settlement appears to have been reached with the contractor who carried out the unsatisfactory restoration – and the Council is now proceeding with the preparation of a specification for rectification works, to be put out to tender as soon as possible.

**Cllr Stephen Chowns**

**Chair of the Environment and Leisure Committee**

**22<sup>nd</sup> April 2022**



# Ledbury Annual Town meeting Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022

## Resources Committee report

The work of the Resources Committee is mainly concerned with matters connected with employed staff and therefore its activities have to be kept confidential because of their personal nature.

It meets less frequently than the other major committees at just 3-4 times a year, but there is, however, much constructive and important work that the committee undertakes in these areas to ensure the smooth and harmonious functioning of the Council's obligations and activities on behalf of the residents of Ledbury, even if not obvious to the public.

First, we would like to congratulate our Clerk, Angela Price, on recently celebrating 3 years with the council. She has been instrumental in bringing in many efficiencies to improve the way the council works and introduced or updated many important policies to guide the council and the councillors on effective work practices and operations. We look forward to more annual celebrations of her stay with the council.

One innovation in her first year as part of the Mayor's aspirations for the new council at the time, was to produce the first Ledbury Town Council Corporate Plan, which is now guiding many of the activities we are undertaking. It is very much a living document and work in progress, but we are already seeing some of its results.

One key innovation in the last council year was the appointment of Olivia as the council's first Community Development Officer, who has impressed many with her creativity and enthusiasm, which combined with a skill to bring officers, councillors and volunteers to work together, is also showing demonstrable improvement benefits to both business promotion activity and entertainment events for residents and our important tourist visitors.

Other new staff who have joined us in the last year as a result of a governance review in 2020 and to help deliver on the corporate plan, are Julia as Deputy Clerk, Sally as Accounts Administrator and Amy as Office Administrator who filled the role left by Olivia when promoted to be our CDO. Emma has recently joined us in a CDO support role and we have our long serving Beth whose creative energy and enthusiasm continues to inform and educate visitors to our famed painted room. Finally, we have our Groundsman Terry, whose key role is to maintain the cemetery.

We sadly said goodbye to Hannah as our receptionist recently and we wish her well for the future, and are now recruiting for her replacement.

On the governance front we recently completed a special audit on the financial consequences of the judicial review of a few years ago, with some important lessons to learn but no 'smoking gun' of failings by the council that were not already in the public domain.

We can confidently look forward to another year of continuous improvement in the range and quality of services the Town Council delivers for its residents.

**Produced by the Mayor, Cllr Andy Manns and Deputy Mayor, Cllr Phillip Howells, as acting Mayor during periods of the Mayor's illness**





Report to Annual Town Meeting 28 April 2022  
Finance, Policy and General Purposes

I am proud of the accomplishments of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes committee in the past year, as we continue to emerge from the pandemic, into a more normal state of affairs, and continue to modernise our finances and governance, to put the council on steady footing going forward. I would like to thank the staff, in particular the indispensable Angie Price, for their unwavering hard work in support of the committee.

This year, we continued updating the Council's financial agreements with outside bodies, most notably the mortuary lease. We continued to modernise our policies for a more efficient and worker friendly council. We passed a budget whose precept rise is well below inflation, and below the council tax rise from Herefordshire Council. I would like to thank my fellow councillors, in particular Cllrs. Harvey, Howells, Bradford and Sinclair, who contributed to the Budget Monitoring meeting where the budget's final form was determined.

In summation, the last year has been a productive one for the finance, policy and general purposes committee. I wish my successor in the chair all the best in continuing to advance all of these ongoing projects for the benefit of Ledbury.

Councillor Eakin