



SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

TOWN MAYOR COUNCILLOR MURROUGH O'BRIEN



A year ago, this report opened by saying "this was a year unlike any other any of us have experienced". As we moved on from the dreaded 2020-21 lockdown season, the last

year, if I can sum it up in one word, has all been about transition. I hesitate to use transition back to normality, as it feels, yet again, that a new normal is becoming the norm each year.

Re-opening Champions Manor Hall, from the previous 'meetings-on-zoom era', affected many areas of council functionality, from the extra costs associated with cleaning, and social distancing, to having to take some very tough decisions on regular hirers to facilitate council business. It has been challenging and obviously not well received by those who were affected. I can only apologise for all the upheaval. Our local Town Council, like every level of Government, has probably learned a few things from the 'pandemic era' and going forward, will be better prepared. What lockdown and transition provided was an opportunity to look at how the Town Council operated and prompted us to undertake a modernisation review that could update certain areas of process and efficiency. Our objectives, as always, were to try to deliver greater value for money, deliver more services, and through all councillors, be more accountable to the community who elect us to office.

This transition has started; we have taken some very bold steps to reduce the number of committees and redistribute the workloads. Our aims are to make sure that all councillors feel engaged and that they have a voice that can be heard and represent you at every meeting. Having updated the structures, our next mission for the forthcoming 12 months is to make them work for us and deliver the objectives.

However, the last 12 months have not all been about internal change, we believe we have accomplished many achievements. The reports from the Committee Chairs are within this report, but I would especially like to highlight a few. Our gamble to go ahead with the Christmas Fayre proved successful (whilst many other local councils did not proceed) and we did have a bit of luck with covid wave timings. I think it is safe to say that the last one was the best we have had, albeit as a community, we were all in a "we needed that" sort of mood. I thank the Leisure Committee for this event and look forward to a rapidly increasing programme of events in the next 12 months.

The Environment Committee has had a busy year as well; most of the things they do we tend to take for granted, like hanging baskets of bloom and colour and other such schemes to keep the town feeling fresh and tidy. The committee considered a very sensitive issue regarding children and their place in your hearts at the Garden of Remembrance, having learnt that Colchester was 'the nearest' space that accommodated this very sensitive area. I thank the Environment Committee for their work here and we will soon ensure this journey is no longer required for those who wish to remain local when bringing memory and peace together.

In areas regarding town planning, the Town Council has probably gone through a revolution in the last 12 months. We foresaw the heavy workloads and ensured we had two committees allocated. The Development & Infrastructure Committee took on the Neighbourhood Plan, a five-year exercise that culminated in your approval at a referendum late last year. In addition, there were numerous consultations regarding the 1200 new homes north of the Burnham Road. The Town Council has voiced residential concerns at every opportunity, whilst accepting the fact that these 'Government-mandated' new housing allocations are almost impossible to stop. I thank the 'D&I' Committee for the large amount of due diligence and analysis they carried out.

The Planning Committee has also faced increasing demands. Planning law changes and online consultation approaches adopted by planning authorities are perhaps changing the way local parish & town councils approach their role in supporting the district council planning authorities, especially around simple planning applications, like small extensions, garage conversions or tree pruning. However, this has been offset by new planning demands such as strategic solar farms, coastal planning policies (that's us still), Bradwell nuclear development, and the planning aspirations of bordering districts. I thank the Planning Committee for tackling and trail-blazing these important areas. Indeed, the knowledge and experience gained by your local councillors serving on both 'planning-focused' committees have been invaluable to the whole Town Council.

I would like to offer further thanks, not just because it is the protocol (which it is of course), but really, I genuinely feel these, they are personally important. First to our staff and officers who have worked hard to keep us councillors in check and support all our key services for the last year. Without them, council services do not function. Second, I would like to thank all my fellow town councillors for their dedication to office and contributions throughout the year (all town councillors are voluntary, unsalaried positions; elected councillors may receive a fixed £500 a year allowance for their time) without you, there is no council. I especially thank my Deputy Mayor, Bob Massey for his support, and for sharing his experience across the whole spectrum of councils; without which, my term as your Town Mayor would have been a whole lot tougher.

Finally, I thank you all; not just those of you who choose to vote, but the whole community as our services are for everyone. Without your support and constructive feedback, it is far more difficult to effect change and improvement within the Town Council. I thank everyone for their ideas, thoughts, suggestions, criticisms, and feedback. Long may it continue

Murrough O'Brien

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Chairman:
Councillor Keith Bentley

The following matters are reserved and delegated to the Environment Committee: Issues in and around South Woodham Ferrers to include the following: Traffic Management, Litter Control, Roads, Pavements and Footpaths, Signage, Public Transport, Garden of Remembrance, Millennium Place and the town sign, Woodham Fenn, hanging baskets and sponsored roundabout.



A COVID MEMORIAL was placed at the Garden of Remembrance to commemorate all residents sadly lost during the Covid pandemic.



HANGING BASKETS AND PLANTERS

Floral basket displays are provided in the town centre and other retail locations.

Hanging baskets also provide a lovely colourful display around town.



CHAT -A-WHILE BENCH

A place residents can sit and chat at Millenium place if they are feeling isolated or lonely.

THE RIVERFRONT

This year, new signage has been placed in Town for the Riverfront and a new bench and maintenance of existing riverfront benches has been completed.



NEW POSTERS

Were placed around the town to encourage all residents to clean up after their dogs



During the year three much needed defibrillators have been placed in town. The phone box in Heralds Way, the fire station and at Creekview Road.

LEISURE COMMITTEE

Chairman: Councillor Russ Crosbie

The following matters are reserved and delegated to the Leisure Committee: Children's Play Area and Blue Cage Hullbridge Road, the Bowling Green, Allotments, the Bandstand, leisure facilities and delivery of the Town Council's annual programme of events.



CHRISTMAS LIGHTS & CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

Christmas lights were erected in the town centre by the Council with a contribution from Asda and

Chelmsford City Council. The Christmas Fayre went ahead this year with the addition of an ice-skating rink.



SWIMMING POOL

The Council contributed £10,000 towards the running of the swimming pool at the Leisure Centre.

PLAY IN PARK

The Town Council fund the Play in the Park schemes organised by Chelmsford City Council in South Woodham Ferrers. These free sessions are provided during

Easter and the summer months and held at Saltcoats Park.

Details of the sessions are available on the Town Council's website.

CHAMPIONS MANOR HALL

This year the Council has completed a replacement surface of the bowling green.



An outside table tennis facility is also provided for all to use.



HALLOWEEN PARTY

This was a new children's event which was a great success.



The Town Council held a seniors Christmas party in December 2021.

During the year The Leisure Committee held a Woodham in Bloom competition that received beautiful entries from residents.

The Town Council look forward to reinstating the seniors film club, youth club and a new toddler group which begins on Monday 25th April. Platinum Jubilee celebrations are planned including a mural at the bandstand.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Chairman:
Councillor Ian Roberts

The following matters are reserved and delegated to the Planning Committee:

To consider and comment on all plaMns, development briefs, planning, and tree preservation orders applications submitted for development within and around South Woodham Ferrers or in areas that could affect South Woodham Ferrers.

To respond to any issues regarding the development of land and property within and around South Woodham Ferrers. The Committee meets every month to agree comment on the various planning matters that arise.

During the last year many of our meetings were held virtually and Councillor visits to view sites was curtailed planning the committee submitted comments to Chelmsford on around 100 local planning applications from around SWF.

We also carried out planning consultations on many aspects of wider Chelmsford planning matters.

The responsibility for dealing with and responding to the major Countryside development to the north of the B1012, was taken over by a new Development and Infrastructure Committee, which is currently preparing a response to the Willow Grove part of the development by Bellway Homes.

It has been a busy year for planning and next year we expect it to remain so with detailed planning applications or the proposed developments to the North of SWF expected later this year.

The Planning Committee will be combined with the Environment Committee to form the new Environment and Planning Committee from this May as part of the Council's committee restructuring to improve how it all works to best serve the community.

CHAMPIONS MANOR HALL COMMUNITY CENTRE

We welcomed many regular hirers back to Champions Manor Hall now Covid restrictions have been lifted. Unfortunately the pandemic had an impact on some small businesses but we have welcomed new hirers this year. The flooring in both the halls will be refurbished in April 2022 to remove all the Covid restrictions that were in place previously. The lift at Champions Manor hall will also have an upgrade in April 2022 to install two sets of automated electric doors. This will be funded by an RCCE grant. We are looking forward to continuing affiliation with our existing and new hirers to Champions Manor Hall.

Bookings available for Champions Manor Hall

Tel 01245 321817

Email - paul@southwoodhamferrerstc.gov.uk

Main Hall

Multi Purpose Room

Conference and Meeting Rooms



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Chairman: Councillor Murrough O'Brien

The Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for Town Council land, premises and staff, as well as civic affairs and public relations. The Committee co-ordinates the budgetary process and recommends a precept to cover the annual expenses of the Council, which is determined at a Council meeting in January each year. For the financial year 2022/23 the Band D Precept has increased by £2.92. The precept for 2022/23 is £449,435.

Precept 2022-23



GRANTS AWARDED

For the financial year ending 31 March 2022 the grants below were awarded under the Town Council's Grants scheme.

In addition to the grants awarded below the Town Council received a £10,000 locality funding grant from Essex County Council and County Councillor Bob Massey is funding equipment for a new Toddler group starting April 2022.

If you have a project that you think may meet the Town Council's criteria please contact the office on 01245 321817 or visit our website to download an application form.

SWF Railway Adopters Group	£500
SWF United	£674.91
Swallows (gym equipment)	£3,000
Action for Family Carers (Hall hire costs)	£5,000
Eyotts Sailing Club	£2,000
Swift Singers	£1,000
Table Tennis	£200

COUNCILLORS BY WARD

CHETWOOD WARD

Councillor Bob Massey
Councillor Ashley John
Councillor Alan Shearring
Councillor Russ Crosbie
Vacancy

ELMWOOD WARD

Councillor Jackie Birch
Councillor Murrough O'Brien
Councillor Lisa Kelly
Councillor Scott Wilson
Vacancy

COLLINGWOOD WARD

Councillor Peter Ferry
Councillor Annie Humphrey
Councillor Malcolm Sismey
Councillor John Miller
Councillor Darren Thompson

WOODVILLE WARD

Councillor Keith Bentley
Councillor Donna Eley
Councillor Ian Roberts
Councillor John Burman
Councillor Toni Perham Lake

THE COUNCIL AND ITS COMMITTEE SYSTEM

The Town Council's Committees meet throughout the Council year to assist in progressing the Council's business. Notices of all meetings are published on the Town Council website, noticeboards and in the Focus column.

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