

Crewkerne Town Council

Report No. 6

ANNUAL REPORT

March 2007

THE MAYOR'S REPORT.

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Council's Annual Report which is designed to keep you in touch with the work that we are doing on your behalf. Throughout the year we will continue to bring you further information via our Newsletters, the next issue is due to be distributed throughout the town in May.

The Council continues to ensure the well being of the buildings and land owned by the Town Council and has established a clear policy in spending part of its precept on preventative maintenance programmes to avoid high cost repairs in the future and also, where possible, the enhancement of the amenities we provide in our growing community.

Work has commenced on the new land below the Bincombe nature reserve and we are now able to offer the first four Council allotments for rent. Clearance work will continue this year to enable us to use the land to its full potential.

During the past year plans for the development of the town have moved on significantly. The CLR key site continues to progress towards the start of the building phase and the new developments at Maiden Beech and the North Street trading estate have moved forward in the planning process. The town centre will soon see significant changes with the Waitrose project commencing at the end of the month, the first phase will be the building of the new Day Centre followed by the formation of the temporary car park on Henhayes prior to work on the main store building and two tier car park. We also await the development of the old Cooke and Sons premises into a new retail outlet for the town.

The Council now works in partnership with A Better Crewkerne And District (ABCD) to establish further new ideas and projects to enhance the town and surrounding villages.

The Active Lifestyle extension to our Aqua Centre has been completed and the public opening saw a visit from the Yeovil Town players, this was followed by our formal opening when we were honoured by a return visit of HRH The Princess Royal.

As well as the Open Forum slot at the beginning of each full Council meeting we continue to hold monthly surgeries to allow direct contact with Councillors to discuss any matters regarding the town. It is important that you use these opportunities to express your opinions and in turn the production of these publications will ensure that the Council keeps you informed.

In recognition of their contribution to the town and its citizens Rusty Jackson and Peter Gammon have been chosen to receive our Honoured Citizen Awards this year. Presentation of the Award takes place at the Annual Town Meeting on Monday 26th March.

The following reports from each of the Council Committees detail their work during the past year and we have also included the Council's aims and achievements for the same period.

Cllr Mike Best, Mayor

COUNCIL AIMS & ACHIEVEMENTS

2006/07

To improve and encourage recreation and leisure facilities for young people and adults in the community.

Achieved:

- Completion of the major new attraction in the town the Active Lifestyle Centre, an extension to the Aqua Centre, and formally opened by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal on 15th February.
- Awarded grants to West One Community Centre £7,250 (£6,000 of this is for the annual rent to the Town Council), Crewkerne Carnival £400, Heritage Centre £1,500, Day Centre £1,500, CUDOS £250, Crewkerne Action for the Disabled £100, Girlguiding £75, Twinning Association £150, Pegasus Karate Club £75, and Screen in the Square £150 to improve or aid leisure pursuits.

- Again provided administrative support and a grant of £1,000 to the highly successful Annual Lighting Up celebration on 24th November in the Town Centre.
- Awarded £1,250 from the Mendip and South Somerset Safety Partnership towards a local youth skatepark event in Happy Valley on 24th August.
- Assisted the Walks Committee to reprint the successful 'Walks around Crewkerne' pack.

To improve communication and partnership working in the community

Achieved:

- Worked in collaboration with Crewkerne Sports Club to deliver a mutual amicable agreement with Kimberley Developments agents for Waitrose Supermarkets regarding the sale of a small parcel of land at Henhayes, in order to ultimately increase the economic vitality and prosperity of Crewkerne.

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- Provided an information source to the public on matters concerning the construction of Waitrose.
- Maintained a Council web page on the Crewkerne.Town website. This is regularly updated with many articles about the Town Council and its activities. Continued to publish a Quarterly Newsletter.
- Held the popular monthly 'Councillor Surgeries' in the Town Hall, now in its fourth year.
- The Community Plan for Crewkerne and District was launched in July. Several projects are being driven forward, including new notice boards, by A Better Crewkerne and District (ABCD) Steering Group which has members from the public, private and voluntary sector together with support from SSDC.
- In partnership with Chard and Ilminster Town Councils, arranged and publicised a French Market day adjacent to the Town Hall on March 10th.
- Assisted the new publication of the Crewkerne Town Guide in collaboration with representatives from the Chamber of Trade and the Local Information Centre.
- Worked in tandem with 'Crewkerne Action for the Disabled' (CAD) regarding the provision of dropped kerbs. Encouraged CAD to input on new planning applications in order to ensure access for the disabled is catered for in business premises throughout the town.

To protect and improve the environment.

Achieved:

- Unkempt land acquired at Bincombe Lane has been

cleared of bramble and tidied up. Four allotments have been created together with a landscaped area suitable for grass seeding this Spring.

- Promoted an annual Town Spring Clean day in April '06
- 5 new specimen trees, 3 beech, an oak and a sweet chestnut were planted in Barn Street Recreation Ground with the aid of an environmental improvement grant from South Somerset District Council.

To co-operate with and support the Police and District Council to reduce crime and disorder in the town.

Achieved:

- Awarded £3,143 Grant funding from the Mendip and South Somerset Safety Partnership to improve safety to Chubbs Lawn residents and security to West One Youth and Community Centre by providing additional fencing.
- Continued to maintain a close working liaison with the local police and Police Community Support Officers as well as the SSDC Community Safety Action Panel.
- Provided administration to the Crewkerne Community Safety Group.
- Continued to maintain the close circuit television cameras in the town centre and gave assistance to the local police to optimise the cameras to maximum potential.

Financial Report

The accounts for the current year, which ends 31st March 2007, will not be audited until later in the year. The final accounts will be presented to the June meeting of the Town Council and a summary published on the notice board outside the Town Hall prior to audit. Members of the public will have the opportunity to examine the full accounts on request.

The Statement of Accounts for the last audited year 2005/2006

	31 st March 2005	31 st March 2006
Balances b/fwd	85,475	63,118
Annual Precept	145,501	174,785
Active Lifestyle Centre	57,894	860,526
Total other Receipts	53,910	47,349
Staff Costs	73,925	91,473
Loan Interest	12,214	12,251
Active Lifestyle Centre	58,070	862,978
Total other Payments	135,453	107,461
Balances c/fwd	63,118	71,615
Total Cash & Investments	30,067	81,098
Total Fixed Assets	4,432,155	4,511,802
Total Borrowings	108,423	103,844

At 31st March 2007 the following estimated debts were outstanding to the Public Works Loan Board:

Aqua Centre	38,000
Town Hall	19,000
Victoria Hall	40,000

Estimated income and expenditure for the current financial year is as follows:

Income

Bank Interest & Dividends	3,700
Grants & Donations	6,580
Miscellaneous	4,250
Precept	199,835
Rents	9,640
Victoria Hall	5,000
Town Hall	4,200
West One	3,000
Active Lifestyle Centre	210,440
Total	446,645

Expenditure

General Admin	23,000
Salaries & Wages	83,000
Grants & Donations	12,800
Grounds Maintenance	14,000
Loan Charges	12,367
Burial Board Precept	20,160
Victoria Hall	10,500
Town Hall	17,000
War Mem Grounds	2,000
West One	11,300
Other Payments	800
Active Lifestyle Centre	212,000
Total	418,927

It is anticipated that the expenditure for the current financial year will be within budget.

AMENITIES COMMITTEE

REPORT

The Town Council Amenities Committee meetings are held on the first Monday in the month (excluding August). The Committee makes decisions on matters relating to property and land owned by the Town Council as well as issues relating to other amenities in the town.

The public buildings and open spaces owned and maintained by the Council are as follows: the Town Hall and the Victoria Hall, including the Town and Community Offices; West One Youth and Community Centre; Henhayes Playing fields including the Children's playgrounds, the Sports Pavilion and the Aqua Centre with Active Lifestyle Centre; Bincombe Beeches Nature Reserve; Happy Valley with the Skateboard Park, BMX Track, basketball and football play areas; Barn Street recreation field and Southmead Crescent play area.

War Memorial Grounds in Severalls Park Avenue The Council maintains the small Severalls Community Hall and Memorial recreation area because Town Councillors are the Trustees. The hiring of the grass/hard Tennis courts is available from Severalls Mini Market. The allotments are all let. The Severalls Community Hall was vacated in the autumn by The Crewkerne Arts and Allied Crafts Society and some damp problems have to be addressed prior to re-letting.

West One Youth and Community Centre The Management Committee has commenced a programme of improvements. The Council contributed to the refurbishment project in West One by installing a new window in the kitchen area. The natural light from the new window, together with the new kitchen provided by the Management Committee, has drastically improved the kitchen for the users. Some vandalism to the flat roof has occurred during the year. A successful grant application to install fencing to keep people off the roof will hopefully prevent further vandalism. All the activities at West One are well supported.

Town Hall and Victoria Hall Routine maintenance is undertaken by our Groundsman during the winter.

Bincombe Amenity Land Replacement gates have been installed, and work on clearing the land to create new open space and allotments has been undertaken.

Playgrounds All the children's swings seats and chains have been replaced as part of a maintenance programme. The Southmead Crescent playground has been improved with painted designs added to the surface which was completed by local volunteers.

Aqua Centre and Active Lifestyle Centre The Council's Groundsmen have planted new flower beds adjacent to the Active Lifestyle Centre. Swimming numbers have increased from the previous year, with the swim school being hugely successful and in great demand. Membership of the gym is ahead of the monthly business plan.

Open Spaces General The flowerbeds at Church Street and South Street Car Park entrance have been maintained. The Sensory Garden designed by Melissa Wilkinson, at Bowhayes/Orchard Rise, has had some vandalism to the walls. SSDC will be replacing some of the wall with treated railway sleepers.

Vandalism to Town Council property takes up a considerable amount of time and finance, which subsequently increases the Council Tax.

The Council encourages recycling of all waste with the weekly street collection and by using the recycling centre. The Committee supports the work of the Trash Bash team, which is a group of volunteers who assist to pick up litter and tidy areas of the town. Additional volunteers would be most welcome.

The Council financially supports the Local Information Centre (Tourist Information) a valued asset for the town. One of the town's walks packs is being updated and reprinted, funded by grants.

Town Crier David Craner registered his interest in becoming the official Town Crier, as he believes that this ancient tradition would add colour and character to the town. The Council welcomed and accepted David Craner's kind offer to take up the post as the Town Crier.

The Council has produced a Policy on Preventing and Managing Fire to comply with The Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005 to apply to all Crewkerne Town Council's buildings and premises: The Town Hall and Victoria Hall, Severalls War Memorial Hall, West One Youth & Community Centre.

Thanks to our Groundsmen who have continued to maintain the town's grounds and buildings during the year and to the Clerk and Staff for all their work.

Cllr Peter Chard, Chairman of Amenities



Town Councillors		
SIMON ANDREW (Chair of Planning)	46 Middle Path, Crewkerne TA18 8BE	76161
MIKE BEST (Mayor)	186 Park View, Crewkerne TA18 8JH	74245
VERONICA CHARD	10 Barn Close, Crewkerne TA18 8BL	72810
PETER CHARD (Chair of Amenities)	10 Barn Close, Crewkerne TA18 8BL	72810
IRVIN JOHNS	Brendon, 2 Lyme Road, Crewkerne TA18 8HE	73738
HILARY LEAMON (Chair of Policy & Resources)	Highlands, 18 Lyme Road, Crewkerne TA18 8HF	77014
MALCOLM McALL (Deputy Mayor)	The Old Bakery, Bincombe Lane, Crewkerne TA18 7LY	72424
TONY SHIRE	The Magnolias, 30 Barn Close, Crewkerne TA18 8BL	76652
ANGIE SINGLETON	Kincora, Church Street, Crewkerne TA18 7HR	74846
BETTY SPANSWICK	Sail Cottage, 5 Victoria Sq., Popleswell, Crewkerne TA18 7ES	75004
DAVID TOZER	7 Whitehall Court, Wadham Park, Crewkerne TA18 7NW	75759
VIVIEN WILES	195 Park View, Crewkerne TA18 8JH	73946

PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

The Planning and Highways Committee consists of all Town Council members chaired by the Chairman of Planning, and meets on the second Monday of every month including August. Its principal function is to ensure an informed local input into the planning decision process, and it considers all planning applications in Crewkerne parish submitted to the District Council, who are the Statutory Planning Authority. After discussion the Committee makes recommendations to the District Council, and if our recommendations agree with the planning officers at Area West the decision is normally made at that level. Only the largest scale applications and those involving major principles of planning policy are then considered by the District Council committees. If we disagree then the decision used to go to the Area West committee anyway, but changes introduced a year or so ago to speed up the approval process and reduce the workload on the Area West Committee have altered this procedure. Most 'disagreement' cases are now resolved between the planning officers and our own District Council ward members without going to committee or coming back to the Town Council. This system increases the probability of some decisions that the Town Council will disagree with, and it also underlines the importance of understanding the planning issues involved in the eyes of the officers when our Committee considers an application. Another consequence of the tight deadlines now being applied by the District Council is that we almost always have to consider some applications at Town Council meetings, as the time available for processing applications is less than one month and our Planning meetings are monthly.

Our monthly Planning and Highways Committee meetings as well as the Town Council meetings are open to the public, and personal representations from applicants, objectors and others are welcomed at the time planning applications are discussed. In most cases the Committee makes its decision at the first 'hearing', but in some cases it has to be deferred pending further information, in which case it will be dealt with at the next planning meeting, or if the time scale is tight at the next full Town Council meeting. This year 119 different applications were considered, and 15 of these had to be discussed on more than one occasion. The applications to be considered are posted, with the agenda, on Council notice boards and on the Council's website six days before the meetings, which gives members of the public time to study the applications and the opportunity to observe the discussion and make representations.

The most important application which has required repeated discussion and is still not completely determined concerns the 'CLR'/Easthams/Key Site proposal. A revised version of this was considered at our April 2006 meeting and given conditional support, followed by approval in principle by Area West at a special meeting in November. Details of the conditions to be met by the applicants (social housing and dormouse protection included) are now still being negotiated at the District Council level, and several more months are likely to elapse before final 'full' approval is given and work can start. The proposal for 110 houses at Maiden Beech is also experiencing a slow passage, with outline approval now given in principle, but discussions still in progress on the conditions to be met. In contrast the Waitrose proposals, which seem to have attracted strong local support, have passed through the system quite quickly, and work is starting soon.

The Planning and Highways Committee is also the principal forum in which highway and traffic matters affecting Crewkerne are discussed, though delivery of any improvements or changes in this area is the responsibility of the County Council. Often with the help of our County Councillor, we are constantly passing on Crewkerne's needs to the Highway Authority in terms of both short-term and long-term requirements, and trying to ensure that Crewkerne gets its share of any funding available for improvements. This activity is dominated by efforts to improve road safety in the town for all road users. Last year all possible moves for improvements, including crossings at strategic points, more severe speed limits, possible one-way systems, parking management, improved footways and cycleways, were subsumed in a Traffic Management Study to be carried out for Crewkerne by the County Council, which was expected to report in summer 2006. This would enable co-ordinated decisions to be taken on improvements in the town's highways within the limits of the financing available - largely from planning agreements. The proposals were in fact finally received in November, and after a rather hurried public consultation period were considered in a well-attended planning meeting in the Day Centre in January. The idea of a 20mph speed limit over the whole town area was approved, but the more complex proposals for a North Street and a Market Street one-way system were felt to have considerable disadvantages and were not supported in the form offered. Further discussion is planned.

Cllr Simon Andrew, Chairman Planning & Highways