



ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2019



Shaping the future of Marlow

It has been a great year and one that has seen us working even harder in the background along with our fantastic community to “shape our future” and build a new and even stronger foundation for everything we do in Marlow. I am very proud to be part of this community and to have had the privilege to serve Marlow during my Mayoral year to begin our transition which will see new responsibilities for our Town Council over the next few years. We celebrated some significant events this year; the Centenary of Armistice day with a packed High Street and Causeway; RAF 100 Baton Relay that came through town, which once again showed the significance of Marlow and its importance and long association with the RAF as a key and critical wartime base. Our heroes and supporters in the community came together again at ‘Celebrate Marlow’, held at the Crowne Plaza for the Town Council to thank all those who do so much for our town, who are often not recognised (*this will be on 29th of September this year so please do let us know of any of our unsung heroes that you think should be invited*).

It was a very busy summer in the town with a Royal visit by HRH Princess Anne who joined the traditional Swan Upping ceremony as it made its way down the river. Carnivals, fetes, and regatta were amongst many of the events which took place, proving time after time our town is a sought-out destination of significance in the UK.

As summer left us, Marlow was again the centre of attention as the Christmas lights lit up the town at the “Switch On” event by the hero of the motoring world, Mr Edd China, who rode into town on his festive record-breaking red sofa. The lights were magnificent again, so a very big ‘thank you’ to all our sponsors. Thank you to all our residents, The Marlow Chamber of Trade and Commerce and The Marlow Society, for your support.

“Shaping the future”- We recognise Marlow is growing successfully and I am grateful to everyone in the community who volunteer to put huge time and effort to make it happen and drive that Marlow success. To further ambitions on the prospects of our town, we believe the only way to address growth is to recognise the opportunities for continuing improvement in service in Marlow not only through community but also to challenge ourselves as a Council to deliver more locally and cost effectively. In the last few months our Council team has looked closely at the challenge of a newly formed Buckinghamshire Council and how that may manifest itself during Spring 2020 and recognised, as

change approaches, we must act and be ready to seize opportunity. I am therefore pleased to share with you that we have set out our plan and are taking bold steps to change our Council model in readiness for the opportunities in devolved services that we believe will create benefits for us to have more control over the town’s destiny.

In recognition of the future, the role of the Mayor which has traditionally been one of leader of the Council, attending many civic duties as well as more lately, with engagement with infrastructure and new projects and initiatives, we recognise the need to restructure and support the growing projects and initiatives with a new Leader position to work alongside the Mayor and with the Town Clerk to ensure we continue to deliver the day job, as well as new initiatives and services we take on as efficiently and quickly as possible.

My chosen charity this year was a little different and has focused more locally on raising funds to support mental health provision and initiatives in our own Marlow schools and amongst our young people. We need to support the efforts of our teachers and school professionals through funding support directly to the schools and enable them to continue to embed resilience in the young through their own school initiatives. The great news is we have had generous support and the even better news is that the Council has raised this to a higher priority. Mayor Elect, Cllr Richard Scott has agreed that throughout the next Mayoral year we will continue to drive that initiative and begin to commence funding as the school’s plans develop. If you would like to make a contribution to the charity, please consider any corporate or individual support and please do continue to engage on thoughts and initiatives.

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A/C 03635900, the Mayor’s Charity Account.

Finally thanks to you all for your hard work and support in this my Mayoral year, thanks to Hilary Martin, our Town Clerk, and her team of officers for the work they do in running everything in the background supporting us and you, in keeping our town special and a special thank you to all my fellow volunteer Councillors, and to my Deputy, Tim Avery, in giving up their time to serve on the Council. I have very much enjoyed representing our town and as I end this year of change, there are still further changes ahead and a lot of hard work and we welcome the opportunity to take on more responsibility.

Cllr Chris Funnell
Town Mayor



Chairman, Cllr Richard Scott

The prime responsibility of the Resources Committee is to manage all financial and administration services required by the Town Council. It meets six times during the year and residents are welcome to attend the meetings.

The Committee seeks to maximise the use of the Town Council element of your Council tax to provide excellent value for money in procuring and administering services for residents.

In the last financial year, which ended on 31st March 2019, a small surplus was realised on our general fund and this will be added to our reserves to ensure future financial stability. This surplus arose through good levels of income and prudent management of our expenses. Our income was in excess of budget, largely as a result of increased income from the cemetery, which we maintain to a high standard. The majority of the expenditure was close to our approved budget.

In terms of our regular expenditure, this was the third year of assuming responsibility for devolved services for grass cutting and other maintenance matters from the District and County Councils. Your Council has continued to maintain this excellent service and been able to act more quickly to residents' requests in dealing with maintenance issues.

We are pleased to report that we have re-tendered this service and agreed a new and improved contract with Continental Landscapes with effect from 1st April 2019. If appropriate to do so, we will look to take on further devolved services from the new Buckinghamshire Unitary Council to be established in May 2020.

As part of our Vision of keeping Marlow an attractive and vibrant place to live, visit and work, we continue to provide the following services to a very high standard:

- Floral Town from May to October.
- Expanded provision of Christmas lights and decorations.
- Provision of another successful 'Switch On and Shop' event to launch the Christmas festivities in Marlow.
- Maintenance of all of our play areas and green spaces to keep them in excellent condition.
- 'Celebrate Marlow' event.
- Grants and donations to local organisations totalling over £7,000.
- Provision of half the cost of a dedicated Police Community Support Officer and support for the Community Payback scheme.
- Maintenance of the Allotments to a high standard.
- Support for the Town Bus Service.

Your Council has strong general and earmarked reserves and have taken the decision to use some of those to further improve the Town and its infrastructure. These include:

- £35,000 for a safer crossing across the Causeway from Station Road to Higginson Park.
- £20,000 on improving the footpaths and street scene in Spittal Street jointly with Wycombe District Council and Sorbon Estates.
- £25,000 for new electrical infrastructure to ensure our Christmas lights remain reliable.
- £1,700 for gateway signs at two entrances to the Town.
- £35,000 for the possible lighting of our world famous bridge across the Thames.
- £4,500 to refurbish the Frohman statue on The Causeway.

We are pleased to confirm that the Town Council element of your Council Tax bill for the current financial year to 31st March 2020 has not increased and the annual charge for the average Band D property is less than £1 per week.

Chairman, Cllr Neil Marshall

Planning

Marlow Town Council is a statutory consultee to the local planning authority Wycombe District Council. The Planning, Environment and Transport (PET) Committee meets every three weeks to review planning applications within the Marlow Town boundary.

The bulk of the applications reviewed each year are for minor extensions or changes of use and we have a strong correlation with the Planning Authority findings.

The New Local Plan is in the final stages of approval without any major changes affecting Marlow and maintaining our Green Belt protection areas against developer threats.

A couple of significant developments are currently under consideration, Regal House in Station Road and a new larger sports hall for the Sir William Borlase's Grammar School.

Environment

This is becoming an area of great concern for Marlow as well as in the wider community. An Air Quality Management Area has been declared for the Chapel St,

Spittal St, High St and West St areas of Marlow and we are working with both the District and County Councils to consider actions to alleviate the issue.

The PET Committee is initiating the setting up of an advisory panel of Marlow residents with professional knowledge in environmental matters to help raise public and commercial awareness of the issues and possible actions to improve our environment.

Transport

We are always mindful of the challenge of parking availability in the town, largely brought about by the vibrancy of the town itself, but solutions which satisfy residents, shoppers and inward commuters (all of whom are essential to the viability of the town) prove to be very challenging.

We are working with both the District and County Councils (who hold responsibility for off-street and on-street parking respectively) and have suggested decking the Central Car Park.

We successfully defended the principle of free parking on street. Bucks Highways have recently improved the parking bay marking and installed sensors to aid enforcement and this can also aid motorists with finding vacant spaces via a mobile app.



Making Marlow the most attractive and vibrant riverside town in the Thames Valley

It's now seven years since we presented our 'Vision for Marlow' document, setting out what we wanted to achieve for our town for the next decade, and we're extremely proud of what we've achieved so far. Here are some of the highlights from the past year:

Making and keeping our town beautiful

- We maintain stunning floral displays around the town.
- We've introduced floral 'gateways' to the town, and will soon install planters on the Wiltshire Road roundabout.
- Bunting decorates the streets from May to September.
- We have taken responsibility for grounds maintenance around the town to ensure that all areas are well tended.

Attracting culture, arts and sporting events

- The Christmas lights are a huge success, thanks to the support of our business sponsors, and our Christmas events are firmly established in the town's calendar.
- We work closely with Transition Town Marlow and support their Community and Farmers' Markets on the first Saturday of each month on The Causeway.
- We have helped primary and secondary school children understand democracy and get involved in the community.
- We provide support for the hugely successful food and music festival Pub in the Park.
- We provide a proactive environment for cultural and sports initiatives, including Love Marlow, the Sprintathon, community youth clubs, Marlow Regatta and many others.
- We've created a Celebrate Marlow event in recognition of the groups and individuals who contribute to our community.
- We're in active discussions over a literary and comedy festival for Marlow – more to follow.

Protecting the environment for future generations

- Working with the supermarkets, we helped reduce the use of plastic bags in Marlow and it is our aim to eradicate single-use plastics completely.
- To encourage the use of bicycles, we've introduced additional cycle paths around the town and we're continually looking at ways to reduce car movements.
- Our wonderful volunteers recently joined in the Great British Litter Pick, with support from the community and the Wombles, who do a brilliant job in the town.
- We've worked alongside the Environment Agency and Bucks CC to secure Marlow's flood alleviation scheme, which is nearing completion.
- BCC has committed to fixing the Marlow Bridge lights with overnight working during the summer holidays.
- BCC will install replacement bollards and improved signage to protect the bridge.

Looking after the transport needs of residents, visitors and businesses

- Liaised with BCC over the installation of individually marked parking bays in the town centre, with parking sensors, to help with enforcement.

- We put forward detailed proposals for a decked parking area at the Central car park to alleviate the strain on parking in the town, which are with WDC for review.
- We supported BidCo (the organisation that represents Globe Park businesses) with the introduction of yellow lines on the roads in and around Globe Business Park.
- The Business Park to trial a bus route from Wycombe Station to the Park, and looking at lift share and bike schemes.
- We have worked extensively with WDC and Bidco to promote The Westhorpe Interchange, (access to and from the Business Park) consultation and are awaiting results.

Engaging with all sectors of the community

- Our improved website and social media presence has helped us both inform and engage with our community.
- The Marlovian magazine has been improved and updated and is distributed to all homes in Marlow.
- We encourage residents to give us feedback; we believe it is important to have a two-way dialogue.

Keeping Marlow safe

- We work closely with the police to prevent oversized vehicles crossing and causing damage to our historic bridge.
- 'Shop Watch' and 'Pub Watch' initiatives, which we set up in partnership with the police, help safety in the town.
- We set up the Marlow Community Flood Plan in 2013 to ensure the town is well prepared for future floods.
- As part of the speed reduction campaign on key roads, we help monitor vehicle speeds around the town and regularly report the findings to the Police.

The imminent introduction of a Unitary Authority for Buckinghamshire (replacing WDC and BCC) means big changes in the structure of our local government. We welcome any changes which give us more control over our town and help us take it to the next level of success.

With our strategy and Vision already in place, we believe we are perfectly positioned to take on more of the devolved services which matter to our residents, businesses and visitors. Marlow Town Council has the energy, the vision and the commitment to ensure we satisfy the aims of our Vision, and we hope you will support us over the interesting times ahead. The Environment is a key part of our Vision and in the coming months we are going to put a team together to look at how we can make improvements locally. More news as we have it.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions to help us deliver our Vision for the next ten years. To keep Marlow:

- A fantastic place to live.
- A great place to work.
- An exciting place to visit.
- A wonderful place to bring up children.
- A caring environment for all.

If you have any suggestions or ideas that you think would help us, please do share them, email

office@marlow-tc.gov.uk.