



ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2023

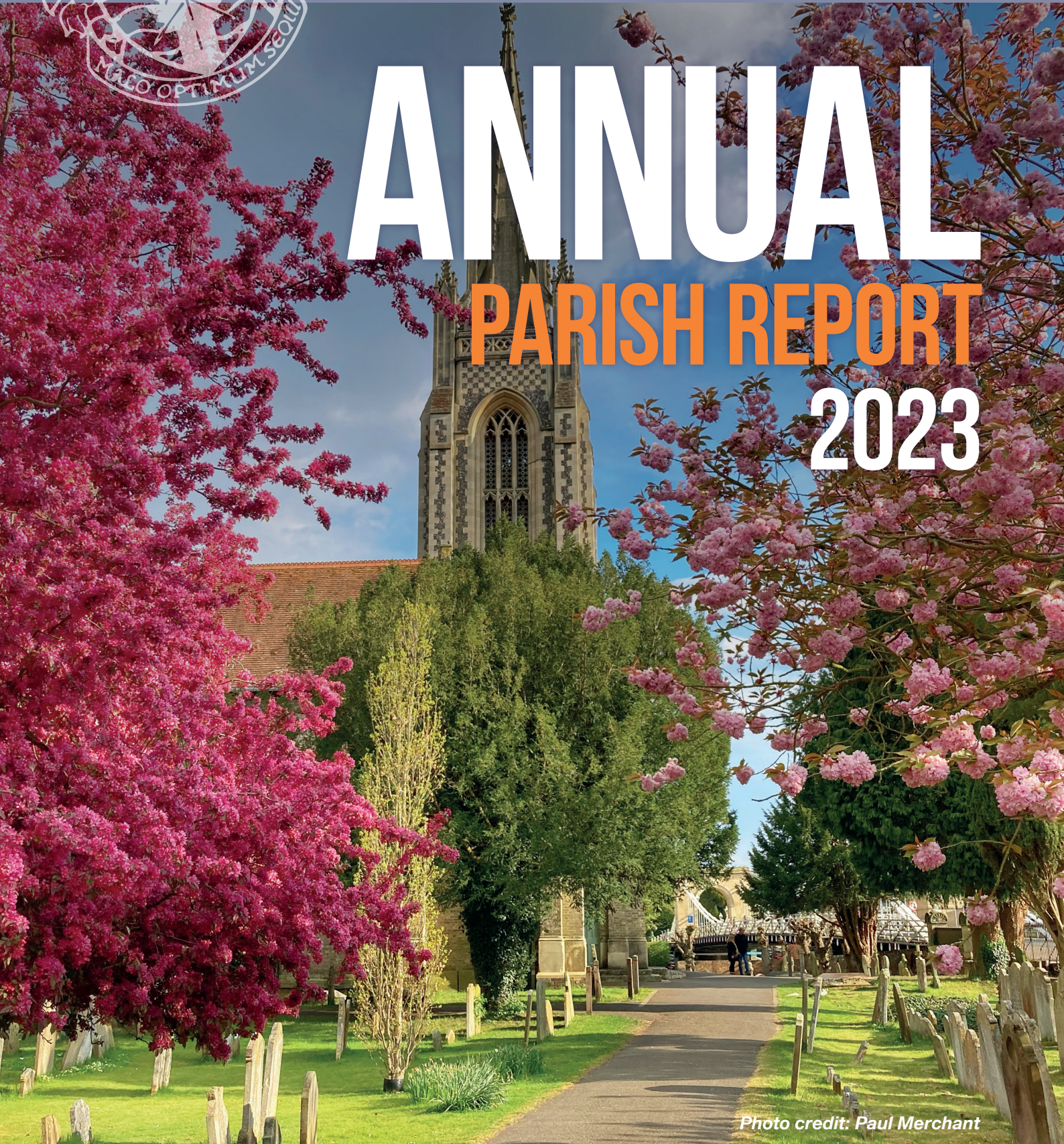


Photo credit: Paul Merchant

MARLOW TOWN COUNCIL

MAYOR'S

REPORT 2022/23



Marlow remains a very community-orientated town and I'd like to offer a big thank you to all residents for your support

I am honoured to have been your Town Mayor for the past four years and I shall be standing down at the annual general meeting in May. During that period of four years, many town events were cancelled due to Covid. I am, however, pleased to report the good news that all our civic events and indeed many events put on by the various town organisation are now back in the calendar – this all makes for Marlow to be an excellent place in which to live, visit and work.

Reporting on this last 12 months - the Council hosted the "Party Like The Queen" event in Higginson Park on 3rd June to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. It was a really successful family day themed in the 1950s and included music, entertainment, food, drink and much more. It was therefore with much regret that only three months later the Queen passed away and civic ceremonies took place locally to remember her magnificent reign and service to our country. Subsequently, I had the privilege of reading the official Proclamation of the accession of King Charles III to the throne from The Causeway.

Other civic events continued during the year and the annual Remembrance service attracted excellent support; the outstanding Christmas lights were switched by Peter Jones; Carols on The Causeway took place in Christmas week; and the Chamber of Trade late night shopping and the Rotary Santa's Fun Run also took place in December. The Council held a civic celebration service in March this year with

our changed format to promote town activities - we included two choirs from Sir William Borlase school and presentations of the local Ukrainian cooperative and 3rd Marlow Scouts. I also had the pleasure of presenting a Lifetime Achievement Award to Mrs Liz Ferris for her many years of working with children in the town. During the year, I have represented the town at the Marlow Town Regatta & Festival; Great Marlow School Celebration of Success; Buckinghamshire Council and other local Town's civic services; and with several councillors and the Marlow Town Twinning Association commemorated the historic occasion of the 50th anniversary of town twinning with Marly le Roi, France.

I also continued to support new businesses moving into the Town by cutting ribbons to open shops and offices; and with the Lord Lieutenant, presented a Queen's Award for Enterprise to G & L, an international company in the healthcare industry based in Marlow.

Marlow remains a very community-orientated town and I'd like to offer a big thank you to all residents for your support. My thanks also go to all Town Councillors and to my Deputy, Cllr Jocelyn Towns, who has supported me and stood in for me on several occasions. Finally, we would not function as a Council without the support of our officers, led by Town Clerk, Hilary Martin. Many thanks to them for running everything in the background.

I have very much enjoyed representing our town over the last four years and I wish you and your families well for the coming months.

Cllr Richard Scott

Town Mayor



→ I have very much enjoyed representing our town

Leader, Cllr Chris Funnell

Volunteering and leading is important as it offers essential help to worthwhile causes, places, people and the wider community



The big question, why do you become a councillor, what do the 12 of you do, how much do you get paid, what does it involve?

The answer surprises most, we are the first tier of government, 12 council members elected by you to look after our town. As a team we share your passion, care about Marlow's future and its prosperity and looking after our home. We want to make it a wonderful place to live and work, a caring environment for all, an exciting place to visit and a wonderful place to bring up children.

Like you, we are also residents, with families, jobs, and the same range of human challenges, we have a collective belief in pledging our service to you, 14,464 residents, to deliver the best service we can .

We operate with a budget of approximately 500k per year. We cut the grass, look after green spaces, cemetery, allotments, hedges, pathways, security, environmental challenges, planning, trees, Christmas lights, grants, charity, litter management, asset management, health and safety finance, legal, treasury and finance, and much more.

As a team we are the legal corporate body governed by the local government act 1972. Our job is to listen, discuss, promote and win the best for you and the town - taking your challenges to the next levels of government, offering support on your issues and we don't ask you for a penny for doing that, we are volunteers.

I am proud to say we collaborate with numerous other volunteers and groups in the town that also give their time with grace and humility to lead, care and provide for others and I would like to extend my appreciation to the many other volunteers that give up their time to do this.

The challenges over the last couple of years have been financially driven, inventing new ways to ease the pain for residents through the pandemic, supporting many



hardship initiatives and seeking out our vulnerable for support. At the same time, we continuously challenged ourselves on how we operate, how we spend your money and how efficiently we deliver our service recognising that we face new challenges every year and changing and adjusting our approach accordingly.



This year we took on board the challenge to look at every line of our budget, absorb inflationary challenges, take a hard look at value for money, look at supporting residents and we delivered a "zero" increase in the council tax precept for all of you.

As we sign up soon for another council year at our AGM in May, along with my fellow councillors, I look forward to continuing to serve you as leader. We will continue to drive an organisation that will take Marlow from strength to strength as a fantastic place to live, and deliver the best value we can.

Once a Marlovian, always a Marlovian.

Please stay in touch by visiting our website at

www.marlow-tc.gov.uk which explains what your council does and provides contact information for your councillors and questions.

We would also welcome any feedback by email **office@marlow-tc.gov.uk**

Chairman, Cllr Natalia Mityaeva

Despite the difficult economic climate, the Town has finished its fiscal year in a good fiscal position. We realised increased revenues from both investment income and cemetery fees which enabled us to support and finance many enhanced services for our residents.

Among these we continued to pay for grass cutting and caring for our public spaces, providing our town with extra security through financial contributions for a Police Community Support Officer and delivering additional patrols of our parks and green spaces by a private security firm, contributing to the town bus service, purchasing and maintaining bunting and summer floral displays around town, as well as continuing to print and distribute the much-loved Marlovian magazine.

We also continued to organise and sponsor some amazing celebrations of the important events that became so iconic in our town such as the Remembrance Parade, the Swan Upping, the Civic Service that showcases



the best of volunteering and the community spirit of Marlow, and of course the annual Christmas Celebrations including the high street Christmas lights switch-on and our wonderful Carols on The Causeway event with a lovely orchestra, a choir, mulled wine and mince pies. The additional highlight this past year was the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in Higginson Park that brought much of our community and visitors together to enjoy the day out with live entertainment and fun activities.

Our annual budget also supported maintenance of our allotments and cemetery, waste management and required site inspections for health and safety of the residents and visitors.

As we move into the new financial year we will continue to review and evaluate our expenditures and financial commitments where our resources are most impactful and valued by the local community and will continue to build on our healthy reserves. Our projected budget for 2023/2024 has been balanced with no increases in parish tax to our residents. We also will be looking to review our accounting systems and processes for efficiency and improved delivery.



➔ The Town has finished its fiscal year in a good position



Chairman, Cllr Neil Marshall

Planning

Marlow Town Council is a statutory consultee to the local planning Buckinghamshire Authority. The Planning and Transport (PT) Committee meets every three weeks to review planning applications within the Marlow town boundary.

We review all applications carefully and make appropriate comment or objections.

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

The Wycombe Local Plan was approved without any major changes that affect Marlow. It maintained our Green Belt protection areas against developer threats. A new Local plan for Buckinghamshire will begin to be developed in the near future which will supersede the Wycombe Plan in due course. It is still some time away and is unlikely to have major impact on Marlow.

Developments under consideration by Buckinghamshire



planning department include the Marlow Studio project for whose revised planning application is expected to be reviewed by the strategic sites committee in the very near future. The proposal for the new schools boathouse at Gossmore was finally approved earlier this year after protracted negotiations.

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 that 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 Buckinghamshire Council towards a post-Covid travel plan and are looking at options for improving the Town Bus service with a more environment-friendly operation. We supported the new quietway on Trinity Road.

The Committee is looking forward to another busy and productive year for Marlow.

**Chairman,
Cllr Jocelyn Towns**



Environment, sustainability and wellbeing

We continue as a Council to raise further awareness amongst our residents as we work together with other organisations to drive greater learning about our Environment and Sustainability as a Town. You will recall we talked about **The BIG Sustainable Marlow Challenge** which we launched towards the end of last year. This programme encourages all of us to take simple steps towards a greener lifestyle, by helping Marlow to reduce its carbon emissions, and to help nature.

Please continue to join us in our eco-missions and be part of the Challenge.

These simple steps are:

- Saving energy at home
- Reducing waste
- Walking and cycling more
- Switch to an electric car
- Helping nature

Do check out our website where you can find all the information www.marlow-tc.gov.uk/challenge

Wildflower areas

Our pollinator policy has provided wildflower areas around the Town, with more news from the team to be shared on this very soon.



The Great British Spring Clean

We were very pleased to be able to support the Great British Spring Clean again this year, and together with the Wombles and residents, we were able to collect over 25 bags of rubbish. A big thank you to all who took part.



In conclusion

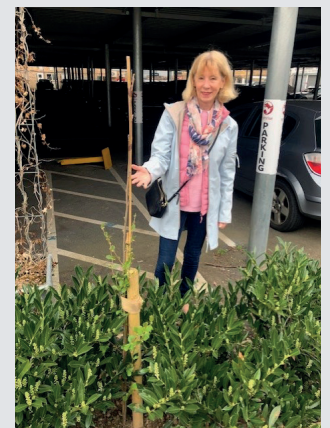
I have been running the Environment Committee, which became a fully delegated Council Committee in 2021. This was developed from a working group set up in 2019 (just before Covid), when we launched the Sustainable Marlow programme. This included projects aimed at reducing single-use plastic bottles, engaging Marlow schools in sustainability, and planting more trees.

Here is one of the trees that have recently been planted in the business park replacing three birch trees that had sadly failed.

Your Town Council will continue to improve its own environmental performance and to fully consider sustainability in its policy decisions going forward.

More information on all our policies and initiatives can be found on our website.

I sign off having greatly enjoyed my work with the environment team and wishing my successor Colleen Stapley the new Environment Chair a very successful year ahead.



Chairman, Cllr Richard Scott

The new Community committee was established in November 2021 to lead on events; manage how your Council communicates with residents and other stakeholders; deliver projects and services to enrich and improve the Marlow community in areas such as economic development and tourism; community safety, community engagement and community cohesion. The committee consists of five members and is chaired by the incumbent Mayor. We continued to offer residents several very successful events throughout the year.

On 3rd June 2022, we celebrated the platinum anniversary of HM The Queen with "Party Like The Queen" in Higginson Park. It had a 1950's theme and included entertainment for the whole family and vintage food and drink stalls. All helped by glorious weather, thousands of residents and visitors enjoyed a really great day.

This year, we have organised an informal event in Higginson Park to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. Taking place on Saturday, 6th May, "Party Like The King" will be sharing the park with Marlow & District



Round Table May Fayre and will include entertainment for the whole family, a large screen on which to watch the coronation service and, food and drink

2022 saw the 50th anniversary of town twinning with Marly le Roi, France. This very successful arrangement was recognised in France on 7th May with councillors and members of Marlow Marly town twinning association attending. To commemorate this historic event, I planted a tree in Marly le Roi and presented a commemorative plaque to their town council. We will be reciprocating the French hospitality this year over the weekend of the Marlow Town Regatta & Festival on 10th and 11th June.

Our traditional events of the pre-Christmas lights Switch On, Carols on The Causeway and a Civic Celebration service were back in full swing and our celebration event, held in March, reached out to all residents endorsing the community spirit which prevails in our town. Further details of the celebration event are covered in the Mayoral report.

Looking forward, the committee is also considering a number of future capital projects to enhance the town and full details will be shared with residents when the information is available. We will also be reviewing our communications to make full use of traditional and social media channels to promote the council's activities.



➔ We continued to offer residents several very successful events

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