

# Report from Westbury Town Council

Westbury Town Council (WTC) has had a very busy period with a number of projects moving forward.

## Play Areas

The lease to transfer 10 of the town's play areas from Wiltshire Council to WTC is now signed and we will expect to take over their running shortly. Following a tender process, IdVerde was successful in winning the contract.

## Business Plan & Mid Term Financial Plan

WTC have been looking at our business plan and our midterm finances with particular regard to the number of services that the town council has or might be taking on. To assist with this we have asked an external consultant to look at our current practices. The initial report has been positive. We will use the information gathered to help us take on further services that are likely to be offered to the town council to run should people want them to continue.

## Budget & Precept

WTC's finance committee will consider a first draft of its budget on 11<sup>th</sup> December which is part of the process of setting our precept (WTC's share of residents' council tax bill). Currently, the free car parking scheme (in a trial at the moment) is a key topic as to continue would have a significant effect on our budgets (it represents around 7%); we have been collating opinions from businesses in the town centre and welcome other feedback.

## Emergency Planning

We have been working on a revised & improved emergency plan which details resources and procedures for emergencies in the town so that we can provide timely and relevant support to the emergency services as needed. It should be ready for publication in January. The Council will next be working on a Business Continuity Plan & disaster recovery.

## Events

Our events group is well into final planning for our Summer Fayre in 2018 and by the time of the next area board meeting the significantly revised Christmas in Westbury event will have happened – we hope successfully.

As residents should have seen, we have replaced our Christmas in Westbury booklet this year with a colourful and a simpler pull-out in the White Horse News. We hope that people find this convenient (our primary aim) and are pleased to report that there is a considerable saving.

## Grants Process

We have received much positive feedback on our revised grants evening which gave more opportunity for groups in the town to share information. The scrutiny group is now meeting with a random selection of awards to find out more about what they do and how our grants will be used. We would like to take this opportunity to remind groups in Westbury that last year we moved the date of the annual process and as this was successful we will continue with this date. So, the next grants cycle will begin in May 2018 – although details and forms are always available on our website. As before, town council staff are always happy to advise and help when necessary with applications.

## Word War 1

Westbury is planning to take part in the National Beacon lighting to mark the centenary of the 2018 Armistice. We have plans for additional activity. We are also still considering some kind of public art as a commemoration for future years.

## Laverton Build

The final phase of the Laverton build will begin in January and should be completed in around 3 months. Unfortunately, despite market testing during the planning the final tenders came in rather higher than expected. The council has agreed to go ahead noting:

- 1) The dilapidated side extension is unsafe and would require considerable work to remove
- 2) We have received advice that the fire escape needs to be redesigned in any case
- 3) We are pleased to note continued greater use of the Laverton by community and commercial users but we have increasing issues with providing room for these users and the council itself
- 4) The reasons for going forward have not changed and it was always our intention to complete the Laverton restoration.

## Public Meetings

The town council are arranging two public meetings following motions to Town Council on the 6<sup>th</sup> November

- 1) A meeting about health services. This is scheduled for the 5<sup>th</sup> of March and the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have agreed to attend
- 2) A fact-finding meeting about possible plans for an incinerator. Date to be decided (possibly 12<sup>th</sup> February) depending on response from potential attendees.

## Newsletter

Feedback for our newsletter continues to be mostly positive. Our next newsletter will be published in January

And finally, on behalf of the Clerk & her staff and the Mayor & the councillors we wish everybody a Happy and Safe Christmas holiday.

## Neighbourhood Plan

Having appointed expert consultants to work with us on a plan we are now planning a meeting with a representative of Wiltshire Council's planning team those who have expressed interest in being involved with the committee part of the process to talk about the details of the process. This process will involve significant consultation with residents of the town and surroundings.