

Clerks Update – January 2020

The Town Council wishes the Westbury community a very happy & healthy New Year. We started the New Year with a busy Town Council meeting. On Monday 6th January, the full council met to deliberate over several important issues affecting the local community and those living much further afield.

- High on the agenda was agreeing the draft budget for the next financial year 2020-21. This year deciding the budget was a challenge for councillors as the precept requirement included an assumption for the services that **may** transfer from Wiltshire Council in the autumn 2020. The cost of assets and services would be significant, and the town council agreed it would be prudent to make some provision for this. The town council will commence discussions with Wiltshire in April about the facilities and assets that could transfer to the town council. Following a public consultation, the town council will decide between whether this is right for Westbury, postpone the transfer, pay for enhanced services (meaning Wiltshire provide the basic service and the town council pays for a top up) or do nothing.
- The Town Council has set up a new committee to consider the impact of delegation of services on the town council and the Westbury community. This Committee will carefully consider the list of assets and services that Wiltshire Council would like to transfer and the associated costs and resources required. This will be undertaken in consultation with the community and a recommendation made to town council in the spring.
- The town council agreed to declare a climate emergency, joining many councils across the nation and globally. For the town council this means considering the effect on the climate in everything we do from policy setting to local projects, with an aim to being carbon neutral in the medium term. The Operational Working Group has been tasked with considering the implications for the town council and its community.
- The town council has agreed to commission Atkins to undertake a traffic management study to consider what measures can be taken to improve traffic flow, air quality, cycle and walkways in the town.
- The Chair and Town Clerk recently met with Cllrs Philip Whitehead, Bridget Wayman and Parvis Khansari, Director of Highways & Environment to discuss the councils concerns about the volume of traffic in Westbury, the impact of this on air quality and the improvement required to footpaths & cycleways.
- An air quality monitor will be purchased to provide continuous monitoring of air quality, measuring particulates and pollutant gases. This is run on solar power and will provide us with the data to raise our concerns with Wiltshire Council.
- The Neighbourhood Plan is moving on, it is on schedule for completion in 2021. Recent larger pieces of work includes a call for sites (deadline the end of March 2020) and commissioning a character assessment of the town.
- Soap Box event! An exciting event where teams develop and construct a race ready self-propelled soapbox car. The town council agreed to fund an initial small sum for our Events Manager, Ryan Child, to look at developing a regional event hosted here in Westbury. It is hoped the event will bring social, educational and economic interest to the town. While offering a practical introduction to science, technology, engineering & mathematics (STEM) for young people. The town council will be working with local companies, who also see opportunities for apprenticeships and skill development from this event.

- In addition to annual events, the town council has committed resources to tackling loneliness in Westbury. One of the first actions was to set up a Men's Group. This takes place every Monday at the Laverton from 19.00pm.
- The wet pour has been replaced in five of our play areas at the cost of £35,000. This is part of the town councils ongoing commitment to maintain, improve and develop play areas in Westbury. Campion Play Area will soon receive two new pieces of play equipment to replace those "Springys" that were broken.
- The town Council has commissioned a painting to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the twinning of Chateau du Loir. This painting will depict and honour the relationship between our two towns.
- The town council has supported a staff charity day. Each member of the team will spend one day per year working on a community-based activity.
- The council approved several revised policies and a new Training Policy for staff & Councillors. This will help to further develop the qualifications and skills of the town council. All policies are available on our website.

We are always keen to hear your views on any of the council activities. Please contact Deborah Urch on info@westburytowncouncil.gov.uk or call 01373 822232