



**Chard Town Council**  
**Annual Report**  
**2012/2013**

## Mayor's Annual Report

I have been privileged to serve a second term of office and again this year I have visited a lot of places in Chard and Somerset. Some weeks I feel Jim and I have lived in the car with all the travelling we have done but we have met some very interesting people, and made some new friends. It has also been a time when I have learnt a lot more about Chard and the surrounding areas.

Two of the charities I have chosen to support during my term of office are involved in assisting young people, and my third charity is the First Responders. Working with the Guiding and Scouting Associations has brought me a lot of pleasure again this year. At my Tribute to Musicals event, representatives from the charities once again had the audience taking part which resulted in a lot of laughter. This was an emotional night for me and any one that attended will have seen me near to tears. The groups taking part gave their time freely and a big thank you to them. Also the Military Wives were brilliant and had a standing ovation as they walked in, and again when they left after their performance.

The Town Team have been working very hard this year and I would like to say a big thank you to them for trying to promote the town.

Also last year it was the Jubilee and Olympics and we saw some marvellous events going on in the town. Thank you to the committee for the hard work that was necessary in putting on the events. There was a tremendous amount of community spirit in the town.

There are many people I would like to say a big thank you to, firstly the Guildhall staff for keeping the building in good order and being around when people have enquiries. I can honestly say that nothing is too much trouble for them. I would like to express my appreciation and thank the Amenities team for their dedication to the town. The Tourist Information Centre is being well used, a big thank you to the committed volunteers and staff who man the office and keep this facility open. We find that it is not only visitors wanting information for the surrounding area, but also residents wanting to find bus times etc... so this is a vital local service. I would like to give the office staff and especially Vicky a very big 'Thank You' for their support during my two years as Mayor. Vicky has been looking after my events calendar, and advises me of any invitations, letters or questions, and if I did not respond quickly would send me a reminder. Thanks also to Mr. Dave Travis, who has been my Mace Bearer, and his family for supporting me at events. My Chaplains, Reverend Sue Tucker and Jim Fallon from St Mary's Church and to Councillor Mrs. Jenny Kenton, my Deputy, for stepping in when I was not able to attend a function, and for being there to listen when things were getting busy. Also to the councillors who have helped behind the scenes on some of my events.

Finally, I would like to say a big thank you to my husband Jim, who remembered the key each time for the chain box because I kept forgetting it, for being my chauffeur, time keeper, dresser and ideas man. And for my family that have missed me not being able to visit as much as I wanted, but maybe they say thank you for the peace and quiet.

I have enjoyed this privilege and honour of serving the people of Chard in this way. I wish the new Mayor of Chard good luck and hope they enjoy their time representing the town. I would like to finish by saying this is everyone's town, and if you are not happy with what is being done you have a standing invitation to come to any council meeting and speak at the public participation time. There are some big planning applications coming up and this is your time to voice your views. So please do not be afraid to attend the meetings as we like to hear your views.

Councillor Mrs. Cath Morrison  
Mayor of Chard

## The Town Clerk's Report

2012/2013 has been a very busy time not only for the Council, but also for the wider community. There were several national events to celebrate and Chard has played its part too with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee taking place last summer. There was a whole week of events organised by a very dedicated group of volunteers that culminated in a Party in the Park followed by an evening of entertainment and fireworks at the Beacon site. The Olympics was a time of celebration too with a lot of interest generated when the Olympic Torch passed through Somerset. There was a feeling of great community spirit and pride. The red, white and blue theme was carried through with the town's planting scheme in the summer and despite being the worst summer in living memory the displays looked fantastic and instilled a sense of national pride in many whose positive comments were well received.

Another event taking place last year for the third consecutive year was the Community Fun Day organised by Streetspace, which sadly due to all the rain in July had to be postponed until September, when eventually the sun did shine. This was once again a great success and helped promote this local group working with young people to enable them with social, personal and spiritual development.

This year has seen the Council taking over the running of the Saturday street market which was previously operated by the District Council. A Royal Charter from Charles II dating back to 29<sup>th</sup> June 1683 granted Chard the right to hold markets on certain days. This is certainly a tradition the Council is keen to continue with and hopes to develop it by attracting new traders. In conjunction with this a Saturday Indoor Market in the Guildhall commenced and in the run up to Christmas certainly proved to be very popular attracting a large and diverse group of stall holders offering a wide range of products.

Chard saw the introduction of its own Town Team last year, which was formed when a group representing local businesses and trades people came together to apply to become a Portas Pilot Town. This was a government initiative set up with funding targeted at improving town centres. Although Chard was not successful in its initial bid the Town Team has since been awarded funding and has been busy developing a number of schemes aiming to regenerate the High Street and boost the town's economy. A Christmas event saw the culmination of a lot of effort and hard work being rewarded with a huge turnout of local people coming into town to enjoy the festive atmosphere, sample local produce that was being sold in the street market, enjoy music provided by local entertainers and of course the official Christmas light 'Switch on'. I for one certainly enjoyed the carnival type atmosphere that was present in the town that evening!

December also saw another first with the staff at the Guildhall putting on a children's event, which they all undertook in their own time. Local schools were contacted and an open invitation sent for all primary aged children to come and join in a number of activities that had been organised. Santa Claus even took time out from his busy schedule to see the children and talk to them about their plans for Christmas. Although the numbers were slightly disappointing it was a rewarding experience for those staff who had worked to put on the event and hopefully lessons learnt to make future events even better.

Earlier this year it was my privilege to meet a number of past mayors who were invited to attend the unveiling of a new Honours Board. The Council had agreed to support this project and local craftsmen were involved in the design and creation of the new board. A small reception took place on 4<sup>th</sup> February to which were invited former mayors and their families to officially unveil the board which lists previous mayors dating back to 1974 (this was when the local government reorganisation took place). It was a pleasure talking to so many people who have taken such an active role in the life of our town and in serving our community as mayor in times gone by. The board is proudly displayed in the Town Hall and, subject to other events taking place, is available for all to come and see.

Another scheme that came to fruition in early spring was one that had been in the pipeline for many years, and was therefore a particular pleasure for me to finally see complete. It was a partnership project between Chard 2000/Chard in Bloom, South Somerset District Council and Chard Town Council which involved the removal and replacement of four trees in Fore Street. The work was carried out over a number of weekends therefore minimising disruption to pedestrians and traffic. The new trees – Pyrus Chanticleer are, I'm sure you will agree, a great improvement allowing a lot more light and offer a more attractive street scape. The Town Council will be working to enhance the planting scheme on the gateways into town over the coming months and hopefully will continue to improve the entrances into Chard for both visitors and residents alike.

It was with sadness that we recently received the news of the sudden death of former councillor Mrs. Audrey Spencer. Audrey was a tireless campaigner and worked hard assisting many local voluntary groups. Her positive attitude and spirit was certainly an example to us all and she will be greatly missed.

Despite the continuing gloomy economic outlook Chard has much to be thankful for and we can all enjoy the strong sense of community that exists within our town. It is always so heart warming at this time of year to look at the nominations for the Outstanding Service Awards and recognise how many people selflessly give of their time and energies in helping others. Chard Town Council, its Members and Officers, is committed to serving our community and has a real desire to see it continuing to develop and flourish.

Sarah Robson  
Town Clerk

April 2013

## Organisation and Accountability

Chard Town Council is comprised of fifteen elected members each representing one of five areas of the Town. These areas are known as wards. Each ward has three members, Combe, Crimchard, Avishayes, Jocelyn and Holyrood. This arrangement makes sure that we have a truly local government in Chard. The Council Committees for 2012/2013 were Amenities, Finance & Guildhall and Planning & Highways. There is also an Allotments Sub Committee which works in partnership with the Allotment Holders Association. This year has also seen number of working parties that have been set up on a task and finish basis as and when necessary. These included the Jubilee working group, the Football working group and the Market working group.

All meetings of the Council and its Committees are open to the public and press to attend. There are some occasions when for reasons of confidentiality members of the public and press are excluded. This is by means of a resolution in accordance with the requirements of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. These matters are usually, but not restricted to issues such as 'Staff in Confidence' or 'Commercial in Confidence'. At most meetings time is set aside, usually fifteen minutes, before the meeting starts for members of the public to address, make statements or ask questions of the Council.

In accordance with statute, at the end of each financial year the accounts of the Council are available for public inspection for a period of twenty-one working days. This period is advertised and facilities are made available for members of the public to come and examine the Council's accounts. As the Council is committed to a policy of openness and transparency any reasonable request to view the accounts, or any other aspect of Town Council work, will try and be accommodated at any time of the year.

The Council has a new website which contains a lot of information about services and functions of the Council. There are many downloadable forms available relating to allotments and the cemetery. All of the minutes of the Council's meetings are available also and can be downloaded. If you do not have access to a computer and wish to see copies or extracts of minutes these can be made available for you to view at the Guildhall upon request in advance.

## Chard Town Council – How to get in touch

### Town Councillors

Your Town Councillors are elected democratically by the people of Chard. They are not paid and do not receive any allowances. It is the Councillors that make the decisions and steer the direction in which the Council goes.

#### Avishayes Ward

Mrs. Cath Morrison	(Liberal Democrat)	01460 239120
Graham Forsyth	(Independent)	01460 67202
Mrs. Tricia O' Brien	(Liberal Democrat)	01460 66104

#### Combe Ward

Mrs. Sara Dowell	(Liberal Democrat)	01460 261898
Andy Kenton	(Liberal Democrat)	07591 087347
Martin Wale	(Conservative)	01460 65190

#### Crimchard Ward

Julian Dorse	(Liberal Democrat)	07882 191108
Mrs. Jenny Kenton	(Liberal Democrat)	07591 087347
Tony Prior	(Independent)	01460 65144

#### Holyrood Ward

Mrs. Brennie Halse	(Conservative)	01460 67422
Garry Shortland	(Liberal Democrat)	01460 67357
Mrs Sue Wyatt	(Liberal Democrat)	01460 61370

#### Jocelyn Ward

Dave Bulmer	(Independent)	01460 67917
Martin Dowell	(Independent)	01460 67143
Ms. Sandra Pittwood	(Independent)	01460 67481

Details of Councillors' addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses may be obtained on request from the Town Clerk and are also available on the Chard Town Council website under the page 'Council'.

### Council Officers

The Town Council's team of staff, which currently stands at eighteen, is led by Sarah Robson, the Town Clerk. Terry Powell is the Council's Operations Manager and is directly responsible for the Guildhall and Amenities teams.

## How to contact us:

Visit us at: Chard Town Council  
The Guildhall  
Fore Street  
Chard  
TA20 1PP

Tel: 01460 239567  
Fax: 01460 261661  
email: [sarah.robson@chard.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.robson@chard.gov.uk)  
email: [terry.powell@chard.gov.uk](mailto:terry.powell@chard.gov.uk)

Other Council officers may be contacted through the Town Clerk or by phoning the reception desk on 01460 239567.

## Finance

The precept for the year 2012/13 was set at £530,854 equating to a local parish precepting charge of £117.17 for Band D properties. Changes in policy at central government have been imposed on district councils relating to the Council Tax Benefits Scheme which has had a knock on effect on town and parish councils for this coming year. For this financial year 2013/14 Chard Town Council will receive a Support Grant of £67,825.00 to offset the effect of the Council Tax Benefits Scheme and the Council has set the precept at £463,029.00 giving an overall amount of £530,854.00. However the effect of the new scheme has had an impact on the Band D equivalent for Chard which for the coming year will be £121.43, a rise of £4.26 which is approximately 3.6%.

Chard's town precept continues to be in line with other towns of similar size within the South-West Region.

## Council Tax

Council Tax for the three Local Authorities responsible for Chard has been set for the year 2013/14 at the following levels:-

- £121.43 for Chard Town Council
- £150.74 for South Somerset District Council
- £1027.30 for Somerset County Council
- £168.03 for Avon & Somerset Police Authority
- £75.39 for Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue
- **£1542.89 in total and based on Band D Properties**

The average bill for South Somerset is £1490.64

## Summary of Budgeted Accounts for 2011/12

<b>Item</b>	<b>Expenditure £</b>	<b>Income £</b>
Amenities Including Capital	148,608	7,400
Street Cleaning	52,160	52,160
Cemetery	28,947	29,000
Allotments	6,082	5,000
Guildhall	183,529	49,150
Tourist Information Centre	22,837	4,700
Support & Other Services	230,047	1,200
Grants	10,000	
Precept		533,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>682,210</b>	<b>682,210</b>

The forecast Accounts for the year ending March 2013 are as follows but it should be noted that these figures have not been audited and are only 'forecasts' and will probably change when the Audited Accounts are presented to Council in the Summer of 2013.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Income</b>
Amenities Including Capital	174,762	6,500
Street Cleaning	59,185	52,160
Cemetery	27,676	32,500
Allotments	3,610	3,610
Guildhall	186,873	37,550
Tourist Information Centre	23,543	5,400
Support & Other Services	180,525	2,600
Grants	15,000	
Precept		530,854
<b>Total</b>	<b>671,174</b>	<b>671,174</b>

## Other Legal Requirements

Chard Town Council is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998, The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and has adopted the Model Code of Conduct for the conduct of its Councillors.

The introduction in 2011 of the Localism Act saw many changes to democracy at a grass roots level with the need for wider engagement with the electorate on a range of issues. This new legislation has enabled greater opportunities, with provision under the General Power of Competence, for town and parish councils to take responsibility for a broader range of services and a greater freedom to act.

*Sarah Robson*

Sarah Robson MILCM  
Town Clerk