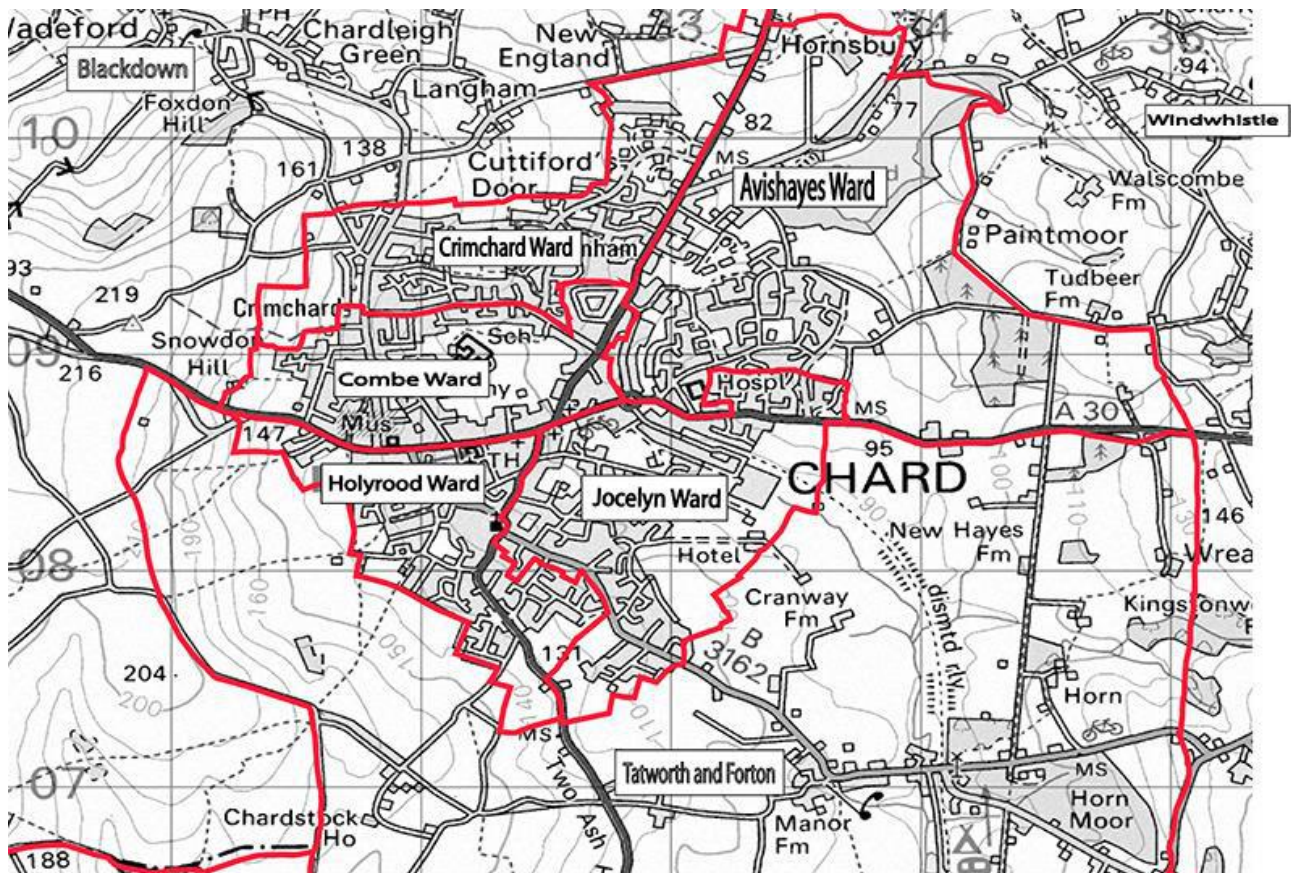




Chard Town Council
Annual Report
2016/2017



Chard Town Council – Ward Boundary Map



A Vision for Chard

Chard will be a successful, vibrant, attractive town, where people want to live, work, study and visit.

The town will have real and accessible transport links, decent housing provision for all, excellent employment and business opportunities and a vibrant community life. It will be clean, green, safe, active and prosperous, and a place to be proud of.

Mayor's Report

In many respects the past year has not been much different to many previous years. As Mayor it is my fundamental duty to be impartial and fair to all. I along with other members have sought to achieve a Council that is run with stability and efficiency, with a clear understanding of our role within the organisation whilst recognising that we are elected to serve the people of our town delivering services that enhance the well-being of our community.

As Mayor during the last year I have completed almost 120 engagements, meeting many people both in Chard and throughout Somerset. It is very important that the Mayor supports local organisations and events held in our town, and it is true to say that there is so much positive work done behind the scenes that often goes unrecognised. I cannot help to be impressed that there are such a variety of organisations in our town that give many people an interest to get involved with; this in itself brings the community together as a whole. I would therefore like to acknowledge and express my gratitude to all involved in so much positive work.

Another one of my roles as Mayor is to promote our town to other people who are not familiar with what Chard offers in terms of location, history, environment, industry, places to visit, and most importantly that it is a good place to live. I have done this through my many Mayor's engagements across our County. I believe that it is very important to be positive about our town.

In June last year, I had great pleasure in accompanying one of our twinning committees in a visit to our twin town of Helmstedt in Germany. Like the visit to Seica Mara in Romania a few months earlier, this was an important engagement that is key to promoting our town and keeping the continuity of a positive relationship with our continental neighbours.

There are a couple of events locally that I would like to highlight; the first occurred on July 14th last year when I had great pleasure in visiting a dear lady (Winnie Gray) celebrating her 100th Birthday at Sunnyside residential home. It was very heart-warming to hear about what she has done throughout her life, working hard in particular when times were tough including during the second World War.

The other local engagement that I would like to highlight was an event held in our auditorium on 12th December last year; Holyrood Academy Awards Evening. This was a presentation to the students who have achieved high standards in a variety of educational and recreational activities in previous years. The thought that went through my mind was the exceptional level of ability our young people have in Chard, we should all be very proud of the fact that the young people of Chard have so much talent. This can only be good for the future of our town, I am sure we are all very supportive of this and feel very assured that Holyrood Academy has a very bright future.

Councillor Dave Bulmer
Mayor of Chard

April 2017

Town Clerk's Report

As I start to write my second Annual Report for Chard Town Council, I am reminded how last year was a very busy time not only for the Council, but also for the wider community coming together under the theme of Celebration!

Along with the Nation, Chard played its part in the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations starting with the lighting of The Beacon at Crowshute Link on the 21st of April, the Queen's official birthday.

The Guildhall then hosted three very royal affairs for the Town to be part of during May; the first was a successful 1940's themed Three Counties Swing Band evening and the following morning saw families and young people embrace their creative side with 'Have A Go' workshops, including the task of designing flags for Chard Town Centre. The weekend ended with a celebratory 1940's themed High Tea, where customers enjoyed traditional British afternoon refreshments and were taken care of by traditionally dressed servants!

To continue the theme, in July we were pleased to unveil the flags that had been designed and 42 colourful and imaginative flags were put up outside local businesses in the town. Despite a few teething troubles this year, they did look lovely and really brightened up the town centre. We hope to sort out the minor issues we had with them staying in place and see them flying again in 2017. As the flags went up, Holyrood Street and the Guildhall hosted vintage goods and crafts in our themed street market and fair.

Finally, on Sunday 24th of July Jocelyn Park hosted the annual Party in the Park for the final celebrations of the Queen's birthday! Many thanks to the Town Team for all their hard work putting this party event together.

There have been a number of changes to the staff that work for the Council, both outdoors on the Amenities Team and those behind the scenes based in the Guildhall. We wish well to those who have moved on to new opportunities and warmly welcome the new additions to our team.

2016 also saw a change to the elected Members of the Council as Mrs. Brennie Halse resigned due to family commitments and Dave Orchard joined the council. Cllr. Orchard was a member of Chard Town Council previously and we welcome his expertise.

Over the Summer we moved the office staff onto the top floor of the building. This means that the administration team is now all together in one space for the first time. Coinciding with changes to our IT and phone system we hope this will see improved communications both amongst the staff and also with our customers. As ever, the Reception desk is manned throughout the day, so if you call into the Guildhall you will find someone ready to deal with your enquiry.

The changes now see all our hireable meeting rooms together on the second floor of the Guildhall, including the creation of a new smaller informal meeting space that is now available to hire.

We can never be complacent in how we work together and how we deliver our services; this is an ever-changing landscape and it is an exciting challenge to meet new demands and embrace new methods of work.

With this in mind, we are currently coming to the end of an Organisational Review that is being led for us by the Community Council of Somerset. The aim of this is to explore the most cost-effective and operationally sound organisational structure for the Council, both now and going forward into the future. We will also examine and review the current relationship between Elected Members, Committees and Sub Committees to determine the most appropriate best practice, in line with any necessary legislation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of staff who have worked hard and supported their colleagues during periods of change and I am proud that despite often being short staffed, they have continuously delivered a high standard of service across all areas.

My role here as Town Clerk reminds me daily that 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 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 in the years to come.

Zoe Truong
Town Clerk

April 2017

Organisation and Accountability

There are three tiers of local government, each with different responsibilities. Chard Town Council is the first and most local tier, with an important role to play in promoting the town, representing its interests and supporting the work of different groups in the community. South Somerset District Council is the second tier and is responsible for services including car parking, housing and street cleaning. Finally, Somerset County Council's responsibilities include highways (relating to both roads and pavements), education, health and social services, public rights of way and libraries.

Chard Town Council has fifteen elected Councillors who are elected every four years and represent one of five areas in the town, known as wards. Each ward has three members; the wards are Avishayes, Combe, Crimchard, Holyrood and Jocelyn.

The Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor are elected annually at the Annual Town Council Meeting in May. Councillors are unpaid and commit their time to improving Chard and maintaining it as an attractive and sustainable place in which to live, visit and to do business. Elections were last held in May 2015 and are scheduled to be held next in May 2019.

The full Council meets bi-monthly (3rd Monday) in the Town Hall at The Guildhall. All meetings are open to the public, with a period of time set aside for members of the public to address Council. 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'.

In addition to the full Council meetings there are three standing committees; Finance and Personnel (F&P), Guildhall and Amenities (G&A) and Planning and Highways (P&H). P&H meet every month to act as consultees on planning applications and highways issues. F&P and G&A meet in rotation on the months between full Council meetings. Again, all meetings are open to the public.

Working groups are formed to deal with issues as they emerge and may include non-Councillors. There are currently working groups on the Saturday Market, Tourist Information Centre, Youth Engagement and Community Grants Awards, as well as two sub committees dealing with Allotments and Personnel.

1. **Finance & Personnel Committee** is authorised by Full Council to take responsibility for the preparation of the Council's annual precept, review of the longer-term strategy of the Council, monitoring and scrutinising of the budget. In addition, the Committee takes responsibility for the regular review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Insurance, Risk Management, Policies and Terms of Reference. It has delegated responsibility to make expenditure against the Council's Administration Budget. The Committee monitors the Council's Monthly Accounts Reports and takes appropriate action to ensure compliance with budget.
2. **Guildhall and Amenities Committee** oversees the management, maintenance and enhancement of the Guildhall building, including maximising the continued use of the

building by external groups. The committee works to ensure that the Town Council plays its full role in promoting the cleanliness, safety and development of the town and its open spaces. It has responsibility for setting Guildhall hire charges, allotment rents, market rents and cemetery fees subject to approval of Full Council.

- 3. Planning and Highways Committee** make observations on all planning applications and planning issues, including Development Briefs, Local Plans, Structure Plans and Development Control and to make site visits where necessary. The committee works to ensure that planning matters are exercised in accordance with the legislative and policy requirements of the Council with due regard for the individuals and communities affected, the economic effects, sustainable and environmental impacts

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 30 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 External Audit last year was completed by Grant Thornton and there were no matters of concern identified or reported.

The Council's website contains a lot of information about services and functions of the Council and there are many downloadable forms available relating to allotments and the cemetery. All of the minutes of the Council's meetings and also its policies are available and can be downloaded in a PDF Format. 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. Recent news events are also uploaded and details of any vacancies that occur within the Council. There is also a comprehensive list of groups and organisations on the website – if you know of a group that isn't included please let us know as we'd like to ensure information is easily accessible for the many organisations based in Chard.

The Town has an electorate of 9,858 as of 1st April 2016.

Town Council Staff and Management

The Council currently employs a total of ten full-time staff and six part-time staff, with two vacancies. The current staffing structure allows for six members of staff working in Administration, four working supporting the Guildhall and eight in Amenities, covering street cleansing, parks maintenance and the cemetery. These are made up of a variety of full and part time roles.

The administration of the Town Council is led by the Town Clerk (Zoe Truong) who is appointed by the Council. The Town Clerk must carry out all the functions required by law as the Town Council's Proper Officer and issue all statutory notifications.

She is supported by the Deputy Town Clerk (Tracy Lamb), who is also the Responsible Financial Officer for the Council, with specific duties relating to the budget, annual accounts and audit to ensure proper financial management and transparency

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	01460 239120
Garry Shortland	01460 61592
Dave O' Brien	01460 66104

Combe Ward

Andy Kenton	07921 574019
Mrs. Amanda Broom	01460 62102
Steve Warwick	01460 61977

Crimchard Ward

Mrs. Jenny Kenton	07921 574019
Martin Carnell	07411 696725
Mrs. Jenny Orchard	01460 67760

Holyrood Ward

Mrs Sue Wyatt	01460 61370
Jason Baker	07736 310805
Dave Orchard	01460 67760

Jocelyn Ward

Dave Bulmer	01460 67917
Mrs. Sara Dowell	01460 261898
Mrs. Irene Glynn	01460 238417

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

How to contact us:

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

Tel: 01460 239567
Fax: 01460 261661

email : townclerk@chard.gov.uk
email : financeofficer@chard.gov.uk

Other Council officers may be contacted through chardtouncouncil@chard.gov.uk or by phoning the Reception Desk on 01460 239567.

Finance

The precept for the year 2016/17 was set at £515,341 equating to a local parish precepting charge of £124.04 for Band D properties. In addition to this SSDC awarded £49,650 as part of the Precept Support Grant, a transitional arrangement that has come about since Central Government imposed changes in the way council tax benefits are paid. This was a rise of £1.84 increase from the previous year.

The Precept Support Grant is reducing annually with Chard Town council being awarded £15,800 for 2017/18, £33,850 less than the previous year. This reduction, in addition to the need to ensure that a number of key projects in the Town are funded, meant the Town Council felt it was prudent not to draw on their reserved funds as they have in previous years

Reluctantly for 2017/2018 the Members felt there was no alternative but to increase the Band D percentage. The precept demand was therefore set at £608,741 with a Band D Equivalent for 2017/2018 of £144.33, an increase of £20.29.

Mayor's Allowance

The Mayor's allowance exists to help defray the cost to the Mayor whilst undertaking his/her duties for the civic year. Chard Town Council is committed to accountability and transparency in respect of all expenditure, including the Mayor's allowance.

The term of office begins from the time of the election of the Mayor at the Annual Town Council meeting. The current annual budget is £4,500, of which £3212.27 has been spent, however this is subject to change until the new Mayor is elected on 15th May 2017.

Council adopted a policy for permitted expenditure in March 2017 and details will be reported accordingly in future annual reports.

Council Tax

Council Tax for the three Local Authorities responsible for Chard has been set for the year 2017/2018 at the following levels: -

- £144.33 for Chard Town Council
- £157.48 for South Somerset District Council
- £1,080.36 for Somerset County Council
- £42.43 for Somerset County Council Adult Social Care
- £181.81 for Avon & Somerset Police Authority
- £81.57 for Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue
- **£1,689.98 in total and based on Band D Properties**

Tracy Lamb
RFO

April 2017

Summary of Accounts for 2015/16

Item	Expenditure £	Income £
Amenities Including Capital	£227,288	£15,120
Street Cleaning	£53,060	£48,879
Cemetery	£24,969	£38,627
Allotments	£3,288	£4,114
Market	£1,267	£5,906
Guildhall	£217,671	£35,661
Tourist Information Centre	£1,160	£1,305
Support & Other Services	£191,560	£5,304
Grants	£17,363	0
Precept Support Grant	0	£55,930
Precept	0	£489,822
Contribution from reserves	0	£36,958
Total	£737,626	£737,626

Summary of Budget for 2016/2017

The Accounts for the year ending March 2017 have not been finalised and audited. The figures below are the budgeted accounts for 2016/17.

Item	Expenditure	Income
Amenities Including Capital	£364,300	£10,900
Street Cleaning	£68,591	£49,000
Cemetery	£27,698	£29,101
Allotments	£4,140	£4,300
Market	£1,890	£6,000
Guildhall	£269,854	£42,830
Tourist Information Centre	£3,050	£3,740
Support & Other Services	£214,016	£7,115
Grants	£24,500	£0
Precept Support Grant	0	£49,650
Precept	0	£515,341
Contribution from reserves	0	£260,062
Total	£978,039	£978,039

Other Legal Requirements

Chard Town Council is registered with the Information Commissioners Office to enable it to hold information 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.

Zoe Truong
Town Clerk

April 2017

Chard Guildhall



Located in the centre of Chard – a perfect venue for meetings, seminars, wedding receptions, theatrical productions and so much more!

The Guildhall in Chard offers a fully accessible venue that is available to hire. The building offers a range of facilities including disabled toilets, kitchen, bar and café areas.

Equipment is also available to hire; projector, screen and microphones as well as a fantastic stage facility complete with lighting and sound system.

Loading and unloading is permissible and parking is available nearby in the town pay and display car parks.

Meeting Rooms and Capacity

Guildhall Auditorium	seated audience with Balcony	240
	seated at tables	150
	empty hall	330
Town Hall		60
Mayor's Parlour		20
Bondfield Room		6

**Outside of office hours there is a minimum two hour hire*

Please contact the Reception Desk on 01460 239567 to find out more.