

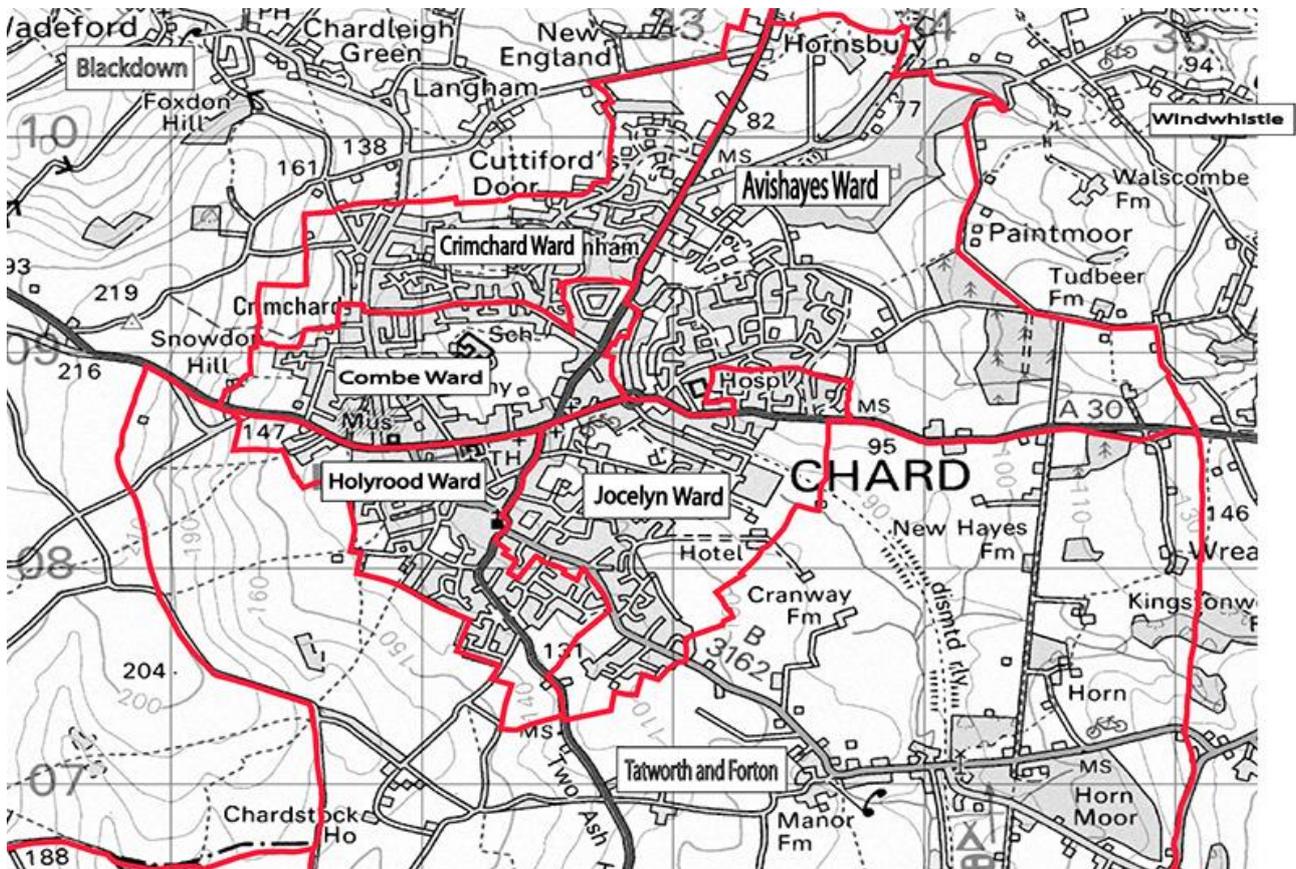
Chard Town Council

Annual Report

2017/2018



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



As we come towards the end of my first year as Mayor it's good to reflect on the years events. The year has seemed to have just flown by from the robing event which was the public acceptance of office.

A big part of being Mayor is attending events here in Chard and around the County and neighbouring Counties, this is a way of promoting Chard and relationships with other Towns. It is important for a Mayor, first and foremost, to have the interests of Chard firmly in their heart to do their best for the residents and business providers of the Town. In today's economic climate this is a considerable undertaking.

I have had the great pleasure in attending a number of shop openings over the past year and it is good that people have had faith to open up in Chard and it is our duty to support our local shops and services. I have had great pleasure in attending events here in Chard and would like to say a big thankyou to everyone who gives up their time to put on the events. The Easter hunt for the children and to promote the retailer of the Town, the summer festival which allows organisations to have stalls to raise funds for their work, Cllr Sara Dowell and Rev. Cresswell Whitton who organised the opening of the old court house and was my court clerk when we recreated the workings of the court and tried visitors to the court with real cases this was a great success.

It was my great pleasure to take part in the carnival last year accompanied by other mayors of Towns, some of which do not have a carnival anymore, we must be all grateful to the small band of people who put on the carnival. One of my favourite events in the Town is the Halloween event, organised by Chard Town Team, which seems to get bigger each year and it is great to see young families having fun in a safe environment. A special time of year is the Christmas lights switch on, our Town has one of the best lights around and I would like to give thanks to Chard Town Team for their involvement but a huge thankyou to the amenities team who erect the lights and do the bulk of the work. None of these events would be possible if it were not for the people who close the road for us and who take the abuse from motorists.

This is where we all can help. The groups need volunteers, without them these events will not be possible so if you can help please do contact them.

I had the honour of being at the launch of the poppy appeal and taking part in the remembrance parades. This year is a special year as it is 100 years since the end of the first world war and events to mark this are happening in Chard.

I had the pleasure to be involved with Holyrood Academy during my year, firstly at their awards night and lately at the Duke of Edinburgh awards in Yeovil where they are one of the biggest participants and this is something we should be proud of our young people.

Over Christmas I had the pleasure of meeting our residents in the nursing homes which ranged from just a cup of tea to getting covered in flour helping them to make biscuits. I also had pleasure in welcoming visitors from our twin town of Helmstedt, here in the Guildhall. It is good this relationship is still going strong thanks to a small group of people. Lastly, I would like to say thankyou to all who looked after myself and others with tea and a bacon roll during the clearing of snow earlier this year it would be good if anyone wishing to help in the future could send in their details to Chard Town Council so that we can compile a register.

Councillor Garry Shortland
Mayor of Chard

April 2018



Deputy Town Clerk/RFO's Report

The Council have undertaken an Organisational Review, led by the Community Council of Somerset, which has provided recommendations for the most cost-effective and operationally sound organisational structure for the Council, both now and going forward into the future. We have already made progress with two new posts filled by our Guildhall manager and Outdoor Services manager who are working hard with their teams to continue to improve the services provided to the Town.

The top priority that Council have recognised from the review is the development of a plan for engagement with the local community to identify their priorities, which will help to influence the objectives set out within the Business plan and objectives and overall strategy for the Council.

We look forward to consulting with the people of Chard in the coming year to challenge our existing services, to shape the way our service is delivered in the future and to prioritise future spending.

Councillors will determine the principles and direction of the three-year plan and will work with the Town Clerk and officers to support its delivery. We will also work hard to improve awareness and understanding of all the Council's activities and services and encourage increased participation and engagement across the board.

Finance

The precept for the year 2017-2018 was set at £608,741, Members having reluctantly felt there was no alternative but to increase the Band D percentage, equating to a local parish precepting charge of £144.33 for Band D properties. This equated to a £20.29 increase from the previous year. Council felt it was prudent not to draw on their reserved funds as they had in previous years

SSDC awarded a Precept support grant of £15,800 (£33,850 less than the previous year), a transitional arrangement that has come about since Central Government imposed changes in the way council tax benefits are paid.

The Precept Support Grant is reducing annually with Chard Town council being awarded £5,420 for 2018-2019.

For 2018-2019 the precept demand was set at £631,341 with a Band D Equivalent of £148.08, an increase of £3.75, with £87,049 being taken from reserves. Officers have been tasked with working towards making savings for a balanced budget in 2019/2020.

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 £2,582 has been spent, however this is subject to change until the new Mayor is elected on 14th May 2018.

Council adopted a policy for permitted expenditure in March 2017 and details of expenditure are as follows:

Mayors Allowance	Amount
Tickets to events	£418.00
Refreshments for Mayors events	£713.56
Hire of the Guildhall for Mayors events	£619.61
Raffle prizes	£12.47
Volunteers/staff events	£578.53
Staff leaver donation	£40.00
Singer for Mayors event	£200.00
Total	£2,582.17

Council Tax

Council Tax for the three Local Authorities responsible for Chard has been set for the year 2018-2019 at the following levels: -

- £148.08 for Chard Town Council
- £162.48 for South Somerset District Council
- £1,115.99 for Somerset County Council
- £76.17.43 for Somerset County Council Adult Social Care
- £193.81 for Avon & Somerset Police Authority
- £84.01 for Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue
- **£1,780.54 in total and based on Band D Properties**

Summary of Accounts for 2016-2017

Item	Expenditure	Income
Amenities Including Capital	£243,842	£15,273
Street Cleaning	£56,428	£55,489
Cemetery	£19,927	£34,966
Allotments	£3,302	£3,603
Market	£2,024	£5,142
Guildhall Including Capital	£190,895	£32,661
Tourist Information Centre	£846	£7,734
Support & Other Services	£222,698	£5,053
Grants	£11,354	£0
Precept Support Grant	0	£49,650
Precept	0	£515,341
Contribution from reserves	0	£26,442
Total	£751,316	£751,354

Summary of Budget for 2017-2018

The Accounts for the year ending March 2018 have not been finalised and audited. The figures below are the budgeted accounts for 2017-2018.

Item	Expenditure	Income
Amenities Including Capital	£180,100	£11,300
Street Cleaning	£79,850	£50,000
Cemetery	£27,850	£31,071
Allotments	£5,300	£4,600
Market	£3,248	£6,000
Guildhall Including Capital	£228,039	£35,550
Tourist Information Centre	£3,270	£1,130
Support & Other Services	£225,100	£4,620
Grants	£16,055	£0
Precept Support Grant	0	£15,800
Precept	0	£608,741
Contribution from reserves	0	£0
Total	£768,812	£768,812

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. Council also have a Personnel Sub Committee (PSC) to support the Town Clerk in the appointment and management of staff and to manage the Town Clerk. The PSC meet every month but these are business meetings and are therefore not open for members of the public to attend.

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, the Guildhall/LIC, the Newsletter, Youth Engagement, Skate Park, Armistice and Community Grants Awards, as well as a subcommittee dealing with Allotments.

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 would like to ensure information is easily accessible for the many organisations based in Chard.

The Town has an electorate of 10,230 as of 1st April 2018.

Town Council Staff and Management

The Council currently has posts for a total of eleven full-time staff and eight part-time staff, (four posts are currently vacant).

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

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.

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.

Tracy Lamb
Deputy Town Clerk/RFO

April 2018

Chard Outdoor Services

New cemetery markers have arrived and been installed to help the public visiting the cemetery to find the plots they are looking for if there is no operative available.

The team were busy putting up Christmas Lights over the festive period to illuminate the town for all to enjoy. Now that the lights are down we are already looking forward to planning the event again for the coming year.

The Community Payback initiative remains a valued asset carrying out unpaid work in the town in support to the Outdoor Services Team. Work includes collecting excessive litter, painting, removing graffiti and clearing footpaths. On any occasion when numbers of Payback attendees may be reduced, the work can still proceed but without charge to the council under such circumstances.

The Outdoors Services Team, along with Cllr Garry Shortland and Cllr Baker, must be praised for their hard work not only once but twice during extreme weather conditions in March, with disruptive snowfall. This led to the town being immersed into a Winter Wonderland with access around the town being extremely treacherous. The new purchase of a Quad bike together with Snow plough arrived just in time for the second deluge of snow. The time to clear pavements and the cemetery was greatly reduced, together also with only one person needed to drive the Quad bike to complete this task, with help to follow with gritting.

We have received many positive remarks from not only the public, business owners but also the Police for the effectiveness of the Quad bike and snow plough. The Quadbike will also be used for many other tasks throughout the year, namely sweeping, weed spraying and gritting.



Shirley Pitman, Outdoor Services Manager

Chard Guildhall



As a Grade 2 listed building the Guildhall requires a Quinquennial survey, which is a five-year report on the condition of the building. A full review of the building is currently in progress and this together with the Quinquennial report will identify the immediate and long-term maintenance needs of the building.

The Guildhall was refurbished some 15 years ago and some equipment is in need of replacing or updating. We are pleased to have a new projector in the auditorium to provide an enhanced experience for our hirers.

We are pleased to confirm that local information can still be obtained from the Local Information Centre at the Guildhall and visitors are assisted by our team of excellent volunteers and staff.

The building continues to be used by many local groups and organisations and has recently been the venue for the Pantomime, Wrestling and the successful Earth Hour event. The Antiques, Craft & Vintage Fair continues on a Thursday and we are actively searching for additional stall holders and someone to run the Café.

A survey is being run on Facebook and Chard Town Council websites as well as in hard copy to ensure we direct our resources towards improving the Guildhall and to consider suggestions for future events.

Sue Gay, Guildhall Manager