



**TODMORDEN TOWN COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT
APRIL 2020 TO MARCH 2021**

Introduction by the Mayor of Todmorden Cllr Ruth Coleman- Taylor

This Mayoral Year started and finished in some degree of lockdown. Neither I nor the Deputy Mayor have seen the Mayoral Robes and chains during our year of office let alone had the opportunity to wear them! All the Council Meetings I have attended, including those I chaired as Mayor, have been conducted via Zoom.

When I was appointed Mayor of Todmorden for 2020/2021, a few weeks before the end of the previous Council Year, we all knew that we could not hold the usual Mayor-Making Day at the Town Hall in May, but it seemed likely that this would simply be postponed until later in the summer. I think we still referred to Covid as an “epidemic” and thought it would blow over, like a bad influenza season. Local organisations were still making provisional bookings for me to address their AGMs or other main meetings later in the year. None of these events happened!

By late summer, we all realised that we were suffering a pandemic, which might go on for a long time, and we decided to stop treating Covid as a temporary emergency. The Council’s Emergency Committee was wound up and we resumed our normal programme of Council meetings, with the difference that these were all facilitated via Zoom. Once we as Councillors had acclimatised to Zoom, we offered our system to local organisations to use as a Community Zoom when it was not needed for Council meetings.

Without a Mayor-Making Day, we had lost the opportunity to make the usual Citizenship Awards to people who had made an outstanding contribution to the community. We eventually decided to do this at the last meeting of the calendar year, just before Christmas, and make it a celebratory event. There were 4 nominees. In this Mayoral Year like no other, it made sense to give all of them a Citizenship Award and to invite their friends and family to join the Council by Zoom and be part of the celebration. It was of course recorded.

Usually, the Mayor invites Councillors and the Council Officers to a little party in the Mayor’s Parlour after the final Council meeting of the year. Clearly that could not happen in 2020, so I arranged to send some sherry and mince-pies to all the usual guests with instructions to be ready to raise a glass after the Council Meeting finished. It was a good opportunity to relax together for a while at the end of a very stressful year.

Todmorden people have very much come together as a community to cope with Covid. Local organisations and many, many individuals have been working hard ensure that the needs of vulnerable people are met and that no-one should feel left out. As Mayor, I introduced the Mayor’s Certificates of Recognition for people and organisations that have made a particular contribution. These were all based on nominations by Councillors or local people.

Like many older people, I received my first Coronavirus vaccination early in the New Year 2021 and I arranged for a photograph to be taken of the event, in the hope of encouraging others to do so. More recently, Todmorden was celebrated by a Sunday

paper as one of the best places in England to live. This gave me the opportunity to make a statement and to have a photograph taken outside the Town Hall, probably the nearest I have come all year to a “normal” Mayoral event! It was not, of course, entirely normal, as the photographer and I had to work out how to do a socially distanced photo-shot and kept collapsing in giggles.

As my amazing Mayoral year comes to an end, I realise that I have taken part in a unique period of history. Of course, it is stimulating and exciting to live in interesting times but, when I wish my successor a normal uneventful year, I do of course have her best interests at heart!

Annual Report of Todmorden Town Council 2020-2021

Emergency Committee, Town Council and Resources Committee

Foreword

During this most challenging of years former Cllr's Simon Ormerod and Frank McManus (both former Mayors of Todmorden) and the former Town Clerk Catherine Emberson all passed away.

Due to Covid regulations, as is our normal custom, the Town Council was unable to be present at their funerals. As a mark of respect, their service to Todmorden was acknowledged by the holding of a minute's silence at the next Council meeting following their passing.

1. This extraordinary year of unprecedented challenge arising from the Coronavirus Pandemic has required different ways of working by the Town Council to still enable the delivery of positive outcomes for its residents.

March 2020 saw our way of holding meetings and making decisions fundamentally change. Many Town Councillors were of an age that shielding became the norm and no meetings in public could be held.

Technology infrastructure was not initially in place for all Town Councillors to carry out business, and therefore the Town Council resolved to delegate all decision making to an Emergency Committee of five Town Councillors.

2. Zoom became the buzz word and the Town Council moved swiftly to put in place IT infrastructure through improved Web Site capabilities, laptops for those requiring them and printers for all enabled all Town Councillors to then be able to carry their democratic function and attend all future meetings by zoom. The cost of this investment will be offset by savings in postage costs and office printing costs and recovered over the next five years. The Public were also invited to attend Council meetings via zoom once all technical issues were resolved.
3. This Emergency Committee met on five occasions between April to July during which time over 100 separate items were considered, including some twenty-eight planning applications in our role as consultee, before returning to our normal Meeting timetable and structure from September 2020.
4. The impact of Covid did lead to some changes in our normal run of business predominantly in a reduction in our usual support of grant applicants wishing to hold events and activities. This was quickly replaced with assistance given under our Covid Fund for activities helping residents during lockdown and supporting other activities that were deliverable remotely, yet still with impact and benefit to the community.
5. The Town Council also took the opportunity to bid for two major capital funding opportunities. We were successful in securing £56,225 of funding for new and replacement festive light schemes in Todmorden, Cornholme and

Walsden and new schemes in Portsmouth and Eastwood, which were all delivered for December 2020. Funding has also been gained to erect eight bespoke children's displays on the Market Hall wall for Dec 21, with a school's competition being judged in May 2021 to select one entry from each of the eight schools participating.

6. We were also successful in securing initially £150,000 for a new Wheelspark to replace that already in Centre Vale Park. This has now increased to £225,000 and an investment of £25,000 by the Town Council to deliver a "sunken" scheme now costing circa £250,000. These changes were required to meet the exacting requirement of the Environment Agency to not contravene its statutory function, and not compromise the Centre Vale Park Flood Alleviation Area.
7. This has required over six months of extensive negotiation and re-engineering of initial proposals to satisfy their requirements. Subject to some final satisfactory drainage considerations, it is anticipated that construction will commence soon. The Town Council's willingness to not only lead on all matters relating to the project, but also invest £25,000, was key to bringing this project closer to delivery, having been in the pipeline since 2012.

Both investments have been provided by Calderdale MBC under the Town Deals Accelerator Funding Programme and we thank the Town Deals Fund board for their support, and Calderdale MBC, in working with the Town Clerk to put all the funding and legal agreements in place for the Town Council to be able to take forward this new and exciting initiative.

8. Whilst the last twelve months have been challenging, the Town Council has nevertheless: -
 - Bid for and secured £281,225 of external funding.
 - Tendered out, selected contractors, and delivered new festive lighting schemes.
 - Tendered out and selected contractors for the Wheelspark project involving a user group of adults and children to refine the design. The initial scheme has been re-engineered, a raft of approvals obtained, and funding and legal agreements concluded.
 - Developed a new website providing greater transparency and accessibility of information.
 - Made 10 Covid 19 related grants totalling £3,651.
 - Awarded 12 grants totalling £25,506.
 - Continued our support of Todmorden in Bloom
 - Funded 50% of two PCSCO's £34,704.
 - Funded Todmorden Information Centre to remain viable - £14,981.
 - Provided 21 community waste skips during the period of main tip closure at a cost of £4,662.
 - Delivered over 8000 information leaflets providing residents with valuable emergency contact information during Covid lockdown.

- Supported residents near Gaddings Dam with visitor behaviour issues, including provision of information signage and liaison with Calderdale MBC parking enforcement and the Police.
 - Lobbied and actively engaged for bus service provision pre and post covid – for both public and schools’ use.
 - Lobbied for better laptop provision for Todmorden Students.
 - Lobbied and supported several “Green” based initiatives.
 - Committed to the Calder Valley Community Rail Partnership
 - Made a long- term investment of £3k into the Calder Valley Community Land Trust for Fielden Acre
 - Carried out intensive policy work to ensure good governance compliance and to satisfy both internal and external audit requirements – reviewing twenty policies.
9. As we hopefully move out lockdown, our prudent approach to managing the Council’s finances, whilst also delivering a no increase in Town Council Precept, places us in a good position to be able respond positively to future grant applicants, especially those that will bring vitality and energy back to our Town Centre.
10. We have also increased our Financial Reserves in order to now be in a position to work with partners in the community to potentially help lever in larger amounts of funding for projects should the opportunity arise, should those projects be deemed to be of benefit to Todmorden.
11. Focus for 2021/22 will, subject to satisfactory drainage solutions being found, initially be on constructing a new Wheelspark and finishing the Festive Displays, before looking to give Patmos Gardens a facelift and Lobb Mill Picnic area some attention. Future projects also include the possibility of introducing more publicly accessible defibrillators as well as starting a longer-term programme of repairs and maintenance for many of our ninety-five benches we own throughout the town.
12. Further focus will be on Policy Development and Operational Procedures as we move towards the Town Council seeking recognition as a Quality Council under the Local Council Award Scheme. Such Policy Development will also include bringing the Neighbourhood Plan to a position of public consultation and ultimately approval by the Planning Inspectorate, and in doing so help guide and inform future development in Todmorden.
13. In closing 2020/21 has seen all Town Councillors work together during challenging times, ably supported by a hard-working and dedicated team of Officers all focussed on helping Todmorden move forward.

Mayor of Todmorden – Cllr Ruth Coleman - Taylor

Cllr Denis Skelton – Chair of Emergency Committee Chair, Chair of Resources Committee and Leader of Todmorden Town Council.

Annual Report from the Development Committee 2020 - 2021

1. There were 8 meetings of the Development Committee between 2 September 2020 and 31 March 2021. Six scheduled physical meetings between 1 April 2020 and 29 July 2020 were cancelled due to the Covid19 pandemic. The business of these was dealt with at the virtual Emergency meetings.
2. The Development/Emergency Committees was consulted by Calderdale MBC on 115 planning applications during the year.
3. The Development Committee dealt with 98 enquiries from Councillors and residents affecting Todmorden, enabling either information and or resolutions to be delivered. These included, for example:
 - blocked drains,
 - incidences of rats,
 - speeding on local roads
 - blocked rights of way
 - damaged walkways
 - road gridlock due to roadworks
 - problems with waste collection
 - problems with dog fouling
 - fly tipping.
 - parking and litter at Gaddings Dam
4. The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, which comes under the auspices of the Development Committee, has met ten times during the year to develop the Neighbourhood Plan for Todmorden.

The Neighbourhood Plan for Todmorden will be consistent with, but separate to, the Calderdale Local Plan which is due to be completed later this year/early next year.

This work started in 2015 and has had to be revisited to include greater focus on issues such as the climate emergency and the need for affordable and sustainable housing and employment in Todmorden.

Specific pieces of work have included the commissioning of a Housing Needs Assessment (for which a grant was approved), highlighting the need for 1 – 3-bedroom dwellings, especially affordable houses, for purchase or for rent.

Work has also been carried out to identify those properties in Todmorden that are not listed, but that are of value to Todmorden because of their history, location, type and or nature of the building.

Separately, a list of 'green' sites (including Denis' Field, which due to TTC supporting the local campaigning groups action, has now been designated as an 'area of interest' by Calderdale MBC). is being developed so that green

sites as well as important properties in Todmorden can be included in the Neighbourhood Plan, to ensure that additional consideration will be given to them if planning applications are received. There is further work needed to revisit the Draft Neighbourhood Plan given it was originally compiled in 2015. It is highly likely that further consultation will need to be carried to check its current relevance. The target date for completion is to submit this for approval shortly after the new Calderdale Local Plan is adopted.

5. The Development Committee was active in the issues surrounding flooding in Todmorden. It has received presentations from organisations such as Slow the Flow and the Todmorden Flood Group and has expressed serious concerns to Calderdale MBC about certain applications for planning permission in areas susceptible to flooding ,as well as the need to enforce planning conditions.

The Development Committee has recognised that the issue of flooding is a complex one involving drainage capacity, old planning application approvals which potentially today would not obtain approval, topography regarding water run - off, the assessment of flood risk and the increasing need for permeable surfaces to be standard on new development.

The Town Council has not felt able to support several applications where it felt that the benefit of new housing, of course needed in Todmorden, was outweighed by building in an area susceptible to flooding where in the event of heavy rainfall, the existing drainage infrastructure from experience is likely to be overwhelmed.

Flooding is such an important issue. It has recently been agreed to set up a working group to deal specifically with flooding, so that a clear and comprehensive understanding of the issues can be gained, and a strategic and practical plan be put into place with key stakeholders to deal with the reoccurring cycle of the cause and effect of flooding.

It is acknowledged that many organisations are involved or have an interest in flooding and the plan would need to include effective partnership and collaboration. These organisations will include:

- Calderdale MBC
- The Environment Agency
- The Canal and River Trust
- Yorkshire Water
- Local organisations
- Other town councils in the Upper Calder Valley

The Development Committee deals with many issues that are not the direct responsibility of Todmorden Town Council, yet by enabling, facilitating and supporting Todmorden residents in dealing with issues, substantial progress is made on delivering positive outcomes to the enquires we make. This is most ably supported by our dedicated team of Officers.

Cllr Christine Potter Chair of Development Committee

Annual Report from the Climate Emergency Committee 2020 -2021

1. The first meeting of the Climate Emergency Committee was 9 October 2019 and there was one further meeting in the 2019-2020 year. There were 2 meetings of the Climate Emergency Committee between 23 September 2020 and 31 March 2021 and eight informal meetings on 12, 19 and 26 October 2020, 2 November 2020, 7 December 2020, 18 January 2021 and 15 March 2021. One scheduled physical meeting between 1 April 2020 and 29 July 2020 was cancelled due to the Covid19 pandemic.
2. Until now, the Climate Emergency Committee has primarily been engaged in fact finding and consultation, but the Town Council agreed to restate the Climate Emergency Declaration and agreed an outline action plan in November 2020. A draft of a prioritised action plan was produced at the CEC informal meeting on 15 March 2021 and this plan is to be discussed at the Town Council on 27th April 2021.
3. The CEC has received presentations from a range of organisations:
 - Anthony Rae – Friends of the Earth
 - Catherine Bann – Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
 - Sarah-Jayne Robbins – Todmorden Flood Group
 - Ginny Harris – Calderdale New Green Deal
 - Mary Clear – Incredible Edible, Todmorden
 - Cllr Mike Potter – Ryedale Council
 - Finn Jensen – Blackshaw Head Environmental Action Trust (BEAT)
 - Dr Nick Green and Diana Tremaine of Todmorden Learning Centre
 - Julia Mercer – Calderdale Extinction Rebellion
 - Dongria Kondh – Treesponsibility

As a result of contacts made by the CEC with Slow the Flow, Robin Gray has also delivered presentations to the Development Committee on:

- Slow the Flow
 - Peat
4. The CEC has put much effort into considering what Todmorden Town Council can realistically achieve. Climate Emergency issues can be global, and consideration has gone into what TTC can influence/enable, and what it can achieve for itself as stand-alone projects.
 5. The CEC has also reviewed the current Moorlands Policy (2007) and has updated it and referred it to the Development Committee for further consideration. It was decided that there was much in the existing policy that still applied, but following the presentations above, it was decided to include information about flooding and the restoration of the moorlands. It was also decided to clarify and state the respective roles of Todmorden Town Council and Calderdale MBC.

6. The role of Todmorden Town Council is one of enabling other organisations to protect and conserve the moorlands around Todmorden. In particular,,it was agreed that it will be necessary to engage with Calderdale MBC so that the issue of moorlands is recognised as an important strategic issue, which amongst other things, impacts on flooding.

The Climate Emergency Committee wishes to thank the Officers for their support and guidance through this initial phase of research and fact finding and look forward to working with them as we now move towards delivery of identified opportunities to deliver interventions at local level.

Cllr The Revd Graham Kent Chair of Climate Emergency Committee