



# Todmorden Town Council Annual Report April 2022 To March 2023

## Cllr Elizabeth Thorpe, Mayor's Report

As my Mayoral year ends, I would like to say what a privilege and a pleasure it has been to serve the town and its people.

My thanks go to my consort, Paul Thorpe for his support throughout the year, and to Cllr Susan Press and Catherine Moore as attendants.

As Mayor I have chaired 8 Full Council meetings. I thank the Committee Chairs, all Councillors and Officers for assisting me in this.

Whilst a lot of business and activity is carried within our Committees and delivered through our Officers, many items come to Full Council for consideration and decision making.

In total full Council has either received presentations, information on, or made decision on 181 items.

As Mayor, I have also seen Todmorden secure Town Deal Funding and the council supporting the delivery by sponsoring the Centre Vale Park Projects. Thanks go to Coilin Hill, our excellent project manager.

In terms of national events, it has been a year of celebration and sadness with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, her death and the forthcoming coronation of King Charles the Third. I attended many local events over the Jubilee weekend and received a warm welcome on every occasion. It was great to see families enjoying themselves and school children having such a good time.

Locally, I have had a busy year receiving 80 invitations of which I have attended 75. I thank everyone who invited me to meetings, events and celebrations.

Many events such as the Carnival and the Country Fair returned for the first time since the pandemic and it was heartening to see people enjoying themselves once more.

It's hard to pick out the highlights of the year; there have been so many fabulous events. Representing the town on Yorkshire day was particularly enjoyable. Keighley was the chosen venue and they did a superb job.

Standing alongside the community and our veterans and laying a wreath on behalf of the Town Council on

Remembrance Sunday was an honour I won't forget.

I've had the privilege of attending excellent productions at the Hippodrome Theatre and performances by Todmorden Orchestra and The Choral Society.

I had a wonderful time in December visiting care homes; again, this had been prohibited during the pandemic so it had been a long time since they had been able to meet the mayor. I also joined the community Christmas lunch at Todmorden High school. I'm always impressed by the good manners of the students at all our schools.

I've started the 1000<sup>th</sup> Park Run, a 10k race and a fun run. My sporting successes have been limited although I did turn out to be rather good at archery. I was less successful at crown green bowling!

It's been a difficult year for a great many people. I've witnessed and been directly involved in assisting people affected by the cost-of-living crisis. There has been a lot of co-operation between voluntary organisations in the Upper Valley to distribute food and get the help to where it is most needed I'm pleased that the Council has provided grant funding to help with these efforts.

Our voluntary organisations and citizens continue to rally round to help not only local people but those across the world. Support for those affected by the war in the Ukrainian has continued, and only recently the people of this town raised £6000 in a day to assist those affected by the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey.

I was invited to award the prizes at the Pride of Todmorden Awards, a terrific initiative and event organized by Clair Priestley. 300 tickets were sold and the event raised over £4000 for charity.

As you may know, my chosen charitable cause has been Dementia Friendly Todmorden. They are such a dedicated team of volunteers and it has been an honour to be involved this year. I have attended most of the Daisy's cafes this year and the work they do is a huge help to those affected by dementia and their families. I am pleased that the money I have raised will go directly to funding equipment and supporting their continued success.

The rather unconventional Mayor's Ball turned out to be a success and raised £1500!

I extend thanks to those that have helped me in my role as Mayor over the last 12 months.

The team at St Mary's church who provided the venue for our Town Carol Service and the Civic Service following the Queen's death.

My Deputy Mayor, Cllr Tony Greenwood, for his friendship and sound advice.

Members of the Council, who are a pleasure to work with. We disagree at times but there is never any unpleasantness, just good humour and determination to do our best for the town.

The Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk and the Mayoral Officer, Nicola Pugh who is incredibly supportive and efficient. We are fortunate to have such an excellent team of officers.

Finally, may I extend my best wishes to our next Mayor for a successful.

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## **Resources Committee**

**Cllr. Denis Skelton, Chair of the Resources Committee & Leader of Todmorden Town Council**

### **1. Number of Resources Committee Meetings**

There were 7 meeting of Resources Committee between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

## **2. Number of Grants Awarded**

There were 29 grants awarded under our discretionary grants award scheme to local groups and organisations totalling £56,026.96.

In addition grant awards were made to the Todmorden Information Centre of £15,380 to help with core funding provision, and to the Police Commissioner of £36,264 in respect of an additional 2 PCSO's (50/50 funded)

## **3. Projects Delivery**

3.1 As the Council with Todmorden, moved out of lockdown, 2022/2023 saw a return to normal business and a year of delivery of major projects on the ground.

3.2 The successful funding bids made in 2020/21 for financial assistance from the "Accelerator Fund" as part of the initial Town Deal Funding, resulted in the opportunity to deliver one of the Town Councils long outstanding ambitions, a Wheels park, that has been so well received by the towns youngsters and indeed, many older participants.

3.3 Continuing the theme of the Town Councils involvement with the Town Deal Fund, the Town Council took on the challenging responsibility of becoming Sponsor to the Centre Vale Park projects to enable the renovation of the Bandstand, a Bowling Association Pavilion extension, a new Tennis Court and refurbishment of existing courts, a new Multi Use Games Area and refurbishment of the Conservatory and energy/environmental improvements to Fielden Hall.

3.4 The Town Council is worked with volunteers from these groups to help achieve in the first place, the approval of the Treasury Business Case In December 2022.

3.5 Todmorden Town Council has been working with the groups where needed, to attract external grant funds, to then oversee and project manage construction pending then on completion, each group assuming operational and financial responsibility for ongoing delivery.

3.6 This is a very substantial commitment with the Town Council having allocated £10,000 by way of contribution to fund dedicated officer time to achieve the Business Case stage.

## **4. Governance, Finance and Transparency**

4.1 The Councils financial position continues to be considered at every meeting of the Resources Committee, together with the forecast end of year position in order for Members to prudently manage additional spend requests to the budget as set out at year start.

4.2 Financial provision has been made to enable some improvement works to be carried out at Lobb Mill and for renovation/upgrading of other benches. Both of these projects had to be held back as other time critical opportunities arose during the year but will now be progressed in 2023/24.

4.3 Governance and Financial Management remains strong with all policy documents reviewed in year with both subject to both internal and external audit scrutiny as part of in year and end of year processes.

4.4 As can be seen from the financial report accompanying this overall annual report, the Town Councils financial position remains robust to deal with its known commitments.

4.5 All financial reports together with minutes of decision making and details of all payments made are available to view on the Town Councils website as are all statutory returns.

## **5. Enabling others**

5.1 In addition to awarding of grants we have continued on with the work associated with the role of sponsor for the Centre Vale Projects for the Town Deal project.

5.2 As a Council, Members have recognised the current cost of living crisis and work has been done regarding Cost of Living- signposting on the Council website to assist residents find the support they need, setting up of a email network for groups/professionals to help collaboration between the groups and holding the Cost-of-Living event in October 2022 and additional events planned for 2023/24

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## **Development Committee**

**Cllr. Steve Martin, Chair of the Development Committee**

Before outlining the work of the Development Committee, I wish to acknowledge the contribution made and the outstanding commitment to the work of this Committee that our friend and councillor colleague Ruth Coleman-Taylor, made prior to her recent passing.

### **1. Number of Development Committee Meetings**

There were thirteen meetings of the Development Committee between 1 April 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

### **2. Number of Planning Applications Consulted on**

The Development Committee was consulted by Calderdale MBC on 111 planning applications during the year.

### **3. Participation in Other Consultations**

As well as being consulted on planning applications, the Development Committee has been consulted on the following:

- Proposed upgrade of existing mast at Royd Farm, Royd Rd, Todmorden
- Proposed upgrade of mast (Cellnex 225457) at Arqiva Transmitting Station, Stones Farm, Watty Lane, Dobroyd, Todmorden

### **4. Number of new Issues on the Development Register**

The Development Committee dealt with 86 (plus those up to 31<sup>st</sup> March) new enquiries from Councillors and residents affecting Todmorden, enabling either information and or resolutions to be delivered. These included, for example:

- blocked drains
- speeding on local roads
- flooding
- blocked rights of way
- problems with waste collection, especially in rural areas
- fly tipping
- school bus services
- changes to shop premises in the Conservation area where no planning permission has been given
- sheep and cattle grazing on main road in Portsmouth and Cornholme
- overgrown trees/ unauthorised felling of trees
- use of volunteers on sites in Portsmouth and Lee Bottom Rd, Stoodley
- issues arising from the A646 Corridor Improvement works
- Amount of rubbish accumulating at Todmorden Bus Station
- Debris in Rochdale Canal weir in Walsden
- Rat sightings
- Collapsed walls in public areas
- Cessation of precautionary gritting on roads in rural areas
- Damage to road and drains as a result of work at Victoria Rd building site
- Condition of road and signage, for example at Stansfield Hall Rd
- Damage to Stoodley Glen Canal Bridge and requirement for better signage
- Graffiti, especially on Network Rail and Northern Powergrid property
- Collapse of road and wall near Calder River at Lobb Mill
- Instability of houses on Halifax Rd
- Traffic issues in Cornholme, Portsmouth and Walsden
- Concern about potential flooding issues on Halifax Rd and Derdale St

## **5. Presentations Received**

The Development Committee has received presentations during the year on a variety of issues including from:

- Presentation by Mr K Crabtree on the State of Gullies in Todmorden.
- Presentation by Mr P Swales from the Environment Agency About Flood Alleviation Projects in the Todmorden area.
- Presentation on the Calderdale Tourism and Visitor Economy by Ms D Greenwood

## **6. The Neighbourhood Plan**

6.1 Work has been continuing on the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.2 The Neighbourhood Plan for Todmorden will be consistent with but separate to the Calderdale Local Plan which is due to be completed by March 2023.

6.3 This work started in 2015 and has had to be revisited to include greater focus on issues such as the climate emergency, the need for affordable and sustainable housing and employment in Todmorden and alignment with Town Deal Fund ambitions. It was also thought to be prudent to delay the completion of the Neighbourhood Plan until the Local Plan was finalized. This is to ensure that the two plans are aligned.

6.4 A considerable amount of 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.

6.5 Separately, a list of 'green' sites 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.

6.6 As part of Green sites consideration, the Town Council wrote in detail to the Planning Inspector objecting to the allocation of housing development by Calderdale MBC for Denis's Field site. This has now been removed from the list of allocated sites.

6.7 A Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee was set up in February 2023. A plan is in place for public consultation in July 2023 and the Neighbourhood Plan is expected to be finalized from around July 2024 onwards for the next fifteen years.

## **7. Flooding**

7.1 The Development Committee has been active in the issues surrounding flooding in Todmorden. It 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 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.

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## **Climate Emergency Committee**

**CLlr Jane Williams, Chair of the Climate Emergency Committee**

### **1. Number of Climate Emergency Meetings**

There were 4 meetings of the Climate Emergency Committee between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

### **2. Initial projects**

2.1 The Climate Emergency Committee's work has been primarily focused on the development and implementation of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and pledge.

2.2 Over the past year, progress has also been made with establishing links with local voluntary-based groups and organisations whose work aligns with climate change mitigation and improvement of the local environment, as well as keeping abreast of similar efforts of neighbouring local authorities. The Committee is grateful for the collaboration and support from such groups and external organisations, and looks to continue promoting and supporting their work, and building upon existing relationships.

2.3 Members ran a very successful tree initiative called 'My Tree Promise' which saw 97 trees, with a pot and compost given to residents within Todmorden and has agreed to run this as an annual initiative.

2.4 As a means of ensuring public engagement with efforts to tackle climate change, the committee has made strides with the development of accessible Climate action plan and Pledge. After much consideration and revision, the action plan and pledge has been successfully developed and made available both in paper form and online, for anyone who wishes to take part in this green initiative.

### **3. Marketing**

To ensure as many people as possible know about the work of Todmorden Town Council's Climate Committee to date, funding opportunities for small scale climate projects, and how to get involved in local climate efforts, including pledge participation, and the committee ran 4 promotional market day events at Todmorden Market, with promotional materials in the form of stall banners, pens, stickers and leaflets.

### **4. Participation in Other Consultations/ Funding Applications**

In January 2021, a joint application was put forward by Todmorden Town Council and Hebden Royd Town Council in a bid to gain training being offered by the Local Climate Engagement Programme – a new training and support scheme that will help local authorities deliver high quality public engagement projects on climate change and to enable more effective ways to achieving net-zero targets. Despite the highly competitive nature of the application process (as there was 75 local authorities applying for it) our application was successful, and the Town Clerk attended these sessions.

**Collective action** is imperative for tackling climate change issues. This necessity is reflected in the Climate Emergency Committee's approach to formulating and implementing climate action at local level, through a consistent consideration of the needs of the local community.

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## **Staffing Committee**

**Cllr Mary Carrigan, Chair of the Staffing Committee**

### **1. Number of Staffing Committee Meetings**

This Committee convenes on an as and when needed basis. During this year it met on two occasions on both occasions to consider staffing and issues that have arisen.

### **2 Appointments**

2.1 Following the decision of the then Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer to retire, recruitment commenced initially in July but was initially unsuccessful. With the agreement of the then Town Clerk/RFO to remain in post until a successful recruitment could be achieved.

2.2 In February 2022 the Staffing Committee, following Full Councils decision to agree to appointment a New Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer and her first year has been a busy one.

2.3 To aid an effective handover and provide some initial continuity, the previous Town Clerk has agreed to stay initially until the end of May 2022 to help with handover, accounting year end, delivery of some outstanding projects and then took on the role of lead officer for the Town Council in its role as Sponsor of the Centre Vale Park Projects, continuing this specific role on a needs only basis.

### **3 Policy Work**

3.1 The volume of work necessary for the small office team to deliver what has been delivered, has meant that staffing policy reviews as intended, did not take place. These will be reviewed this year.

3.2 Staffing appraisals were last completed formally in January 2023 following also a review held as part of a re-evaluation of job roles.