

Town and Parish Annual Report for Marlborough East – May 2024

Annual Meetings will take place in Savernake, Mildenhall and Marlborough councils over May – they are great opportunities for coming together as a community to reflect on the previous year and discuss the opportunities ahead. Some highlights from Wiltshire Council and my own work to support residents in Marlborough East are below.

Without a sound financial footing no council is able to deliver on its statutory requirements and manifesto commitments. Despite the ongoing budget pressures due to increasing demand for services and inflationary costs, Wiltshire Council has effectively managed these challenges through a focus on prevention and early intervention.

So, I'm delighted to report that **our 2024-25 budget is again balanced** with every saving we need to find identified both this year and next, with no cuts to any services (libraries, leisure centres, household recycling centres etc) or use of valuable reserves.

The Council receives nearly 83% of its funding from Business Rates and Council Tax, so we take delivering on our promises to local people very seriously. It's always useful to remember that over 59% of your money is spend on adult and children's social care.

Children's Services – rated Outstanding by Ofsted: Giving Wiltshire's children the best start in life is fundamental to improving their chances of living full and healthy lives. Working relentlessly to improve our services we now deliver consistently Outstanding services that ensure the needs of families and children are met at the right time by the right people.

Additional Funding for Highways & Flood Prevention: Cycles of baking temperatures, flooding and freezing has caused significant damage to stretches of Wiltshire's roads, as it has nationally. Tackling the issues on our classified and unclassified network remains a priority so we are investing an additional £10m in Highways maintenance, which with an additional £5.2m of DfT funding, will enable significant extra road surfacing and treatment works over the next 2 years. Latest plans for the Marlborough Community Area can be seen [here](#). We are also investing an extra £1.5 million a year to treble the number of gullies we clear each year and to increase the number of pot hole gangs. Our winters are getting wetter so it's critical to invest in keeping drainage systems clear to mitigate the impact.

An extra £800,000 for Enforcement over coming years: We all have examples where planning enforcement is not seen as being strong enough so we are investing in more enforcement officers. In addition to enforcing planning rules and tackling illegal parking, enforcement is also about making sure people are kept safe from dangerous living conditions, that our countryside is not polluted with fly tipping, fly posting and litter, and that more anti-social behaviour is prevented. That where people break rules they are held to account to stop our residents' lives from being blighted.

Council Tax

In common with most councils we have put up council tax by 4.99%, which will cost a Band D house an extra £1.65 per week. However, this is in the face of the Council's own costs rising by 9% so if we don't increase council tax now we will just store up future problems.

Across the town and parishes, I have continued to support residents with specific local matters

In July 2022 I set up the **Marlborough Area Youth Forum**, to employ a Youth Worker and support the Youth Club at St Margaret's Mead and youth work in the wider Community Area. This year, with Wiltshire Community and National Lottery funding and the huge contribution of Lisa Farrell, one of our Trustees, we've been able to attract more volunteers enabling us to open after school on Wednesdays as well as Fridays, offering a range of activities and a hot meal. All St John's pupils are welcome and if you would like to get involved, please contact me.

I played a key role in ensuring Wiltshire Council met a commitment to transfer the **Community & Youth Centre** at no cost to Marlborough Town Council, after it invested thousands to renovate this important asset, later adding the skate park.

I also liaised between the councils to secure funding for a town centre traffic survey and modelling exercise to find ways to address the frequent **congestion** on the A346 and A4. Outcomes are expected this summer. I remain in regular contact with the traffic management team to ensure utility companies are held to account for their regular failings.

As chair of MTC's Finance & Policy committee, I have secured budget to recruit an **Apprentice Youth Worker** this year. This will be a fantastic opportunity to secure diploma and potentially degree level qualifications while working and gaining significant experience. Operating across a range of community groups, including the Forum, this post will help ensure we have an effective Youth Service to support our youngsters. I am also treasurer of the Marlborough Area Poverty Action Group.

Planning matters are often raised with me by local residents with developments at York Place, St Martins, and the Equine veterinary clinic on Poulton Hill dominating. I took both of these to the Eastern Area Planning Committee – a process that ensured local voices are heard and I will look to Planning (with its extra enforcement budget) to ensure all the conditions are met. I have also helped Savernake Farm progress ideas for a horticultural community hub and facilitated access to hundreds of trees and maintenance funding.

If there is a local issue that you are concerned about, please do get in touch.

Don't forget – the **Marlborough Area Board** exists to work alongside local organisations to make things happen in the community. It provides grants to community groups – from the Scouts, village hall committees, sports clubs, Greatwood to 'Sing-a-Long'. If you have a project or activity that needs funding, please get in contact so I can help.

Finally, as in past years, I would like to say a huge **thank you** to all the local councillors and support staff across Marlborough East who, along with an array of local voluntary organisations, help ensure we have such a lovely place to live.

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