

BELPER TOWN COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19



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INTRODUCTION

By the Mayor, Councillor Tim Sutton

It has been another great year for Belper in terms of festivals and events as the town continues to build on its reputation as the “can do, go to” place in Derbyshire.

Much of this success is due to the wide range of organisations and groups that exist within the Parish, who put so much effort into the many events in and around the town that promote a high degree of vibrancy within Belper, which helps to attract a large number of visitors to the town from across Derbyshire and neighbouring counties.

This year the arts events have brought international artists to the town such as Margaret Keys and Sergei Pobovedov, to add to the existing diversity of entertainment that is available in Belper.

Two key projects coming to fruition are the replacement Tea Rooms in the River Gardens and The Blue Box, the latter of which is aimed at Belper’s youth.

The Town Council has done much to facilitate and support both new and existing groups, recognising that these groups can become self-sustaining by having a sound business plan in place which will enable sufficient support and interest from the general public.

These successes have also had their downside, as developers continue to exert pressure by wanting to develop our green spaces. This pressure has resulted in bringing the town’s residents together to resist unsustainable and unnecessary expansion of the settled boundaries of Belper. A core element of this resistance is based on the researched evidence that has been produced in the Neighbourhood Plan for Belper, which, after nearly four years of repeated unanticipated setbacks, will go out to public consultation this summer.

On a personal level as Mayor, I have had a varied and exciting year representing your town by attending a wide range of events both in and outside the Parish, ably assisted by my Consort, Tricia Smith, who deserves my thanks for keeping me on time and supporting me at the many events we have attended together.

The Council cannot work effectively without two groups of hardworking people who deserve gratitude by the citizens of the town and myself in equal measure.

The first group are your elected Councillors, who put in an enormous amount of time and effort on your behalf, far more than is often-realised.

The second group that deserve recognition are the Council staff themselves, who, through hard work and commitment, keep the wheels turning and the cogs of the machinery well oiled, in order to maintain services for us on time, within budget, and still manage to keep smiling!

My personal thanks goes to Pauline Latham, our MP, who continues to offer unceasing support to Belper town and its community.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Members of the public are welcome to attend Council meetings which are usually held on the second Tuesday of each month (apart from August) at 7pm when time is set aside for the public to raise any matters of concern or to make their views known on any items on the agenda.

In addition, there are the following Committees:

Finance, Governance & Staff Working Party
Facilities
Leisure, Tourism & Green Spaces
Herbert Strutt Charity
Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS:

Belper in Bloom

Belper Town Council has entered the East Midlands competition for many years and thanks to the consistent drive and passion of the In Bloom volunteers they have received a Gold Award for the ninth consecutive year. We will be pulling out all the stops this year to beat our rivals and bring the winning trophy back home to Belper for another year.

Improvements to the Christmas Lights and the Switch On Event in 2018

The Council has increased the budget for the Christmas Lights and as a result improved the Christmas lights on the Market Place. The Switch On event on 24 November 2018 saw the biggest ever crowds for the event, with Eleanor Tomlinson aka Demelza from Poldark switching on the lights.

Summer and Christmas Food and Real Ale Festivals:

Our prestigious food and drink festivals help Derbyshire and East Midland suppliers showcase their products. The event attracts thousands of visitors to the town and gives local producers a unique opportunity to promote their wares directly to the public. Visitors are able to taste a huge range of products on sale, ranging from real ale, cheeses, meats and cakes. It is a perfect day out for food lovers and a showcase for our local producers.

Sponsorship

Despite the poor economic climate local businesses have continued to support the town by way of sponsorship thus helping to provide attractive flower displays, Christmas trees and supporting St Georges Day celebrations – all of which help make Belper a lovely place to live, work and visit.

Love Belper

The Council has welcomed the start of the Love Belper brand – where local independent shops, cafes and businesses have joined together to promote Belper. The Council has supported the initiative by providing Grant Funding.

The Herbert Strutt Charity

The Council in April 2018 became the sole trustee of the Herbert Strutt Charity replacing Amber Valley Borough Council. The Council has invested the capital funds of the Charity in high interest yielding accounts in order to distribute the income in accordance with the Charity's aims. The Council administers the Charity through the Herbert Strutt Charity Committee and has made grants to Belper Recorder Group, Openwood Gate Pre School and Milford School.

Belper in War Time

In the past year, the Belper in Wartime Group focused its efforts on the centenary of the Armistice in November 2018. A free film was shown at the Ritz, *Nurse Edith Cavell*; an exhibition was displayed at No.28 Market Place; on the day itself, a display of knitted poppies – one for every Belper man who died – was planted in the WWI flower bed in the Memorial Gardens, with the silhouette of a soldier added by the Belper Branch of the Royal British Legion. A banner was displayed the King Street railings, featuring the names and photographs – where they exist – of every man killed. Concerts and talks have been held to fund-raise towards the production of *Sacrifice*, a permanent new memorial to the fallen, due to be erected this year. Work was progressed on a commemorative book to mark the centenary of the war in Belper, which will be released for the Peace Celebrations centenary in July this year. We continued the practice of on the 100th anniversary of a fallen soldier, the flag in the Memorial Gardens was lowered and a biography about the soldier was posted in the notice board.

Providing Grant Aid to Community Groups:

By providing grant aid to many community groups, the Council is making an effective use of its resources. This support provides a lifeline for some groups enabling them to continue functioning, or it can provide "seed corn" money for new ventures and initiatives by existing organisations.

During the year, the following organisations have received up to £1000 grant funding each:

Belper and District Scouts
Amber Valley District Guides
Belper Street Angels
Love Belper
Derwent Valley Trust
Belper Goes Green
Belper Unitarian Chapel

The Council has also provided ongoing annual grants to –

Belper North Mill Trust
Derbyshire and District CAB
Drop Inn
Amber Valley Community Transport
Derbyshire Childrens' Seaside Holiday Home
Fleet Arts

In addition, the Council has also agreed provide to long term grant funding to –
Accessible Belper and Belper Street Angels commencing in 2019

HOW THE COUNCIL SERVES THE COMMUNITY

Looking after the town:

The Town Council works in partnership with Amber Valley Borough Council undertaking many of the functions associated with much larger Town Councils. Belper and Milford areas are maintained to a very high standard as can be evidenced by the parks, gardens and floral displays. Every effort continues to be made to combat the problems of litter, fly-tipping and graffiti.

As well as contributing to the environment, the Council plays an important role in the monitoring and consideration of all planning applications. The Council has actively supported the community groups opposing the Belper Lane and Bullsmoor Planning Applications. Members are fully committed to supporting the economic regeneration of Belper through such initiatives as the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site which is having a major impact on the local tourism industry.

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group is finalising the Plan for submission to Amber Valley Borough Council in May 2019 with the Referendum hopefully to be held in November 2019. The Working Group is made up of 4 councillors and 9 residents who have worked extremely hard to deliver the Plan. The main aim of which is that the town's development can be satisfied by brown field development rather than green field.

Communicating with the Public:

As well as the Council's notice boards situated around the town, the Council publishes all news, events, agendas, reports and minutes on its website and news items are also published on twitter and Facebook. The Council also produces a Newsletter three times a year. This is delivered to every household to keep people informed and it has a handy quick reference guide of contact information for local services.

Liaising with the Police:

The Police are invited to the Town Council meetings and are given the opportunity to report on crime figures and to raise any relevant matter.

Providing Community Facilities:

All Council meetings are held in St John's Chapel which also serves as the Heritage Centre. The Heritage Centre is generally open to the public each weekday morning. The Heritage Centre in the Chapel is available for hire by the community for day time meetings and events.

The Council has completed a Lease on the land at the side of the Chapel and resurfaced this for use as a car park for Heritage Centre users and the Council. It has also provided 10 permit parking spaces. The Council has installed a ramp access to the Chapel and a green path across the Chapel Grounds. This has secured the long-term use of the Chapel by the Council.

Providing Allotments:

The Council provides a number of allotments sited at Hunter Road. They are managed by the Allotment Association in partnership with the Town Council. All the plots are in use and there is currently a waiting list.

Provision of Car Parking:

The Council provides valuable free parking facilities at the Coppice Car Park at the rear of the Market Place and Gibfield Lane

Monthly Market:

The Market is a highly respected and is very well attended with visitors from all over the area enjoying the vibrant atmosphere and vast selection of quality produce which is always on offer.

Organising Events and Entertainment:

The Council has organised the following events this year:

- **Larks in the Park** – A series of musical and other entertainment held on Summer Sunday afternoons in Belper's River Gardens.
- **Summer Food Festival** – King Street was alive on a Sunday in July with a wide range of foods to suit all tastes
- **Christmas Food Festival** – Following on from the success of the Summer Food Festival a Christmas Festival has now become an annual event in the town centre.
- **Proctor's Spring and Autumn Fairs** – A long standing traditional fair visiting the Coppice car park and the Market Place twice a year
- **Remembrance Day Service and Parade** - (with the co-operation of the Royal British Legion) held at St Peter's Church.
- **The Christmas Light Switch On** – "Christmas light switch on" takes place both at Milford and Belper on the last Friday in November.
- **The Christmas Eve Carol Service** – Over a thousand people attend this open-air service on the Market Place.

STAFF

The Council employs three office-based staff: Town Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer and Assistant Town Clerk who work between 60 hours per week. The Council employs three outdoor staff members and one cleaner/caretaker. The Council has also agreed to employ a Business Support Apprentice.

FINANCE

The Council's precept for 2019-20 is £284,271.

Council's finances are regularly monitored by a Finance, Governance and Staff Working Party.

Set out on the next page is a summary of the Council's income and expenditure for the year ending April 2018.

INCOME

PRECEPT	273232
GRANT	0
SPONSORSHIP --	
Xmas, Flowers, Food Fest	26966
MARKET RENTS	5720
LETTING FEES	678
MISC	8100
TOTAL	314696

EXPENDITURE

STAFF	146454
GEN ADMIN	18232
ELECTION EXP	6000
OUTDOOR MAINT	11898
VEHICLES/EQUIPM	5978
SLA	34279
PR	5486
MISC GRANTS	2912
COMM SERVICES	3601
EVENTS	24082
PROJECTS	4919
MARKET PLACE	4149
FLORAL	13901
MAYOR	1406
COPPICE	135
PLANNING	1135
TOTAL	284567

NET	30129
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