

Bury St Edmunds Town Council Annual Report 2014/15



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Chairman's introduction

This last Council year (May 2014 – April 2015) Bury St Edmunds Town Council:

- again gave significant financial support to Bury in Bloom for floral displays in parts of the Town
- jointly funded with St Edmundsbury Borough Council the Family Fete which was held in the Abbey Gardens in early August
- arranged the Armistice Day memorial service around the Angel Hill war memorial
- held its St Edmund's Day Awards in November 2014.

The awards for Citizen of the Year and Young Citizen of the Year being an important way for the Town to acknowledge those who do so much for our community and deserve civic recognition, the publicity for which helps to encourage others to do likewise.

The Awards evening was very well supported and was again successfully combined with the various best plot Allotment Awards

- awarded community grants.

Councillor Stefan Oliver Chairman 2014/15



The Memorial Bearings of Bury St Edmunds Town Council first granted in 1606 by King James I and then confirmed in 2006 by Royal License by Queen Elizabeth II

Through the Year

May (2014)

Cllr Stefan Oliver was elected Chairman.

Councillors were also appointed as representatives to outside bodies such as Bury in Bloom, Safer Neighbourhood Team, Guildhall Feoffment Trust, Suffolk Association of Local Councils, and the Christmas Fayre Working group.

July

Judging of the Council's Allotments Competition took place.

Allotment holders meeting

August

Council's St Edmunds Community Fete was held in the Abbey Gardens, free entry: entertainment for all, children's games, races and competitions, free craft workshops, modestly priced refreshments.

November

The Chairman and other Councillors represented the Council at the wreath-laying Armistice Day service. The veterans and helpers were afterwards invited in to the Council's offices for tea and biscuits.

The St Edmund's Day Awards evening was held - giving recognition to those who have made an outstanding contribution within the community. Presentations were made to the Citizen of the Year winner and to the Young Citizen of the Year winner. Allotment awards were also presented.

January

More grit bins put out, now totalling 108.
Allotment holders meeting.

February

Council set its precept level at nil increase, £13.50 per Band D. Government welfare reform changes reducing the number of households paying the precept.

March

An information flyer was sent to all households in the parish of Bury St Edmunds informing of Council's role in the Town and

April

Response to St Edmundsbury Borough Council's St Andrews Street South and the Station Road area.

Explaining the financial position
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- Magna Carta - Council awarded £5,000 for educational workshops in schools leading up to the celebrations which took place in 2014 as a reminder of Bury St Edmunds historic pivotal role in bringing about the Magna Carta;
- A further £2,000 has been awarded for the creation of a Magna Carta 800 years commemorative feature for the Abbey Gardens to be created out of reclaimed Abbey stone, presently stored at West Stow;
- Tourism plans – the Town Council made a contribution of £3,000 (joining with Ourburystemunds and St Edmundsbury Borough Council) to commission a "Destination Management Plan" - to help ensure that Bury retains and improves its attraction as a major tourist destination. The Town Council Office is one of the tourist information hubs;
- Priors Estate playground refurbishment £10,000 contribution;
- Bury in Bloom awarded £3,912 in respect of Abbeygate Street summer and winter planting;
- Illumination of the 'With the Grain' sculpture on King's Road roundabout and of the sculpture of the wolf guarding the crown of St Edmund on the Southgate Green roundabout;
- The Athenaeum Club - towards the repair and cleaning of the telescope in the observatory at the Athenaeum and the possible installation of a camera to enable the images to be viewed in the lower rooms - £250;
- St John Ambulance - for the purchase of an Adult Airway Management Torso - £600;
- Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid Centre – for a one year pilot project to provide individual therapy sessions for child victims - £2000;
- Avenues East (formerly Optua) - for a fortnightly leisure club for the disabled - £858.25.

Council took an opportunity to save 50% of its occupational outgoings by downsizing to two rooms within the old Borough offices at 7 Angel Hill for the remainder of its lease term.

Community Governance Review

This will be carried out by St Edmundsbury Borough Council in the autumn when all residents of Bury St Edmunds will be consulted on issues of parish boundaries and how any separate parishing would impact on the rest of Bury St Edmunds. The review was envisaged by the 'Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031' planning document which identified 5 areas for future housing development.

PLANS FOR 2015/16 so far

- A 'B17 Flying Fortress' memorial sculpture (jointly with Bury in Bloom, St Edmundsbury Borough Council and other interested parties/sponsors) which will also identify the scheduled Eastern Relief Road as a route to the Town.
- St Edmund's Day Awards and Allotment competition.
- War memorial restoration works (Angel Hill and Cornhill).

The chart illustrates key areas of Council's income and expenditure, indicating the position at 31 March for 2014 and 2015:

	Year ended 31 March	
	2014	2015
	£	£
Annual Precept	170,177	170,744
Total other receipts (INCOME)	36,695	32,426
Staff costs	81,108	82,326
Loan interest/Capital repayments	0	0
Total other payments	107,863	90,495
Balances carried forward	165,495	195,844
Total Cash & Investments	164,660	200,821
Total Fixed Assets	67,979	73,635
Total Borrowings	0	0

Where does the money come from?

Council Tax

The Council's primary source of income (known as its precept) comes from the payment of council tax by people who are resident in the parish of Bury St Edmunds. This money is collected on the Town Council's behalf by St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

For the financial year which ran from 01 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 the amount of council tax paid to Bury St Edmunds Town Council by the occupier of a property which falls in the 'D' band was just £13.50 (the same amount as for the previous three years). The precept figure for 2015/16 is £170,744.

Allotment Rents

A total of £15,437 was collected from allotment tenants as the annual rent for their plot(s).

Balances Carried Forward

The balances held at the end of the financial year of £195,844 (known as general reserves) although significantly higher than the minimum level set by Council, is still within the parameters laid down in the

relevant guidance. It is essential that an amount of money is available to cover any unexpected expenditure and Council has decided that it will keep £60,000 as its minimum reserve. In addition some reserves are 'ear marked' for specific purposes and some are 'ring fenced' because of financial commitments made where the money has not yet been paid to the relevant party. The remaining reserves are available to spend the next year.

Assets

Council's fixed assets are recorded in a register. Examples of these assets include street furniture such as litter/grit/dog bins and office equipment, furniture etc. The value at the end of the financial year has increased slightly to £73,635.

How has the money been spent?

Staffing

The Council's staffing bill overall was £82,326. The staff costs include £2,418 on training.

Office Premises

The costs of the office premises included £22,736 rent and service charge, £5,986 business

rates, £2,674 insurance, £515 cleaning, £4,247 computer maintenance and phone services.

Elections

Ordinary elections for all 17 councillors take place 7th May 2015.

The normal term of office for a councillor is four years and the next planned ordinary elections will be in May 2019.

War Memorials

Every year before the Armistice Day and Remembrance Day services the Council ensures that both the memorial on Angel Hill and the Boer War memorial in Cornhill are cleaned. This is done by a specialist contractor so that damage is not caused by the cleaning materials or process and cost £1,200.

Bury in Bloom

A donation of £3,600 was given to 'Bury in Bloom' in respect of floral displays in Abbeygate Street (including erection, watering throughout the season and removal).

A further £2,400 lighting of the Wolf Statue and With the Grain sculpture.

Allotments

In total £7,783 was spent at the allotments including:

Dip tank works	£2,007
Fence repairs	£337
Grass and hedge cutting	£600
Lease costs	£851
Miscellaneous expend. including repairs	£153
Skip hire	£1,075
Tree works	£1,185
Water used	£2,635

Grant Funding

Grants awarded are shown below:

Magna Carta 800 Celebrations (educational purposes)	£5,000
Bury St Edmunds Cricket Club	£2,000
Bury In Bloom Wolf Sculpture (additional)	£2,000
Horringer Court Residents Association (traffic calming)	£1,000
Memorial Garden Fund	£250
British Red Cross	£250
Royal British Legion	£120

Council and Committee Meetings

The Town Council has three committees, two of which make recommendations to the full Council. These are Finance, Policy and Resources which meets monthly, Staffing and Employment which meets every three months. The Planning and Licensing committee which meets twice a month has authority to make decisions on behalf of the Council.

Planning and Licensing is a very busy committee, with on average 20 planning applications to look at each meeting, plus licensing and other issues such as proposed street closures, vending permits and tree preservation orders.

Members of the public are always welcomed to meetings so that the council can reflect the views of those people most affected by planning decisions.

The Full Council meets monthly, except for August. All meetings are held on Wednesday evenings, and are open to the public. At each meeting there is an opportunity for the public to ask questions.

Meeting agendas are displayed on the Council notice board in the Cornhill, in the Town Council offices, as well as on the website at www.burystedmunds.suffolk.gov.uk

The website provides much more information on current matters which the Town Council is to consider or has considered,

for example, objections that its Planning & Licensing Committee has made, presentations to be made to that Committee by developers prior to their submission of master plans to St Edmundsbury Borough Council, (the planning authority), prior to submission of a planning application; current consultations received by the Town Council for consideration and response; information on the Council's allotments for those residents wanting to go on the waiting list, information for existing allotment holders and the downloadable Official Guide to Bury St Edmunds.

How to contact us

All Town Councillors can be contacted via by phone or email and some have additional mobile or business telephone numbers as shown on the website which is at: www.burystedmunds.suffolk.gov.uk.

Staff members are:

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Assistant Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer: Sue Hindry
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Allotment officer/Admin Assistant: Gill Cook
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