

THORNBURY ANNUAL TOWN MEETING REPORTS FOR 2007-08

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE 2007-08

1. The Council continues to subsidise the Hanging Basket Scheme, supplying a record 200 baskets to the town centre properties and once again providing a daily watering service.
2. The Committee is regularly represented at meetings of the Severn Vale Environmental Link Group, the Waste Management Forum, Transport Forum and Local Agenda 21.
3. The Committee took part in the National Annual Spring Clean initiative, clearing hedges around the perimeter of Chantry Field in April 2007. In September the Town Hall was once again opened with guided tours given by councillors as part of the English Heritage Open Doors initiative.
4. The tree warden has been working closely with planning at South Gloucestershire Council to inspect all Tree Preservation Orders and has also worked closely with Thornbury in Bloom to plant new trees in the Mundy Playing Fields.
5. Council's Tourist Information Centre has continued to operate most successfully with enquiries being dealt with by staff and our dedicated volunteer helpers. A new South Cotswolds and Vale of Severn glossy guide has been produced, and a new town guide has been published. Committee decided to continue its efforts to promote Thornbury by this year asking the pupils of Gillingstool School to design a Christmas card; the winning design was printed and then sold in the tourist office. To further promote Thornbury, Committee has supplied another advertising template for the franking machine which is used for all post leaving the office. The template is to promote the fact that there is free car parking in the town.

6. We continue to maintain and supply litter bins, dog bins and seats throughout the town. In line with council's policy to provide bus shelters further sites have been investigated this year.

7. Continuing support has been given to the composting site and Filnore Woods whilst at Poulterbrook the environmental area has been cleared ready for work to begin. Committee has been investigating the possibility of providing further allotments within the town although as yet all enquiries about available land have been unsuccessful. The committee will continue to support the search for suitable land and in the meantime a garden share scheme has been instigated in association with the Allotment Association and Age Concern

8. Committee has continued with its policy of giving assistance to the neighbourhood watches in the town for the replacement of missing signs.

9. We inform South Gloucestershire Council of any faults that we, or the general public, have noticed in the footways and highways and these are now being dealt with quickly and efficiently. Road resurfacing around the town is being discussed with South Gloucestershire Council. Committee has commented on the diversion of two footpaths within the town.

10. There are several projects that committee has undertaken to investigate further, these include the provision of steps on the railway embankment at Medina Close, the identification of roads used as public paths and the provision of a cycle path between Thornbury and Alveston. A cycle path has been introduced on Streamside Walk, along the section running from Crossways School to Malvern Drive.

11. Committee has been investigating green issues and are ensuring that council is aiming to reduce its carbon footprint on all of its sites. It has held a breakfast meeting to promote the green issues to businesses within the town and it is hoped to set up a forum

of businesses to share information and take the matter forward. As part of the Climate Change Fortnight a prize draw questionnaire was drawn up with the aim of discovering measures that the townsfolk take to reduce their carbon footprint and to share these ideas with other townsfolk. Committee agreed to support Sustainable Thornbury in its quest to reduce the number of plastic bags used in the town, and has given financial support to the production of Thornbury jute shopping bags.

12. We have submitted comments on South Gloucestershire Council's Waste Strategy 2008-14 and the decommissioning of Oldbury Power Station

13. Financial Estimates for the Committee for 2008-09 show a increase in net expenditure of £4,350 over the previous year's original estimate. With forward balances half those of the previous year, the precept requirement is increased by almost 50% to £24,538. Provision is made for spending on public seats, litter and dog bins. There is also provision for the continued support of tourism, promoting Thornbury and Thornbury in Bloom.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLAYING FIELDS AND CEMETERY COMMITTEE 2007-08

1. Thornbury Town Football Club and Thornbury Falcons have, once again, made full use of pitches and facilities at the Mundy Playing Fields this year but the continued closure of the Castle School changing rooms, on health and safety grounds, has restricted the use of the Chantry Field by Thornbury Town Football Club. The Falcons and Thornbury Rugby Club have, however, been using the pitches on a regular basis. Club Thornbury, an organisation on which Council has representation, has continued to pursue the refurbishment/rebuild of the changing rooms at the Castle School Sixth Form. Draft plans have now been drawn for the layout of the changing rooms and it is hoped that the matter will now progress to a satisfactory conclusion in the near future.

2. The Tennis Club has continued to make good use of Council's Court 3 and 4 and maintained the playing surface to a high standard. The Club will be considering building a practice wall on Court 3 and relining both courts for mini tennis use in the forthcoming year.
3. The Round Table Firework Fiesta was once again held at the Mundy Playing Fields and hosted, again this year, by GWR. The event, as always, was extremely well attended and is an excellent evening's entertainment for both residents and visitors.
4. The Skatepark continues to be extremely popular with youngsters from Thornbury and all the surrounding areas. Committee is still pursuing the completion of the skatepark lease with South Gloucestershire Council and once this has been finalised, funding will be sought to carry out improvements to the park. A skatepark consultation day took place in June last year and several young people attended and contributed ideas. The construction of a BMX track was the most popular suggestion.
5. The play area at Streamleaze Green continues to be very well used by local youngsters. A special swing for use by children with disabilities will be installed in the near future. Members were, however, dismayed to learn that vandals using bolt cutters had caused nearly £1,000 of damage to the play equipment. The Play Rangers have been holding regular sessions on Streamleaze Green again this year and attendance has been most encouraging.
6. Committee decided this year to pursue the possibility of constructing a natural play environment area at the Eastland Avenue open space site. The South Gloucestershire Council Play Project Officer, Michael Follett, has been advising members on the best ways to progress the project. An application was made to South Gloucestershire Council's Small Grants Budget and the sum of £1,175.34 was awarded in March towards the preparation of plans for the play area. Committee will progress the project during the forthcoming year.

7. All of Council's open spaces and the Kington Lane Cemetery have continued to be maintained to a very high standard. This year the Cemetery accommodated a total of 71 burials, interments of cremated remains and scattering of ashes, which is 18 more than in the previous year. The Garden of Rest cremated remains area is now full and a new Cremated Remains Garden has been constructed next to the Children's Section. This new area has provided an extra 120 grave spaces for cremated remains burials. The tarmac path through the Garden of Rest will be resurfaced in the near future.
8. The Mundy Playing Fields, despite the inclement summer weather, proved to be immensely popular with both local residents and visitors alike and the paddling pool continued to be a great attraction for youngsters. Members investigated the possibility and obtaining large tree trunks as natural play features but, unfortunately, the purchase and transportation of such large items proved to be impractical. Committee are investigating the feasibility of constructing living willow structures at the playing fields in the autumn. The replacement of some of the old play equipment in the Chantry Road play area was considered and it is hoped that new equipment will be installed some time during this year.
9. Seeking funding for the construction of the football pitches at Poulterbook and extension of the pavilion has been incorporated in Club Thornbury's bid covering several sports project within the town. Members have met with representatives of Thornbury Football Club and the Gloucestershire Football Association to consider ways in which improvement to the pavilion changing facilities can be undertaken as part of the ongoing project.
10. Following concerns that had been expressed about the state of the wall of the Castle abutting St. Mary's Churchyard, the structure had been examined by South Gloucestershire Council's Conservation officer and English Heritage's Structural Engineer and deemed to be safe. No further action will now be taken.

11. Permission was given to Thornbury in Bloom to plant three Oak trees and a small leafed lime in the Mundy Playing Fields and these were planted in late autumn.

12. Committee is still awaiting the completion of the final documentation that will allow Central Networks to site two electricity substations at the Mundy Playing Fields and bury the overhead cables underground. Members felt that the removal of overhead cables would be beneficial for the health and safety of users of the playing fields.

13. Financial Estimates for the Committee for 2008-09 show an increase in net expenditure of £23,150 over the previous year's original estimate. Allowance is made for £10,000 for the development of Poulterbrook, £10,500 for Skatepark enhancements, £10,000 for development of play areas and all services maintained at present levels. With forward balances decreased by approximately £15,000 over the previous year this has resulted in a increase of the precept requirement by approximately £33,800 to £120,849.

**REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE TOWN DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE 2007-08**

1. A total of 181 planning applications were considered during the year which was 20 less than the previous year. Detailed comments were made to the planning authority in each case. 83.4% of applications determined were in line with this Council's comments, this is slightly more than last year's rate of 83%.

2. Notification was received from South Gloucestershire Council of 5 Planning Appeals but there was only 1 Traffic Area Licensing application to consider.

3. There has been continued active involvement in the Thornbury Town Centre Partnership. The Steering Group appointed last year to undertake a Town Health Check has completed the consultation process covering the four topics Environment, Transport, Economy and Social Issues. A meeting was held in January attended by the Steering Group, South Gloucestershire Council Officers, Representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Councillors at which information was given of the appointment of a new South Gloucestershire Council Officer, Deborah White, as lead officer for the project. Deborah would be correlating all the current information and producing a draft document which would be available for consultation in June. The Steering Group has now evolved into the Town Centre Strategy Working Group which will be producing an action plan to help improve the vitality, viability and sustainability of the town.

4. In November last year Committee was pleased to receive a presentation from Claire Jaggard and Winifred Baker giving details of a recent brain storming undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce which has resulted in the production of a survey feedback, SWOT analysis and marketing strategy to revitalise the town centre. Members look forward to the strategy aims being initiated.

5. Comments have been submitted to South Gloucestershire Council on the following:-
 - Local List Supplementary Planning Document
 - Exit Signing at Tytherington Quarry
 - Informal Consultation on re-lining of the road on A38 south of Grovesend Road.
 - Consultation on Proposed Waiting Restrictions at Gillingstool/Oakleaze Road junction *and*
 - Informal Consultation on Crossways Infants and Junior School Travel Plans

Consideration was also given to

- Changes to Parking Enforcement
 - Adoption of Development in the Green Belt. Supplementary Planning Document. *And*
 - South West Regional Assembly's Review of Additional Pitch Requirements for Gypsies and Travellers in the South West
6. Members were disappointed that the plans for the new library development have not progressed and were extremely concerned when Somerfield Store closed in November. The news that Aldi would be refurbishing the store and opening in June was welcomed but the 8 month closure of these premises in such a prominent location has been most unsatisfactory.
 7. Committee has been pursuing an extension of the High Street lighting upgrade with South Gloucestershire Council's Community Safety Office to include the top section of the High Street. Progress has been slow but a reasonably positive response has been received from the District Council.
 8. Committee has taken an active part in the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's consultation on the decommissioning of Oldbury Power Station. Detailed comments have been submitted on the 'Draft Business Plan Consultation' and the 'Stakeholders' Engagement Process'. Council has two active representatives on the Oldbury Power Station Site Stakeholders Group.
 9. Members welcomed South Gloucestershire Council's agreement to their suggestion to hold a Consultation Day on the 6th September to enable members of the public to see the changes proposed by the Traffic Management Review. The event had been a success with over 200 local residents attending. The review proposals were considered in depth by committee and detailed comments submitted to South Gloucestershire Council.
 10. In response to Committee's request to monitor traffic speed on Morton Way a temporary speed reminder sign had been erected near the entrance to Osprey Park.

It is hoped that the sign has been instrumental in slowing motorists who are, perhaps, not aware that they are exceeding the speed limit.

11. Committee has been instrumental in facilitating the submission of a petition signed by local residents to install a pedestrian crossing across Midland Way between the two mini-roundabouts.
12. The Town Development Committee is non-spending Committee so there are no financial matters to discuss.

**REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FINANCE AND POLICY
COMMITTEE 2007-08**

1. The allocation of grant aid to local organisations has increased again this year and details of recipients are tabled at this meeting.
2. During the year consideration has been given to the following and detailed comments submitted as appropriate:-
 - Commission for Rural Communities – Strengthening the Role of Rural Councillors.
 - South Gloucestershire Council – 3 Year Review of the 2003 Licensing Act
 - South Gloucestershire Council – School Organisation Plan 2007-2012
 - South Gloucestershire Council – Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station Review 2007
 - South Gloucestershire Council – Our Vision for an Excellent Quality of Life Consultation
 - South Gloucestershire Council – Draft Parenting Support Strategy
 - South Gloucestershire Council – Housing Strategy 2008-2013
 - South Gloucestershire Council – Economic Development Strategy

- South Gloucestershire Council – Gypsy and Travellers Sites – Issues and Options
 - South Gloucestershire Council – Community Engagement Strategy
 - Communities and Local Government – Consultation on Orders and Regulations relating to the Conduct of Local Authority Members in England
3. During the year the Committee has been represented at the following meetings
- Shopmobility (South Gloucestershire)
 - South Glos. PCT Project Steering for Thornbury Hospital
 - Avon Local Councils Association
 - South Gloucestershire CVS
 - Safer and Stronger Community Group
4. The Committee continued to liaise with the police and welcomed their regular attendance at meetings
5. Since first considering the North Bristol NHS Review, Committee has been totally committed to ensuring the future of Thornbury Hospital. Cllr. Phyllida Parsloe, as Council's Representative, has attended all meetings of the Project Steering Group for Thornbury Hospital and given detailed written reports on all matters discussed. Members unanimously agreed to continue to support the proposal for a new build of Thornbury Hospital and this course of action has been vigorously pursued.
6. In April 2007 the Environment Committee sought the support of the Finance and Policy Committee for its resolution to aspire to obtain Carbon Neutral Town status. Members of the Finance and Policy Committee unanimously supported the Environment Committee resolution.

7. Committee considered several access issues during the year and regularly received minutes of the meetings of Shopmobility (South Gloucestershire). Members were very saddened to receive news of the sudden death of Sue Gawler who had played such an important role in the developing and expanding the Shopmobility Scheme.
Thornbury's own scheme started on 6th December on a very cold and wet day but local people are now becoming more aware of its existence and, to date, 10 people have signed up to join the scheme.
8. The Mayor of Thornbury's Youth Award Scheme received a number of nominations this year and the judging panel has recently chosen a winner. The successful candidate will be announced and receive his/her award at Council's Annual General Meeting on 6th May.
9. The Safer and Stronger Community Group has met several times during the past year, chaired by Cllr. Clive Parkinson. Attendance has been rather disappointing but it is hoped that, with increased publicity, more members of the public will be encouraged to come.
10. Preparations for the Armed Forces Event began in December and on 19th April, local residents were pleased to welcome representatives of the Armed Forces and associated organisations to the town. The march by the band of the Light Cavalry Regiment around the town was a rousing sight and the stands erected in St. Mary Centre were visited by many members of the public.
11. It was reported to Committee in June that as the local British Legion had disbanded there was no longer an organiser for the Remembrance Day Sunday Parade. A working group of three Councillors was formed to try and facilitate the event and, after liaising with both the Church and the local cadets forces, the parade went ahead.

12. Looking now at finance and the three budgets administered by the Committee:-

The Central Services budget for 2008-09 shows an increase in net expenditure over the previous year's original estimate of £9,450.00. With forward balances increased by £689 from the previous year, the precept requirement has increased by approximately £8761.00 to £158,461

Under the Land and Property budget net expenditure is expected to increase by £8,385 but with a slight decrease of approximately £800 in forward balances from the previous year, the precept requirement will rise by approximately £9,200 to £33,691.

The Grants and Contingency budget shows a decrease in net expenditure of £3,770 and an increase of forward balances of £7,000 from the previous year. The precept requirement has decreased, therefore, by approximately £10,500 to £81,736.

13. Taking the estimates as a whole compared with the 2007-08 original estimates, capital expenditure will decrease by £9,400 and grant aid will increase by £5,625. Wages and superannuation will increase by £7,100 and other costs by £9,090. Income, excluding the precept will fall by £29,150.
14. At its January meeting Council set a precept of £419,275 an increase of £53,160 (14.5%) over the previous year. This equates to Band D Council Tax of £94.71 an increase of £11.82