



Lyme Regis Town Council

Corporate Plan 2022-2027



Introduction

Cllr Brian Larcombe MBE, Mayor of Lyme Regis



The last few years have been challenging on a number of fronts. The election of 2019 welcomed a new council with a high proportion of members serving as councillors for the first time, and this proved to be a very successful year with early plans developed and action taken to address some of the council's legacy issues, asset and public open-space maintenance, finances, the council's contribution to the Lyme Regis tourist economy, and the emerging environmental debate.

We set about improving the council's interaction and dialogue with other east and west neighbouring town councils, Dorset Council and our West Dorset MP. This was extended and proved of particular value as Covid-19 arrived and the individual and collective ideas, initiatives and responses to it were exchanged in forum with other seaside town councils and our local MP. The arrival of the virus placed unprecedented demands on the nation, government, Dorset Council, Lyme Regis Town Council, and each of us as individuals. Throughout the uncertainty and imposed restrictive measures of 2020, and before the arrival of developed vaccines, the council went into its own special delegated measures and amended ways of working to maintain as much operational delivery as possible. This proved to be very successful and, although a different way of working, we delivered on a significant and extensive range of plans and objectives in 2019, 2020 and 2021 that includes the following:

Council Assets

Finance - We have secured the council's finances despite the impact of Covid and without any need to resort to a loan or selling of assets. A re-examination of spend and practices has resulted in a healthy bank reserve that provides a sound contingency for any future potential impacts of the scale of Covid-19; we have chased down long-running debts owed to us and repaid a long-running loan the council had with Dorset Council, making Lyme Regis Town Council a rare and envied debt-free council.

Physical assets – We have installed the Woodland Walk feature lighting in Langmoor Gardens; resurfaced the huge seafront roof and incorporated a new balustrade perimeter – a huge once-in-a-generation cost and work, not undertaken for 50 years; installed the extensive length of seafront benches along the huge section of the Marine Parade; carried out essential maintenance of the Guildhall and council office – not invested in for over a decade, and restored the integrity of the Guildhall tower back to its original

and authentic stone built appearance; reoccupied the council office ground floor providing much-improved space and public access; replaced aged beach huts; and completed the significant legal work to provide better formal agreement and security of tenure to the Monmouth Beach chalets, caravans and beach huts – a large and important piece of work never undertaken before; we have carried out significant improvement and raised new levels of ongoing maintenance in both Langmoor and Lister Gardens and the town cemetery; installed new play equipment in the Henry's Way park, provided extensive tree planting around the perimeter of the Anning Road playing field, and undertaken the long-awaited replacement of the Marine Parade's seafront railings.



Public support



We have raised the level of waste collection along the seafront; installed improved CCTV and anti-social behaviour security; subsidised the running of the town bus service; provided a park and ride service to help alleviate summer peak car parking demand; provided new term and annual grants to local groups and societies of a level proportionately higher than any other towns in Dorset; we've given particular support to historic buildings of resident and public benefit including Lyme's only Grade I listed building – St. Michael's church tower, and the Roman Catholic church of St. Michael & St. George refurbishment; we've supported the running costs of the Marine Theatre; supported the development of Lyme Regis Football Club's ground and facilities improvement; the Hub and youth facility; the Philpot Museum and the facility it provides of Lyme's historic past for local and visitor insight; and public support to the Axe Valley and West Dorset Ring and Ride and Citizens Advice Bureau. All this in addition to the smaller

group and society grant recipients and resident support during the thankfully brief but significant period of Covid restriction, while also helping to offset the raised difficulties it presented for some of the council's business tenants and local residents. In doing this, we have also held the council's precept and kept its part in household council tax bills fixed, only raising it once in the last decade.

Present and future

The new council quickly recognised the global debate and message of climate change

and we created our own Environment Committee to focus on and develop initiatives, within its scope, to determine, deliver and influence change and adjustments that can be made to help address the impact at a local level within the council's means. This will include our 'own house' and we have taken the early steps to become a 'paperless office' with the efficiency and benefit to our environmental footprint it provides; upgrading the council staff IT kit; issuing all council members with council laptops; carbon literacy training and physical asset examination for efficiency and



change for environmental benefit; electric charging points in our car parks; and future planned public engagement to help support awareness of environmental initiatives. We have and continue to improve and develop our public-facing website and online facilities. We have also embedded a raised scrutiny of the council's spend of public money and a grown emphasis of prudence and the limitation of the council's finances as a place of small town and parish status, while carrying the higher expectation that always accompanies a visitor destination. The limited physical capacity of Lyme Regis and its numbers has focussed the council on the reality of its true scope and scale, and to acknowledge the importance of 'quality over quantity' in order to continue to be a destination of choice for the very different needs and levels of investment made by 'day tripper' and 'holiday-maker'. The impact of either group is now a consideration that influences plans and events within the council's determination. We are developing future plans for our land asset in Strawberry Fields within the life of this council and better use of the Langmoor and Lister Rooms and the Jubilee Pavilion.

While Covid and other global issues continue to remind us just how small and interconnected the world is, our degree of influence and reach remains limited. However, we can and do play our part within our local scope and resources, and we aim to ensure the future resilience of the local environment and benefit to Lyme residents, and for those who visit and contribute to the local economy of Lyme Regis, Dorset, and the south west peninsula.

All achieved in the last 36 months despite a range of different challenges....

Lyme Regis is a desirable place to live and visit; it is resilient and in many respects is more sustainable and better equipped to overcome some of the problems other communities may have more difficulty in overcoming.

Thank you to all who have helped our town in the positive ways you have throughout this challenging but very successful period, and the sound position Lyme now occupies with the raised confidence of its prospects for the future.

Cllr Brian Larcombe

Cllr Brian Larcombe
Mayor of Lyme Regis

The Money



Lyme Regis Town Council is different from most councils; over 90% of its income comes from assets owned by the council. Income from these assets gives the town council independence and financial strength. This means in addition to all its usual functions, the council was able to freeze the precept to local households in 2021-22, fund projects to improve the town, and allocated £75,000 in grants to local organisations.

Inevitably, financial planning for 2021-22 was informed by Covid-19; in 2020-21, the net effect of income loss and additional expenditure was £300,000.

Prudent assumptions and a cautious approach meant major projects weren't released until end-December 2021; this gave the council time to assess the strength of its income and understand any adverse impacts arising from Covid-19 restrictions. Fortunately, income streams were strong and Covid restrictions introduced by the government in the winter didn't have a material effect on either income or expenditure.

The council's strong financial position in December 2021 allowed it to release monies to undertake repairs to the Guildhall, replace a section of the seafront railings, replace beach huts on Marine Parade, start a programme to replace ticket machines in its car park and pay off its loan from Dorset Council.

The loan, which was for £500,00 over a 20-year term, was taken out with West Dorset District Council in 2010; the loan was to help pay for the refurbishment of the Marine Parade Shelters. The strength of the council's finances meant the loan could be repaid eight years ahead of schedule. Early repayment means the council is now a debt-free organisation and has a further £37,500pa at its disposal.

The council's strong financial performance in 2021-22 is mainly due to a significant increase in car parking revenue and higher than budgeted income from its mini golf; changing holiday destination choices resulting from Covid-19 is an important factor here. In addition, the council raised £120,000 from the sale of two new beach huts.

The income forecast at 31 March 2022 is £2.22million and the expenditure forecast is £1.90million. The forecast for 2021-22 suggests a reserve of £1.2million on 31 March 2022. This represents an increase of £320,000 on the reserve held 31 March 2021, i.e., £880,000. Because of the current economic uncertainty, the council has decided to retain a reserve of £1.2million; this is £200,000 above its policy of holding a reserve of £1,000,000.

Looking Ahead

The 2022-23 budget is again informed by prudent assumptions.

These prudent assumptions create a budget surplus of £388,000 after the following projects are complete: repairs to the cemetery chapel roof, renewal of lighting columns, the introduction of an enhanced residents' parking permit, an asset management review, works to eliminate water ingress to the Jubilee Pavilion, the replacement of the amenities' hut in Langmoor Gardens and a replacement vehicle.

As well as producing an annual budget, the council produces a rolling five-year financial plan.

The five-year plan incorporates known income along with routine expenditure essential to the council's operation. It excludes inflation, price increases, non-essential projects and major purchases. The council's five-year financial plan has a surplus of just under £350,000 each year. This is money the council has at its disposal to undertake long-term investment in its assets, capital projects and service improvements.

To help the council identify where it should invest this money over the next five years, public consultation will take place during the spring and summer.

Finally, there has been much talk about dissent in the council chamber; members are committed to addressing these issues during the council year.

