



# Lyme Regis Town Council

## Corporate Plan 2021-2026



# Foreword

## Cllr Brian Larcombe MBE, Mayor of Lyme Regis



We are approaching the end of the second year of the council elected in 2019 and one of the impacts of Covid-19 has meant that unusually this report covers two years, 2019-2020.

A lot has happened during the period. One of the effects of lockdown and restriction, and the passing of time, means it's easy to forget what it has meant to deal with things during this unprecedented time. Challenging enough, but even more so for a newly-elected council, and it is therefore all the more important that we remind ourselves of what has been achieved in the last 24 months - two highly significant years. A period that also introduced us to the new experiences of Skype, Zoom and virtual meetings; furlough and remote-working; social-distancing; local levels of improvisation, even a 'drive-in' carol service, and the much-valued 'community support' initiative which gave support to residents across the town.

2019 was a progressive year - there was more scaffolding in Lyme's Broad Street than ever, with practically every business improving their premises; the uplift, investment and appearance of Lyme was remarkable. There was and still is a want to make our town a 'destination of choice' with a focus on quality over quantity to help Lyme's sustainability, and underline the small but special seaside place it is. For our part as a town council, we listened to the concerns expressed by residents for the state of our beach areas and waste collection - we fixed both and the area has never looked better. We undertook a complete refurbishment of our seafront public toilets and raised them to a standard we've never had before; we improved the Woodland Walk and transformed the area by installing feature lighting.

Local groups and societies were awarded substantial new annual and term grants, and we set about formulating plans for the life of the new council. Wendy and I attended an incredible number of invited functions and events locally in Lyme and across Dorset - whether a fundraising or celebratory event, a civic or social gathering, all were accepted and provided the opportunity to represent Lyme and help promote and support all the different interests concerned. Thank you to Wendy for being with me throughout and her tireless support. Thanks also to Alan, our town crier, and Lynne Vian for their support and all they do for Lyme and good causes.



As 2019 went to 2020, Covid-19 appeared into our world and despite the impact it has had, we adjusted and continued to deliver to our plans and commitments. We dramatically improved the Langmoor Gardens with extensive work to lift its whole appearance and maintenance. We also improved and raised the level of maintenance in the cemetery - both have brought appreciative comments from residents and visitors. We have installed new seafront beach huts, and new benches along a huge expanse of the parade - they've been used a great deal, and again we've had many thanks expressed by both residents and visitors. We've installed new play equipment in Henry's Way play area and planted commemorative trees in Anning Road Playing Field to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World War 2 and VE Day.



Local groups and organisations have continued to receive annual and term grants which, although reduced, are still very much higher than other comparable Dorset towns; we continued to subsidize the town's local bus service, and we also gave a vital and significant sum donation to St Michael's church tower – at nearly 1,000 years old in parts, Lyme's only Grade I listed building. With respect to our own assets: we have resurfaced the seafront shelters' roof – a 'once-in-a-generation' 50-year legacy, an essential and hugely significant commitment undertaken only a couple of months before Covid was known of. We have re-acquired our office ground floor to provide long-needed better public access and improved necessary working space,



and we have carried out essential restorative work to the Guildhall. Less visible but nevertheless important has been the resolving of legacy issues in the Monmouth Beach area which properly formalises long-term arrangements for all concerned. We are also looking to apply environmental benefit to our assets and incorporate climate change initiatives where we can. We have significantly grown our relationships with other councils and organisations in the last two years, and this has proved beneficial in addressing common areas and issues, particularly those that Covid later presented. This should continue to prove useful post-virus as its legacy - the changes it has brought and the resultant economic squeeze, will continue to challenge us and all other towns and councils.

So much has been achieved in the last two years and Covid-19 has made it all the more remarkable given the restrictive measures within which we had to work.



Our finances are good, which given the £350,000 fall in income due to the Covid lockdown in the spring months of 2020 and the essential once-in-a-generation £650,000 resurfacing of the seafront shelters roof committed to just ahead of the unknown Covid and the global impact it would have on all of us, represents a significant result. The nature of Lyme businesses and the heavy dependency on tourism as its principal income has required a resourcefulness and resilience the town has rarely had to call upon. It is much to Lyme's credit that the town has responded in the

positive way it has and in doing so has shown its sustainability and the means to maintain and provide all that people will expect of Lyme this summer and into the future.

For our part, the town council has completed some significant things and brought a bearing in the last two years that will bring benefit for future years. Lyme has the prospect of being a destination of choice, a great place to live, and the place we all continue to cherish. Thank you to council member colleagues; John Wright as clerk and all council staff; Daryl Turner as our Dorset councillor; Chris Loder MP; local businesses and media coverage; the very long list of groups and volunteers who gave their time and energy to all that's been done; and thank you to all residents of Lyme for your support and resilience in the last two remarkable years.

*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 its own assets. Income from these assets gives the town council financial strength and independence which means it has been able to freeze the precept to local householders for 9 out of the last ten years, fund projects and provide grants to local organisations.

During 2020, Covid-19 had an adverse effect on the town council's finances; income loss is estimated at £250,000 and additional expenditure is estimated at £50,000. The main areas of income loss were car parking and the temporary closure of the chalet and caravan park: the main areas of additional expenditure were increased supervision, additional cleaning and extended opening hours for Marine Parade toilets, and the employment of a security company to tackle anti-social behaviour.

To control expenditure, most of the council's planned projects were put on hold. The one exception was the re-surfacing of the roof below the seafront gardens; this was a £650,000 project which was contractually committed at the onset of Covid-19. Despite significant losses early in the financial year, the council's income improved with the easing of lockdown in June 2020.



# 2020-21: Where we are now



The council's forecast reserve at the beginning of April 2021 is £620,000. Before starting non-essential projects, the council intends to increase this reserve to £850,000; this is equal to 50% of the council's income. A reserve of £850,000 is considered enough to allow the council to respond to unplanned emergencies.

The council's income and expenditure budgets for 2021-22 include known income along with routine expenditure essential to the council's operation. They are c.£1,700,000 and c.£1,300,000, respectively, and produce a budget surplus of c.£400,000. So, achieving a reserve of £850,000 is highly likely during the year. Only then will the council release non-essential funding.

The council is confident enough about its finances to freeze the precept charged to the town's residents in 2021-22; the precept is held at £64 for a council tax band D property.

The budget also includes £75,000 grant funding to local organisations. Beneficiaries of town council grants include the Marine Theatre, Citizens' Advice Bureau, B Sharp, LymeForward, The Hub, Axe Valley and West Dorset Ring and Ride, Lyme Regis Museum, Junior Parkrun, 1<sup>st</sup> Lym Valley Scouts, the Church of St Michael and St George RC Church, the Town Mill, and btheChange.

## Looking ahead

In July 2019, the council declared a climate and environmental emergency, followed by the launching of a net zero plan in August 2020 to achieve our ambition of become carbon neutral by 2030. Our future plans and projects will therefore be guided by this ambition and to help inform us, we have also agreed a strategic plan to tackle our major environmental impacts over the coming years.

As well as producing an annual budget, the council has a rolling five-year financial plan to 31 March 2026.

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 purchase which can be deferred. The council's five-year financial plan has a surplus of just under £400,000 each year.

# Our priority projects

Our surpluses will be used to achieve the council's agreed objectives, projects and major purchases which are grouped into three priorities.

The highest priority projects are: providing members with IT equipment, refurbishment of the council offices, refurbishing the Langmoor and Lister Gardens, installing electric vehicle charging points in our car parks, installing water meters at the chalet and caravan park, buying a new wood chipper, replacing the seafront railings, installing further CCTV, and implementing an asset management priority.

Our priority two objectives are: replacing lighting columns in the seafront gardens, and replacing our diesel utility vehicle with an electric model.

The third group of priorities are: the third and final phase to replace Cart Road beach huts, hosting a residents' weekend, replacing the amenities' hut in Lister Gardens, replacing the 'cadet hut' where the external works' team is based, replacing the transit, courier and lengthsman's vehicles with electric models, replacing car park machines, repairing the roof of the cemetery chapel, implementing a free town bus, and replacing the tractor.

