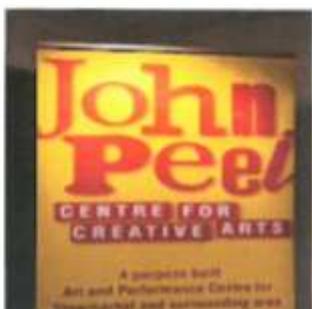
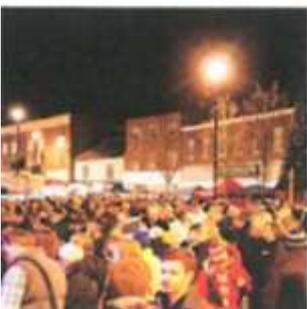
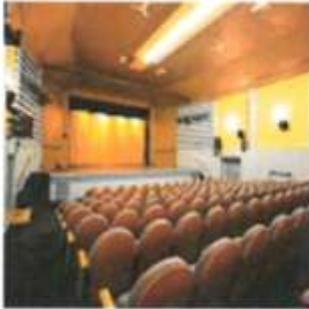




STOWMARKET TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14



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Mayor's Welcome



I was delighted to be asked to serve my home town as Mayor for a second term of office in 2013/14. During the year, it had been a pleasure to reacquaint myself with so many people who work so hard for our community.

For my Mayoral Charities, I chose the Stowmarket Trefoil Guild, the 3R's Project at St Peter and St Mary's Parish Church and the 1331 (Stowmarket) Squadron Air Training Corps. I was delighted that a total of £3,000 was raised through a variety of events including a collection during my Civic Service, the Christmas Carol Service, a Quiz Night, the Combs Ford Christmas Light Switch On, a table top sale and a Civic Dinner. The Stowmarket Trefoil Guild will put its share of the funds towards the project to build a new Guide Hall. The present Guide Hall is in need of replacing and I am sure the new hall, when completed, will provide many years' service to the Guiding Association. The 3R's Project will continue the very important renovation, restoration and reordering for our Parish Church and its church hall. 1331 (Stowmarket) Squadron Air Training Corps will purchase some new archery equipment with their donation which will increase the scope of activities for their members. The equipment will include bows, arrows, target faces and safety netting to allow them to shoot indoors.

There were several highlights of my Mayoral year ranging from the High Sheriffs' Garden Party to the switching on the Christmas lights in Combs Ford. Two of the most memorable events I attended were the Graduation Ceremony of students from West Suffolk College held in the St Edmundsbury Cathedral and the premiere of The Railway Man held at the Regal Theatre which was so well organised by Town Council Officer, Sarah Page.

During the past twelve months, I have chaired several meetings of the Town Council, overseeing many of the key decisions of the year. I would like to thank my fellow Councillors and the Town Council staff for their continued efforts which ensures that improvements are made to the town and its facilities.

I hope that you find this Annual Report of interest, providing an insight into the activities of the Town Council over the past year. Of course it would be impossible to include everything that the Council has achieved but this report contains some of the many highlights from the past 12 months.

With kind regards,

**Councillor Mrs Vera Waspe
Stowmarket Town Mayor 2013/2014**



Town Clerk's Overview



There is no way of knowing what Stowmarket Town Council will be asked to help with during the course of the year. That is why a year in the life of the town is never, ever, dull. Councillors and staff find it extremely rewarding to be given the opportunity to help local people and whilst we may not have all the answers, we can usually point people in the right direction so that they can access the advice and support that they require.

Over the past 12 months, we have continued to support local people offering something for everyone from 'the cradle to the grave'. This can be exemplified by two of our projects this year. The first is the provision of a new play area at Glemsford Road, Combs Ford. The facilities for children up to 12 years of age have been designed by the children of Combs Ford Primary School and Combs Middle School. The project has been delivered with assistance from Mid Suffolk District Council. This is an excellent new facility and continues our programme of investment in the play areas within the town. At the opposite end of the age spectrum, we have worked in partnership with Community Action Suffolk to set up a new Lunch Club at Redwoods, Red Gables for some of the more mature members of our community. This provides an excellent venue for people in their later years to share their interests and enjoy good company. The Red Gables Lunch Club follows the closure of the Thorntree Lunch Club after forty years of distinguished service to the local community. The release of space by the Thorntree Lunch Club has, in turn, enabled the Town Council to enter into discussions with Mid Suffolk Citizens' Advice Bureau at Milton House about the re-configuration of space within Milton House that might better fulfil the needs of the CAB. Partnership working has certainly been a theme of 2013/14 with the Town Council working with MENTA, the Suffolk Enterprise Agency to provide a new community facility on the Recreation Ground. This project is now at an advanced stage and will open in May 2014.

Our local services continue to be valued by the local community with the Regal Theatre, Community Centre and Market all performing above expectations. This reflects the loyalty of our customers and the dedication of our staff. During the course of the year, we have also been able to support many local clubs, organisations and projects, allocating nearly £70,000 of financial support to them.

In closing, I wish to recognise the contribution made by all 15 Members of the Town Council. They give up their time to serve the town without receiving any payment whatsoever, for their services. We owe them, a huge debt of gratitude for all that they do for Stowmarket.

David Blackburn
Town Clerk



Meet Your Councillors



Gerard Brewster



Suzanne Britton



Gary Green



Graham Harris
OBE (civ), MBE(mil),
MCMI



Barry Humphreys MBE



Duncan MacPherson



Lesley Mayes



Poppy Robinson



Nigel Rozier



Barry Salmon



Keith Scarff



Vera Waspe



Frank Whittle



Anne Whybrow



David Whybrow

Meet Your Management Team



David Blackburn
Town Clerk



Michelle Marshall
Deputy Town Clerk



Glenn Markwell
Public Services Manager



Heather Tooke
Community Centre Manager



Sally Goonan
Accounts & Finance Manager



David Marsh
Theatre & Events Manager

Community

The Town Council is based in the heart of the town so that it is accessible to all of the local community. We work closely with many local businesses, interest groups and voluntary bodies within Stowmarket in seeking to promote civic and community pride in the town.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Town Council procured and installed new Christmas Lights in 2013 as part of the ongoing support that we provide for the town centre. Many positive comments were received from local businesses, residents and visitors about the new modern-looking lights which replaced the former lights which were over thirty years old. The centre-piece of the scheme was a Christmas tree which was 40 feet high, decorated in colour coordinated baubles with over 1,500 energy efficient LED fairy lights. The new lighting also incorporated 50 six foot high trees attached to lamp columns throughout the town centre creating a magical effect. The Town Council ensured that the energy efficiency and environmental impact of the new lighting was properly considered before the improvements were made.

The new lights were unveiled at the 2013 Christmas Lights Switch On event which saw the Town Council work with the Town Centre Partnership, the Museum of East Anglian Life and St Peter and St Mary's Parish Church. Plans have already been approved for 2014 to incorporate additional lighting into the scheme and also illuminate the church steeple to create a focal point that can be seen for miles. The Town Council is certainly playing its part in making Stowmarket "the town of Christmas trees".

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

A traditional Christmas Market Fayre was launched in 2013, which was a celebration of the long standing market history and paid tribute to the dedication of our market traders. The atmosphere at the Fayre was enhanced by musical performances on the event stage, fairground rides, Santa on his sleigh and a giant snow globe in which members of the public were able to have their photographs taken. Sponsorship for the event was secured from local businesses. The event was well received by local shopkeepers and also by market stallholders who enjoyed a bumper days' trading. It is now planned that this will become an annual event in the town's calendar.

CEDARS PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Town Council has been pleased to offer practical support towards the opening of the new Cedars Park Community Centre. This impressive new facility on the Cedars Park estate has been provided with £1 million of developer contributions from Belway Homes and Crest Nicholson. The Town Clerk is a member of the Board of the Cedars Park Community Interest Company providing an important link between the Town Council and Cedars Park CIC.



CCTV AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Town Council operates the Stowmarket CCTV system in the town in partnership with Mid-Suffolk District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council. Monitoring figures for the 2013/14 financial year were as follows:

- 63 incidents were monitored by the cameras of which 18 were of anti-social behaviour, 18 minor incidents, 12 serious offences and 15 traffic offences.
- The cameras were used in 26 incidents where arrests were made

The Town Council is currently reviewing the CCTV system including an upgrade to the system to improve picture clarity to enable the police to identify individuals more effectively.

The Town Council plays an active role in community safety and hosts quarterly meetings of the Safer Neighbourhood Team to which the local community is invited to attend. The Policing priorities for the town are set jointly by the Police and the Town Council at these meetings.

GRANT SUPPORT AND STOWFUND

Each year, we provide a significant amount of financial support to local groups and organisations. One of the key areas of support is the annual grants round where applications are carefully assessed by the Town Council's Grant Panel before awards are made. The awards made in 2013/14 which are shown below:

Applicant	Award
1331 Stowmarket Air Training Corps	£481.36
Activity Group (Partridge Court)	£250.00
Avenues East Group (formerly Optua)	£384.00
East Anglian Traditional Music Trust	£250.00
East Suffolk Association for the Blind	£200.00
Haughley United Youth Football Club	£200.00
Haughley Youth Club	£100.00
Leading Lives	£400.00
Mid Suffolk Voluntary Organisations Forum	£500.00
Royal British Legion Club Ltd	£500.00
Stowmarket Allotment Growers Association	£500.00
Stowmarket and Area Opportunity Group	£250.00
Stowmarket ASD Saturday Club	£250.00
Stowmarket and District Camera Club	£240.00
Stowmarket and District R B L Women's Section	£160.00
Stowmarket Ladies Netball Club	£460.00
Stowmarket Parish Church	£500.00
Stowupland Pre-School and the Mighty Oaks	£300.00
Suffolk Accident Rescue Service	£250.00
Suffolk Family Carers	£419.64
Suffolk Regiment Old Comrades Association	£400.00
Suffolk Young People's Health Project (4YP)	£500.00



A new community support scheme called 'StowFund' was launched by us in 2013/14 which was used to support a wide variety of local community groups and projects with grants ranging from £250 to £4,000. A full list of the beneficiaries is shown below:

Organisation and Project	Amount
HomeStart – Community Fun Day	£500
Abbots Hall Primary School – Walking Bus Noticeboard	£460
John Peel Centre – Chairs	£2,000
Friends of Stowmarket Library – Start Up Costs	£250
Safer Neighbourhood Team – Bike Marking Kits	£750
Stowmarket Scouts – Rebuilding Project	£2,000
Rotary Club – First World War Commemoration	£500
Stowmarket High School – Young Enterprise Scheme	£160
New Life Church – Community Fun Day	£500
Town Pastors – Running Costs	£300
St Peter and St Mary's Parish Church – Café 52	£400
Guide Hall Committee – Restoration Project	£1,000
Boys Brigade – Refurbishment Project	£500
John Peel Centre – Void Project	£4,000
First Responders – New Equipment	£750

MID SUFFOLK CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU

Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice Service continues to provide a vital service to the residents of Stowmarket and the neighbouring parishes. Demand for the services that it provides increases year on year and as a consequence, additional specialists are needed to meet the demand. During 2013/14 the Town Council has been working with the CAB in order to provide additional office accommodation within the Milton House Business Suite.

The project will be completed during autumn 2014 and it will enable the CAB to move into four additional rooms within Milton House. The Town Council continues to provide £7,600 per year in grant support to the CAB.

PLAY AREA IMPROVEMENTS

The Town Council is continuing to undertake a programme of improvements to the play areas that it manages within the town continuing with the redevelopment of Glemsford Road Play Area in 2013/14. Mid-Suffolk District Council released £25,000 of funding (from Section 106 developer contributions) with the balance for the project being funded by the Town Council. The major part of the construction of the play area was undertaken by the Town Council's Maintenance Team.

Plans have also been approved to redevelop the Lindsey Way Play Area following consultation with local school children, parents, residents and the local community. The improvements will be jointly funded by the Town Council and Viridor Waste Management Company and the project is scheduled to be delivered later in 2014.



REGAL THEATRE

The Regal Theatre continues to go from strength to strength. The venue enjoyed its highest annual number of admissions in 2013/14, with 56,670 people attending the venue and enjoying a film, show or lecture during the year. Cinema attendances accounted for 86% of admissions and live shows and lectures accounted for 14%. We are immensely proud of our team of staff at the theatre who have worked tirelessly to 'double' admissions over the past four years.

The theatre screened 110 different films during 2013/14, the largest choice of films shown during a year since the venue was built in 1936. In July 2013, the Regal celebrated the previous year's record admissions by screening three of the year's Oscar winning films and charging just £1 per ticket. These 12 performances were very popular and the event received extensive coverage in the local press.

Friday, 17th January 2014, saw the Regal transformed into Leicester Square for the day when it played host to a very special screening of 'The Railway Man', complete with a red carpet. The event was held in honour of a very special guest, Roland Baker, an ex-Prisoner of War from the Suffolk Regiment who was captured and forced to work on the Death Railway during the Second World War. Unlike many others, Roland survived this horrific ordeal and was invited to the London Premiere but unfortunately he was unable to attend. Once the Regal staff heard of this, they decided that if he couldn't get to the red carpet, the red carpet would come to him. This sell-out performance was a huge success and was attended by the local press, Town Councillors, the Mayor and local celebrity Roy Hudd.

STOWMARKET COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Town Council purchased the Community Centre at Hillside, Combs Ford in 1985 and since then, it has proven to be a much used and valued resource within the town. The past 12 months have been successful for the Community Centre with bookings remaining high and a good mix between commercial users and community and charitable organisations.

The Community Centre is the base for the Stowmarket Foodbank, which is run as part of Stowmarket 'Churches Together'. The Town Council is pleased to be able to offer a 'home' for this important local service. The Sunshine Children's Centre which is also based at the Community Centre also continues to be a vital service in meeting the requirements of local families. The Children's Centre, which is operated by Suffolk County Council under an agreement with the Town Council, provides much needed support to local families with children from 0 to five years old.

STOWFEST

StowFest 2013 was held on the evening of Friday, 31st May and Saturday, 1st June. Approximately 400 people attended the Charity Friday Evening event and around 1,800 attended on the main day. StowFest remains very popular with a large core of music fans, some travelling from Norfolk & Essex for the event. The Amplitude stage was especially popular, giving local young performers the chance to showcase their talents. For the first time, professional stages were used in place of lorry trailers and local company 'Total Driving' sponsored the event.

Looking forward to 2014, the organising team has unveiled plans to appeal to a wider audience with the event being re-branded as 'StowFiesta'. The event promises to combine the familiar elements of StowFest with a new family entertainment area and more mainstream musical entertainment.



THE BEACH PARTY

The Town Council was delighted to launch a new event in 2013 called the 'Stowmarket Beach Party'. The 'beach party theme' involved live music, a Punch & Judy show, donkey rides, a bouncy castle, giant slide, tug-of-war and a giant sand pit. The day's entertainment concluded with an open air screening of the hugely successful film 'Mamma Mia' under the night sky.

Having a beach party 30 miles from the nearest seaside caught the attention of the local media with the production of 'Stowmarket on Sea' sticks of rock proving a real talking point. The event proved a great success, with 1,500-2,000 people paying us a visit during the evening and an estimated 600-800 people staying to watch 'Mamma Mia'.

THE JOHN PEEL CENTRE FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS

The John Peel Centre for Creative Arts is based at the Corn Exchange. The building is owned by the Town Council and is operated under a long term lease. Following a request for support from the Board of the John Peel Centre to extend and improve their facilities, £10,000 of financial support was provided by the Town Council including £6,000 already allocated in the form of landlord contributions and £4,000 of new funding to enable the project to proceed. The Town Council recognises the tremendous work of the Board of the John Peel Centre in transforming the former Corn Exchange into a modern entertainment venue of which the town can be justly proud.



Economy

The vitality of the local economy is key to achieving the sustainable development of the town. Economic development for the area is a strategic issue that is promoted by Suffolk County Council and Mid Suffolk District Council. However, the Town Council has an important role to play as an advocate of the local community and in building positive relationships with local businesses.

COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

The Town Council is fortunate in having some very positive relationships with local businesses. We are keen to develop these relationships further so that local businesses are acknowledged for the contribution that they make to the town. Of course one by-product of these relationships, is that they provide access to sponsorship and other resources which help mitigate some of the costs of projects, services and events. The town's Christmas events, StowFest and the Beach Party all benefited significantly from commercial sponsorship. Work has also commenced upon the 2014-15 Stowmarket Town Awards in partnership with Archant, the publisher of the East Anglian Daily Times and the Stowmarket Mercury. The support of Archant will help to ensure that the town and the awards event receive the maximum media coverage locally and regionally, promoting the town and celebrating the successes of Stowmarket people.

MARKETS

Twice weekly markets are held in the town on Thursdays and Saturdays each week. During 2013/14, the core of traders increased with new stalls appearing on the market. It is recognised that markets up and down the country are fragile and the Town Council has sought to increase its marketing and promotion whilst holding market tolls at the same level for another year to support the town's market.

MILTON HOUSE

Milton House, is one of the most historic buildings in the town and it is owned and managed by the Town Council being the main interface between the Town Council and the residents of Stowmarket. It provides office accommodation for a variety of organisations, both those working in the public and private sectors, and it is a well-used and well-loved building. The Stowmarket Registration Service is the principal tenant of the building providing birth, marriage and death registration services for the local community. The Registrars conduct many civil ceremonies with The John Milton Room providing a very desirable venue for civil ceremonies and civil partnership ceremonies following its refurbishment in 2013 and the grounds of Milton House provides a beautiful backdrop for photographs. Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau occupies the oldest part of the building (which dates back to the 16th Century) under a lease agreement and financial support from the Town Council. Discussions are currently being held with the CAB about extending its accommodation at Milton House so that it has larger and more flexible accommodation. Beyond the space allocated for the CAB, lettings within the Milton House Business Suite are at capacity providing a valuable source of income which ensures the long term viability of Milton House as a public building.



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The Town Council is committed to providing support to local people, enabling them to obtain knowledge, experience and skills in order that they may find paid employment. Each year we offer placements to local schoolchildren to undertake Work Experience giving them a broad overview of everything the Town Council's areas of activity.

We continue to employ a Trainee and an Apprentice within the Maintenance Team who are currently undertaking a training course with Easton and Otley College. During 2013/14 Members also made an undertaking to employ an Apprentice within the Administration Team and the position will be filled later in the year.

THE MUSEUM OF EAST ANGLIAN LIFE

Stowmarket is proud to be the home of the award-winning Museum of East Anglian Life (MEAL). The Town Council is pleased to undertake joint working with the museum, which in 2013/14 included Christmas events and planning for the Commemoration of the First World War. The Town Council also awarded £5,000 of grant funding to MEAL to support the refurbishment of the Bobby building in 2013/14 with a further £5,000 allocated in the 2014/15 budget to further project work at the Museum.

TOWN CENTRE

The Town Council continues to support the town centre with a range of initiatives being developed and implemented in conjunction with our partners. The investment in the Christmas Lights and the Christmas Market Fayre in 2013/14 were important in supporting seasonal trade and plans were approved for installing a characterful new clock near the Market Place which will be erected later in 2014. Further initiatives are being researched as the Town Council seeks to enhance its role and involvement in the promotion of the town centre.



Environment

Stowmarket is recognised as being the fastest growing market towns in the country. The Town Council is eager to support appropriate spatial development of the town and makes representations regularly to the Planning Authority over proposed development. The Town Council also acts to safeguard the town's environment through preservation of the natural environment and maintenance of open spaces. Additionally, it plays a key role in helping to improve the cleanliness of the town through its deployment of dog and litter bins and litter picking activities.

ALLOTMENTS

Both of the Town Council's allotment sites at Cemetery Fields and Hospital Fields, are full and thriving. Significant improvements have been made to the boundary at Hospital Fields and water has been introduced at Cemetery Fields. The Town Council has introduced monthly inspections to ensure that all the plots are kept to a satisfactory standard whilst providing the opportunity for regular contact with the tenants.

The Allotment Association has worked hard to obtain funding to purchase a poly tunnel for community use. The Town Council worked in conjunction with the Allotment Association to help with the preparation of the land. It is anticipated that the poly tunnel will be a catalyst for more cooperative and communal working by allotment holders.

CEMETERIES

The Town Council owns and manages two cemeteries within Stowmarket, one of which is managed for wildlife. The Old Cemetery, Bury Road has become established as a wildlife haven in the heart of the town and provides an important habitat for native flora and fauna. It is a lovely, peaceful location to visit to watch the wildlife.

FLORAL DISPLAYS

The Town Council provides hanging baskets in the town centre which add a great deal of colour and interest to the town centre and are always popular with local businesses and local residents. This year a new style of hanging basket, which incorporates a water reservoir, was trialed. This type of hanging basket proved successful in reducing water consumption and the time involved in maintaining the hanging baskets. A replacement programme will continue in 2014 which will see the old hanging baskets replaced with the new hanging baskets in most areas of the town.

In order to commemorate the Queens Jubilee, 60 new trees were planted along Gipping Way. The work was carried out in partnership with Mid Suffolk District Council. Over 2,000 bulbs were also planted on the Recreation Ground by the Town Council this year to commemorate the Centenary of the start of the First World War. This enhanced the visual appeal of the area. Additional bulbs will be planted each year, up to and including 2018, as part of the commemoration of the First World War.



PICKEREL PROJECT

The Pickerel Project was established in 2000 and is a local voluntary environmental group that seeks to improve the environs of the River Gipping. The secretariat for the group is provided by the Town Council. Highlights in 2013/14 included two educational river walks and a talk provided by the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership.

The group has enjoyed an increase in the numbers of volunteers attending their regular clear-up days and walks along with improved media coverage. They are always seeking more ways to improve the river's environment and welcome anyone to their monthly Clear Up days on the first Sunday of every month, meeting at 10am in Prentice Road car park.

RED GABLES

Red Gables is the headquarters for a large number of small local community and voluntary groups. The Town Council is committed to supporting the operation of the building and we have worked with them closely with them to improve their outside space. Work included remedial tree work following the gales, removal of trees in line with guidance from Mid Suffolk District Council's Tree Officer, repairs to the driveway and support and advice on the creation of a dedicated wildlife area.

PLANNING, CONSULTATION & STRATEGY

It was another busy year for the Members of the Planning, Consultation & Strategy Committee. The Committee met on 21 occasions and considered 61 planning applications, ranging from modest extensions on existing dwellings to large scale development within the town. The Committee considered each application within a local context having regard to national and local planning policies. Notable planning applications during 2013/14 were an application for a 70 bedroom care home at Cedars Park, the development at the former Riverside Entertainment Centre site and the housing development at Chilton Leys.

In addition to considering planning applications, the Committee considered a wide range of issues that affected the town. During 2013/14 the following matters were given consideration:

- The proposed development at land off Farriers Road and Poplar Hill (Edgecomb Park)
- The Needham Road Safety Improvement Scheme
- The Statement of Community Involvement
- National Cycle Route 51
- The Proposed Business and Enterprise Park Development (Mill Lane)

ROAD SAFETY

The role of the Stowmarket and District Road Safety Committee is to help make local roads, paths and cycle ways safer for all pedestrians, cyclists and drivers within Stowmarket and the surrounded villages. The secretariat for the group is provided by the Town Council. The Committee deals with a wide range of issues, including speeding, traffic lights, congestion and complaints from the public. During 2013/14, the Committee had been active in lobbying for the delivery and implementation of the Needham Road Safety Improvement Scheme by Suffolk County Council.



SNOW CLEARANCE SCHEME

The Town Council received a high level of public interest to its Volunteer Snow Clearance Scheme during 2013/14. The scheme, which was launched in 2012, works in association with Suffolk County Council to provide a grit bin and snow clearing equipment to groups of neighbours who volunteer to clear the snow and ice on their streets.

Although the winter proved to be too mild and wet for snow to settle in 2013/14, a total of 27 streets have now signed up to the scheme, ensuring their safety in the future. In particular, we have received a very positive response from a large number of locations in the Cedars Park area. We hope to build upon our successes in the coming year with even more volunteers subscribing to the scheme, helping to make Stowmarket safer during the winter months.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Town Council has responsibility for the dog and litter bins in all areas of the town with the exception of the town centre, following changes in charging and responsibility introduced by the District Council in 2012. Close links have been formed with the local community enabling the Town Council to be responsive to the needs of the residents with respect to the deployment of new bins and the location of existing bins.



Finance

Financial capacity is key to everything that the Town Council does in providing it with the resources, to enable it to deliver its operations and services for the benefit of the town. The Town Council has strong and effective budgetary control arrangements in place to ensure that there is proper scrutiny of the application of public funds in accordance with the budget approved annually by the Council. Revenue, capital and reserve positions are constantly monitored to ensure that the Town Council has robust finances that recognise the risks and challenges inherent in public sector financing at the present time.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The Town Council has improved its financial position year on year since 2010/11, when its reserves had subsided to an inadequate level and it was facing significant financial uncertainty. Since then, it has undertaken a wholesale review of its operations and services through a newly constituted Business Improvement Sub-Committee. This has enabled to plan its finances and areas of activity more effectively. Performance across its cost centres has improved and clearer priorities have been set enabling the organization to become more effective and efficient. The outcome has been a stronger financial performance with surpluses generated on the income and expenditure account that have enabled reserve balances to be re-built to an adequate level.

FINANCIAL RISKS

Whilst the Town Council has been able to take steps to manage its finances with respect to the areas under its direct control, there are risks to its financial position that arise from matters outside its control. These relate primarily to the following:

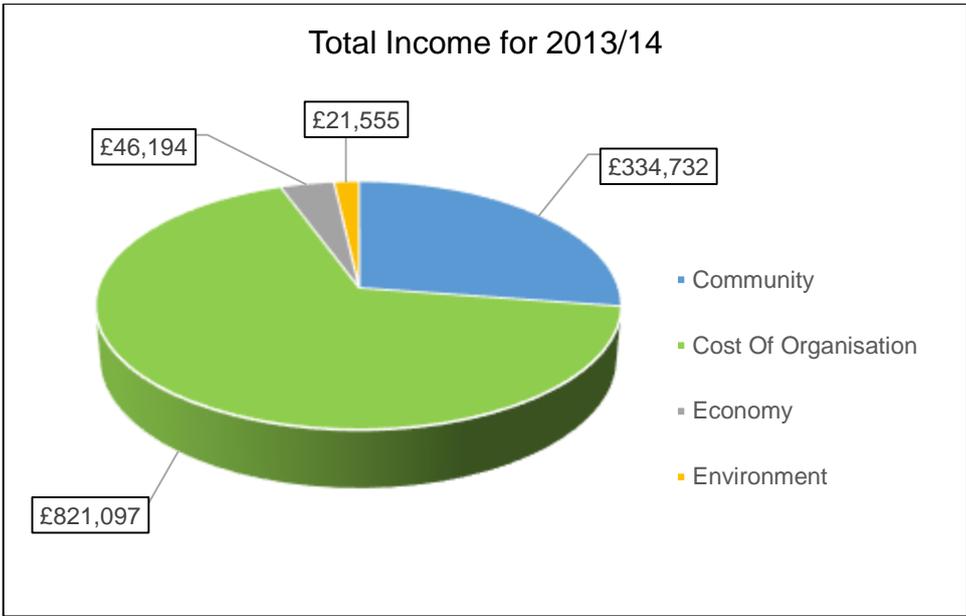
- Phased reductions in Local Council Tax Support Grant year on year
- Reduction in the Council Tax Base under the new Council Tax regime
- Reduction in grant funding from other tiers of local government
- Further potential changes to local government finance
- Additional costs through new pension arrangements

The above provide significant additional challenges to our financial position which will need to be managed through our medium term financial planning over the following years.

TOTAL INCOME FOR 2013/2014

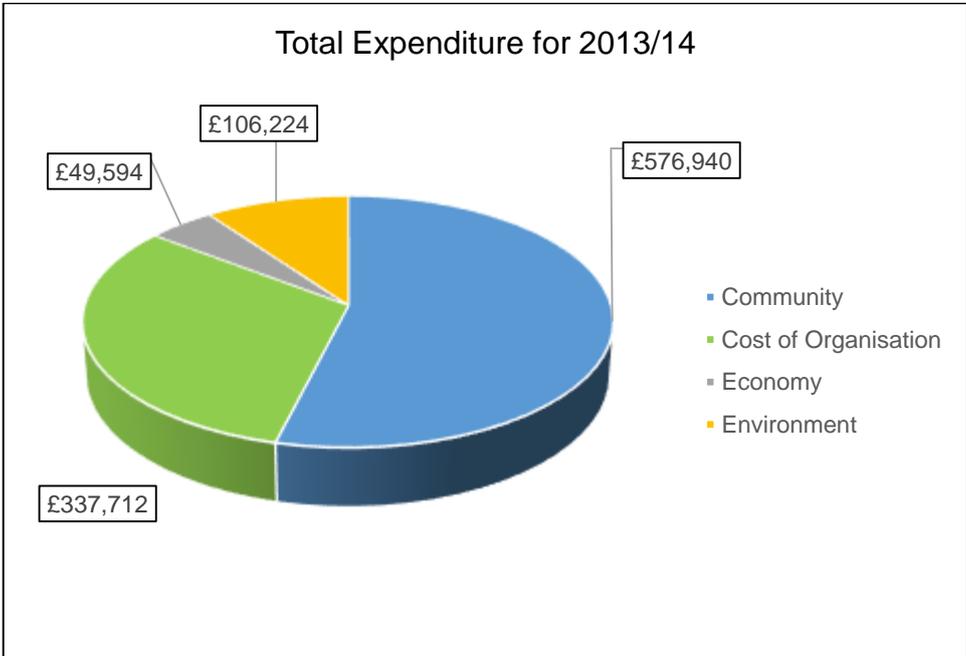
Corporate Area	Actual at 31/03/2014
Community	£334,732
Cost Of Organisation	£821,097
Economy	£46,194
Environment	£21,555
Grand Total	£1,223,578





TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR 2013/2014

Corporate Area	Actual at 31/03/2014
Community	£576,940
Cost of Organisation	£337,712
Economy	£49,594
Environment	£106,224
Grand Total	£1,070,470



RESERVES AS AT 31ST MARCH 2014

Reserves as at 31st March 2014	
General Reserve	£230,398
Capital Fund	£77,944
Capital Allocation from Precept	£18,446
Buildings Reserve	£91,233
Community Safety Reserve	£33,667
Environment Reserve	£21,000
Public Spaces Reserve	£28,333
Resources Reserve	£89,226
Regal Frontage Reserve	£166,170
Total	£756,417



BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH 2014

31/03/2013		£	£	£	31/03/2014
£		£	Cost of Asset	Depreciation	£
Net Value	Fixed Assets				Net Value
1,270,768	Land and buildings	1,833,966		587,821	1,246,145
0	Non Op Land & Buildings	5,541		5,541	0
217,363	Vehicles/Plant/Equip	451,976		222,705	229,271
204,534	Infrastructure Assets	286,514		115,971	170,543
60,942	Community Assets	60,942		0	60,942
1,168	Intangible Assets	6,731		6,147	584
1,754,775		2,645,670		938,185	1,707,485
	Current Assets				
500	Debtors - Market	543			
9,573	Debtors - Community Centre	10,847			
7,624	Debtors - General	9,299			
100	Debtors - Regal	255			
5,646	VAT Refunds	2,025			
3,503	Accrued Income	3,450			
0	Cycle to Work Scheme	282			
47,870	Prepayments	30,382			
0	Doubtful Debts	-1,550			
2,413	Stock - Regal Bar	2,716			
200,000	Barclays Bond	0			
8,903	Barclays Active Saver	227,696			
201,011	Natwest	253,684			
270,694	Barclays Current A/C	204,949			
44	Petty Cash - Office	173			
500	Regal Till Float	500			
25	Reception Float	25			
150	Deposits Paid	150			
4,097	Paypal	296			
0	Nationwide 1 Year Bond	100,000			
3,328	Regal Theatre Control	2,289			
765,981				848,010	
2,520,756	Total Assets				2,555,495
	Current Liabilities				
49,049	Trade Creditors	10,338			
-20,640	Other Creditors	0			
1,899	Regal Gift Voucher Suspense	2,634			
26,364	Accruals	51,494			
10,935	Regal Hirers	9,829			
7,941	Receipts In Advance	7,773			
10,134	Unapplied Grants	9,526			
85,683				91,593	
2,435,073	Total Assets Less Current Liabilities				2,463,902
	Long Term Liabilities				
36,172	Loan - Regal	28,872			
36,172				28,872	
2,398,901	Total Assets Less Long Term Liabilities				2,435,030
	Represented By				
365,734	General Reserve				230,398
1,718,603	Council Investment in Fixed A				1,678,613
30,356	Capital Fund				77,944
13,446	Capital Allocation from Precept				18,446
91,733	Buildings Reserve				91,233
33,667	Community Safety Reserve				33,667
28,333	Environment Reserve				21,000
28,333	Public Spaces Reserve				28,333
88,696	Resources Reserve				89,226
0	Regal Frontage Reserve				166,170
2,398,901					2,435,030

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31st March 2014 and reflects its Income and Expenditure during the year.



CAPITAL RESERVES AS AT 31ST MARCH 2014

Capital Programme 2013/14									
Year Added to Programme	Description	Amount included in Capital Programme	Estimated Cost	Grant funding	Estimated Cost to Council	Funded From Capital Fund	Funded From Other Reserve	Estimated Outturn	Current Status
Up to 2012/13	Chapel Gate		£3,950	£0	£3,950	£3,950	£0	£3,950	Closed
	Play Provision - Recreation Ground		£99	£99	£0	£0	£0	£99	Closed
	Promotional Signs		£2,201	£2,201	£0	£0	£0	£2,201	Open
	Teen Shelter		£8,500	£8,495	£5	£0	£5	£8,500	Open
Up to 2012/13 Total			£14,750	£10,795	£3,955	£3,950	£5	£14,750	
2012/13	Asset Management Software	£4,000	£3,555	£0	£3,555	£3,555	£0	£3,555	Closed
	Chapel Recycled Water	£5,000	£5,000	£0	£5,000	£5,000	£0		
2012/13 Approved February 2012	Fuel Store	£5,000	£5,087	£0	£5,087	£5,000	£87	£5,087	Closed
	Glemsford Road Play Area	£5,000	£35,000	£25,000	£7,334	£5,000	£2,334	£32,334	Open
	Market Place Bollards	£10,000	£8,774	£0	£8,774	£8,774	£0	£8,774	Closed
	Milton House Refurbishment	£10,000	£34,460	£19,574	£14,322	£14,322	£0	£34,460	Closed
2012/13 Total		£39,000	£91,876	£44,574	£44,072	£41,651	£2,421	£84,210	
2013/14	Community Centre Roof Replacement	£30,000	£30,000	£0	£30,000	£30,000	£0		
	Community Centre Solar Panels	£10,000	£10,000	£0	£10,000	£10,000	£0		
2013/14 Approved February 2012	Fleet Vehicle	£5,000	£5,000	£0	£5,000	£5,000	£0		
	IT Server	£6,000	£12,172	£0	£12,172	£6,000	£6,172	£12,172	Closed
	Chilton Fields Play Area 1st Allocation	£10,000	£10,000	£0	£10,000	£10,000	£0		
	Hanging Baskets		£2,530	£0	£2,489	£2,530	£0	£2,530	Open
	Electric Piano		£2,500	£0	£2,073	£0	£2,073	£2,500	Open
2013/14 Total		£61,000	£72,202	£0	£71,734	£63,530	£8,245	£17,202	
2014/15	Community Centre Ceiling & Lighting	£5,000	£5,000	£0	£3,770	£5,000	£0	£3,770	Closed
	Digger	£8,000	£8,000	£0	£8,000	£8,000	£129	£8,129	Closed
	Lindsey Way Play Area	£15,000	£60,000	£30,000	£30,000	£15,000	£15,000	£60,000	Open
	Market Electricity	£8,000	£8,000	£0	£8,000	£8,000	£0	£8,000	Open
	Market Town Clock	£2,000	£20,000	£10,000	£10,000	£2,000	£8,000	£20,000	Open
	Milton House Asbestos Removal	£10,000	£10,000	£0	£10,000	£10,000	£0	£10,000	Open
	Replacement of Christmas Lights	£10,000	£20,000	£0	£20,000	£10,000	£10,800	£22,800	Open
	Tractor	£10,000	£10,000	£0	£10,000	£10,000	£0		
	Recreation Ground Toilets & Kiosk Project		£40,000	£0	£40,000	£0	£40,000	£40,000	Open
	Recreation Ground Skate Park Lighting		£5,000	£0	£5,000	£0	£5,000	£5,750	Open
2014/15 Total		£68,000	£186,000	£40,000	£144,770	£68,000	£78,929	£178,449	
2015/16	CCTV improvements	£10,000	£10,000						
	Community Centre Boiler Replacement	£15,000	£15,000						
	Milton House Adaptations - CAB Project	£10,000	£10,000						
2015/16 Approved February 2014	Milton House Business Suite Fuse Board	£3,000	£3,000						
	Chilton Fields Play Area 2nd Allocation	£30,000	£30,000						
	Regal Frontage Project								
2015/16 Total		£68,000	£68,000						



Performance

Stowmarket Town Council compiles a small, defined set of performance statistics on a bi-annual basis. Performance for 2013-14 is shown below:

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target/Expected level	2013-14	Traffic light
Staff sickness - number of days per person per year	<3	2.24	
Completion of staff development interviews	100%	100%	
Formal complaints per year	<5	5	
Formal grievances per year	0	0	
Completed training courses by staff	n/a	20	
Occupancy of rooms at Milton House	100%	67%	
Review of risk assessments on time	100%	100%	
Reports of accidents and near misses	n/a	9	
Regal admissions	Year on year growth	58,083	
Community Centre hours of usage	Year on year growth	7,005	
Community Centre income/expenditure	Surplus	£26,385	
Market footage	Year on year growth	32,733	

Key



Performance on target



Performance not on target but improving



Performance not on target

Notes:

The complaints indicator includes a number of complaints about a third party with which the Town Council has a partnership arrangement.

The occupancy at Milton House is below target because part of the premises are being refurbished prior to new tenants being allocated the accommodation



Improvement

The Town Council's Business Improvement Sub-Committee coordinates innovation within the Town Council. It maintains under review, the efficiency and effectiveness of existing operations and services so that they provide value for money to local residents. It also evaluates new ideas and initiatives prior to their submission to Council or the Operations and Services Committee. The Town Council prides itself on being a forward-looking organization and commits to achieving continuous improvement so that it is at the leading edge of good practice within the Towns and Parishes sector of local government.

AREAS OF REVIEW 2013/14

Christmas Lights Project

The feasibility of updating the town's Christmas lights was evaluated prior to the development of design and procurement arrangements.

Community Café Project

The Business Improvement Sub-Committee has had oversight of the project and was instrumental in the partnership arrangements agreed with MENTA – the Suffolk Enterprise Agency.

Corporate Planning Process

The Town Council has been agreeing steps to update its Corporate Plan. The process for undertaking this piece of work has been developed in consultation with the Business Improvement Sub-Committee.

Environmentally Friendly Hanging Baskets

The business case for moving to new hanging baskets was evaluated before steps were taken by the Town Council to begin a programme of procurement.

Memorial Clock Project

The provision of a new 'characterful' clock in the Market Place was considered and endorsed by Council. A Project Team was then appointed to take the project forward as part of the commemoration of the First World War.

Regal Theatre Frontage Project

Approval was given in principle, to the idea of making further investment in the Regal Theatre, so that the frontage is more aesthetically appealing and the capacity of the building can be increased.

Stowmarket Town Awards

The introduction of Town Awards by the Town Council was developed to celebrate the achievements of local people, businesses and community groups.



Risk Management

Effective risk management measures make sound business sense for the Town Council. They ensure the appropriate use of resources; they reduce fraud and waste through the implementation of robust internal control measures; and they provide resilience in the face of new and changing circumstances. They are also consistent with safe and transparent stewardship of public funds on behalf of the people of Stowmarket.

AREAS OF REVIEW 2013/14

The Town Council's Risk Management Committee holds regular meetings during the course of the year where risk management arrangements and internal control procedures are maintained under review.

Assets

The depreciation of assets was reviewed and the loan of a grand piano to the Stowmarket Concert Society was approved.

Banking and Insurance

Business banking and insurance were reviewed and updated for the ensuing year.

Budget Risks

External risks relating to the budget were scrutinised ahead of the budget round and recommendations submitted to the full Council.

Capital Project Updates

Contractor issues, contract terms and legal advice received in respect of the Glemsford Road Play Area Project were reported through the Risk Management Committee.

Code of Conduct

The Suffolk Code of Conduct was reviewed and approved for adoption in line with the new model issued nationally for all tiers of local government.

Customer Comments

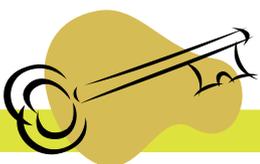
A new customer comments procedure was introduced to provide a robust and transparent process in dealing with positive and negative customer comments.

External Auditor's Report

The External Auditor that the Annual Return was in accordance with proper practices and no matters had come to the Auditor's attention that had given cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

Internal Auditor's Reports

The interim and final reports of the Internal Auditor were considered and actions agreed in response to the issues raised. The Internal Auditor was re-appointed and an Internal Audit Work Programme approved for future years. There were no material areas of concern.



Policy and Strategy Development

The following policies and strategies were updated:

- Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Risk Management Strategy

Standing Orders

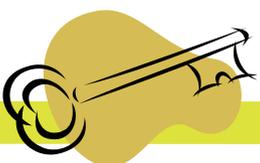
The new model Standing Orders issued by the National Association were received and adopted, subject to some minor 'local' modifications in terms of content and format.

Town Trading

The Town Council's policies and applications procedure for town trading were developed and endorsed by the full Council.

Treasury Management

The Town Council reviewed its short term investments and the credit ratings of financial institutions offering investment products in order to balance risk and reward, and safeguard public funding.



Democracy

The Town Council comprises 15 Councillors who serve for a term of 4 years. The next Town Council elections are due to be held in May 2015. The current membership of the Town Council is as follows:

NORTH WARD

Councillor N G K Gowrley	70 Combs Lane, Stowmarket, IP14 2DD	01449 774297
Councillor G Green	35 Shakespeare Road, Stowmarket, IP14 1TU	07545 423824
Councillor D MacPherson	41 Finborough Road, Stowmarket, IP14 1PS	01449 676400
Councillor N J Rozier	76 Union Street, Stowmarket, IP14 1HP	01449 677837
Councillor B J Salmon	27 Windermere Road, Stowmarket, IP14 1LD	01449 612012

CENTRAL WARD

Councillor Mrs S L Britton	41 Finborough Road, Stowmarket, IP14 1PS	01449 676400
Councillor Mrs L M Mayes	3 Pineview Close, Stowmarket, IP14 1BZ	01449 613449
Councillor Mrs P J E Robinson	Stricklands Road, Stowmarket, IP14 1AP	01449 614811
Councillor Mrs A E J Whybrow	26 Bury Street, Stowmarket, IP14 1HH	01449 678785

SOUTH WARD

Councillor G M Brewster	27 Combs Lane, Stowmarket, IP14 2DB	01449 615527
Councillor G P Harris	92 Poplar Hill, Stowmarket, IP14 2AX	01449 675609
Councillor K E Scarff	92 Lindsey Way, Stowmarket, IP14 2PD	01449 770966
Councillor Mrs V I Waspe	Boyton Hall, Combs Lane, Stowmarket IP14 3BL	01449 612607
Councillor D S Whybrow	26 Bury Street, Stowmarket, IP14 1HH	01449 678785



Committees, Sub Committees & Panels

The Town Council appoints various Committees, Sub Committees and Panels to assist it undertake its work. The Membership of the decision-making bodies is shown below:

PLANNING, CONSULTATION & STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Chair: Councillor Mrs L M Mayes

Deputy Chair: Councillor D S Whybrow

Councillor G M Brewster

Councillor G Green

Councillor D J MacPherson

Councillor Mrs L M Mayes

Councillor N J Rozier

Councillor B J Salmon

Councillor Mrs V I Waspe

Councillor F Whittle (until March 2014)

OPERATIONS & SERVICES COMMITTEE

Chair: Councillor Mrs A E J Whybrow

Deputy Chair: Councillor Mrs P J E Robinson

Councillor Mrs S L Britton

Councillor G Green

Councillor G P Harris

Councillor B Humphreys

Councillor D J MacPherson

Councillor K E Scarff

Councillor D S Whybrow

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Chair: Councillor Mrs A E J Whybrow

Deputy Chair: Councillor K E Scarff

Councillor B Humphreys

Councillor Mrs L M Mayes

Councillor B J Salmon

Councillor F Whittle (until March 2014)

RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chair: Councillor G M Brewster

Councillor G Green

Councillor G P Harris

Councillor D J MacPherson

Councillor Mrs P J E Robinson

Councillor N J Rozier

SPECIAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Chair: Councillor B J Salmon

Deputy Chair: Councillor Mrs L M Mayes

Councillor G M Brewster

Councillor G P Harris

Councillor B Humphreys

Councillor D S Whybrow



BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT SUB COMMITTEE

Chair: Councillor Mrs L M Mayes

Deputy Chair: Councillor B J Salmon

Councillor G M Brewster

Councillor N J Rozier

Councillor Mrs A E J Whybrow

Councillor D S Whybrow

CAPITAL PROGRAMME WORKING GROUP

Chair: Councillor K E Scarff

Councillor D J MacPherson

Councillor Mrs P J E Robinson

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW WORKING GROUP

Chair: Councillor G M Brewster

Councillor N J Rozier

Councillor B J Salmon

Councillor K E Scarff

Councillor D S Whybrow

GRANTS PANEL

Councillor N J Rozier

Councillor K E Scarff

Councillor Mrs A E J Whybrow



Representatives on Outside Bodies

The Town Council appoints various Committees, Sub Committees and Panels to assist it undertake its work. The Membership of the decision-making bodies is shown below:

1331 (Stowmarket) Squadron Air Training Corp	Councillors G Green and Mrs A E J Whybrow
Cedars Park Resident's Association	Councillors G Green & F Whittle
The John Peel Centre for the Creative Arts	Councillors B Humphreys
Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau	Councillors G P Harris and Mrs V I Waspe
The Museum of East Anglian Life	Councillor Mrs A E J Whybrow
The Museum of East Anglian Life Friends	Councillor Mrs P J E Robinson and Mrs V I Waspe
Optua Advice and Advocacy	Councillor Mrs A E J Whybrow
The Pickerel Project	Councillors B J Salmon and K E Scarff
Redwood Lodge Committee	Councillor Mrs V I Waspe
Stowmarket Allotment Association	Councillors G M Brewster and F Whittle
Stowmarket & District Chamber of Commerce	Councillor Mrs L M Mayes
Stowmarket & District Road Safety Committee	Councillors G Green and K E Scarff
Stowmarket Carnival Committee	Councillor Mrs P J E Robinson
Stowmarket Town Forum CIC	Councillors D J MacPherson and N J Rozier
Stowmarket Town Twinning Association	Councillors Mrs P J E Robinson and Mrs V I Waspe
Suffolk association of Local Councils	Councillor Mrs L M Mayes
Thorntree Lunch Club Management Committee	Councillor Mrs P J E Robinson
Victorian Quarter Resident's Association	Councillors B Humphreys and N J Rozier
Wattisham Flying Station	Councillor D S Whybrow



Attendances at Town Council Meetings

Councillor	Full Council	Planning, Consultation and Strategy Committee	Operations and Services Committee	Personnel Committee	Risk Management Committee
G M Brewster	100%	100%	substitute - 3 occasions		100%
Mrs S L Britton	25%	substitute - 1 occasion	56%		
G Green	50%	52%	56%		0%
G P Harris	83%	substitute - 3 occasions	100%		100%
B Humphreys	58%	substitute - 1 occasion	44%	50%	
D J MacPherson	50%	67%	89%		33%
Mrs L M Mayes	100%	81%	substitute - 3 occasions	100%	substitute - 1 occasion
Mrs P J E Robinson	100%	substitute - 5 occasions	89%		100%
N Rozier	100%	95%	substitute - 2 occasions	50%	67%
B Salmon	83%	86%	substitute - 3 occasions	100%	
K E Scarff	83%	substitute - 8 occasions	78%		substitute - 1 occasion
Mrs V I Waspe	83%	76%			
F Whittle	22%	18%		0%	
Mrs A E Whybrow	83%	substitute - 5 occasions	78%	100%	
D S Whybrow	75%	67%	56%		
Total number of meetings	12	21	9	2	3



Mayoral Charities

It is the convention that the Mayor nominates charities each year which may support national and/or local good causes. A total of £3000.00 was raised for the Mayor's Charities during 2013/2014. The money was raised through a variety of ways including the Christmas Carol Service, a Quiz Night, Combs Christmas Light Switch-on, table-top sales and a Civic Dinner. The Mayor's charities this year were the Stowmarket Trefoil Guild, the 3R's Project and 1331 (Stowmarket) Squadron Air Training Corps.



The Stowmarket Trefoil Guild will be using their donation from the Mayor towards the building of a new guide hut. The current venue is in some need of repair and a new meeting place for all the members of the local guiding association is now urgently needed.



The 1331 (Stowmarket) Squadron Air Training Corps have expressed a wish to use their donation from the Mayor towards the cost of purchasing some new archery equipment. This will include bows, arrows, target faces and safety nets to allow them to shoot indoors at the Cadet Centre.

3R's

The 3R's Project at St Peter and St Mary's Church will use their donation towards their ongoing hard work in maintaining our wonderful parish church and its associated church halls which will ultimately benefit many local groups and organisations.

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs Vera Waspe has been delighted to support such important work through her fund raising activities and wishes to thank everyone for their wonderful support at her fundraising events.



Main Areas of Responsibility

The Town Council is the tier of local government that is closest to the community. It works with the County Council that deals with the delivery of strategic countywide issues such as education, social care and transport and also the District Council that coordinates the provision of more localised services such as housing, leisure, planning and refuse. The main Town Council services are as follows:

- Allotments
- Armed Forces Day
- Burials and Cemeteries
- Christmas Lights
- Churchyard Maintenance
- Community Centre at Hillside
- Community Engagement and Events
- Crime Prevention and Policing Priority Setting
- CCTV System Monitoring
- Dog, Litter and Grit Bins
- Entertainment and Events
- Grant Funding and Community Support Funding
- Grounds Maintenance
- Hanging Baskets and Planters
- Litter Picking
- Lobbying on behalf of Stowmarket
- Market
- Market Place
- Mayoralty and Civic Events
- Place Shaping
- Planning Consultation
- Play Areas (x 6)
- Premises Maintenance
- Public Conveniences
- Recreation Ground and Skate Park
- Regal Theatre Management
- Remembrance
- Snow Clearance Scheme
- Town Centre Support
- War Memorial Gates



Contact Us

Name	Title	Email	Tel
David Blackburn	Town Clerk	davidb@stowmarket.org	01449 776393
Michelle Marshall	Deputy Town Clerk	michellelm@stowmarket.org	01449 776399
Glenn Markwell	Public Services Manager	glennm@stowmarket.org	01449 776398
David Marsh	Theatre & Events Manager	davidm@stowmarket.org	01449 612825
Heather Tooke	Community Centre Manager	heathert@stowmarket.org	01449 613084
Roger Benstead	Grounds Maintenance Coordinator	rogerb@stowmarket.org	01449 357497
Sally Goonan	Accounts & Finance Manager	sallyg@stowmarket.org	01449 776397
Lucy Keeble	Accounts & Finance Officer	lucyk@stowmarket.org	01449 776396
Sue Leedham	Civic Officer	suel@stowmarket.org	01449 612060
Stephanie Edmans	Community Liaison Officer	stephaniee@stowmarket.org	01449 776390
Sarah Parramint	Business Support Officer	sarahp@stowmarket.org	01449 776394
Chris Voden	Assistant Regal Manager	chris@regalstowmarket.co.uk	01449 612825
Sarah Page	Regal Office Manager	sarah@regalstowmarket.co.uk	01449 621825
Sian Copeman	Relief Duty Manager	sianc@regalstowmarket.co.uk	01449 621825
Chrissie Day	Market Officer	christined@stowmarket.org	07925 592775

(Note: In addition, the Town Council employs a number of other part-time staff who perform various duties principally at the Regal Theatre, Community Centre, Milton House and within the Maintenance Team).





The Town Council Offices are open:

Monday to Thursday	9.00am to 5.00pm
Friday	9.00am to 4.30pm

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