

INTRODUCTION

Since the election in May 2015, the new council has been very busy, taking forward a number of initiatives that were started under the previous council. The town council is aware of the wider context in which it is working, with cut-backs in Herefordshire Council services, and is keeping under constant review the ways in which these impact on our community. This report both highlights some of the key initiatives that the council is involved in and also charts the course of the past year, month by month.

KEY INITIATIVES

ASSET TRUST

Negotiations continue to develop the organisation that will manage the Old Police Station, the Museum Building, the Market Hall and Place de Marines, the Coach House, the Public Toilets, and three Car Parks that Herefordshire Council are intending to hand over to Kington Town Council. KTC has set up a Kington Community Asset Company and is in the process of turning it into a charitable company. Once these buildings have been transferred to KTC they will be let on a long leasehold subject to the business plan to the charity. This is likely to take at least another year. Meanwhile the proposal is that Recreation Ground Trust is going to take over the management of two additional green spaces of Crooked Well and Kington Park play areas.



KINGTON LIBRARY

In March 2015, the Town Council in partnership with Herefordshire Council held a workshop with a wide range of interested organisations to discuss the proposed pilot for the Library, developing its work with a focus on well-being. The pilot provides significant funding from public health as well as the main funding from Herefordshire Council and this funding is secured until the end of March 2017.



During the course of the last year, the Town Council has been actively engaged with Herefordshire Council and with the staff in the Centre itself. A number of Kington Town councillors are involved in the Community Advisory Forum, which is chaired by a town councillor. This forum has been able to discuss the strategic agenda for the library and ensure community engagement in the early stages of the pilot. It has recommended that a User Group is set up, to ensure input from users into its future development. A wide range of activities are now taking place in the room on the first floor and statistics from Herefordshire show a continuing high level of library use. The Town Council will continue to play an active role to ensure that the library facilities and customer services are retained in the town.

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Council has also been involved in preparing a comprehensive Neighbourhood Plan for the development of Kington, More about this initiative below.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Kington Town Council continues to provide the Christmas lights, which, it is hoped, enhance the town over the Christmas period and help encourage shopping in the town. But over £5,000 of your precept is paying for these lights. The council is prepared to continue funding them but would welcome ideas for spreading the burden of this cost from the precept.



COMMEMORATING THE GREAT WAR

Kington Remembers, the group of local organisations that received Heritage Lottery Funding for activities to commemorate World War I, has continued to develop “Kington Conversations”, involving guest speakers on topics about the war in all of its aspects. It has also continued to develop its website (www.kingtonremembers.org) and is developing a data base of information about local people who served in some way during the conflict. It is hoped to make this data base available through the museum.

LOOKING AFTER OUR HEALTH

A Defibrillator has been attached to the Market Hall available for anybody to use. Training will be taking place soon. The town council has also noted the concerns of local people about both the Doctor’s surgery and the Ambulance Service. A meeting was held in January 2016 with representatives of the company that has taken over the back office services at the surgery, and they have pledged to ensure a more responsive service for the community.

DEVELOPING MARKETS

The Town Council has taken over the responsibility for the management of the Market Hall and the running of the Markets under a Market Operators License. This has been successful and the markets have gone from strength to strength. The day to day management of the markets this year has been devolved through a Service Level Agreement to Kington Community Market Group which will have its own website in early May. We are grateful to David Pickersgill and Bernard Ray who managed the markets for us in 2015.

LOOKING AFTER OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

The council receives regular updates from Balfour Beatty on road repairs and schedule of works. It also works closely with the locality steward informing her of works required.

The council contributed to new attractive sign at the entrance to the Hatton Gardens Industrial Estate. Amongst other initiatives the roundabout at Sunset has recently been enlivened with painted guitars .



The Severn Waste Services opened the Kington Recycling Centre in April. This great asset is open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Kington in Bloom assisted by the council produced colourful hanging baskets in the Place des Marines again last year and has added a number of planters throughout the town. Anybody wishing to help with this please contact the council office. The competition will be organised again this year.

SUPPORTING LOCAL GROUPS

We continue to support the excellent work of Kington Tourist Group by an annual grant of £2,500 to cover the rent of the tourist information centre. We have also supported the Kington Walking Festival and a range of other local groups who do so much for the town.

Kington Town Council Year:

May 2015

A new council was elected. Four of the previous councillors decided not to stand again. The Council would like to thank them for their involvement and the great contribution they made to it. Five new councillors joined the Council, bringing their knowledge and expertise to the work. Cllr Celia Kibblewhite was elected Mayor, with Cllr Bob Widdowson as Deputy Mayor. Appointments were made to the committees and outside bodies.

June 2015

- Issue was raised over charges being added to the Co-op car park. The Council played a significant role in persuading the Co-op to change its initial plans to three hours free parking during the day and free overnight parking from 4pm to 10am.
- The council began developing a four year programme of key objectives for the future



July 2015

Councillors continued to bring up items of concern throughout the town such as street cleaning, which had deteriorated, and rubbish bins which had not been emptied; walls that had not been repaired; and hedges that had not been cut. This information was passed to the appropriate bodies and the work carried out, though not as quickly as the council would have liked. This attention to the town environment continues throughout the year.

August 2015

- The Lengthsman was appointed.
- Herefordshire Council held a consultation event to discuss its income and saving plan. Concern was expressed at the possibility of some of its customer services venues being closed and changing to online provision only. The Council did not consider that adequate information was given in the paper provided on this issue for it to make a considered response and communicated this to Herefordshire Council.
- Continued concern was expressed over the Section 106 monies accrued from new housing developments in the town over the last ten years and what had happened to these funds. Information was eventually provided in April 2016.

September 2015

- The Diocesan paper on the refugee crisis was discussed.
- The Council agreed to contribute to the Hatton Gardens Industrial Estate sign.
- A councillor contributed to the Tree Warden's network throughout the county.
- The Council won a place in the finals of a national competition set up by Blachere for Christmas Lights. Kington came third and was awarded £1,000 for new Christmas lights – those chosen wrap around the lampposts at the eastern entrances to the town

October 2015

- The Council had a presentation from Balfour Beatty, who are Herefordshire Council's contractors for road repairs, who explained their methodology.
- A further presentation was given by the Community First Responders who explained that Kington had two first responders and how their work complemented the Ambulance Service. Concern was expressed at the response times of the ambulance service in attending call outs to Kington.
- The Kington Centre/Library had its funding confirmed until March 2017.

November 2015



- Mayor Cllr Celia Kibblewhite resigned due to ill health. Celia had presided over a productive period ensuring that the Council maintained its Quality Status and the Council thanked her for her outstanding contribution. Deputy Mayor Cllr Elizabeth Banks was elected as Mayor.



November 2015 (Cont.)

- The Lord-Lieutenant, the Countess of Darnley presented British Empire Medals to two Kington Residents at St Mary's Church.
- Kington Remembers held one of its "Kington Conversations" on the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, at the end of which a number of Lady Hawkins' School students were presented with prizes in connection to a competition arranged by Kington Remembers.
- Kington retained its Quality Town Council Status and would apply for Gold Status in 2016.
- Councillors tidied the War Memorial for the Remembrance Day Celebration.
- Time was spent preparing the budget for 2016, particularly as the financial support for the Market Towns from Herefordshire Council is likely to be cut.



December 2015

- Cllr Martin Fitton was elected Deputy Mayor.
- The Council agreed to find seed funding for the Kington Community Asset Trust.
- A training session for councillors was agreed.
- Kington Museum received provisional Museum Association Accreditation and a new curator had been appointed.
- A new service agreement for the management of markets was agreed.
- Grants were awarded to local organisations as recommended by the grants panel.

January 2016

The Council had a presentation from the Chief Executive and the Chief Medical Officer of the Integrated Health Management group, which has taken over the management of Kington Medical Centre. A new practice manager will take up his position in March. The Council agreed its budget for 2016.

February

- Cllr Richie Cotterell resigned but will still assist the council by acting as Tree Warden.
- The council welcomed the General Manager and Partnership Manager of Halo Leisure who have taken over the Leisure Centre at Lady Hawkins' School and explained their intention of developing the facilities.
- The Council set up a Task and Finish Group to monitor the work of the Lengthsman.
- Concern was expressed at the removal of the evening bus service from Hereford and a questionnaire devised by the council had received some responses.

March 2016

- Cllr Dick East resigned due to ill health and his knowledge of the condition of the town will be missed.
- The Defibrillator was installed on the Market Hall.
- Peter Newman, the Open Spaces Footpath officer has retired and his work will be much missed.
- The council agreed arrangements with the Kington Community Market Group.

April 2016

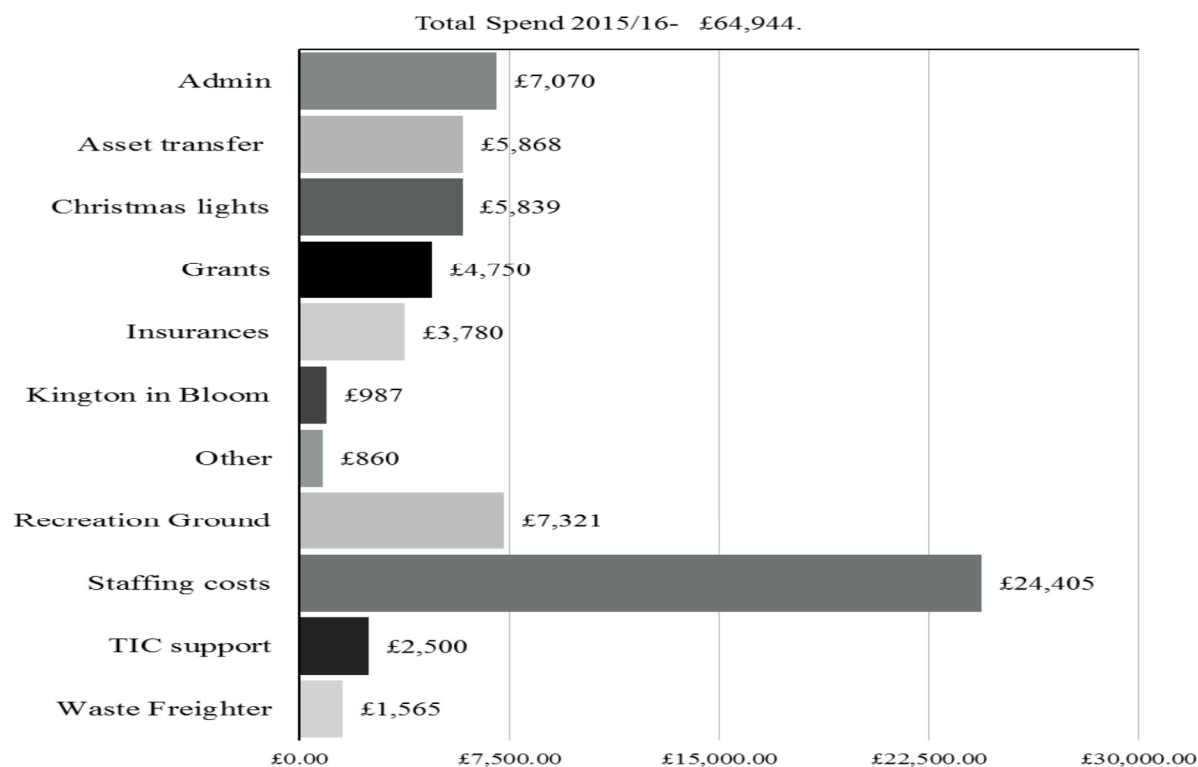
- Zandra Pitt, the new Library/Kington Centre Manager came and talked about the pilot project being run through the library and issues related to its future sustainability.
- The Severn Waste Recycling facility opened.
- The Council considered the way forward for the Kington Chronicle and Photocopying service.
- The Council discussed the escalating costs of the Christmas Lights.
- Kington lit a Beacon on Bradnor Hill to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday and the council would like to thank Kington Golf Club who made this possible.



I would like to thank all councillors, the clerk and the clerk's assistant for their contribution to this year for without their help and involvement the council would not have been so successful

What your money is spent on

From April 2015 to March 2016 (our financial year) Kington Town Council spent just under £65,000. This was well below the budgeted expenditure of £86,000 for several reasons. Firstly town councils like Kington show in their accounts only cash expended hence invoices not paid until the new financial year are not included. We are seeking to change this for future years so that the accounts give a better representation of actual expenditure in the year. For example expenditure on the churchyard and the Lengthsman scheme was not paid until April. Secondly, we had significant underspend on the



Recreation Ground but we have set aside the underspend in our reserves to help pay for future investment in the play facilities. Finally, through careful budgeting we have achieved savings across a number of headings e.g staffing costs and overheads.

Town Council finances in the future

Every town council meeting provides an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions of the council. Recently we were asked why the Precept (the local amount added to your Council Tax bill) had been increased by over 16%. Although big percentage rise, in cash terms this amounts to an extra 24p per week. Nevertheless, there is a strong commitment within the council to hold the Precept down as far as possible because we are aware that people who previously could obtain Council, Tax Benefit now have to pay a proportion of their Council Tax. Why has this increase been necessary?

For several years the town council budget has benefited from central government grant, known as the Council Tax Support Grant, which is paid to Herefordshire Council and then distributed to town and parish councils across the county. This has been cut by almost £5,500 or 47% and next year will be cut by a similar amount. By 2019 there will be no grant at all. In past years this has provided 16% of our income.

In addition we have increased the budget for the Recreation Ground because of the need to build a fund to provide for a major upgrade and possible replacement of the play facilities there. We have also had to set aside more money to support the Christmas lights which this year are estimated to cost over £6000. To soften the impact we are drawing over £10,000 from reserves but will not be able to keep doing this in future years which may mean either cuts to expenditure or further increases to the precept. We have set up a group within the council to look at finances up to 2020 and consider ways in which extra income could be found by way of grants or sponsorship to support activities such as Kington in Bloom, Christmas lights and the recreation ground. All ideas welcome!

Kington's Neighbourhood Plan is Taking Shape.

The Neighbourhood Plan, which is now in preparation, provides the local detail required to implement Hereford Council's Core Planning Strategy (2011-2031) and will have legal force allowing Kington residents to have a key role in determining how Kington thrives and develops.

After 12 months of data gathering, research and advice from consultants we are now drafting the Plan. In putting together policies we have also benefitted from community advice through extensive consultation, community surveys, meetings and events.

Central to the Plan are the policies on housing development within Kington, to meet our obligation to find sites for 200 new dwellings required to meet Herefordshire Council's land supply targets. As the Plan period started in 2011, part of this target figure is already covered by 45 planning permissions and completions. Herefordshire Council has delegated the task of finding sites for the remaining 155 dwellings to the Neighbourhood Plan Group given the need of finding sites where the provision of significant landscape and townscape mitigation measures can best be achieved.

Based on our extensive consultation and data gathering we have now identified sites sufficient for the housing development required. The proposed sites are shown on the map below. In choosing these sites we have considered over 25 possible locations. All sites that have been considered are detailed in a full report which can be viewed on our website. (Kingtonareaplan.org.uk) In order to avoid confusion we have retained the original site numbering.

The majority are small sites, but it is proposed to focus the bulk of development on two sites west of the Old Eardisley Road estate (K12 and 13) where we are proposing between 75 and 95 dwellings. The decision was taken based on our landscape assessment which showed that development there would do least damage to the landscape.

The map also shows Local Green Space which we consider should be fully protected from development and which gives emphasis to the existing open space on both banks of the River Arrow. A proposed Settlement Boundary is also shown on the map and any development beyond that boundary will be resisted. The draft proposals described above were agreed by Kington Town Council in December 2015 as the basis for developing policies.

The choice of K12 and K13 for the large bulk of development will require very detailed site and building design to mitigate impact on our high quality landscape. To show how these sites could be developed whilst ensuring the least damaging impact, a Master Plan is now being prepared by our Consultants. Because of current infrastructure constraints, especially sewerage limitations, phased development will be required and it is intended that the Master Plan will be a series of modules to show how this can be achieved.

We expect that this further work and the preparation of draft policies will be completed by July. In addition to the above these will include policies for Huntington and Kington Rural and Lower Harpton. At that time there will be further extensive consultation prior to the Independent Examination of the Plan by a Planning Inspector and the subsequent Community Referendum. The Plan will only become operative if a majority of those voting support it.

In preparing the Plan we have had considerable help from our consultants. Sam Rosilli (Site Assessment) Carly Tinkler (Landscape) Mark Owen (Design) Claire Rawlings (Planning Advice) Lewis Goldwater (Local Green Space) the Herefordshire Council Neighbourhood Planning Team and especially the people of Kington. Our thanks to all.

Local Groups Supported 2015-2016

St Mary's PCC
Herefordshire Nature Trust –(Wild Play)
Kington Chamber of Trade
Kington Operatic Society
Kington Festival
Kington Walking Festival
Kington Agriculture Show
Kington Museum
Kington Tourist Group
Kington Tennis Club

£200
£500
£500
£500
£500
£500
£500
£426
£2500
£500

Kington Town Council Information

The Old Police Station
Market Hall Street Kington HR5 3DP
Phone: 01544 239098
Email: clerk@kingtontowncouncil.gov.uk
Website: www.kingtontowncouncil.gov.uk
Office opening hours:
Monday 11am 1pm
Tuesday 3pm– 5pm
Friday 1pm -3pm

Current Councillors

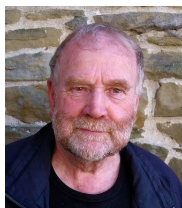
Mayor

Mrs Elizabeth Banks



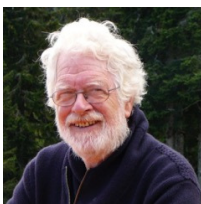
Deputy Mayor

Martin Fitton



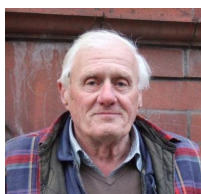
Deputy Mayor

Bob Widdowson



Councillor

Tom Bounds



Councillor

Fred Hawkins



Councillor

Rob MacCurrach



Councillor

Chris Forrester



Councillor

Esther Rolls



Councillor

Ian Wood-Johnson
(Woody)



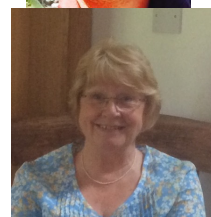
Councillor

Will Laurie



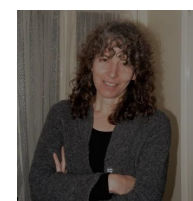
Councillor

Pat Prior



Councillor

Sally Williams



Staff

The Council is supported by its Clerk Gwilym Rippon, who works three days a week and the Assistant to the Clerk, Mary Tolhurst who works one day per week.

The Lengthsman is Gareth Evans and the Recreation Groundsman is Ken Perks.