

Martock Parish Council Report
Martock Annual Parish Meeting May 2024

2023-2024 has continued to be a difficult time but I believe we are on the right track in the efforts to create a vibrant council that the Parish deserves. When I joined council in 2021 the whole country was coming out of the pandemic and since then we have lurched from crisis to crisis much of it coming from national and local Government. The latter has tried to offload all its problems to parishes.

When I became Chair in Feb 2022 I was determined to work on a “fix and repair” process to rebuild the infra structure to ensure all in the Village are supported and we have a team delivering services that we can all be proud of. We need to continue in the process and however frustrating we need to fix before we move forward.

Staff

As I mentioned last year, one of the characteristics of a well-run organisation is high staff morale. This has been lacking for the last few years and it is still my aim to get the Council back on track. There is a renewed enthusiasm from staff old and new and despite some changes in personnel the future looks brighter. One sad note was the retirement of Linda Batten, I am sure you will all wish to join me in thanking Linda for her 30 plus years of service.

We have seen a change since the appointment of Natalie Fortt as CEO in February. This has resulted in the Council being full staffed for the first time since I joined Council in 2021

There has been a number of unfounded comments being made by the media around the number of staff in Martock but the Full Time Equivalents is only 5.5 and the number of hours is the same. We have just made a few role changes and worked around the needs of the Council.

Changes to Working Practices

Over the last year there have been a number of improvements made which will lead to greater efficiency and smoother operations. These include:

- New IT system including packages through Realtas and a cloud-based system.

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- Booking and invoicing system in place for hires and review of charges to help support the provision of these community facilities.
- Taken on running the Cemetery administration.
- The Café project at the pavilion is completed and hopefully the café will open in the next few weeks.
- We secured a grant to provide activities and meals during the holidays to benefit children from vulnerable families. I am pleased to report that we have been successful in a bid for the summer 2024. Watch this space.

Councillors

The Councillors have put in a lot of time this year and people forget we are all volunteers. Difficult decisions had to be made especially when the budget was produced and I am grateful for everyone’s efforts. We were able to fill a number of co-options to Council but we still have a number of vacancies should people be interested.

Volunteers

The Village blessed with huge number of willing volunteers but it would be wrong of me not to mention Gordon Swindells and the Flood Wardens. Their efforts over the winter were a great help to all.

Planning

Council is well supported by the Planning Committee who are constantly working to ensure that all applications are processed and look at the wider interests of the Parish. I must mention the work of Paul Helyer both as Chair of the committee and the wider work he does for the Village and Council.

Communication

We believe that communication is improving but are equally aware that we still need to improve. Council will be setting up a working group in the coming months to review and expand our communications at all levels. If you are interested in joining the group please let the office know.

Community Team

We are extremely fortunate to have our community team. The team are a unique delivery part of Martock Parish Council and we plan to continue to support and improve the offer to the most vulnerable in our community over the coming years. This programme has been supported by MPC for over 10 years and should be celebrated. The issues at County mean that the

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Community Team is more important than ever and a fantastic service to the Village.

Youth Services

We have supported the CYP Charity who support the youth club. It is important that we as a Council continue to support a youth service although it is also the role of Council to ensure value for money and we will be reviewing this grant to ensure we spend money wisely to support the youth. With this in mind we are just about to enter a procurement process for the service over the next few years.

Fireworks & Other Events

Council continued the annual fireworks which was a tremendous success with around 4000 people attending and enjoying this event at the recreation ground. There were a few issues around parking but a full review has been completed and will be reported in due course. Council also oversaw the following events Merry Martock, King Charles’ Coronation, Summer Fete and the Remembrance Sunday Parade. As always, we are greatly appreciative of the hard work of the many volunteers without whom we wouldn’t be able to run these events.

Clubs & Societies

Our Clubs and Societies appear in doing well and long may this continue. A strength of the village is the number of community groups available to parishioners. In particular congratulations to Martock Rovers FC who managed to win two cups in a successful season

Finally, we share frustrations about the increase on precept but our increase was small in comparison with other local villages where the percentage increase was way into double figures. Any increase below the rate of inflation means a real term loss.

I would like to place on record my thanks to all the staff and councillors past and present who have worked hard this year for the betterment of the village. Whilst we may not agree all the time there is no doubt that all have the interests of the village at heart.

John Hole

Chair Martock Parish Council, May 2024