

# **Leominster Town Council 2023-2024**

## **Annual Report**



Leominster Town Council consists of 16 volunteer councillors representing the North, South, East and West of the town, with 4 councillors per ward.

Together they guide our officer team, headed up by our Town Clerk, Julie Debbage PSLCC CiLCA, to use the council precept to benefit the town. Councillors sit on a number of committees. All town council meetings are on Monday evenings, with the exception of Communications & Events Committee on Tuesday evenings, at our 11 Corn Square offices and they are all open to the public. See the end of this paper for the many ways you can keep in touch with Leominster Town Council.

Below is a summary of Leominster Town Council's principal achievements in this last year.

### **Full Council**

- Appointed councillors to sit on 16 outside bodies.
- Following the asset transfer of the Old Priory, currently home to Leominster Foodbank, ECHO, YHA and Leominster Meeting Centre, we applied to the Community Ownership Fund for £785,832 of capital funding and £50,000 of revenue funding and are pleased to announce that the application was successful.
- Participated in the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Steering Group and a number of its sub-groups, which delivered a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, town centre Wifi, a heritage web app, a building grants scheme and support for the Cultural Consortium - *Leominster Roars*.
- Delivered a number of smaller projects as part of the HSHAZ Scheme to benefit the town. These included;
  - 'Leominster People' in partnership with Leominster Museum
  - Heritage Building Owner's Project – to support owners of historic buildings in Leominster
  - A town centre Heritage Shop Trail
  - An Independent Programme Review looking at stakeholder engagement

- Facilitated a smaller Shop Front Enhancement Grant Scheme of up to £3000 per business property, that delivered improvements to the following sites:
  - Martins Models, 10 West Street
  - Hopelands Centre, 7 School Lane
  - 17/17a Corn Square
  - Lew's Sweet Delights, 47 West Street
  - Four Seasons Hardware, 25 Drapers Lane
  - Clubsport, 9 South Street
  - Robin ELT Shoes, 16 Corn Square
  - Sassy's, 20 Drapers Lane
  - Jumping Ships, 21 High Street
  - Brights Butchers, High Street
- Contributed funding to provide CCTV in Leominster and worked with Herefordshire Council to develop the proposals for the Safer Streets 5 funding, which will see additional street lighting and CCTV provision in our open spaces.
- Continued to facilitate virtual weekly Team Leominster operational meetings and monthly tactical meetings, to keep key organisations in touch with each other and facilitate partnership working to address issues and opportunities in the town.
- Delivered monthly Talk Community surgeries at the Barons Cross Community Room with Team Leominster partners.
- Continued to administer two local charities.
- Provided winter Warm Space sessions at the Town Council offices for the second year.
- Following consultation in September 2023, a precept request of £693,117 was submitted to Herefordshire Council. An increase of 4.7% for 2024-25, significantly lower than inflation rates. This equates to an extra £8.57 per year or 16.5 pence per week per year on a Band D property.
- Adopted the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct.
- Confirmed that Leominster Town Council met the criteria for eligibility to re-adopt the General Power of Competence, giving the council more freedom to serve the local community with its operations.
- Procured and delivered the refurbishment of Central Car Park Toilet block.

- Delivered a Summer Youth Activities Plan.
- Began to develop a new Emergency Plan.
- Worked in partnership with The Priory Church and the Lieutenancy Office to host the Princess of Wales, 'Together at Christmas' family carol concert for the West Midlands.
- Completed Ropewalk Play Area Asset transfer from Herefordshire Council to Leominster Town Council with £36,177 of s106 funding from the adjacent housing development, for play equipment improvements.
- Supported local veterans as part of the Armed Forces Covenant.
- Allocated £1000 to earmarked reserves to be used as match funding for the Ducking Stool to be appraised by a conservation expert.

### **Environment and Services Committee**

- Commissioned grant-funded Lengthsman Drainage Works along our C & U roads, including unblocking drains and ditching to alleviate highway flooding in the parish to a total value of £16,100. This also included works to scrape the kerbs of vegetation on Buckfield Road.
- Continued to maintain the verges and grass cutting in our open spaces around Leominster. Please note that as from 1st April 2024 the verges will revert to Herefordshire Council, so that the town council can concentrate on improving our own open spaces – The Grange, Sydonia, Ginhall Green, Priory Mead and Ropewalk Play Area.
- Inspected and carried out minor repairs to town council play areas.
- Continued to provide and clean the Grange and the recently refurbished Central Car Park toilet blocks.
- Sponsored a planter and carried out the watering of all of the Leominster in Bloom Planters. We are proud to contribute to another Gold Award for the town!
- Continued to erect stalls for the monthly Farmers' Market and other occasional events.
- Continued to trim and carry out minor repairs on Public Rights of Way.
- Continued working on The Grange Masterplan, making the refurbishment of The Grange Play Area a priority.
- Maintained the closed churchyard of The Priory Church.

- Reinstated an Environmental Working Group to develop a plan on the action points raised in the Energy Audit and Heat Decarbonisation Plan for The Old Priory and 11 Corn Square.
- Begun to develop a Youth Club Project in association with other organisations.
- Procured a tree survey to cover all town council owned open spaces.
- Provided over 100 Allotment plots and supported the annual Allotment Awards.
- Ordered a new tree guard for the Verdun Oak in The Grange, to be installed shortly.
- Supported local residents during flooding within the parish.
- Reported back to the Planning & Highways Committee regarding tree applications in the parish.
- Developed new priorities for the new corporate plan.

### **Finance & General Purposes Committee**

- Monitored the income and expenditure of the council.
- Developed a draft budget for 2024-25.
- Carried out an autumn LTC budget consultation with residents at both the Friday Market, Farmers Market and via an online survey. The report has been published on the website and a paper copy is available upon request.
- Oversaw staff recruitment and a staffing review via the Personnel Sub-Committee.
- Secured funding of £15,930.40 (80% works value) from Historic England and Central Government in 2023 to finance a heritage statement for the Old Priory building and a feasibility study for the Old Priory Centre project through the Leominster HSHAZ Scheme.
- Developed the funding strategy for The Old Priory.
- Appointed an Internal Auditor.
- Monitored the Cultural Consortium funding as part of the HSHAZ Scheme.
- Awarded 12 grants of up to £100 each as part of the Community Celebration Fund to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. It is estimated that approximately 1000 residents benefitted from the fund.
- Developed new priorities for the new corporate plan.

- Provided grant support for the following local organisations:

Leominster Area Polish Society: Coach hire to visit Polish War Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum	£200
Leominster Air Force Cadets: To purchase a new laptop	£500
ECHO: Towards making a film called Leominster Living Orchard or Appletown.	£1000
LARC Development Trust: Towards entertainment for the Victorian Market 2023	£1000
Walkers are Welcome: To cover printing of 2 walking route leaflets	£540
OAK's Children's Group: Towards the running costs of 'Family Fridays' and 'Breakfast Saturdays' projects.	£1000
Melody Dance Company CIC: To hold a free 2-day dance camp over Easter 2024	£923
Pom Ladies: To allocate funds in principle to sponsor and transport a 3D panel from Leominster to an exhibition in France to commemorate D-Day.	£500
Leominster Royal British Legion: Towards the Remembrance Parade and associated activities	£450
Leominster Museum: Towards a community concert and celebration of Herefordshire Folklore to mark the 150 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the birth of Ella Mary Leather.	£1000
Leominster Shopmobility: Towards ongoing core operational costs	£1000
Leominster Community Centre: Annual allocation	£8000
Leominster Priory Holiday Club: Towards the provision of safety fencing and temporary toilets	£680

## **Planning and Highways**

- Commented to Herefordshire Council (HC) on 83 Planning, Listed Building and tree applications.
- Commented on 5 licensing applications, 2 Public Rights of Way Modifications and 3 Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) Schemes.
- Identified priorities for current and future S106 funding from larger developments in the town.
- Identified members for a Community Speedwatch Group, to monitor speeds at risk assessed areas of the town.

- Represented the town council on the A44 Traffic Safety Group that meets bi-monthly.
- Requested that the remaining funds in the Market Town Maintenance Fund (following the resurfacing of South Street in the town centre, West Street, Rainbow Street, Burgess Street and part of Worcester Road) be used to resurface some of the footway in Etnam Street.
- Considered or contributed to the following HC public consultations;
  - Byelaw for Acupuncture, Tattooing, Semi-Permanent Skin Colouring, Cosmetic Piercing and Electrolysis.
  - Herefordshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan Main Modifications Consultation
  - The Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) Public Consultation
  - Consultation on Licensing of Sex Establishments - Statement of Licensing Policy
  - Gambling Policy Consultation
  - Electric vehicle Charge Point Infrastructure Consultation
  - Herefordshire Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation (in process)
- Raised a large number of defects with Balfour Beatty for remedial works.
- Made representations to the local authority regarding The Royal Oak, Land at Dukes Walk, 73 Etnam Street and 12-14 West Street.
- Subsidised the 427 Bus Replacement Service until it ceased in Nov 2023.
- Developed a list of priorities for the new corporate plan

## **Communications and Events Committee**

- Continued to organise the Friday Market, oversee the monthly Farmers Markets and organise a range of events to promote the town. Please note that all markets and events will be temporarily relocated to Etnam Street Car park for a period of approximately 6 months from mid-May 2024.
- Managed the relaunch of the Information Centre (previously the Tourist Information Centre), which has 3 staff and 13 volunteers, to support and signpost residents and visitors. This involved a Family Fun Day in July 2023. Visitor numbers from January to the end of December 2023 were 18,813 and January to the end of March 2024 were 3,921.
- Submitted the annual list of road closures for events and markets, and applied for Temporary Event Notices (TENS) for licensed events.

- Rented out offices and the Council Chamber, The Stable Gallery, Counselling Room, The Secret Garden and the Servants Quarters holiday let\* to provide an income for Leominster Town Council to support our activities in the town.
- Continued to be a partner of the Cultural Consortium, enabling a number of cultural events to run alongside the HSHAZ programme in Leominster, celebrating local heritage. This included the Light Up Leominster Event in November 2023.
- Secured funding of £3925.00 in the form of a UKSPF grant in 2023 for Winter Wonderland and Late Night Leominster.
- Donated 20 of the Christmas trees used in the Winter Wonderland Event to The Priory for the Christmas Tree Festival, where local organisations each decorated a tree. The remainder of the trees were donated to community organisations, care homes, the hospital and schools.
- Organised the Leominster Food Fayre in September 2023 to celebrate locally sourced food.
- Supplied Leominster Christmas Lights in 2023.
- Supported the Victorian Market Event by promotion, installing the Farmers Market and funding some of the entertainment.
- Delivered our third Leominster Independents Day in March 2024 to support Leominster's wealth of independent businesses at a quieter time of year. Funding of £1375 was secured from Visit Herefordshire to buy promotional mugs and bags for the event. Free parking was arranged through the HSHAZ scheme.
- Providing meeting spaces for several community organisations to hold daytime and evening meetings. Through this activity a total of 248 free hours were given to support community organisations. A total of 362 hours of additional paid rentals provided essential funds to support town council operations in the town.
- Allowed the Old Priory to be used in training exercises for the Fire Service.
- Funded and organised holiday youth activities at Barons Cross.
- Secured and administered a Lottery Community Fund grant to support activities and parties celebrating the Coronation of King Charles III.
- Continue to manage the Leominster Tourism Association to promote local businesses.
- Continued to support the Leominster News with town council pages.

- Compiled a Festive Leominster 4-page pull-out in the Teme Valley Times to promote businesses and event over the Festive Season.
- Hosted 12 exhibitions in the stable gallery, making art accessible for residents and providing a platform for showcasing the works of local artists.
- Developed a list of priorities for the new corporate plan.

\*Occupancy rate in 2023 – 2024 was 60%

### **Keeping in touch with Leominster Town Council**

You can:-

- Visit our website for news, agendas and more.
- Follow our three Facebook pages: Leominster Town Council, Leominster Information Centre and Mayor of Leominster.
- Read our regular monthly spread in Leominster News.
- Email your councillors: email addresses are on the website and in the Leominster News.
- Attend our committee meetings on Monday evenings at 11 Corn Square: all open to the public, with time at the start for public questions.
- Visit the Information Centre, 11 Corn Square, open Mon-Sat 9.30am - 4pm. Our staff and volunteers look forward to meeting you.
- Contact our staff by telephone on 01568 611734.
- Check out our notice board with posters about many upcoming events, for example Mayor Making on 17th May 2024 at The Priory Church.
- Use our Information Corner to find out about services that you may find useful.
- Drop into our Stables Art Gallery, to see new exhibitions each month free of charge.
- We also sell an attractive range of gifts from local suppliers, as well as tickets to local events.