



BEWDLEY

Town Council



Photograph provided by Mr J Moule

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021

2020/21 has been a difficult year all round; Bewdley has not only faced a world-wide pandemic which saw the loss of former Mayors and stalwarts of the community, but also devastating floods in February 2020 and January 2021. The community came together to offer help and support to those in need and our wonderful key workers.

As a Council, we are continually striving to improve the services we offer. This year we improved our systems which has allowed us to deliver virtual council and committee meetings, with only a few minor hiccups along the way; we introduced a new website and updated our Facebook page. There is always more we can do, and we hope that the annual report and the meeting will encourage more people to get involved, learn about the Council's role and maybe even consider becoming a Councillor in the future

Our aim is always to provide the best service that we can, using the resources that are available to us.

1. The Town Council

Bewdley Town Council was created in 1974 following the reorganisation of local government in England & Wales, before which it had been a Borough within Worcestershire. It now forms part of Wyre Forest District which is one of six Districts within Worcestershire.

We have 13 Town Councillors all of whom were elected for a term of four years on 2nd May 2019. The next elections are due in May 2023. The Councillors' contact details can be obtained from the Council website www.bewdleytowncouncil.org. On 25th February 2021, Cllr Michael Maher resigned from the Town Council. This will result in a by-election to be held on 6th May 2021. If you are interested in becoming a Councillor, please contact us for more information.

The 2020-21 Council year officially began on 15th May 2020 with the annual meeting of the Town Council (Mayor Making). At this meeting, the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor were elected; Cllr Anna Coleman was elected as Mayor and Cllr Daniel Morehead as Deputy Mayor. We also elected Town Councillors to the Councils committees, advisory groups and as representatives on external bodies.

2. General Power of Competency

Having met the criteria of at least two-thirds of the total seats on the Council being held by elected members (all our Councillors are elected) and a having a Town Clerk who holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration (achieved in June 2020), on the 6th July 2020, we resolved to adopt the 'general power of competency'. Under the Localism Act 2011 s1 (1), this gives us "the power to do anything that individuals generally may do as long as they do not break any other laws."

3. The Town Council meeting and Committees

Our Town Council meetings are held on the first Monday of the month, except for August 2020 when the Council took a summer break. During 2020-21, due to the pandemic, all town council and committee meetings have been held virtually via Zoom. This was initially quite a challenge however once the technical issues were resolved and allowing for the occasional frozen screen, the meetings have been a great success.

Our committee meetings are also held monthly; in 2020-21 there were 3 main committees:

- Finance and General Purposes Committee:
This committee met on the 3rd Wednesday of every month and focused on the Council's financial management including reviewing of the budgets, policies and risk management before they are presented for Council approval.
- Planning Committee:

This committee met on the last Thursday of every month to consider planning applications, it does not however have the power to grant planning permission but is a legal consultee and provides comments on all planning and tree works.

- The Staffing Committee:
This committee normally meets every quarter, and also on an ad-hoc basis, when required, to oversee all staffing, polices and appointments.

2021-22 will see the introduction of a new 'Facilities Committee' to oversee the running of our parks, open spaces and amenities.

All meeting agendas are posted on our noticeboard outside the Mayor's office in the entrance of the Museum and Guildhall. They can also be found on our website, as can all our Council and committee minutes.

4. Councillor attendance statistics for 2020/21

The council and committee attendance records are set out below:

May 2020- March 2021	Council	Finance & General Purposes	Planning	Staffing
No of Meetings	14	10	10	6
Cllr John Byng	14/13	10/10		6/6
Cllr Sarah Billet	14/13		10/9	6/6
Cllr Anna Coleman	14/14			
Cllr Roger Coleman	14/14		1/1	
Cllr Simon Collingridge	14/13			6/3
Cllr Elizabeth Davies	14/12	10/5	9/6	6/5
Cllr Calne Edginton White	14/14			
Cllr Paul Gittins MBE	14/13	10/9	10/8	
Cllr Paul Harrison	14/14	10/9		6/6
Cllr Heather Lacy	14/9	10/8	10/8	
Cllr Michael Maher	13/13		10/8	
Cllr Daniel Morehead	14/14	10/8		
Cllr Rodney Stanczysyn	14/14	10/10	10/9	

5. Council Staff

Sharon Hudson is the Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer and has overall responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the Council and financial management. Kerry Smith is the Council's Administrator and acts as the committee clerk to the Council's Planning Committee, as well as working on many other projects. Alan Banks is the Council's caretaker and looks after the cleaning of the Load Street public conveniences and undertakes weekly inspection of the Wyre Hill Sand Park. Alan also undertakes weekly checks on the Millennium Green and the lifebuoys. In January 2021, the Council's Apprentice, completed a two-year apprenticeship course and left for pastures new. Only Sharon, as Town Clerk, works full time, Kerry works 30 hours per week and Alan from 1st April 2021 will work 20 hours per week. The payroll function for the Council is carried out by the District Council.

6. Civic Ceremonies

In a normal year we would hold a number of civic ceremonies which would include the annual meeting of the Town Council (Mayor Making), Mayor's Sunday and Remembrance Services. However, in 2020-21, due to the on-going pandemic, we were unable to hold any formal events. The Mayor did pay tribute on Remembrance Sunday, laying wreaths at both the towns war memorial ,at St Annes and All Saints churches.

7. Communication

We are committed to promoting good communication and continue to build and maintain open communication lines with the public and the residents of the town. To ensure that the Council's news, updates and information are accessible to as many individuals as possible, we have adopted various methods of information sharing:

The Webstie: www.bewdleytowncouncil.org

We created a new website this year; it is more vibrant and contains lots of useful information and pictures of our beautiful town. The website is also regularly updated with news and events from around the district.

Facebook: Bewdley Town Council

The Town Council facebook page is a popular method of communication and has provided us with a great tool to get information out quickly, especially during the recent floods.

8. Town Maintenance & Amenities

We are responsible for maintaining a number of amenities around Bewdley however these do not include the highways or car parks.

<u>Lengthsman</u>	The role of the Lengthsman is to carry out a wide range of minor works within the Bewdley boundary on behalf of Worcestershire County Council as the Highway Authority. WCC provides a small budget of £2895. Richard Jones is the Town's Lengthsman who also runs his own gardening and landscaping business; Petr Kratky is the Assistant Lengthsman.
Town Clock	We pay for the servicing of the town clock located on St. Anne's Church tower.
Bus Shelters	We own nine bus shelters. All the bus shelters were provided with funds from Worcestershire County Council but are maintained and kept in repair by the Town Council.
Benches	Presently, we own and maintain 41 seats and benches situated in the town, some of which have plaques these have been donated in memory of people for whom Bewdley was a special place.
Lifebuoy	There are 7 lifebuoy sited on Severn Side North, Severn Side South and at Beales Corner, which we own and maintain. These are checked weekly by our Caretaker. In 2020-21 a new lifebuoy was fitted near the Mug House to replace one previously damaged.
Street Pole	We own and maintain 9 street poles in Load Street which are used for Christmas lights, Carnival bunting and for the town's hanging baskets. Unfortunately, the pole sited outside of Tesco Express had to be removed this year as it was bent having been used as a climbing pole late at night.

Noticeboards	We own and manage the notice board at Beale's Corner; all voluntary, not-for-profit organisations in the town are able to advertise events taking place in Bewdley at a cost of £10 per week (Monday to Sunday) and subject to availability. The Council also has noticeboards located in the Museum entrance, outside of the Museum and on the disabled toilets; advertising materials can be displayed here at a cost of £5 per week.
Wyre Hill Sand park	The Wyre Hill Sand park adjacent to St Anne's School and is leased to us by Worcestershire County Council. We are responsible for and continue to pay for the running cost and maintenance of the site. The Caretaker undertakes weekly checks on the play equipment and Richard and Petr cut the grass. During the pandemic, the park closed for a number of months. It is now open however several restrictions are still in place. The park has an active 'Friends' group who help with site maintenance.
Trees	We are very lucky to have two voluntary Tree Wardens, Mr Cliff Willmot and Mr Gren Jones, who monitor the condition of Bewdley's trees and who also comment on planning applications for work to be done on trees in the Town. They are primarily concerned with trees that are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPOs) and all trees within the towns Conservation Area (TCAS). Where any tree is to be removed for genuine reasons, they usually recommend a replacement is planted to maintain and enhance the overall amenity of the town.
Millennium Green	We hold land on trust for the community called the Millennium Green situated adjacent to the Shaw Hedge Road Community Centre in Wribbenhall. Following reports of anti-social behaviour, the overgrown shrubs were severely cut back in 2019 we would welcome any volunteers who would like to work with us to look after the Green for local residents to enjoy.

We also provide:

Tubs and Baskets	We are responsible for a number of flower tubs and planters located around the town. Local businesses are able to adopt the planters located on Severnside South (provided with funding from Worcestershire County Council and District Councillors' Community Funds). They can plant flowers of their choice and advertise their businesses. There were no hanging baskets displays in 2020 due to a massive price hike by WFDC, more than doubling the allocated budget. A new supplier has been sourced for 2021.
Christmas Lights	<p>The Christmas Lights are switched on for a period of about six weeks from late November into the New Year. 2020 was the last year of a three-year contract for which the Council paid £11,500 annually for the provision of the display, including installation, removal and storage. Due to the pandemic, the annual Christmas light switch-on event 2020 was cancelled.</p> <p>2020 saw us work with Worcestershire County Council, the Bewdley Civic Society and a local business to provide bridge illuminations during the festive period.</p>

Fireworks	In a normal year, we would provide the carnival fireworks display in June however due to the pandemic this event was cancelled.
Markets	We have a contract with LSD Promotions to provide the Bewdley Town Markets on 1 st and 3 rd Sunday of every month and Bank Holiday Mondays (March to December). Due to the pandemic the markets were cancelled in 2020-21, they are due to recommence of 18 th April 2021 in line with government guidance.

9. Localism Transfers

During 2020/21 we worked closely with Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) to secure key assets for the town which include the Riverside North Park and Load Street Toilets. We have also secured new office accommodation at 6/6A Load Street. It is hoped that the Localism transfers will be completed during the first quarter of 2021-22.

Town Council Offices - The offices at 6/6A Load Street will be part leased, from the Community Housing Group, and part owned. We will be moving into the new offices over the next few months.

Public Toilets – We will take ownership of the public convenience located on the Load Street car park. The Caretaker will continue to clean both toilet blocks and will now be responsible for reporting any maintenance issues directly to the Town Clerk.

Riverside North Park – We will also take responsibility for the beautiful Riverside North Park. Unfortunately, due to the poor condition of the paddling pool, WFDC agreed to remove the facility during the spring of 2021. We are looking forward to working with the ‘Friends’ group in the future.

10. Neighbourhood Plan

We continue to work on Bewdley’s Neighbourhood Plan with a group of dedicated members of the community. The purpose of the plan is to give a stronger voice to local residents on planning issues and land use. The first public consultation took place in March 2016, with the draft objectives and policies consultation held on the 18th March 2017. Following changes to the draft plan Wyre Forest District Council have asked us to hold another consultation exercise which should take place during 2021. Look out for the consultation, please get involved and have your say.

11. Finances

The bulk of our income continues to come from the precept. This is the sum of money which we raised from householders in Bewdley. It forms part of the overall Council Tax levied by the County Council, West Mercia Police Authority and the Fire & Rescue Service which is collected on their behalf by Wyre Forest District Council. Our precept in 2020/21 was calculated by multiplying the Tax base (the number of band D properties in Bewdley) by the amount levied against those Band D householders.

2020/21

Tax Base 3647 (band D properties in Bewdley) multiplied by our 2020/21 band D annual levy of £50.00 with the annual increase per band D property being £5.56 and the weekly increase being £0.107

The Budget working group of the Finance & General Purposes Committee met on several occasions to discuss and consider cost savings and budget increases, particularly with regards to the Localism transfers. When considering the budget for 2021/22, the Council resolved an overall increase in our part of the Council Tax of 10%.

The table below shows how the average Band D charge has increased during the last five years

Year	Precept	Band D Charge	Band D % Increase
2017/18	128,377	35.70	34.2%
2018/19	142,263	39.43	10.45%
2019/20	161,309	44.44	12.70%
2020/21	182,350	50.00	12.52%
2021/22	200,585	55.56	11.11%

12. Accounts Summary

The budget summaries for 2020-21 & 2021-22 are listed below:

Summary of Budgeted Income and Expenditure		
	2020-21	2021-22
	£	£
Council Costs	15,570	11,770
Administration Costs	109,500	112,100
Services	21,110	31,320
Capital Costs	11,050	19,600
Events	19,500	17,200
Property Costs	6,000	30,433
Use of Balances	-380	-21,838
Precept	-182,350	-200,585

13. Support for local Community Groups

We remain committed to providing grants to local community based organisations; the payment of any grant is subject to certain terms and conditions. In 2020/21 a budget of £13,000 was made available in grants to the local organisations for the benefit of the community. The number of applications received this year was down on previous years. If you are interested in applying for a grant, visit bewdleytowncouncil.org for more information. Please see a summary of the grants we made over the last year.

Organisation	Grants 2020-21
Wyre Forest CAB	£1000
Bewdley Petanque Club	£500
Royal British Legion-Remembrance Day	£100
Wyre Forest Dogs Trust	£50
Monday Night Club	£1000
Bewdley Cricket Club	£250
Bewdley School	£500
Community Transport	£1000
Bewdley Scouts	£900
Bewdley Rowing Club	£1000
Community Workshop Cafe	£1000
Wyre Forest Multiple Sclerosis Society	£50
Evergreen Project	£1000
Bewdley Anti-Racism Group	£1000
Total Grants Awarded 2020-21	£9350

14. Meet Your Councillors

Bewdley Town Council is made up of 13 Councillors representing the three wards of Bewdley East, Bewdley West and Wribbenhall. Being a Town Councillor is a voluntary unpaid role and can be very rewarding. Currently we have a vacancy in the West ward if you are interest in becoming a Councillor visit the Bewdley Town Council website for further information or contact the Wyre Forest District Council, Elections Team.

EAST WARD COUNCILLORS (4)



**Cllr Anna
Coleman**
2020-21 Mayor



**Cllr Rod
Stanczyszyn**



**Cllr Paul Gittins
MBE**

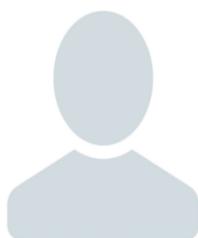


Cllr Heather lacy

WEST WARD COUNCILLORS (4)



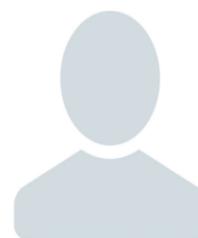
**Cllr Roger
Coleman**



Vacant Seat



**Cllr Calne
Edginton White**



Vacant Seat

WRIBBENHALL COUNCILLORS (5)



Cllr Liz Davies



**Cllr Paul
Harrison**



**Cllr Daniel
Morehead**
*2020-21 Deputy
Mayor*



**Cllr John
Byng**



**Cllr Sarah
Billett**

Your Councillors contact details are available on the town council website
www.bewdleytowncouncil.org

Contact Us

Bewdley Town Council
25A Load Street
Bewdley
DY12 2AE
Telephone: 01299 400157.
office@bewdleytowncouncil.org

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