



# Ilfracombe Town Council Annual Report

## 01 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

### Town Mayor's Report

My first year as Mayor turned out less daunting than I anticipated. With a team of outstanding and knowledgeable councillors there was very little arising during the year that always had one or another of them having the depth of local and historical knowledge to add value to the various debates and decisions.

The role of Chair can be a tough one but my refereeing skills were rarely called on and most debates were pretty civilised and polite. With party politics taking a distinct back place the objective of always putting Ilfracombe first was achieved by welcome consensus.

The last twelve months we have seen Ilfracombe continue on its course of becoming a town that attracts tourists and businesses alike with the High Street and Harbour areas becoming more and more vibrant. The impact of our many volunteer groups is considerable and very little can be done without them. Almost every week during the season sees events, arts, music and entertainment around the town. My wholehearted thanks goes out to those individuals who 'make things happen' in Ilfracombe.



I have enjoyed travelling around North Devon and visiting other towns and Mayors. It has been immensely heartening to have neighbouring mayors asking how we have achieved so much whilst holding our precept down to one of the lowest in North Devon yet developing at an unrivalled pace. My fellow chairpersons will cover the detail of those developments and I would not want to tread on their toes but one or two highlights are worth a second read.

Our Town Team go from strength to strength making the approaches to Ilfracombe a joy to see, resurrecting tired areas and adding year round colour which contributed to Ilfracombe in Bloom winning the Gold standard for the FIFTH year running.

November saw an incredible event celebrating the end of WW1 when the towers of the Landmark became a live screen and visiting dignitaries and what appeared to be half the town, turned out on a very wet night to marvel at the presentation. Only three weeks later the Lighting of the Christmas lights saw almost 8000 people fill the High Street to party the night away.

Concerns about crime had to be met in October when a spike of petty crime in the High Street and St James' Place was brought to our attention by the High Street Traders. A Town meeting was called and although lightly attended, was an opportunity for all angles to be examined and concerns aired. Focus was directed at the issues and working with our police, North Devon Council and other agencies all of the concerns have been either dealt with or are at the core of ongoing initiatives. New licensing schemes for HMO's and private landlords were launched in October and a CCTV scheme piloted in the High Street. With the help of funding from the police authorities this pilot will roll out greater coverage during the next year.

The BBC have been very visible in Ilfracombe for the last 6 months and next year will show the airing of a series showing how 'troubled' towns can work together and become more successful.



I cannot write a report like this without mentioning One Ilfracombe. Going from strength to strength One Ilfracombe is leading the way across North Devon and the wider Devon area in how working together with all the agencies that impact the town can produce real results improving the welfare, health and wellbeing of our residents.

Being a Town Council is not without its challenges with funding being slashed across the board, services being withdrawn and smaller towns, such as ours being left to sort things out for themselves. I truly believe we have risen to this challenge and the dedication of all Councillors and especially our Ilfracombe Centre staff has addressed these challenges head on.

I commend them to you.

***Cllr Val Gates, Mayor of Ilfracombe, 2018/19***

## **Finance & General Purpose Committee Report**

I am pleased to report that again this year through sensible and prudent management we have been able to keep our overall spending within our budget. Although we have incurred some unexpected costs in insurance premiums and repairs to the Lantern and Lee toilets we have ensured that our reserves are strong enough to cope.

This coming year is the last year that we receive a support grant from the District Council to help with our running costs. Despite anticipating the loss of this grant we still feel comfortable in keeping our increase in precept for this year to 3.9%. This compares with an 11% increase agreed by Barnstaple Town Council. Our main income apart from the Council tax precept is from the Ropery and Cheyne Beach car parks and from renting office space in this building and renting rooms at the Lantern. Our income from the Ropery is predicted to be slightly less than last year as Easter would normally give us a boost but we have not had a full Easter period in this financial year. We have kept our summer parking charges at £1 per hour as there is no appetite to increase although others have. We are looking to provide two charging points for electric vehicles at the Ropery and are currently in discussions with the equipment supplier.

As trustees, we continue to oversee the operation of the Vision Centre at Slade and the building is well used by regular clients and for 'one off' celebrations.

The use of the Lantern Centre is gradually increasing and revenue income has exceeded expenditure, not by very much but we are content. Last year we ring fenced money from our reserves for the Lantern because, when we took over the building, we were aware that considerable expenditure on maintenance would be required within 5 years. Many of the windows are rotten and need replacing and as it is a listed building we have to use hardwood rather than plastic. This is costing us in the region of £15000. On a lighter note, however, we have been able to rent the cafe and it will open shortly as a Mexican Cantina.

We have been able to increase slightly our level of grant funding to local groups for this coming year, as we realise the benefit to the Town provided by the many voluntary organisations, and we are very pleased to see the recipients here with us tonight. We get far more grant applications than we can fulfil with a budget of around £20K so I am afraid that there will always be some disappointments. You will have noticed the new finger posts around the Town and we managed to get grant funding for these.

We continue to cover the reasonable expenses of our Town Crier who is such an asset to the Town and particularly to the tourist trade.

We have now installed a CCTV camera on a trial basis and this is focussed on the Arches. We are also in discussion regarding installing a new camera at Mullacott Business Park where there have been a number of break-ins over the past few months. We are looking at a longer term solution with the Police and District Council.



Our maintenance operative has now been in post for over a year and you will have noticed the improvement to many green areas and particularly on the road down from Mullacott. We have set up a base for the Green Team adjacent to Marlborough Road cemetery where they store all their equipment and re-cycle plants. We have become members of the County Council Road Warden scheme and this allows us to fill minor pot-holes and do other minor repairs on the highway.

The District Council, who own the Dotto Train, have had no-one respond to their tender process for somebody to operate the vehicle this year. They have asked us, as the Town Council, whether we would be interested in operating the train. We are looking into implications of running the train because it would be a real setback if we cannot find an operator.

This is the last Town Meeting of this Council . There are elections on May 2<sup>nd</sup> for the new Council and I am content that we leave office ensuring that there is a robust financial situation for the new Council to inherit.

I would like to thank our staff for their diligence in looking after the day to day running of our affairs and for their co-operation in furthering our ambitions as laid out in our Strategic Plan.

***Cllr Rod Donovan – Chairman 2018/19***

## **Planning & Environmental Committee Report**

It has been another interesting year for the committee, with major applications nearing completion. For example I would expect the Berkley Hotel to be completed by the end of the year and the Town Houses in Northfield Road next. The Southern Extension has been having a torturous time with problems over the siting and funding of the new school, Devon County Council still dealing with this. The Montebello site, because of its lack of development, has been recommended for a CPO (compulsory purchase order), like-wise with Golden Coast site although the latter's owner has of late shown interest in a possible development through a pre-application. The Watersports Centre is slowly moving forward through the steering group, although the HRO (Harbour Revision Order) and associated licences seem to be stuck in Westminster, there are 6 new tenders for the project which will go to quantity surveying to evaluate and then on to the Executive Council. To repeat last year's report a new set of amended plans from Acorn Blue are in for the Lee Bay Hotel site and this will come before the LPA (Local Planning Authority) in April. Another major revised application to come forward is the Bicclescombe Nursery site, now seeing 10 houses, and we are still awaiting The Shields Phase 2 which is the steep ground between Doone Way and Fernway. This site is potentially important as it could provide a possible link road, linking the 2 existing Shields developments.

***Cllr G Fowler – Chair of the Planning & Environmental Committee***

## **Marketing Group**

We've had another busy year in supporting all the major events that go on throughout the year. Again, special mention must go to all the hours that Barbara and Marnie from the Tourist Information Centre have put in, they run the "Events for Ilfracombe" group, promoting and helping to arrange the attractive events that go to make up our social/tourist calendar throughout the year, also special mention must go to "Sea Ilfracombe" and "Combe Christmas" and the electricians involved in installing our lights through some pretty wet weather during the winter. At the moment we are working towards making us a "Coach Friendly Town" this would be nationally recognised and could bring more day trippers via the coach companies into the town. As previously mentioned, a large proportion of our marketing budget pays for the "Ilfracombe Guide" of which 80k is circulated around the South West, again another way of helping to increase our visitor footfall.

***Cllr G Fowler***



## Staffing Committee

This last year has, as ever, been a busy one for Ilfracombe Town Council staff. Once again we have seen a few changes in both personnel and organisation. But the staff and councillors have all done their best for the good of our town.

Rachel Collins, our new Proper Officer (another name for Town Clerk) has completed her first full year in office. As our legal officer it is her role to advise the council on its duties and powers, ensure the council is compliant with proper financial practices and ensure the smooth running of the council. Her qualifications mean that we are eligible for the Local Council Award scheme, which is a quality award for councils.

As you are no doubt aware, staffing is the council's biggest cost and so it is important that they give good value for money. In that regard I'm sure you all appreciate the work done by our Town & Asset maintenance team. We have Rob and Richard leading the way with their work on maintaining and enhancing our environment, assisted by Clive and a willing team of volunteers in picking up litter in the town. They have been joined this year by Warren who works closely with Richard in keeping the Lantern and Ilfracombe Centre in good order. Clive, of course, is the poster boy for One Ilfracombe's Town Team who responds to calls to tidy up grot spots around town.

Keep your eyes out for more planters with herbs and vegetables this year, a project dear to my heart. Rob has been in conversation with local groups who are willing to maintain the planters and to use some of the produce in community food ventures. The team also work closely with Ilfracombe in Bloom, Community Resources and other groups, on keeping the town blooming throughout the summer and helping to keep our town on track for gold in the annual In Bloom competition.

On the reception desk we have Celia working alongside North Devon District staff greeting visitors to the centre with a smile, helping with their queries where possible and providing admin support to Rachel.

Times are changing and parish councils are taking on responsibilities and projects which would once have been outside their remit. Here in Ilfracombe, under the leadership of Steve Seatherton, we have a team to manage such projects or to offer services to community projects whose objectives meet the town strategy.

Steve's team comprises Hannah, who plans and co-ordinates projects, and Sarah and Neil, our community engagement officers. Neil's primary responsibility is PR, the website and social media. Sarah makes sure that the council maintains links with business and community organisations in town.

Both Neil and Sarah have been enthusiastic supporters of the recently formed Ilfracombe Youth Council. The council currently comprises 14 students from the junior school and academy in years 6 through 9. Neil is guiding some of the youth council members in developing a project to improve play spaces; Sarah makes sure that safeguarding is in place and helps to organise off-site activities for them.

It is Steve's team who are involved when we agree to undertake projects on behalf of One Ilfracombe. The Living Well initiative, co-ordinated by Hannah, in particular goes from strength to strength. Miriam's Community Connector role is undergoing something of a transformation. The council still provides employer services for Miriam but her role is seen as an important aspect of primary care so she will be spending 2 hours a day working from the GP practice. She has recently been joined by Charmain who will be helping to develop initiatives to support identified needs in town.

At the end of last year we said farewell to Kate Romo, who was our asset manager. She had been with us for a few years and we wish her well in her new ventures. We had two members of staff join and leave within the year and thank them for their contributions, and we have two new employees due to join us in April.

I hope that the Ilfracombe community is happy with the service the council provides.

I am grateful for the support and guidance I have received and continue to receive from the Staffing Committee members and officers. On behalf of the Councillors I would like to thank Rachel, Steve and their teams for all their efforts this year.

***Cllr N Pearson – Chair of the Staffing Committee 2018/19***



## One Ilfracombe

One Ilfracombe is the delivery arm of the Town Council and its key aim is to help deliver the Strategic Plan through its three themes: Living Well, Town Team and Ilfracombe Works. The Key to success of One Ilfracombe is through true partnership working and delivery of projects that help the town.



A few notable highlights during 2018/19 include –

**Police Mental Health Funding** – One Ilfracombe secured over £10k from Devon and Cornwall Police to address mental health issues in the town and anti-social behaviour. Over £4k will be allocated for Belle’s Place (community hub) to provide a free drop-in hot meal service on Thursdays and Fridays. They already provide a hot meal service on Monday which attracts a wide range of people from sofa surfers to socially isolated elderly people. One Ilfracombe will also be providing mental health training (including suicide awareness and mental health first aid training) to community groups in Ilfracombe.

**Community Connector** – The Community Connector role continues to grow and provides a vital service to those people who are in need of help and are unsure of what to do with issues and problems. The connector provides a sign posting service to put people in contact with agencies and groups that can help them. During 2018/19 the Community Connector saw 263 people which is an increase of 27 people from 2017/18. From the 263 people, the Community Connector dealt with 311 issues with a 77% success rate. The main issues people came to the Community Connector with was social isolation, housing, mental health and help to stay living at home.

**iBCF Funding** – A joint One Ilfracombe and Combe Coastal bid for iBCF Funding for social prescribing (Devon County Council) was successful with an award of over £45k to increase social prescribing work in Ilfracombe. The funding will extend the Community Connector role and fund an additional role of a Community Development Officer to support the provision of activities within the town and identify the gaps.

**Mindful Fair** – A mindful fair took place on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018, the event was for groups and organisations to promote their wellbeing services to the public. There were 32 different stands and an estimated 400 people attended.

**Out of the Blue Cadets** – The 15<sup>th</sup> course of the Out of the Blue Cadets scheme has now been completed. The scheme was created in 2014 in collaboration with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and Devon and Cornwall Police. It is a nine week Emergency Service cadet’s course based at Ilfracombe Fire Station.

### **Commissioned Projects:**

- **One Barnstaple** – One Ilfracombe Was commissioned to set up and deliver the One Barnstaple project. As this work progressed, One Northern Devon recognised the skills and knowledge we had in-house and have commissioned further ‘Ones’ for the whole of North Devon. This is a 12 month project.
- **Home from Hospital** – One Ilfracombe was commissioned by NDHT to run this service to help people who were discharged from hospital.
- **Diabetes commissioned work** – One Ilfracombe was commissioned to deliver a series of diabetes events throughout North Devon. These were very well attended and One Ilfracombe will be commissioned to deliver a series of further events for 2019/20.

**Ilfracombe Big Spring Clean** – The event was held on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2019 and over 60 volunteers tackled the High Street, Harbour, Seafront and Hele.

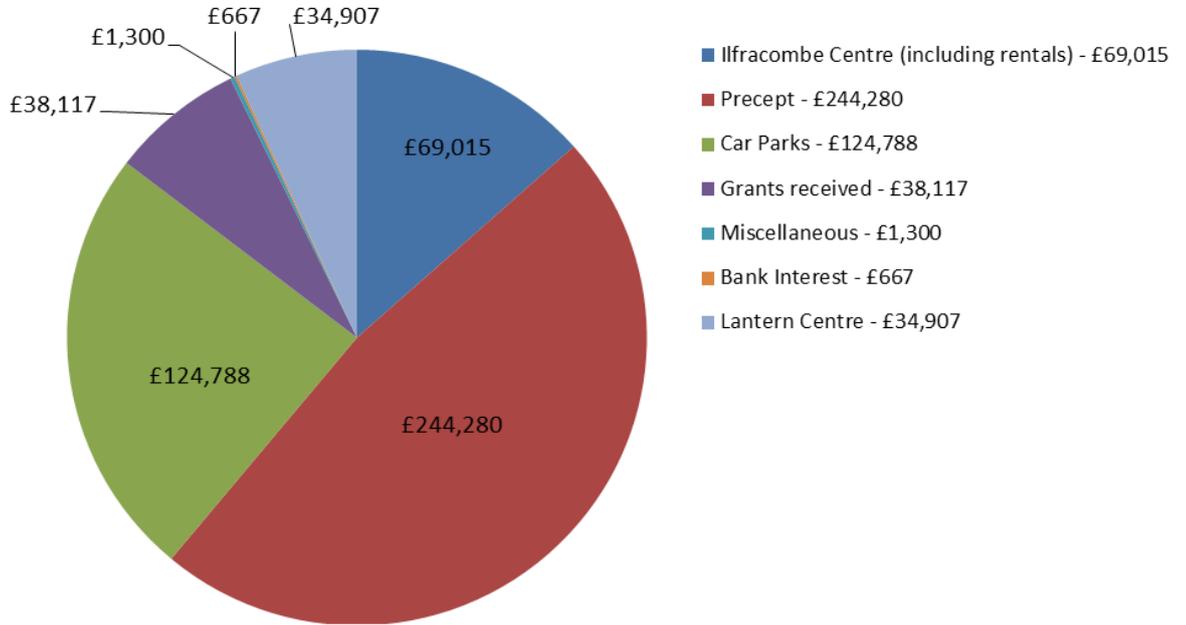
**Beach Clean Boards** – One Ilfracombe were awarded funding for beach clean boards at the Harbour and Wildersmouth Beach.

**Cancer Support Group** – One Ilfracombe has been working with Macmillan Cancer Care to set up a cancer support group in Ilfracombe.

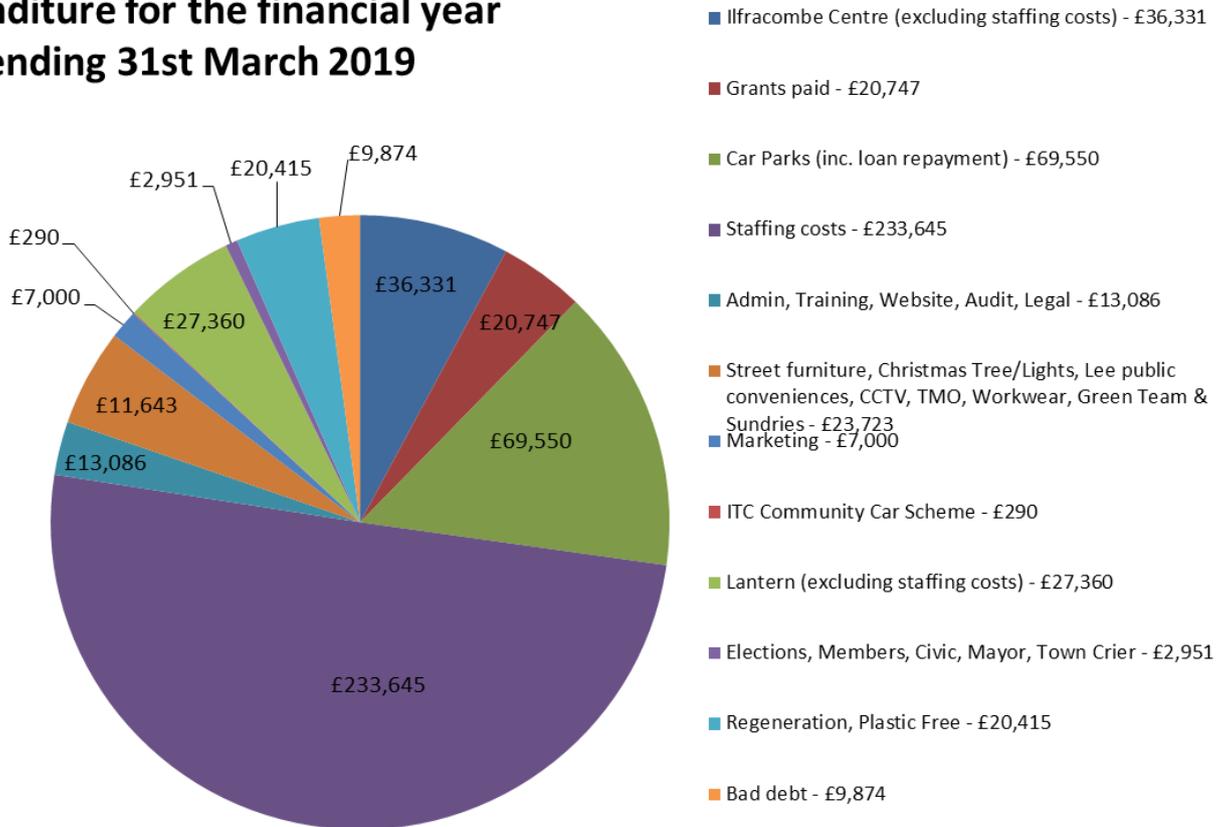


**Financial Information**

**Income for the financial year ending 31st March 2019**



**Expenditure for the financial year ending 31st March 2019**





Council members in office during 2018/19

Surname	Fore Name	Status	Ward
Aston	Lee	-	Central*
Coulter	George	-	Central*
Courtnadge	Richard	-	East
Crabb	Paul	-	East
Donovan	Janice	-	West
Donovan	Rod	Chair of F&GP Committee	West
Edmunds	Mike	-	East
Fowler	Geoff	Chair of Planning Committee	West
Gates	Val	Mayor	Central*
Gear	Bert	-	Central*
Leck	Kit	-	Central*
Pearson	Frank	-	Central*
Pearson	Netti	Chair of Staffing Committee	West
Schofield	Greg	-	Central*
Squires	George	-	West
Trebble	Steve	Deputy Mayor	West
Turton	Daniel	-	East
Yabsley	Paul	-	West

\*central ward merged into east ward part-way through the year.

Proper Officer & Centre Manager – Miss Rachel Collins

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