



Ilfracombe Town Council Annual Report

01 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

Town Mayor's Report

2019 started with the Local Council elections so by the first council meeting in May we had a totally new council. Richard Courtnadge, Janice Donovan, Mike Edmunds and George Squires did not seek re-election. All have served the town well over many years, and three have served as Mayor. I would like to thank them sincerely for their contribution over their terms of office.

We welcomed onto the Council new councillors Pat Coates, June Williams, Sara Wilson and Terry Elliott.

In May I was very honoured to be elected into a second term as Mayor of Ilfracombe and Chair of the Town Council.

Reports from the Committee Chairpersons, Finance & General Purposes, Staffing and Planning will cover a lot of the detail of a very eventful year.

As Mayor I sit on all the committees and continue to be very impressed by the professionalism, knowledge and passion displayed by all of your Councillors.

One of the most interesting committees is the Ilfracombe Regeneration Board. This is the North Devon Committee that works with the Town Council to develop concepts such as the new Sea Sports Centre, the Sea Front Development, the acquisition and development of derelict sites, and significant changes being planned longer term for the town. I soon understood why some things can take so long to come to fruition. Patience is a virtue I had to call upon quite often.

I represented Ilfracombe at over 20 civic events around North Devon in addition to many attendances at local events, businesses and celebrations.

Our Town Council staff are too often unsung heroes. We have two teams led by our Proper Officer, Rachel Collins and our Programme Manager, Steve Seatherton.

Rachel keeps the council on the straight and narrow looking after our finances and our statutory duties. Steve leads the One Ilfracombe and town project teams. My thanks go out to both of them because it is the quality of the work that they deliver that is promoting Ilfracombe as a town that is innovative and ground breaking with other North Devon towns looking to us for advice and guidance.

Summarising the success of One Ilfracombe in my report would develop a brief report into a book of considerable length so I would encourage you to read their annual report which you can find on the ITC website.

Events during the season were as exciting as ever. Green Man, Birdman, Sea Ilfracombe, Carnival, All things Morris, mini rally, motorbike show and many others ensured that our hotels, B&B's, restaurants and shops had a good year. Then at the end of the year the now traditional Combe Christmas that gets bigger and bigger every year was attended by over 5000 people.

Ilfracombe in Bloom continued to pick up Gold awards from South West in Bloom despite having moved up into a more challenging category.





Pride in Ilfracombe awards were presented in April with Carl Perrin receiving the Top Award. Out of the Blue goes from strength to strength with students from the Academy on a waiting list now going into 2022.

Christmas came and went – Roy, the Town Crier and I visited all our Care Homes on Christmas Eve and then 2020 started quietly. Our next Mayor, Kit Leck and Deputy Mayor Dan Turton were voted into office in March just before Coronavirus changed everything.

This was when the Town Council team really came into their own. With less than 3 days planning the team swung into action, closing the Centre and organising over 150 volunteers into a cohesive army able to support everyone in the town in need of help and support in the light of the lockdown. The BBC heard about what we were doing and came down to film and broadcast on national news a few days later. Over time the project had been streamlined and enhanced by working closely with NDHT, the Medical Centre and the various agencies that work with residents that need most support.

Council and Committee meetings continue using Zoom – thank goodness for technology and we continue to do as much as we can within the constraints.

So we move into a new term with no change. I will remain at the helm until we are allowed to hold our Annual Meeting of the Council and our committees remain unchanged.

Lastly but by no means least I would like to thank all my fellow Town Councillors for their support and encouragement. Not the easiest group in the world but by far the most passionate, committed and engaged that I have ever worked with.

Thank you all.

Cllr Val Gates, Mayor of Ilfracombe, 2019/20

Finance & General Purpose Committee Report

The past year has as a whole has seen the Council maintain a robust financial position with overall expenditure and income in line with our budget predictions, and where some fluctuations have occurred any excess, or unexpected, expenditure has largely been matched by an increased income. Our finances for the year ending March 2020 show a sound fiscal position but our budget for 2020/21, which was set in January 2020 has been thrown into disarray by the Covid-19 pandemic and we are now attempting to plan our way through the next twelve months so that we can be sure that we have some core funding available when the current crisis is behind us.

This is a report on the year 2019/20 and although the Covid-19 crisis has recently had some effect on our revenue, the year's income and expenditure is largely in accordance with expectations.

Income from the Ilfracombe Centre has exceeded our budget figure but we have had higher than predicted utility costs possibly partly due to the increased use of the room hire facility offered by the Centre.

The Lantern Centre has continued to be increasingly used as a community centre and we maintain income from office rental and the pre-school facility. I mentioned in last year's report that we had rented the café but regret that the operator was unable to make a viable business from the Mexican Cantina and has now closed.

Fairly major expenditure has been identified relating to the Lantern and as well as completing the work on replacing the windows we have also had to replace the boiler system and this has now been completed. We are also aware that the lift is becoming a problem in that spare parts are no longer available. We have now budgeted for a new lift and hopefully will be spreading this cost over the next two years.

One of our main sources of income is the Ropery car park and again this has performed well over the last twelve months showing an income slightly in excess of budget. We lost income at the end of March due to the Coronavirus.



The expenditure on the car park was slightly over budget but the net difference between income and expenditure was in accordance with our predictions.

During this past year we have changed the policing system for the car park, largely in response to public dissatisfaction, and have replaced the ANPR system with the previously used 'pay and display' arrangement which is now policed by North Devon Council. This change has been the major contribution to our 'overspend' because of changes required to the ticket machines and signage. We have also taken this opportunity to upgrade the machines to accept contactless payments. The hourly rate for summer parking has been increased to £1.10 in line with NDC charges.

Permits for Cheyne Beach car park have again been popular with most permits being sold. These have been rendered invalid whilst free parking is provided in all Council car parks and our intention is to re-issue these when the car parks re-open such that subscribers will have a full years parking from that date. Refunds will be issued in circumstances where a ticket holder does not wish to use the permit beyond March 2021.

We are still looking at providing electric charging point in the Ropery Car Park and we are still investigating suitable systems that will give us a good return on any investment we may make. This is an area where technology is fast moving.

We have had to take into account the loss of the precept support grant from the District Council together with the increased expenditure detailed elsewhere in this report. Even so we have been able to maintain our increase in the precept to 4.9% for the year 2020/21.

This last year has seen the introduction of a new IT system for the Ilfracombe Centre. This has been done in conjunction with the District Council to ensure that the new system is compatible and compliant with 'Council' regulations. Although we had allowed for this expenditure in our 2019/20 budget, the final cost was in excess of the predicted figure and we had to draw on our 'reserves' to cover the balance.

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.

We have been able to increase slightly our level of grant funding to local voluntary groups for this coming year. We are monitoring the situation fairly closely as we realise that some grant funding is destined for events that may not take place and we will make decisions based on the current 'lock down' scenario.

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.

The floodlighting of the skate park was completed in this last year leading to increased use of this facility.

Although we have our own modest scheme in place, we are now waiting on the roll out of a CCTV system agreed between the police and North Devon Council. Progress on this appears quite slow and we will increase pressure to get this into operation.

The availability of public toilets in the Town has become a major concern with the closing of the Cove toilets and the transfer of the Landmark Theatre to a private enterprise. We have been in discussion with the District Council and portable toilet providers to reach a temporary solution for the 2020 summer season but all discussions have been shelved until we are through the current crisis.

We have been approached by the operator of the Tourist Information Centre to increase our financial support. New and innovative ways of providing services to holidaymakers has led to a sharp fall in commissions that used to provide



substantial funds to the TIC. We recognise the importance of the TIC to our community and we have come to a financial arrangement to keep them going whilst we look at longer term possibilities to enhance their operation.

Our Town Maintenance Operative continues to improve many of the green spaces in, and leading to, our Town. In association with the Britain in Bloom Committee the Town again won top awards in the competition. We now have a facility at Marlborough Road to grow and re-cycle plants and this year could have been one of the most colourful to date. Together with our other manual staff he has also been involved in installing the flood barrier at Cheyne Beach. This has been necessary on several occasions over the past six months.

Our maintenance staff have also been involved in extensive repairs to the public toilet at Lee to ensure that they are maintained to a good standard. We as a Council, continue to be responsible for these toilets and we pay for the cleaning through the Lee and Lincombe Residents Association who engage the cleaner on our behalf. These staff have also been involved in refurbishing bus shelters.

We have been working with the District Council towards getting the Dotto Train back into service. Due to various bureaucratic delays we were unable to achieve this in 2019. We have been working on this through the past winter and we had nearly everything in place to start the service at Easter.

All councillors have been involved in identifying blocked drains in the Town and we now have mapped details of these. With Devon County Council only undertaking the clearing of some drains every three years, it was our intention to employ a private contractor to clear as many drains as possible. The current health situation has postponed this work but it is hoped that we can carry out some of this work before the winter of 2020/21.

Through the hard work of Councillor Trebble and through the voluntary work of many electricians in the Town we have renewed the electrical installation and lighting at the War Memorial gardens. Some work has also been done on the High St lighting, and to keep these going we need to finance new power supplies lines. Money for this has been included in our precept.

Balancing our finances over the past year has been relatively straightforward. We now enter unknown territory and the full extent of the current pandemic is making budgeting very difficult. We are confident that our robust reserves will see us comfortably through the next twelve months even assuming that we will have little or no income from our commercial enterprises such as the Ropery car park. I would like to think that we will have sufficient funds to help kick start the economy of the Town at the appropriate time.

I would like to thank our staff for all the work that they have done over the last year and particularly for their positive reaction to the Covid-19 crisis in providing a co-ordinated response to the consequences of the 'lock down' scenario.

Cllr Rod Donovan – Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee 2019/20

Planning & Environmental Committee Report

An interesting year for the new committee with 2 major applications nearing completion. The Berkeley Hotel is set to be completed fairly soon several of the apartments are having their finishing touches done and are being marketed. The 12 Town houses at the top of Northfield Road are completed and several have been sold subject to all the usual agreements. The small in-town development at the High Street end of Greenclose Road, is now well under way also.

The Southern Extension although being beset with problems over funding for education facilities has now moved a step forward with agreements between the developer and DCC. There might well be a start date within the next 12 months. The Montebello site, because of its lack of development, was recommended for a CPO but nothing has happened there to date. Like-wise with the Golden Coast site although with Premier Inns now taking a reinterest in the Colossus site there may be some scope for 106 money as the Sea Front site is now up for auction.



The Watersports Centre is still slowly moving forward in planning terms. Both the Larkstone and Cove sites are still very much in the frame with probably both sites being used subject to funding. The HRO (Harbour Revision Order) and associated licences which held the whole process up was finally passed during the year.

For the sake of repetition the Lee Bay Hotel site has ground to a halt. NDC were hoping to do a site feasibility study but to date that has not been forthcoming. Similarly the revised application for the Bicclescombe Nursery site, now seeking 10 houses, has stalled, likewise The Shields Phase 2 which is the steep ground between Doone Way and Fernway. I suspect some of this is to do with the present economic situation plus now with the virus pandemic adding to the mix virtually all building/site work has ground to a halt. The coming year in project/planning terms will be challenging to say the least.

Cllr G Fowler – Chair of the Planning & Environmental Committee 2019/20

Marketing Group

We had local elections in May which resulted in new town councillors joining Ilfracombe Town Council and some changes to committees and groups. In July Councillor Geoff Fowler stepped down as Chair of the Marketing Group and this role was taken up by new councillor Pat Coates. Geoff remains a valued member of the marketing group.

The main part of the marketing budget has once again been used to help support the Ilfracombe Guide which is organised by Barbara and Marnie from the Tourist Information Centre. Approximately 80,000 guides are distributed via outlets throughout North Devon. A special mention has to go to the T.I.C. team for running the “Events for Ilfracombe” group that works tirelessly to create a packed calendar of events that bring in tourists to the town and enjoyment for locals too as well as significant financial benefit to businesses in town.

This year we have had some very successful events with organisers being quoted as saying “best ever” and these include to name a few the Art Trail, Sea Ilfracombe and Combe Christmas which tried a new format by splitting the stalls for charities and other retailers/crafters over the days rather than combining them as in previous years.

It should be noted that none of these events would happen if it wasn’t for the great teams of volunteers who work tirelessly throughout the year to promote our town and make it an attractive destination for visitors. Thank you.

This year the marketing meetings have benefitted from presentations from outside groups to try to stimulate new ideas for the ongoing promotion of Ilfracombe as a go to tourist destination.

At the time of writing however, we are unfortunately facing one of the biggest if not the biggest challenges for our town and indeed country in modern times COVID-19.

This has already resulted in many of our events planned for 2020 having to be cancelled and businesses and tourist attractions closing. As you know the much loved Dotto tourist train was due to make a comeback at Easter but this is currently on hold.

We are a strong community and when this is all over we will all need to work together even more creatively to rebuild and strengthen our town and its tourist offer.

Stay safe everyone.

Cllr P Coates – Chair of the Marketing Group 2019/20



Staffing Committee

Summary

This last year has been a remarkably busy time for both Ilfracombe Town Council (ITC) and the partnership staff members. Once again, we have seen a few changes in both personnel and organisation. As always, the staff and councillors have all done their best for the good of our town.

This report aims to provide a brief insight into the work of the Committee and its contribution to the Council's business.

The later months covering this reporting period have included unprecedented upheaval and change due to Covid-19. It should be formally, acknowledged that the Council and partnership (One Ilfracombe) staff have risen to the challenge brilliantly.

Role and Membership

The Committee's objective is to provide effective and professional staff management of all matters related to the employees of the Town Council.

Membership comprises of seven elected members, two of whom are the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and are ex-officio members. The [Terms of Reference](#) for the Staffing Committee are available from the Ilfracombe Town Council website.

As expected, the Council's largest expenditure is staff costs and it is therefore essential that a robust committee structure in place to ensure that the Council is able to provide effective services and value for money. The Staffing Committee plays an important role and its contribution to this process should not be underestimated.

Contribution to Council Business (Examples)

ITC holds a number of assets that are essential to the delivery of the strategic plan and the Council's economy. The Council's strategic direction is comprehensively reported within [Ilfracombe Strategic Plan 2015-2025](#). All work undertaken, by and on behalf of ITC, can be referenced within this important document.

Dotto Land Train: ITC has been successful in securing a lease agreement with North Devon Council and saving this valuable resource from being sold or allowed to run elsewhere in north Devon. The additional staff capacity required to manage Dotto has been put in place. A recruitment process is underway for an operational manager and drivers.

The Lantern Centre: The ITC remains committed to ensuring availability of a quality facility for use by individuals, clubs, businesses and community groups. Through the Staffing Committee the ITC have sought to ensure that The Lantern is managed on a day-to-day basis and is fit-for-purpose. This has required the recruitment of new staff.

Car Parking: ITC owns and manages the operation of Ropery Road car park. NDC look after the enforcement aspects. Ropery Road car park is a significant contributor to the Council's budget. It is correct and proper to ensure that there is sufficient staff capacity to manage this important asset. ITC also is responsible for issuing residents parking permits.

One Ilfracombe Model and Working Together

The One Ilfracombe model is widely acknowledged as the regional lead in respect of partnership working. Indeed, much of this is being replicated in other areas. ITC is a key body and manages a number of One Ilfracombe staff. The Staffing Committee have an important role in ensuring that the Council is not over-exposed and that there is the staff capacity to manage an evolving service delivery model.

At the Ilfracombe Centre we have ITC staff working alongside colleagues from NDC to greet and help with their queries. NDC, not unlike other councils, have had to make cuts in service provision and Ilfracombe has not been



immune. Staffing Committee has sought to understand how these saving impact upon ITC work and to negotiate new working arrangements.

Staffing have sought to ensure that ITC has the necessary staff capacity to plan, promote and co-ordinate projects with town businesses and community organisations. This includes use of IT and social media.

Other responsibilities

The monthly agenda has a number of fixed items relating to the Council’s responsibility as an employer. Included within these agenda items are sickness, annual leave and training.

The Chair of Staffing is responsible for performing annual appraisals and is first point of contact for senior officers on matters regarding staff employment policy. This committee also deals with staff grievances and disciplinary matters.

These matters are of a confidential nature; hence this Committee has a restricted membership and is not open to the public.

ITC has a comprehensive library of Policies and Procedures. Staffing Committee receives all drafts and amendments prior to presentation to the full Council.

Covid-19

Obviously, much of the Council’s project work has been put on hold. However, the Staffing Committee have agreed to a review of projects and a commitment not to put these at risk once the current crisis is over.

Ilfracombe is fortunate to have an amazing staff team. These staff were quick to recognise that isolation and access to facilities by our most vulnerable was going to be critical during the lockdown period. It was thanks to ITC and One Ilfracombe staff that the Town has an exemplary neighbourhood volunteer project. Indeed, it was so innovatory and ground-breaking that the BBC did some filming of the scheme in action.

At the time of writing this report ITC has furlough arrangements in place for four staff members. The remaining staff are working from home or social distancing when visiting Council facilities.

ITC has a duty of care for all its staff and the Staffing Committee will continue to meet via video link to monitor and review health and well-being of all its staff.

And Finally

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 all our teams for their enthusiasm and commitment to the people of Ilfracombe during this year.

Cllr Kit Leck – Chair of the Staffing Committee 2019/20



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 2019/20 include –

Police Mental Health Funding – One Ilfracombe working with the Police has secured a further £10,000 from the Police and The Police Crime Commissioners Office to help reduce anti-social behaviour, increase volunteer capacity and deliver mental health training. Much of this funding has been to support Belles Place to increase their Meals and More service from one day a week to 5 days a week. We have also secured a further £10,000 from the CCG to keep the service open for a further 2 years. One Ilfracombe are also delivering mental health first aid training to local volunteers and community leaders.

Community Connector – One Ilfracombe has been commissioned by North Devon Coastal Primary Care network to deliver social prescribing services in Lyn Health GP surgery, South Molton Medical Centre alongside its current service provision in Ilfracombe. The Ilfracombe Community Connector who has now been in post for 5 years and is well established saw a total of 580 people and helped with 699 issues during 2019/20.

Improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) – The Community Builder has been funded for 16 months in a joint One Ilfracombe Combe Costal Bid. The Community Builder works with the Community Connector and community organisations to support a robust community offer of activities; working with existing groups to look at sustainability and promotion and starting new projects, groups and activities that help to fill the current ‘gaps’.

Out of the Blue Cadets – The OOTB cadet scheme was created in 2014 as a One Ilfracombe initiative collaboration with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) and Devon and Cornwall Police (DCP), it is a 9-week Emergency Service cadet’s course, based at Ilfracombe Fire Station. The course includes sessions facilitated by Devon and Somerset Fire Rescue, Devon and Cornwall Police, South West Ambulance Service and the RNLI and the participants from the Academy learn about the role of the different emergency services, basic first aid skills, develop team work skills as well as building confidence and aspirations. For the latest course there were 80 applicants for 16 spaces.

One Northern Devon Commissioned work – One Ilfracombe has been commissioned for 1 year by One Northern Devon to develop and support 7 ‘One’ Communities across Northern Devon.

The Community Car Service – Ilfracombe Town Council coordinates the Community Car Services that provides hospital transport for our most vulnerable residents. Delivered by our volunteers they provide transport for vital hospital services in Barnstaple, Taunton, Exeter and Plymouth. The Community Car Service delivered 169 car journeys during 2019/20.

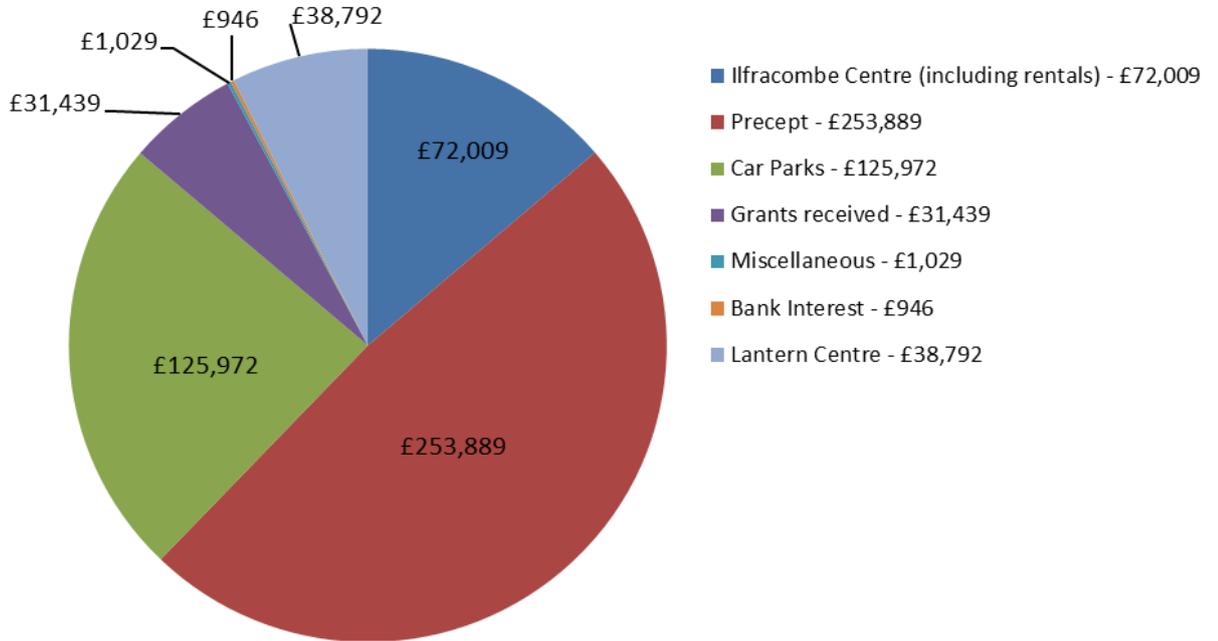
Dotto Land Train – Ilfracombe Town Council has been working on developing a business plan to run the Dotto Land Train. This plan has been agreed by Ilfracombe Town Council and the recruitment of staff to run the train was started in March. This project is now on hold until it is safe to start the operation of the Land Train.

Without Ilfracombe Town Council intervening and agreeing to run the train it was likely that no other operator would have come forward. This would have resulted in the train being sold and Ilfracombe losing a tourist attraction as well as the link between the harbour, sea front, high street and carparks within the town.

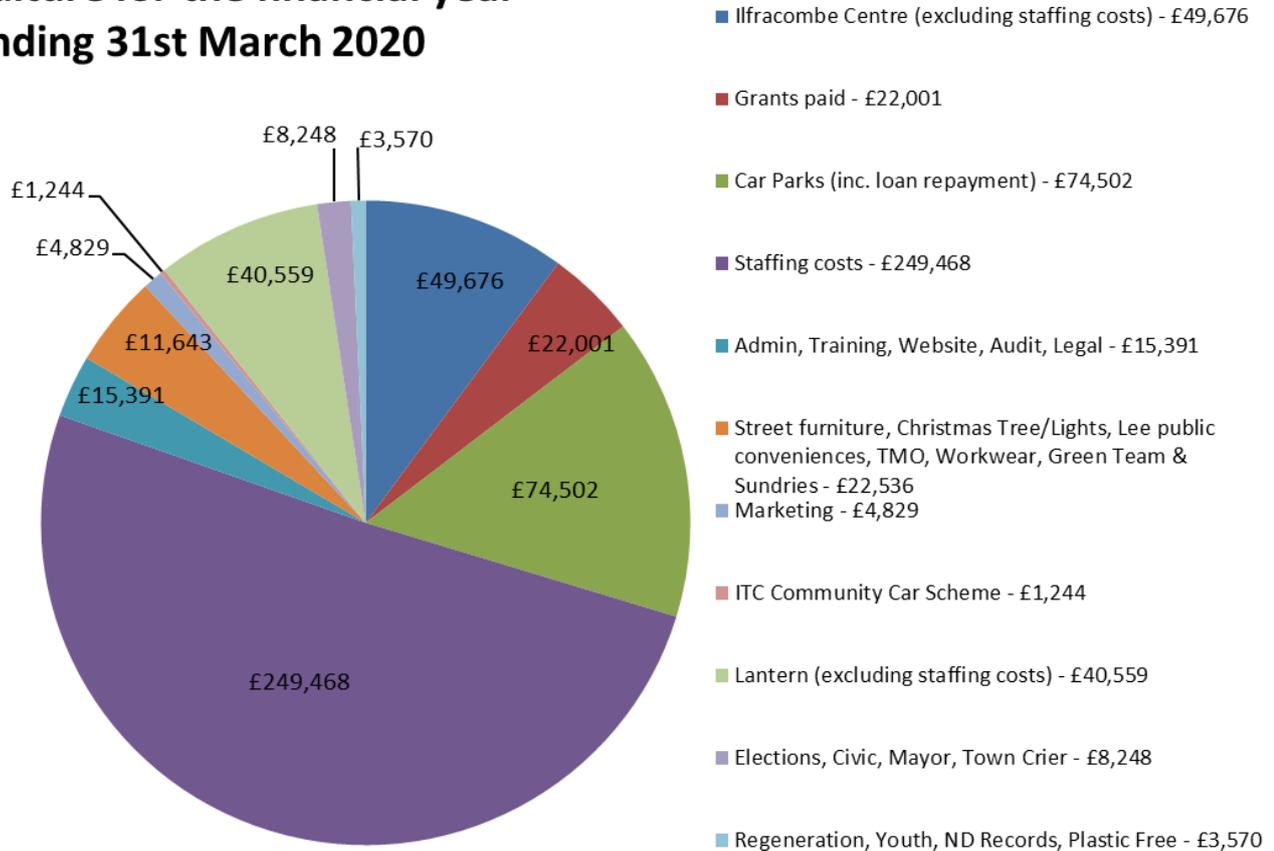


Financial Information

Income for the financial year ending 31st March 2020



Expenditure for the financial year ending 31st March 2020





Council members in office during 2019/20

Surname	Fore Name	Status	Ward
Aston	Lee	-	West
Coates	Pat	-	West
Coulter	George	-	East
Crabb	Paul	-	East
Donovan	Rod	Chair of F&GP Committee	West
Elliott	Terry	-	East
Fowler	Geoff	Chair of Planning Committee	West
Gates	Val	Mayor	East
Gear	Bert	-	East
Leck	Kit	Deputy Mayor / Chair of Staffing Committee	East
Pearson	Frank	-	East
Pearson	Netti	-	West
Schofield	Greg	-	East
Treble	Steve	-	West
Turton	Daniel	-	East
Williams	June	-	East
Wilson	Sara	-	West
Yabsley	Paul	-	East

Proper Officer & Centre Manager – Miss Rachel Collins

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