



# Annual Report 2025

**T**he purpose of this report is to update you on what we, as your Town Council, have been up to in the last twelve months. At our Annual Town Meeting in March we also made the presentation of awards to our Citizens of the Year, and presented the recipients of the Financial Assistance Award Scheme with their certificates.

I'd like to start by recounting some of my experiences as Town Mayor this year.

If I were to use one word to describe my time as Mayor, it would be "community". The incredible diversity of the many events I've been honoured to attend has really emphasized to me what a special community we have in Loughton. In our town we have something for everyone - whether that's a club, special interest group, charity, meeting place or welcoming public space. Whether you want to volunteer, learn something new, get fit, be entertained, help others or receive help yourself - you can find it here.

This was particularly evident during the fantastic Loughton Day in September, when over 50 of the community groups gathered at Loughton Cricket Club. It was an enormously popular event, and I had the pleasure of meeting everyone that exhibited.

I've attended many local events, including our much-loved Jessel Green Family Fun Day. The National Jazz Archive and Loughton Dramatic Society have invited me to all of their fantastic performances this year, which I've enjoyed enormously. I've been pleased to present winning certificates at several competitions, including Best Allotment at the Loughton Horticultural Show, and the Best Christmas Windows. It was an honour to take part in the Remembrance Day Parade and lay the Loughton wreath at the War Memorial. I also attended the Holocaust Memorial Service, which had a good turnout (despite the terrible weather that afternoon) of people across different faiths and backgrounds coming together. Recently I was at Lopping Hall for the Golden Jubilee of HRH The Duke of Gloucester as Ranger of Epping Forest, where pupils from Thomas Willingale School performed a reading. On Friday, 21 March 2025, I hosted a mock Town Council meeting at the Town Council Chamber Room with 18 children from Staples Road Primary School – Youth Council. I also must mention the most unexpected thing I did as Mayor, which was meeting two penguins at Woodland Grove care home in December!

On occasions where I haven't been able to go to an event, I was very grateful to my Deputy Mayor Les House and past Town Mayors for attending in my place and representing Loughton Town Council.

My two charities this year were Loughton Voluntary Care and Haven House Hospice, and I thank all the residents who donated to these charities across various events over the last several months.

I'm very proud to be part of this special community we have in Loughton, and I thank all the staff at Loughton Town Council and my fellow councillors for working so hard to preserve it.

My term as Mayor started with a beacon lighting in Hillyfields to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings, and it will fittingly end with another beacon lighting to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day on 8th May at Hillyfields open space, where I hope to welcome many Loughton residents.

**Cllr Katie Valentine**  
Town Mayor

## **Loughton Town Council**

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Town Clerk **Mark Squire**

## Planning & Licensing

### Cllr Carol Davies

Following the May 2024 local elections, a new Planning & Licensing Committee was formed, meeting 22 times over the course of the year to review and discuss key planning and licensing matters affecting Loughton.

This year saw a slight increase in planning applications. We reviewed 255, raising objections to 140 and no objection to 115. Fourteen applications were amended and referred for reconsideration. Objections were maintained to 12, while finding the changes acceptable to two.

Twenty appeals were lodged against planning decisions made by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), the local planning authority. Interestingly, one application we originally had no objection to, but upon review we ultimately supported EFDC's refusal reasons.

23 applications involved work on trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). Being so close to Epping Forest, we take great care when considering applications involving trees, recognising their contribution to the town's character, and the community's quality of life. Their changing colours, size and shape, brings vibrancy, interest and value to gardens and the townscape. Beyond their visual appeal, trees play a vital role in controlling climate change, providing much-needed oases of shade, helping to significantly cool urban areas. This is especially important as more gardens and driveways are paved over.

Trees are also crucial for biodiversity, supporting wildlife. A single mature oak tree can provide habitats for more than 2,000 different species. Therefore, we carefully assess the impact of applications involving trees. Ensuring our decisions support EFDC's biodiversity goals, alongside enhancing the town's environment, and the health and wellbeing of the community as a whole.

This year EFDC introduced three new TPOs in Loughton at:

- Grange Court, High Road
- 25 Upper Park
- Oak Tree Cottage, 31 Goldings Hill

September 2024 saw a significant legal case. EFDC successfully prosecuted a Loughton landowner involved in the illegal felling of 132 trees at the Debden Hall Estate. In sentencing the Judge stated "the case represented the most significant of its nature, in terms of the number of trees and acreage of land covered". 101 trees were ordered to be replanted. The landowner was fined £300,000, less one-third having pleaded guilty. LTC are

pleased that EFDC is resolved in taking robust enforcement action where tree offences and other breaches of planning control occur.

Over the year, we reviewed 12 licensing applications, raising objections to six, (this included 5 Pavement licences). We reviewed two Street Trading Licences, objecting to one.

The Committee also commented on a number of important planning and licensing consultations this year.

In summer 2024, EFDC invited Planning Consultants to review its procedures, amid concerns about meeting statutory requirements. A number of changes followed in the autumn, including streamlining EFDC Planning Committees to just two, meeting every three weeks to assess applications that fall outside officer delegation.

Applications referred to Committee changed. Major developments, involving ten or more dwellings, are automatically determined at Committee if recommended for approval.

Applications are referred where a Town or Parish Council has objected with material planning considerations, and the council has confirmed in writing their attendance to speak at the meeting.

Other applications that receive at least five public objections or letters of support raising relevant planning issues may be called in. In addition, councillors can call in applications themselves but must do so within four weeks of them appearing in the Members' Bulletin.

For other applications, householder extensions, Listed Buildings, variations of conditions etc, decisions are now only made at Planning Committee if considered appropriate by the Planning Portfolio Holder, or the Head of Planning, or a Planning Committee Chairman. Meaning, even if objections are received from Town or Parish Councils or local residents, these applications only go to Committee if one of these key decision-makers believes it is warranted.

This year has been an important one for planning and licensing in the district, with many significant changes. We remain committed to ensuring development in the town is sustainable, environmentally responsible, and in the best interests of the community.

By carefully assessing each proposal, we aim to enhance and protect what we all value about the town – ensuring Loughton continues to be a vibrant, welcoming, and healthy community, not just for now but for the generations to come.

## Recreation

### Cllr David Wixley

Following the Local Elections in May 2024 the Recreation Committee remained largely unchanged although we were pleased to welcome newly elected Cllr Ruth Sylvan to the Committee.

The Roding Valley Recreation Ground occupied much of our time, and I regret to report that football there has discontinued, having been played there since at least the 1950's. There are several reasons for this including a decline in men's grassroots football, frequent flooding of the pitches and that the changing rooms are no longer fit for use.

However, subject to a structural survey, the possibility exists that the changing rooms could be re-purposed as a Men's Shed. District Councillor, Chidi Nweke, is spearheading this project which would provide opportunities to tackle loneliness and social isolation which can affect men who have retired, with the chance to learn new skills, or pass on existing skills to others.

We also received a presentation from South Loughton Cricket Club about their ambitious plans for a new pavilion.

As you may be aware the District Council's Local Plan provides for the building of many new houses, and it is recognised that an increasing population will put extra recreational pressures on Epping Forest. To mitigate this EFDC has identified the R.V. Rec. as a SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space). At the EFDC Cabinet meeting of 9 December 2024, it was agreed that a sum of £318,000 could be used to enhance facilities on the Rec. I attended that meeting and was given assurances that LTC would be consulted on any proposals. To date no more information has been received.

Vanessa Gayton from the EFDC Communities & Wellbeing team attended two of our meetings to inform us of its Oakwood Hill Estate project. The benefits that this will bring are recorded in the minutes of the Recreation



Committee's meeting of 5 November 2024 and are available on the LTC website.

The Town Clerk and several councillors attended the Oakwood Hill Estate Stakeholders' event held on 15 November 2024 to learn more about the project.

It's disappointing to report that this year we were less successful in receiving awards from the Essex Playing Fields Association but still received a Certificate of Merit for the Traps Hill Playground and a "New Project" commendation for the playground on the R.V. Rec.

I am pleased to report that the Newmans Lane playground has been refurbished and is proving to be very popular. We are grateful to EFDC who provided some financial support for this project via the Government's UK Prosperity Fund. Thanks are also due to Cllrs. Mackinnon, Sylvan and Valentine who formed a sub-group to vet submitted plans and tenders.

In conjunction with the Environment & Heritage Committee we have been able to support the local Speed Watch Group in their quest for a SID (Speed Indicator Device) which has recently been installed in Valley Hill and complements those already fitted in

Buckhurst Hill. Much credit must go to those volunteers whose motivation is to make the roads safer for all of us.

Following the commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of D Day on 6 June last year, with a beacon lighting event on the Hillyfields Open Space, a similar event was held this year on 8 May for the 80th Anniversary of V.E. Day.

The annual Jessel Green Fun Day will take place on Sunday 6 July.

As always, I thank my fellow members of the Recreation Committee for their contributions and officers help and advice in running the Committee throughout the year.

**Photo: 80th Anniversary VE Day Beacon Lighting**

# Environment & Heritage

## Cllr Chris Pond

This has been a rather frustrating year, as the Committee has tried with almost no success to persuade the principal councils, Essex County Council (ECC) and Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) and others to take action on several fronts without success.

Designation of further conservation areas. EFDC have requested further information on obtaining Fields in Trust status for Jessel Green. Very slow responses from EFDC, who are the ground landlords, and Government increases in housing targets, doubling the number of houses the District needs to build in the next few years, makes it potentially vulnerable. Jessel Green which we thought was safe may now need further protection.

Resumption of High Road markets on a weekly basis. Requirements of highways Essex County Council (ECC) may be impossible to satisfy. This is ongoing but has yet to happen.

Disabled access to Loughton Station. Financial arrangements with Transport for London (TFL) cannot be met. TFL requested a contribution of £1 million towards the cost of installing disabled access, which is obviously out of the question.

Arrangements for designation of St John's burial ground as disused. This process seems in abeyance, although financial provision has had to be made for the future.

Replacement of salt/grit bins by ECC. A total lack of engagement by ECC, fortunately we did not suffer a hard winter this year.

Rubbish build-up on the Station yard has resulted in vermin infestation. ECC Highways to action this.

Solar panels on the Murray Hall. This will be pursued next year by the Recreation Committee.

It is now apparent that action by county and district councils will become ever more difficult to secure pending abolition of those bodies in 2028.

The Committee has considered wider environmental issues, but many things which seem appropriate have not been possible.

Activity where LTC/E&H is the sole player have progressed satisfactorily as usual; e.g. the second 'Loughton Day', at the Loughton Cricket Ground, (primarily to benefit local community groups) was an even greater success, this time around, with bumper crowds and over 50 community groups involved, demonstrating the wide number and variety of ongoing activities in the town.

Loughton Wombles has successfully reached its third anniversary, with



regular litter picking meets, continuing each month of the year in 'sunshine and snow'.

The Town Council continues with its heritage plaques programme, recognising significant contributions of past Loughton residents to the country and environment. One individual property in York Hill has now received its third blue plaque, which maybe a record!

The Christmas lights in the High Road, Station Road and The Broadway have been well received. We are currently out to tender, so expect new designs for the festive period later this year.

The Town Council supported a local 'Speed Watch' resident with the application and recent placement of a Speed Indicator Device (SID) along Valley Hill. The data received is now being analysed.

Sustainability – Cllr Fricker has a special interest in this and will be presenting a detailed report later this year.

The annual Horticultural Show proves ever popular but new entrants are always welcome.

We are fortunate that many local retailers still keenly participate in the annual Christmas Window competition.

Good work continues at the allotments and Town Council cemetery.

A special acknowledgement to Paul Hoy, Services Manager, who has done so much for the environment. After 20 years' service, he will sadly be leaving us this year and will be very much missed.

**Photo: Loughton Day 2024**

# Resources & General Services

## Cllr Michael Owen

The Resources and General Services Committee bears the responsibility of overseeing the finances of the Town Council and ensuring that it conducts itself with utmost openness, transparency, and ethical standards. The Committee carries out the day-to-day financial transactions necessary for the smooth running of the Town Council and oversees staff salaries, insurance (new 3 year contract being agreed), bill payments, banking arrangements (moving accounts this year), admin for the whole Council, personnel and employment matters, staff management, IT and office equipment, Members' expenses, management of Buckingham Court, and maintenance of the Kingsley and Murray Halls. Furthermore, the Committee is responsible for producing the quarterly Town Council Magazine, "Think Loughton," managing the Town Noticeboards and Website, and administering the Financial Assistance Scheme.

The Committee is also responsible for organising Civic Celebrations, such as the Citizenship Awards, and undertakes policy reviews, contract reviews, training strategy, internal audits, and banking and investment reviews on an annual basis. I am pleased to report that the Council received a clean audit report from the External Auditors. In the latest Internal Financial Check, Cllr MacKinnon visited the office on 6 January 2025 and undertook a financial check on the payroll reports for December 2024 and the council also re-appointed Heelis & Lodge as Internal Auditors for the years 2025 – 2030.

Each year, the Committee reviews the Council's insurances, Council-wide priorities, and policies, such as the Essex Pension Fund Administration Strategy, Investment Strategy and Policy, Members Remuneration Scheme, Procedure to fill a Casual Vacancy, Laptop Policy, Staff Absence Policy, Data Protection Policy, Code of Conduct

and Complaints procedure, Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, Health and Safety, and Training Strategy. This year the tax base which will be used to calculate the 2025/26 Band D Council Tax for Loughton Town Council is 13184.10 and will mean Loughton Town Council's annual council tax for a Band D property will be £80.48 (an increase of £4.13 a year). There will be no increase in the Councillors' Parish Allowance.

Awarding grants to local groups and organisations is a critical function of the Committee, and we ensure that these awards benefit people living in Loughton and provide a positive impact on the local community. This year, we are supporting 23 organizations with £27k, and the full list is available on the February 2025 minutes from the Resources Committee. Additionally, there is a separate grant provision of £8,500 to Citizens Advice Epping Forest.

Sadly this year we suffered a minor loss as the Council used a local charity for the collection of money related to Jessel Green day, who we had worked closely with for many years. Whilst we await the final outcome on this episode with the administrators, we have taken the opportunity to review and tighten our processes around creditors but there are always inherent risks when operating as a council and whilst we work to minimise these we cannot avoid them altogether.

I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Town Clerk, Mark Squire, who continues to do excellent work and our new pending Responsible Financial Officer, Kate Pendlebury (and outgoing RFO Kim Lumb), our Deputy Town Clerk, Pippa Bryce, and all our hard-working officers. Lastly, I thank all the members of the Resources Committee for their commitment and dedication to the welfare of the residents of Loughton by scrutinising the Town's finances carefully and conscientiously.



Attendance at meetings during the municipal year 2024/25

Committee/ Councillor	Council 8 meetings	Planning & Licensing 25 meetings	Recreation 5 meetings	Environment & Heritage 5 meetings	Resources & General Services 6 meetings
I Allgood	8	4	2	2	*5
R Brookes	6	1	2	1	*6
C Davies	7	*19			
W Dodd <sup>2</sup>	7	*20		*4	
S Fontenelle	6	1	2	1	*6
A Fricker	7	1	1	*5	
S Harriman	8	2		*4	
L House <sup>1</sup>	2		*3		
K-W Lee	7	*22			
N MacKinnon <sup>1</sup>	6		*4		*5
R Minhas	3	*16			
S Murphy	3	*17			
S Murray	8		*4		*5
J Obaseki	2			*1	
M Owen	7				*6
C C Pond	7			*3	
J Riley	8	*24	1	1	
M Stubbings	8	3	*5		*6
R Sylvan	8		*4		
C Ubah <sup>1</sup>	5	*16	1	*2	
K Valentine	7		*5	*5	
D Wixley	8	5	*5	4	6

\* a member of that committee

<sup>1</sup> Ballot Papers for Broadway and Debden Wards were incorrect at election on 2/5/24. Extraordinary Meeting held on 29 May to resolve Committee membership details and election of TM and DTM once all councillors confirmed. (CU) Confirmed Member of PLC on 3/6/25 (total 24 mtgs up to 28/4/25). <sup>2</sup>: (WD) Final member of Planning & Licensing Committee confirmed for 29/7/24 meeting (total 20 mtgs up to 28/4/25).

1 further Planning & Licensing Committee meeting was held on 12/05/2025 after this report was compiled.

Financial Report

£	2023/24*	2024/25*
Band D precept figure per household	71.39	76.35
Precept	904,300	993,909
Interest	23,222	23,112
Operating income	208,697	181,467
Total receipts	1,136,219	1,198,488
Resources & General Services	177,200	204,879
Environment & Heritage	229,472	234,357
Recreation	705,398	768,748
Planning & Licensing	50,000	53,000
Total payments	1,162,070	1,260,984
Balance c/forward	491,775	465,924
Add receipts	1,136,219	1,198,488
Less payments	1,162,070	1,260,984
Balance c/forward	465,924	403,428
General fund	280,024	302,924
Earmarked reserves	185,900	100,504
Overall balances	465,924	403,428

\*Unapproved & unaudited. For a detailed copy of the accounts please contact the council.

Members’ Allowances 2024/25

The Parish Basic Allowance for 2024/25 was £120 pa			
Councillor	Parish Basic Allowance	Travel & Subsistence	Total
	£	£	£
R Brookes	120.00		120.00
C Davies	120.00		120.00
W Dodd		53.28	53.28
S Fontenelle	120.00		120.00
S Harriman	120.00		120.00
S Murphy	120.00		120.00
J Obaseki	120.00		120.00
C Pond	120.00		120.00
M Stubbings	120.00		120.00
C Ubah	120.00		120.00
D Wixley	120.00	62.88	182.88

Cllrs I Allgood, W Dodd, A Fricker, L House, K-W Lee, N MacKinnon, R Minhas, S Murray, M Owen, J Riley, R Sylvan and K Valentine have renounced their right to claim the allowance.

**Councillors list, by ward, during the year 2024/25**

**Alderton Ward**  
Cllr Alan Fricker  
Cllr Michael Stubbings  
Cllr Katie Valentine

**Broadway Ward**  
Cllr Neil MacKinnon  
Cllr Ceejay Ubah

**Debden Ward**  
Cllr Les House

**Fairmead Ward**  
Cllr Carol Davies  
Cllr Sebastian Fontenelle  
Cllr Ruth Sylvan

**Forest Ward**  
Cllr Kin-Wan Lee  
Cllr Stella Murphy  
Cllr Jon Riley

**Roding ward**  
Cllr Stephen Murray

**St John’s Ward**  
Cllr Ian Allgood  
Cllr Stephen Harriman  
Cllr Joyce Obaseki  
Cllr Michael Owen  
Cllr Chris Pond

**St Mary’s Ward**  
Cllr Wendy Dodd  
Cllr Rajveer Minhas

**Whitebridge Ward**  
Cllr Rose Brookes  
Cllr David Wixley

Contact details for the councillors may be viewed at **www.loughton-tc.gov.uk**