



Annual Report 2023

This report is an update on what Loughton Town Council (LTC) has undertaken in the last year. At the Annual Town Meeting in March, we awarded our Citizen of the Year and Loughton Building Design winners and presented the Financial Assistance Award Scheme recipients with their certificates.

As Mayor, I chair full Council Meetings, involving all 22 Town Councillors. Over the year some important strategic matters have been reviewed, including the Local Plan modifications and ward boundary proposals. We listen to residents' complaints and try to rectify them.

Deputy Town Mayor, Mick Stubbings has been a constant support throughout my Mayoral term, along with all the Town Councillors.

To LTC officers, who work tirelessly to action our decisions, thank you for all your support and the hundreds of hours spent assisting us as elected Councillors. A special thank you to Pippa Bryce, who must be the most organised efficient person ever and our Town Clerk, Mark Squire for being solid, safe and dependable.

So how on earth did I get here? Firstly, by joining the right party! The Loughton Residents Association (LRA) is an independent local party, run by residents who enjoy contributing to the quality of life in Loughton. Trying to stop building on green spaces and high-rise blocks being built whilst understanding the need for more housing that young people can afford. Opposing payment of road use and getting yellow lines located where locals want them. Trying to retain diverse shops in the high street and Debden Broadway. We maintain our precious green spaces, and pass on requests for repairing potholes, replacing street lighting, providing salt bins and regular rubbish collections. The LRA hold 21 of the 22 seats at LTC, the other seat is held by Cllr Stephen Murray, an independent, with many of the same ideals as the LRA.

What a year it has been. It started with our Queen's Platinum Jubilee, celebrating 70 years' service, where the Lord Deputy Lieutenant lit the beacon on Hillyfields, one of Loughton's green spaces. Tea parties and cutting cakes were many! Then the death of our dear Queen Elizabeth II, during the period of mourning I was to wear black clothing together with a black ribbon, and I read the proclamation at the library to local Loughtonians proclaiming the new King and shouted 3 cheers for His Majesty.

I attended about 40 events being photographed by David Jackman for Everything Epping Forest at most! I only wear my chain on official engagements, but welcome the friendly recognition smile I receive when walking around town.

LTC staff organise major events at which I am guest of honour. Jessel Green Family Fun Day is an extremely popular fixture that attracted a staggering 3000+ people last year.

We look forward to Loughton Day this September, an event taking place at Loughton Cricket Ground showcasing local charities and organisations.

We have an allotment competition with a quite magnificent cup awarded to the winner. Prizes for the best Christmas Window Competition, where shopkeepers compete, and I am one of three judges. Christmas cards with designs produced by locals, the winning card being submitted to print for distribution. We maintain the safety of our playgrounds and outdoor gyms, playing fields, Roding Valley Recreation Ground (RVRG) tennis courts, and hire out our function rooms, the Murray and Kingsley Halls and latterly Buckingham Court. We order street furniture, instal heritage plaques, organise flower baskets, and maintain the War Memorial and drinking fountain.

At the War Memorial floral tributes were laid following the death of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II; and wreaths on 11 November for annual remembrance day. However, my most memorable occasion was leading the procession from The British Legion to the War Memorial, followed by a marching band and laying the Loughton Wreath in memory of those that gave their lives in both world wars. Then standing upon a podium alongside Dame Eleanor Laing MP and Mrs Caroline Pond, as past chairman of EFDC, where uniformed personnel marched past and saluted us. It was one of those moments where I had to pinch myself to know it was real.

Of the Jewish events in Loughton, of which I was very at home, the menorah lighting on Standard Green and the Holocaust Memorial Day where my heartfelt thoughts were expressed.

As Mayor I nominated a charity that benefits local residents. A treasure hunt was held on 23 April in Loughton High Road to raise monies for Lopping Hall, our multi-purpose community venue.

My Mayoral term ended in May, incorporating the coronation of King Charles III with all the invitations that brought. Street parties on Sunday 7 May were planned and Loughton residents were encouraged to join in the celebrations. Hopefully Church Lane, the street I live at, will host one.

Cllr Barbara Cohen
Town Mayor

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Town Clerk **Mark Squire**

Planning & Licensing

Cllr Carol Davies

In the last year the Planning and Licensing Committee held 22 meetings.

Chaired by myself, supported by my deputy Cllr Will Kaufman and experienced Planning Committee members, (Cllrs Stella Murphy, Phillip Abraham, Kevin Rainbow, John Riley and Graham Wiskin) and our very capable Town Council Planning Clerk Debra Paris and Jonathon Glynn, we have considered:

- 305 planning applications, of those we objected to 181 and raised no objection to 122. (The Committee made no comment in two instances, one application being duplicated by EFDC, the other being an application from the Town Mayor, Cllr Cohen.)
- 22 appeals – we objected to 16 and our appeal comments were lodged with the Inspector. (6 were for information only.)
- 5 licensing applications – objecting to 3.
- 18 amended applications or re-consultations. Of these we objected to 13 - the remaining 5 we had no objection to.

Owing to the sad death of HM Queen Elizabeth II, the Committee meeting for 12 September 2022 was cancelled with applications on that agenda being submitted under delegated powers, in order that comments to the Local Planning Authority were in time.

EFDC's new local plan has now been accepted by the Inspector. We are pleased that Jessel Green and the two London Underground sites, at Loughton and Debden Tube Stations have been successfully removed from this.

Also, regarding a recent proposal for 38 flats at Loughton Library - I can confirm that EFDC objected to the application, the key issue that the 38 flats exceeds the 20 flats allowed for in the draft Local Plan, and that there would be an adverse effect from pollution on the (SAC) or Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation as well as on the York Hill Conservation Area.

Regarding the SAC, EFDC have devised a so-called pollution mitigation strategy, consisting of charging developers of new houses to make an unspecified financial contribution. They are also likely to institute a clean air zone (CAZ) charging motorists to drive through the Forest. However, as the effectiveness of both the mitigation strategy and CAZ are completely unproven, we will continue to object to planning applications that create pollution, impact the Forest and negatively affect the health and wellbeing of residents.

EFDC made two new TPO's (Tree Preservation Orders) in Loughton this year and consulted the Committee on the Statement of Principles under The Gambling Act 2005.

Currently there is unfortunately a large development of 48 properties proposed for the EFDC ex-nursery site. Situated next to Hillyfields Open Space, bordering the GROW Community Garden, the plans include a 4-storey block of flats, large car park and the removal of most of the plots of mature trees. As this

site is elevated this will increase the negative impact and overbearing effect on the amenity of the surrounding neighbouring properties and street scene. This Committee objected most strongly to this application. However, it will ultimately be decided by EFDC's Development Management Committee rather than being voted on by its Area Plans South Sub-Committee.

For the 2023 Loughton Building Design Award, Cllr Barbara Cohen, Town Mayor, Cllr Chris Pond, Chairman of The Environment & Heritage Committee and myself considered two applications.

The first, an ex-local authority house, part of the original Debden Estate situated at the bottom of Newmans Lane, one of the post war permanent prefabricated British Iron and Steel Federation Houses. Since it had become quite dilapidated over time, it has been given a complete yet sensitive makeover.

The second, an extension adjoining a 1920's 'Renaissance' house in Church Lane by renowned firm of Wallis Gilbert and Partners. This development has paid such attention to the detail and styling of 'Limber', the main dwelling, that it blends in perfectly.

Although both quite different, importantly each property's refurbishment adds considerably to the street scene in their respective settings. It's for this reason my fellow judges and I decided both were worthy of note, with the award going to 49 Church Lane and the runner up being Newmans Lane.

I congratulate both architects and developers.



Recreation

Cllr David Wixley

I'm pleased to announce that work on building a new playground on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground (RVRG) is due to start in early April and expected to be completed by the Summer.

On the subject of playgrounds, the Council was approached by a mother whose young son suffers from food allergies. We were made aware that someone touching food and then playground equipment could result in a child suffering an allergic reaction as allergens can remain on surfaces. We responded to the mother's request and put up warning notices.

The basic message is:

1. Not to eat near play equipment.
2. Dispose of litter responsibly.
3. Wash/clean hands after eating.

As in previous years we received awards from the Essex Playing Fields Association with the RVRG and Willingale Road Playing Field both receiving Certificates of Merit as well as the playgrounds at Traps Hill, Newmans Lane and Westall Road receiving runner-up and silver awards respectively. In achieving these awards we recognize the efforts of our staff and the District Council's Ground Maintenance team in making this success possible.

In August the Town Mayor, Cllr Barbara Cohen, and myself took part in a hedgerow survey on the RVRG. This was organised by the District Council's Countrycare team and stemmed from an initiative by "The People's Trust for Endangered Species". The scheme is probably aimed at the farming community with the objective of demonstrating the benefits of healthy hedgerows to farmers. A short report on the survey can be

found in the agenda for the Recreation Committee meeting of 7.9.22 via the LTC website.

For reasons of tree safety and management the Council commissioned a tree survey in 2021. The survey recommended work to be carried out which included the removal of dead Cherry trees on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground. It is proposed to plant replacement Cherry trees over a period of time as funds permit.

At our November meeting the Committee received a presentation from Mr Fabrizio Luca Ferrari who is the Epping Forest District Council's Public Health Improvement Officer. His presentation outlined EFDC's Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26 which was well received with members' questions being answered.

The Willingale Road Nature Reserve continues to benefit from volunteer workdays held on 6.10.22 and 5.1.23 organized by EFDC's Countrycare team. There are plans for a moth survey in April or May.

The Committee is responsible for two community halls. The Murray Hall where the Council is looking into whether or not it is viable and cost effective to install solar panels and the Kingsley Hall where essential repairs and improvements have been made to the rear garden area.

It was good to see the return of the Jessel Green Family Fun Day after a break of 3 years due to the Covid pandemic, the event seemed more popular than ever. This year's event will be held on Sunday 25 June.

Finally, I thank officers and Committee members for their contributions throughout the year.

Resources & General Services

Cllr Michael Owen

The Resources and General Services Committee bears the responsibility of overseeing the finances of the Town Council (TC) ensuring 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 TC overseeing staff salaries, insurance, bill payments, banking arrangements, Council admin, personnel and employment matters, staff management, IT and office equipment, Members' expenses, management of Buckingham Court. Furthermore, the Committee is responsible for producing the quarterly TC Magazine, "Think Loughton," managing the Town Noticeboards and Website, and administering the Financial Assistance Scheme.

The Committee organises Civic Celebrations, such as the Christmas Card Competition and Citizenship Awards. It undertakes policy reviews, contract reviews, training strategy, internal audits, and banking and investment reviews on an annual basis. I am pleased to advise that the Council received a clean audit report from the External Auditors.

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 Use, Staff Absence, Data Protection, Code of Conduct and Complaints procedure, Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, Health and Safety, and Training Strategy. This year, the TC faced significant challenges due to the fallout from the Covid pandemic and global inflation issues, which hindered our ability to plan for the longer term. Despite this, we have tried to keep the increase in council tax to an absolute minimum, given that RPI was at 13.7% and CPI at 10.7% as of November '22. To achieve this, we made savings, reduced expenditure on certain projects, and postponed others. There will be no increase in the Councillors' Parish Allowance. This year the tax base which

will be used to calculate the 2023/24 Band D Council Tax for Loughton Town Council (LTC) is 12,667.9 (12,732.8 last year) and will mean LTC's annual council tax for a Band D property will be £71.39. An increase of approximately £6.23.

Awarding grants to local groups and organisations is a critical function of the Committee, and we ensure these awards benefit people living in Loughton providing a positive impact on the local community. This year, we are supporting 17 organisations (up from 14 last year), and the full list is available in the Committee's February 2023 minutes. The committee for the grants consists of three members, which will increase to four next year to include the previous cycle's Mayor, who brings a better insight into the decision-making process due to their involvement in local organisations during their mayoral tenure. Additionally, there is a separate grant provision of £8,500 to Citizens Advice Epping Forest.

On 15 December 2022, Cllr Murray visited the Office and undertook a financial check on purchase orders and receipts for the Financial Year 2022/23. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Town Clerk, Mark Squire, who continues to do excellent work, our Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, Kim Lumb, our Community Manager, 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.

In January 2023, the Committee passed a resolution to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge for local councils and requested that this protocol be included in the Councillors' induction pack. The Committee was tasked with supplying bunting for both Loughton High Road and The Broadway for King Charles' Coronation celebrations in May 2023 which we were pleased to support.

Environment & Heritage

Cllr Chris Pond

As usual, the Committee met roughly 6-weekly. Topics covered included: **Thames Water (TW)** Loughton's water infrastructure has continued to deteriorate, and Committee members have tried to bring TW to discussions on this. Unfortunately, they are accountable to nobody, save their distant shareholders. Although they did agree to a couple of video link meetings, mains continue to burst frequently. Remedying this would require action at a national government level. We do what we can but beyond moaning, that is nil.

Benches – York Hill Green

A major issue at the beginning of the year was the question of returning these benches, with their view into Kent, which had been removed by order of the Head Epping Forest Constable – as they sit on City of London land. Eventually, the Committee (on a most unusual vote) decided to have them replaced.

Allotments

The three sites in Loughton all contributed to the successful Horticultural Show, which the Committee facilitated. At present, this part of the Committee work is going without incident.

Wombles

There have been litter picking expeditions at roughly 6-weekly intervals, where a team of 6-10 people patrol and remove litter from two or three beats. It is a great pity this is necessary, but the improvement is great.

Signage

Jointly with the Forest, we got funding for pedestrian signage to guide people who arrive at the station towards the Forest, which is not as straightforward for a visitor as one might think.

St Johns Churchyard

We were notified by the Church that they intended to apply to the Ministry of Justice that they proposed to close the churchyard. This process is governed by a rather cumbersome statutory process; we held a useful preliminary meeting with them, but the Order has not yet been applied for. This would mean the Church no longer maintained their

churchyard, and that LTC would have to decide if it wished to assume the responsibility, or passport it to Epping Forest District Council.

Alleyways

I obtained some funding from Essex County Council for naming some further alleyways within Loughton. The aim is to encourage walking and develop shortcuts for pedestrians, e.g., to shops, bus stops, and stations, and to provide an alternative to car use.

Claybury Hospital War Memorial

This was found in Loughton and returned to Redbridge Museum after we had cared for it for the time the Museum was closed.



Attendance at meetings during the municipal year 2022/23

Committee/ Councillor	Council 7 meetings	Planning & Licensing #22 meetings	Recreation 5 meetings	Environment & Heritage 5 meetings	Resources & General Services 6 meetings
P Abraham	5	19*			
P Beales**				*	
R Brookes	5		4		4*
B Cohen	7	2		5*	3*
C Davies	3	20*		1	
T Downing	3			1	
S Fontenelle	6	2	5*	5*	2
L House	5		4*		
J Jennings	3				1*
W Kauffman	5	20*			3*
N MacKinnon	6	1	5*		
S Murphy	5	18*			
S Murray	6		5*		5*
M Owen	3				5*
C C Pond	7			5*	1
C P Pond	6			5*	2
K Rainbow	6	20*			
J Riley	5	18*			1
M Stubbings	6	2	5*	1	6*
K Valentine	5		5*	5*	
G Wiskin	7	19*		4*	
D Wixley	6	2	5*	4	6

* a member of that committee

** Cllr P Beales has been granted a leave of absence

#One Planning Meeting scheduled for 12/9/22 was cancelled following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II. (Planning Committee Comments for that meeting were submitted under powers of delegated authority)

Financial Report

£	2021/22	2022/23**
Band D precept figure per household	62.44	65.16
Income		
Precept	782,675	829,663
Interest	57	11,481
Operating income	145,211	152,900
Total receipts	927,943	994,044
Running Costs		
Resources & General Services	208,462	269,571
Environment & Heritage	212,866	201,015
Recreation	542,338	630,279
Planning & Licensing	34,000	34,170
Total payments	997,666	1,135,035
Summary		
Balance c/forward	702,489	632,766
Add receipts	927,943	994,044
Less payments	997,666	1,135,035
Balance c/forward	632,766	491,775
Total net assets represented by:		
General fund	343,594	267,530
Earmarked reserves	289,172	224,245
Overall balances	632,766	491,775

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

Members' Allowances 2022/23

The Parish Basic Allowance for 2022/23 was £120 pa			
Councillor	Parish Basic Allowance	Travel & Subsistence	Total
	£	£	£
P Abraham	120.00		120.00
R Brookes	120.00		120.00
B Cohen	120.00		120.00
C Davies	120.00		120.00
T Downing	120.00		120.00
S Fontenelle	120.00		120.00
L House	120.00		120.00
N MacKinnon	120.00		120.00
S Murphy	120.00		120.00
C C Pond	120.00		120.00
C P Pond	120.00		120.00
M Stubbings	120.00		120.00
G Wiskin	120.00		120.00
D Wixley	120.00		120.00

Cllrs P Beales, J Jennings, W Kauffman, S Murray, M Owen, K Rainbow, J Riley, and K Valentine have renounced their right to claim the allowance.

Councillors list, by ward, during the year 2022/23

Alderton Ward

Cllr Philip Abraham
Cllr Michael Stubbings
Cllr Katie Valentine

Roding Ward

Cllr Rose Brookes
Cllr Neil MacKinnon
Cllr Stephen Murray
Cllr David Wixley

Broadway Ward

Cllr Philip Beales
Cllr Les House
Cllr Kevin Rainbow

St John's Ward

Cllr Michael Owen
Cllr Caroline Pond
Cllr Chris Pond

Fairmead Ward

Cllr Carol Davies
Cllr Sebastian Fontenelle
Cllr Will Kauffman

St Mary's Ward

Cllr Barbara Cohen
Cllr J Jennings

Forest Ward

Cllr Trevor Downing
Cllr Stella Murphy
Cllr Jon Riley

Cllr G Wiskin

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