

THORNBURY TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/2024



The Annual Report provides an overview of the Civic Year

1st May 2023 – 30th April 2024.



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A message from your Mayor



DEAR RESIDENT OF THORNBURY,

I hope this annual report finds you well. What an honour and privilege it has been to be chair of Thornbury Town Council & Mayor of Thornbury this year. Our council year started with a fresh new council being elected, which brought with it exciting new energy & experience. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow councillors for their hard work & support throughout the year.



My year as Mayor has brought too many highlights to list here, with every invitation and mayoral appearance being an insightful dip into the wonderful community town we live in.

One of my personal passions, and a key part of our current council strategy, is youth provision. An early highlight of the year was an invitation to the Krunch 'Summerfest', held up at the skate park. I know the ceremonial robes attend many events, but this is surely the first time a mayor has been taught to skateboard!

There have been many opportunities to visit and witness some of the various incredible volunteer group's work within the town, most of which are ably assisted by our wonderful Volunteer Centre. Again, there are too many to list but honourable mention to Thornbury in Bloom team who work so hard to make our town look so wonderful.

Our open spaces, cemetery & children's play areas continue to be such a valuable asset to the town & thanks must go to our outside staff who work so hard to not only keep them immaculate but help us to hit our climate & nature goals by implementing various new ecological schemes throughout.

Whilst Councillors may take some of the credit for Thornbury Town Council's work, it is not possible without the hard work & continued support of our workforce led by our new Clerk Hannah Bowden.

I look forward to seeing you out and about this year, if you would like me to attend your function or event please visit <https://www.thornburytowncouncil.gov.uk/thornbury-town-mayor/>.



MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

Following the local elections held in May 2023, we are pleased to introduce your councillors for the next 4 years. This election saw 7 newly elected members and 7 returning councillors, bringing a strong mix of fresh ideas and experience to the team. Additionally, 2 councillors were co-opted later in the civic year, further strengthening our representation.

Below are the details of your councillors and which area/ward they represent. We encourage all residents to stay engaged with their councillors and work together to shape the future of our area.

There are regular 'Meet your Councillor' sessions, these are held on the last Saturday of the month in the Town Hall between 10am & 12.30pm. Do pop in if you have any matters to raise or just to say "hello".

NORTH WEST WARD	 Cllr James Murray (Mayor)	 Cllr Phil O'Rourke	 Cllr John Reynolds	 Cllr Chris Woodhouse
NORTH EAST WARD	 Cllr Helen Ball (Deputy Mayor)	 Cllr Chris Rowe	 Cllr Jayne Stansfield	 Cllr Danny Bonnett
SOUTH WARD	 Cllr Chris Bloor	 Cllr Gil Gilroy	 Cllr Helen Harrison	Vacancy as of September 24
SOUTH EAST WARD	 Cllr Chris Davies	 Cllr Fiona Deas	 Cllr Kath Greenman	 Cllr Maggie Tyrrell

The new sandpit at the Mundy Playing Fields has been a huge success!



Creating the new sandpit at the Mundy Playing Fields

NEW PROJECTS, INITIATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE YEAR

Redevelopment of Eastland Avenue Play Area

The play area off Eastland Avenue was transformed with a £70,000 make over, including the installation of lots of new and exciting play equipment and new paths and fencing. The area is now a much more welcoming place for local residents to enjoy.



Lots of Exciting Developments at the Mundy Playing Fields

- A new sand pit was installed at the playing fields which has proved to be a huge success.
- We have increased the amount of accessible seating that is available at the playing fields.
- The playing fields is now part of a Biodiversity Ring being implemented around Thornbury, following the planting of lots of new trees and nature friendly hedging.
- New fixed goal posts have been installed onto the two football pitches on the Poulterbrook field, meaning that they are available to be used at all times (with the assistance of a s106 South Gloucestershire Council grant).

More Opportunities to Meet Your Councillors and Improved Community Engagement

Town Councillors were busy manning stalls at local events during the year, including the Carnival and Christmas Lights switch on. These opportunities are a valuable way for local residents to meet their local Councillors and for Councillors to hear first-hand their comments and concerns. It's also an opportunity for the Town Council to inform residents about future projects and initiatives, and to get their views and input on them. The Town Council also ran a very successful Annual Town Meeting in April, including an opportunity for recipients of Town Council grants to showcase the invaluable work they do. Monthly "Meet Your Councillors" sessions continue at the Town Hall on the last Saturday of most months and are well attended. Many of our Climate and Nature initiatives included the opportunity for local residents to get involved on a volunteer basis – these were very successful and well attended.

Youth Survey

The Town Council carried out a youth survey in the local area to gain more of an understanding from young people themselves about what they feel are the priorities for improving facilities for them and the results of the survey will be used to advise the capital strategy and open spaces.



Delivery of New Electric Vehicle and Commitment to More

The Town Council committed to the transition from diesel to electric vehicles and we took delivery of our first electric vehicle in March with more to come in the future.



Enhancing Wildlife and Encouraging Nature



The first meeting of the newly formed Climate and Nature Committee took place in June 2023 and one of their first actions was to agree a Local Climate and Nature Action Plan for Thornbury. This signalled the Town Council's commitment to tackling climate issues and supporting nature. Since then, lots of initiatives have taken place including:

- Reduced verge cutting to encourage natural growth and implementation of new open space management plans.
- Adjusted mowing regimes and creation of wildlife habitats, such as bird boxes, bug hotels and hedgehog houses.
- Wildflower seed sowing days with volunteers helping to plan a total of 650 square metres of wildflower meadow at the Mundy Playing Fields and Chantry Field.

Tree Planting

Through an online tree vote, the public had the opportunity to choose new trees for our open spaces. Supported by a grant from the Tree Council, we held tree planting days with volunteers, planting over 70 trees and establishing over 100 metres of hedgerow. Some of these will become part of the local Biodiversity Ring, an initiative which the Town Council is very happy to support.



Supporting Better Waste Management



- The Town Council supported Plastic Free Thornbury by conducting a plastic audit, phasing out single-use plastics, adopting refill packs, recycling soft plastics produced at the Town Hall and registering as a water refill point.
- During a clean-up day at the Chantry Field volunteers collected near 500g of general waste and nearly 200g of recyclables, while learning about the carbon reduction benefits of proper waste management.
- The Town Council hosted a workshop on converting fruit peels into cleaning solutions, raising awareness of issues around food waste.



Reducing Emissions

- The Town Council began annual carbon emissions accounting to assess and identify ways to minimise our carbon emissions.
- We conducted an energy efficiency survey and thermal imaging at the Town Hall, resulting in an energy savings action plan to guide our future energy conservation efforts.

Bees at St Marys Churchyard and Thornbury Cemetery

The Town Council was very happy to support the installation of bee hives by local beekeepers into both St Marys Churchyard and Thornbury Cemetery.



We Welcomed New Additions to Our Team!

During the year we welcomed three new members of staff to our team – a new Grounds Maintenance Operative in December 2023, a new Chief Executive/Responsible Financial Officer in January 2024 and a new Cleaner in March 2024. We are very happy to have them on board and hope they enjoy making a real difference to the town!

Don't miss out! Sign up NOW to our Climate and Nature E-newsletter via:

Google form: Scan the QR code or go to <https://forms.gle/i6mEYxXFNm7vGNpx6> OR

Email: climateandnature@thornburytowncouncil.gov.uk OR

simply visit us in **Town Hall**, during office hours, to get the latest news. The link will take you to an external Google Form which may not meet the same accessibility standard as our Town Council website.



Committee Reports



STAFFING

Over the past year there have been several staff changes and the Staffing Committee has been busy with staff recruitment. We wish those that have departed all the very best for the future and welcome those that have joined us, all of whom are settling in very well. Staffing Committee continue to employ a HR support partner in Worknest. They have provided invaluable support over the past year on a wide variety of issues. Finally, I would like to thank all the Town Council staff for their commitment to the work they do and in ensuring excellent relations with members of the public.



Cllr Jayne Stansfield

Chair of Staffing



PLANNING

The Planning Committee members commented on a wide range of minor planning applications. ranging from house extensions to work to trees in the conservation area. Consideration is always given to the effect of extensions on neighbour's amenities and the effect of the design on the neighbourhood. Larger applications that came before the Committee included the Lidl store proposal on Midland Way where there was no objection in principle but concern over traffic movements and the loss of trees was expressed. The committee has objected to several new build proposals outside the current development boundary.

The committee commented on various South Gloucestershire Council consultations, including the early draft Local Plan. Proposals to keep housing near to employment areas, to protect Thornbury's commercial area, to develop housing on land near the golf course and to ensure infrastructure was installed ahead of development were supported.



Cllr Maggie Tyrrell

Chair of Planning





OPEN SPACES

During the past year, the Open Spaces committee has supported the Town Council staff in completing a number of initiatives. These include the Redevelopment of Eastland Avenue Play Area including the installation of lots of new and exciting play equipment and new paths and fencing. The area is now a much more welcoming place for local residents to enjoy. There were also a number of developments at the Mundy Playing Fields including installation of a very popular sand pit, increased availability of accessible seating, installation of fixed goal posts on the Poulterbrook pitches, and planting of trees and hedges as part of a biodiversity ring around Thornbury. Another initiative to support biodiversity was the installation of bee hives in St Mary's Churchyard and Thornbury Cemetery.

As part of the council's commitment to reducing its carbon emissions, we took delivery of our first electric vehicle with more to come in the future.

Open Spaces Committee would like to express our gratitude to the council staff, especially the outdoor staff who do so much wonderful work to look after our open spaces and maintain them as places we can all enjoy.



Cllr Helen Harrison
Chair of Open Spaces



CLIMATE AND NATURE

The Climate and Nature Committee came into being this year, with the remit to support the other committees with advice where relevant, and to spearhead the Town Council's action in light of the acknowledgement of the climate and nature emergency (declared in 2021).

We have been very lucky to have the support and drive of Yan, who is qualified in the area of carbon quantification, and who initiated the Thornbury Eco-Volunteer scheme, and has been the driving force behind tree-planting and clean up events through the year. The Town Council are reducing pesticides in all our work, and working towards elimination of glyphosate, contained in the spray known as Round-Up. These chemicals are bad for bug-life, and potentially harmful to humans, and they persist in the environment for years after application.

The committee is supporting the extension of Thornbury's Biodiversity Ring, a Sustainable Thornbury project; it's supporting Plastic Free Thornbury, and is looking to eliminate single-use plastics from council work; it is helping to make the town environment nicer and more sustainable with suitable tree and perennial planting in town council controlled areas; it's helping to engage with residents on the topic of community energy - watch out for more on this in the coming year.



Cllr Danny Bonnett
Chair of Climate & Nature



FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSE

This committee is responsible for ensuring that the council manages its finances within budget, and annually reviews in depth proposals for the following year's budget and makes recommendations to Full Council. In year, if there are specific budget requests from other committees, this committee reviews these. For example, the committee agreed the new charging regime for the public tennis courts. The committee also agrees the allocation of community development and small grant awards to community organisations, for the benefit of our residents.

The committee also has a programme of reviewing and updating all the council's policies, including any new policies. This is one way in which, we, as a council ensure we are 'fit for purpose' and operate to a high standard of public service. Moreover, every year there is an independent audit carried out of the council's operations. We have maintained a judgement of 'High Standard' for a number of years, which can give re-assurance to our residents that we are working effectively for their benefit.



Cllr Helen Ball

Chair of Finance & General Purpose



GRANT AWARDS

Thornbury Town Council awards grants to projects which will provide direct benefit to the local community.

This year, the Town Council introduced a new Grant Policy that outlined two distinct funding categories for grants:

1. Community Development Grant Aid –

Organisations can receive a maximum of £3,000 for projects. The application window is April/May for this category and applications can only be made once every 3 years.

2. Small Grants – Organisations can apply for up to £750 once a year for projects. Application windows open twice a year; April/May & October/November.

The term project means activities, capital investments/equipment, or time-limited developmental running costs.

To the right is a table outlining the support provided by the Town Council to various local organisations through the new grant scheme in 2023/24.

Community Development Grant Aid	
Grant Aid	Allocation
South Glos Digital Community Interest Company	£3,000
JIGSAW Thornbury	£3,474
Thornbury Area Youth Music (TAYM)	£1,200
The Inspire Arts Trust	£3,000
Thornbury Arts Festival Trust	£3,000
Krunch South West	£1,450
Thornbury & District Community Association (The Chantry)	£3,000
Small Grant	
Phase CIC	£750
Sustainable Thornbury	£375
Sustainable Thornbury	£375
Thornbury and District Sea Cadets	£300
Sight Support West of England	£650
Thornbury In Bloom	£750
Thornbury Christmas Lights Association	£750
St Mary's C of E Primary School Parent Teacher Friends Association	£750
Jigsaw Thornbury	£750
Thornbury and District Heritage Trust	£3,450
Thornbury Community Permaculture Project (TCPP)/Sustainable Thornbury	£750
Thornbury Town Football Club (Thornbury Town Tigers – Girls Team)	£656.11
Great Western Air Ambulance Charity	£750
Thornbury Duke of Edinburgh Award Open Award Centre (DofE)	£750
TOTAL AWARDED	£29,930.11



SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2023/24 AND BUDGET FOR 2024/5

	2023/24 ACTUAL (£)	2024/25 BUDGET (£)
Balances brought forward	1,077,866	1,304,194
Precept	898,894	931,436
Total other receipts	351,610	427,653
Staff costs	422,046	484,917
Loan interest/capital repayments	18,784	15,184
All other payments	583,346	541,527
Balances carried forward	1,304,194	1,621,655

This summary offers a clear comparison between the previous year's actual accounts and the planned allocation of resources for the current year.

This table provides a concise overview of the **actual financial performance** for the 2023/24 financial year, alongside the **proposed budget** for 2024/25. The figures reflect our ongoing commitment to sound financial management and strategic investment in key areas to benefit the community.

In 2023/24, we successfully delivered on several key initiatives while maintaining a balanced financial position. The 2024/25 budget has been carefully planned to build on this progress, focusing on continued service provision and development of projects and assets.

Balance Brought Forward – these are the reserves held by the council, which include both earmarked funds and a general reserve. The general reserve provides a contingency equivalent to 5 months of expenditure for the 2023/24 financial year.

Precept – is calculated based on the estimated budgetary needs of the Town Council and divided among households according to their council tax band. Each precept is a part of the overall council tax.

Other receipts - these include various income sources available to the Town Council such as grants, rental income and hire fees, interest on investments and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Staff costs – includes all associated costs related to staff resource for the Town Council

Loan Interest and Capital Repayments – This refers to the repayment of Public Works Loans secured to fund key projects. The repayment amounts, including both interest and capital, are determined by the terms of the loan agreement.

All other payments – this encompasses costs not included above such as the costs for civic office and functions, administration of the council, costs associated with delivery of services, management of open spaces, maintaining and purchase of new assets, site and property management, grants, service level agreements and various projects.

Balance carried forward - includes the remaining reserves and allocation of funds to specific reserve accounts.





COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE

Council & Committee Meetings Attendance 2023-2024						
	Full Council	Finance & General Purpose	Open Spaces	Planning	Staffing	Climate & Nature
Number of meetings	7	6	5	5	7	4
Helen Ball	7	6	N/A	2	7	N/A
Danny Bonnett	4	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	4
Chris Rowe	2*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jayne Stansfield	5	5	N/A	4	6	3
James Murray	7	3*	2*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Phil O'Rourke	6	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
John Reynolds	6	6	5	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chris Woodhouse	6	3	N/A	N/A	6	4
Chris Bloor	7	N/A	5	5	N/A	4
Helen Harrison	4	N/A	4	N/A	N/A	3
Gil Gilroy	2*	N/A	N/A	N/A	3*	N/A
Simon Johnson	5	3	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chris Davies	7	6	3	3	N/A	N/A
Fiona Deas	7	6	4	5	N/A	N/A
Kath Greenman	6	N/A	0**	N/A	7	3
Maggie Tyrrell	6	4	N/A	5	5	N/A
Cheryl Jenkinson	3**	0**	N/A	N/A	1**	N/A
Mark Oaten	2**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
*Joined Council or Committee mid-year						
**Left Council or Committee mid-year						



HAVE YOUR SAY – WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE SEATING IN THORNBURY!

We are seeking the views of local people about where they feel there is a need for additional seating around the town. We are keen to gather views from as many people as possible, from every part of the local area, who between them have walked every road, lane and path, and stopped to admire every view on offer.



Please get in touch with us before 30 November 2024 and let us know your views. You can message us, email us, call us, scan the QR code or tear off the slip below and return it to the Town Hall. All our contact details are on the back page.

- Is there somewhere you would have appreciated the chance to sit and rest your legs while walking?

.....

- Is there somewhere particularly beautiful where it would have been nice to sit and admire the view?

.....

- Is there somewhere you have needed to wait and the chance to sit down would have been appreciated?

.....

- Is there somewhere it would be nice to sit, meet friends and catch up, perhaps under cover?

.....

Where seats are requested on our land, we will use this information when we next need to decide where to put new seating. Where seats are requested on land that is not managed by us, we will pass the information on to the landowner and ask them to consider putting some seating in that location.

View from the Town Hall roof



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