

CARTERTON TOWN COUNCIL
Annual Report 2003/2004

Mayor's Foreword



The Annual Report provides an opportunity to take stock of the last twelve months. The Town Council is only one of many organisations working within the town and I would like to thank those who have helped and supported our efforts in any way. We have demonstrated that partnership working can and does deliver.

One of the highlights of the year was the opening of the new leisure centre in November 2003. This splendid facility is already much appreciated by many people of all ages. Sadly, the year saw the closure of the open-air pool in Swinbrook Road. The cost of refurbishing the pool was beyond our limited means but we are committed to retaining the area for recreational use. I would like to thank all those who worked at the open-air pool over the years and who taught so many of our young people to swim.

Another highlight has been the completion of the town centre paving scheme. The work has been funded by all three councils and a private landowner. The end result has dramatically improved the look of the town centre.

The results of the Carterton Check were published in the summer of 2003. Following that, we were fortunate in securing a second funding package which runs for three years and which goes towards the costs of employing a Project Manager to take forward the forty plus projects identified in the Carterton Check. I would like to record here my delight at our being awarded Beacon Status by the Countryside Agency for this work. I sense that this project has brought together the wider community and that we are now all working with a common purpose towards making Carterton the place that we all want it to be.

The construction of new homes on the NorthEast development continues apace and the new link road towards the A40 opened last November. The Town Council is keen to make residents on the new estate feel part of the community and held a very successful open day at St John's School last autumn.

The Town Council has relatively modest financial resources. The net budget for 2004/05 is £227,840, an increase of just over 2% on the current year. Because of the increase in the number of houses in the town, the charge to each household has decreased by more than 6%.

The year has also seen a number of very successful civic events. We have held several receptions, a coffee morning, the Mayor's Walk (which this year raised more than £1600), the Civic Church Service and the Switch On of the Christmas lights. All of these events provide an opportunity for the residents of the Town to meet with Councillors and also for us to promote our town to dignitaries from other areas.

The icing on the cake this year has been the award of Quality status to the Town Council – the first town or parish council in Oxfordshire to achieve this distinction. The Quality scheme was launched by the Government last year and provides an independent assessment of our work. Those Councils awarded Quality status are assessed as being representative, competent, well managed and able to take on an enhanced role. We look forward to developing our role in the coming months.

All that we do is only achieved by the hard work of Councillors and Town Hall staff. In closing I would like to record my thanks and appreciation to the Mayoress, the Deputy Mayor and Councillors for the support and help that they have given to me. My thanks also go to the Town Hall staff who help not just the Councillors but all the residents of the town. Carterton is indeed fortunate to be served so well.

K.W. Stone

Town Mayor
May 2004

Introduction

This Report describes the main achievements of Carterton Town Council during 2003/04. It also gives details about the services provided by the Council.

About the Town

Carterton, the second largest town in West Oxfordshire, is situated some 7 miles south west of Witney. The town lies on the edge of the Thames Valley and is close to the Cotswold area of outstanding natural beauty. Carterton's population has more than trebled in size during the last 30 years, to a present total of about 15,000. This figure will continue to increase as some 1400 new homes are built in the development area to the north east of the town.

Much of this high development rate has been due to the presence of the adjoining RAF Brize Norton air base. Carterton is rightly proud of its close and friendly relationship with the Royal Air Force, which is the largest employer in the area. Other local employment is found on the Southern Industrial Estate where there is a wide range of firms of all sizes. For employment further afield, Carterton is conveniently located for Oxford, Swindon, Cheltenham, Witney and Faringdon.

Carterton grew rapidly through the 1960s, 70s and 80s without any compensating provision of public leisure services. However, the current planned growth will be matched by improvements to the town centre and local facilities. The Town Council is working with West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to attract new shops and businesses to the town and also to provide much needed sport and leisure facilities.

Carterton has the usual commercial facilities of a town of 15,000 population (and in addition has a private market on Thursday of each week which draws hundreds of visitors to the town).

Employment

The 1991 Census statistics revealed approximately 5,000 jobs in Carterton, of which a significant proportion were at RAF Brize Norton. About 50% of the town's residents commuted to work outside Carterton. Since then, the number of jobs outside the base has been increased both by the development of the District-owned industrial estate off Black Bourton Road and by the new retail and commercial development in the town centre.

The attraction of Carterton to major employers will increase now that the link road to the A40 has been completed.

Carterton Town Council

The Town Council Offices are at the Town Hall, Alvescot Road, Carterton, Oxon OX18 3JL. Tel No. 01993 842156, and Fax No. 01993 844898. Email: jeustace@carterton-tc.gov.uk Website: www.carterton-tc.gov.uk The Town Hall is open 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Carterton Town Council was established in 1985 when the Carterton & Black Bourton Parishes were split.

The Council and its Committees

The full Council oversees all the activities of the Council. The main areas of the Council's work are covered by a number of Committees. These are Administration, Planning, Policy, Recreation and Traffic.

The Council meets at 7.45 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month. The Planning Committee meets at 7.30 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday of each month. Meetings of the Recreation and Administration Committees take place on a Tuesday four times a year, and the Traffic Committee meets twice a year. Other Committees meet by agreement. Members of the public and press are welcome to attend any meeting.

Town Councillors

Carterton's sixteen Town Councillors represent the five wards in the town. They are elected every four years. The last election was in May 2003.

Gateway Ward:

Councillor Mrs L. Walcott
112 Queens Road, Carterton
Councillor W.O. Walcott
112 Queens Road, Carterton

Shillbrook Ward:

Councillor Mrs. D.V. Bulley
53 Swinbrook Road, Carterton
Councillor Mrs M. Crossland
111 Burford Road, Carterton
Councillor P.J. Handley
Westbourne, Pye Corner, Shilton

Upavon Ward:

Councillor B. Crossland
111 Burford Road, Carterton
Councillor L.H. Giles
25 Corbett Road, Carterton
Councillor P.L. Scott
39 Alvescot Road, Carterton
Councillor K.W. Stone

7 Humphries Close, Carterton
Councillor N Tully
16 Bluebell Way, Carterton

Rock Farm Ward:

Councillor D King
18 Larksfield Close, Carterton
Councillor M A Townsend
60, Richens Drive, Carterton
Councillor P.G. Wesson
9 Brome Way, Carterton

Milestone Ward:

Councillor Mrs. A. Madden
33 The Crescent, Carterton
Councillor P. Madden
33 The Crescent, Carterton
Vacancy

OFFICES

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chairmen of the various Council Committees are elected annually in May. During 2003/2004 the following Councillors held office:

Town Mayor

Cllr. K Stone

Deputy Town Mayor

Cllr B Crossland

Chairman Administration Committee

Cllr. L.H. Giles

Chairman Recreation Committee

Cllr. Mrs. D.V. Bulley

Chairman Policy Committee

Cllr. P.J. Handley

Chairman Traffic Advisory Committee

Cllr. Mrs. D.V. Bulley

The Councillors do not receive any payment or allowance for attending meetings or for carrying out any Council business.

Staff

The Clerk of the Council

Janet Eustace

Deputy Town Clerk

Margaret Tinner

Administrative Assistant

Tan Marchant

Council Facilities

The Town Council maintains two recreation grounds, one at Alvescot Road and the other at Swinbrook Road, a children's playpark, squash courts, 23 acres of water meadows for public access at Willow Meadows, The Dell with a trim trail, the Queen

Mother's Garden, and numerous open spaces throughout the town.

The Council provides allotments in Kilkenny Lane and a burial ground in the village of Black Bourton. The Council also pursues an active policy through direct action or grant aid measures to improve and enhance the general environment and condition of the town.

Carterton Check and Carterton Fast Forward

The Council was fortunate to secure in 2002 a package of funding from the Countryside Agency to allow it to employ a consultant to carry out a Market Town Healthcheck. The Carterton Check was published in the summer of 2003. The Countryside Agency has provided a further package of funding to help the Council employ a Project Manager to take forward the 49 projects identified in *Carterton Fast Forward Towards 2010*. Many organisations and individuals are now working to bring these projects to a successful conclusion.

Beacon Status

One of the main projects to come from the Carterton Fast Forward project is the redevelopment of the town centre. We are working with a number of organisations to secure a thriving town centre for the future. Our work in this area has been recognised by the Countryside Agency who have awarded the Council Beacon Status for this project.

Quality Status

In March 2004 Carterton Town Council was awarded Quality status: the first town or parish council in Oxfordshire to achieve this distinction. The Quality scheme was launched by the Government in 2003 to provide an independent assessment of the effectiveness of local councils. Those Councils awarded Quality status are assessed as being representative, competent, well managed and able to take on an enhanced role. In the coming months we will be considering how best to develop our role to provide local services in the most cost effective way.

Town Centre Improvements

The Town Centre Partnership involving the District and County Councils and other interested bodies is working with the Carterton Fast Forward project to redevelop the town centre. In the shorter term the three Councils have worked together to complete the successful repaving of the town centre.

Recreational Facilities

The new leisure centre, which is run by Wycombe Leisure, opened in November 2003. Usage and income continues to exceed projected targets. Over five and a half thousand visits were recorded during the month of January 2004 with four thousand visits

attributed to swimming. In comparison February saw swimming attendances double to over 8,000 visits. Feedback from users is very positive. Work is continuing to complete the outside play area adjacent to the multi use room. This space requires fencing and gating to make it suitable for small children. Building defects to be resolved include re-surfacing of the car park and exit plus teething problems with the centres environmental building management system.

Sadly there have been problems with the new playingfields. The District Council has budgeted for remedial works to bring the failing pitches and cricket square up to standard. Work has started and the pitches should be ready for play by October.

Planning

The Town Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications. As such it is responsible for commenting upon all the applications which fall within the Town. These comments are passed to West Oxfordshire District Council who take them into account when reaching planning decisions.

More than 130 applications have been considered by the Town Council during the year.

Promoting Carterton

Carterton is a thriving town with a great sense of community and is fortunate to have many residents who give willingly of their time and energy. The Council is now looking at ways to promote the town to the outside world. The Town Council web site (www.carterton-tc.gov.uk) has been redesigned. The production of a quarterly newsletter continues and provides a vital link between the Council and residents.

The Civic Function

The Council has continued to play an important Civic role. The annual St George's Day Dinner and the Mayor's walk raised substantial funds for charities. The Mayor has represented the Town at various functions throughout the County and has also undertaken a number of local engagements, including attending many events organised by clubs and organisations based within Carterton.

Annual Competitions

Every year the Council holds a number of competitions including the Best Kept Allotments Competition, the Carterton in Bloom Competition and the Best Decorated Premises Competition each Christmas. There is also an annual swimming gala held for the local primary schools.

Highways and Traffic

Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for Highways matters but the Town Council has a Traffic

Committee which takes an active interest in Traffic issues, advising the County Council of matters of local interest.

During the year this Committee raised a number of issues with the County including road safety in the centre of town, speed limits, the siting of bus stops, the resurfacing of roads and vandalism to traffic signs and signals.

Grants to Voluntary Groups

The Council gives financial support to a number of local clubs and organisations. During the year 2003/04 the Town Council awarded the following grants:

Health Walks Initiative Training	£250
Carterton Community College year book	£500
Carterton Rangers Football Club	£500
Carterton Tree Trust	£1000
Witney Citizens Advice	£300
Edith Moorhouse drug awareness	£640
Friend's and Neighbours Club	£100
Harefield Transplant Club	£400
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	£3,690

How your money is spent.

The Town Council has relatively modest financial resources. The net budget for 2004/05 is £227,840, an increase of just over 2% on the current year. Because of the increase in the number of houses in the town, the charge to each household has decreased by more than 6%. The closure of the open-air swimming pool in the autumn of 2003 has meant significant savings in the Council's recreation budget. Funds have been set aside to develop a new recreational facility on the site and also to provide a BMX track at the Dell.



Carterton Town Centre

For further information about the Town Council contact the Town Hall on 01993 842156 or visit www.carterton-tc.gov.uk.