



Datchet Parish Council

Datchet Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting 22nd April 2024

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Firstly, can I say a big thank you for all the Datchet residents for supporting and working with the Parish Council over this past year. We have had many issues to face over the last 12 months from a new Borough Council to the ongoing flooding risk in January/February 2024. We also have an ongoing cost of living crisis and financial pressures on our community to maintain its village infrastructure with a Borough Council in Financial distress.

Since taking over as Chairman of Datchet Parish Council in May 2022, yes this is my 2nd term. We have seen the Parish council grow with new residents stepping up to take the role as a Parish Councillor to add their energy into progressing the village forward. I have had the pleasure of working with the community on the sad passing of the Queen and Her Majesty's funeral, the Kings Coronation with the Datchet Fete Committee, Christmas on the Green and now the up-and-coming D-Day 80th Anniversary.

I have again witnessed first-hand the huge community spirit of Datchet and how at difficult times the community pulls together to make this village the lovely place, where we live, bring up our families and continue to enjoy Datchet as it should be celebrated. I have seen how Datchet Parish Council has started to gain traction in the community where residents can come debate, gain guidance and support on matters that are concerning them. So, to help that progression, I thought I would outline the responsibilities and duties of the Parish Council which can be broken down simply as:

- Give views, on behalf of the community, on planning applications and other proposals that affect the parish.
- Alert relevant authorities to problems that arise or work that needs to be undertaken in Datchet.
- Help the other tiers of local government keep **in touch** with their local communities.
- Maintain on behalf of resident's historic land, properties and other community assets that we enjoy every day.

https://www.datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk/Roles_and_Responsibilities_1735.aspx

Let us remember the Parish Council is a voluntary authority where members are elected by the community or co-opted onto the council to support these

responsibilities for the residents of Datchet. The Parish Council needs more residents to join as Parish Councillors, to continue to improve these responsibilities and duties to the village. So, I would encourage any residents to look at joining the Parish Council over the next few months and add value to your own community. We now have 14 Councillors with 15 spaces, so let's fill this last vacant space and move this council forward, adding more value back to the community.

We have seen 3 Independent Borough Councillors elected at the last local elections in May 2023 who are working with all the local Parish Councils and their members, including Datchet to move the Parish forward progressively. This is the first time this has occurred in Datchet history and we look forward to this joined up approach that will put the people of Datchet, first before politics.

Through the years we have had the luxury of having committed members in the Parish Council who engage, take on responsibilities for residents and act selflessly to support the community of Datchet. This continues with the Lead Members of the council, the Deputy members and other members of the council who put the needs of Datchet residents first. This is a voluntary role and one that should be respected as these members work for Datchet residents for FREE.

Here is a list of member roles currently held to support the community of Datchet, these roles will be again elected at the next Annual meeting, which is to be held on 13th May 2024:

Lead and Deputy Lead Member Roles 2024:

- **FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE** – Chairman - Cllr. David Buckley, Vice Chair - Cllr. Susan Young, Cllr. Tim O'Flynn and Cllr. Ian Bacon
- **STAFFING COMMITTEE** - Chairman - Cllr. David Buckley, Vice Chair - Cllr. Monica Davies and Cllr. Ian Thompson
- **PROPERTIES** - Lead Cllr. Darren Sanders and Deputy Lead Cllr. Ian Bacon
- **GROUNDS** - Lead Cllr. Ian Thompson and Deputy Lead Cllr. Steevan Glover
- **PLANNING** – Lead Cllr. David Buckley and Deputy Lead Cllr. Darren Sanders
- **HIGHWAYS AND GENERAL PURPOSES** - Lead Cllr. Caroline Wise and Deputy Lead tbc.
- **FLOODING AND DRAINAGE** – Lead Cllr Ian Thompson and Deputy Lead Cllr. Susan Young
- **EVENTS** - Lead Cllr. Andrew Clemens and Deputy Lead Cllr. Steevan Glover
- **CEMETERIES** – Lead Cllr. Phil Bicknell and Deputy Lead Cllr. Caroline Wise
- **CHAIRMAN** – Cllr. David Buckley

- **VICE CHAIR** – Cllr. Ewan Larcombe

FINANCIAL UPDATE

How does the Parish Council finance its responsibilities to the residents. Datchet Parish Council has the power as an authority to request money from the community to maintain and support its land, assets, and property for the community. This is requested by way of a precept which is applied locally and added to your Council tax annually. It is important that the Parish Council manage this income, so it does not become a burden on the community or increase the household costs unnecessarily. This current year and even with external inflationary pressures, the Parish Council has been able to maintain its level of precept without having to increase it. It has done this by strong financial controls and disciplines in managing supplier contracts. This is an ongoing focus of the Council as pricing prices are still rising in particular energy and labour costs.

We foresee ongoing uplifts in costs, so we have established a new Finance and Governance committee who will be focused on reviewing department expenditure regularly, plus setting out future budgeted expenditure on maintenance and projects for a 3 – 5 financial plan. This will allow the Parish Council to consult with residents on projects and expenditure well in advance of annual budget periods and adjust the precept to fit with resident's needs.

We can never ignore outside financial pressures like inflation which has reached unprecedented levels in the UK in the past 24 months. However, this is slowing, and forecasts predict it falling throughout 2024. This impacts directly on the Parish Councils expenditure, so needs to be monitored regularly.

One of the main pressures we are looking at is the financial distress that the Borough Council finds itself in. With Adult & Children's services running at 77% of the annual budget and increasing and interest rates on the debt peaking at 13% of the budget this leaves just 8-10% on local services. This is an extremely precarious position and one that may not improve for 10 years or more but certainly not in the short term. Therefore, we need to look at how the Parish is maintained, and services supported during this period of austerity. This is why the new Finance committee is so key to planning expenditure, with residents needs and meeting that need with a precept control that matches residents needs and expectations.

This communication will be ongoing throughout 2024 up to the budget update towards the end of the year.

Joining together

We would encourage the community to come to our monthly Parish meetings, to engage and have input with the Councillors to discuss where you feel improvements can be made or what further positive steps could be taken to benefit the whole

community. However, you can also contact or engage with your Parish Councillors at all times should you feel the need. If you have a constructive idea how to improve the village and improve the quality of lives of the community, we look forward to hearing from you.

The meetings are generally held on the 2nd Monday of each month at the Village Hall. Starting time is normally 7pm but please check the Datchet Parish Council notice boards around the village and the website for up-to-date information.

Contact details of Parish Councillors can be found on the Parish Council website here:

https://www.datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk/Your_Councillors_1733.aspx

Or you can call the Parish office on 01753 773499

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