



Ware Town Council Annual Report 2018/19

A Message from the Mayor, Cllr David Oldridge



It has been my honour to represent our Town this civic year. On becoming Mayor, I stated my two aims of increasing Ware Town Council's engagement with residents and promoting reading across our Town and I believe that I have achieved these goals.

We have greatly increased our social media followers due to more regular posts on Twitter to keep residents informed about the goings on in our town. We have also increased the amount and regularity of stories we post on our website, written by both officers and local community groups, which are sent directly to subscribers. Planning Applications relating to our town are now posted on social media and sent directly to our website subscribers, with links to the East Herts planning portal, making it easier for residents to have their say.

This Civic Year, Ware Town Council has twice linked up with the nationally recognised Yarnbomber team: firstly to create a wonderful Poppy Display on the Priory gates to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the end of World War I in which over 200 young men from Ware lost their lives; and secondly to create Christmas figures for young residents to find throughout our town, thus encouraging families to visit our High Street.

Remembrance Day in Ware was very well attended, a poignant tribute to those that paid the ultimate sacrifice in defence of our community and I was extremely proud to lay a Poppy Wreath on the Town's behalf in their memory.

In terms of promoting reading, the #WareReads initiative has been a great success. We have promoted a monthly #BookoftheMonth, chosen by local schools, Ware Library, Mark Prisk MP, local authors and residents. #WareBookShare was also a resounding success. Around 800 second hand books were donated, wrapped and distributed to houses across our town to spread some Christmas cheer and encourage reading. My personal highlight was having the chance to visit local Care homes at Christmas and hand deliver some of these gift books to some of their residents.

Other highlights of the year have been taking part in the Hertford Shires Rotary Charity Dragon Boat competition, judging the allotment competition, turning on the lights at Dickensian evening, judging Christmas trees and dance competition posters, planting flowers in wellington boots at Larkspur Academy, revamping our committee structure to make the Council more efficient and initiating a plan to improve the look of the train station footbridge in collaboration with students at HRC. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing Clerk, Jill Rowlinson, for her dedicated and professional service to our town for the last 10 years, and, in particular, for her support this year.

It nonetheless gives me great pleasure to welcome Terry Philpott as our new town Clerk and I wish him all the best in his endeavours to continue the work of the past year to make Ware Town Council a modern and forward-thinking council, always striving to improve engagement with our residents.

Councillor David Oldridge, Mayor of Ware

Ware Town Council provides:

- Ware Cemetery
- Allotments at Widbury Hill and King George Road
- Maintenance of the war memorial, church clock, the churchyard at St Mary the Virgin, Tudor Square and the Common Wharf
- Ware Festival, Rock in the Priory, free band concerts, town tours, town talks, food festival
- Support and encouragement of Town Twinning with Wülfrath, Germany and Cormeilles-en-Parisis, France
- Grants to local organisations
- The Town Council is the first tier of local government and represents the views and opinions of Ware residents.

As Trustee of the Priory Charity the Town Council provides:-

- Ware Priory and Fletcher's Lea (conference, meetings & functions venue)
- Priory Grounds and public toilets
- Children's play area and skate park
- Ware Priory Lido (heated outdoor pool)

How to Contact Your Councillors

Christchurch Ward			Trinity Ward	
Phyllis Ballam	01920 464594		David Oldridge	
phyllis.ballam@waretowncouncil.gov.uk			david.oldridge@waretowncouncil.gov.uk	
Alexander Curtis	07966703117		Stephen Reed	07813958916
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Jonathan Kaye	07580743521		David Andrews	07818580084
jonathan.kaye@waretowncouncil.gov.uk			david.andrews@waretowncouncil.gov.uk	
St Mary's Ward			Chadwell Ward	
Mark Pope	01920 420498		2 vacant seats	
Mark.pope@waretowncouncil.gov.uk				
2 vacant seats				

To Contact Ware Town Council

Town Clerk – Terry Philpott, The Priory, High Street, Ware, Herts. SG12 9AL

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Support to Local Organisations in 2018/19

Organisation	Purpose	Amount Awarded
Raynet	Batteries for mobile communications unit	300
Active East Herts	Under 10's skateboarding lessons	500
Hertford Symphony Orchestra	Concert to mark 100th anniversary of WW1	500
Ware & District Photographic Society	Annual exhibition	239
Ware Type 2 Diabetes Support	Meeting room hire	96
Ware Operatic Society	50th anniversary show	2500
Guideposts	Community Garden Group	2000
Ware Drill Hall	Replacement boiler	7500
Presdales School	All weather hockey pitch	15000
Southern Maltings	Opening the ground floor	25000
Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust	Improvements to Place House Hall	5000
Total one-off grants awarded 2018/19		£58,635
Ware Town Council supports the following organisations with annual grants:		
Ware Museum	General Grant	5000
Ware Museum	Tourist Information Point	2100
Ware Town Partnership	Dickensian Evening	1600
Ware Town Partnership	Ware in Bloom	1300
Total grants awarded 2018/19		£68,635

Report on the Accounts for 2018/19 and the Budget for 2019/20

The Council's events business continues to be a net contributor to the Council's finances (c.£35,000 in the 2018/2019 financial year) providing a subsidy to this Council's precept requirement. However, despite a recovery in the economy, the wedding and conference markets continue to be challenging and our income from this is expected to be down against budget. The uncertainty around Brexit is clearly not helping.

We have, however, continued to work hard to manage the Council's finances responsibly and to keep any increases in precept to inflation levels. Following a 3.0% increase in the precept last year, we have increased it by 3.2% this year (based on a Band D property). Unfortunately, due to the continued challenging market conditions and a lack of demand for office space, this year we anticipate a small excess of expenditure over income of £13,000 (compared to £7,500 last year). This will be covered from the Council's reserves which currently stand at c.£418,000.

The Council is considering more innovative uses for its office space. We have continued discussions with East Herts District Council, who are looking to expand their successful Launchpad project. Ware Town Council will be working with them to open a Launchpad at Ware Priory, helping to support business growth in the town. The small cost to this Council will be covered from its New Homes Bonus Allocation. Unlike many authorities, East Herts District Council passes part of its New Homes Bonus grant to Town and Parish councils. Ware has received £488,000 so far, allocating some of this to Tudor Square, the Neighbourhood Plan, refurbishment of our Lido a new Town Council website. We have also used it to provide larger grants as shown above. Another project being funded from this is the provision of a multi-use games area and outdoor gym on the old tennis court in the Priory Grounds. While this Council is making a contribution towards costs, the majority of the funding is coming from Sport England and East Herts District Council via Section 106 funding.

The Town Council continues to provide services and events to the town, such as the Lido, Ware Festival, the Food Festival, Rock in the Priory and the Community Cinema, to provide grant funding to local groups and to contribute to the town centre CCTV. In addition, the Council as Trustee of the Priory Charity is responsible for the maintenance of the Priory and its grounds; following the last quinquennial inspection of the building a programme of works was established to ensure that it is maintained in the best possible condition. We are preparing for the next inspection in 2020. The costs of running and maintaining the Lido are considerable and its income is heavily dependent on the weather. Last year, the net deficit produced by the Lido was £49,000 due to a poor summer. This year, however, due to much better weather, the deficit reduced to £36,000.

