

Atherstone Town Council



Annual Report 2024/2025



LOCAL COUNCIL
AWARD SCHEME
FOUNDATION

Town Council Office

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday: 9:30am – 3:00pm by appointment

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Town Council meetings are held monthly in the Committee Room, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Civic Suite, The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, CV9 1DE.

The calendar of meetings is published on the website and in the noticeboard on the Market Square.

Members of the public and press are welcome to attend Town Council meetings. A public session is held at each meeting, where the public can comment on agenda items.

For 2024-25, the Chair of the Town Council was Cllr Sara Bishop and the vice-chair was Cllr Keith Barnett.

Officers



Town Clerk

Kate Clover PSLCC



Deputy Town Clerk

Sally Oldham PSLCC

Town Councillors

Central Ward



Councillor Keith Barnett

Tel: 01827 230703

Email: keithbarnett@atherstone-tc.gov.uk

Address: 28 Mancetter Road, Mancetter, CV9 1NZ



Councillor Jake Braithwaite

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Address: 41 Ambien Road, Atherstone, CV9 2AT



Councillor Jacky Chambers

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Address: Green Farm, Main Road, Baxterley, CV9 2LW



Councillor Richard Collins

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Councillor Gary Chamberlain

Email: garychamberlain@atherstone-tc.gov.uk



Councillor Gwyn Short

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North Ward



Councillor Chris Jones

Tel: 07984 160667

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Councillor Nomonde Pritchett

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Councillor Martin Short

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Councillor Olivia Dipple

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Councillor Dawn Wilkinson

Email: dawnwilkinson@atherstone-tc.gov.uk



Councillor David A Wright

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Address: 95 Witherley Road, Atherstone, CV9 1NA

South Ward



Councillor Sara Bishop

Tel: 07885 420129

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Councillor Carol Evans

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Casual Vacancy

Farewells and Welcomes

This year, the Council welcomed new Town Councillors: Nomonde Pritchett, Sue Baker, Gary Chamberlain, and Olivia Dipple.

In April 2024, a casual vacancy in the North Ward was filled via co-option by Nomonde Pritchett.

In October 2024, we said goodbye to Cllrs Anne Forwood and Joshua Smith, followed in November by former Town Mayor Cllr Ashley Wickham-Young.

In January 2025, three casual vacancies in the North, South, and Central Wards were filled via co-option by Olivia Dipple, Gary Chamberlain, and Sue Baker respectively.

In February 2025, we said goodbye to Cllr Sue Baker, leaving a casual vacancy to be filled via co-option in May.

What has the Town Council achieved in 2024/25

Civic Role

The Town Mayor attended 31 official events across Warwickshire and the surrounding areas, raising the profile of Atherstone and the Town Council.

The Mayor has hosted three events this year, inviting civic dignitaries from across Warwickshire to visit Atherstone. A Civic Service was held in September at St Mary's Church, a Civic Reception was held before Dickens Event in November, and a fundraising quiz was held in April 2025. In total, over £1,500 has been raised for the Mayor's chosen charity, St Giles Hospice.

Cllr Bishop, Town Mayor for 2024/25, writes the following report:

I felt very honoured to be elected as Mayor of Atherstone in May 2024. Since then, I have had the pleasure of attending numerous events both locally and further afield representing the Town Council and the people of Atherstone.

Highlights of the year have been: involvement with a variety of events held by our local schools; receiving the salute on behalf of the Town on Remembrance Day; meeting young hockey players at Atherstone Adders; Atherstone Car Show; musical and dramatic performances by local groups at St. Mary's Church and the Owen Street Community Arts Centre; and, of course, the Christmas events – such as the procession through the town and the turning on of the Christmas lights.

I am very grateful to local businesses and organisations for their support of civic events and mayoral fundraising activities this year, in aid of St Giles Hospice.



Market Square

The Town Council has an agreement with North Warwickshire Borough Council to manage events on the Market Square. The Town Council continues to manage the twice weekly markets.

The Town Council owns pop-up stalls, tables and a canopy which cover most of the Square. These are available for the use of community groups, and events. Details and costs can be obtained from the Town Council office.

During the summer months the local publicans serve drinks outside on the Market Square in a café culture style. A monthly Farmers Market that began in February 2022 has been well received and continues to expand.

Several annual events take place on the Market Square, including Dickens Event, Atherstone Partnership's Big Weekender, the Car Show, and the Christmas Market. We have also been treated to several smaller events, including a performance by the Anker Morris Men and Outwoods Primary School Carnival.

Allotments

The Town Council provides allotments for rent at two sites: Merevale and Gypsy Lane.

As of 30 March 2025, both sites are almost fully occupied. Of 73 plots at Gypsy Lane, 10 plots are vacant; of 88 plots at Merevale, 10 plots are vacant.

Anyone requiring a plot should register at the Town Council offices. The current waiting lists as of 30 March 2025 sit at 19 names for Gypsy Lane and 37 names for Merevale.

The Town Council also owns the neighbouring Atherstone Allotment Association site, in Gypsy Lane. The Town Council works with the Associations, and tenants, for the sites' general improvement.

Allotment Awards were judged and presented in the summer of 2024 at both sites. The Allotment Judging Panel comprised Cllrs Jones, Barnett, and Chambers. Cllr Jones gave a report on behalf of the judging panel:



2024 has not been a good year for allotments! The weather has been extremely changeable and there was a lot of heavy rain during the planting season making the ground soggy and wet to work on. This was followed with relatively short bursts of extremely hot sunshine and more heavy rain.



Despite these challenges it was a privilege for us to spend the evening inspecting the Merevale and Gypsy Lane allotments – we even had a fly past by an Apache helicopter. We were all impressed by the work, skill, and ingenuity demonstrated in so many of the plots and felt sympathy for the plot holders suffering from rotting roots and poor yields. There were still many triumphs, and we are proud to celebrate these here.



Gypsy Lane had the tallest beans (Plot G39b) and the most delicious looking pears (Plot 37), whilst Merevale had some excellent woven willow fencing (Plot M4b) and a really well tended community plot (Plot M50) that looked very fruitful.



Judging which plots to present awards to is a subjective matter where the judges had their own preferences. Is a beautiful, tended vegetable plot (Plot M32) more worthy than a well-run pigeon loft (Plot G20b)? Is a well-stocked chicken run (Plot G13) higher ranking than a succulent raspberry patch (Plot M68)? Maybe the young grapevine (G25b) will be ripe for awards in the coming years?



Despite not having a set of predetermined scoring criteria, the judges' deliberations actually presented clear award winners for each category, along with a few special commendations for extra skills on display.

Cemetery

The Town Council maintains Atherstone Cemetery on Sheepy Road and is responsible for the maintenance of burial and memorial records for the cemetery.

The Town Council continues to engage with the Community Payback team, who now provide additional help maintaining the cemetery.

The Town Council received funding from Warwickshire County Council for the planting of four new trees to replace those previously removed for safety reasons.

As a Burial Authority, the Town Council has arranged and attended 50 interments, authorised 41 new memorials, and conducted 34 deed transfers and other administrative duties.

Atherstone Town Council has responsibility for the event management of the Remembrance Day Parade and service which takes place at St Mary's Church and the War Memorial in Atherstone Cemetery.

Chair of the Cemetery Working Group, Cllr Chambers, gives the following report:

In January 2025, the Town Council submitted a planning application for the cemetery extension and responded to the public consultation by the Law Commission for England and Wales on the reform to burial and cremation law. This included provisional proposals relating to grave reuse and reclamation, regulation of burial grounds, and ashes remains.

We also reviewed our cemetery regulations and cremation and burial fees to simplify the pricing structure, reduce administration costs, and ensure that the overall costs of managing and maintaining the cemetery were adequately covered, and also similar to the fees charged by other authorities.

The Town Council remains grateful to the Community Payback Team for their excellent help and continued support in maintaining the cemetery grounds – including for the Remembrance Day commemorations. The Cemetery Working Group were pleased to be able to meet them, say thankyou, and to discuss ideas for their programme of work in the future.

Old Allotment Gardens

The land between Atherstone Cemetery and the A5, which runs from Sheepy Road through to the brook at Abeles Way, is known as the Old Allotment Gardens.

In early 2021, the Town Council began consulting for the future extension of the cemetery, and began work surveying the site. In 2025 a planning application has been submitted for the site to be used for future burials



CCTV

The CCTV cameras and ducting in the town centre are owned and maintained by the Town Council, who are also responsible for the staffing costs monitoring the screens by dedicated CCTV operators. The Town Council works in partnership with North Warwickshire Borough Council and Warwickshire Police.

The live monitoring of the CCTV provides a proactive approach to crime in Atherstone. Active monitoring staff work closely with the local Police Safer Neighbourhood Team, and the CCTV system includes a direct link to Police Headquarters at Leek Wootton.

Since 2023, the Town Council have been solely responsible for meeting the costs of the active monitoring service. The Town Council secured UKSPF grant funding of £59,055 to cover approximately 50% of the staffing costs from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2025.

The Town Council carried out a consultation with our residents and key stakeholders regarding the future funding of the active monitoring service.

The Town Council supports the Town's retail radio system, known as Townwatch. Subsidies are given towards the cost of the radios, for those taking part.

Chair of the CCTV Working Group, Cllr Gwyn Short, has the following report:

As well as the consultation, Atherstone Town Council carried out a campaign to raise awareness of active monitoring CCTV and Townwatch radio. This was promoted by One Media Shed, and resulted in strong public engagement. Cllrs Chambers and Jones, plus a Long Street shopkeeper, were interviewed on BBC CWR and highlighted the joined up approach to crime prevention and detection, involving CCTV active monitoring operatives, the police and Townwatch radio, with a reduction in shoplifting in Atherstone, against the national trend.

26 new businesses have signed up to the Townwatch radio scheme, thanks to PCSO Gavin Scott. This means there is now 75% coverage.

Play Areas and Open Spaces

There are two play areas managed and maintained by the Town Council: at St Mary's Road, which is owned outright, and at Westwood Road, which is leased.

Due to several instances of damage, vandalism, and anti-social behaviour at both play areas they are now fully covered by CCTV.

Chair of the Open Spaces Working Group, Cllr Martin Short, writes the following report:

Councillors have been working on possible ways of upgrading access to the Anker water meadows for the benefit and enjoyment of local residents, with regard to exercise, mental health, education, nature and much more.

Having been allocated levelling-up money to fund a feasibility study, we engaged a consultant, Sharon Bayne, who has worked with us on developing our ideas, canvassing the views of residents and local organisations (the response has been very largely positive) and consulting with the various landowners.

Sharon has recently completed her reports, which will shortly be available. These incorporate residents' suggestions and have a considerable focus on biodiversity, as well as how the project would align with the local footpath network. Sharon has also produced costings for different parts of the project.

The next stage will involve prioritising our aspirations and presenting to potential partners and funders, so that we can turn this project into reality.

Planning

As a Statutory Planning Consultee, the Town Council comments on planning applications within the civil parish of Atherstone, and those outside it which would affect Atherstone.

Planning applications to be considered can be found on the monthly Town Council agenda and responses on the website. In total the Town Council considered 42 planning applications in 2024/25.

Christmas Lights

The Town Council owns the Christmas lights erected each year along Long Street, Church Street, and Market Street, and outside St Mary's Church. There are also pole mounted displays installed in Station Street and the Market Square. The Council is solely responsible for the purchase, testing, maintenance, erection, and dismantling of the lights.

Support for Local Community Groups

The Town Council can make small grants to assist local community groups. Details of these can be found on the website.

During 2024/25 the Town Council awarded community grants to:

- Atherstone Motor Show – £500
- Atherstone Partnership (Charity Beer Festival and Big Weekender) – £2,000
- Dickens Event 2024 – £2,600
- Atherstone Rangers (50th Anniversary celebration) – £1,000
- Open Hands CIC – £1,000
- Atherstone Ball Game (road closures) – £2,095

Additionally, the Council continue to support the social supermarket in Unit 7, The Arcade (Ediblelinks) by providing this retail unit free of charge and meeting their service charges. This equates to approximately £5,500 in support.

Each year the Council also purchases a poppy wreath for Remembrance Day, for a donation of £25 to the Royal British Legion.

Honorary Citizen and Ruby Chambers Award

Each year the Town Council debates the choice of Honorary Citizen, an award made to a person(s) who, in the opinion of the Town Council, has made an outstanding contribution to the life of the town.

For 2025, the title of Honorary Citizen will be awarded to Dawn Teagles in recognition of her commendable contributions and many years of service to the Leading Players community group and the community of Atherstone.

The Ruby Chambers Sports Award 2024 will be awarded to Harper Reay of The Queen Elizabeth Academy.

Both awards will be presented to the recipients at the Annual Parish Assembly in May 2025.

Floral Displays

The Town Council maintains the floral displays in the town centre during the year with summer and winter plantings.



Website

The Town Council has a website – www.atherstone-tc.gov.uk – maintained by the clerks which gives up-to-date information on Council activities, local news, and documentation.

The Council Meetings page gives the public access to all public meeting papers alongside meeting agendas and minutes.

Local Council Award Scheme

The Town Council currently holds the Foundation Level, as part of the Town Council Action Plan 2024-26 the Council are working towards higher levels of the Local Council Award Scheme in the coming year.

Arcade Shops

The Town Council owns and operates the Arcade Shops, in Long Street. This complex provides a mixture of retail, commercial and community use. The current Arcade tenants are:

Unit 1	Fieldview Plastics
Unit 2	Becca Kim Aesthetics and Skin Clinic
Unit 3	Vacant
Unit 4	BFH Bargains
Unit 5	Vacant
Unit 6	Open Hands CIC
Unit 7	Edible Links Social Supermarket
Unit 8	Fieldview Plastics Showroom
Unit 9	Arcade Carpets
Upstairs front	Nail Bar

To apply for a vacant unit or join our waiting list, contact the Town Council Office.

The Town Council continues to assess potential uses for the upstairs space.

Chair of the Arcade Working Group, Cllr Bishop, has the following report:

In May 2024, advice was sought from CAVA about the possibility of obtaining external funding to enable the upstairs space at the Arcade to be brought into use. In June, due to the resignation of the previous Chair of the working group, Cllr Derek Pickard, Cllr Bishop was chosen to chair the group.

The Action Plan that had been drawn up in January 2024 was reviewed. Recommendations were presented to Full Council in July 2024 about necessary improvements to raise Energy Performance Rating and to address any issues identified in the Fire Risk Assessment, so that the premises could be used in the future.

Advice has been sought from a number of companies to inform any future project, should funding become available. Following a risk assessment of the upstairs space by the Clerk, the working group has begun the process of organising and clearing the upstairs offices and ensuring that necessary archive material is stored appropriately.

Owen Street Community Arts Centre

The Town Council owns The Arts Centre, Owen Street, Atherstone, CV9 1DG.

It was purchased to retain and protect this important community asset for the people of Atherstone and the surrounding area. All covenants restricting the future use of the building as a community resource remain in place.

The building has been leased back to the Owen Street Community Arts Centre whose Board of Directors are fully responsible for running the facility, including bookings, maintenance, insurance, and running costs. The Board are keen to promote wider community use of the building.

Finance

	2023/24	2024/25 **
	Actuals	Budget
Precept	175,298	193,707
Other income	275,474	150,122

Total Income	450,772	343,829
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Staff Costs	85,568	96,659
Other Costs	216,152	227,170
Tfr to Earmarked reserves		20,000
Total expenditure	301,720	343,829
Profit/loss	149,052	

**** accounts not yet finalised**

Cash position

	Current a/c	Deposit a/c	Deposit a/c	Totals
	20490881	20490894	20490904	
1 April 2024	28,938.61	214,978.94	504.15	244,421.70
31 March 2025	31,353.90	190,653.69	92,317.66	314,325.25