



ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2024

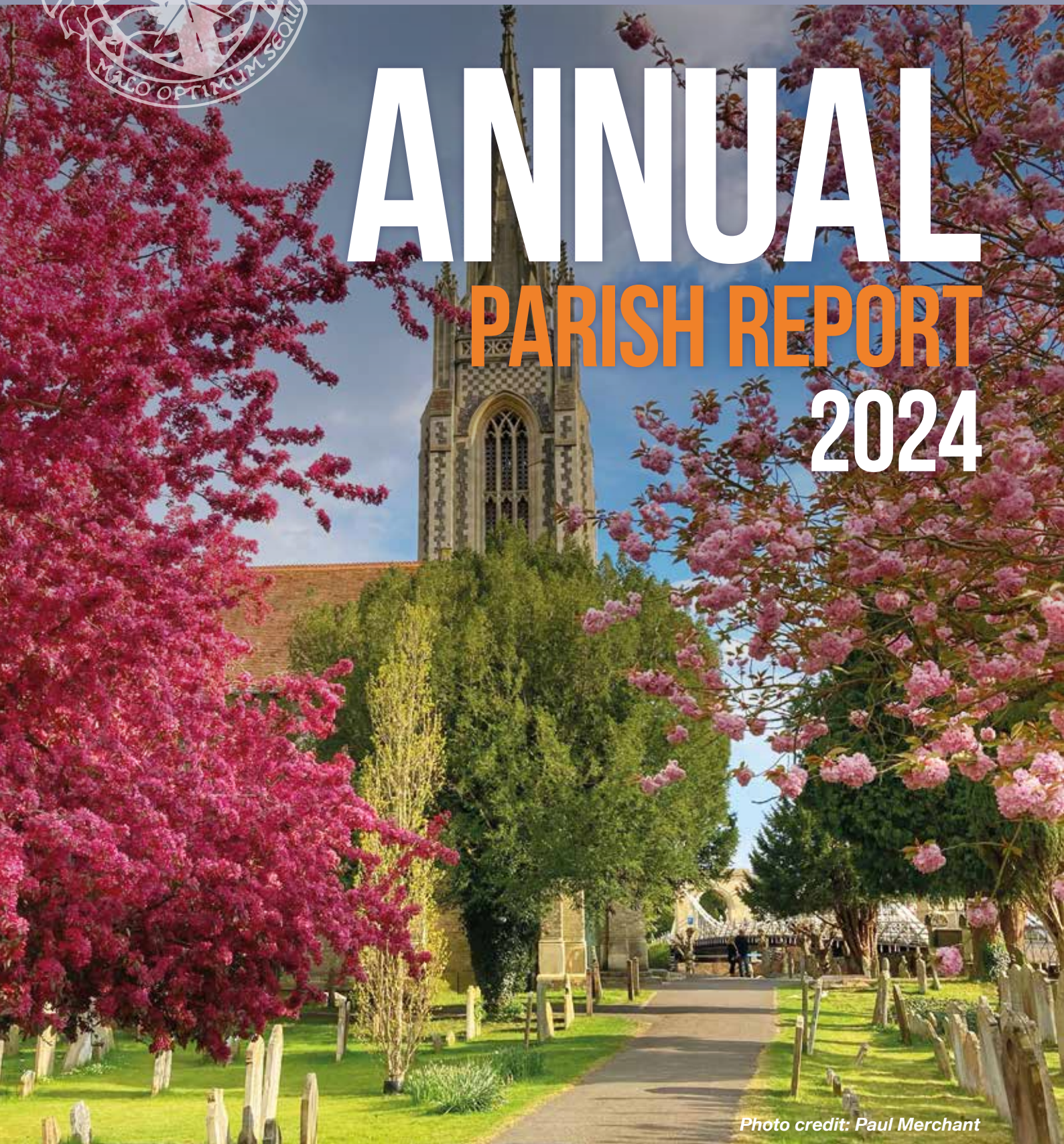


Photo credit: Paul Merchant

MARLOW TOWN COUNCIL

MAYOR'S

REPORT 2023/24



Marlow remains a wonderful town and I'd like to offer a big thank you to all residents for your support, I am honoured to have been your Town Mayor for the past year.

In my first year I have been pleased to represent our town at local events. The Marlow Town Regatta and Festival stands out for me because it was superbly organised, and the weather was sunshine the whole weekend. This and all the events held in Higginson Park make Marlow an excellent place to live, visit and work.

Over the last 12 months other civic events continued like our annual Remembrance Day Service and the outstanding Christmas Light Switch-On with Robert Thorogood, the author of The Marlow Murder Club novel which had its big screen premier at the newly opened Everyman Cinema and on television.

The Rotary's Santa's Fun Run also took place in December which saw a sea of Santas of all ages stream up the High Street. In March we held a Civic celebration service to promote activities, volunteer organisations and excellent Marlovians; songs from

Marlow Glee Club, a reading from a Great Marlow School Student and presentations from Meals From Marlow and the Royal Marines. The Countess Howe, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire presented the Lifetime Achievement Award to Shaun and Barbra Murphy for their many years of organising and collecting the Poppy Appeal each November.

During the year, I have represented the town at many events and continue to support new businesses and celebrate shops that had endured tough times during COVID but are still working hard.

I would like to offer a big thank you to all residents for your support. My thanks go to all Town Councillors and to especially to my Deputy, Cllr Colleen Stapley, and Leader Chris Funnell who have supported me this past year. Finally, we would not function as a Council without the support of our officers - many thanks to them for running everything in the background. I have very much enjoyed representing Marlow the last year and I wish you and your families well for the coming months.

Cllr David Brown

Town Mayor



➔ I would like to offer a big thank you to all residents for your support

Leader, Cllr Chris Funnell

I am proud that we can continue growing the prosperity of our town and deliver once again a 'zero' increase in the Council tax precept for our residents.



Last year I reported that our challenges have been financially driven and that trend has continued with pressures on every area of our £500k budget with our work levels ever increasing in these turbulent times. We continue to fulfil our statutory duties to a high level to maintain parks at Gossmore, Seymour, Riley, and Campbell Road play areas as well as allotments, play equipment, security, cemetery, town bus, verge and grass cutting, and Balfour gardens.

Our events are more popular than ever throughout our parish managed by six staff and 12 Councillor volunteers, and we maintain a high level of support to external organisations. We have great challenges ahead, but I am pleased to report we are in the final stages of a complete performance review of our Council that will be in place this summer and will finalise a strategic plan and organisation to challenge efficiency in all our work. As part of this, a major element will be to innovate new income streams and projects and focus

on strengthening community.

We will continue to press for comprehensive responses through our Bucks Councillors and colleagues to address the areas that are important to residents and the initiatives that the chairs of our committees work hard on to deliver improvements for our town. Most importantly our motivation as volunteers comes from you, our residents, and we continue to be grateful to all the many volunteers and groups in the town that continue to act with grace and humility and perseverance in supporting us in carrying out our duties.

As we sign up soon for another Council year, I look forward to continuing to serve you as leader of our Council along with a great team and I am grateful and honoured to drive an organisation that will continue to take Marlow from strength to strength to be a fantastic place to live, work and play! Thank you!

Once a Marlovian, always a Marlovian.

Please stay in touch by visiting our website at

www.marlow-tc.gov.uk which explains what your council does and provides contact information for your councillors and questions.

We would also welcome any feedback by email **office@marlow-tc.gov.uk**



→ I am proud that we can continue growing the prosperity of our town

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

REPORT 2023/24

Chairman, Cllr Natalia Mityaeva

We are expecting to finish our fiscal year March 2024 in a strong financial position, with our income and expense accounts resulting in a surplus due to a combination of increased revenue, expense savings, and some one-time items. The investment income has outperformed the budget partially due to the increases in interest rates and strong dividend income. We also received additional income from the rental of our offices for the Marlow Murder Club Series.



Our commitment to cost-efficiency has led to expense reductions in salary, subcontractors, community, and other areas compared to the budget while ensuring residents still received essential services and exceptional programmes like the town bus, private park security, and bespoke professional grass cutting. Additionally, there was no increase in Parish tax for 2024 -2025 - this is a significant achievement in the current inflationary environment while many Councils across the country struggle with balancing their books. We are looking forward to another strong financial year 2024-2025. Marlow Town Council is well positioned to meet our financial commitments and continue to maintain high quality services for all residents going forward.

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

REPORT 2023/24

Chairman, Cllr David Brown

The newly formed Community Committee is now in its third year. It was set up to lead events and improve the Marlow community.

We concentrate on economic development and tourism, community safety, engagement, and cohesion. We continue to offer residents several very successful events throughout the year, unfortunately not all that are planned go forward. Due to inclement weather, The King's



Coronation, Bee Town, and the Marlow & District Round Table May Fayre were all cancelled. These were all such a shame as a great deal of hard work, time and effort was lost.

Last May we presented the French Councillors From Marley-le-Roi with a 50th anniversary plaque at the annual Marlow Regatta. Looking forward, the committee is also considering several future capital projects to enhance the town and full details will be shared with residents when information is available. We will also be reviewing our communications to make full use of traditional and social media channels to promote the Council's activities.

➔ We are looking forward to another strong financial year 2024-2025



Chairman, Cllr Richard Scott



Marlow Town Council is a statutory consultee to the local planning decision making process within Buckinghamshire Council. The Planning and Transport Committee meets every three weeks to review planning applications and other matters within the Marlow town boundary. We review all applications carefully, considering other consultee and residents' submissions and make appropriate comments or objections, which are submitted to the Planning Authority. The bulk of applications reviewed each year are for minor extensions, or changes of use, and we have a strong correlation with the Planning Authority's subsequent decisions.

We note that several former bank premises have not been fully redeveloped since closure of their retail locations. We have however reviewed several planning applications to re-utilise these buildings and have been generally supportive of them. It would be good to see these closed premises brought back into use to further improve our busy town centre.

We are always mindful of the challenge of parking

availability in the town, largely brought about by the vibrancy of the town itself. Solutions that satisfy residents, visitors, and inward commuters (all of whom are essential to the viability of the town) continue to prove very challenging. We have recently approached Buckinghamshire Council to review a proposal which we submitted to the old Wycombe District Council for an appropriately designed multi-storey parking for the central car park situated to the rear of Sainsburys supermarket. Marlow Town Council contributes to a Buckinghamshire Council bus that provides town-wide weekday service and on certain days goes to High Wycombe and Maidenhead. During the year, we have worked with Buckinghamshire Council to review options for improving this service to have a more regular timetable. Details of the service are available on our website and in the Marlovian magazine.

A new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire is currently being developed and this will supersede the old Wycombe District Local Plan. It is unlikely that it will have any major impact on Marlow. However, following its publication, the Town Council will consider whether the plans for Marlow require further detailed work including the possible preparation of a Local Neighbourhood Plan. The Committee, which will remain with the same experienced members for the next twelve months, is looking forward to another busy and productive year for Marlow.

Chairman, Cllr Colleen Stapley



Over the past year we have been quite busy with environment and wellbeing initiatives. This is partly because residents and the planet demand more and better, and partly because improving the environment is something I personally practice and would love to inspire others.

Environment and Wellbeing Action Plan

We set-out to provide our committee with higher-level strategic thinking so our time, effort and money is better spent on specific areas of interest and concern. This strategic thinking formed an Environment and Wellbeing Action Plan that defines our role, describes how we work and outlines five focus areas for our committee and MTC.

1. Biodiversity and nature

Support, improve, and protect plant, wildflower, insect, and animal habitats and encourage residents to connect with and care for nature.

2. Active travel

Promote the benefits of walking/biking/scooting to school or town, find ways to make it a more positive/enjoyable/accessible experience and encourage residents to choose active travel over driving.

3. Recycle, reuse and refill

Promote more sustainable living behaviours and habits regarding single-use plastics, recycling, and water/electricity consumption and encourage reusing/repairing products, refilling over buying new.

4. Spark moments of joy

Create positive experiences/interactions for residents to foster good vibes and community spirit through art, music and new ways of connecting.

5. Support schools and local groups

Amplify initiatives from schools and groups, and empower students to educate residents.

Biodiversity and Nature

Pollinator action plan

This was co-written with the help of Wild Marlow. It explains Marlow Town Councillor's commitment to pollinators and identifies six objectives.

No Mow May

The first day I took over the committee last May I introduced 'No Mow May' with a press release to residents and adjusted our grass maintenance in all areas (except high traffic) accordingly. Surprisingly, we had no resident complaints and 'No Mow May' is happening again next month.



We have made further adjustments so that cutting resumes in early June for all areas Marlow Town Council is responsible for excluding wild verges. There is a full-page cut-out in the March Marlovian to encourage residents to take part and display the sign in their window to hopefully encourage others.

Wild verges

Last spring/summer we launched 'wild verges'. These areas of grass (normally cut eight times during the season) are left to grow wild to support pollinators as habitat, shelter, and food. A special 'Wild Verges' map was created



ENVIRONMENT & WELLBEING COMMITTEE REPORT 2023/24 CONTINUED...

with local artist Nicola Metcalfe to educate residents where Marlow Town Council is responsible for cutting and the 'wild verge' locations. We also created signs to educate residents as to why the grass is long placed in the actual areas. This spring/summer we have expanded our wild verges across the town. I personally visited Marlow primary schools and met with their Eco-teams. We discussed the importance of wild verges and I asked them to join our efforts in creating a pollinator corridor – you can see on the map which schools have participated in 'wild green' areas on their land.



Additional improvements

Removed all glyphosate from grounds maintenance and with our contractor.
Raised the height of the mower blade to 6cm (on grass that is not high traffic) to allow for daisies and other ground flowers to be left untouched when the grass is cut.

Active Travel

Active travel map

This map was created with Nicola Metcalfe to encourage school children, parents, and residents to walk, bike or scoot to town and school by highlighting that any corner of Marlow is roughly a mile or less to the top of the high street and children attending school in catchment will be the same.

New footpath policy

We can't encourage Active Travel if we don't have the proper footpaths to walk around. The goal of this policy is to raise awareness and understanding of residents' responsibility regarding their garden vegetation spilling over onto footpaths and rendering them less usable and potentially unsafe. The policy also outlines how to correctly report obstructed footpaths so they can be cleared. Let's

work together to keep our footpaths clear so we can better support people who depend on them for Active Travel and hopefully encourage others to start walking as well.

The full footpath policy is available on our website under Active Travel - www.marlow-tc.gov.uk/active-travel



Footpath clearing

To kick-off this policy and encourage more Active Travel we have engaged our grounds maintenance to clean-up the footpath along the football path (MTC's responsibility) cleared and trimmed back along the top and around the lights, so it is not as dark and overgrown.

Community collaboration

Working with Nick Rowcliffe and Mark Skoyles of Living Streets to bring to life a joint Active Travel community project.

Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs (MVAS)

MVAS are electronic signs which only become visible when approaching motor vehicles are exceeding a certain speed. We have implemented several initiatives involving MVAS machines to remind drivers of safe speeds and encourage Active Travel confidence.

1. Positioned MVAS machines on key Active Travel school crossings to proactively discourage speeding.
2. Gained approval to buy a fourth MVAS machine in



ENVIRONMENT & WELLBEING COMMITTEE REPORT 2023/24 CONTINUED...

March so we can have two machines simultaneously on two roads monitoring in both directions.

3. Created a list of high traffic roads near schools where school children will be crossing along and other roads known for speeding (with the help of local residents) and put together a permanent list of roads that create a permanent MVAS machines rotation. Each road will have two MVAS's deployed for 6-8 weeks to proactively discourage speeding by flashing when exceeding 30.

Recycle, Reuse and Refill

Refill map

Did you know that you can get a water bottle filled for free at numerous locations across Marlow? Well no one seemed to know so we also created a Refill Map with Nicola highlighting all the different places in Marlow you can get your water bottle refilled for free so we can work together on discouraging single use plastic water bottles.



Events and Misc

Bee town

Sadly, due to strong winds the Bee Town Festival was cancelled last summer. So, we contacted the Marlow Library and they kindly allowed us to display the beautiful boards we created for the public to see.



Marlow Carnival Green Village

We had a booth at the event with information boards about everything we have been working on and some tips to save water and electricity and recycle. We also asked a Bucks recycling expert to attend the event to help answer any recycling questions.

MTC Website

A new environment tab has been added to the MTC website and restructured previous and new content to allow easier access to environment.

YOUR COUNCILLORS

Marlow North West Ward

Cllr David Brown



Cllr Roy Cadman



Cllr Natalia Mityaeva



Cllr Carol Heap



Cllr Chris Hoyle



Cllr Neil Marshall



Cllr Roger Wilson



Marlow South East Ward

Cllr Tim Avery



Cllr Chris Funnell



Cllr Colleen Stapley

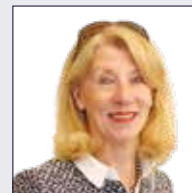


Marlow South Ward

Cllr Richard Scott



Cllr Jocelyn Towns



To get in touch with a Councillor for your ward, please visit the 'Your Councillors' page on the Marlow Town Council website where you can find their contact information.