

P Car Parking - the future

The harmonisation of car parking across Wiltshire is causing anything but harmony; instead, significant opposition has been provoked across the county by the way parking charges may soon be levied. In short, free parking could be a thing of the past for some towns but not for others while the actual cost of parking may increase throughout Wiltshire. The Car Parking Working Group is attempting to find a way to avoid losing all of Warminster's free parking spaces in April, so we'll keep you informed of developments.

Waitrose Update

The old Dents' factory site won't be remaining empty for long. As the glove manufacturers look to their future with a new, purpose-built factory on the outskirts of town, Waitrose is preparing to start work on the site and clearing the way for a new Warminster store. If all goes to plan, the building of the new supermarket will start in April.

Firbank Community Centre

The new MOD Firbank Community Centre, in Firbank Crescent, had its official opening ceremony in November, attended by the Mayor Sue Fraser and other councillors and Town Council officials. The guests were shown round the new facilities which incorporate the Warminster Garrison Nursery and a community hall, which allows military families and local residents to meet and socialise. The new Community Centre is open between 8.30am and 1.30pm, Mondays to Thursdays.

Foodbank Finds A Home

After operating without an official base, Warminster's Food Bank has finally found a home of its own in the town. The charity, which provides help for people in financial difficulties brought about by illness, redundancy, delays in benefit payment, or similar circumstances, is a vital link for many people in our community and can make a real difference. Vouchers are issued by official bodies such as doctors' surgeries and Social Services, and can then be submitted to the Food Bank for a box of supplies, containing sufficient food to feed a family for three days. If you'd like details on what is needed and how to make a contribution, you can go to Morrisons, the Information Centre or Starline Taxis.

FORCES MARCH FANCY A GRAND DAY OUT WITH THE FORCES?

Last May, over 100 people – ordinary men and women walking alongside the Army and Royal Marines – took part in a forces walk conducted over five days from Ilfracombe to Bulford. This test of endurance raised in excess of £30,000 for Service charities, including Project 65, the Veterans' charity. It was so successful the organisers are repeating it this year, from 25th to 29th May, and are looking for willing participants specifically to join them on the last stretch, Day 5, from Warminster to Bulford, some 26.2 miles. Entrants will pay £25 a head, but will be expected to raise additional sponsorship. Those who took part last year said it was hugely enjoyable and very special. "A truly remarkable challenge," reported one such participant. "We have met so many great people and we're coming back next year." So if you're fit, hale and hearty, you can get even fitter and help Veterans and their families by taking part. For more information, go to www.forcesmarch.org.uk



Warminster Town Councillors - the members

Warminster Town Council is made up of 12 Councillors who are known collectively as Members. The town is split into two wards, Warminster East and Warminster West, and six members represent each ward.

The Council is led by the Mayor - Councillor Sue Fraser, and the Deputy Mayor - Councillor Pip Ridout, both of whom were elected on 17th May 2010.

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forthcoming meetings - Town Council and Committee Meetings are held at Dewey House and are open to the public. You are most welcome to come along either to listen or to say your piece in the public session. Times of meetings and agendas are listed below and are also posted on the notice board outside Dewey House and posted on our website www.warminster.uk.com and advertised in The *Warminster Journal*. Minutes of meetings are also posted on the website

Town Development	7th Feb	7.00pm	Planning Advisory	28th March	7.00pm
Planning Advisory	14th Feb	7.00pm	Communications	4th April	7.00pm
Finance & Assets	28th Feb	7.00pm	Parish Meeting	11th April	7.00pm
Planning Advisory	7th March	7.00pm	Planning Advisory	18th April	7.00pm
Town Development	14th March	7.00pm	Finance & Assets	26th April	7.00pm
CCTV	16th March	10.30am	Planning Advisory	9th May	7.00pm
Full Council	21st March	7.00pm	Annual Meeting	16th May	7.00pm



engage

and make a difference

editor's welcome

It's good to know that the next time we turn the page of the calendar, we'll be seeing spring coming over the horizon. Spring is always the season we associate with new ventures and new beginnings, so it's quite fitting that the way has been made clear for the refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms. You can read more of this story below and inside this edition of *engage*.

Of course, the decision about the Assembly Rooms is not the only thing we have had to deal with – there are other issues such as car parking in the town. This is a proposed development that is stirring up passions right across the county, so we're not alone. And, as the year progresses, there'll no doubt be other problems to deal with. But with spring around the corner and the kind of community spirit that exists in Warminster – examples of which you can read about inside – we can face any challenge!

ASSEMBLY ROOMS GIVEN GREEN LIGHT

In the last edition of *engage*, it was reported that around 1500 questionnaires relating to the future of the Assembly Rooms were mailed to randomly selected Warminster residents. As a rule, the number of returned questionnaires for this type of exercise is low and a minimum figure of 20% is set; but, in this instance, the figure was noticeably higher. Some 580 were returned, raising the percentage of completed questionnaires to 36.8%. There were also a number of residents who specifically requested a questionnaire. Such an impressive figure reflects the fact that the future of the Assembly Rooms was of prime importance to a large proportion of the Warminster community.

The answers revealed some interesting insights, showing, for example, that 64% of respondents had used the Assembly Rooms in the last three years, and that they'd done so for a variety of events from dinner dances to donating blood. This result was supported by the answer to another question. Asked whether the Town Council should provide a hall for residents or community and voluntary organisations to hire, 87% said yes.

As a result of this lengthy but worthwhile consultation, the refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms – the actual cost of which is less than the widely believed figure of £800,000 – was given the green light. Town residents can now look forward to a facility that will double up as a social amenity and a Council venue – one that will not only serve the people of Warminster today, but can act as a legacy for future generations.





Warminster Town Council

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Staff at Dewey House



Heather Abernethie Pauline Martin Marion Blewett Judith Halls

As we go to press The Assembly Rooms is about to close for its first major refurbishment since the 1970s. We will report on progress in the next issue of *engage* in June, but we expect the Rooms to remain closed until late summer. In the meantime, the Town Council offices in Dewey House are open as normal Monday to Friday 9.30am – 4.30pm and Dewey House hall is available for hire. You are welcome to call in during opening hours, and are also welcome to attend the council meetings which are held in the Chamber. Details of forthcoming meetings are given on the back page, listed on the website and advertised on the notice board outside Dewey House and in the *Warminster Journal*.

Our website at www.warminster.uk.com continues to be developed and we would be interested in your opinion of it. Does it contain the information you want? Would you like to see other information included? Details of council meetings and activities are listed on it and you can access agendas and minutes of all meetings, as well as other items such as the Annual Report, CCTV Annual Report, the Draft Town Plan, the Draft Community Flood Plan and back issues of *engage*. There is also a section for Hot News where you will find news items relating to the Town Council and to the town. If you would like to include an item please let us know.

MAYOR'S PARLOUR

Over the last few months, I've been kept very busy representing our town at many different functions, both in Warminster and around the county. These included celebratory and gala evenings; visits to the Air and Army Cadets, the Baptist Church for their bicentenary, and to the Wootton Bassett Field of Remembrance, which was very moving; and attending numerous charity AGM's.

We are at an important watershed in local administration with responsibilities being passed down from government to County and Parish level. These will affect the NHS, Planning, and other sections of the community; as a result, we have had various meetings outlining these developments. As for other concerns, we'll be looking for a swift

completion of the Assembly Rooms to minimise disruption to regular users, and continuing the fight against the introduction of further parking charges. This may mean entering into an additional financial arrangement with Wiltshire Council, but we feel it's worth it to keep our town the vibrant place it is.

The Carnival was its usual high standard and even the weather was kind, with the rain holding off for most of the time – a big 'thank you' to the Carnival Committee for their time and effort. The rain also held off for the Remembrance Parade, allowing us to show our appreciation to the brave men and women in our Armed Forces, past and present, and to admire the spruced up War Memorial, which was given a facelift by designer Richard Haes. It's been a long winter, but now, thankfully, we can all look forward to the warmer weather of spring and summer.



Sue Rose

Assembly Rooms are scene of new partnership

The development of the Assembly Rooms is an important milestone, not only for Warminster, but for local government. This is because the newly refurbished building will be able to host officers from Wiltshire Council, a unique move that will enable them to deliver community services directly to Warminster people.

To illustrate how serious they are about the Assembly Rooms, Wiltshire Council is contributing £145,000 to the refurbishment project, which will help to update the offices and build new disabled facilities. The latter are planned to be more than disabled toilets and will incorporate space to meet the additional needs of the disabled and their carers.

The presence of the two councils alongside the community facilities make this project one of the first examples of collaborative local government in the country. John Noeken of Wiltshire Council said, "I am delighted that we are working with Warminster Town Council on this exciting and original project. Our aim is to make services more accessible for local people." Mr Noeken, who is Cabinet Member for Resources, added, "By working with the Town Council, we can provide the best facilities for staff and local communities." Warminster has always prided itself on being an historic town, so it's appropriate that, within local government, it's now the scene of history in the making.



NEW PLAQUE FOR COPHEAP MEMORIAL

An additional group of people was remembered on Remembrance Day last November when Warminster Town Council put up a plaque at the entrance of Copheap Memorial, 50 years after its dedication, to honour those who had set it up.

The Memorial, just off Copheap Lane, is believed to have been instigated by Harold Dewey and was overseen by the old Warminster Urban District Council. Built between 1949 and 1950, the steps and pillars on the lych gate were designed and built by the Wiltshire Regiments of Old Comrades and Royal Artillery Association (The Old Gunners), and a photograph on the plaque shows members of the working group. The lych gate is inscribed with the wording: "As an everlasting tribute of pride and gratitude to the sons of Warminster who gave their lives in the Great World Wars, this archway was constructed and Copheap preserved for the perpetual use and enjoyment of all."



FAIRTRADE TO ENCOURAGE SHOWING OFF

The enthusiasm for Fairtrade is showing no signs of flagging, but there are still some people out there who need persuading; so the theme of this year's Fairtrade Fortnight, from 28th February to 13th March, is "Show off your label". In other words, wear the Fairtrade label with pride. The Warminster Fairtrade group is leading by example and planning to have a stall in the Three Horseshoes Walk on Saturday 12th March. There will be a tombola of Fairtrade products and a young band of helpers from Kingdown School, who will be spreading the word. Local pubs and cafés, including Moretons in Market Place and The Organ Inn in the High Street, will be promoting Fairtrade products, and, where possible, using them. Moretons are certainly not missing out. On Pancake Day, 5th March, they'll be serving Fairtrade pancakes – and you can't say fairer than that.

A Future for Warminster Festival?

In its 20 years' history, the Warminster Festival has enjoyed huge success, but with members of the Warminster Festival Committee retiring, its very existence is now under a big question mark. With the departure of Dorothea and Charles Sultana de Maria – Chair and Treasurer – and Richard Violet – Secretary – who have done sterling work over the years, there are too few committee members left to make it a viable proposition.

This is your chance to make a positive contribution to this fantastic event. If your head is buzzing with new ideas step right up and volunteer to go on the committee now! For further information or to put yourself forward give **Pauline Martin** at the Town Council a call on **01985 214847**.

Another successful Christmas Market



TOWN LINK TO NEIGHBOURLINESS

When it comes to helping others, the Link Scheme is a grand example of good neighbourliness. Just under 40 volunteers manage to clock up around 44,000 miles a year, but it's not just driving they do. They carry out dog walking and shopping, pick up prescriptions and help people get to the surgery. So if you're in real need, call **01985 211655**, Mondays through to Fridays, leaving your name, telephone number and what help you're requiring. A co-ordinator will then get back to you. On the other hand, if you yourself want to become a volunteer, give them a call on the same number. **You can never have too many volunteers!**