



2023-2024

Horwich Town Council Annual Report



Horwich Town Council

The Council is made up of 14 Councillors representing 7 wards.

The role of a town councillor is completely voluntary and does not receive any payment or claim any expenses.

During the civic year, May 2023 to May 2024, Council has continued with its role providing add-on services and facilities to the community of Horwich, having allocated funds in the budget for initiatives such as spring and summer planting of the town centre flower troughs, additional winter gritting for some of the hillier parts of the town and provision of free dog waste bags.

Council has consulted throughout the year with the unitary authority, Bolton Council, on a wide range of matters of importance to the parish such as major planning issues as well as making recommendations on the monthly lists of planning applications in Horwich.

The Council continues to welcome public participation to the meetings along with various representatives attending to provide the residents and members with updates and information such as the Bolton NHS Foundation Trust to present its clinical strategy, Bolton Council's Senior Enforcement Officer with an update on enforcement issues, a representative from Horwich Angels with an overview of the initiatives and work of this organisation and Bolton Play and Youth Service who presented a summary of play and activity sessions in Horwich in 2024 funded by the Town Council ,

Some Highlights

Began discussions with Horwich RMI Social Club for the potential purchase of the Recreation Ground and Pavilion by means of an application to the Community Ownership Fund.

Continues to fund youth provision during school holidays, including a skate ramp and various play and activity sessions in Horwich, along with outreach provision to alleviate anti-social behaviour

Launched new website www.horwich.gov.uk

Worked towards attaining Foundation status of the Local Council Award Scheme

The Town Council's social media presence increased through use of its Facebook page

Civic Awards presented to Peter Schofield and Paul Cunningham in recognition of their long service in the voluntary sector

Administered the community grants scheme to help support and develop many local organisations

Funds and runs the Festival of Horwich, a popular free to enter family fun day at Horwich RMI Recreation Ground

Adopted the national 'Civility and Respect' pledge for local councils

Supports Horwich Community Centre which continues to provide a community space for all ages and interests including an elderly lunch club, free seated exercise for rehabilitation purposes, a drop-in toddler group, various activity and fitness groups and Citizens Advice drop-in service to help give free advice to residents. The Centre continues to be self-financing (except for staff wages)

The Council's Year

April saw staff completing the annual accounts in preparation for end of year internal and external audits. The spring planting on the high streets was out in full bloom and Council chose a new Town Mayor Elect and Deputy Town Mayor Elect for 2023 – 2024. The outgoing Town Mayor Councillor Steven Chadwick unveiled three commemorative oak trees in Ridgmont Park to celebrate 150 years of local government in Horwich, the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of King Charles III. The Town Mayor also distributed Coronation wildflower seed packets and commemorative bookmarks to local primary schools in celebration of the coronation of the new monarch in May.

A new civic plaque was installed at the former Black Bull pub on Church Street, acknowledging its history as a former stagecoach inn and the centre of local administration in Horwich in the early 19th century.

In **May**, a new Council was elected, made up of some familiar faces as well as some new ones. Councillor David Grant was appointed Chair of the Council and Town Mayor for the civic year 2023-2024. His chosen charities for the Mayoral year were Rock It, Veterans' Army and Bolton Hospice. Dr Kathryn Grant, who is a councillor on Blackrod Town Council, was appointed as the Town Mayoress.

In **June**, the Town Council provided funding for community groups and projects in the town, aiming to support sustainable local projects that improve the quality of life for the residents of Horwich. Groups that were in receipt of a grant included Horwich Community Choir, Horwich LC Amateur Swimming Club, 42nd Bolton Scout Group and St Catherine's PCC. Council also awarded grant funding to Horwich Festival of Racing for commemorative medals for all entrants in their 20th anniversary event.

Council fulfilled its statutory duty to complete its Annual Governance and Accountability Return which was submitted to external audit and came back with no issues highlighted for attention.

July and August saw summer play and youth activities taking place in various locations in Horwich, funded by the Town Council from the youth provision budget.

September and local residents enjoyed the free to enter Festival of Horwich fun day for all the family at the RMI Recreation Ground on Ramsbottom Road. Councillors, staff, volunteers, performers, food and drink vendors, voluntary organisations and emergency services came together to provide a spectacular event which provided very popular with all those attending.

In **October**, at the meeting of the Grants to Voluntary Sub-Committee, members approved the grants for financial assistance to: Horwich Parish Church, the Wright Place Luncheon Club, Horwich Amateur Theatre Society, Horwich Locos Basketball, Old Rivs (u16s) Girls Football Club and Horwich Youth Darts.

Council discussed the possibility of taking over the management of allotments in Horwich from Bolton Council and approved this as one of its long-term initiatives.

In **November**, the residents of Horwich turned out in large numbers to pay their respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the two World Wars and conflicts since. The Parade and Service is organised by the Council and the Horwich Royal British Legion. An image of a red poppy was projected onto Rivington Pike over the Remembrance weekend, jointly funded by Horwich and Blackrod Town Councils and Chorley Council.

December saw people from across the community brave the wintery weather including the Town Mayor and Mayoress and neighbouring mayoralty at the annual lighting of the Civic Christmas Tree at the Crown roundabout. The evening started with the switch on of the lights minus the reindeer family whose seasonal residency was abruptly ended the previous week when they were stolen. However, the community enjoyed a great line up of Christmas songs provided by the Rivington and Blackrod High School band and choir and there was also Santa's visit on the Rotary of Horwich Sleigh. Happily, the reindeer family was returned undamaged a few days later and since been stored away at a secret location until next Christmas. The new Christmas lighting fixtures were very well received, bringing some welcome brightness to our town during the dark winter days.

In **January**, The Council approved the draft budget for 2024 – 2025 with the precept figure of £274,990. This will equate to an increase for a Band D property of £6.49 on the previous year and a total payment of £36.02 per year (approximately £3 per month/75p per week) which will allow the Council to continue providing additional services and facilities to the residents of Horwich. These include Horwich Community Centre, with support for the Heritage Centre next door. Sponsorship is provided for large events with smaller grants allocated to voluntary groups to support organisations providing services and activities for all ages, including sports clubs, schools, churches and many more. The budget will allow continuing support for Remembrance Sunday and the improved Christmas Lighting scheme and will ensure the continued planting of the roadside flower troughs. Funds have also been set aside to look at green space project for the future. Council will continue to encourage civic pride through its civic award and civic plaque scheme. The precept will also allow for the 'Festival of Horwich' to continue as a successful annual community celebration.

In **February** Council launched its new website www.horwich.gov.uk with better navigation, clearer content and easier accessibility and content solely managed by the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk.

The Town Mayor held a very successful Birthday Bash Fundraiser at Ridgmont House in aid of his charities, including performances from Rock It and a charity raffle with some amazing prizes. On a more solemn note, on a bleak, cold morning he attended a short service in memory of the victims of the Winter Hill Air Disaster in 1958 and laid a wreath from Horwich Town Council and Horwich Heritage.

March saw Council working with Horwich RMI Social Club to explore the possibility of purchasing the Recreation Ground with the aim of preserving this important open space for the community in perpetuity against any potential threat of development. Funding is being sought through the Community Ownership Fund, part of the Government's Levelling Up Strategy which is a lengthy and complicated process. Council intends to consult with the community in various ways over the next few months.

Sadly, Councillor Craig Rotheram resigned due to ongoing health issues. Craig was thanked for all his hard work over the past six years and his contribution to the Council, particularly his work on the Festival of Horwich and the new Christmas lighting features.

And finally, the Chair would like to thank the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk for their support, dedication and hard work throughout the year without whom none of these achievements would be possible.



