



ALCESTER TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25



Contact details for Alcester Town Council

Globe House
Priory Road
Alcester
B49 5DZ

Tel: 01789 766084

Email: clerk@alcester-tc.gov.uk

The office is open between 9am-1pm Monday to Friday

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Introduction

This is the report of Alcester Town Council and covers the activities and services it has delivered from May 2024 to April 2025.

The Council has sixteen councillors, all elected for a four-year term. The next election is scheduled for May 2027.

Cllr Mike Bowe was elected as Mayor in May 2024 with Cllr David Henderson elected as Deputy Mayor.

The parish of Alcester is divided into two Wards – Alcester West and Alcester East. Councillors are elected to represent each Ward as identified on the back page.

Finance

The Town Council sets the precept each year in January. The precept is the primary source of income for the Town Council and is a small part of the Council Tax which residents pay to Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

At the Full Council meeting on 7 January, the Town Council agreed to request a precept of £410,120 from Stratford-on-Avon District Council for the year 2025-26.

The Town Council uses the precept to run council business and to provide a wide range of services to residents. These include four allotment sites, four playgrounds, the cemetery on Birmingham Road, civic and community events such as Remembrance Sunday, grants to voluntary organisations, the Health and Wellbeing projects, maintenance and upkeep of the Eric Payne Community Centre, maintenance of the Alcester Community Shed, maintenance of Priory Meadow, Centenary Field and other open spaces and miscellaneous street furniture such as signs, benches and bins.

Planning

The Planning Committee meets once a month to consider all planning applications in Alcester. The Council are a consultee in the Stratford-on-Avon District Council planning process and during the year considered 56 applications. The Committee supported 4, objected to 7, and responded with no objection to 30 applications. For tree works there is a standard response of No Representation and there were 15 such applications.

The minutes of the Committee are published on the Town Council website.

Quality Gold Award

Alcester Town Council has received the prestigious Quality Gold Award as part of the Local Council Award Scheme. This achievement recognises that the Council achieves good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement. It confirms that the Council goes above and beyond its legal obligations, leading the community and continually seeking opportunities to improve and develop even further. At the time of the award, out of the 9,000 town and parish councils in England, there were only 53 who have been awarded this status and the Council is therefore very proud of this achievement.

Rural Enterprise Hub



The Town Council secured a grant from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to create a Hub to provide a service to rural and agricultural businesses. The service fosters rural enterprise, unlocking the potential and exploring opportunities, for the rural community local businesses offering advice, material, and practical support in particular areas of interest, such as Grant Funding, Skills Training, Apprenticeships, Technological & Agricultural Innovation and Small Business Start-Ups .

In partnership with Minerva Mill Innovation Centre, Vicky Griffith is employed as the Rural Enterprise Development Officer to run the Hub. The project has now been extended until July 2025.

This pilot project will help to identify any risks and issues before committing more resources and enable an accurate budget and investment appraisal to be determined, depending on the outcome, at the conclusion of the pilot programme.

SPEND

A new support group for parents with children and young people who have special needs has been launched in Alcester.

Created through a collaboration of local parents and Alcester Health & Wellbeing Partnership, the first session took place in January 2024 and the response was incredible with amazing feedback from all who attended.

The group, named 'SPEND', meets on the second Friday of every month in the Depot at the Eric Payne Community Centre in Alcester from 9.45am -11.15am. It is a safe place for SEN parent carers to come together to make connections and share experiences and information with other people walking the same path. Professional speakers are invited and there are opportunities to do mindfulness activities together. The aim is for parents to feel supported, not just with practical advice and assistance but also with their own emotional well-being.

Electric Van

Alcester Town Council was delighted to take delivery of its new electric van in October 2024.

Following the demise of the old Town Council van (which was recycled for scrap), the councillors decided that an electric van was the way forward. Not only is this move in keeping with Alcester Town Council's Climate objectives, it is also proving more cost effective to run.



Remembrance Sunday

The Town Council organised the annual Remembrance Sunday parade on 10 November 2024, to remember all those who lost their lives in conflict.

The parade was very well supported - led by Alcester Royal British Legion accompanied by Alcester Victoria Silver Band, followed by serving members of HM forces and veterans, Lord Hertford, Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Alcester Army Cadet Force, Alcester Town Council, other Council



representatives, Emergency Services, Alcester Court Leet, Alcester Churches Together, town organisations, youth organisations, schools and junior sports clubs. A short outdoor service was led by Reverend Daniel Corlett and Reverend Julie Lindsay on Church Green where wreaths were laid, standards presented, and lives remembered.

Bee Squared

Bee Squared



Alcester Town Council

Using a grant from WCC County Councillors fund, 1800 packets of wildflower seeds were distributed free of charge via shops in Alcester. Each packet contained enough seeds to plant out a metre square area and residents were encouraged to take part. 500 bee seed bombs have been given out to primary schools in Alcester. An event was held in September 2024 hosted by All Things Rural to advise on how to plant the wildflower seeds.

Good Day Farm

Using a grant from Awards for All, the Good Day Farm visited Jubilee Fields in October 2024. For this inter-generational initiative, children from St Nicholas Primary School and Our Lady's and residents of Cherry Trees care home enjoyed meeting the animals together.



Grand Days Out

This project continues to run very successfully with coach trips this year to Coventry Cathedral, Bourton on the Water in the Cotswolds, Coventry Transport Museum and the RAF Museum in Cosford.

There were a total of 68 different people taking advantage of these trips.

Holiday Lunch Club

The Holiday Lunch Club continues to provide a hot lunch for local children each school holiday.

Jubilee Fields Fencing

Following significant vandalism of the wooden fencing at Jubilee Fields, the Town Council installed new ROSPA compliant fencing around the play area together with self-closing gates. This was funded using section 106 funds for public open spaces from the Bloor Homes Development.

Repair Café - 5th Birthday Party

The Repair Café celebrated its 5th birthday in October 2024. Over the 5-year period of the Repair Café there have been over 1080 visitors with a visitor satisfaction rate of 73.9% and with a repair success rate of 59%, that is 638 repairs out of 1080 items.

The environmental impact of the Repair Café over the 5-year period has been significant with a total emission saving of approximately 21000 kg CO2 emissions and an estimated 2233 kg saved from going to landfill and recycling.



The emission savings from our repair activities over the 5 years are equivalent to ONE of the following:

Driving 87,171 miles, taking 13,118 showers, or flying 127,992 miles

These equivalencies highlight the substantial environmental benefits of our repair initiatives.

Mayor's Civic Awards



Outstanding contributions from members of the Alcester community were recognised at the Mayor's Civic Awards evening held at The Greig Hall in January 2025. This was an excellent opportunity to showcase the brightest and the best of Alcester in terms of volunteering, community spirit and commitment to the town.

The Mayor made the following awards for 2024 from a strong group of nominations:

Young Persons of the Year- Joint winners Louie Styler, Jacob Woodfield and Monty Payne.

Community Organisation of the Year- Church Street Properties

Business of the Year – Waitrose, Alcester

Citizen of the Year – Maggie Payne

In addition, Cllr Bowe awarded a special Lifetime Achievement award to Chris Wright in recognition of his significant contribution to the town of Alcester.

Prizes were also awarded to the winners of the 2024 allotment competition. Mr J Coton was the overall winner and awarded the Reg Grummett trophy.

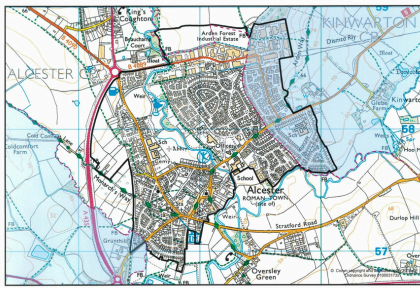
Window Wanderland

January 2025 saw the sixth annual Alcester Window Wanderland brightening up Alcester's streets during the dark winter months. This year, the Council worked hard to get more community organisations and Alcester businesses involved in the event.

This year's three categories were Nature & Climate Change, Health & Wellbeing and Community & Neighbourhood. The judging was a real pleasure- although it was a massive challenge to choose between the 21 entrants to the festival! Our 2025 winners are: Jen Hopkins for Nature and Climate Change; The Scouts with Michael Beaver Opticians for Community & Neighbourhood; Run Alcester at Pantry Ann's for Health & Wellbeing and finally Cherry Trees for Best Overall Window.



Neighbourhood Development Plan Review



The Alcester Neighbourhood Development Plan Review Steering Group, consisting of residents, businesses and town councillors, has met regularly over the past year.

The Group has looked at the existing policies in Alcester's Neighbourhood Development Plan to see if they need changes or additions in the light of new local concerns or higher-level planning policies.

The work of the Group was paused pending progress of the South Warwickshire Local Plan which will have a significant effect on the requirement for additional housing development locally.

Flood Guardians

The Flood Working Group is currently reviewing the role of our flood wardens in the event of a significant flood. The rebranding of the volunteers as 'Flood Guardians' has included training sessions in basic health and safety with Warwickshire County Council, and flood volunteer training with Communities Prepared, which is a national community resilience programme advising on how to prepare and take actions before, during and after a flood.

Further work is underway to allocate specific roles to each Flood Guardian including allocating geographic areas of responsibility. While it remains the responsibility of individual property owners to protect their home, the Flood Guardians will assist the Town Council with monitoring and reporting on the local drains, gullies and river levels, and, in the event of a significant flood event, contacting those residents living in vulnerable areas known to have previously flooded.

Alcester Community Shed



The successful transformation of the old squash courts into the Community Shed is complete and it was officially opened on 25th October 2024 by the Mayor, Cllr Mike Bowe.

The project took almost a year and involved many contractors and volunteers who worked together to produce this wonderful community asset. The cost of the work was met by securing grants and generous donations at no expense to ratepayers. It is a welcoming space with a fully equipped workshop where people can join together to make and mend, learning new skills, having fun and making new friends. And, of course, after the work is done there is space to relax over a tea or coffee.

The building is managed by Alcester Town Council and is home to the Alcester Community Shed group. During a busy couple of open days in September many residents showed interest in Shed membership and many have now joined. As well as sessions where members can use the hand tools, there are plans to get trainers in to teach how to safely use the machine tools such as the lathe, plus demonstrations by experienced professionals.

The Crafty Lunch Club

The Mayor's chosen charity for the year was The Crafty Lunch Club.

This is a group that give adults with learning or physical disabilities, and their carers, the chance to have fun. The Crafty Lunch Club team do a wonderful job of bringing joy to people that have fewer opportunities for enjoyable and friendly interaction. At the same time allowing



their carers to have social contact with other carers and the group organisers. Everyone gets involved in creative crafts, games, dancing and finishes off with a two-course lunch.

Thank You and Goodbye

Since the last annual report, we said goodbye to Cllr Erick Wilson, Cllr Vaughan Blake Cllr Gavin Smithers and Cllr Kathrin Foster who resigned as Town Councillors. Cllr Lauren Martinson also served briefly as a Town Councillor during the year. We also bade a fond farewell to Sarah Duran, Deputy Town Clerk who retired in June 2024 having worked for the Council since 2017.

Welcome

We were pleased to welcome Cllr Ruth Ashfield and Cllr Colleen Chester as Town Councillors during the year. Kyla Brown was appointed as the new Deputy Town Clerk in September 2024.

Alcester Town Council Councillors

Alcester West Ward



Mike Bowe
Mayor



Kathryn Cargiill
Lead Councillor:
Health and Wellbeing



Colleen Chester



Corin Elliott
Lead Councillor:
Business and Tourism



Andrew Foster



David Henderson
Deputy Mayor
Lead Councillor: Footpaths



Wendy Mills
Lead Councillor:
Communications, Engagement
and Corporate Strategy



Clive Neal - Sturgess
Lead Councillor:
Community Resilience

Alcester East Ward



Ruth Ashfield
Lead Councillor:
Climate Change



Mark Cargill
Lead Councillor:
Planning / Eric Payne
Community Centre



Gill Forman
Lead Councillor:
Cemetery



Dougie Gordon
Lead Councillor:
Climate Change



Keith Greenaway
Lead Councillor:
Allotments



Alison Leask
Lead Councillor:
Youth Engagement

