

## One Year on as Wiltshire Councillor for the Marlborough East Division

Over the last few weeks, I have joined Annual Town and Parish Meetings in Marlborough and Savernake, sadly missing Mildenhall's due to a diary clash with Marlborough's for whom I'm also a town councillor. It's very interesting to hear the annual updates from these important bodies that help ensure our communities thrive as great places to live, work and visit and I'm proud to represent them. I should like to thank all Councillors for all their hard work and commitment, and especially the Clerks, who do a fantastic job keeping everyone on track.

Wiltshire Council recently set its 2022/23 budget and 10-year Business Plan to focus on the future, while maintaining a long-term strong financial footing. The council's budget for the next financial year is just over £417m and with more than half (£235m) on support and social care for adults and children. Around £92m will be spent on day-to-day services such as waste management, road maintenance, leisure, and library services as well as the council's carbon management and climate change work - which recently saw the council ranked as the fifth best unitary authority in the UK for its response to this global challenge.

Alongside this, the council's capital programme is £307m for projects to improve and maintain the county's infrastructure - including leisure services, council house building (with ten new homes coming to Marlborough), school maintenance, footpath, and highway improvements.

The 10-year Business Plan outlines the council's guiding themes, which are prevention and early intervention; improving social mobility and tackling inequalities; understanding communities; and working together.

The Climate Change strategy underpins our ambitions to reduce emissions and to make the county more resilient to climate impacts. A number of projects are now underway, including a 'groupon' style Solar Community Scheme for residents, businesses and community buildings. More information is at [www.solartogether/wiltshire/home](http://www.solartogether/wiltshire/home) but registration closes on 14 June. I am also working to secure funding to extend the foot and cycle path along the disused Chiseldon to Marlborough railway line to connect the north and east of the town area to the west, providing much needed access to the Business Park and St John's.

Locally, I am very aware that traffic and road safety issues remain a high priority and I was pleased to see the annual budget for "CATG" doubled while also being renamed as Local Highways & Footpaths Improvement Groups (LHFIG); tasked with identifying small-scale local highways projects to improve safety and, now, to encourage walking and cycling with their remit extended to include improvements to Rights of Way. LHFIG is a sub-Committee of the Marlborough Community Area Board, which can award capital and revenue grants to local groups for initiatives that align with the board's five priorities - Climate Change, Children and Young People, Older or Vulnerable People's Health and Wellbeing, the Local Economy and Health. I would encourage everyone to have their say on the Board's plans and how best they could be implemented. To understand more, recent Agendas and Minutes can be found [here](#).

Personally, I'm also very committed to improving the lot of our local young people, particularly considering the impact we know Covid lock downs had on mental health and social skills. With the benefit of a grant from the Area Board I am working to set up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) that will enable us to fund raise and employ a local Youth Worker.

Another local priority is planning, with commercial developments and concerns over plans for the Savernake Forrest dominating. I will do all I can to ensure local views are presented to the Planning Officers, “calling in” decisions when they might not reflect local views.

Thank you for your support over the past year. It has been a pleasure to represent you all at Wiltshire Council and to play a small part in your vibrant communities. Please feel free to contact me on [caroline.thomas@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:caroline.thomas@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Caroline Thomas  
Wiltshire Councillor for Marlborough East