

## Matlock Town Council report 2025

Matlock Town Council has had a period of transition during 2025. After a case of fraud last year, the Council has a new Finance Officer who has been continuing the work started by the Town Clerk, Simon Hosmer, in streamlining the accounts. In addition, the Council now comprises three independent councillors, one Labour councillor and the remaining eight being LibDems. Sadly, no local members came forward to take up vacant places that then went to the coopted independents. The reduced LibDem cover is a symptom of a wider issue with the LibDem membership in Matlock and Tansley, but hasn't caused any problems for the running of the Council.

The month of May this year saw a change in Mayor from Jason Knighton to Marilyn Franks. Both have executed their roles enthusiastically. Jason is now the leader of the Council.

Turning to finance, the outstanding fraud has yet to result in any arrests, but fortunately the bank has covered the lost funds and so the Council itself is not out of pocket.

The Council has adequate income to cover its operating costs and is now looking to increase its reserves. Council has asked the Clerk to provide a plan for doing so.

The Council is responsible for the Imperial Rooms, various parks, planters, open spaces and footpaths in the town, events, toilets in the Hall Leyes Park children's play area, and Christmas lights.

Imperial Room bookings have shown strong growth over the last year and have now fully recovered from the Covid pandemic. At the same time, the room booking fees have been simplified and increased to bring them more into line with operating costs. Progress is continuing in that respect. The heating system replacement is an outstanding issue to be addressed as is officer accommodation which is cramped and in need of decoration.

Environmental work continues. Mostly, this is to maintain the current conditions. A new works plan is in preparation which should lead to better management of outside staff and the environment.

Derbyshire Dales and Matlock Town Council agreed some time ago for the transfer of land in Starkholmes that performs the functions of a village green. This has yet to happen, but I understand that the contract is now with the Town's lawyers.

Allotments are still a concern with a relatively long waiting list after the closure of the private allotments in Starkholmes and Matlock's continued growth. An element in the environment plan will be to make requests for allotment land or financing from S.106 contributions.

Planters continue to be a concern also, with some yet to show promise in terms of colour and cover.

The events schedule has been a major success once again with events scheduled throughout the year culminating in the Christmas lights turn-on last week.

The toilets continue to be loss making but are providing a useful service and the council will continue to run them.

Turning to Christmas lights, their extent has increased year by year in accordance with a plan prepared about three years ago. They have now expanded into Hall Leyes Park and look very well there. The coloured bulbs now cover nearly all the commercial properties in the centre of the town.

Looking forward, the Town Council is considering the impact of Local Government Reorganisation. It is opening up a dialogue with the District Council about parks, open spaces and car parks in the town to determine whether any of these might be transferred to the town council before the District Council's finances are locked down due to LGR. The desire is to keep open spaces under local control and provide an income source through the car parks to pay for them.

The other major issue for Matlock as a whole is the location of the offices for the new unitary authority. Clearly, the County Council and District Council officers bring in significant revenue to Matlock shops and the buildings themselves, if vacated, would need new uses. If they were left empty they would be a major cause for concern. The County Council has an application in planning to turn its offices into apartments and a hotel, but it has not been progressed since the County election. I expect that nothing will change until 2028 and the new unitary authorities are in place.