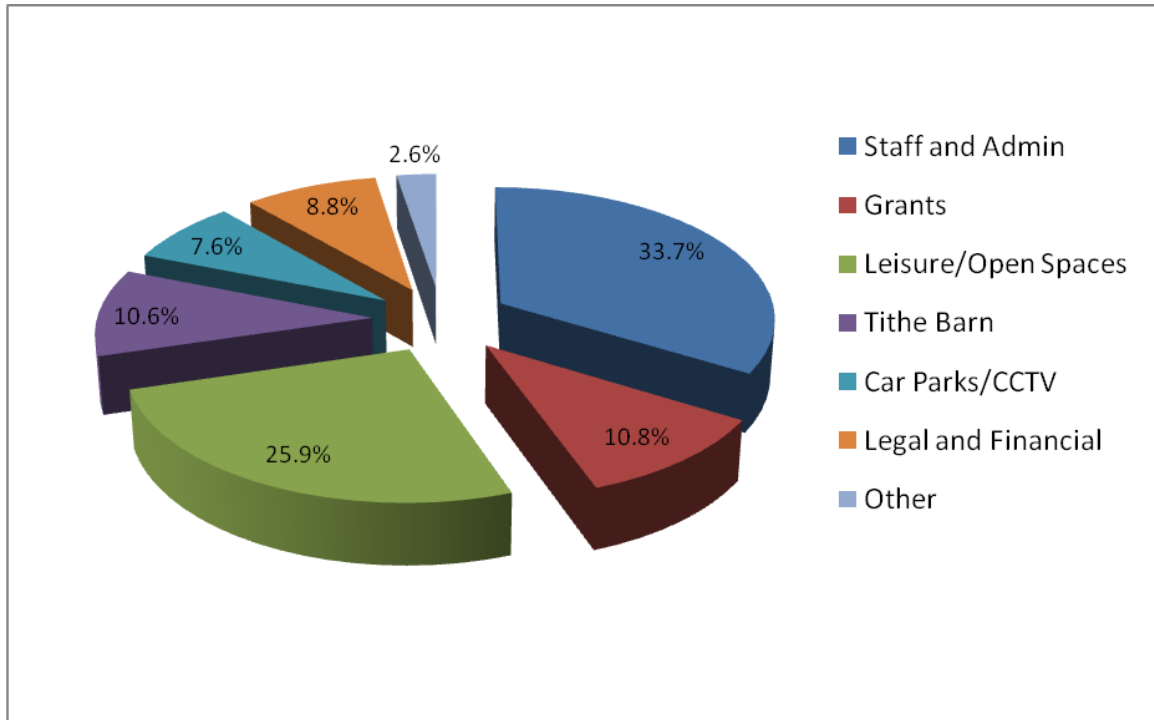


Nailsea Annual Town Report 2014-15

It is the job of Nailsea Town Council to make the best contribution possible to improve the town for the benefit of its residents. This necessitates raising money through the Precept and spending it appropriately. Making these choices inevitably demands much commitment and effort by both councillors and staff. I would like to commend everyone for their work this year as it has been a particularly busy one. The summary of expenditure is shown below, and a more detailed breakdown is at the end of the report.



Regretfully, Sonny Walker found he was no longer able to offer the time necessary and resigned, so I would like to thank him for joining the Council and the contribution he made. It was a pleasure to welcome Julie Petford who was elected unopposed in his place.

It is also a pleasure to welcome Emma Herriot to the office team as senior administrator. Liz Fey is moving on from her post as Finance Officer, which she has most ably done for the last 10 years.

Now what has occupied the Council most during this year and how has its carefully budgeted money been spent?

Let's start with **The Glasswork's Site**. I cannot tell you how many people have offered their thanks and congratulations for completing this project as they are so numerous. It is even better to report the schedule of works was carried out within budget. I would particularly like to mention Ian Morrell and Cllr David Packham's contribution to the process. Their skill and knowledge undoubtedly enabled the correct decisions to be taken regarding all aspects of the work, which as an important heritage site, with an industrial past use, was quite complex.

Hopefully it will be a well used and loved site for the benefit of everyone instead of the ugly eyesore we once knew!

Of course it is not easy choosing to spend tax-payers money on such a project, but I would like to offer reassurance that after all other avenues to make the necessary changes were closed, it was the Town Council's responsibility to abide by the wish to improve the site expressed by residents in the Parish Plan several years ago. All decisions were carefully debated and decided through the proper democratic process.

In fact it is that process which makes being a councillor so interesting. Everyone may have a personal point of view, but after a vote the decision is collectively that of the Council. All Council meetings are open to the public and there is time allocated to the public on the agenda of every Town Council meeting, so it is hoped as many views as possible can be heard and considered.

However, very occasionally, the number of voices to be heard are so many that it may be necessary to find another way for them to be expressed. The Chair of Planning, Cllr James Tonkin, decided a public meeting was necessary when **Lidl's Planning Application** came before us and the Council agreed. The overwhelming view by residents that too many car parking spaces would be lost from our busy Stockway South car park has led Lidl to think again and the Council awaits to see if this can be redressed.

On the subject of **Car Parks**, the Town Council welcomed the improvement made by Waitrose when North Somerset Council agreed to lease the Link Road car park to them. Although accepting a 2 hour waiting time was necessary, it is hoped it will reinforce the long held view of the Council that free car parking can be retained across the town. Seeing an improved car park in one area however, has highlighted the need for improvement in Station Road.

Equally contentious is the route proposed for the **Hinkley C Connection**. The process of finalising the route is now at the stage of review by the government's planning inspectors and the Council has submitted its views in writing and verbally. At the Planning Inspector's hearing I spoke as vehemently as possible against the detriment of overhead cables in the hope that an underground solution might be found, especially as the timescale has been extended.

Other planning issues affecting our town involve housing numbers. Government inspectors have also been looking at **North Somerset's Core Strategy**. There has been an identified need of around 21,000 homes and Nailsea can expect several hundred within or close to the town. This could be of value as the declining population reverses and new families settle here. However, it requires careful planning and encouraging development of the correct mix as identified by the Town Council. Also it is to be hoped that the style will be in keeping and will retain green areas and pleasant outlook for residents.

It is because we value these green areas in the town that the Council has mapped them out with a view of adopting them should the financial situation at North Somerset Council mean they could no longer be protected.

The **heritage** of our town is also very much on the agenda. It is pleasing to know that North Somerset Council has made some investment in improving **Middle Engine Pit** and land clearance has not only revealed the fascinating historic remains on the site, but also the possibility of the

area being improved and used as a historical resource to help the education of our children, and possibly even visitors to the town.

In fact there are 'hidden history' sites elsewhere in the town and a design consultant has produced a fascinating document for the Council. It makes suggestions of how innovative signage might encourage visitors and residents to explore the town in search of aspects of Nailsea's past. This could not only be fascinating, but also another method of bringing Nailsea to the attention of others who share a love of natural, social or industrial history. It is early days, but I welcome this initiative.

The young people of Nailsea also deserve somewhere to call home. At the moment the Council is still supporting **Youth Services** at Youth House until a better venue can be established. Recently it has signed a contract with Foreal to carry provision of a dedicated youth service where Avon Youth Association left off, due to unforeseen circumstances. Hopefully, as Monday evenings become established as 'our night' at Youth House, many young people will benefit from the Town Council's expenditure.

The Town Council has long been a supporter of the value of the **Skateboard Park** to the young people in our town and made the decision to support the aim of the group working to raise £150,000 for its refurbishment to the tune of £50,000. Hopefully as has been proved in the past, it will be money well spent. With other agencies also contributing to this project, I dearly hope it won't be too long before everyone sees the fruition of their efforts.

Our community needs to feel safe as everyone gets on with their business, whatever activity they enjoy. So **Community Safety** has also been on the agenda this year. It was pleasing to see the Shop Watch project become active and reliable sources tell me it very quickly was effective when dealing with criminal activity in the town centre. Coupled with a review of CCTV cameras I hope that we have a watchful eye on anyone wishing harm to our residents and property in the area.

Of course the **voluntary sector** plays its part too and it is with some regret John Hunter announced the demise of PACT, but it is to be hoped a new way of working together with the police can be developed.

The Town Council also promotes **Disability Equality** in as many ways as possible while recognising there is always more to be done. One project completed this year with the help of the Council was the pathway around Backwell Lake. I would like to commend everyone in the Backwell Access Group for their determination which inspired others to get involved.

I am pleased to say the **Tithe Barn** is now the preferred venue for so many organisations and individuals in the town and the building now pays for itself. But again that is due to the hard work of members of the Tithe Barn management team and the staff. I would particularly like to give a mention to our caretakers, who ensure everything is ready for you should you decide to hire the building or any room in it.

The staff have also done sterling work ensuring the **allotments** are well administered. They offer recreation to many residents and hopefully excellent produce to enjoy. Any problems are reported by the allotment representatives, so thank-you to them for attending our meetings and making such a positive difference. There is hope that more allotments may be available and we

have listened with interest to councillors from Wraxall and Failand Parish Council regarding progress made to acquire suitable land.

Finally, I would just like to say how much I have enjoyed my term in office. The role has involved such a variety of activities many of which were totally unexpected.

But by far the nicest part was meeting so many wonderful residents of this town and I'd like to thank everyone for the warm welcome I've received when visiting so many different organisations.

Cllr Clare Hunt, Town Council Chair
April 2015

How has the Council spent your money?

The total expenditure budget of the Council in the year was £457,625 and the precept was £457,606. The Council also generates income from some of its activities, such as hiring the Tithe Barn, allotments, grazing on its land at Gaulacre and market canopy hire. The total budgeted income was £546,683: the surplus funds created have been put into reserves in preparation for further budget cuts at North Somerset Council and the likelihood that some services will have to be taken over by the Town Council.

The major items of revenue expenditure are:

Staff, office and administration costs: £154,370 (33.7% of the total budget) - this includes: office staff, handyman, Town Orderly and Farmers' Market Manager, office costs and web-site.

Grants: £49,480 (10.8%)

Leisure and open spaces: £118,325 (25.9%) - this includes: youth services, maintenance and improvement of sports fields, public rights of way, woodlands, open spaces, Nailsea in Bloom, planting and watering, Garden of Rest, bus shelters, litter and dog bins, allotments, play equipment, Farmers and Craft markets, Christmas lights and street lighting.

Tithe Barn: £48,500 (10.6%) – Events' Coordinator, caretakers, maintenance and repairs.

Legal and banking: £40,050 (8.8%) - legal and professional fees, banking costs, loans, audit and insurance.

Car parks and CCTV: £34,900 (7.6%)

Other: £12,000 (2.6%) - includes works to the Glassworks and contingency.

The diverse activities of the Town Council require many hours of councillors' time and it is worth noting that they do not receive any allowances for their work.