



Wokingham Town Council



Application Pack Chief Executive & Town Clerk





Welcome from the Mayor

3rd May 2022

Dear Candidate,

Thank you very much for expressing an interest in our post as Chief Executive & Town Clerk.

Wokingham is a wonderful town which provides a great place to live, work and visit. The Town Council is a large and active Council benefitting from Councillors and officers who are committed to delivering effectively on behalf of our residents. Its Strategic Plan aims to enhance Wokingham Town for all current and future residents and businesses. The principles underpinning the plan are:

- Service
- Sustainability
- Distinctiveness
- Inclusivity

As our Town Clerk retires, we are seeking a successor who has the experience, skills and knowledge to lead the organisation, bringing the enthusiasm to further develop the Council and welcome a new cohort of Councillors in May 2023. This will offer an excellent opportunity to consider the direction of the Town Council in the medium term and ensure that WTC continues to respond to the needs of its residents.

We welcome applications from the broadest range of individuals, you may have existing experience within local government or offer transferable skills from the commercial sector. Whatever your background, if you can demonstrate that you meet our requirements, we would be interested to hear from you.

The successful candidate will be based in the Grade II* Town Hall, which is one of the most iconic buildings in Wokingham borough. It sits right at the heart of the community we serve and you would be leading a talented team of officers who carry a range of responsibilities to ensure that our work is delivered both creatively and efficiently.

I very much hope that you feel enthusiastic about this opportunity and would encourage you to have an early discussion with our current Town Clerk, Jan Nowecki. I look forward to receiving your application.

With regards

Councillor Maria Gee

Mayor of Wokingham 2022-2023





The Role

We are seeking a proactive and forward-thinking Town Clerk who will grasp the responsibility for all aspects of the Council's delivery. The successful candidate will have sufficient knowledge, experience and resilience to work with Councillors and Officers alike to effectively deliver the business of the Council but also ensure its democratic responsibilities are delivered lawfully and in the best interests of its residents.

The current Town Clerk will leave just before Christmas 2022, and we hope her successor can join in early November to allow a good period for handover and settling in.

Applicants should be able to demonstrate good leadership and management experience and knowledge of Local Authority law, practice and procedures together with a relevant qualification (or willingness and ability to obtain this) to ensure the Council can retain its Power of Competence.

Applicants should be clear in their application why they are interested in the post and thorough in their response to the Job Description and Person Specification.

Wokingham Town

Prominently located in the county of Berkshire, Wokingham is a thriving historic market town, set in the picturesque and economically active heart of the Thames Valley. A town centre of historic character and architectural interest, with conservation areas protecting many listed properties, some of which date back to the 14th Century. Wokingham Borough is regularly voted as one of the best and healthiest places to live in the UK.

Situated in the M4/M3 corridor close to Heathrow and Gatwick, the town also enjoys good rail access on the London Waterloo to Reading train line together with the service between Reading and Gatwick Airport.

Wokingham Town Centre has undergone a major regeneration in the past five years with retail, residential and public open spaces now completed. The final piece of this jigsaw will see the new leisure facility opening in July 2022. The regeneration has been undertaken sympathetically with new buildings and open spaces complementing the heritage of the town. The Town Council offered its own contribution to this by working in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council and using its CiL funding to share the cost of the Market Place refurbishment.

The town enjoys an attractive retail mix with a good independent and national offering in the town centre. There is a wide range of hospitality outlets from those serving coffee through to restaurants and specialised bars. In addition, the improved town offers areas to hold the many events for which the town is renowned. Thankfully Wokingham seems to be 'bucking the trend' and defying the impact of the pandemic with new businesses continuing to open.

Within the town council boundaries there has been considerable residential development which caters for a wide demographic profile. These residents look to the town centre for both leisure and retail activity but also enjoy good access to the surrounding countryside.





The Town Council

Our Vision

The Council's vision is that by 2023:

- Wokingham will be a truly welcoming, inclusive community which offers no barriers to any individual.
- The Town Council will continue to serve its whole community using its resources to make a positive difference.
- Wokingham will remain distinctive from its neighbouring parishes both in terms of its market status but also through its unique service delivery of Arts & Culture and its contribution to Civic life within the town.
- The Town Council will be recognised for its contribution to sustainability through its direct work but also where it works with partners.

The principles that underpin the delivery of this vision are:

- **Service** - All residents of Wokingham Town deserve high quality services. In providing those services, the Town Council will seek to enhance its services to support new and overlooked communities and groups and to use its personnel and financial resources proportionately and wisely.
- **Inclusivity** - Wokingham Town will be welcoming to all irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Wokingham Town Council will take positive steps to enhance its services for its diverse populations equally and fairly.
- **Sustainability** - Wokingham Town will aim to be a sustainable community. Wokingham Town Council will seek to protect and enhance its natural, built and cultural environments for all current and future residents, and to deploy its personnel and financial resources sustainably.
- **Distinctiveness** - Wokingham Town is proud of its distinctive nature as a modern market town with an ancient heritage. Wokingham Town Council will protect its heritage while recognising that change is necessary to enhance its services to current and future residents.

This year will see the undertaking of a comprehensive Residents' Survey the outcomes of which Council will use to direct its delivery and it will offer a baseline for the new 2023 Council to consider its vision and priorities.

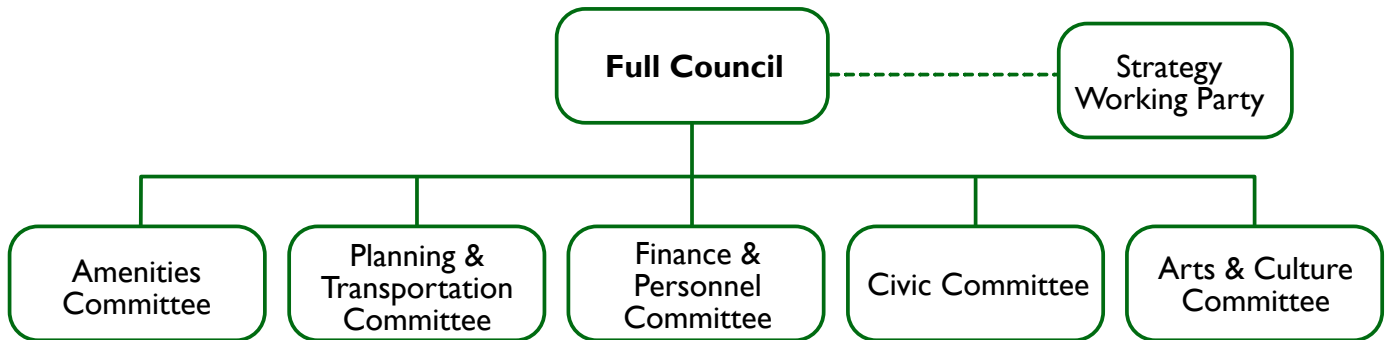


The Councillors

The Town Council is made up of 25 elected members and as a council holds the heritage of the town, with the Mayor as its First Citizen. The controlling group stands at 13 Liberal Democrats with 6 Conservative, 3 Labour and 3 Independents. As a result of a by-election in November 2021 the Council is now approaching a 50-50 split with 12 female Councillors and 13 male, ages are also diversifying with the youngest Councillor in their early twenties. This profile brings a diversity of thought and approach to discussions and decisions.

The Council is constituted through a statutory committee structure supported by occasional working parties.

Council Structure Chart

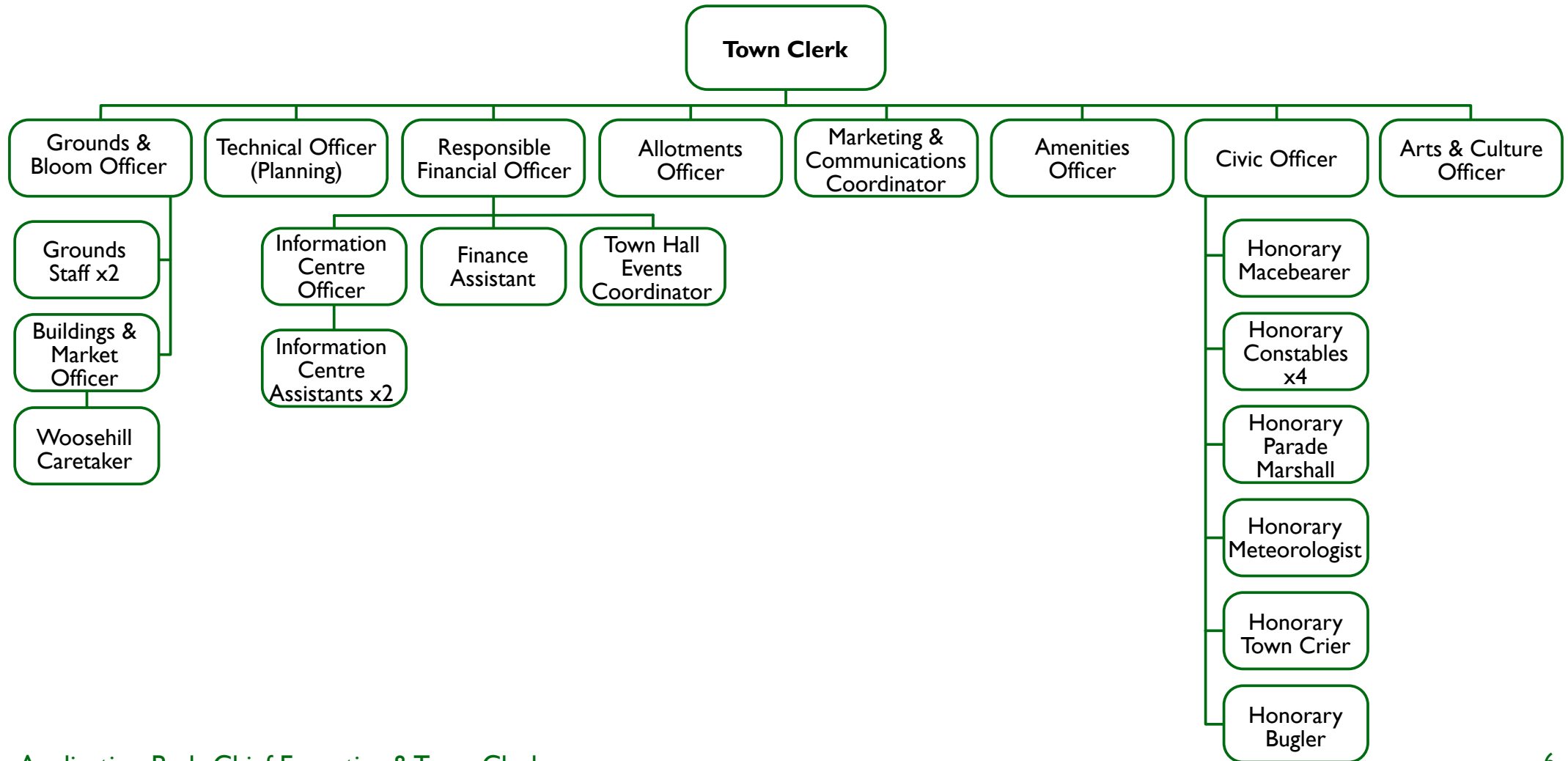


The term of the current Council ends in May 2023 when all members will be up for re-election.



The Officer Team

There is an 18 strong officer team bringing a good range of skills, knowledge and experience through a mix of full and part-time roles. Additionally, there is a small team of Honoraries who support the Civic activities of the Council.





The Council's Services and Activities

Wokingham Town Council serves a population of circa 32,000 residents and is one of approximately 70 Local Councils in England which set a Council Tax Precept of over £1m. With an agreed total budget of £1,476k for the financial year 2022-23 the Council delivers a range of traditional services such as parks, play parks, allotments etc. together with those that make the Council distinctive from many of its colleague councils and these encompass the heritage elements together with our Arts & Culture delivery which adds to the 'USP' of this Council.

Our Parks, Open Spaces and Allotments:

The Council owns and manages eight parks and open spaces with the most recent addition being the new town centre park, Elms Field, which it is managing on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council. They offer a diversity of provision from more formal spaces, those offering a country park experience through to a small urban garden in the town centre.

We manage these sustainably and have committed £10k per year for new tree planting across our estate and are rewilding to create pollinator-friendly environments. We benefit from volunteers whose expertise and enthusiasm ensures that we are improving the biodiversity of the parks and maintaining wonderful spaces for everyone to enjoy, which has been so important in the last few years.

Residents benefit from six allotment sites across the wider town area, with more to come as they are delivered from developers; all will be immediately occupied. We are adding to the sustainability of the sites with water capture on all sheds and waterless toilets being introduced wherever possible.

Our Play Parks:

The Council has a well-maintained set of play parks numbering five in total. It has committed to a ten-year, fully budgeted, refurbishment programme which is using CiL funding in the first instance.

With its fully inclusive timber equipment, spanning toddler to teenager, Elms Field has become a destination attraction.

Wokingham in Bloom:

As a Silver Gilt winner Wokingham in Bloom enhances both the horticultural and community activity within the town. WTC helps coordinate the entry and working with an 80 strong volunteer group there are now two thriving community gardens, spaces across the town that enjoy a lot of 'TLC', a wonderful copse in Joel Park and together we are establishing and maintaining wild flower areas.

Most recently during the pandemic we worked with a partner charity The Link Visiting Scheme to provide plants and friendship to lonely and isolated residents. This 'Link to Nature' project has been recognised as of great value by Thames & Chilterns in Bloom with a presentation made nationally.





Our Market:

The Council manages the market which is based in Market Place outside the Town Hall. A Charter Market of 800 years standing, it continues to flourish and is a much-loved element of the town.

In recent years a monthly Vegan Market has been established which has proved popular and helps to support the Council's sustainability and inclusivity principles.

Our Buildings:

The Victorian Town Hall is the Council's key asset and both Councillors and Officers recognise the responsibility they hold as custodians of this building. It sits in the centre of the town's conservation area and successive Councils have continued to invest in its fabric honouring its heritage but also, wherever possible, ensuring it has modern facilities for those who use it.

Recent projects have included a full redecoration and refurbishment of the clock tower together with a state-of-the-art boiler. The Town Hall is also home to the main War Memorial for the town.

Popular for weddings, couples love the magnificence of the cross-beamed Main Hall or, for smaller numbers, the intimacy of the Diamond Jubilee Room. The building is of course open for commercial and community use and contributes income to the Council's budget.

Woosehill Community Hall also contributes income to the Council's budget. It is leased from Wokingham Borough Council and is well used for such things as sporting activities, parties and the many U3A groups active in Wokingham.

Our Heritage:

The Town Council 'holds' the heritage of the town from Mayoral service, spanning from the 1800's, through to the regalia and town artefacts donated through time.

Councillors wear robes and the Town Clerk a wig and gown on Civic occasions, the Mayor wears a chain, which is the envy of many, and the silver mace leads the traditional parades through the town. This makes us distinctive from other local councils.

Each year, we join in with England's Heritage Open Days, welcoming hundreds of visitors at the Town Hall and offering activities for all ages.

We lead the Remembrance commemorations each year and we welcome schools and other community groups to Silver Talks, sharing details about the building and the town's history.

We acknowledge the amazing voluntary activity of individuals in the town through our annual Civic Awards.





Events:

The Town Council is unusual in having a standing Arts & Culture Committee. In existence since 2011 it is focused on ensuring that our residents enjoy a range of different opportunities across the year, most of which are delivered free of charge. Some we deliver ourselves, others we work with partners and some are outsourced.

These range from a large street concert, summer Theatre in the Park performances, an incredibly popular Children's Book Festival through to a newer Board Gaming event and a 'Chalk About It' designed to support mental health awareness.

We have led activities to celebrate national events such as Jubilees and this year will be hosting a party in the park style event for the Platinum Jubilee.



The above offers you just a flavour of how active the Town Council is but we could also mention how we put the sparkle into Christmas with the lights, clean graffiti, ensure our planning committee upholds the integrity of the town's built environment, award £97k in grant funding to local charities and actively work with the many local partners to maximise what we can offer together, in particular some very large events.



How to Apply

We do hope the information above has encouraged you to make an application and we look forward to hearing from you.

Please go to www.wokingham-tc.gov.uk/tcrecruitment where you will find the job description, person specification and application form.

Application is electronic and you must use the online application form

CV's will not be accepted

For any technical queries contact Miles Thorne: mthorne@wokingham-tc.gov.uk 07538 085384

Please let us know if you have an accessibility need and/or require reasonable adjustments to either the application or interview process. Contact Town Clerk, Jan Nowecki, jnowecki@wokingham-tc.gov.uk to discuss it further.

You will receive an automated acknowledgement of your application.

Please see below for the recruitment schedule.

If you would like more information or an informal discussion to learn more about the Council and the post before deciding to apply, feel free to contact Jan Nowecki, Town Clerk jnowecki@wokingham-tc.gov.uk or telephone 0755 79570741.

Recruitment Schedule

All applications will be considered by the selection panel drawn from serving Councillors.

Shortlisted candidates will be required to undertake a pre-interview task and attend a panel interview which will last around 1.5 hours.

Activity	Date
Closing Date	24 th May - Midday
Shortlisted Applicants advised	2 nd June
Interviews	Tuesday 14 th June