

Mayors Report for Annual Town Meeting 2018

I present to you this evening my report in summary of the last 12 months work and engagement by the Town Council:

1. Last year, we agreed the lease with Museum4Watton to allow museum to open - Grand Opening in March of which I was proud to be a part. This is a wonderful attraction for the town, not only as an educational and interesting facility for residents of all ages, but also something that may well attract visitors to our Market Town.
2. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group moving forward - TC engaging with others through this process
3. Watton Drainage Group formed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan –work continually being undertaken by the members. This group was previously chaired by Bob Dore, who sadly passed away last month. The group brought together a level of specific knowledge and experience way beyond that of many Councillors and as such have been lobbying Anglia Water and BDC on behalf of the community and as a Town Council endorsed local action group.
4. Anti-Social Behaviour - meeting held May 19th with members of the Safer Neighbourhood Team and officers of Breckland Council. As a result, the Police Architectural Liaison Officer compiled a report outlining suggestions to help reduce anti-social behaviour in Harvey Street. Actions taken seem to be beneficial, but issues remain regarding fly-tipping, which I understand that Breckland are actively addressing.
5. Last August, the Council had a presence at the Wayland Show, a first time out for the Brand-new WTC Branded Gazebo, (purchased with a small allocation of Market Town Initiative Funding) Our presence allowed for anyone who wished, to come forward and engage the Council on any matter, although the primary focus centred around the Neighbourhood Plan
6. The Council also had a presence at the Carnival, allowing for anyone who wished to come forward and engage the Council on any matter, although the primary focus centred around the Neighbourhood Plan
7. Funding was also received during the year to support the Neighbourhood Plan and a small amount of DC11 funding received to improve facilities at the play areas.
8. Town Council staff re-structuring – 2 new members of staff employed.
9. In June, I went to Weeze as the Leader and representative of the Town Council, with the Watton Twinning Association, The Phoenix Pipes & Drums also went along as Town representatives to celebrate Weeze visit. This was a wonderful opportunity to continue the bond and relationship between our Town and Weeze, and culturally interesting. It is important to mention this was not paid for out of the

Council purse. Myself and each Bandmember paid for our own travel. Our accommodation was also provided at no cost to WTC.

10. In July, we hosted a rather special Medal ceremony for Mrs Hilda Smith a local lady who had been awarded the Defence Medal 1939-1945 for her time in the Land Army, Home Guard and apparently also some time served with the fire service. This was working in Partnership with The Watton Branch of the RBL
11. The Town Council supported the International Food Festival at the Sports Centre.
12. Received a donation of £2,000 from Tesco under the 'bags of help' scheme towards our second, and very successful fireworks event. This went extremely well. ALux provided their comprehensive Traffic management at cost, and after generous donations from Tesco, Abel Homes, Stanta, Carbrooke PC and money in from Trade stands, the whole event came in at almost £4,000 under budget.
13. In November, and for the first time, we placed Poppies on lamp posts and in prominent positions throughout the town. This act of remembrance was well received and attracted a lot of positive feedback. This year, I would like to invite residents to come into the office and write on a large poppy a dedication and the name of a loved one, a relative or a name of a local person researched who has fallen in any conflict, perhaps for a donation to the Poppy Appeal. These will then be placed on lampposts as before.
14. During the last year we have welcomed New councillors – Kathryn Stallard, Jake Tinsley, Alysha Holder–Moat, and Gavin Maby – and we currently have a vacancy due to recent resignation of Maureen Roy.
15. Allotment land lease at Thetford Road has been confirmed up to 2028
16. In December, we extended the Christmas lights each end of the High Street and held a very successful Festive Market.
17. Earlier this year we formed an alliance With Swaffham TC as the Swaffham & Watton Partnership – the purpose being to address issues that are common to market Towns and to look at cost savings by sharing certain services and opportunities.
18. We are in on-going talks with Breckland over the potential allocation of Open space land as a result of the 106 agreement regarding the signals and the former Officers mess site.
19. We have appointed a Town Crier to add gravitas and tradition to our civic occasions and public events. This is an honorary role and as such the Town Crier does not receive payment for his work.

20. Those of you who will remember our old blue van that served us well, last autumn the Van had to be replaced, so a New Town Council van purchased.
21. On 7th April, I hosted the Mayors Charity Ball, which has raised in excess of £1,500 for the Mayors Charities, PACT Animal Sanctuary and Mens' Shed. Again, no tax payers money was used for this event.
22. Cemetery. In the last 12 months, this Council has attempted to address multiple concerns related to the Town Cemetery, with regard to the upkeep and maintenance, the costs for plots burial and interment, and at a meeting last October, the council made a difficult decision and voted to cease being a burial authority when the cemetery is full which was anticipated to be in approximately 10 years.
23. Further issues regarding the cemetery continued to come to light, some discovered by our staff, some of the councillors who weren't present at the October meeting and some concerns raised by members of the public. In response, earlier this year the Council introduced The Cemetery Working Group, to look at all the concerns raised, and it quickly became clear that the more we investigated matters, the more problems came to light, meaning that the issues surrounding the cemetery could not be addressed properly in isolation.
24. At the Council Meeting on 10th April, A proposal was made to rescind the decision made in October, that motion was carried, and the Cemetery Working Group recommended that the Council should carry out a complete review of every aspect of the Town Cemetery, taking into account every single point, from all of the concerns that have been raised by Funeral Directors, The Church, The Grave Diggers, those who have loved ones interred and of course concerns & complaints from residents of Watton and anyone else with a genuine interest.
25. As I am sure you will appreciate, this will be a mammoth task, and the first meeting of the Working Group to set the Terms of Reference will be held during the first week in May.