

CHAIRMANS / MAYORS REPORT TO FULL TOWN COUNCIL

3rd July 2017

The Mayoral side is very much a public way of reaching local residents and others. June has seen some activities being supported within some quite differing themes.

The **Primary School Fete** is always a highlight of the Whitchurch calendar, raising much needed funds. It was great to mooch around the stalls and to draw the Raffle. I then went on to win some Love Hearts by hooking a duck!

The **Scouts Group** are one of the town's treasures – providing a mass of character building and life development skills for young people. Their AGM and presentations showed just how much they benefit not just the young people but also our community. That they also recently went out and cleaned many street signs just shows how much they give to our community.

The **Armed Forces Day Flag** raising at Basingstoke was a much more formal affair attended by myself and the Mayoress and one that respects those who keep our lives both free and safe. This year was also sombre as it incorporated a Minute's Silence for those affected by the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

You may remember we supported the planning application for the opening of a **Café at the Sports and Social Club**. It opened last week and we attended on the first morning to enjoy a very good value traditional breakfast. They are now open from 7.30am to 1.30pm each day for breakfasts and lunches. Very highly recommended.

Lastly I visited the **King's Arms Sausage, Beer and Cider Festival** and as well as enjoying the community atmosphere of the event, also was highjacked in to be photographed with Dead Blow, and Role Models, two of the rather 'heavy' music acts. A very regrettable incident across the road took place mid-afternoon when the sheds behind the petrol station went up in flames, devastating for the businesses there – a terrible event for which they can only be given full support. Again our **Fire Service** was fantastic and averted what could have been a far worse and horrendous major catastrophe.

On the Business side...

This month has seen some quite high profile activities come to the fore that will have big repercussions on our town and its residents.

The **Neighbourhood Plan Referendum** is now imminent and I hope Councillors will be encouraging our residents to support this. The alternatives, if it is rejected do not bear thinking about as Whitchurch could become a developer's free-for-all.

Our input into **Developer Funding** is a massive opportunity to shape our town and provide what our residents wish. I can only urge attendance by Councillors at the workshop on Wednesday evening. Looking around the town we are now seeing changes with major building sites under construction. We must do all we can within our powers to ensure funding goes to support infrastructure that is needed.

The **General Election** cannot go unmentioned and I'd like to congratulate Kit Malthouse on his re-election and hope he will support local residents and our town on issues such as its health provision, traffic situation and police support.

The **Railway Station Car Park** has raised its head and a meeting was arranged for last week with our County and Borough Councillors and representatives from adjoining Parishes. We need to work together on this and all have said they will feedback on their ideas and activities to resolve the issues. It does seem that it is the Town Council, despite not being a statutory body for parking, which has been taking the lead by incorporating the Station Car Park into the Neighbourhood Plan. In some way this is gratifying but the others are those who should really be driving this.

Primary School Expansion will also affect our whole town and again we will have opportunities through use of the Developer Funding.

Ensuring we engage with local residents is essential and must be a top priority. The recent **Adult Gym** display showed how important that is with what I consider an astounding turnout to talk over this (and other) local issues. Thank you to the Clerks for arranging this.

Lastly '**Christmas in Whitchurch**' has been raised and the Town Council's involvement. I had a meeting at the GNC last week and discussed use of the Town Hall as before, but that it really needs the traders and other organisations to work together for any programme.

Present plans are for Thursday December 7th. I suggested close liaison with Colin Reeves, who I happily see is giving a presentation to us this evening.

I would also like to recognise and give thanks to Annie Dickinson and her **Whitchurch Lights** team who are raising funds for lights and who have already provided our town with a blaze of colour with the hanging baskets. Along with the excellent efforts by other businesses and the public houses, this has given our town so much colour.

John Buckley 3.7.2017