

## **Annual Town Meeting 17 April 2018**

### **Report of the Hednesford Town Council**

The Annual Report of the Town Council covers the Municipal Year – May 2017 to April 2018

Since the elections in May 2015 your Town Councillors have been George Adamson, Sheila Cartwright, Derek Davis, Brian Gamble, Doris Grice, Bill Hardman, Sue Hardman, Chris Mitchell and myself Alan Pearson

During the last year Mrs Linda Whitehouse resigned as a Town Councillor and Councillor Matthew Davis was co-opted to take her place

I was honoured to be elected to serve as Chairman of the Council for the current year and I have been supported by Brian Gamble as Vice-Chairman

To comply with statutory requirements the Annual Meeting of the Town Council this year will be at 7:30 pm on Tuesday 15 May 2018

Members of the public are cordially invited to all Council meetings and, at the commencement, there is always an opportunity for questions and discussion

The Town Council remains committed to delivering a package of measures that are designed to benefit the local community and to promote Hednesford

As a continuing pledge to the economic wellbeing of Hednesford, each year the Town Council contributes about £25,000 towards the cost of CCTV. Less than £2.00 per year per elector

This ensures that Hednesford still has the only free town centre car parking in the entire district and, as well as the economic benefits, we should all feel safer due to the cameras deterring crime and anti-social behaviour.

Concerns had been expressed that shoppers and visitors were having difficulty finding parking spaces on the Co-op car park as these were being taken up by rail commuters

This situation has been addressed and a Car Parking Order introduced which has alleviated the problem

Despite difficulties due to the changes in rail franchises the Council was pleased to see the commitment by the Heart of Hednesford to ensure that the station is cared for and also for all the voluntary work undertaken to tidy the town, especially the Miners' Memorial. Residents and traders should be grateful for all the other projects being undertaken by the Group to improve and enhance the town

The Council is working to increase public pride in our town and the surrounding area which is regarded as the "Gateway to Cannock Chase" - an area of outstanding natural beauty. This was reflected in a wonderful embroidery, commissioned by the Town Council and unveiled earlier this year and now on permanent public display at Pye Green Community Centre

The heritage of Hednesford is being promoted as much as possible and the Town Council has hosted talks including one in respect of the history of local canals

One of the most important roles of the Town Council is to represent the views of the local community and ensure that these are made known to the District and County Councils and other bodies

We are grateful to our District and County Councillors for their support during the year

Since the last Town Meeting the Town Council has submitted observations on around 60 planning applications – a similar number to last year

When commenting on planning applications the Town Council seeks to improve highways and car parking arrangements and for developers to contribute to the provision of other benefits for the people of Hednesford

In order to enhance this influential planning role during the year the Town Council continued preparations on the Neighbourhood Plan for Hednesford. It has been the subject of a further round of public consultation and it is hoped will shortly be scrutinised by an independent Inspector. If approved, all electors in Hednesford will be given the chance to vote to accept or reject the plan in a referendum to be held in due course

The Town Council now receives payments referred to as the Community Infrastructure Levy from developers who are granted planning permission for new builds

If the Neighbourhood Plan is approved the amount the Council is entitled to receive will increase. This year CIL has been used to fund equipment for the North Hednesford Speedwatch

Like many organisations the Council will be faced with the complexity of implementing new General Data Protection Regulations being imposed by the Government

Within the bounds of what is legally possible the Council will still publish a range of information on the web site which has been updated so as to make it more user friendly.

Amongst other things, the website provides access to papers for Council Meetings and news about the Neighbourhood Plan

On Twitter we have 861 followers - an increase of just over 16% from the 720 last year

A “welcome pack” is still available for new residents to the town, containing a variety of sign posting information to introduce them to Hednesford and let them know what is available on their doorstep

The Town Council remains fully behind initiatives to raise awareness of dementia

The Town Council continues to support various organisations that do so much to promote the area and generate community involvement. Once again funding has been provided to Hednesford in Partnership which aims to coordinate various projects and has been successful in organising events

The Town Council has provided nearly £900 towards the costs of putting on the Hednesford Festival in August and is meeting the cost of Road Closure Orders to allow the staging of monthly street markets

We are very grateful for all the effort that went in to the Christmas evening in the Town Centre and the Council has expressed appreciation to everyone involved

Due to the decision of Cannock Chase Council to withdraw funding for Christmas lights the Town Council will again be meeting the cost in future and will be working jointly with Heath Hayes and Wimblebury and Norton Canes parish councils in this regard

For your diary please note that this year the Christmas event will be on 7 December

Pye Green Community Centre continues to attract regular hirers along with new users. However, due to withdrawal of funding the well-liked weekly mothers and toddlers sessions are no longer taking place

Each week there are bookings from dance groups, martial arts trainers, zumba, keep fit, slimming

organisations, providing activities for all age groups and abilities – there is even weekly dog training sessions

There are opportunities for young people to train in dance and performance

The Centre has become a venue for the delivery of local health services. Regular blood transfusion sessions continue. The Hednesford Baby Clinic has relocated to the Centre with sessions every Monday morning. The Centre will also be hosting pre-natal training and a diabetes clinic. CRUSE Bereavement hold one to one counselling and a drop in

The function room with fully licensed bar is regularly booked for private parties such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and funerals

Availability of rooms can be checked on the website and we can now accept payments for room hire by debit or credit card

The Town Council office based at the Centre deals with many personal enquiries each week

Thanks to finance of £5000 being provided by the Town Council CAB is able to hold an Outreach Advice service on Thursday morning of each week. This has assisted many clients in dire circumstances during the year

The Centre provides free IT facilities for anyone needing to use a PC or go online

Many statutory and other bodies choose the centre for their public meetings. The meeting rooms continue to be popular with commercial training providers

In terms of finance, the Town Council has been able to maintain the same level of precept for 2018-19 at £137,500. Due to the changes in the council tax base this has reduced the amount of the Town Council element of the council tax bill

The Annual Audit of Accounts was undertaken by an independent firm of private consultants and once again the Council's accounting and financial arrangements have been approved

That concludes the report of the Town Council

Before moving on are there any questions?