

## **Annual Town Meeting 16 April 2019**

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

The Annual Report of the Town Council covers the Municipal Year – May 2018 to April 2019

This year your Town Councillors have continued to be George Adamson, Sheila Cartwright, Derek Davis, Matthew Davis, Brian Gamble, Doris Grice, Bill Hardman, Sue Hardman, Chris Mitchell and myself Alan Pearson

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

A new Council is due to be elected on 2 May 2019 and I should like to thank those members who are not seeking re-election for their past service

To comply with statutory requirements the Annual Meeting of the Town Council this year will be at 7:30 pm on Tuesday 14 May 2019

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 has endeavoured to deliver a package of measures 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

The Council was pleased to see the continued commitment and success of local voluntary groups and in particular the Heart of Hednesford who have ensured 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 to improve and enhance the town; leading also to Hednesford being awarded second place in the large village category of the Best Kept Village competition in 2018

Of note this year was the action taken to adorn the town and War Memorial with knitted poppies to mark the centenary of the end of World War One, the planting that took place to honour the establishment of the Royal Air Force and the decorations placed in Anglesey Square for Christmas and more recently the memory trees

The Town Council commissioned a commemorative WW1 bench sited at the entrance to the War Memorial

The heritage of Hednesford is being promoted as much as possible and we have just unveiled our first blue plaque in memory of Albert Stanley at a ceremony attended by a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire

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 47 planning applications – slightly less than 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 was delighted that the electors of Hednesford voted in favour of the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan

The contents of the Plan now form part of local planning policy and this is taken into consideration when planning applications for the area are dealt with. It is pleasing to note that some planning applications have already been

amended so that they are in conformity with the Neighbourhood Plan

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

Approval of the Neighbourhood Plan means that the amount the Council is entitled to receive will increase

A number of projects where this funding could be used are being considered and will be a matter for the new Council to determine

Like many organisations the Council faced the complexity and expense of implementing new General Data Protection Regulations 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 will be overhauled following the elections in May

Amongst other things, the website provides access to papers for Council Meetings and bookings for the Pye Green Community Centre

Followers on Twitter have increased by nearly 9% since 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 aim is to ensure that residents of the new developments, including Keys Park get a copy

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

The Town Council continues to support various groups that do so much to promote the area and generate community involvement. Once again funding has been provided to several local organisations

The Town Council has committed up to £3000 towards the costs of putting on the Hednesford Festival in August and is meeting the fees for street trading licences 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 once again organised this and met the cost involved

For your diary please note that this year the Christmas event will be on Friday 6 December

The organisation of events has been assisted by Hednesford in Partnership which is now to be formalised as a charitable incorporated organisation

Pye Green Community Centre continues to attract regular hirers along with new users

Each week there are bookings from dance groups, martial arts trainers, zumba, pilates, keep fit, slimming organisations, providing activities for all age groups and abilities – there is even a weekly dog training session

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. The Hednesford Baby Clinic has relocated to the Centre with sessions every Monday morning. The Centre also hosts diabetes clinics. CRUSE Bereavement hold one to one counselling sessions and a fortnightly 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 payments for room hire can be made 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 holds an Outreach Advice service on

Thursday morning of each week. This has assisted many clients in dire circumstances during the year

Due to demand, the service is to be expanded from 1 April as a result of the Town Council increasing funding to £10,000 for the year

Unfortunately, due to lack of use and the costs of upgrading hardware and software, the IT facilities are no longer available

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 2019-20 at £137,500. Due to the changes in the council tax base this has reduced by 2% the amount of the Town Council element of the council tax bill for a Band D property

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?