



# Annual Town Assembly 2026 Chief Officer Overview

**Good evening everyone and thank you all so much for joining us here this evening for your Annual Town Assembly.**

I'm Lindsey Smith, Chief Officer at Hednesford Town Council, and I'd like to take a few minutes to share an update on what your Town Council has been working on over the past 12 months.

## **Looking Back at 2025–2026**

It's been another full — and incredibly busy — year.

A large part of my role as Chief Officer has been focused on making sure everything continues to run as it should: overseeing the Council's work and strategic direction, supporting your councillors and our officer team, ensuring the community centre operates smoothly, and keeping everything compliant, transparent and moving forward.

This year, we've continued to make steady progress in pursuing outstanding Section 106 projects. These aren't always headline-grabbing, but they are essential parts of our infrastructure and new housing developments — including, for example, the installation of a new cycle shelter at Anglesey Car Park, linked to the Land West of Pye Green development. There are still several outstanding items, and I can assure you they remain firmly on our radar and are being actively pursued by our Project Support Officer.

While no new UKSPF funding came forward this year — which limited some of the actions we were able to take — a carry-forward of previous funding allowed us to support the VE Day celebrations, a true partnership effort with our brilliant community groups. It also enabled us to complete the Mind Your Local Business campaign, showcasing Hednesford's local businesses, and helped brighten the town centre with the provision of six hanging baskets around the Clock Tower.

## **Supporting Our Community**

One of the most rewarding parts of this year for me has been seeing first-hand the difference our Community Support Grants make.

Over the past year, our Community Officer visited 12 groups who received grants, seeing projects in action — the connections being built, the activities taking place, and the support networks being created. It really reinforces why this work matters.

We've also continued to fund weekly Citizens Advice sessions at Pye Green Community Centre every Wednesday, providing vital support to residents, and we've supported several local groups and charities through free or subsidised room use.

In addition, we awarded £1,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy funding to the Chase Heritage Group to support their campaign to protect the Museum of Cannock Chase, helping to safeguard an important part of our local heritage.

And, in a small but meaningful gesture, local history books and calendars were donated to every school in Hednesford, with thanks to our Chair and Deputy Chair.

## **Listening to You**

This year, as promised, we carried out our biannual community consultation, which told us clearly that your priorities are:

- safety and policing
- youth provision
- and improving shops and the market

And we didn't stop there.

In the autumn, we carried out a dedicated youth consultation with young people aged 11 to 18. Their feedback was insightful, honest and incredibly important.

They told us what they value about Hednesford — our parks, green spaces and sense of community — but they were also clear about the challenges they face: boredom, a lack of things to do, anti-social behaviour, gangs, loud traffic and potholes.

Most said they feel safe most of the time, or at least sometimes, but they want greater reassurance — more visible policing, better lighting, and, above all, a safe place to go in the evenings.

Their top three priorities were very clear:

- a safe social space of their own
- low-cost, affordable activities
- and support in finding part-time work and earning their own money

That message has come through loud and clear and mirrors what other partners are telling us. It will play a key role in shaping our plans moving forward.

## **Events, Partnerships and Projects**

Despite the usual challenges — tight timescales and the ever-unpredictable British weather — we successfully delivered key events including Remembrance and the Christmas Light Switch-On, which we organised in just eight weeks, even if the weather did conspire against us once again.

The Hednesford Street Market went to tender, but unfortunately no submissions were received, and the decision was made to pause its provision for the foreseeable future.

The Hub at Pye Green continues to go from strength to strength, the Wellbeing Walk remains as popular as ever, and our volunteer base is growing. We are incredibly lucky to have such knowledgeable, dedicated and committed volunteers.

We've strengthened our partnership with Kingsmead School through the continued development of Hednesford's Youth Council, and we've made a number of improvements across the town — from restoring elements of the Miners' Memorial to designing new features for the heritage trail, including a wayfinding bench.

Behind the scenes, significant work has also taken place on a wide range of projects — from fly-tipping and signage, to understanding upcoming devolution changes and their potential impact, progressing an asset transfer request with Cannock Chase District Council for the Community Centre, implementing Assertion 10, monitoring proposed car parking charges, and improving the accessibility and functionality of our website. All non-confidential supporting papers for statutory council meetings are now available online.

Within the team, we welcomed Rachel Gentle as our new Pye Green Community Centre Officer, said a fond farewell to Jim on his retirement, and welcomed Harry as our new Caretaker.

And, of course, we celebrated a major milestone — 50 years of Pye Green Community Centre — a moment of real pride and nostalgia for the whole community.

## **Looking Ahead to 2026**

We are preparing to submit our AGAR for 2025–26, and the budget for 2026–27 has now been agreed.

We're already planning another exciting year of events, both across the town and at the Community Centre. Please do put **Sunday 8th November** and **Friday 4th December** in your diaries for Remembrance and the Christmas Light Switch-On.

We're also launching a new digital newsletter for Hednesford, with printed copies available across the town, and we'd genuinely value your input on what you'd like to see included.

Our 2026 Community Support Grants have now been awarded to 16 fantastic organisations — many of whom are here this evening — and I'd encourage you to speak with them to learn more about their work and how you can get involved.

Our biggest focus for the year ahead is clear. We will be working closely with young people and our partners to develop solutions, seek external funding, and actively explore every opportunity to respond to what young people have told us — helping to create safe, welcoming spaces and real opportunities to thrive.

## **Closing**

What I've shared this evening is just a snapshot of a very busy and productive year.

Much of our work takes place behind the scenes, but everything we do is driven by one shared aim: to make Hednesford a fantastic town in which to live, work, play and visit.

I am incredibly proud of the team at Hednesford Town Council — both our officers, who consistently go above and beyond, and our councillors, who volunteer their time and bring immense knowledge, commitment and passion for Hednesford. While it's vitally important that we are held to account, I wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you for everything you do.

Thank you to all of you for being here this evening, for caring about your town, and for being part of the Hednesford community.

Please enjoy the rest of the evening, speak with the groups joining us tonight, and do come and find me — or any of our councillors or officers — if you'd like to chat, ask questions or share ideas.

And now, I have the great pleasure of handing over to Hednesford Town Council's Community Officer, Matt Johnson.

**Thank you**