

Town Mayors Annual Report April 2021

Cllr P Goulbourne, Town Mayor, presented his annual report for the people of Ellesmere, as follows:

“Because last year’s Annual meeting was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions this report will cover 2 years from 2019/21.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as Mayor of Ellesmere for the last 2 years and to represent the town at various functions across the county, until Covid came along.

I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their help and support during this time.

I would also like to reiterate how proud I am of the way the local businesses in Ellesmere have supported the town during the unprecedented times we are living in.

With shops delivering to shielding residents, and Pubs becoming takeaways and delivering to shielding residents.

Also, I would like to thank the Town Council Ellesmere Covid 19 support group volunteers for the amazing job they have done in supporting the shielding vulnerable residents.

During the 2019/20 period, together we have continued to work towards improving communication and accessibility with the residents and businesses in the town.

With the support of my fellow councillors some of the things we have implemented and are working on are:

- We have agreed to recognise the climate emergency and committed to become a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030, and to set up a working group. We also agreed to sign the Tree Charter.
- The Vision for Ellesmere working group held a very successful workshop at the end of January with invited people from local businesses and community groups, to accommodate the number of participants, this was held over two nights. These two workshops generated numerous ideas, which the working group are going through now to try to move some of the ideas forward.
- The Council appointed a Youth member, myself and the youth member visited all the youth organisations and schools in Ellesmere to explain the workings of the town council, with a view to involving them in any decisions that may impact them.
- The Town Councils finances continue to remain in a healthy position.

Then in March 2020 the country was hit with the Coronavirus, however, in late February we were alerted by Doctor Alison Hughes a GP living in Ellesmere and working in Wales to the huge number of cases of Covid-19 in Wales. As a result of Alison’s concerns the council agreed to organise a meeting at the Town Hall with interested community and Faith groups, this resulted in a Local Community Support Group being set up. Within a week we had set up a dedicated Facebook page and website all coordinated by the Town Council, with over 60 Volunteers.

With over 80 clients, volunteers collected prescriptions and shopping for the venerable.

The coordination of this was done by Town Clerk Jo Butterworth and her assistant Jean Hynes, which they undertook as well as their normal day to day work. With a ban on gatherings of more than two people all the Town Hall bookings were cancelled, we also had to Furlough all the caretaking/cleaning staff.

The government banned all face-to-face council meetings and postponed all local and elected city Mayor's elections, and council elections until 2021.

As at April 2021, we currently have a full complement of councillors, who have been meeting regularly virtually by Zoom and have continued to work hard throughout the year for the benefit of the town.

All are volunteers and give their time freely. I would like to thank them all for hard work and their support.

Over the past year we have had the 85 streetlights that we own converted to LED lights, this can already be seen to be reducing our electricity usage meaning we are saving money.

Down at Birch Rd in conjunction with Shropshire Wildlife Trust we have been successful in getting the area of the pond designated as a Local Nature Reserve.

We have engaged the New Saints Foundation team to carry out a youth outreach project. Stage 1 was to establish what the youth of the town need. The team carried out 6 scoping visits, besides the young people they spoke to businesses owners local residents. The visits have shown that Ellesmere does not have huge problems with youth, the main cause of problems appear to be boredom. A weekly youth café or club would enable the town council and the town to offer the young people the opportunity to grow, develop and express themselves in a positive setting with peer mentoring. Covid-19 restrictions allowing the team will move onto stage 2 of the project.

The Vision for Ellesmere working group developed and distributed to every household in Ellesmere Urban a questionnaire, we had over 200 completed questionnaires returned which was a very good outcome, the group are now working through and acting on some of the replies. One of the actions from the questionnaire was the amount of litter and dirty signs in the town.

The Town Council has launched a volunteer group to carryout regular litter picks and hopefully sign cleaning in the town, now that the Covid-19 restrictions have been relaxed. The first meeting was last Sunday.

The Town Council are moving forward with a plan to carry out works on the town hall leaking roof. We have had a survey done on the roof to find out the extent of the leaks and to come up with recommendations to permanently stop the leaks. Once this work has been completed the intention is to replace all windows with double glazed units to help to reduce our carbon footprint plus save costs on heating. Then redecorate the whole building.

I would like to record my grateful thanks to the Town Clerk Jo Butterworth and her team, Jean and Vanessa as they have kept the Town Council running efficiently, arranging council meetings via Zoom, plus interpreting the Governments guidance for the town hall throughout the various lockdowns.

Clr Paul Goulbourne

April 2021.