

Ellesmere Town Mayor's Annual Report for 2025/2026

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2025/26.

Before I start, I'd like to make a few personal thank yous. Firstly, to my long suffering husband, Ian. He has definitely been the back room support for all my mayoral mad cap plans and, on occasion, he's donned his best bib and tucker and joined me at more formal events! So, thank you Ian. You didn't even wince too much when I marched down Ellesmere High Street with a megaphone – although he was notable by his absence!!

I've also been supported by my dear friend, Suzanne, who has stepped in as consort when asked, as Ian just doesn't 'do' people! Without her, I would have been Billy No Mates for many events, so Suzanne, thank you!

Also, very importantly to me, are my two sisters, Kate and Mary. They've turned up to every event I've hosted, supported me when I've doubted myself and they've constantly reminded me when I've been a bit swamped with my mayoral duties that I can do it and how proud our parents would have been.

I've been so proud to represent Ellesmere as Mayor this year and I've tried not to take the responsibility lightly....I hope I've supported as many of the events that I was invited to as I could.....there have certainly been a wide range of ones to attend! More of that later....

The Town Council comprises a team of dedicated, unpaid volunteers who work hard as our councillors, trying to ensure that Ellesmere continues to be a desirable place for our residents to live. As you can imagine, appreciation isn't always forthcoming for the work that the Council does – sometimes we have to make decisions that, whilst not popular, are always taken for the benefit of the town. I'd like to thank all my fellow councillors for their support this year. Wise words have often come from the 'elder statesmen' for which I've been very grateful.

In May, the Town Council elections brought new faces and renewed enthusiasm – I'm pleased to say that all the 12 seats have been filled with councillors from a wide range of backgrounds, and I was deeply honoured to be elected as Mayor, with Councillor Pete Jones elected as Deputy Mayor.

But, nothing within the Council would work without our dedicated staff who keep us all under control and make sure that, as Mayor, I'm not screwing anything up! So a huge thank you goes to Jo, whose knowledge has been invaluable to me this year – she offered wise counsel on challenging topics and has guided me through the complexities that come with the role of Mayor...and Gem and Vicky who have constantly offered their support when I've come up with crazy ideas to raise money for my chosen charity or got me organised when I've been dashing from one place to another!

So, during a time when finances are stretched and the town council is being asked to do more with less, we continue to try and make the best decisions for the town. This includes the transfer of the Tuesday market to Shropshire Council to be managed – we're continuing to see its renaissance with increasing numbers of traders, visitor numbers are up and we look forward to great things going forward. We are delighted to have the benefit of Kate Gittins, who has been responsible for the success of Shrewsbury market and the resurgence of Market Drayton – we are expecting similar success for Ellesmere....and that is reflected in the great atmosphere there has been at the market in the last few weeks.

From a council perspective we continue to manage our finances diligently. Demands on our budget are considerable, but we strive to deliver the best services for the money we have, which includes the continued maintenance of the town hall, whilst continuing to keep the increase in precept at the lowest level possible. This has been set for the next financial year and with an increase of 5% it remains one of the lowest in Shropshire.

Looking ahead, it looks likely that we will have to take on the Street Scene work which is currently undertaken by Shropshire Council so the town council is already planning for this situation by careful handling of the town's finances, but we have to be aware that this will be a challenging undertaking.

In addition to our council work, a number of the councillors, myself included, sit on the Mere Advisory Board, which ensures that the jewel in Ellesmere's crown is welcoming and an enjoyable place to visit for both residents and those visiting from further afield. We are grateful to Ed and his wardens, Mike and Lee, who work extremely hard to maintain the Mere and its surrounding gardens. Thanks, must also go to the group of Mere volunteers who meet weekly to carry out additional work such as weeding and tree clearing.

The renovation of Mere cottage has been completed, and we're delighted to see the Paddle Brothers in residence, bringing some great water sports to the Mere. I was particularly honoured to be asked to cut the ribbon on their opening day – thankfully I managed to avoid being persuaded to go out on a paddle board.....but I have photos of Jo doing exactly that, if anyone wants to see them.!

As a town Ellesmere is blessed to have a dedicated group of volunteers from a range of groups who support all the events that take part in the town.... without these wonderful people much of what we see in the town just wouldn't happen. I include in this our charities who raise money for many causes and groups who support our elderly residents, host meetings for people who have challenges and the dedicated team who maintain Plantation Wood, as well as Rotary, League of Friends and the Masons, who donate funds to some wonderful local causes.

Many of the volunteers I'm referring to are here this evening and on behalf of myself and the Council, thank you for everything you do.

On the subject of volunteers, June was a month of culture and civic pride, beginning with the Fizzgiggs play on the 14th, commemorating the Ellesmere Workhouse and bringing its history to life in a wonderful series of performances, followed by my Mayoral Civic Service on the 22nd.

Ellesmere celebrated Armed Forces Day on the 28th of June with events organized by our wonderful British Legion branch. These included actors representing WW11 historical figures, a gathering of vintage armed vehicles and music provided by a string quartet from The Duchess Of Edinburgh String Orchestra – a proud moment for me in my mayoral year as my son was among the musicians, and performances from Ellesmere Primary School. The day concluded with a wonderful afternoon tea and dance hosted by the Ronnies, a 1940s group of singers.

Each event was a testament to the strength and unity of our community and the turnout was great to see.

July continued in the same spirit (no pun intended) with my mayoral Gin Quiz Night on the 4th

with all proceeds going to my chosen charity, the Carnival committee, who put on wonderful events throughout the year. Emma and Gareth from the Shropshire Distillery were kind enough to host the evening, for which I thank them, and the ever popular Regatta took place on the 6th — both full of laughter, friendly competition, and the unmistakable charm that Ellesmere always delivers.

In August, we enjoyed a vibrant calendar once again — from *The Rivals* play at the Mere on the 3rd, to the VJ Day commemoration on the 15th, the Carnival on the 16th – a highlight for me as I got to ride in a Morgan, and the much-anticipated Pump Track opening on the 17th, a facility which is currently being well used by the young people of the town.

The completion of this wonderful addition to the town was driven by the Town Council working party, headed by Councillor Paul Goulbourne. The cost of the pump track was raised through crowd funding, with donations from businesses and much bucket collecting from some wonderful volunteers and illustrates the generosity of residents and businesses in Ellesmere. The opening day saw a fantastic turnout from youngsters and a demonstration by members of the Telford Flyers.

All events showcased the energy and enthusiasm that make Ellesmere such a special place to live.

October saw Welshampton Primary School celebrate its remarkable 175th anniversary — an incredible milestone for a cornerstone of our local education and community life and I was delighted to be invited to share in the celebrations.

November began with my next charity event – a tabletop sale held at the town hall. This was where the megaphone made its appearance as I went through the town, followed by Jo who insisted on live streaming me, to drum up support for the event! The Australian holiday makers I collared at the Cross were rather confused, but insisted on a photo with the mad mayor!!

On a more sombre note, Remembrance Sunday saw a large procession from the promenade to St Mary's for the church service – how uplifting to see so many people supporting our armed forces.

December saw the ever popular Winter Festival, at which I was honoured to switch on the tree lights and it was a busy month of carol services and festive celebrations.

As the Mayoral year entered 2026, I've truly come to appreciate just how special Ellesmere is. Our town is bursting with fantastic clubs, community groups, charities, volunteers, and local businesses — all working hard (and smiling while they do it!) to make life here so vibrant and welcoming. It's been a real joy to meet so many of you and see the enthusiasm and creativity that make Ellesmere shine. I was honoured to be invited to Ellesmere Rotary's 40th anniversary dinner in February....they do such important work for the local community.

My last event as Mayor begins tomorrow.....the Arts Festival seemed like such a great idea when I suggested it – who knew how much work goes in to organizing an event with many performers offering their time for free. We have a small committee who have worked so hard to make this event happen and I do urge everyone to support it – there is something for all throughout the 4 days. Local businesses, the market, volunteer helpers and Mother Pat at St Mary's have all embraced the occasion. In fact, Mother Pat's comment was 'as long as I can get to altar to pray on Sunday, do whatever you like!' Let's all be more like Pat!

So, in conclusion, let's remember what a wonderful town we live in. Whilst Ian and I are relative newcomers (and probably will be for the next 20 years) it's clear to see why so many people want to live in and visit Ellesmere. We are not without our challenges but I, for one, wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

Thank you!