

Knutsford Town Council

Annual Report
2017/18

Knutsford Town Council
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LOCAL COUNCIL
AWARD SCHEME
QUALITY GOLD



Introduction from your Mayor

Welcome to the 2017/18 Annual Report of Knutsford Town Council.

This has been one of the busiest years for the Council and it looks set to be even busier in 2018/19. I would like to thank the dedication of all councillors and officers for their work over the past twelve months. In January, Charlotte Greenstein stepped down from the council after three years' service; we thank her for her work during this time.

We were pleased to be long-listed for the NALC Council of the Year award; whilst we didn't make the shortlist it was great to see the council being recognised as being ahead of the curve on best practice.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported one of my many Mayoral Fundraising events during the past twelve months; every raffle ticket sold and meal eaten has helped raise funds for my chosen good causes; Mid Cheshire Riding for the Disabled, Knutsford Youth Orchestra and the Friendship Café.

It has been an honour to serve as your Mayor for a second time.



Cllr Neil Forbes
Town Mayor



Elections

In May a by-election was held for Over ward following Yvonne Bancroft's resignation. The contest was between three candidates with Conservative candidate Cllr Jon Wells-Bradshaw being elected. A by-election was also held in Norbury Booths ward following Charlotte Greenstein's resignation; two candidates stood with Conservative candidate Cllr Elizabeth Beswick being elected.

In May 2019 full elections will be held for all 15 seats on the Town Council.

Asset Management

The management of the grade II listed Cemetery Chapel was returned to the Town Council in late 2017 and plans have been put in place for a refurbishment to bring the chapel back into operational use. This work is being funded through a payment from Cheshire East Council in respect of the backlog of repairs and income from the upcoming sale of the Cemetery Lodge house. We hope to have the chapel open in the Autumn.

Plans are also in place to convert redundant space within our public toilet buildings into lettable commercial space.

We plan to create three new spaces within these buildings, retaining the public toilets, which will bring in additional income to the Town Council. The works will be funded through a loan replayed from the income over five years.

Our biggest project is the redevelopment of the Market Hall to create a modern and more comfortable shopping environment with rented apartments to the first and second floors. Initial plans were on public display in early April and we are hopeful to apply for planning consent before the Summer.

Finances

The Town Council's principal source of income is the precept, collected with Council Tax. For 2018/19 a Band D property will pay £56.78 per year (just over £1 a week) to the Town Council, an increase of £6.94 per year.

The remainder of the council's income is from rental income, bank interest, sponsorships and sales.

The Town Council thoroughly scrutinises its budget over a three-month period with a view to minimising the burden on tax payers.

The increase in precept requirement represents a continued increased



activity for the council such as our new Town Centre Manager, Music Festival, responsibly for the Cemetery Chapel and developing a Neighbourhood Plan. Our full budget is available to view on our website.

War Memorial Cottage Hospital

The Town Council published a full statement on its work around the War Memorial Cottage Hospital in February which set out the history of the site which is now owned by the British Red Cross.

In April 2016, when the proposed disposal of the War Memorial Cottage Hospital by the Red Cross became clear, the Town Council established a working group to investigate matters further and researched all documents related to the history, management and disposal of the memorial.

In August 2016 the Town Council had submitted an application to Historic England for the building to be 'listed'. This was rejected by the Department for

Culture, Media and Sport on the grounds that the building is not of sufficient special interest in a national context.

It was concluded that whilst there remains a strong moral case that the hospital belongs to the community which paid for it there does not appear to be a legal basis for this which could prevent the sale of the building. It is understood that the sale price is around £2,500,000.

An application to demolish the hospital and build a new retired living apartment block was submitted by McCarthy and Stone. The Town Council has objected to this on the grounds that alternative uses which may retain the building have not been thoroughly investigated.

Protecting Public Open Space

The Town Council has been working with the newly formed Knutsford Residents of Over Ward [KROW] to prevent the Cheshire East Council sale of public open space on Longridge.

The sale is proposed to enable the development opposite Longridge estate owing to a covenant preventing access directly from the road. We have sought its protection as an Asset of

Community Value, highlighted the importance of the area and set out our support to discharging the covenant restricting to ensure the area is developed to compliment the existing housing estate.

We will continue to oppose any loss of much treasured public open space.

In September we launched a new Events Forum - a place for community event organisers to meet and discuss plans, ensuring events don't clash and organisers can share best practice and tips!

Working in partnership with Bella Marketing and Knutsford Admin we hosted two workshops for local businesses; the first on social media and the second on the new Data Protection Regulations.

We refurbished the Grade II listed Parish Pump on Chelford Road, replacing the rotting wooden case.

A portable Speed Indictor Device was bought to alert speeding drivers to their speeds and record speeding data across Town.

The toilets at Knutsford Cemetery were redecorated and works undertaken to fix a number of fallen gravestones.

We published an updated Town Guide to promote the Town to potential visitors and made plans to update the Town Centre maps.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Following our 2015 Open Spaces survey we have installed two new benches on green spaces in Westfield Drive and Malvern Road.

A bench was installed in memory of the late Cllr Clive Nicholson at the Town Council Offices.

Our Town Ranger responded to requests from the local community to refurbish benches at the Community Hospital.

New planters were installed at four entrances to Knutsford and at Cotton Shop Yard.

Jointly with Tatton Estates, we funded the repairs to the cobbles around the King Canute mosaic.

Events

In 2017 we launched a brand new event – Knutsford Music Festival. Held on the final weekend of June, the festival was delivered working in partnership with local businesses who hosted a range of performances in their shops, bars and even a hairdressers. The Town Council organised three anchor events and feedback all round was great.

Popular community Halloween event, the Pumpkin Path, transferred to the Town Council this year. It was delivered through working with a number of town centre businesses who opened their doors late on Halloween to provide a safe arena for 'trick or treating'.

Our two day Christmas Market was held on the first weekend of December along with the Christmas lights switch on and reindeer parade. The Town was extremely busy and kicked off the festive season in style.

The following Saturday was the Lantern Parade and Crib Service which



continues to grow each year. As with previous years we hosted two workshops to enable children to make their own lanterns and participate in the parade.

Sister to the Pumpkin Path, the Easter Bunny Hop was also delivered by the Town Council this year, again working with local businesses to provide an enjoyable family afternoon in the Town Centre.

Community Grants

The Town Council operates a community grants scheme to provide support to community organisations through which we have given over £18,000 during the past year.

These funds have helped groups such as the Knutsford Hosts, Canute Lunch Club, Knutsford in Bloom, Knutsford Heritage Centre and the Knutsford League of Hospital Friends to name just a few.

Neighbourhood Plan

It has been twelve months of significant progress on the development of the Knutsford Neighbourhood Development Plan and we are now at the stage of the Regulation 14 consultation – a key milestone in plan making which signifies that completion is anticipated within the next six months.

A dedicated team of councillors and residents have been working tirelessly to bring this plan together and we would like to once again thank everyone who took the time to respond to our Emerging Policies consultation in late 2017. This has led to us preparing the first full draft of the plan ready for public scrutiny.

It is anticipated that we will have

submitted the Plan to Cheshire East Council by the end of September 2018 with a referendum on its adoption expected in early 2019.

Once adopted it will form part of the planning framework for Knutsford and, now we have reached this advanced stage, can already start to form a material consideration in planning decisions.



Staffing Changes

There has been a number of staffing changes in the past year. Firstly, in August we welcomed our new Town Centre Manager, Sandra Curties, who is leading on engagement and initiatives to support the economic vitality of the Town Centre as well as managing our Market Hall.

Later in the year we said goodbye to our first Town Ranger, Robin White, who has worked hard over the past two years to

tackle 'grot spots' and odd jobs. In March we welcomed Bob Garner to the role. We also said goodbye to Mayor's PA Clare Stuart West and hello to Annabel Irvine who hit the ground running organising three fundraising events in as many months.

Our Deputy Town Clerk is currently on Maternity Leave with Administration Assistant Sarah Morgan covering the role and Alex Brown covering Sarah.

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



131

Events attended by the Mayor
or Deputy Mayor



14

Applications submitted to
Historic England to list buildings



295

Planning apps considered by
the planning committee



110

Entries in the 'Best Christmas
Window' competition



79

Council and committee meet-
ings held



614

Responses to the
Neighbourhood Plan survey



176

Reusable Market Hall
bags sold



15

Trees planted
across the Town



1932

Votes cast across two
by-elections