



## MAYOR'S REPORT

I have had quite a busy year representing Neston at a wide range of events. These included Ladies Day, the Parkgate Carnival, Remembrance Day, The Victorian & Easter Markets and the Victoria Cross Commemoration. I have also presented grant award certificates to community organisations and have been amazed and impressed by the amount of volunteering that goes on, so much of it committed to helping others.

Beyond Neston I have attended various functions that have been very enjoyable and, more importantly, helped to keep awareness of Neston and our place in the County in the minds of people who are in a position to take decisions that may affect us.

Any Chairman of the Council relies on the support of Councillors to ensure that the decisions of Council are reached in a timely fashion. This involves lively debate and consensus agreement and I have been fortunate in the involvement of colleagues over the past 12 months. Council is also reliant on its staff and we have been equally fortunate in the commitment they have shown during the year. I would like, on behalf of the whole Council, to record our thanks to them.

## VALUE FOR MONEY

Neston Town Council continues to seek the best value for the precept received and has this year reviewed the costs of some of its regular contracts to ensure it is still receiving best value.

The Council has also simplified its committee structure to increase efficiency and responsiveness. There are now four standing committees:

**People** supports cultural and community development as well actively encouraging projects that improve health and wellbeing within the community.

**Places** comments on planning applications, campaigns to improve public transport and works to highlight highways issues and improve the local environment.

**Policy** deals with matters relating to strategic finance, governance and human resources.

**Resources** is responsible for financial monitoring, assets and economic development.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

The Council continues to work hard to improve community life. We cannot detail here a complete record of the year but what follows are highlights which we hope will give a flavour of the Council's activities and achievements during 2017/18.

### Christmas Market

This year saw the second Neston Victorian Christmas Festival funded and organised by the Town Council with its partners Neston Churches Together, Chamber of Trade and Rotary Club of Neston. The event was another major success with full use of both Market Square and Town Hall (owned by CWaC and managed by Neston Town Council). Market stall holders were again delighted with the amount of business they received and the Council received lots of positive feedback from the community about the event.

## **Sytchcroft Park**

The Council has continued to support and drive the Sytchcroft Park transformation project in partnership with the CWaC Places team, having provided the initial pump priming grant of £12,500 from its New Homes Bonus monies. The popular project has now attracted over £170,000 of external funds provided by WREN, Neston S106 Group, Adactus Housing, Tesco and the Neston Civic Society, as well as funding from CWaC Cllr Andy Williams. We look forward to seeing the new park installed in the autumn and will help to ensure it is properly looked after and used by the whole community.

## **Community Grants**

The Council has awarded nearly £29,000 in grants to community organisations during 2017/18. We have supported a variety of initiatives including training to help the long-term unemployed return to work, projects that reduce social isolation and organisations that provide skills and education for young people. We also continue to fund important local events such as Ladies Day, an annual art exhibition, the Village Fair and the West Vale Family Fun Day.

## **Junior & Deputy Junior Mayor**

The introduction of the Junior and Deputy Junior mayor was followed up during the year at various events where our junior partners played an active role including public appearances at the Village Fair and Christmas market.

## **Parkgate Carnival**

Neston Town Council supported the first Parkgate Carnival which was a major success. We will be providing some sponsorship again in 2018/19.

## **Neston Music Festival**

Neston Town Council supported the inaugural Neston Music Festival. The Council provided funding for festival publicity and marketing and ensured there were sufficient funds to deliver the event.

## **VC Commemorative Stone**

The Town Council was honoured to fund, lead and support the production and laying of the VC commemorative stone. This was marked by the Council's event on 24<sup>th</sup> March at St Mary and St Helen Parish Church involving members of Christopher Bushell's family and various local dignitaries to recognise his VC award for outstanding bravery.

## **Neston Transport Standard**

Neston Town Council continues to campaign to improve the quality of road, rail and bus connections in Neston. The Town Council is grateful to the expert advice it has received from the Transport Working Group in support of these goals during 2017/18.

## **Neston Neighbourhood Plan**

The Town Council is similarly grateful for the expert advice and support it receives from the Neston Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group which has just published its first annual monitoring review (available to download from the Town Council website).

## **Neston Looking Better**

A dedicated team of volunteers has worked tirelessly once again this year to improve the local environment for the benefit of everyone. The Town Council would like to recognise this contribution and thank the volunteers for their dedication and commitment.

## **Neston Town Hall and Market**

It is pleasing to report increased usage of the Town Hall during 2017/18. In 2018/19 the Town Council will focus on developing these assets further to make them as productive as possible for the community.



## GRANTS AWARDED DURING 2017/18

Neston Town Council's grants scheme is open to voluntary and community groups and organisations operating within the Neston area and is intended to

- enable local people to participate in voluntary groups and activities
- help the Neston area's voluntary and community groups improve their impact on the community
- ensure the provision of services needed by the residents of the Neston area, via the voluntary sector
- support organisations which meet the needs of people experiencing social and economic difficulties
- ensure that there is equality of access and opportunity for all Neston area residents to the services it provides and funds
- improve or enhance the local environment.

### Main Grants Programme

Hip & Harmony CIC	Ladies Day Entertainment 2017	£3,984.17
RAF Air Cadets, Neston Squadron	Flight simulator construction	£1,418.00
All about Women	Mental Health Peer Support Group	£2,047.97
Amber Button	Neston Work Group	£2,350.00
Neston & District Art Society	NADAS Annual Art Exhibition 2018	£445.00
Neston Village Fair Committee	Village Fair 2018	£1,322.00
Friends of West Vale Park	Family Fun Day 2018	£1,500.00
Little Actors Theatre Company	Adult Theatre Club (12 month pilot)	£2,000.00
Train to Change	Neston's Lift up to Work III	£5,244.00
Amber Button	Neston Work Club	£3,000.00
Hip & Harmony CIC	"Next Level" Youth Projects	£4,743.97
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£28,055.11</b>

### Small Grant Awards

Ellesmere Port & Neston Community Transport	Community transport for Neston	£300.00
Little Actors Theatre Company	Chairs for new premises	£300.00
Amber Button	Craft sessions	£300.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£900.00</b>

This Annual Report will be formally presented at the 2018 Annual Town Meeting being held at Neston Town Hall at 6.30pm on Tuesday 8 May.

The Annual Meeting of Neston Town Council will take place on Tuesday 22 May at 6.30pm at Neston Town Hall.