



NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Town Mayor's Report – 14th April 2022

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for attending this Annual Town meeting for North Walsham. This meeting is not a regular meeting of the Town Council, but a meeting at which the Town Council, through the Town Mayor, reports to the people of North Walsham and provides an opportunity to ask questions directly to Members of the three Councils Town, District and County which operate within North Walsham.

This report includes the period May 2021 to April 2022. Since the last meeting we have been joined on the Town Council by Jo Cracknell, Penny Spall, Rebecca Shaw, Julia Beach, David Covell, Steve Dibben and Sam Golder, unfortunately Rebecca Shaw has recently left the Council for personal reasons and we now have one vacancy which is currently being advertised. It is with great sadness that we lost Cllrs Helen Gotts and Jenny Melville to illness both of these Councillors will be greatly missed and I would like to take this opportunity to express the Town Council's sincere thanks and gratitude for all that they did whilst they were Cllrs, people often forget that these people gave their services voluntarily and often spent a considerable amount of time selflessly working for the good of the Town.

It has been a busy year with the Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) funding beginning to deliver Town improvements,

We have successfully applied for joint funding to install a Trod (footpath) between the Bluebell pub and the North Walsham and Dilham Canal along Bacton Road. There are 2 areas where we will have to approach landowners to see if they are willing to allow the Trod to be set back from the road, hopefully, they will respond positively and this will allow safe easy walking access to the Canal.

The Council has been awarded the Quality Gold Award by NALC recognising the quality of our systems and procedures this is the highest award possible to give a Town Council.

The preparation for Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee celebrations are well under way and at an advanced stage with numerous stalls and free entertainment being arranged along with a beacon lighting and bagpipes and a short firework display.

The Grounds staff continued throughout the pandemic to do an outstanding job looking after our Cemeteries, Churchyard and all of our Parks. The centralised vehicle compound and storage facility has been completed and will undoubtedly make our grounds operations considerably more efficient now that the equipment is centralised, this purpose-built compound has electrics and CCTV installed to further enhance security and has enabled us to free up the lower chapel on the Cemetery for its intended use. The ground staff are quite approachable and will happily receive any feedback or suggestions

Now that the COVID restrictions have been eased we will be restarting the litter picking groups on Sundays, when we were able to carry this out it was well supported by volunteers and considerable amounts of litter were removed from our hedges, verges and roads.

Cemeteries

As part of the Chapel refurbishment the doors will be replaced in October, the floors and pews have been bead blasted, new glass fitted to windows where needed and the guttering and soakaways are currently being worked on, we are still looking for a suitable bell and if anyone feels they can assist please contact the office.

We have installed new benches in the church yard and have launched a scheme for memorial benches around town. Get in touch if you are interested.

Markets

We are undertaking several Street food Feasts this year the first one is at the end of April and we will also be running several car boot sales on the memorial park the first of these will be free of charge for those wishing to give it a go, contact details are on the posters or available from the Town Council

If anyone is interested in having a stall at either the Thursday or Sunday Markets then please contact Nigel Clarke through the Town Council Office.

Precept

The Council has strived to make efficiencies where possible and gain funding from other sources where available, this has enabled us not to increase our council tax from last year.

Planned expenditure

£10K for new cemetery land

£5K for electricity connection to the Memorial Park

£28K As the Town Councils Contribution to the proposed Trod to the North Walsham and Dilham Canal

PARKS

Memorial Park

The Development & Amenities committee has continued in the revitalisation of the War Memorial Garden using Section 106 funds, these are contributions received from developers, under their planning approval. The Memorial Park and Memorial Gardens have undergone numerous improvements which started with the installation of obelisks dedicated to all that served during the wars and a flag pole, new benches are being installed along with raised flower beds and cast-iron poppies shortly being installed to further enhance the Memorial Garden. In addition, we are installing electrical supplies to the park to enable events to connect to power supplies.

A park entrance that will commemorate the Queens Jubilee is planned for the gateway by the community centre hopefully this will be finalised soon.

A review of the modernised By-laws has now been reviewed by Westminster and will hopefully be adopted shortly.

Trackside Park

With the help of North Walsham Play and Matt Smith the new Skate Park has been installed, with lighting planned and additional play equipment to be installed in the near future I would like to take this opportunity to thank North Walsham play for all of their efforts and assistance in both fund raising and implementation of the facilities.

The dog area continues to be well utilised, and the footpaths that run up to Cromer Road and Oak Road have been adopted by the this will enable us to address the ongoing issues with overgrowth etc

Woodville Park

New swings have been installed and the park is being well utilised

Spa Common

The council owns a plot of land at Spa Common. This is planned to be a wild meadow with nature walk and we are continuing with its development.

Fiskes Wood

This has new fencing and an entrance to Saddlers wood installed, it is hoped that in the coming year we will be able to reinstate a footpath so that people can walk around the area

General Town issues and Improvements

Despite the challenges we have faced recently we have continued to listen to the concerns and issues raised by the residents of North Walsham.

The HAZ works have started and will be ongoing in phases throughout the year. During the late summer while works take place in the Market Place, our markets may have to relocate for a while, probably to bank Loke car park. We will keep you informed on that.

The proposed Bus Interchange works starts on the 25th of April and we have been assured that the issues raised with county and district councillors have been taken onboard and resolved where possible, we fully appreciate that there will be a reduction in parking spaces on the New Road Carpark but the benefit that this much needed state of the art facility will bring in terms of easing traffic congestion and providing adequate shelters will benefit all of the residents of North Walsham.

As always, a Town is only as good as its residents and volunteers and I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to:

North Walsham in Bloom

I would like to express the Council's thanks to North Walsham in Bloom for the outstanding work they do in keeping our Town flower beds, planters and boxes so magnificently tended and colourful, a real credit to the Town they should be rightly proud of their efforts.

Wayne Beauchamp – For all his efforts in producing the Town Guide in particular for giving his time free in producing the current 2021 guide, which has already been delivered to households within the Town an amazing effort especially considering the impact of COVID. He has also scanned in our burial records and will be playing at the Platinum Jubilee event

I would also like to thank all the Council staff for their hard work during the year that despite working from home at times they have still ensured that all queries and issues have been dealt with speedily, professionally and satisfactorily. I am sure you will agree they have worked hard to raise the Town Council's profile.

Lastly, I would like to thank the current Councillors for their team spirit and continued support and efforts throughout the year. I am sure they will agree that it is no individual that is important but working together as a team regardless of their own opinions is what matters and has made such a success over the past years.