



NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Town Mayor's Report – 6th April 2023

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 the three Councils - Town, District and County which operate within North Walsham.

This report includes the period May 2022 to April 2023. Since the last meeting we have been joined on the Town Council by Susan Richardson, unfortunately Cllr Sam Golder has recently left the Council due to work commitments. The upcoming local elections have now closed for nominees and all seats were uncontested, due to former councillors not standing we have 3 vacancies available for co-option and I urge anyone interested in serving their community to put themselves forward. After 12 years on the Council with the last 4 consecutive years as Mayor I have decided to step down from the Town Council along with Cllr Sim, Cllr Fryer and Cllr Murphy on behalf of the Council I offer our sincere gratitude and thanks for the many years of service they have given to the Town. It is often forgotten that these people gave their services voluntarily and often spent a considerable amount of time selflessly working for the good of the Town.

Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee celebrations were very well received with the beacon lighting, bagpipes and a short firework display. The jubilee celebration although delayed due to the weather was also very well attended and appreciated. It was with great sadness that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth passed and there are 2 new memorials in the park for Her Majesty and Prince Phillip. I was privileged to represent the Town Council at the remembrance service held at St Nicholas and would like to thank the Rev David Warner and all those involved. The Kings Coronation festivities planning is at an advanced stage and we hope everyone will enjoy the planned events.

The Grounds staff continue to do an outstanding job looking after our Cemeteries, Churchyard and all of our Parks. The lower chapel in the Cemetery is being renovated and will shortly be available for its intended use once again. The ground staff are quite approachable and will happily receive any feedback or suggestions

Cemeteries

As part of the Chapel refurbishment the doors will be replaced shortly, the floors and pews have already been bead blasted, new glass fitted to windows where needed and the guttering and soakaways repaired are currently being worked on, we are still looking for a suitable bell and if anyone feels they can assist please contact the office. In addition the Bacton Road cemetery has had the access roads re-surfaced.

Markets

The Market has finally returned to the Town centre We are undertaking several Street foods Feasts again this year the first one is at the end of April and we will also be running regular monthly car boot sales on the memorial park the first of these will be free of charge for those wishing to give it a go on the 16th April, 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 the Town Council Office, we do have a pop-up stall available for anyone wishing to dip their toe in the water.

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 surveys and reports

Parks

Memorial Park

The Development & Amenities committee has completed the revitalisation of the War Memorial Garden using Section 106 funds, these are contributions received from developers, under their planning approval. The installation of obelisks dedicated to all that served during the wars, a flag pole and cast-Iron poppies have all been completed along with new benches being installed and raised flower beds being which further enhance the Memorial Garden. In addition, we have completed installing electrical supplies to the park which will enhance the usage and enable events to connect to power supplies. The modernised By-laws are well on the way to completion and will shortly be in place.

Trackside Park

The new Skate Park is being well utilised although we have unfortunately experienced episodes of abusive graffiti, steps are underway to paint the outside of the skate bowl with anti-graffiti paint. Additional play equipment has been installed and well received by all. I would like to take this opportunity to thank North Walsham Play and Matt Smith for all their efforts and assistance in both fund raising and implementation the facilities.

The dog area continues to be well utilised, and the footpaths that run up to Cromer Rd and Oak Road that were adopted by the Town Council have enabled us to address the ongoing issues with overgrowth etc.

Woodville Park

The park is being well utilised

Spa Common

The council owns a plot of land at Spa Common this has proved problematic in maintaining taking up a disproportionate amount of the Ground Staffs time and although originally it was planned to be a wild meadow with nature walk this is no longer possible and we have decided to utilise it again for grazing.

Fiskes Wood

It is hoped that in the coming year we will be able to continue with the reinstatement of 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. Whilst we appreciate our efforts might not be to everyone's approval, we are at least trying to do our best and move the Town forward and as I have said previously there are 3 vacant positions on the Town Council if you feel that you have something to add please put yourself forward.

It has been a busy year with the Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) funding delivering the much-needed Town improvements, including the Travel hub, refurbished and new Public Conveniences and the regeneration of the Town Centre. These improvements have at times caused considerable upheaval and inconvenience and I thank everyone for their patience and understanding. It is always the case that you will never please everyone and I respect the opinions and views of members of the public, the vast majority of feedback given has been very positive. We listened to people's concerns regarding access to the Town centre and ensured that disabled Parking for blue badge holders and loading bays for use between the hours of 10 am and 4 pm were provided, I would ask that people do not abuse this facility. I would like to thank our County and District councillors for their assistance and funding towards these facilities and improvements.

The HAZ works are apart from the Cedars building in large completed, it is hoped that the council will return to the building in late May.

It is unfortunate that the proposed trod pathway along Bacton Road to the Canal will no longer be undertaken due to the Canal footpath no longer being open to members of the public. we felt that we could not justify the costs involved, hopefully in the future the access issues can be resolved, and this project revisited.

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, throughout the HAZ works they have strived to maintain the flowers and planters they are all 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 2023 guide, which has already been delivered to households within the Town an amazing effort

I would also like to thank all the Council staff for their hard work during the year they have ensured that all queries and issues have been dealt with speedily, professionally and satisfactorily. I am sure you will agree they have continued to work 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. I wish the new Council all the best in their endeavours