

2020 Annual Mayor's Statement – Councillor Geoff Haldenby, Mayor of Boroughbridge and Chairman of Boroughbridge Town Council

On 8th May 2019 I was reinstated as Mayor for a second year. Unfortunately, a week later I had to spend a while in hospital undergoing major surgery which laid me low for two months. During this time, the Council carried on as they do and my Deputy, Monika, took over as the Chair and deputised with dedication, supported by the rest of the Councillors and the work of the Council was skillfully kept on track.

Over the last two years the Council have delivered and continue to work on a range of projects. Mentioning just a few, the plans for the Mill Lane site are starting to develop well and the Bus Shelter on the High Street seems to be popular (even if the buses are infrequent!). The Tutt Woodland has now been sold and is in private ownership and is no longer a drain on the Council's financial and management resources. Tidiness of both Cemeteries has been improved and the benches throughout Town have been or are being refurbished. The Lime Trees at St James' Square have had new and upgraded lights installed and the Fountain is now imaginatively illuminated in the hours of darkness. Unfortunately, Harrogate Borough Council have managed to turn our request to shape and prune the Lime Trees at St James' Square into a major issue – we continue to work on this though.

Going forward, recognising the difficulty in getting any project done in the present Covid-19 situation, we have a number of significant improvements in train to Community Life and the experience our visitors have when visiting our very special Town. These include the installation of attractive Cycle Racks on the High Street, the completion of the Electric Car Charging Points in the main Car Park and the potential installation of special LED lighting across the main River Ure Bridge to make it a safer place at night and also to increase its visual impact.

One highlight of the last year was the UCI Cycle Race coming through Boroughbridge - albeit on a wet Friday evening! All that attended to watch the event enjoyed it and thankfully it did not turn our green space at the back of our Car Park into a quagmire as was seen at Harrogate.

The Council saw two of its long serving staff leave in late 2019 – Helen Heavisides and Helen Chester who have moved on to pastures new. I personally together with the Council thank them for their work over the years. We now have John Nichols as our new Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer who has joined us from the business world and he is doing a great job in modernising the way we work and how we work as a Council and helping us meet the challenges of the future. We have also recently recruited a Deputy Clerk, Liz Leatherbarrow who unfortunately is unable to physically join the Council as yet because of the Covid-19 precautions we are following.

We are now building a truly can do culture to help improve our Town and what it offers to our Communities wherever we can. Our Tourist Information Centre has been improved and will continue to be modernised going forward. We regularly get great feedback from our tourist visitors coming in to our Tourist Information Centre and we remain grateful to our team of volunteers that provide so much practical advice and help to them.

The Town and visitors again welcomed the late night shopping event in December and the Christmas Lights were a credit to those involved. As ever, the New Year brought hope....and also foul weather and flooding which impacted on a number of our residents. The support provided by our Boroughbridge Emergency Response Team (BERT) volunteers led by Pauline Phillips was magnificent and they have the gratitude and thanks of the Council and the Town generally.

In these troubled and uncertain times during which the entire Country fights its way through the dreadful Coronavirus situation, I wish all residents the very best. We will be able to beat this problem if we all follow the guidelines that have been made very clear to all. In the meantime stay safe and well.

After stepping down as the Mayor after spending 2 years in office I will be remaining on the Council as a Councillor and I wish my successor as Mayor, when announced, the very best for their term of office. For me, it has been a privilege to serve the Town as Mayor and lead the Council Team and work hard, much of which is behind the scenes, to raise the positive profile of Boroughbridge, Aldborough and Minskip.