

WITNEY ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2020

REPORT TO THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING FROM YOUR MAYOR, DUNCAN ENRIGHT

Witney is a wonderful town, and it has been my privilege to serve as its mayor for most of the last year. I am grateful to the officers, former mayors and councillors, including my predecessor Cllr Churchill, and current councillors, for their support. I am particularly pleased to thank my Deputy Mayor Cllr Aitman for her help this year.

As this council has a new administration, which you elected for four years in 2019, we have had a chance to think again about our priorities. As the leader and committee chairs explain in their reports, our priorities are driven by asking everyone in Witney for their views and priorities, as part of a One Witney plan.

It seemed to me as Mayor, in a year that has brought so much to divide us, that my role should be to unite the town in the things we care about. That's why I have put first supporting the community in Witney, before the essential job of representing Witney outside the town. I have played a role in reshaping the business of the council, and finally organised events and initiatives to raise funds for four local charities: Witney Woodland Volunteers, The Wychwood Project, Friends of Springfield School, and Oxfordshire Mind.

Supporting community takes many guises, and I have attended many dozens of business openings and re-openings, school events, local clubs and society events, and civic functions. There are so many highlights in our fabulous town, but ones that involved a bit of singing included the Witney Pride Picnic, Witney Carnival, Witney Music Festival, LibFest, Richmond Villages Music afternoon, Witney Day Centre, and Ceewood Hall Christmas Lunch (a legendary event that will live long in memory, also attended by Cllrs Coles, Price and Bolger!) I would like to praise in particular our service clubs including the magnificent team at Rotary for their huge efforts across the town.

I have represented Witney at events in our neighbouring towns and in our beloved city Oxford. I also have the privilege of working with our twin town mayors in Unterhaching and Le Touquet, and on the first weekend in April I hope you can join us for some of the events to celebrate 30 and 40 years of twinning with them. On the days before, during and after leaving the European Union, we flew their flags and the town flag to demonstrate our continued friendship, despite any national political issues. I have also tried to make sure our District and County Council colleagues are aware of what is happening in town, and to encourage people to work together.

As Mayor I chair the Council, and it has been a pleasure to see more people attending our meetings in the slightly less crowded Gallery Room of the Corn Exchange (we still use our

historic chamber above the Town Hall for meetings too). I will leave it to our brilliant councillors to describe the work we have been doing on your behalf, and on your instructions.

Finally, I am pleased to say that raising the profile and funds for the charities continues. I will be holding further events between now and May. The Hedgehog Day in Autumn was a huge success, and something we will build on in future. As we face the Climate Emergency, we must think hard about our environment, which is why I have been very impressed to see so many councillors and residents coming forward with ideas, including an expansion of tree planting around the town and district. If you wish to contribute to this or any other area of town life, please don't hesitate to contact your councillors, or me as mayor.

Cllr Duncan Enright