

Mayor's Report to Havant Borough Council - 26th October 2016

Almost halfway through the Mayoral year, it continues to be a great joy to be able to share in so much that goes on for residents of the Borough, especially on days which are special to them. One in particular was hosting in the Parlour the 100th birthday of one of our brave soldiers, Gerry Rayner, who, with no family of his own, has been befriended by SSAFA and the Royal British Legion. In WW2 he had served in Africa, Malta and the Italian campaign, telling me he had marched 1000 miles up the spine of Italy pursuing the retreating Germans. I hope I can be as active as him if I live as long. I also had had a birthday celebration in August, shared with nearly 200 residents, who attended the Celebration of Age in the events suite. We are so fortunate to have many groups, such as the Men's Shed, Walking Football and Good Neighbours to keep residents healthy and happy into old age. I am grateful to Community First, Churchill Retirement Homes, the Methodist Homes for the Aged, and the Forties Tea Rooms who helped with this event, as well as the many groups and Angel Radio who gave so freely of their time.

Continuing my statistical analysis from last July, during these relatively quiet 13 weeks of summer I have had 77 formal engagements, and additionally 33 informal (such as my continuing programme of visiting places of worship) as well as 32 meetings planning future events. Of these 91 days, there have been 23 free of any Mayoral commitments – so was able to dash up for 4 days to North Wales via Nottingham to help our daughter settle into her new home. In this period, 280 hours has been spent on Mayoral duties – sometimes for over 10 hours or more without a break. The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Elaine Shimbart, has been always ready and willing to step in when there is a clash of engagements and I am really grateful to her, and also Cllr Leah Turner, who has had to be called upon too.

Michael is sometimes not able to accompany me, but he always enjoys being with me, and continues to bring his own special humour to these events, joining in with gusto and dancing at every opportunity! We particularly enjoyed dancing the Sailors' Hornpipe with Wayne Sleep on the new Hayling ferry as we made the ceremonial crossing to Portsmouth and back. Other residents have accompanied me sometimes, and it is good to share the honour with them!

This period has seen many holiday-makers coming to visit our lovely Borough. It was brilliant to see so many keen enthusiasts at the National Watersports Festival, especially as they included my cousins-in-law. My sister-in-law was concerned to see a photo of her cousin laid out on a treatment bed, but I had found him enjoying a special electric massage after his strenuous day windsurfing! It was good to see his grand-daughter among many young people receiving a prize. Continuing my series of walks to hidden beauty spots of the Borough, we showed off the lovely walk to Langstone Harbour from Bedhampton

in August, St Clare's Copse in Warren Park in September and Hurst Wood this month. I am most grateful for the support of Cllr Beryl Francis and Cllr Paul Buckley for leading these last two walks. Not only has it been good to be out in the sunshine, but I continue to wonder at the beautiful places that we can find in every part of the Borough. We are so fortunate to have such lovely woodlands and waterside walks to enjoy, but I am sad that we encounter very few residents on these walks, nearly all of them dog-walkers.

Thanks to the open and welcoming attitude of our Council, we are now attracting more national and international events. We need to encourage our hoteliers to encourage these groups to involve the council. The U3A National finals of petanque were held at Mill Rythe on Hayling Island and I was fortunate to be able to attend and present the prizes.

It was lovely to welcome visitors from across the country and I hope we can spread the word that the Mayor is always delighted to attend and welcome visiting groups to our Borough.

I also attended the opening session of the 8th European Cobra Meeting, their first one in the UK, with visitors – and about 80 of their distinctive cars – from across the UK, as well as Holland, Germany, France, and the Czech Republic. The organiser had looked at other places, but Havant had been the most helpful and welcoming.

I was especially delighted that the first Havant 10k Run that I have long wished for, took place on September 25th. It attracted sufficient runners from Portsmouth and neighbouring areas so that Havant Athletic Club will now make it a regular part of its calendar on the last Sunday every September. I will be getting into training to run it next year! The runners this year all commented on the outstanding beauty of the route, so word will get round, and hopefully it will become part of the training for the thousands taking part in the Great South Run at the end of October, bringing people to our Borough. I am grateful not only to Pete Spencer and the Havant Athletic Club for organising this, but also for the support of Park Community School, including the Head Teacher, Chris Anders, who ran it himself! It was disappointing that only two councillors came to support this inaugural Run.

Standing out in this period too, have been the outdoor fetes and fairs which thousands of residents and visitors enjoy. The 3 Churches Fete on Hayling was great fun... not only did I find a pair of evening shoes for a bargain price, but I had a go on the rowing machine brought down by the Langstone Cutters to encourage new members to join them in the camaraderie of this healthy sport for all ages. I know only too well how hard our residents work to stage these events, as I have been very involved in the organisation of the Emsworth Horticultural Show (as well as the Leigh Park Carnival) for many years. I am most grateful to them all, as well as for the support of our new Norse team in the depot for their enthusiastic enabling of these and other events. Thankfully for the

Emsworth Show, the sun shone this year, after two years of rain which had almost wiped out the event. Emsworth is unique in the Borough in maintaining its traditional Horticultural Marquee, and the skills exhibited in gardening, flower arranging, photography and crafts by both young and old, were awe-inspiring.

My visits to our schools started again with the new term, and it has been good to share key moments in their life. Purbrook Park School now has an excellent new teaching block, and the Head Boy and Girl showed Michael and me round the brand new classrooms - we are looking forward to seeing the final stage opened in the Spring. Havant College can be rightly proud of their state of the art classrooms we saw at the beginning of September, with its use of modern computing technology to enhance the learning opportunities. We have also seen democracy in action in two schools with their elections to their school councils. It was good, too, to meet parents and girls, including my neighbours, from our Borough at the Prizegiving held by Portsmouth High School. Just recently Park Community School hosted superbly the first Mayor's Proms Fashion Show, supported by two new shops in the Borough, Mousetrap who supplied some stunning gowns and Astares, which I had only opened in September, providing some trendy suits, for the young men and women students to model.

I particularly enjoy events where I open something, especially new businesses and shops in the Borough – in this period I have opened a new Vets, a new Pet Shop and a new Funeral Parlour, as well as 2 new life-saving defibrillators, one in North Hayling and a second in Leigh Park.

Some of my visits to smaller groups have been really rewarding. We enjoyed meeting children at two of the children's homes in the Borough, together with their neighbours and staff. It is good to know that there is such support available, especially in gradually enabling these young people to become independent as they prepare to leave Council care, which can be the start of a really difficult time for them. We really appreciated the efforts put in by small groups of volunteers like the Friends of Hermitage Stream, who put on their first Fun Day in August and the Waterlooville events team.

Michael and I continue to enjoy the music and arts in the Borough – I was so impressed by the talent shown by our youngsters of the Urban Vocal Group last month, that I am hoping a Havant Music Festival will be born next Spring ... watch this space! It was with huge pride that I was able to show off to my fellow Civic heads, some of the exciting developments happening here, including seeing the emerging buildings at Dunsbury Hill Business Park, a new small industry in Waterlooville, the new facilities at Park Community School as well as a new gym in Leigh Park I had opened in August, the Scalextrix and Music Fusion at the Spring, and the work of the Pastoral Centre and the new business ventures in Emsworth which keep that community thriving. Our return visits to their districts have been giving me ideas, too.

Anne Thurlow and Neill Payne, as well as the rest of the Facilities team, together with help from the PR and economic teams, are strong in their support of all that I am trying to achieve – even when I come up with new ideas like the Havant Music Festival! I am hoping by the end of November to have some exciting events for 2017 in place. Meanwhile the Quiz at the end of this month has been fully booked for the last 3 weeks, and there will be limited places for the Indoor Triathlon in Waterlooville Leisure Centre on November 26th. I hope, too, that all councillors will support the Remembrance Sunday services across the Borough as we remember the huge sacrifices made during WW1. I will be leading a group of residents (at no cost to the council taxpayers) across to France for a weekend at the beginning of April to visit the Battlefields of the Somme and will lay a wreath on behalf of the Borough at the Thiepval Memorial – at least one other councillor has already indicated their interest in joining me... any others are welcome, but do book your place soon! And remember with Christmas coming, we have the Christmas Coffee morning on December 14th, for your special gifts. My Charity Christmas Ball is on December 22nd and will start the Festive holiday with a swing, so please come and enjoy it with me and some of my family and friends.

Faith Ponsonby
18/10/16