

Mayor's Report to Havant Borough Council - 22nd February 2017

Christmas now seems a long way away, and I hope you all had an enjoyable break with your families. My thanks go to all those who attended the Christmas Ball, especially to Anne and Neill who carefully guarded the secret that our eldest son was going to pay a surprise visit from Japan for the Ball and subsequent festivities. It was also good to see business people and service organisations present too, making it an occasion bringing together a wide range of Havant people.

We had great fun at the Christmas plays and pantos, and even with the lack of sleep in the run-up to Christmas, there has never been the slightest danger of nodding off, so enthralling were the performances. Park Community School's 'Beauty and the Beast' and the Dynamo Youth Theatre's 'Joseph' were both outstanding, and HIADS 'Red Riding Hood' was full of laughs. Among the concerts, the Hayling Singers' and brass band were great fun, as were the Emsworth Community Singers with the Meridian Wind Band. The spectacle of the Chinese New Year Celebrations in Portsmouth was amazing, where I was also delighted to make some excellent links and also saw several residents there from Havant.

Although the pace has lessened since Christmas, some of the events have been edged with sadness, notably the funeral service and memorial service for Cllr Colin Mackey. Our thanks go to Alderman Brendan Gibb-Gray, who ensured that both these services met with the approval of his widow, Diana, while still enabling many of us to hear stories of his working life. It was a real reminder to appreciate each other better while we still may. Appropriately, the weather was bleak for the service on Holocaust Memorial Day at the end of January, a tiny taste of what those living in the concentration camps endured day after day. This was the last event to be organised by one of our long-serving officers, Sarah Flamson, who has left us for the greener grass of East Hampshire. We wish her well in her new role, and she takes with her a small memento of HBC which we presented to her following the HMD service.

It is always a great privilege to present prizes or attend concerts at our local schools. The range of talents shown, as well as hard work and confidence of our young people is amazing. Perhaps one of the most moving occasions was awarding certificates to the senior pupils of Rachel Madocks school, including the son of one of our officers. The young people were exuberant in their pleasure at their achievement and the ceremony will remain as a highlight of their lives, a tribute to the dedication of their teachers and parents. I was also reminded of the perseverance of many disabled people when I met Sonny, who is paralysed from the neck down, but hopes to be part of the paralympian Rugby squad in Tokyo – he and his mother were in tears at a fundraising event when someone attending it generously handed over a cheque for half the cost of the specialist lightweight wheelchair Sonny needs. More recently I was bowled over by the determination of Lorraine Raine Lambert, a paralympian who was the speaker at the Sports Council awards, who narrowly missed out on a shooting medal at Rio – she was injured 7 years ago, but despite constant pain and losing a leg, was not going to let that stop her participating in sport at the highest level. I have immense admiration for all those who still live life to the full, despite all they have to endure.

With only 12 more weeks before I hand over the chain to the Deputy Mayor, I am now finding time will not allow me to achieve all I set out to do. I have now visited 34 places of worship of the 46 in the Borough, and 27 schools, so will not quite complete the mission to visit every one. While there have been fewer formal engagements in this period I have been able to work on plans for the last few weeks of my year in office. The last of my 4 coffee mornings will be on March 15th and the brochure for the first Havant Music Festival (East of the A3(M)) from March 30th – April 9th will shortly be appearing. The Classic Vehicle Run will take place on the morning of April 9th – we hope it is warmer this year! The International Celebration of Spring will be on April 23rd, with Fishbourne Mill Morris already booked. Finally I shall be the oldest of 'the Magnificent 7' – the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, and 6 other Mayors/Chairmen – abseiling down the Spinnaker Tower on April 30th. I hope to see many of you at some of these events. Statistically, in this 11 week period, I have only averaged nearly 18 hours per week away from home on mayoral duties, with 50 formal engagements, 11 informal – but 26 meetings! I actually had 22 days without any Mayoral

engagements, compared with only 4 days in the 6 week period before the last Council meeting, though these days off were not entirely free, as we had a long weekend looking after our 2 youngest grandchildren, aged just 2 and almost 5! I was also laid low with the 'boomerang cough' like so many others! My last formal engagement this period was to visit the 3rd birthday of a weekly coffee morning held in Cowplain, where I was greeted by 5 or 6 diminutive 'paparazzi', members of a local junior camera club, all busily clicking away during the morning, on instructions to have the Mayor in every picture, with residents both old and young – I shall await their photos with interest!

Spring is thankfully just around the corner, and we should give praise to our colleagues in Norse who have turned out to ensure our roads are safe and our refuse collected even during the bitter cold.

Faith Ponsonby

13/02/17