

Mayor's Report to Havant Borough Council - 29th March 2017

The 7 weeks since I last reported to you have become busier again, with several schools asking me to visit. Perhaps one of the most interesting of these was to see what St Alban's School, West Leigh (the school our daughter attended) were doing on their Pollination Day. They are planting plants which attract butterflies and bees to them, and studying why this is so important. All the children had dressed in some wonderful insect costumes (with the help of their parents!) and I was shown round by a group of 3 girls, one of whom was very new to the school, and another from Yr 6 gave a well-informed commentary on everything that was going on. In the same week, we also attended a most enjoyable concert at the Portsmouth Grammar School, where pupils from Yrs 7 – 13 showed a huge talent in various forms of modern music. Earlier in the period, I was so proud of our students from Warblington School and South Downs College, who performed at one of the Annual Rock Challenge events in Portsmouth – all the schools produced some really thought-provoking interpretations of their choice of a story – Warblington focussed on the danger to bees, and South Downs on the Berlin Wall. The costumes, scenery, choice of theme, music and choreography was all done by the students, and though they did not go through to the finals this year, I am looking forward to seeing one of the Finals nights next month.

It was not just in the field of music, though, that our young people excel, as I was really pleased that a young student from Park Community School won the 3rd round of the Rotary Young Chef competition, and goes on to the Regional Final next month. It was also good to meet such a sensible group of school representatives at The Youth Conference, so ably organised by our Communities Team. At a presentation of awards to Beaver and Cub Scouts it was lovely to hear the citations of what these young people had done to achieve their awards, with a common theme being how they helped the younger Beavers and Cubs settle into the groups.

We were delighted to host the reception for retailers and small businesses on March 14th, and my thanks are due to the councillors who managed to deliver the invitations, which were well received even if the recipients were not able to attend. The Mayor can play a really important role in engaging with various groups in our community; in this case we could also not only provide a networking opportunity for our economic development officers to talk informally to these small businesses, but also 'sell' them ideas about schemes like 'Breast-feeding Welcome', Dementia Awareness, and FairTrade, which could help give them a slight edge in such a competitive marketplace. It was also a great pleasure to give a member of staff her 25-year service award, which enabled me to find out more about the work she does, and her career path with the council. We really value the loyalty of our officers, who often go way beyond their formal duties in providing service to our residents. I really hope with all the coming changes, the Mayor can continue to be involved in recognising good service. I would like to thank especially our colleagues in Norse South-East who have been really supportive of some of these events, as well as sponsoring the Classic Car Rally next month. It was equally good to support the efforts made by our colleagues in Community First at the recent 'Love Leigh Park' event, which brought lots of people into the Leigh Park Community Centre to find out what was going on, and hopefully contribute more to the future of the Centre.

Another event which gave me great pleasure was to unveil a new information panel about the Billy Line, near the newly restored signal, with County Cllr Andrew Gibson. The path is now looking so good, and to find such beauty within a few minutes' walk from the increasingly busy Havant centre is a great joy, and should attract many people to come to live and work in Havant. It was a pleasure meeting some of the local residents who help to maintain the trail. On my regular monthly 'ambles' we took a small group, including someone who came all the way from Portsmouth to join us, along the Hermitage Stream, again seeing some of the work done by the loyal Friends' group. The final one in the series will be held on April 12th, when we will be visiting Brook Meadow in Emsworth.

This has been the season for AGMs, and we have been able to attend several of these, again recognising the enormous contribution made to our communities by dedicated volunteers. At the Bereavement Counselling AGM, we heard from a young man, whose wife had had a stillbirth, of

the huge support his bereavement counsellor had given him. At the Hayling Island Men's Shed group, it was great to hear that they might be close to having their own shed, but meanwhile have been helping other groups on the Island with clearing ground for planting, noticeboards, etc. I was also privileged to attend the Interfaith Conference hosted jointly by the Muslim community who meet in the Waterlooville Community Centre and Hope not Hate. There was a great feeling for more co-operation to lead to a greater understanding of each other's beliefs, and I was really touched to receive two effusive accolades for my contribution to the speeches.

My final 7 weeks will be really action-packed, with the Havant Music Festival which will also run next year, the Mayor's Annual Classic Vehicle Run, the trip to the battlefields of the Somme (**NOT FUNDED BY THE COUNCIL!!**) with a number of residents joining us, as well as our 2nd son and eldest grandson, the International Celebration of Spring, thank you's to some special people who have helped us or the community, all before I join the 6 other Civic heads in the abseil down the Spinnaker Tower.

Faith Ponsonby

20/03/17