

Mayor's Review

At the end of my Mayoral year I would like to share some thoughts and offer many thanks.

Nationally, this has been a momentous 12 months. I am fairly certain no previous Mayor has, during their year of Office, seen two monarchs and three Prime Ministers! I have no comment of the Prime Ministers but the royal events will long live in the memory.

My year started with the joyous Platinum Jubilee, with the beacon, party in the park, Church service and, who could forget. Jubilopoly! Many thanks to all those who worked so hard to make these events happen and be so successful. It was then with great sadness we lost our queen of 70 years in September. With very unfortunate timing I was away, taking a long-planned holiday in Africa. Nevertheless, even at such a distance, I felt the love and appreciation for all that the late queen had done and felt the sad mood of the nation at the time of the funeral. People I met in Africa, realising I was British, expressed their sympathies. The accession of Charles required civic duties such as the Proclamation and I am very grateful to my Deputy, Cllr Mrs Dodd, for carrying these out so well on my behalf. Indeed, Rosemary has deputised for me on numerous occasions, supported me with her experience and always been ready with advice and support. For all of that, I would like to place on record my grateful thanks.

It was perhaps fitting and symmetrical that my year has ended with the coronation of Charles and Camilla: another happy occasion with a lower-key but nevertheless successful party on Millennium Green.

In terms of the work of the Council, it has also been a busy year. We have had to address many problems and, as we all know, many remain. But I feel and hope that progress is being made although there is still, and will always be, much more to be done. I am encouraged that a dialogue has reopened with Shropshire Council on Wem's needs for regeneration and we need to maintain momentum with this. Intransigent problems such as The White Horse, Morgan Library and traffic issues remain. Final planning decisions for New Street and Edinburgh House are awaited. Despite Permission for Lowe Hill Road there is no sign of a start.

The demands on our finances are ever-increasing whilst costs rise and funding is squeezed.. We face the challenges of supporting the swimming pool, finding a long-term base for our own offices and working with others to seek a replacement for the Sports and Social Club building. As we saw at the Annual Town Meeting, the small grants are essential to keep many groups going.

During my year I have increasingly realised the need for an overall coherent plan and vision for the whole of Wem and I hope to see this continue to progress.

I have been privileged to take part in many civic and social occasions: Remembrance, Civic Ceremony, Honorary Townsman, Carnival, Christmas Lights, Vehicles of Interest to mention just a few and it has been an honour to represent the Council both at these events and further afield.

My biggest disappointment was having to cancel my planned Dinner Dance. It was a stark sign of rising costs, changed attitudes to socialising since Covid and a big reduction in many families' disposable income. Nevertheless, I am pleased to say I have still raised over £2000 for my charities. Many thanks to all who have contributed.

Finally I wish to put on record my thanks to Penny, Sue, Mandy, John and Chris for their ongoing excellent work for the Council and support for me . I have learned a great deal during my year!

Also thanks to all members of the Council for your commitment, courtesy and hard work. Our discussions are always constructive and the strong collaborative commitment to working for Wem is what has made my year so enjoyable. Thank you.