

Of Jane Busuttil Mildenhall High Town Council Mayor

This past year has been different from any other!

During the Covid-19 pandemic I must start by thanking our staff for their patience and going above and beyond by co-ordinating with community groups and members of the public whilst keeping our facilities in good working order and attending to the many council outside tasks in a safe way. In particular, I must congratulate our Town Manager Mark Knight for organising new ways of working to keep everyone safe during the lockdowns; developing methods of home-working where possible and encouraging all councillors to attend our virtual meetings.

Special thanks go to Kirsty Napier and her Response Volunteers group who worked through the Town Council to provide assistance for those shielding to pick up medication and shopping in the initial lockdown.

We must also congratulate Sarah Greatorex from the Market Cross Surgery for her tireless work in setting up and running the Covid vaccination centre in our Jubilee Centre; this has run smoothly, and many compliments have been given. Seven flu clinics were also held. Since February, we are delighted to also host the local Covid testing centre, run by the Army. This helps local workers get a test before going into work and keeps our community safer. I had the pleasure of meeting, and thanking, a volunteer from the litter picking group on our Jubilee Field recently; what an excellent example of keeping busy and helping our community. We continue twice yearly with the planting of town barrels and containers for Mildenhall in Bloom, having taken on the responsibility from the Mildenhall Community Partnership, they certainly brighten up the town!

September last year saw the completion of installation in the playground on Recreation Way of a new piece of equipment, much used. Recently, we have seen the sinking of boreholes to provide more accessible water; one at the Thetford Road cemetery and two at the allotment sites. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Bowman for her hard work resulting in the wonderful Christmas lights display in our town last Christmas; it lifted our spirits and brought a smile to many at such a difficult time of year.

Grants given out in the past year include £500 each to the RBL Poppy Appeal, Abbeycroft Leisure and Mildenhall Social Club plus £200 given to Mildenhall College Academy towards their awards evening. Whilst it has been a difficult year for progressing projects, the Council has spent considerable time in meetings with Suffolk County Council finding a way forward on the replacement of Mallards Bridge, which with a financial contribution from the Town Council, was initially confirmed to be completed in the next few months. Sadly, work has been delayed, as with many projects due to Covid, extra works needing further investigation and now the wait for UKPN to liaise with the project but will mean that the footway through from the Barton Mills side of the River Lark will be restored for all to enjoy as soon as possible this year.

The Council has also managed to get the design for the Cemetery extension on the Thetford Road submitted to the District Planners and we now await final advice on highways matters before we achieve the long-awaited permission to start the works, which will include a car park for those visiting the Cemetery.

Finally, the Town Council have also been investing time in hearing about and giving feedback on the early housing development plans for the land west of Mildenhall. The Council are a statutory consultee for any planning applications and will continue to be engaged and represent residents' views on these proposals, particularly in respect of transport implications.

We plan to showcase ongoing projects later this year when we can meet in person. These include the River Lark project running alongside the Jubilee Field, in conjunction with the River Lark Catchment Partnership and the Environment Agency. Another project for discussion with the town will be the development of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Mayor Jane Busuttil

