

Report of Cllr Jean Wrathall, Town Mayor 2017/2018

It has been an honour to be your Town Mayor over the last twelve months. I was duly elected on Monday 15th May 2017 after taking over from Cllr Pat Maxfield, our first female Mayor.

I am fortunate to be surrounded by eleven very able Independent Councillors from all walks of life (and age groups) who have supported me (and sometimes given me grief) at our many Council Meetings and I would like to thank them all. My able deputy, Cllr David Haigh, has been of invaluable support during my year and a special thank you goes to him.

My first "official" function was Meltham Memories Weekend on 1st & 2nd July. On Saturday I took the parade march past at the Waggon & Horses which acted as central command headquarters. I was duly dressed in 1940's attire as I watched an assortment of army vehicles, cars and troupes from the army, navy and air force and some American GI's all adding to the authenticity of the parade. The sun shone down on a packed village centre and there was plenty of flag waving and cheering.

My Civic Sunday was on 20th August 2017 where the Town Councillors, some civic dignitaries and representatives from various support groups and charities paraded from the Town Hall to Meltham Church accompanied by Meltham Band all under the watchful eye of the parade leader. Following the service a light lunch, prepared by the Foxhole girls, was served in the church hall and was truly delicious. My charities on the day were Shelter and the Forget me Not Trust for which we raised £155.00 each. My thanks go to everyone concerned who helped to make this a very memorable day.

In early September I went to my nephew's wedding in the Forest of Dean and the sciatica which had been niggling away some four month's previously, now seemed to escalate and by the end of September I was in severe pain and unable to work or carry out my duties for the next couple of months.

However, I did manage to attend the Remembrance Sunday Parade and service on 12th November after taking some extra pain relief. The service is always very moving as each fallen soldier from the two world wars plus some from more recent conflicts, are all mentioned by name and remembered. The celebrant was the Rev John Radcliffe after Rev Maureen Read's departure for pastures new.

On Sunday 3rd December came the annual 'Carols in the Park' which was extremely well attended. We sang carols, had a bible reading from the children of all three schools, some Christmas jokes all washed down with a glass of mulled wine (juice for the children) and a mince pie. A great start to the Christmas period.

I had my back operation on 4th December and was out of action again until the end of January. My Deputy, David, duly stepped in and attended some functions for me.

On Friday 26th January 2018 I attended Saddleworth Parish Council's Civic Dinner with my husband, Frank and we had a really fabulous time. We were made so very warmly

welcome and enjoyed a three course meal and entertainment was provided by an 8-piece band from Meltham!

14-17th February – Meltham Stage Company produced Peter Pan and I am proud to say my oldest granddaughter took the lead role in this production. What a really good professional show!

3rd March - I officially opened the new reception area at Meltham Wildlife Centre which is run by Kath Heaney and Cllr Nigel Brook.

28th March – Green Acres Care Home held an Easter Fayre with Easter Bonnet competition which I attended to judge the winner of the Easter Bonnet competition.

23rd April – St George's Day. One of our oldest residents, Arnold Lodge, had his 99th Birthday.

We are very fortunate to have a vibrant and giving community in Meltham with many charitable organisations doing some wonderful work. In particular, Meltham Crossroads, who not only raise large amounts of money for the village but also provide welfare and counselling for those less fortunate than ourselves.

I am very proud and thankful to be a Meltham Resident with its wonderful community spirit and generosity. I have thoroughly enjoyed my year as Mayor of Meltham and I would like to wish the incoming Mayor every success for the future.

Report of David Haigh – Chair of the Properties Administration and Finance Committee 2017/18

The Committee has endeavoured throughout the municipal year to ensure the councils funds are properly gathered and used, the body itself is efficiently run and our properties are maintained and where possible improved, none of this being possible without the hard work of our Town Clerk, Michelle Chard.

In the Budgeting for both this present year and the next financial year we have had to take cognisance of the fact that Kirklees Council, has continued to be under financial pressures from central government causing cut backs in the delivery and quality of services provided in our Township.

We had budgeted to take on board the responsibility for some matters such as making up for reductions in street cleaning, grass cutting and general tidiness in our area; however it has been difficult to get precise information from Kirklees as to the details of cutbacks in our electoral area.

As such at the moment we are using our existing contractors to make good deficiencies reported to us, via our planning committee, but have not been able to do any new tendering exercise as we do not have precise information, to ensure that we can get value for money, and not duplicate Kirklees retained functions, we desperately hope we will have a clearer picture for 2018-19.

We continue to support our Meltham Library financially, and fully fund the CCTV networks in the village especially in the Town Centre; we have recently renewed our contract and secured proper funding provision in our budget for a five year time span in relation to CCTV, knowing how important such safety features are.

In addition, to the above increased costs the Robert Ashton Memorial Park continues to be the main recipient of our Council precept finances and some of our reserves. This Municipal year we had extra costs a result of our tree condition surveyor's report which has led to some felling and remediation related to health and safety matters, with some new planting authorised.

In the park we have done path repairs, fencing and notices for the improved pond area and refreshed the band stand and a number of picnic tables and benches, including some disability provision.

In relation to the play area, a working group has been set up by the council to look at the play provision, which has been limited for a while in the case of the swings, due to Health and Safety concerns. We did see new fencing for the tennis courts finally erected in the early part of the year.

In the new financial year we hope to have a public consultation event in the park with a fun element to find out what local residents want from the park, and how we might use volunteers to supplement our council finances. However as part of our recent proactive planning ahead strategies we are ensuring ring fenced council precept and reserves monies are identified yearly for the parks maintenance and improvement. We continue to fund village organisations with projects via our grants application process, this year the £25,000 has been well spent on various monies granted towards the Scout Huts new central heating boiler and the play courtyard scheme at Meltham Cof E school to name but a few, next year we hope to work with Meltham businesses to encourage a tidy village shopping area.

Your council is aware that more and more village organisations have to be self-reliant and sufficient and our aim is to help financially if we can, but also to help passport groups to expertise and assistance to help you with your important work. The continuing low interest rate has not helped our councils financial reserves, it is difficult to find any banks willing to provide even on long term investment any products much above prevailing bank rate, the committee will continue to watch out for future possibilities which may benefit our local community but give the council a chance to replenish its reserves.

The precept for next year has had to rise to help with the further increases in costs projected, linked to the fact we are doing more as a council to help our village, make up for services that Kirklees can no longer provide and run our own council in an efficient and transparent way, which our future planning is based on. Can I thank all the committee for their hard work in particular my vice chair Paul White and our Clerk Michelle Chard.

Report of Paul White – Chair of the Planning Environment and General Purposes Committee

Firstly, I'd like to thank Councillor Richard Noon for his exemplary chairing of the committee for most of this year. He recently stood down in order to devote more time to his many and various commitments in our Meltham Community. Many residents will be aware of Richard's energy and drive to bring positive change and improvements to Meltham and its residents.

As expected it has been another busy year for the committee, with what feels like a record number of Planning Applications having been considered. Many of these have been from residents and businesses in the Township extending and improving both houses and business premises and we are grateful for how many of the applicants have sought to attractively improve properties. A number of applications we've advised Kirklees Council of our concerns and/or objections and requested that applicants improve their submissions.

This year has seen a number developers commence house building, most notably on Millmoor Road and continue at Helme Lane. We do have sympathy for residents who are being directly affected by the disruption and the anxieties this causes. Many local residents have been angry and exasperated that such developments have not been stopped despite their objections. However, it is worth pointing out that all these sites were allocated as housing or future development sites back in the 1990's by Kirklees Council and so it was unlikely that any would have been refused whatever the scale of the Town's objection. We have requested improvement to many of these schemes, in the main many of these have happened and on the whole the developments are attractive and use quality materials. We can reassure residents that there are no other sites allocated for housing further up either Millmoor Road or Helme Lane. The remainder of the green fields on both these roads are protected under the 'green belt'. Hopefully this will be a reassurance to residents from now on. If any residents are concerned as to which pieces of land are either allocated for development or protected, the Town Council are able to help people with this information.

The whole Town Council has been very concerned about the reduction in services from Kirklees Council, as a result of the reduced funding from Central Government. In particular what impact this has on keeping our Town clean and free from litter. As a consequence, we have started a programme of cleaning up grot spots and responding to any residents request to clean up anywhere in the township by either actively chasing Kirklees Council, if it is their responsibility, or using someone locally to clean and tidy such spots. Residents will find both contact details and a short request form on the Town Council's revamped website. Hopefully many of you will have noticed such improvements such as around the town centre, the steps leading down to Morrisons, at Badger Gate and the Hollow. Please tell us of any other spots you feel need tidying up.

Lastly I'd like to thank my fellow councillors for their continued energy and fortitude and in particular the Town Council's Clerk, Michelle Chard, for her diligence, humour and hard work in what has been a challenging first full year in office.

