

Town Mayor's Report 2019-20 Cllr Kate Buchanan

My year as Town Mayor has been fascinating and stimulating. I have very much enjoyed developing new initiatives with fellow councillors, talking to people and chairing Council meetings. I have attended many events in Meltham and been invited to a number further afield. This report provides highlights of my past year since May 2019:

Ask Meltham

This was launched at the end of May 2019 with the full support of all councillors. Thanks to the Clerk's efficiency and support from Julie McDowell and her team from the Democracy Service at Kirklees Council, we were able to train over 30 volunteers to enable conversations with and submit evidence from over 700 people, including children and young people. The process has been beneficial on many levels: it has encouraged me and my fellow councillors to get out and about in different settings e.g. community groups, cafes, outdoor spaces, businesses and ask people their views on living and working in Meltham; it has enabled the Council to become more responsive to what's important to Meltham's residents; it has created a better working relationship with Kirklees Council. My thanks to Cllr Brian Keighley for analysing and making sense of the data. If you're interested in the details, please go to: <https://howgoodisourplace.org.uk/ask-meltham/>

We had already started implementing many of the recommendations of **Ask Meltham** when the pandemic struck and are looking forward to picking up where we left off as soon as we can do so safely.

The Big Lunch in the Robert Ashton Memorial Park, June 2020

We were looking forward to the Big Lunch in the Park so it was with a great sadness that it has had to be postponed. I'd like to thank the group of volunteers and fellow councillors who put in so much effort to make this a success. We had located all manner of straw bales, marquees and tables, games for all, stalls, ice cream van, state of the art fire engine (from Rosenbauer) and much more to make this an enjoyable event. We look forward to re-scheduling the Big Lunch in the future.

Meltham Fringe: Holmfirth Art Week, July 2020

The planning for this was at an advanced stage when sadly, the Holmfirth Art Week was cancelled. Fifteen artists (including a ceramicist, photographer and jeweller) were planning to exhibit in two venues: Crossroads (the Old Town Hall) and the Carlile Institute. A big thank you to the artists and committed team of volunteers who were supporting this. We aim to be part of Art Week as Meltham Fringe in July 2021.

Meltham Town Hall

In October 2019, we were delighted that MTC was able to purchase the Town Hall under an agreement with property developer, Max Bradley for use by Crossroads and more recently as a hub of the Covid 19 response.

My thanks to Deputy Mayor, Roberta Bampton for her support as well as all my fellow councillors who contribute so much to our team efforts in improving Meltham, Helme and Wilshaw for those who live and work here. My thanks to the Clerk, Michelle Chard for her commitment and persistence.

Planning, Environment and General Purposes Committee Annual Report 2019-20

Chair: Cllr Paul White

For most of this year our committee was 'ticking' along quite nicely getting on with business on behalf of our residents. The sudden change in March as we started coming to terms with the coronavirus pandemic was an anxious time for all of us and has remained one which has created fear and isolation for many of us.

Our work has continued as the Government decided not to stop the planning process in the UK, and as a consequence, planning applications are still being submitted. We decided early on that it was important that we continued to meet (remotely) in order that both your views/objections alongside the Town Council's views were expressed to Kirklees Council. Since then Kirklees Council decided to use executive powers to make decisions without open committees (following Government advice) and this feels like residents are being excluded from the process as only written objections may be made. No doubt much debate and objection to this approach will continue. We've had to learn new skills, like many of you, using Zoom and 'teams' to communicate and hold meetings. Hopefully, we'll return to our usual meetings in the Carlile Institute as soon as possible, where we are always very pleased to have your input.

As I mentioned in last year's report the applications for new housing sites in parts of Meltham like Mill Moor Road and Helme Lane have now stopped. Kirklees Local Plan has no further fields allocated for development. This means that there will be no new sites allocated for housing until the Plan is reviewed in the early 2030s, when the process will start again.

Tackling Grotspots

We have continued with our work to clean up and tackle 'grotspots' and welcome all residents to tell us what and where clean up is required. On the whole we've been able to keep on top of this and many residents have commented, especially through our 'Ask Meltham' initiative last year, that things are better. Our campaign to improve dog fouling has also had mixed success and we aim to roll this out in other parts of Meltham as we come out of lockdown with more posters in the Township. It has been particularly gratifying to see examples of Meltham residents helping in this regard by putting pressure on dog owners to take more care.

We do consider a wider number of issues and consultations throughout the year and this will continue. We are keen to see how repositioning bus stands might reduce congestion in the town centre and how we might repurpose the bus turning area to improve that part of the centre. We'll be doing this by working with our Ward Councillors.

May I thank my fellow Councillors, for their diligence and invaluable input, and in particular our Town Clerk, Michelle, for her good humour, expert advice and hard work in these challenging times.

Properties, Administration and Finance Committee: Annual Report 2019/2020
Chair - Councillor Roberta Bampton

The maintenance and improvement of the Robert Ashton Memorial Park continues to be the highest expenditure for the Town Council. This year repairs have been made to pathways, fencing and the children's play areas. It had also been intended that this year we would hold an event in the Park at which we would consult our residents and other stakeholders to find out what they want from the Park. However, this and other plans for the Park were put on hold, firstly because of the decision to undertake the Ask Meltham project and secondly by the impact of the Coronavirus. One of the outputs from the Ask Meltham project was that the Town Council decided to commission a park master plan and accompanying consultancy services from Kirklees Council for a wholesale change to the park, adopting a holistic and proactive approach to change rather than a largely reactive one. The formation of a Friends of Robert Ashton Park group had been mooted the previous year and two meetings were held to try and establish a core group of people who were interested in being involved in setting this group up. However, the onset of coronavirus has meant that these plans have had to be put on hold temporarily but it is hoped that we can resume by the end of the summer.

The Town Council continues to support our Meltham Library, thereby providing an essential community resource, and also to support various village organisations through our grants scheme. Our contractor has also been busy around the village clearing up grot spots identified by local people – please do let us know if you see an area which needs attention. You may also have seen several notices on lamp posts intending to encourage people to clean up after their dogs, anecdotal evidence suggests that this has had a beneficial impact but, again, please do let us know if there is an area near you where dog fouling is a problem.

We continue to ring-fence annual amounts for items such as election costs, improvements to the Robert Ashton Memorial Park and the town centre improvement fund. We have also set aside a sum of £10,000 in the next financial year specifically for proposals associated with the Ask Meltham project which we undertook last year and which identified several areas requiring financial investment, and as a result of this, as well as setting funds aside for work to the Park we also set up a shop-front grant scheme for business premises in the town centre conservation area which will result in the enhanced appearance of the town centre.

The precept for next year has increased slightly this year to the equivalent of £48.25 for a Band D property, the lowest annual increase for 5 years, this is a total weekly payment of £0.93. This increase is for several reasons, our commitment to the Ask Meltham project and works devolving from that, increased costs associated with keeping our streets clean, and a major project for the Robert Ashton Memorial Park.

I would like to thank all the committee members and our Town Clerk, Michelle Chard, for their hard work and support.