



Mayors Annual Report for the 2024-25 Municipal Year.

Mayor: Cllr David Haigh

The Council has had a year of consolidation in terms of its systems and processes, facilitating the completion of projects started in the last municipal year with new ones started in the current one.

Much of the details of these will be found in the reports prepared by the chairs of the Finance Administration Properties and General Purposes Committee and the Planning Environment and Amenities Committee.

In my report I will give you an overview and flavour of the main events and occurrences during the council year in relation to the Council's discharge of its functions in the Township.

Meltham has many community and self-help groups, statutory health, welfare, and school provision also serve it. In relation to the Kirklees Borough Council, we have seen declines in service provision due to financial issues, where we as a Council have done our best to provide cover with our funding of some youth service provision, general footpath and other tidying works.

In addition, your Council has financially supported several organisations and events from our grants funding and town centre enhancement funding.

Wilshaw Village Hall has had £9,000 towards renovation works, the last £4,500 being paid at the start of the Council's fiscal year.

The Friends of Robert Ashton Memorial Park have been granted £1,000 towards the cost of the annual Picnic in the Park event held every year in August.

Crossroads Charity Shop received £2,500 towards the renovation of the shop frontage from our grant scheme.

Meltham Churches Together was given £350 from the small grants scheme for the annual Carols in the Park event.

Meltham Scarecrow Festival received £800 towards the annual event which this year is combined with the 80th anniversary of the VE day celebrations funded from our small grants scheme.

Meltham C of E School was granted £1,000 towards costs associated with providing a new outside climbing frame from our small grants scheme.

We mark outstanding achievements in our community by awarding the Pride of Meltham Awards annually at our Civic Reception and Dinner. This year now retired but a former long standing Meltham and Kirklees Councillor, local runner and sports promoter Terry Lyons together with the long serving Holmfirth Road primary school crossing attendant Michelle Moran were presented with their commemorative plaques.

In the rest of my report, I will highlight key areas and developments.

The Robert Ashton Memorial Park play area improvements were finally completed by early summer in 2024 despite the terrible weather in the spring making working conditions difficult. There was a meeting in February this year for the final sign off, of the work and aside from a few minor groundwork tasks will be fully completed this spring. My visit during the half term school holidays showed plenty of activity and that the park was being well used.

Staying on the theme of the park, much of the costs were planned to be covered by section 106 monies from payments made by developers

once their houses had been constructed. Despite a great deal of time having been given to the chasing of the receipt of the funds by our Meltham Town councillors and officers we still have only received £57,987 of the £215,608 promised by the developers.

Therefore, the Council had to use its reserves to cover the park play area refurbishment costs, however careful budgeting for next year, a sensible reserves rebuild policy and monies from the recent sale of the old Town Hall as part of the leaseholder's option to buy, have all eased the position somewhat.

The Council's interest in purchasing the old lodge cottage at 142 Huddersfield Road has progressed throughout the year with ongoing discussions with possible tenants for a community building to be developed on the site. The architects draft plans have been submitted for pre-planning advice and at the time of writing we are in discussions with Kirklees Council regarding the heritage status of the site. Once these hurdles are completed, we will continue with our discussions on the financial viability of the project based on detailed work being carried out by our Councils in house consultant.

We have initiated contact with the trust administered by Kirklees that are responsible for the Broadlands Recreation Ground throughout this year, unfortunately at the time of writing the trust want to continue to fully manage the site themselves.

The Council have recently met with our local vicar Reverend John Dracup where a pledge was made to assist where possible in facilitating the change from church to possible community usage of the surplus Church of England buildings at Meltham Mills and Helme, as we want to do all we can to help keep the buildings, and passport information to any groups who may be interested and help with finding sources of possible funding for interested parties, this work is ongoing.

We have seen the youth service provision funded by the Council increase and help to provide weekly discussion sessions at Honley

High School, in Meltham with Monday sessions at the Crossroads Centre and detached youth workers meeting teenagers around the town for example at Broadlands Recreational Ground. A larger meeting room for the Meltham drop in sessions is now required with plans in motion to cope with the increase numbers. At our February Council meeting, some of the young people that have accessed this service, discussed their needs gave feedback of the provision provided.

Meltham experienced severe winter weather conditions, and due to insufficient gritting and snow clearance, the Clerk and I contacted Kirklees Council to address concerns regarding the effectiveness of the authority's winter weather plan. In the town many volunteers cleared town centre footpaths and made safe access to community buildings. This Council recommend that residents, especially on roads not on the Kirklees gritting plan, volunteer to be snow wardens where Kirklees Council will provide grit and shovels.

We have built a good relationship with the police and P.C.O. officers visit our Council meetings whenever they can - this was a result of antisocial motor bike riding in the Broadlands Recreation Ground and estates nearby.

The Council are not resting on our laurels, as I write the final drafting is being done on the emerging themes from the second Ask Meltham project, which last time helped us find the main concerns of the township and led to the work in the park, youth provision and other initiatives.

We continue to lobby Kirklees and wherever relevant the police and present issues discussed at our planning and amenities committee such as the car parking charges, the street scene, dog fouling, poor refuse collection service, roads and potholes, our clerk is very proactive in informing the authority around issues raised by residents.

My wife and I have enjoyed meeting our townsfolk at the Civic Service and many other village events, the remembrance days service being the most poignant, and representing our town at other Kirklees, neighbouring town and parish council events, charity and crafting occasions.

I have lived in this area all my life and was especially proud to cut the ribbon at the official opening of the Helme Vineyard on land, close to agricultural land farmed by my grandfather and uncles in the past. Penultimately a big thank you to all the eleven council colleagues, we are all independent, having no political labels our aim is to do the best for our community in our lovely Pennine town, you have been a hardworking and committed group.

Lastly an appreciation of our two officials Mark Brook our Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, who has served our Council with diligence and care and continues to study to further his knowledge in municipal law and finance and Tara Ball, who has helped inform us on the financing and realities of planning projects for the town, thank you both for your excellent service.

David Haigh J.P. Town Mayor