

It has been an incredibly eventful year that has seen the Council's civic prominence grow and the public profile of our town go from strength to strength. Such things can only be achieved by team effort, by people going the extra mile and working together for a common collective purpose. So tonight it is important for me to highlight some of these achievements and express thanks for all the support and hard work that so many have contributed in order to make this such a successful year.

Firstly my thanks goes to our staff team who are second to none. Their enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism has been fundamental in what the Council has been able to achieve this year. In May 2019 the Council was recognised as holding a General Power of Competence which raised both its status, autonomy and authority. Grateful thanks to Jeremy whose success in gaining the Town Clerks CILCA qualification provided us with the critical component in gaining this elevated status. Emma joined us in the summer as Assistant Town Clerk and instantly we had a dream team. Her diplomacy, 'nothing is too much' approach and the vast store of transferable skills that she brings to all the tasks thrown at her, is truly remarkable. Our groundsman Steve completes this staff team. Not only does Steve keep the town neat and tidy but he deals with a whole host of other tasks too numerous to mention but moving the SIDS, keeping all notice boards up to date, keeping an eye on all council property, undertaking training and being the friendly eye and ears of the town names but a few.

One of the things I feel we should be proud of is the extent to which we have developed and improved how the Council engages with residents and the wider community. Residents can pop in or telephone to speak to a member of staff any day of the week and will always get a friendly and prompt response. Over this year we have built a new website, and have a meaningful presence on social media. The style, frequency and content of the Council newsletters has improved and the number of positive and informative articles appearing in the local press has increased dramatically. In addition the Bungay profile has been given greater prominence by frequent interviews on Radio Suffolk.

At the beginning of this year I felt it was important to engage more meaningfully with the many voluntary groups, organisations and providers. Whilst this is still very much work in progress we have worked hard to establish effective working relationships with our local Police force, and begun to build stronger links with Bungay High School, Bungay Primary School, the four new providers of All Hallows care services, our East Suffolk Council Community Officer and Access Community Trust. In addition the Council welcomed the appointment of our very own Deputy Lieutenant Joanna Spicer who is now our permanent representative for Bungay. Her guidance, advice and friendship this year has been greatly appreciated and I am very pleased that she can be with us this evening.

Another aspect of community engagement was to work more in partnership with residents. The Community Litterpick started by Cllr. Lizzie Samkin last year was a good example of how councillors and residents could share in the responsibility of, and take pride in, caring for their environment. During this year it has gone from strength to strength, and up until lockdown, was happening on a regular basis - a great way for all age groups to share a couple of hours together on a Sunday morning. In a similar vein the mindless vandalism of the Skatepark earlier in the year has resulted in a hugely positive response from members of the community coming together with remarkable skills sets, enthusiasm and the expertise needed

to design and revitalise this much valued amenity. Recognising that Bungay could do more for its young people and to address the problem of ASB, residents, the Council and Access Community Trust have come together to source funding and design a youth project that will provide a hub and support for older teenagers that has only been temporarily stalled by the current lockdown.

The town's ability to adapt, problem solve and maintain a positive outlook was exemplified by the VE 75 Team. Again a group coming together made up of Councillors, local organisations and individuals who had planned a great 3 day programme of events to celebrate Victory in Europe, only to have to cancel everything as a result of the pandemic. Not to be daunted by a global crisis their ingenuity gave the town a virtual opportunity to toast the veterans and enjoy socially-distanced collective street celebrations that were reported on Radio Suffolk.

It is that same resilience and enterprise, when faced with a major event, which meant Bungay was one of the first towns to quickly establish a co-ordinated team of volunteers to support vulnerable residents during the current crisis. The BECS team are a truly remarkable group of people whose generosity of spirit, kindness and selflessness is a true indication of what is great about the people of this town and I thank them wholeheartedly. They are already forward planning for the longer term taking into account that the coronavirus will continue to be a threat to communities until such times that there is a vaccine. So we have face coverings being manufactured on an industrial scale and local maps encouraging people to rediscover footpaths and green spaces close to home. For the long term this group are preparing for the wider and more permanent needs of our 'greater than average' number of older residents. Recognising the needs of this section of the community has led to steps already being taken to work in partnership with the district council and other voluntary sector groups to ensure a sustainable and funded scheme to support independent living and reduce isolation and loneliness for single householders.

So apart from this what else have we been doing this year?

- We have installed a CCTV system with plans in place for rolling it out to cover a greater area of the town.
- We have acquired the freehold of Broad Street so that Bungay, like many Suffolk market towns has its own centrally sited historic town hall
- We have also acquired a number of other assets such as the toilet blocks, play areas and green spaces that put the local community in control of its own amenities and the ability to maintain them to a high standard
- We are close to installing a 24 hour town centre ATM in the Town Hall to counter the loss of all banking facilities and the potential risk of losing our post office
- Speed Indicator Devices (SIDS) are now very much part of the strategy to reduce traffic speed and gather evidence of vehicle flow through the town
- The council has established an Annual Civic Celebration and Awards event and introduced awards recognising Community/voluntary groups for the first time.
- By liaising with Table Tennis England and SCC the community has benefited from the gift of 4 outdoor table tennis tables
- Our bid to ESC Community Partnerships was successful, providing us with funding this year to restore the old cemetery as a quiet green natural bio diverse environment. It has also secured our place at the table steering how future funding of £25,000 per

annum shared with Halesworth and Beccles can be targeted for the benefit of Bungay residents.

To conclude I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their support and hard work in all that has been achieved this year. Some of you, and you will know who you are, have shown great commitment to your role and responsibility as a town councillors. One or two I need to mention by name: Firstly in memory of Simon Woods who was a truly dedicated and valued long standing member of the Council and whose passing last August was a great shock and loss to our team. I must also thank John for taking such an effective lead on behalf of the Council in securing the best deal for the Town Hall and other assets. I know that few things excite him more than charts, spreadsheets, graphs and tables armed with these he makes for a formidable negotiator. Last but by no means least, my special thanks goes to Bob our new Town Mayor who as deputy has been a tremendous support throughout my year in office. At every turn Bob has been there to share what at times, was quite a heavy civic diary, to talk over ideas and be a sounding board. His practical feet-on-the-ground approach coupled with a sense humour has been greatly appreciated. He is a hard worker with a sound knowledge of the town and its history which has been and will continue to be invaluable in the year ahead and I know he will be a dedicated and committed leader of the Council. And so in stepping down I would like to thank you all for your support and drive and energy in making this a year to remember.

Sue Collins
21st May 2020