

Horwich Town Council Annual Report 2020/2021

On 23 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced the first national lockdown in response to the worsening Covid-19 crisis. This was followed by tiered restrictions and two further periods of lockdown, with a step-by-step lockdown road map announced on 22 February 2021. 21 June 2021 has been earmarked for when all restrictions on social contact can finally be lifted following the success of the nationwide vaccination programme and a downward trend in infection rates and hospitalisations. However, it is recognised that the social and economic effects of the pandemic will continue to be felt in local communities for a long time.

In response to legislation for local authorities that came into effect in April 2020, the Council has and continues to hold meetings remotely via Zoom, which also allowed members of the public to attend meetings. This has allowed the Council to continue with its role providing add-on services and facilities to the community of Horwich, having allocated funds in the budget for environmental initiatives such as spring and summer planting of the town centre's 24 flower troughs, additional winter gritting for some of the hillier parts of the town and provision of free dog waste bags. Council has consulted throughout the year with the unitary authority, Bolton Council, on a wide range of matters of importance to the parish such as major planning issues.

Unfortunately, due to lockdown restrictions projects planned for 2020 – 2021 such as the Youth Council, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Green Lane Playing Fields have had to be delayed.



The Council's website www.horwich.gov.uk continues to provide useful information about the council and the community. In addition, the council has its own Facebook page and Twitter account, along with a quarterly newsletter available digitally.



Council has continued to award grant funding to various local voluntary and community groups during the past year, recognising the impact of Covid-19 on these organisations whose plans have been disrupted, events cancelled and income reduced due to lack of fundraising activities. Council

also asked the public for nominations for 'Community Champions' to recognise the efforts of individuals in Horwich who went above and beyond to help the community during lockdown and were presented with a certificate of appreciation from the Town Mayor.

Due to lockdown restrictions the Community Centre was closed to the public for most of 2020 and into 2021 but continued to serve as a collection and drop-off point for donations for Urban Outreach's Grub Tub food bank. As restrictions are eased the Centre looks forward to welcoming back its regular groups as well as starting up some new community-based initiatives.

In the interests of public safety due to the worsening Covid-19 situation, Council had to cancel the annual Lighting of the Civic Christmas Tree Service which traditionally marks the start of the festive season in the town. However, the Christmas Tree at the Crown Roundabout and the Christmas lighting scheme in the town centre were lit up over the festive period.

Also, in response to advice from national and local government on social distancing restrictions, the Council and the Royal British Legion made the decision to cancel the Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service. A short service was held at the Cenotaph with individual wreath laying taking place over Remembrance weekend. Working with Chorley Council and the Royal British Legion, the Town Council partly



funded the illumination of Rivington Pike with a red poppy on three sides on the evening of Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day as a special commemoration to the fallen.



In response to new regulations for local authorities, Councillor Gordon Stone kindly agreed to continue as Chair of the Council and Town Mayor for the civic year 2020 – 2021. Although there have been very few mayoral invitations, Councillor Stone managed to carry out socially distanced presentations to the Horwich Community Champions at the end of 2020 and asked that Council should decide on the allocation of the mayor's annual charity allowance for 2020 – 2021 to local good causes.

Sadly, in October 2020 Councillor Ken Denton passed away, having served as a Town Councillor for Lever Park Ward from 2003 – 2011 and 2013 – 2020 as well as being Town Mayor in 2007 – 2008 and 2015 – 2016. Ken had been a member of the Royal British Legion for many years and was closely involved with the running of Horwich Community Centre. He was dedicated, generous and honest and will be missed by councillors past and present as well as the council's staff.

In line with advice, staff have worked from home whenever possible and continue to work with councillors to develop the role of the council and maintain high standards of professionalism in the council's activities with staff training ongoing, and with all council members encouraged to take up training opportunities offered by LALC on the role of councillors and council procedures. The external auditors found no matters for concern for the financial year 2019/2020 and internal auditors report that they are satisfied that financial controls and systems are effective. The annual risk assessment has been undertaken, the internal system for financial control has been reviewed and the council's policies continue to be reviewed and updated.

The role of a town councillor still remains completely voluntary; members do not receive any payment or claim any expenses. While facing new challenges and implementing new initiatives, Council continues to build on foundations already in place, keeping the best of tradition while continuing to contribute to the ongoing success of the modern community which is Horwich.

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, we have found ourselves in unprecedented and challenging times over the last twelve months and our thoughts are for the health and wellbeing of the residents of our own and all other communities.

Councillor G. Stone
Town Mayor 2020/2021

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Individual Councillors' contact details can be found in the Council's newsletter or on
the councillors/officers' page of our website www.horwich.gov.uk

