

Horwich Town Council Annual Report 2019/2020



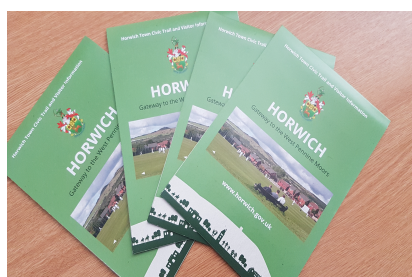
The council's budget for the financial year 2019/2020 continued to provide considerable financial support for many local organisations who have applied for grants to help to pay for a wide range of activities throughout the year. As well as a variety of smaller groups, Horwich Carnival, Horwich Heritage, Horwich Music Festival and Horwich Festival of Racing have also continued to

benefit from generous financial assistance from the Town Council.

Horwich Community Centre and Horwich Heritage Centre continued to thrive with the council's support, with the Heritage Centre continuing to attract many visitors with its varied programme of exhibitions and events. The Community Centre continued with initiatives to raise its profile in the wider community as well as providing a variety of facilities and activities for the people of Horwich. Funded jointly by the Town



Council and the Centre's own reserves, including the refurbished Saddlery, it is available for full community use. The original part of the building has been redecorated with new windows, front entrance and fire doors installed, providing fresh, updated surroundings for all Centre users. The Centre continues to serve as a collection and drop-off point for donations for Urban Outreach's Grub Tub food bank as well as the Bolton Lions Christmas Toy Appeal and Operation Christmas Child. The Centre also worked with the Red Box project, aiming to end period poverty.



The council's website www.horwich.gov.uk continued to provide useful information about the council and the community. In addition, the council has its own Facebook page and Twitter account. The council's quarterly newsletter continues to be well received and is available from Horwich Community Centre. As a departure from the town

guide normally published every two years, in 2019 we produced a new civic trail map and visitor information leaflet.

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 planning issues. With the council's support, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is on track to consult with the local community to produce a Neighbourhood Plan that will enable the sustainable growth of the town while meeting the demands of the Local Allocation Plan for housing.

While keeping costs to a minimum the council has continued with its role providing add-on services and facilities to the community of Horwich. It allocated funds 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, provision of free dog waste bags at the Community Centre and the employment of a part-time street cleaner to address the concerns of local businesses and public about litter and other environmental issues in the town centre.



The Lighting of the Civic Christmas Tree Service continued to mark the start of the festive season in the town and was well attended by all ages with the welcome involvement of Horwich Rotary Club, the choir from Beacon Primary School and the band from Rivington and Blackrod High School. The council continued to fund the cost of the Christmas lighting scheme in the town centre.

The Annual Remembrance Parade and Service flourished due to the promotional efforts of the council who send out invitations and provide the band, with the organisation and support of the Royal British Legion in Horwich. Each year sees the increasing attendance of local groups and organisations as well as the general public. The annual Poppy Appeal was well supported and the streets of Horwich were once again decorated with lamp post poppies generously sponsored by local businesses, organisations and members of the public as well as the addition of soldiers' silhouettes at various locations.



The Town Mayor has had a busy year, performing a wide variety of civic duties, with the support of the Town Mayoress, assisted by the Deputy Town Mayor, supporting several good causes including Bolton Mountain Rescue, Guide Dogs for the Blind and AFC Masters football club. Staff continue to work with councillors to develop the role of the council and maintain high standards of professionalism in the council's activities as the council's role expands. The Deputy Town Clerk achieved the CiLCA accreditation in 2019 and staff training is ongoing, 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 2018/2019 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 remains completely voluntary; members do not receive any payment or claim any expenses. 2019 was an election year with a new council taking office. While facing new challenges and implementing new initiatives, the new council has an opportunity 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.

At the time of writing this report, due the coronavirus outbreak, the council has followed official guidance and cancelled all meetings and closed its community centre and office, with staff working remotely from home wherever possible. We find ourselves in unprecedented and challenging times and our thoughts are for the health and wellbeing of the residents of our own and all other communities.

Councillor G. Stone
Town Mayor 2019/2020

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