

2022-2023

Horwich Town Council Annual Report



The Council is made up of 14 Councillors representing 6 wards.

During the Civic year, May 2022 to May 2023, Council has continued with its role providing add-on services and facilities to the community of Horwich, having allocated funds in the budget for initiatives such as spring and summer planting of the town centre 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. This year, the Council has made recommendations on 117 planning applications.

The Council welcomes public participation to the meetings which has led to representatives attending to provide the residents and members with updates and information such as United Utilities aims to devise a strategy for the ongoing maintenance and future improvement and Professor Paul Salveson from South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership service who aimed to provide an integrated public transport link from Bolton/Horwich to Rivington Country Park, working with a local bus operator to run a regular Sunday service between May and October 2022. Its benefits were providing a reliable and affordable bus service between Horwich Parkway and Rivington Country Park and offered a greener alternative to travelling by car. This initiative was supported by a number of organisations including the Council. The bus has been a great success!

Highlights of 2022 – 2023

Both the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk attained their FiLCA qualification

Continued to fund youth provision during school half terms which included a skate ramp.

Provided outreach funding to help alleviate and tackle anti-social behaviour

Worked towards Foundation status of the Local Council Award Scheme (deadline May 4th for submission)

Increased the Town Councils social media presence

Set up a new Youth Civic Award initiative

Administered the community grants scheme to help support and develop local organisations

Installation of access gates at the Green Lane Fields along with the wildflowers in full bloom

The Community Centre employs 5 members of staff and continues to provide a community space for all groups. It boasts an elderly lunch club, free seated exercise for rehabilitation purposes, a drop-in toddler group, a warm space with food included and Citizens Advice drop-in service to help give free advice and point residents in the right direction.

A Year of the Council

April was a busy time of year for the clerks having to master the accounts in preparation for end of year and getting paper work reading for the external audit. The spring planting on the high streets had come out in full bloom.

In **May**, Councillor Steven Chadwick was appointed Chair of the Council and Town Mayor for the civic year 2022-2023. His chosen charities for the Mayoral year were Rivington Heritage Trust, the Anderton Centre, North West Air Ambulance Service, Horwich RMI Cricket Club, 1471 Horwich Air cadets and Eagley Band. Councillor Sue Denton was appointed as the Town Mayoress.

The Council also put in a bid to the Secretary of Transport to be the hub of the Great British Rail headquarters but unfortunately was unsuccessful in being shortlisted.

Council fulfilled its statutory duty to complete its Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) which includes the findings of the Internal Auditor together with Governance and Financial Statements. The AGAR is submitted to the independent external auditor appointed by the Audit Commission for examination.

In **June**, the Town Council provided funding for community groups and projects in the town. The Council has adopted a set of criteria which successful applications must meet and aims to support sustainable local projects that improve the quality of life for the residents of Horwich. Groups that were in receipt of a grant were, St Catherine's CE Church, Horwich Heritage Society, New Chapel Reformed Church and SHAPE Lancashire Community Interest.

Horwich buzzed for the Queens Platinum Jubilee which saw volunteers, performers, tasty food and drink vendors, host venues and emergency services come together to make a spectacular 3-day weekend event. This was a free celebration which attracted a large number of visitors to the RMI Cricket Club, St Mary's Football Club and Cedar Avenue Village Green.

To make the event a memorable occasion, the Council had commemorative mugs produced with the crest on.

September was a sombre month across not only the nation but the world. Queen Elizabeth II, the UK's longest-serving monarch passed away after reigning for 70 years. The Council sent its condolences to Buckingham Palace,

The Town Mayor of Horwich Councillor Steven Chadwick read the Proclamation of the new King, on the steps of the Public Hall, Lee Lane, following national, regional, county and borough proclamations. Following the announcement and declaration of God save the King, the National Anthem was then sung, followed by three cheers for his Majesty, which was in line with similar ceremonies across the UK and Commonwealth.

The Council recognised the respective achievements from individuals from the Horwich RMI Harriers in the World Under 20 Athletics Championships and Commonwealth Games. Well done!

In **October**, at the meeting of the Grants to Voluntary Sub-Committee, members approved the following grants for assistance to: The Bridge Church, Horwich Public Hall Vets Bowling

Club, The Wright Place Luncheon Club, Bolton Mountain Rescue Team, Horwich National Spiritualist Church and Horwich Community Centre.

In **November**, the residents of Horwich turned out in large numbers to remember and pay their respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the two World Wars and conflicts in between and since. There seemed a greater appetite than ever to demonstrate that, "We Will Remember Them". This was organised by the Council with assistance from The Royal British Legion who commemorated the fallen with poppy's lining the town.

The finalists were announced for the Mayor's Christmas Card competition with the winners being invited to switch on the Civic Christmas tree lights and a chance to watch their designs come to life on cards which were sold to raise money for the Mayors' chosen charities.

The Council supported the Horwich Community Centre with a start-up grant to offer a Warm Space every Wednesday from 9.30am to 3.30pm. Soup, toast and hot drinks were available for free, including newspapers, board games and jigsaws to keep attendants busy.

With the rise in the cost of living, including heating bills and following a suggestion from the Horwich Town Clerk Carol Hutchinson and the Deputy Town Clerk Chloe Morris who are based at the Centre, Council staff started work during the summer on the refurbishment of an empty room. The project was supervised by the Centre Manager Lisa Morris who also did much of the re-decorating along with caretaker Chris Pilling and the result is a warm, cosy, welcoming space for everybody to enjoy on a Wednesday when the temperature dropped. It hopes to return again this winter.

December saw people from across the community brave the crisp wintery weather including the Mayor and dignitaries at the annual lighting of the Civic Christmas Tree at the Crown roundabout. The evening wasn't short of events with the Christmas card winners jointly turning on the lights with the festive 'Big Switch', a new addition of the reindeer family taking seasonal residency at the tree, the community enjoyed a great line up of Christmas songs played by the Rivington and Blackrod High School band despite there being no road closure in place however this soon forgotten about once Santa visited on the Rotary of Horwich Sleigh. A joyous time was had by all.

At the Finance and General Purposes meeting, the Council approved the draft budget for 2023 – 2024 with the precept figure of £225,402. A Band A property will pay £19.65 with a Band D property paying £29.48 per year which would allow the Council to continue providing additional services and facilities to the residents of Horwich. These include the Horwich Community Centre, a base for local voluntary and community groups as well as supporting the Heritage Centre next door. The Council provides sponsorship for Festival of Racing. Its grants to voluntary groups scheme support organisations which provide services and activities for all ages, including sports clubs, schools, churches and many more. The budget will allow continued support for Remembrance Sunday and pay for the cost of the Christmas Lighting scheme and will ensure the continued planting of the roadside flower troughs. Funds have also been set aside to look at a project for the future of Green Spaces. Council will continue to encourage civic pride through its civic award and civic plaque scheme and its production of a town centre civic trail. The precept will also allow for a 'Festival of Horwich' event which the Council hopes to become a successful annual celebration including all residents and businesses of Horwich.

The Council formally agreed to the Civility and Respect Pledge which is a national initiative to start a culture change for the local council sector. The Council recognised that bullying and harassment can have a serious impact on those involved. Signing up would

demonstrate that it is committed to treating councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect.

Horwich Community Centre was in receipt of £1000 from the Council for the provision of chair-based exercises for the elderly and people undergoing rehabilitation. These have proven to be very popular with a large number of regular attendants from the local community

The Council-supported Community Centre closed its big red doors to allow the staff a much-deserved break over the Christmas period.

In **January**, Members received a visit from Sue Johnson, Chief Executive Office of Bolton Council to discuss how Principal and local councils should improve the partnership to strengthen local decision-making, improve engagement with residents and to enhance and devolve services at the lowest appropriate level.

In **February**, at the Civic Awards and Civic Signs Sub-Committee, civic medals were awarded to Peter Schofield for his dedicated voluntary service to Horwich RMI Harriers, Horwich RMI and Good News for Romania and to Paul Cunningham for his dedicated voluntary services to the scouting movement in Horwich. A civic plaque is due to be installed on the Rivington Grill with the wording 'Former site of the Black Bull Public House. A stagecoach inn circa 1750 and centre of local administration for the original village of Horwich 1800 – 1850.

The Council also resolved to approve the planting of three trees at Ridgmont Park, to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, the Coronation of King Charles III and 150 years of local government in Horwich.

March marked the end of the Councils financial year with the Clerks reconciling the accounts in preparation for the intense end of year internal and external audit to be carried out.

On the 17th, Oak trees to signify and commemorate the Platinum Jubilee of our Late Queen Elizabeth II, the Coronation of King Charles III and 150 years of Local Government in Horwich were planted. Assisting with the planting of the oak trees at Ridgmont Park were Town Mayor of Horwich Cllr Steven Chadwick, Flt Lt Steve Nash RAFAC, 1471 (Horwich) Squadron Air Training Corps and Stuart Whittle on behalf of Horwich Heritage. Commemorative signage is due to be installed detailing the information behind the planting of the trees. The Town Mayor will distribute Coronation wildflower seed packets and commemorative bookmarks to local primary schools in celebration of the coronation of the new monarch in May.

April will be the final full month to some of the Councillors currently representing Horwich Town Council. Just like that, four years of office is up! Good luck to those whose are standing again with a farewell and thank you to those who aren't standing but have made this council memorable.

The role of a town councillor is completely voluntary and does not receive any payment or claim any expenses. All the Council seats are up for election this May. Residents will have the chance to vote for the candidates who best represent their views and who will do their best for the community of Horwich. ID will need to be provided in order to be able to vote.

Chair of Horwich Town Council 2022 – 2023, Councillor Steven Chadwick

