

Mayor's Report January 2024

Much of my time over the last two months has been spent in churches. It began with celebrating the centenary of Our Lady of Lourdes with Bishop Richard, Arundel and Brighton diocesan bishop.

December was of course carols month. Our Christmas Carols in the High Street was a great success; a huge thanks to Jo Cork for her hard work in organising the event which was compared by Town Crier, Christian Ashdown. The Chamber of Commerce, who contributed to the mulled wine and mince pies, helped to raise over £700 for the Mayor's charities.

On a more parochial level I joined the carol services at St Albans where the children from Beacon Hill school enacted the nativity story accompanying the ten lessons read from representatives from the local community including your mayor. The most moving service was at Holy Cross Hospital where the neurologically damaged patients played out the nativity story – the devotion and care from the staff is outstanding. I was privileged to start the Boxing Day run around the Punchbowl which had a record number of runners with the winner completing in record time – money raised goes to support the work at Holy Cross.

The Haslemere Musical society also celebrated its centenary in 2023 with a fine concert in December which Penny and I thoroughly enjoyed. We are so fortunate to have such talented musicians and musical societies. And not just instrumental, our local Harmonix choir showed off its talents at a special concert in St Barts – the children from the local schools were great not only memorising the words but also the co-ordinated movements in time to the music. This musical talent was also apparent at the Christmas Celebration at St Christopher's Church in aid of the Hunter Centre – the harpist, in her early teens, was a joy to listen to. Music was also live at the Rotary dinner where Sarah Prescott of Harmonix sang to the diners before Ken Griffiths presented cheques totalling £7,000 to two charities.

Christmas continued to be the focus through December where I was privileged to open the Charities Fair in Haslemere hall, the Gift Bank at St Albans Church, the Moorlands Lodge Faire and the Undershaw's Fayre where I could not resist the snowmen made by the children from socks; "opening" is a bit of a loose description as they all just started spontaneously as visitors drifted in way before "official" opening time!

The town's Christmas Market was well-attended despite the weather: record number of stalls with stall holders reporting good trade. Our own stall had many visitors and thanks to our officers for making the High-Low game and to fellow councillors for helping to promote the council and the important role we play in our community. As always, Melanie Odell with her team of helpers do a wonderful job setting it up, running it and finally clearing up.

Early in December I had the honour of joining Frieda to celebrate her 100th birthday at Chestnutview Care Home. She was joined by two other birthday girls (one another Frieda) but they were a little short of that magic number. Frieda is a fearsome lady and master Scrabble player. I would certainly like to join her next year with our new mayor if invited.

I attended the AGM of Crossways when I was delighted to hear that Councillor John Robini has been accepted as a trustee. The banking hub with its integrated ATM started operations before Christmas and I was delighted to join our MP Jeremy Hunt in officially opening it for business. Although operated by Post Office services the hub does not offer postal services, but Lisa is working hard on including this service especially as there is now no post office operating in central Haslemere.

At long last the Edge is open after a litany of broken promises. I shall be writing to Waverley BC thanking them for their financial support and their efforts to chivvy Surrey CC into accepting this temporary solution however regrettable their last year decision to withdraw offering the Edge's sports and leisure services for our community.

Finally, there is good news that the Lion Green toilets are nearing completion and should be fully operational before our next council meeting. Well done Lisa for all your hard work dealing with such a contrary supplier.