

Good Evening

Normally The Mayor would be reporting to you at this point but because we are currently in Purdah, restrictions on making speeches which might influence voters before the elections later this week , I am afraid you will have to listen to me.

The Mayor and I haven worked closely together during the past 11 months so I can speak with confidence that the highlights of the year are shared not only by us, but by the entire Council.

So often at meetings the votes of thanks come at the conclusion of the report, but as you are aware I am not always totally conventional and tonight I wish to emphasise the contributions made by our Northam Team in achieving so much in what has been an unprecedented 12 months.

When I say Team, each and every member of our Office staff and our maintenance men have gone over and beyond their normal day to day duties. Elected members have worked cohesively, whilst acquiring new skills in mastering technology to participate fully in all our Council's decision making committees.

Virtual meetings have not impacted on the strength and quality of debate and Zoom meetings have enabled greater numbers of our community to listen in and participate from their own homes.

In fact for those of you who are interested in numerical statistics – our Town Clerk and her team have serviced 113 meetings in the past 12 months, functioning with a staff vacancy until February 21 when are new Deputy Town Clerk joined the Team. Hats off to them, they worked long hours to keep democracy working by our Council and for the Community.

We held our AGM on the 10th June 2020 remotely and elected David Chalmers as our new Mayor and I was elected as his Deputy. Not often can it be said that Northam are trend

setters, but as one of the first councils in Devon to hold these elections we can make this claim to fame as we featured in both local and National press. In the autumn a new councillor was co-opted to represent the Northam ward. We bade farewell to Daniel Bell after his resignation and welcomed Mrs Sam Newman- Mckie.

In 2020 the Pandemic regrettably saw the cancellation of all Civic and social events.

During the first lockdown this Council facilitated the coordination of volunteer groups in Appledore and Westward Ho! to identify vulnerable households who needed support with shopping and prescription collection. Both groups needed very little direction as they came together effectively and swiftly to address the needs of their neighbourhoods. However the Office team manned the helpline number, referred people to appropriate services and drew up and published lists of advice, businesses who could provide deliveries of a wide variety of products and meals. The Council's apprentice volunteered with the NHS delivering prescriptions and Councillor Manley delivered food parcels from Morrisons and other essentials funded by a grant from Government to support the vulnerable.

My thanks go to you all, I am sure that we now have a more caring and inclusive parish which we should strive to maintain.

After the AGM- It was debated to ascertain " What were the Council's priorities?" Councillors were invited to contribute to a Vision statement agreeing proposals for future projects to enhance our community. (this is available on our website)

At this point it became apparent that we needed to recruit a new staff member to fill the vacancy that had been carried since the first lockdown. Eventually having overcome the constraints of face to face meetings our new Deputy Clerk, Guy Langton was appointed and joined the team in March 2021. In the few short weeks that he has been with us he has made a significant impact on our website and continues to develop adding new and useful information. He will also be assuming

responsibility for servicing some of the Council's Committees, Thank you Guy. We also decided to recruit a further maintenance operative to the team who has helped us to continue to achieve an excellent groundworks service.

Most recently, our Apprentice has been appointed as an Admin Assistant and will continue to provide excellent support to us all.

These last 12 months have witnessed the creation of three new committees to address not only our vision statement but to honour our commitment to our constituents to become more open and transparent and to listen to the concerns of our community.

The Climate Change working group was constituted as a full committee of the council with a project plan to deliver significant carbon reduction in our premises, ways of working and to promote carbon reduction in homes and businesses in our town council area. Works are well underway with cycle working groups in partnership with DCC TDC and voluntary groups to establish active travel on new routes connecting our villages to each other and to our neighbouring town of Bideford. Trees have been planted and footpaths have been repaired and maintained to encourage walkers to exercise and explore their neighbourhoods.

The Review Committee have updated and reviewed the Council's Standing Orders (the rule book for Councillors and staff) and have also considered every policy which the council adopts at each AGM – much has remained unaltered but new issues such as Cyber crime and new legislation regarding data protection had to be included. A new Emergency Action Plan has been adopted and the terms of reference for existing and new committees have been drafted for approval of full council.

The Westward Ho! Park committee was established in November after Torridge District Council transferred the asset to Northam. The membership has elected councillors and representation from the friends of Westward Ho! Park and the

Westward Ho! Residents Association. In a relatively short period of time a project plan has been developed and it's delivery is progressing well.

We hope that the repainting of the Park's boundary walls by the terrific team from Northam Town Council has sent a signal to everyone that regeneration has commenced. Next on the agenda is the provision of a completely new children's play area; specialist play contractors have submitted proposals for design which have been considered for the range of equipment, the quality of the products and of course the cost. You can follow the progress of this project by attending the Westward Ho! Park committee meetings and viewing the designs, details of both can be found on the Council's website. Our thanks must be expressed to our volunteer and FOTWHOP (Friends of the Westward Ho! Park- Registered Charity) who have planted trees and shrubs in the newly sculpted flower beds and have also given an extensive makeover of the "Bug Hotel". There has been much speculation within social media sites regarding the future of the Pavilion. At this stage in the project nothing has been determined. A Surveyor's report has been received and Councillors have recently inspected the property which will help to inform decisions which have to be made.

Much more Park News to come in the months ahead we can guarantee.

Our Police advocate and the Mayor raised concerns regarding "Boy racers" with the Police and subsequently a campaign was launched to remove illegally adapted cars from the roads, not one we can claim as our idea, but we did evidence and lend support to the initiative.

The Speedwatch scheme has been initiated in response to the concerns raised by the community. It has suffered delays because of covid constraints but we are assured that this will operate as soon as we are permitted to do so. Volunteers are

always needed and anyone interested should contact the Town Clerk.

Responding to requests by constituents, the Council were asked to explore the potential use of CCTV monitoring in Appledore.

After a restricted joint visit, we were unable to gain the support of the Crime Reduction Team to move this project forward because there was no recorded evidence of crime in the village. We were advised to encourage people to report crime as the cumulative effect will prioritise action by the Police and could support the development of monitoring.

Last summer the Police and Crime Commissioner funded Street Marshalls to help manage the increased numbers of visitors to our resorts. This proved highly successful and this year Northam Council have lobbied for Appledore to be included in the scheme.

Northam Councillors have engaged with the Devon County Highways service and were successful with the repairs to the Heywood roundabout potholes on the Atlantic highway exit and the Buckleigh Road turn off from the A39. However there is still much to complete and we will continue to lobby for urgent resurfacing of the remaining stretch of the A39 between the Heywood roundabout and the Abbotsham and Bideford turn offs.

The Town council has not only considered issues which it can directly fund, but has expressed support or provided responses to National Agendas and proposed legislation. Responses were submitted for the Government White Paper on Planning, support was given to the Inland Water Ways Bill, which would regularise sewage discharge into the Torridge and gave support to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill.

The Council has also endorsed the campaign to ban the sale of cheap polystyrene body boards and Westward Ho!, thanks to the support from its retailers, became the first town to ban their sale.

To conclude, just a few bullet points

Formulation of a Joint working group with Torrridge District Council to seek solutions for Car Parking in Appledore, is making good progress.

Westward Ho! Slipway now provides level access to the beach

1st phase of the Westward Ho! sea defences now completed

Defibrulators installed in all 3 villages funded and maintained by the Council

Contribution from the Burrows Committee for new bridges and the heritage trail, across the burns on the Burrows allowing safe passage for walkers from Appledore to Westward Ho! and animal movement, without anyone getting stuck in ditches!

Grants to local organisations totalling £14k

Donation of £750 to the poppy appeal

I am sure that I may have omitted something of great import so many apologies.

It has been a privilege to be your Deputy Mayor and I am sure I can speak for Councillor Chalmers in saying that he too has found working as your Mayor in these challenging times to be a memorable experience of keeping calm and ensuring that the democratic process continued.