

2018 TOWN MEETING 9 MAY

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, fellow town councillors, those from other authorities, members of staff and, most importantly, members of the public and welcome to the Sleaford Town meeting of 2018..

When I attended this meeting last year as a mere councillor I did not imagine that I would be standing here tonight as your outgoing Mayor, and I wish to thank my colleagues for the trust they put in me when I was elected, and the support they have afforded me through the year.

Russ and I have attended many civic events staged in other towns and districts of Lincolnshire, and local RAF stations. Cllr Anthony Brand, as my deputy, and his wife Harriott have attended others on our behalf and I thank them for representing Sleaford in this valuable way.

We in our turn have held civic and town events where we have welcomed “the chain gang” (Mayors from other towns and Chairs of other authorities). These were the Christingle Service at St Denys Church and the Christmas Tree Festival, Civic Service and Reception at Sleaford Methodist Church. In these situations we can “show off” our lovely town and I know that many people return “for a better look”.

On other occasions people from outside the town come in to share our cultural events. Armed Forces week saw the arrival and welcome to Sleaford of relatives of men who had served on HMS Sheldrake during the war, and the opening of our refurbished skate park drew enthusiasts from far and wide. Concerts by groups such as Sleaford Choral Society and Sleaford Concert Band are a great attraction to people who live outside Sleaford, as are our special markets. This year we tried a “St Denys Day market” in October which was successful and will be repeated. Thanks must go here to our Services Team who turn out with such good grace at weekends to set up markets and car boot sales.

It is a privilege to be invited to “first nights” at NCCD and Carre gallery and to meet the artists and their families. This was especially true of the “Young Designer of the Year” at NCCD which should be coming up again any time soon and is to be recommended.

One of the first events I attended as Mayor was the Lions “picnic in the park” where I met representatives of some local charities that I then went on to

support by fund-raising. Of course I had to “check them out” first so I visited Laffletics on Saturday mornings (sporting fun for youngsters with disabilities), Rainbow Flyers on Sunday afternoons (youth club for those with behavioural issues), Project Linus on Wednesdays (making snuggly quilts to comfort children) and The Junction on Monday evenings (giving food and friendship at the New Life Church). I only went to a couple of sessions, the organisers are there every week – a real commitment to improve the lives of others in Sleaford and surrounding areas.

The way I chose to raise money was to hold monthly coffee mornings and bingo sessions and I am pleased to report that these contributed significantly to the total of £4,000 raised. It couldn't have been done without constant practical assistance from Cllr Adrian Snookes, Cllr Bo Allen, Cllr Ken Fernandes, Cllr Melody Shanahan Kluth and our administration and services team

The aim of holding these regular events was not only to raise money but to bring people into the Town Hall, to show them what an asset we have here, and to give residents a chance to meet up. Organisations who work closely with the Town Council such as Sleaford in Bloom, the Twinning Association and the Civic Trust are already able to use the premises. There are so many deserving charities and community groups within the town and it is hoped that they will feel able to have occasional use of our community room for get-togethers which will benefit many.

This year has been made so enjoyable for me by the smiling faces of our administration team and most of all by Town Clerk Kevin. Nothing is ever too much trouble for them. I also give thanks for the wise words and spiritual support from members of local churches, not least Mr John Parry, Cllr Adrian Snookes and the congregation of my own church, Sleaford Methodists.

Thank you.