Neston Town Council

LOCUM CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

FULL COUNCIL (FC5/63)
24th October 2023

Neston Town Council has remained busy and active during the summer months. The Council's newly established post of Administration Assistant was both advertised and very successfully filled, following a rigorous interview process which was conducted in early September. This objective forms a key element of the Council's HR section of the strategy plan, and as the Town Council's newest appointment this will help to future-proof the organisation with this fluid role, where all areas of the council's staff team will be supported.

Due to the escalation of a Market Trader dispute; I spent a concentrated period of time in July investigating the complaint, gathering evidence and responding to the claimant. An amicable result was reached with finality. Conflict resolution sometimes forms a necessary part of this role.

I facilitated a site-visit meeting at the Town Hall between CW&C and Refugee Assist to discuss suitability of using the basement. As this facility was deemed unsuitable due to recent flooding, their search for a new continues in Neston and surrounding areas. I also met with NCYC's new director – Rachael Furey where we discussed aspirations for Neston and how these ideas could be delivered for the benefit of Neston.

Advertisement and associated work for the Council's current vacancies was conducted after the initial closing date was reached on 27th June. The now four vacancies (3 following the all-out election in May 2023, one following the resignation of Cllr Cragg) have now all been re-advertised through CW&C's democratic services team. No further elections were called and the Council is once again able to co-opt in order to fill these vacancies.

Councillors and I met on 17th July to discuss a recent update regarding Market Town Revisitation, because the Council was asked to assist by providing information for a market query. On 19th July I attended a Teams meeting with CW&C's Rural Localities team to receive an update on the Wirral Way anniversary planning process.

On 31st July, the Community Environment Manager and I hosted a meeting with Mr Ward. A second, follow-up meeting was held on 18th September along with Mr Buckley, to further discuss the recent updates to the Town Council website and its associated community pages. I'm pleased to inform members that this project is now very close to competition and the community section will continue to be overseen and updates by Mr Ward's volunteers.

I have introduced new uniform of Neston Town Council branded polo shirts and sweatshirts for the public-facing Markets Team. This will ensure continuity at the weekly market.

The August edition of Neston Local Magazine printed a correction and apology for the mis-information regarding the story concerning the concrete planters in High Street. Following the Town Council's resolution at Full Council in July 2023 the concrete planters were relocated on 11th September by Cheshire West.

I was in attendance at Neston Civic Hall's open forum event on 31st August, following a site meeting with Cllr Barker, Rachael Furey, Mr Clarke and Cllr Kynaston at the premises the previous week for a full tour.

In August, I attended on online course provided by ChALC on the Local Council Award Scheme. I hope that the Council will soon be in a position to begin the process for the next stage of the Quality Council Awarding process.

I have held various meetings with the Council's Finance Manager and Corporate Support & Facilities Officer to conduct in-depth discussions regarding market costs and finances, both in person and via Zoom. In September, we established a trial format for recording of staff time that is apportioned to Market & Town Hall. It is hoped that this data will be invaluable in reaching a deeper understanding of running costs for next year's end of year financial report. The newly revised job descriptions implemented from April 2023 will also have a bearing on this.

Time has been well-spent studying Neston Town Council's current Market Policy and Terms & Conditions documents; as well as investigating the structures and suggesting ways that the documents can be amalgamated and made more streamline. The Corporate Support & Facilities Officer has been working on these suggested changes. This will be of much benefit to staff and traders alike, establishing a more workable document when the editing process is complete and ready to be presented to members.

I attended an online Cheshire Pensions training session on 27th September. The following day I took part in the "Virtual Lunch Energy Saving Event" hosted by Citizens' Advice Bureau, information from this session is available on the Town Council's website.

Following the unanimously accepted appointment at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 14th September, an induction session for the Council's Administration Assistant was held on 2nd October. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Market & Town Hall Committee were involved to provide a warm welcome to our newest staff member during a team meet and greet opportunity. All of the associated HR and administration work behind the scenes to allow for the appointment has also been completed.

Earlier this month I met with an interested candidate who expressed a keen interest to join the Council through co-option. The Finance Manager and I finalised the Full Council report which is to be presented at this meeting.

Zoë Dean
Locum Chief Officer
Neston Town Council
19th October 2023