



LOCUM CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

FULL COUNCIL MEETING (FC5/67)

18th March 2025

The remaining scaffolding at the side of the Town Hall came down in early March. Ceiling tiles in the Clerk's office have been replaced above a previously problematic area, and the contractors have been regularly monitoring the area to confirm that no additional leaks have occurred following the completed repair. The roller blinds have been reinstalled over the newly installed side windows in the Main Hall.

Neston Town Council officers are still working closely with the roof contractors and the Site Manager in order to facilitate the improvement works with the least disruption as possible to the public and hirers of the building. The maintenance work on the flat roofs is already in progress, at one point it was thought that this work would not be able to take place until after the new financial year so it is very good news that this has been able to progress sooner than originally anticipated. The remaining tasks are the skylights and the broken window pane on the upper floor. Improvement works to the front and side windows of the Town Hall are expected to take place in the new financial year.

Orona serviced the main lift at the rear of the building last week. However, we are still awaiting further updates from Equans and the manufacturing company with regards to the new platform lift which was installed at the entrance of the Town Hall in mid-December, amidst some ongoing issues with access and equipment suitability. This issue is being chased from both sides.

Officers have been experiencing some teething problems with the new photocopier equipment since the installation at the end of January. Fortunately, all scanning software is nearly all back up and running and the required adjustments have been made by the Town Council's IT consultant. There are still instances with the main photocopier disconnecting from the server which our IT consultant is working to fix through rewiring.

The Mayor and I meet regularly to keep up to date with progress and to plan meeting content and reports. We met with both the RFO and the Market & Town Hall Manager on 11/02/25 to analyse the 2023/2024 Market and Town Hall income and expenditure breakdown report before it was received by the M&TH committee. Following January's Full Council meeting the Mayor and I collaborated on the official NTC precept announcement press release. Unlike the previous year, the Town Council has not received any negative feedback about the modest 3.9% council tax rise for 2025/26. All members recognised

that in the current economic climate, residents' purse-strings are under constant pressure.

Committee work for the Finance & Administration Committee was completed in a timely manner for the meeting last month with updates to ICT breakdown reports and detailed updates on delivery plan committee objectives.

We are awaiting receipt of the interim audit report following the auditor's visit in early February, which is slightly later this year due to availability of appointments. The RFO and I met on 04/03/25 to prepare documentation and feedback to submit via the intense checklist supplied by the internal auditor. The Town Council is subject to two interim audits through the year and the specific timeframes for these are not set in stone.

Negotiations with Cheshire West & Chester's Property Services Team are ongoing with relation to the Asset Management Agreement. An in-depth officer update meeting took place at the Town Hall on 03/02/25 with myself, the RFO, and representatives from the property and finance teams at CWaC. We are pushing hard for answers to long-standing queries, both physical and financial. Discussions continue relating to the Town Hall's rateable value, along with other premises it manages, which could see an increase in charges. It is likely that a brand-new lease for the Town Council will be drawn up in order to ensure that all arrangements are current and updated.

I attended a Neurodiversity for Town & Parish Councils online training session on 10th March. The training explored different methods to work effectively with neurodiversity across the sector, including how to work differently and make allowances not only for staff, but for councillors and members of the public that we serve as we all have different, and unique ways of working together and there is not a one-size fits all approach.

Neston Town Council is hosting the CWaC Rural Localities Connections Event on 19th March from 4pm – 5.30pm. This will provide local town and parish councils in our area with the opportunity to discuss priorities and aspirations with Cheshire West and Chester's senior leadership team. We have received a healthy RSVP list for this event from our local councillors and we look forward to hosting this meeting.

The Post Office service has proposed a move from the Upper Community Office back to the van on the Market Square on Tuesdays and Fridays. We will keep councillors and members of the public informed as to when these changes in Post Office arrangements are likely to begin.

Zoë Dean
Locum Chief Officer
Neston Town Council
March 2025