

# NESTON TOWN COUNCIL

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## Annual Report



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**Neston Town Council's Mission Statement:**

***We are helping to create an environmentally sustainable and thriving market town for Neston's residents, businesses and visitors, by fostering a strong community spirit and improving and increasing the range of locally run services.***

# Welcome to Neston Town Council's Annual Report 2024/2025 *Cllr Sion Jones* The Mayor of Neston



I must open my report on the year's activities by expressing my profound thanks to the officers of Neston Town Council, without whom we would find it difficult indeed to carry out our statutory duties and projects that the members of the council wish to complete. I would also like to express my thanks to my fellow councillors for their support and advice throughout the preceding 12 months, without their support and energy we would not have accomplished as much work within the community as we have done. I was thrilled to welcome four new Town Councillors to the council to help take Neston forward during my Civic year. Our new members bring a wealth of experience across the education, agricultural and IT sectors.

Committees have been working diligently on progressing the annual objectives over the past year. We are proud to have delivered a Junior Council, whom I welcomed, along with their parents, to an afternoon tea event at the Town Hall in September 2024 when the initiative was officially launched. The Junior Council had the pleasure of switching on the town's Christmas

lights in November 2024 and judging the best stall at the annual Halloween market. First prize was awarded to Big Nan's Creations for her *Paul Joseph's Adventures* pumpkin. This is a charity set up by Claire in memory of her Grandson, to raise awareness of Neuroblastoma, and support for the charity. It is a huge step forward for Neston in gaining interest and enthusiasm from our younger residents and it is great to see the junior councillors being so readily involved in our town events.

I have had the pleasure of attending many events throughout my Civic year. My first engagement as Mayor was the annual Ladies' Day Walk on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024, followed by the church service. I was thrilled to welcome the Lord Mayor of Chester, Cllr Razia Daniels, to Neston who fully joined festivities and gave a short speech later in the day to those who took part, which was hosted by the Female Society. We were certainly fortunate with the weather that day, enjoying beautiful sunshine throughout.

I met with Local MP Sam Dixon in the autumn to foster strong relations and ensure that the needs of the wider town are still being prioritised following the UK parliamentary constituency boundary changes which came into force last year, affecting Neston, Chester and Ellesmere Port. The Town Council has an excellent working relationship with the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC),





who provide support for local councils as well as offering an array of training sessions for both councillors and staff, which Neston Councillors and Committee chairs regularly attend. We continue to foster good relations with Cheshire West & Chester Council, who are our landlords, as well as with our neighbouring towns and parishes. Neston hosted a very well-attended Rural Localities session, delivered by Cheshire West and Chester Council's Senior Managers in March 2025. I watch with interest as the devolution talks begin and what this might mean for our local area as more services and powers are passed down from central government. Neston Town Council has lobbied for planning applications within the town and ensured that the voices of our residents have been heard.

Despite the general upheaval and installation of scaffolding for close to 6 months surrounding the building, the Town Hall roof is now looking spectacular with a full renovation. These improvement works were carried out by Equans, a contractor of CWaC, as the building owners. The Town Council pays rent to the local authority under an asset management agreement in order to operate the premises and market square. I was very pleased to read that Cheshire West & Chester Council has funded Neston Civic Hall for the coming year, to allow the building to continue operating under NCYC and for essential roof repairs to be arranged.

A particular highlight for me has been the various themed markets we hold at the weekly Friday Market throughout the year. Late July saw me don my Pirate garb and join the Whitchurch pirate at the first Neston Pirate market, where we judged the children's fancy dress competition and handed out treats at the market. As a former market trader myself, I will always hold Neston Market close to my heart and I love seeing the market growing from strength to strength. The annual Christmas Market and Lights Switch-on was held on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Neston Town Council took the lead on the event with much success. The switch on event was a great success and thanks are also due to everyone who worked tirelessly to make it a truly great festive occasion for Neston's residents and visitors alike.

Into the New Year, my first engagement was to open Only Connect at Neston, a new shared community hot desk and meeting space that is open for residents to book space. In March 2025, we hosted the annual Neston Town Council Civic Service at St Mary & St Helen Parish Church, which was attended by civic leaders from North Wales and Chester and community organisations from Neston and the surrounding area. This all helps to forge excellent links for future connections. During April, my wife and I attended the Mayor of Mold's charity dinner dance, this well-attended event hosted 200 guests, raising almost £5,000 for the Mayor of Mold's chosen charities. Later that same week I attended the preview night of the Neston Art Society annual exhibition and had the pleasure of opening the exhibition.

Thank you for your support and attendance at many of these great events over my Civic Year.

*With best wishes for the new Civic year, Cllr Sion Jones -  
Mayor of Neston Town Council*



Neston Ladies' Day 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Annual parade with the Mayor of Chester, Cllr Razia Daniels, Town Councillors and CWaC Councillors



Cllr Sion Jones, pictured with the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Brenda Marple following the Mayoral election in May



# Highlights of the Mayor's Civic Year 2024/2025



The Mayor opened new High Street office location for CJ Founds Associates in February 2025



The Mayor and Mayoress attended the Mayor of Mold's charity dinner, dance & auction on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2025



80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the D-Day Landings— Ringing Out for Peace at a special service at the Church of St Mary & St Helen on 6th June 2024. Pictured with Robert Davis, Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire, & Neston Town Councillors



(Above) The Mayor volunteering following storm damage in January 2025



(Above) Presenting the trophies at the Halloween Market with members of Neston's Junior Council





# Working together for Neston...

## Community & Environment Committee

As usual, the Committee has been kept busy with reviewing and commenting on planning applications throughout the year that often require extra meetings to be added to the annual schedule. Neston Town Council will continue to challenge encroachment onto the greenbelt areas surrounding the town, especially with the new changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. We continue to financially support annual events, as well as groups and organisations that carry out services and offer opportunities and support with the community. This covers youth, theatre, music and art, social and leisure activities, health and wellbeing, and especially those with organised group activities.

We supported the town's first Summer Theatre Arts Festival and a Floral Festival celebrating the history of Neston. We financed support sessions for Ukrainian refugees, which included working on language skills, and were delighted to receive the news that one attendee had secured permanent employment following the course.

The committee has maintained its commitment to invest financially in the council's allotments by installing new standpipes, the introduction of water at the Marshlands Road site and general site maintenance.

We are particularly pleased to have met our objective of the introduction of a Junior Council, with representatives from four local primary schools. Our junior councillors have enjoyed an introduction to the process of the founding of the Town Council, switched on the Christmas lights, and will be involved in future town events. Another objective met was the establishment of a Friends of the Wirral Way volunteer group in recognition of the recent 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Wirral way, facilitated by the Council and supported with a start-up donation.



We engage with community groups through the Neston Looking Better meetings and have a representative on the Steering Group of the Neston & Willaston Community Care Partnership. We also have a rolling programme of replacing the town's noticeboards, the second of which was installed in West Vale in 2024/25.

The Marsh Working Group advises the committee about action we can take in our attempt to combat issues caused by mosquitoes on the reserve. You can read more about how the Town Council supports mosquito monitoring on page 14.

We work to improve the visual appearance of the town through the continued provision and maintenance of hanging baskets, planters and flowerbeds throughout Neston, Little Neston, Ness, West Vale and Parkgate. We also work to improve signage such as the installation of new fingerposts at entrance points to the Way (pictured above).

We look forward to another busy year supporting our wonderful community.

**Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Community & Environment Committee**

*Cllr Brenda Marple*



# Supporting the Community

## Grants & Donations

Neston Town Council prides itself on offering a considerable combined budget for grant and donation support within the community, which is factored into the precept during the budget-setting process. Grant applications are considered twice yearly and must be used to provide benefit to residents living within the Neston Town Council boundary. Grant applications for the main grants programme are considered twice a year. Applications for the small grants programme, and the defibrillator grants programme, are considered at the next scheduled meeting following receipt.

During the 2024/25 financial year, Neston Town Council provided grants and donations totalling **£20,639.40** to support the work of local community organisations.

	GRANT RECIPIENT	PROJECT	GRANT AWARDED
1	Neston Flower Society	65th anniversary exhibition costs	£1,000.00
2	Little Actors Theatre Company	2024-25 season of theatre	£2,500.00
3	Neston Community Youth Centre	Celebration for community heroes	£498.40
4	2375 (Neston) Air Cadets Association	Learning/development equipment	£1,790.00
5	Neston Pirate Samba	Preparing for Christmas event	£500.00
6	Neston & District Art Society	Spring 2025 art exhibition	£496.00
7	Neston Swimming Club	Training young coaches	£1,500.00
8	Neston Pirate Samba	Outreach workshops	£2,000.00
<b>GRANT AWARDS - ANNUAL TOTAL</b>			<b>£10,284.40</b>

### NESTON TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY DONATIONS MADE DURING 2024/2025

	DONATION RECIPIENT	PROJECT	DONATION
1	Neston Village Fair Committee	Neston Village Fair 2024	£1,700.00
2	Neston Female Society	Ladies Day entertainment 2024	£1,500.00
3	Friends of West Vale Park	West Vale Family Fun Day 2024	£1,600.00
4	Neston Music Festival	Neston Music Festival - spring 2025	£1,300.00
5	Neston Library	Summer Reading Challenge 2024	£500.00
6	Parish Church of St Mary & St Helen	Christmas lights for front of building	£2,500.00
7	Neston/Parkgate Friends of Wirral Way	Start up costs - insurance/equipment	£250.00
8	Ukrainian refugee support organisers	Ukrainian refugee support sessions	£555.00
9	Little Actors Theatre Company	Neston Theatre Arts Festival	£450.00
<b>DONATIONS - ANNUAL TOTAL</b>			<b>£10,355.00</b>

In addition, Neston Town Council worked in partnership with a number of local organisations to provide a Christmas lights switch-on event for the town at a combined total cost of £7,247.09.

The Town Council is the lead authority for Remembrance Sunday.





## *The Mayor's Civic Year continued...*



Neston & District Art Society prize award



Neston & District Art Society



The magical moment of the Neston Town Christmas Lights Switch On—Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024



With Little Actors at the Neston Christmas lights Switch on





# Town Hall and Market Square

In 2024/25 the Town Hall exceeded its bookings income target. Over the past year the Town Hall has gained a weekly Samba Band group and other regular slots throughout week day evenings continue to remain full and steady.

We are thrilled with two big improvement projects which were completed in 2024/25—namely the brand-new roof for the Town Hall. This work was funded and programmed by Cheshire West & Chester Council as the building owners. It has been a long 6 months with various scaffolding installations around the building but the great site management team made the process run smoothly by working closely with Town Council officers to minimise disruptions to members of the public and regular hirers. As tenants of the Town Hall since 2014, Neston Town Council rents the building from CWaC, making us responsible for utilities and business rates.

In spring 2025, brand new handrails were installed on the Market Square by a local joinery company using certified, sustainable, and durable hardwood with a lifespan of approximately 25 years. A worthwhile investment to be enjoyed by all for many years to come.

However, the continued upkeep of an old building can be challenging. Officers have dealt with various issues throughout the year from drains to lifts. We are currently awaiting a solution to the ongoing issue with one of the bollards on Brook Street. We continue to work closely with our Cheshire West & Chester colleagues to problem solve and deliver good outcomes for Neston, ensuring that essential interior and exterior improvements are completed in a timely fashion and work on the building's infrastructure is prioritised. Following recent management meetings with CWaC, the council hopes to secure an up-to-date lease and a new Asset Management agreement for the Town Hall in order to provide future security going forwards. We have seen rising costs this past year for all utilities.



Fun & games at the summer Pirate Market



Neston Market is more than just a food market. The market is the jewel in the Neston's crown and it is a huge asset to the town, Three themed markets took place in 2024/25, which were all very well supported. The Town Council funds the market and entertainment; all additional activities are supplied free of charge for children and adults to enjoy, including face painting, crafts and biscuit decorating.

The market is now full to capacity on the majority of weeks, averaging 30 stalls on a fair-weather day. Local author Martyn Harvey joined us at the summer Pirate Friday market in July 2024, along with the Whitchurch Town Pirate for flag flying fun! Planning has already started for the Market's 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2028.



# Market & Town Hall Committee

## M&TH Chairman's Report

It has been an absolute pleasure to be Chair of the M&TH Committee for another year. The enthusiasm and dedication of our traders and staff is unmatched and I am always delighted when new traders join Neston market. We have recently acquired a new bedding and homeware stall which is becoming well-established. Neston market is a place for community; visitors, and residents alike coming together each week to support small business and enterprise.

Looking ahead to the new council year, the working group has begun drafting the new Town Hall business plan so we can help to capture the Town Council's vision for the building and continue making improvements to the space. Our long-term aspirations include staffed evening functions and a workable bar.

*Cllr Sion Jones*



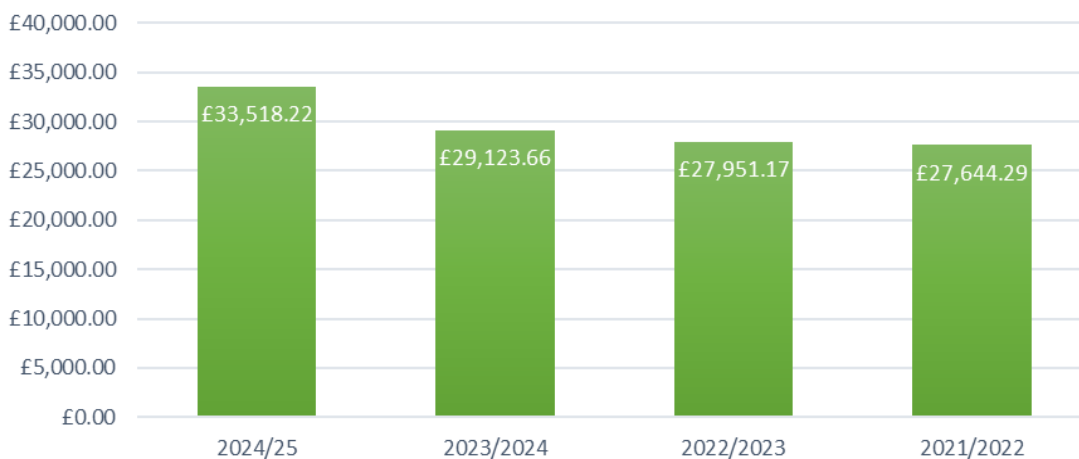
Presenting the trader of the year trophy to Rodanthi Tsanakalioti of Sweet Bites in December 2024

## MARKET REVENUE

(market stall pitch rent & associated revenue)

	2024/25	2023/2024	2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/2021
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>£33518.22</b>	<b>£29,123.66</b>	<b>£27,951.17</b>	<b>£27,644.29</b>	<b>£15,841.58</b>

## Market Revenue





# Working alongside the community...

Neston is very fortunate to have an extensive group of dedicated people who work tirelessly both behind the scenes, and in the public domain, to make the town a better place. Neston's *Looking Better Group* plant hundreds of bulbs each year, maintaining an abundance of public flower beds to enhance the beauty of the town. All of this work is coordinated by the Neston Civic Society. A recently cleared bed was planted with spring-flowering bulbs on the corner of Brook Street and Chester Road car park, captured below in early April 2025.



The first Community Litter Pick, as part of the Great British Spring Clean campaign, took place on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2025. Nine people turned out, including CWaC Cllr Keith Miller and Neston Town Councillors, Janet Griffiths, Pat Kynaston and Brenda Marple, along with Civic Society members Rosemary and Chairman Derek, plus three members from Friends of the Wirral Way. A great effort by everyone involved. A new Neston & Parkgate Friends of the Wirral Way group was also formed over the year, showcasing great partnership working with representatives from Neston Town Council, Friends of Flint Meadow, Parkgate Society, Civic Society and the CWaC Green Space Officer, Tim Lloyd, for the Cheshire section of the Wirral Way.



Volunteers at the Community Litter Pick. Photo: Cllr Brenda Marple

## Allotments

Neston Town Council is proud to offer allotments to its residents. We have 3 allotment sites: Raby Park Road, Marshlands Road, and The Ropewalk in Parkgate. Allotments provide a perfect opportunity for residents without a garden, or those wishing to spend more time outdoors, to get up close with nature and expand their growing expertise. Unfortunately, the waiting list for an allotment in Neston is several years long. Improvement works have taken place this year in order to split some original plots to try and meet demand. Issues with water have been overcome by the continued hard work of officers in order to protect the Town Council from paying unnecessary bills when a water leak was discovered but the Council was not at fault. New stand-pipes have been installed and water has been introduced at Marshlands Road site.





# Expanding our reach...

## Introducing Neston's Junior Council

Neston Junior Council was created in September 2024. The Council comprises of a year 6 child from each of the four Neston primary schools – Neston Primary School, Parkgate Primary School, St. Winefride's Catholic Primary School and Woodfall Primary and Nursery School. Councillor Janet Griffiths was invited to be an honorary member, in recognition of her long service to Neston Town Council, and they have become a great team.

The Junior Council has now met several times, and have attended events including the Halloween Market and Neston Christmas Lights Switch-on event where they got to switch on the lights alongside Father Christmas and the White Witch of Narnia.

Upcoming events include Ladies Day and running the Neston Town Council stall at the annual Neston Village Fair, for which the children have been working hard to plan something new and exciting.

It has been wonderful to see the Junior Council grow in confidence and develop, and we look forward to continuing this every year with a new year 6 cohort.

The Mayor of Neston Cllr Sion Jones said "It has been a particular highlight of my Civic year working alongside the Junior Council, I am grateful to both staff and councillors for giving up their time to bring this important objective from our delivery plan to fruition."



**Neston's Junior Councillors 2024/25: Matilda Drake – Parkgate Primary, Emily Ashton – St. Winefride's Catholic Primary, Penelope Owen – Neston Primary, Alex Manning – Woodfall Primary. All pictured with honorary member Cllr Janet Griffiths**



# Feedback from Grants & Donations



Flowers Galore was an exhibition to celebrate 65 years of Neston Flower Society bringing floral art to the population of Neston and surrounding areas. The ethos behind the exhibition was to showcase some of the history of Neston, Parkgate and Ness in interpretative flower designs.

Exhibits were:- Neston Colliery, Ladies Day, Flower Arranging Through the Eras, The Wirral Way, Parkgate Ice Cream, Ness Gardens and Neston Market. Information boards for each exhibit were produced and read avidly by visitors, bringing back memories for some and educating others... We know that working with flowers increases wellbeing and enables social interaction. We plan to continue to offer sessions to the residents of Neston.

***Pam Flemming-Williams, Chair of the Neston Flower Society***



Our grant from Neston Town Council has had a significant impact on our ability to deliver quality workshops in the Neston area. Through a series of over 20 classes, clubs and school performances, we have engaged over 200 people in the Neston area, including the elderly and very young. Programmes included a regular session for elderly and carers ["SambaNans"], our weekly club for teenagers and an after school club for children at Neston Primary. As a result of this work, we will be able to deliver to performances at the Big Lunch on Stanney Fields on 8<sup>th</sup> June the West Vale Fun day on 7<sup>th</sup> August and a trip for our teenagers to perform at the Southbank Centre in London on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2025.

***Stu Hardcastle—Neston Samba a Neston group newly supported by the Town Council's Grant Scheme during 2024-25.***



The Neston Village Fair, which is held annually, is reliant on financial support including sponsorship from local companies and most importantly the generous donation from the Town Council. The money from these sources helps us to provide a cheap fun packed afternoon, with low priced or free attractions and entertainment all afternoon. Local charities and good causes benefit by raising funds and awareness through their stalls, whilst much of the entertainment is provided by local acts.

***Keith Moores—Neston Village Fair Committee***





# Parkgate Marshes and Mosquito Monitoring



The Town Council has continued to work closely with Dr Enevoldson who maintains ongoing collaborations with Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (virome studies and adult mosquito dispersion), University of Liverpool (virology infectivity) and University of Oxford (modelling and possible effects of climate change).

In his report, Dr Enevoldson notes: "Over the last 5 years, larvae have been discovered which have been shown by various methods to be a species called *Culiseta litorea*. This species bites birds but importantly has never been found in the Dee

estuary previously and classically was thought only to occur in southern England. More extensive dipping studies this year have identified that this species is only found in certain types of pools: small, highly vegetated and furthermore, they appear to be emerging as adults rather earlier in the year than published data would suggest. These findings are being extended with a view to publication in 2025... Unusually, this year the greatest number of mosquitoes was trapped in Parkgate, in the trap at top of Earle Drive (Fig 4) above.

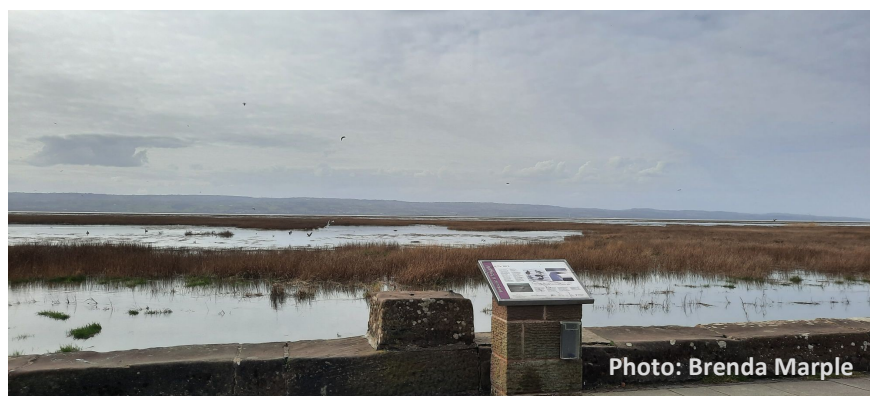


Photo: Brenda Marple

"Prof. Clarkson started collecting data from dipping pools at Quayside in Little Neston in about 2012. Pretty well the same pools have been surveyed ever since. For the last 5 years this has been done weekly and extended to include all weeks of the year. For the sake of

consistency, this report has confined its quantitative results to the data arising from these 5 years, pools from a much wider area broadly similar and there has been no conflict in terms of using the results for the purposes of the mosquito forecast. However, some discrepancies have been noted in some weeks, and this emphasises what Prof. Clarkson and I had already realised, namely that the Clarkson pools are not completely representative of the local marsh pools (and a number of reasons may be advanced for this). Sampling of other pools revealed the presence of larvae at times when none were found in the Clarkson pools. In consequence, a wider range of pools has been surveyed each week and the results used in the weekly forecast. There were fewer larvae throughout the year in 2024 compared to the record year of 2023 but more than in 2022 (a very dry year), 2021 (dry summer), 2020 and 2019 (both had wet spells in summer)."

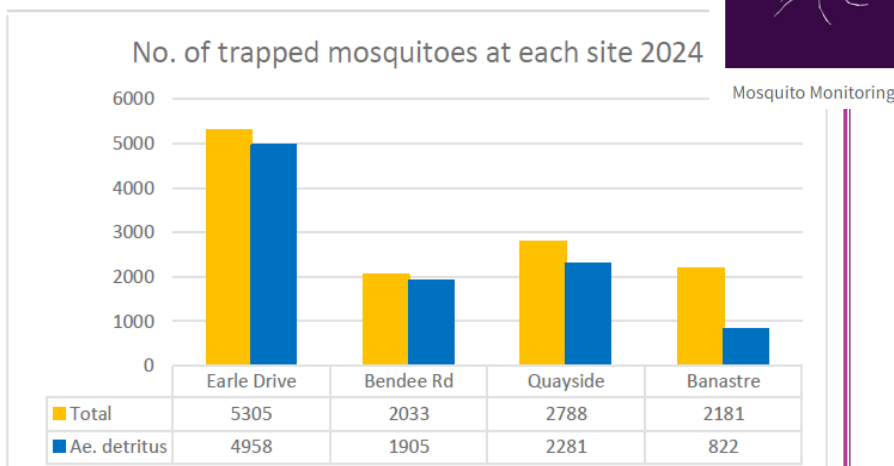


Fig 4.



Photo credit: Robert Clive

## **Neston Town Councillors at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

### **NESTON WARD**

Cllr Janet Griffiths

Cllr David Ruscoe

Cllr Nicola Ruscoe

Cllr Andrew Townsend

Cllr Christine Warner

### **LITTLE NESTON WARD**

Cllr Steve Adderley

Cllr Carol Braithwaite

Cllr Sion Jones (Mayor)

Cllr Pat Kynaston

Cllr Geoff Swaffer

Cllr Stephen Wastell

### **PARGATE WARD**

Cllr Simon Davies

Cllr Paul Doughty

Cllr Shirley Hudspeth

Cllr Brenda Marple (Deputy Mayor)

### **STAFF TEAM**

Zoë Dean—Locum Chief Officer

Audrey Duncan—Community & Environment Manager

Trevor Godfrey—RFO/Finance Manager

Nicky McMahon—Market & Town Hall Manager

Joanna Harding—Community Engagement Officer

James Jones—Caretaker & Market Officer

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**Keep up to date with our Town Councillor vacancies via our website:**

**[www.neston.org.uk/make-a-change-become-a-local-councillor/](http://www.neston.org.uk/make-a-change-become-a-local-councillor/)**