

LOCUM CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

FULL COUNCIL MEETING (FC4/60)

21st October 2025

During the summer recess Neston Town Council hosted its second annual summer 'Pirate' themed market. The event was well attended and extremely successful. We had a number of councillors who came to help out at the book stall and lots of younger visitors took part in the market trail. Neston Town Council handed out free prizes and treats to our younger visitors and the Whitchurch Town Pirate provided several hours of entertainment and frivolity.



We welcomed a brand-new Councillor into our midst at July's Full Council meeting – Cllr Martin Halford. Martin has already thrown himself head first into a number of online ChALC training sessions and we look forward to working with him. Sadly, Neston Town Council has lost a long-standing member in Cllr Andrew Townsend who resigned from office in early September. Neston Town Council would like to thank Andrew for all of his hard work and dedication to the public office whilst serving as a volunteer local councillor for the Neston Ward and wish him well for the future. Cheshire West & Chester Council's elections office has informed me that the advertisement of this vacancy has not triggered an election. This leaves Neston Town Council with two casual vacancies. The co-option campaign for the Parkgate Ward was also refreshed and re-advertised with an associated Press Release over the summer.

I attended the annual Cheshire West & Chester and ChALC Conference in Tarporley on 16th July, along with Cllr P. Kynaston and Cllr S. Jones. It was uplifting to hear about the success stories of local Town and Parish councils from the past year and refocus our minds to face the challenges ahead.

There have been a number of senior management meetings this quarter to oversee projects, problem-solve, and take items forward. I met with the Mayor and Chairman of the HR Committee in both June and September to progress contract discussions. I met with original working group councillors on 16th September to re-start asset discussions with Cheshire West and Chester Council, which will also feature as a Part 2 item in October's Full Council meeting. Meetings such as these lead onto preparatory work ahead of upcoming committees in the Council's calendar and associated research work, report writing and redrafting. The Chair of Finance and the Mayor met with myself and the RFO to dissect the most up to date accounts ahead of the Finance and Administration committee meeting on 30th September.

Neston Town Council hosted an extraordinary Full Council meeting on 19th August 2025 to discuss the Cheshire West & Chester Council Local Plan Consultation for the Neston area. We were joined by the Head of Planning Mr Rob Charnley who engaged in an informative and lively discussion with a record number of attendees. The Town Council's official comments from the meeting were submitted to the online consultation ahead of the 29th August deadline, and linked into the appropriate sections.

The Mayor met with officers and members of Groundwork Changes Places Team in early October to discuss Neston's Market Towns Assessment which has been organised through CWaC. The Deputy Director of Business Services at the organisation will be reviewing Neston and its services along with Winsford, following similar work completed last year in other West Cheshire towns and villages. We continue to lobby CWaC's Property Services team and Equans for updates on repairs and to keep the lines of communication open.

Much work has been going on behind the scenes to organise and formalise grant applications in which a record number were received earlier this month at the Community & Environment Committee. You will notice that the front of the Town Hall is currently undergoing some clean up work and we look forward to seeing more progress as the work progresses. Two new Town Council notices boards, one for official notices and one for local events and activities, were installed outside the Town Hall last month.

The Town Council is very fortunate to have once again received its annual return (AGAR) from the external auditors with no matters arising. Our thanks must go to our diligent Finance Manager/RFO who ensures that all rules and legal objectives are rigorously followed through the Council's accounting practices. It will soon be time to begin budget planning for 2026/27 – where does the time go? Committees have already started the draft their project priorities for the new financial year.

Zoë Dean
Locum Chief Officer
Neston Town Council
16th October 2025