



# **NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

## **Town Mayor's Report - 7 April 2015**

Much has happened in North Walsham since the last meeting.

The Town has suffered the sad loss of Cllr Dave Robertson, a Town Councillor and former Town Mayor whose energy and passion for the role and the town provided a great deal of impetus on issues such as planning and CCTV. I'm sure fellow Councillors and staff alike miss access to his knowledge and his frankness when expressing his opinions.

In early October 2014 we received the news that the pub chain JD Wetherspoon had entered an offer to purchase the Council Offices from North Norfolk District Council. This has sparked a lot of activity as the Town Council seeks to identify SUITABLE and more importantly AVAILABLE alternative premises.

Beginning in January 2015, a trial run of artisan markets opened in Market Place on the final Sunday of each month. These have proved very successful, so much so that the Council has approved their continuation. The important thing to know about these markets is that the income from stall fees is split equally between local charities and projects through which the Council supports the markets.

The Town Council was able to keep its Council Tax precept to an amount only slightly higher than the level set for 2014/15. The primary reasons for the small increase are the likely need to pay a commercial rent on a property at some point in the financial year, and further contributions towards Highways improvements. The Council has again successfully applied for a County Council partnership grant to fund 50% of the costs of three projects in 2015/16 – the installation of a gravel footpath along Bacton Road leading towards the town centre from The Shires; a third SAM2 movable speed awareness sign; and 20mph flashing 'wig wag' signs for installation in the vicinity of North Walsham High School. Highways continues to work on the 2014/15 projects, with the first two SAM2 signs currently being built by the County's contractor and Network Rail recently giving permission for signage upgrades on its property (including the height warning sign from Cromer Road Bridge) to proceed.

In addition to this, the Town Council will also be receiving a support grant from the District Council. Together this means the rise has been kept to a minimum. Of course, the Town Council could have said "no" to any increase in Council Tax, but then we would not have been able to support these projects which we see as vital to the town and community.

The CCTV system in the town went live in the second half of last year, and despite some teething problems has already proved beneficial to the police.

The Town Council has agreed to a deal with North Norfolk District Council to extend its lease on Midland Road car park. In addition, it has put in place an agreement whereby it is able to offer free parking at Vicarage Street Car Park to visitors to the artisan markets, on the last Sunday of each month. The car parks on Mundesley Road, New Road and Vicarage Street are owned by the District Council and any complaints about these should be addressed to them at Cromer (although any complaints made through our officers will be passed on to the relevant department on your behalf). During the year, NNDC decided to commence charging at Mundesley Road, once the necessary surface repair work has been completed, despite objections from the Town Council.

Responsibility for the common land at St Nicholas Court precinct remains unresolved. However, NNDC is in the process of completing a compulsory purchase on the 4 Market Street site, following which that area will be landscaped. This may bring the issue of the state of the precinct back to the fore.

The Council is working on a project to improve the play facilities at Woodville, including a survey of local children and bids to the NNDC Big Society Fund and other funders.

I would like to thank the grounds staff for continuing to do an admirable job looking after the Cemetery, Churchyard and Parks. This is not always an easy job, and they deserve support and respect for what they do.

Thanks to the Christmas Lights Group for their work through the year to ensure that the town is prepared and lit for Christmas, and to the local businesses who continue to support their work in whatever way they are able. Thanks also to the Fun Day Committee for continuing to organise the annual event in the War Memorial Park. As always, both the Christmas Lights Switch-On and the Fun Day were well attended last year, and I hope they continue to be as successful.

Finally, some dates for your diaries

- Civic Service – Sunday 7 June
- Fun Day – Sunday 28 June
- Fun Fair – Wed/Sun 29 July-2 August
- Artisan markets – final Sunday of each month except December
- Christmas market – Sunday 20 December (100% of stall fees to annual Town Mayor's charity)