

It is with some trepidation that I stood on the stage on 8th May at the start of what I hope will be a most eventful Mayoral year. I want to share my year with as many people as possible.

The stage has been set, the curtain has been raised – so, as the saying goes- ON WITH THE SHOW.

I am pleased to introduce our new Macebearer Trevor Gregory and I hope that he has an enjoyable time in this new voluntary role.

Brackley has seen many changes in the 16 years that we have lived here and there are a number of changes that are likely to happen in the near future... not all of them in the forthcoming year thank goodness. We will shortly (possibly) have a new Central Government of some flavour and we can then expect the numerous new directives and initiatives that will no doubt become the "New Policies."

I am pleased to advise you that your Town Council is in good heart and ready to face any challenges during my Mayoral year. A New Medical facility and some 1100 houses both want to share the same piece of land to the north of the town as central government's High Speed Trains.

I foresee a long and interesting time ahead. The HS2 poses a threat and unfortunately it is a case of "wait and see" to ascertain exactly what impact there is to the town from this. The proposals (I hear) are likely to be challenged legally and consultation is due to start in the Autumn. We will be keeping a watchful eye and assisting where possible. As it stands at the moment, Brackley appears to have all the pain without the gain.

At last some of the empty shops are starting to trade again as our shopping pattern changes. I would like to wish good luck to these new businesses and I hope that the residents of Brackley will support them so that they flourish. Your council has been striving to maintain the pleasant appearance of the town and our ground staff and mowing contractors should be congratulated on their hard work.

The council is continuing in its search for a site to accommodate a new skate park to keep our youngsters occupied and exercised! It is difficult locating a facility such as this. It has to be easily accessible for the users and not an inconvenience for nearby residents. We are on the case and once a suitable site has been identified the task of attracting funding will commence.

If there is anyone here that would like to donate a suitable piece of land for this purpose, either as a gift or long term lease, as my teachers at school used to say - "Please see me after!"

There is to be a new competition in the town this summer. Blooming Brackley is being extended to encourage residents to have their front gardens, window boxes and hanging baskets judged. Entry is free and entry forms can be found on the Town Council web site or can be collected from the Clerk's office at the Town Hall. Prizes will be given to the winners and runners up in each of the 3 classes. Entries have to be submitted by 31st May and judging will take place between 8th and 14th July. The judging will be done by the Deputy Mayor and myself and we have enlisted the professional help of the owner of the Middleton Cheney Garden Centre "Purely Plants" This idea came from a resident in the town – that just proves that we do listen.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Bookstall will continue at the monthly Farmers' Market raising money for a facility or piece of equipment in the new medical centre that will replace the Cottage Hospital.

Next May will see the Local government elections when the whole of the Town Council will be elected. The council consists of 15 elected members who voluntarily represent the residents of Brackley. Important decisions have to be made at the 4 regular meetings that we hold generally (except when there is a bank holiday) on the first and third Mondays each month. Members of the public are welcome at these meetings and there is an agenda item specifically designed for public participation. Meetings start at 7:00 pm and any resident is welcome. Perhaps you think that you would like to put yourself up for election next May..... Come along and see what happens and it may encourage you to become a Town Councillor.

As well as chairing the council meetings during my year, I intend to get out and about, visiting as many organisations in the town as possible. I do still work, so unfortunately these visits will have to fit in with my work commitments. The good news is that I start early in the morning and finish early afternoon.... I also get a few days off each month and can sometimes break off and then resume my work.

I am hoping to organise a number of events in the town to raise money for my chosen Charity and also local good causes. I have produced a leaflet that shows the events that are organised so far and more will be added as space permits. I have done this so that if you do **not** want to support me, you can arrange your holidays to coincide with these events! –YOU WILL BE HAVING A LOT OF HOLIDAYS!!!!

Some of the events are traditional and there are some new ideas that I hope will tempt you to come along.

I have decided to have a patriotic theme to my fundraising activities and intend to organise 5 events to raise money for the Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air Ambulance Service.

It is a service that I hope none of us will ever need, but as you cannot have failed to notice, it was this service that attended at Hinton in the Hedges recently to take the pilot of the plane that crashed to hospital in Coventry... The other notable person involved was taken by road to Banbury's Horton Hospital!

The service is funded entirely through voluntary donations and has saved many lives because it is able to get to an incident very quickly. They claim that they can be airborne in 45 seconds which improves recovery prospects.

The first of these patriotic events will be a "Last Night of the Proms" evening on 10th July (the night before the British Grand Prix at Silverstone. I am very grateful that Winchester House School have kindly donated their walled garden to host the event and it promises to be a fantastic evening with the Northampton Concert Band, the St Cecelia Singers and a Soprano providing the entertainment. The first half will be music from the Musicals and then there will be the usual "Pomp and Circumstance" music that we see traditionally on the TV from the Royal Albert Hall.

This event forms the finale to the fortnight long Brackley Music Festival that starts on Friday 25th June and my thanks to the Music Festival committee for allowing me to hog their last night. Tickets are £18.00 each reduced to £14.00 if purchased before 1st July. The Northampton Concert Band do a number of these events in the county and their musical director has described our venue as the best that they will have performed in. Thanks again to Winchester House School The other patriotic events will be held on or near our Patron Saints Days and will themed around those countries. So if whisky tasting, Welsh choir singing, Irish dancing, comedian and music take your fancy come along! I have decided to change the Mayors Ball to a Civic Dinner with a guest speaker and this will be held on St George's day April 23rd 2011.

Additionally, you will see that I have already arranged a number of other events and the proceeds of these will go to Brackley good causes and organisations. Please come along and enjoy yourself and support me during my year in office.

I have decided to try and reach out to as many of the town's residents as possible and I have set up (Well, I haven't – a 16 year old Magdalene College Student has- Thank you Richard) my own website **www.brackleymayor.org.uk** which will hopefully be live this afternoon. I am intending to keep it updated with the events and functions that I attend so that you can see that your Mayor does not just lounge around in his parlour all year! Additionally it will be a useful tool for members of the public to contact me. The role of mayor does not mean that I can fix everything...

PRESS RELEASE from Chris Blunden – Mayor of Brackley

The mayor does not have a fairy wand as part of his regalia. Thank you for your attention. I look forward to meeting you all later.

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