



BURY ST EDMUNDS
TOWN COUNCIL

Councillor Paul Hopfensperger

Annual Report to Bury St Edmunds Town Council 2018 – 2019

Good evening everyone, and it is wonderful to see you all here tonight and thank you all for coming to our annual meeting – Which is in fact **YOUR** meeting.

Before I start, I wanted to go back in history, to give you some idea where we have come from to get to where we are today, and I think this is important for a number of reasons.

I first joined the Bury St Edmunds Town Council at its second ever meeting back in June 2003. That's an astonishing 16 years ago. As a brand new council, we had **no remit, no idea what we were going to do, no staff, no building to meet in, no furniture**, in fact we had **absolutely nothing at all**. We started from scratch, always with one specific and "**A**" *political aim* – to do the best we could for the people of Bury St Edmunds.

Now it is fair to say, we had some challenges along the way. Boy, we had some challenges. But one of the first thing we did, was to re-instate the role of **Mayor of Bury St Edmunds**, something which turned out to be to be very controversial at the time. People kept asking why we had two Mayors. The **Mayor of Bury St Edmunds** and The **Mayor of St Edmundsbury**. No matter how many times we told them that we didn't, we could not make people understand.

Up there on the wall, you can see our four original Mayors: Cllrs. Bob Cockle, Frank Warby, Mike Ames, and the last Mayor of Bury St Edmunds since 2006, my wife, Cllr. Mrs. Rebecca Hopfensperger. In 2006, this council was nearly destroyed over the Mayoralty, but finally, and following the formation of the new **West Suffolk Council** and the loss of the role of **Mayor of St Edmundsbury on March 31st**, I am delighted to announce that we are currently in discussions to bring the truly historic position of **Mayor of Bury St Edmunds** back to our town. We will have further information to bring you on this in the coming month or so.

At this point, I would like to thank former Cllr. Andrew Speed, Chairman of this council for the past four years, who I think led this council to the point we are currently at. Elections can be so very brutal, and we lost a good councillor in May, but that is the nature of the beast we voluntarily choose to be in. Just one vote can, in some cases, be the difference between winning or losing and believe me it hurts, having personally lost by just 4 and 5 votes myself.

That said, during the past four years, this Council has started to come into its own, taking on more and larger activities. I will outline just a few examples.

- We have listened to the people of Bury St Edmunds and have sponsored two Police Community Support Officers or PCSO's, Mark and Jessica who have been recruited specifically to deal with the issues of **anti-social behaviour, homelessness and parking and driving offences** throughout the town. I have to say, they are doing a fabulous job.

• **Paul Hopfensperger** MifHI MCMA CertLegalStud(Open) • Independent Councillor for St Olaves Ward •

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- We have supported the Town's tourism effort with the success of '**Bury and Beyond**' and also work closely with the Business Improvement Organisation - **Our Bury St Edmunds**.
- We are long standing supporters of our fabulous **Theatre Royal**, and especially this year we are financially supporting their 200th anniversary celebrations.
- We are backing world-class events for the '**Abbey 1000**' celebrations due to take place next year to celebrate 1,000 years since the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds was built.
- In 2018 we were lead funders of the **Suffolk Armed Forces Day** celebrations, for almost £40,000 in grants to local charities and events, and another £42,000 given to projects in Councillors localities.
- **Locality Budgets** of £2,500 per ward were introduced 4 years ago, and are an invaluable tool for Councillors which enable us to meet the needs and serve our residents with projects which would never have happened without this funding.
- We are constantly told by our residents that there is a lack of attention paid to our pavements by Suffolk County Council, and so we now provide a significant injection of cash to the tune of **£150,000 per annum** to meet a gap in provision for the repair of pavements and public spaces (or PPS as we call it) throughout Bury St Edmunds. It really is scratching the surface of the problem, but we are doing what we can as a Town Council to address our residents concerns.
- We provide and administer over 350 allotments for the the residents of Bury St Edmunds.
- We provide and monitor two speed indicator devices (or SIDs) which we can move around the town and are manned by Town Council volunteers.
- We've helped make Bury more 'dog friendly' in the last year.
- This office continues to act as a 'mini tourist office' providing information to visiting tourists.
- In September we will be sponsoring the popular Citizens of the Year awards as part of the Bury Free Press's community awards.
- And in November, we will be organising the Remembrance Day commemorations on The Angel Hill as well as maintaining the town's War Memorials.

So I hope you can all see, that from a **small acorn planted in 2003, we have grown into a large oak**, and we are doing all of this for **YOU**, the people of Bury St Edmunds.

On behalf of all of the town councillors from all political persuasions, I would like to thank our staff; **Greg Luton the Town Clerk, Sue Hindry the Assistant Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer**, and **Julie Sturgeon our Allotment and Administration Assistant**. You all do a fantastic job, and we are all proud of the team we have here.

The next 4 years may be politically challenging, I do hope it isn't and I urge all of our councillors to note that a **Parish or Town Council** is an "**A**"**POLITICAL** organisation, and we are here for one reason and one reason only, to represent the People of Bury St Edmunds to the best of our ability. **So please, lets try and remember that in all of our decision making processes.**

Paul J. Hopfensperger

29/05/2019

Vice Chairman – Bury St Edmunds Town Council