

Mayor's report to the Annual Town Meeting to be held on Monday 7th April 2025

My year as Mayor has been a busy one, with over 20 official civic engagements in addition to the background meetings required to chair the Town Council and help steer "Ship Halstead" in the right direction.

I would like to thank the town council staff, new, existing, and those no longer working with us, as well as all Member Councillors, for their hard work, help and support during the year. It is a testament to the efforts of all concerned that this Council is only one of six that hold the Foundation, Quality, and Gold awards in the Local Council award scheme. At this point I would like to pay tribute to Cllr Pell, who was recently awarded the British Empire Medal for 40+ years of service to this council and that of the community. Thank you, Jackie.

Despite the uncertainty of change, house building growth, changes seen, and soon to be seen, in our high street shops, our Town continues to show that its heart is still very much community based, and can boast of over 50 clubs, societies and other organisations that generously offer their time and effort, typically as unpaid volunteers, to make Halstead a great place to live.

For over 25 years Halstead in Bloom has made our town look beautiful for those living, visiting, or moving into town, and I'd like to thank the HIB team for their efforts...there's a very full trophy cabinet that shows their dedication to our town.

I'd like to thank the museum volunteers for all their work in ensuring that whilst change is inevitable, they are there to keep the records of our town throughout history and I would encourage more people to visit our wonderful museum!

We have a fantastic entertainment venue in town, The Empire Theatre, and although it was broken into late last year, no lasting damage was done. A member of our community was so appalled at this that they themselves set up a funding page, and generous donations from many members of the public flooded in. What a special community we have. As a result of the break-in, secure roller shutters have been added to the building by this Council, alongside a security review to ensure no further issues arise. Another real positive came a short while ago when the venue won a grant from BDC, which enabled the upgrade to the cinema projector and now allows the venue to run the top film releases with a setup that caters for film, live shows, panto, Dementia Friendly activities and so much more.

Our fantastic public gardens continue to be used regularly, hosting bands in the park, summer fayre, and many other events that are being organised by both HTC and the wider community. The annual torchlight procession has grown considerably over the years and the public gardens continues to be a wonderful place to end the event with lit candles, a carol service and our community coming together, truly a spectacle not seen in many other places.

My charity this year supports Dementia Friendly Activities in Halstead, and in doing so I aim to assist those activities to help the many people in our community living with dementia. It is a horrible illness with no cure, and sadly will affect millions more people nationally as the years progress. I am proud that this town is accredited with being a dementia friendly town, but we need to expand this so that we are a dementia friendly community, encompassing all aspects, businesses, and organisations to become dementia aware. I have, as a BDC Councillor, given a large part of my Councillor grant to the Living with Dementia project, coordinated by Rotary Halstead. The project aims to put together an online one stop shop for dementia activities, which will be using Halstead as its model of excellence before rolling out to other towns across our county. Of all the hair brained ideas for fundraising I'll be taking part in the Maldon Mud Run on May 4th and the Mayor's charity would welcome any donations!

Halstead will see changes as the years progress, but the Town Council, its members and staff, who care deeply about this town, will continue with the best of their ability to do the right thing for the town wherever possible.

As my closing remark, let's all continue to be proud of what we have, do our best to keep our community together and safe, and our Town a wonderful place to be. It is a privilege to serve the Town as Mayor and I would like to thank everyone again for their support. Thanks.