MAYOR’S REPORT 21016/17

I took over the mayorship from Cllr. Mrs Mary Nesbitt and early on was faced with a crisis. Thieves had broken into our stores in the cemetery and I was worried that, owing to the gap in the roof, the thieves might return and take more or that the insurance company might raise our premium enormously or even refuse to insure us. I was very impressed with the reaction from our staff both in the town hall and in the cemetery. Members of staff in the office offered to come in on their day off and a member of the staff in the cemetery volunteered to stay on guard until Gordon could arrive and make essential repairs. Since then new quarters have been built to store our equipment. All of this costs money but is essential if we wish to safeguard our ride on mowers and other tools and equipment.

Mrs Nesbitt donated funds towards last summer's gala. I hope to be able to do the same this year. Members of the town council threw themselves into organising the gala as did volunteers from the community.

To help with staff development I asked for our staff in the cemetery to attend a customer service course which I believe they found useful and helpful for their futures. This should equip them to deal with complaints and queries better.

I have had the honour of representing the people of Stainforth at events elsewhere such as the thanksgiving services of the Mayors of Doncaster and Hatfield. I have also represented the town council at the annual Remembrance service in church and at the cenotaph in November.

I chose to raise funds for Stainforth's Food Bank and have raised £58 so far. I have used the council's newsletter, Stainforth Voice, to appeal to the community for help with giving food to the food bank.

I am pleased that the town council has continued to help organisations in Stainforth which are helping the community. This help can make a difference between making an event viable or not. I am also pleased that we have continued with our stickers, Please Slow Down In Our Town, to help raise awareness for motorists of our road safety campaign.

Early on we lost two members of the town council. One was due to increased pressure from his business which entailed a great deal of travel but, sadly, the other was due to anti-social behaviour of an extreme nature which meant that her house lost every window in the house. We replaced the two councillors but remained very concerned about the level of criminal behaviour.  Having seen that the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire had worked with Thorne Town Council to reduce crime, I decided to invite Doctor Billings to come and listen to the problems (involving drugs, vandalism and other crimes) in the Princess Avenue area and on New Park Estate. Doctor Billings came one evening in September, bringing with him Inspector Payling, and councillors had the opportunity to explain the problems to the top man in the county. Dr. Billings listened to our complaints and suggestions and said he would return in January when he hoped we would notice a difference. He did return and, I believe, we have noticed a higher profile from the police in Stainforth. The Police Commissioner talked about budget constraints and his polices which he talked about reviewing to bring more officers to our side of Doncaster.  We certainly have had more contact with PCSOs liasing with our clerks and attending town council meetings. I also believe that Inspector Payling has reported back to various councillors.

I attended the funeral of Richard Colburn, former chairman of the Royal British Legion, to show our respect to his family.

I was present at an excellent evening of fireworks on 4th November which the town council partly funded. Late in December, with help from my deputy, Cllr. Mrs Crosby and my granddaughters, I drove around Stainforth to judge our Christmas lights competition. I should like to thank Cllr. Moore for his work with our improved Christmas lights at the Park this year. At Easter I helped Mrs Crosby choose children's pictures for her Easter competition.

I was interested to see preparations for Garry Lyons' play about reminiscences by Stainforth people about the miners' strike and hope that will make a good historical record for the future.

I have accompanied the Methodists on their annual visits to the old people's homes at Christmas, been present in the parish church to listen to a visiting choir from Snaith and went with my wife to the meal for refugees organised in the Catholic church at Christmas. I also opened a lively children's Christmas party at Saint Mary's and have accompanied our PCSOs  on a crime prevention morning in our local supermarket. It was a great pleasure to be invited to the relaunch of Stainforth library by Stainforth4All along with our M.P. Ed. Miliband and the Mayor of Doncaster, Mrs Ros. Jones. I have also taken part in a documentary film which is being made about Stainforth's rebirth after the miners' strike. At all the above events I received a warm welcome.

The precept this year is £178,985, which includes a grant of £42,905 from DMBC, but despite the rise we are in the fortunate position of being able to charge community charge payers less because there are more contributors paying into the pot owing to new housing in the parish.

I have given out a number of mayor's awards to recognise individuals who have helped the community this year and hope to invite them to this year's mayor's dinner.

I have welcomed new groups being established in Stainforth, such as the Women's Group, and SERG, and believe them to be a sign of things to come with new, younger people coming forward to fill our shoes. Like many of you, I was delighted to hear that work on the spur to the motorway will start this summer as it should bring more opportunities for employers to gain access to the motorway network and make a more level playing field for Stainforth in the future. A presentation from Waystone's gave us a vision of the future which should also increase the number of houses, shops and businesses in the community which should give us a better chance of fighting the problems of unemployment, crime and alienation in the area.

Above all, I should like to thank members of the town council, who, sometimes in the face of severe illness, have continued to run committees, visit and oversee the pavilion and work in the cemetery. I should also like to repeat my thanks for the dedication of the staff in the office and in the cemetery.

I wish my successor well and hope the council will unite around her.

Cllr. Stephen Cook.