Mayor’s Report to Full Council – 1st February 2021

My second term continues to very different from the usual mayoral agenda. It has been both exciting and challenging. Along with the Civic Manager the Mayor’s Office has been innovative in seeking to support the community it serves and promote the work of Newbury Town Council. I would like to thank The Civic Manager Elisa Adams for the work she has done in seeking ways to promote our activities and raise funds for the Mayors Benevolent Fund .

We continue to send letters from the Mayor to individuals , businesses and charities that are doing great charitable work or achieving in their field. Even in these difficult times there is much to celebrate in Newbury.

Performance has never been one of my skills it was not something I had expected to be doing as Mayor. Over recent months I think my videos have improved however the viewers are the judge of that.

I took part in the following videos:

BID Shop Local Newbury is Open for Business. A great film show casing all Newbury has to offer in , shopping, leisure, entertainment and retail. Sadly, everything is yet again closed.

Swift Louise Purton Toy Appeal , which ensures disadvantaged children in the area do not go without a present at Christmas . This year’s appeal was more important than ever – particularly with many families facing financial hardship due to the coronavirus pandemic. I co-starred with Bartholomew, the Mayor’s bear, in this production.

Many of you will have seen the virtual Light Switch . It was a strange experience as it is usually a huge, lively event in our Market Place. Doing the countdown in an empty Council Chamber with the Civic Manager was surreal. Enough of trade secrets.

Berkshire Youth 80th Birthday. BY embarked on an ambitious and successful project to film 80 people contributing online to celebrate the event. It was an honour to be part of it.

The final video was my Christmas Message. There were a few versions as the national circumstances and regulations around Christmas kept changing. I hope all those who viewed it found it struck the right note.

I continued to involve the community in designing the Mayor’s Christmas Card. We ran an online competition with the support of the Newbury Weekly News. There were three age groups to engage as many people as possible. Luckily, we were able to do a photo call and present the prize to the winner outside the Town Hall. We were delighted to discover the winner was a doctor at our hospital. She decided to donate her prize to the hospital raffle.

The Civic Manager organised the usual Benevolent Fund Christmas raffle with a company that services online raffles. It worked out well and £335.00 was raised.

We have just completed the Pin Badge competition, again all done online. It is a new Civic Award Category addressing the efforts made by individuals during the pandemic. More about it next time.

No doubt everyone will have read about the amazing 104 year old Ruth Saunders and her marathon walk to raise funds for Thames Valley Air Ambulance. It was an honour to accompany her on the last lap around her block and then attend the final lap . It took place at Newbury Racecourse in the Winners Enclosure. I was given the honour of presenting her with her marathon badge.

Remembrance Day was another challenge for our Civic Manager. It was managed excellently and live streamed by Kennet Radio. Many thanks to all who assisted and the individuals who attended on invitation.

As is traditional I attended the annual memorial service at Greenham Control Tower Gardens on 12th December to remember the American Airmen who died .

I did get to attend the opening night of the Christmas pantomime at the Corn Exchange. One of the lucky few as within a few days it had to close.

The town was greatly honoured to welcome HRH Earl of Wessex on December 3rd. He visited the Corn Exchange and our Charter Market. It was a somewhat inclement day as the rain kept falling. This did not dampen the spirits the traders were all delighted. HRH spoke with every trader, tried samples to taste when offered and accepted some produce gifts He was well informed about the current difficulties producers are experiencing and interested in environmental issues, speaking about his bees and wilding meadows.

Other events attended physically or virtually from October 20th, 2020.

Lord Lieutenants Awards V

Opening of Globe P

Fairclose P

Riverside food distribution P

Xtract Thatcham Queens Awards for Industry in presence of Kit Malthouse Minister for Industry. P

Dingley Promise AGM V

Community Interest Company presentation V

Blossom Fields planting P

Lockdown Wood planting Goldwell P

I continue to be thankful to all Council staff and councillors for your support to the Mayor’s Office and our community. I also thank the people of Newbury for all their efforts to keep life on track and support each other. Please keep it up. The vaccine roll out will continue and life will improve for us all.

Cllr Elizabeth O’Keeffe Mayor of Newbury.

22 January 2021.