

Good evening

I would like to extend a huge welcome to you all.

Our year has been another busy one.

Some of the photos have reflected the big community occasions such as Big Christmas mad the ongoing work on Fairfield culminating in the launch in September. We won't forget Michael Eavis, of course in shorts, talking to young and older people and flirting with some of our older residents who he still remembers by name along with their family connections. Such charisma!

Our town has hosted several markets and mini festivals this year. The weekly Tuesday market continues to provide a range of food, plants and gifts. Ange and her team work hard to create the lovely atmosphere on a Tuesday and we are grateful to her and the dedicated stall holders who appear come rain or shine

These activities are a focus for some of our objectives as a Town Council.

We achieved the first stage of the Local Government Award Scheme and are well on the way to submitting our application for the next level of award.

Our aim to work closer with Ansford Parish Council is demonstrated tonight in our first joint annual meeting. We are also delighted that Ansford is taking on the management of the Fairfield and very much hope that further developments can be jointly funded on the future.

You will hear more about the NP from Pek but I must congratulate Pek and the team who have worked tirelessly over the past years to get this plan accepted by the inspector and by SSDC in order to take it forward to a community referendum. Please read it carefully in and vote to adopt it in the summer. It's an essential document when it comes to limiting our building developments.

Our projects for young people continue to be a priority and we support the provision of youth club through Youth Matters. We are extremely grateful to Fray who runs the club as a volunteer along with Madron Osborne and latterly Hedge as additional support. It's a huge commitment for them and they need some more help. With the collapse of County youth services we have led a local initiative to work with other Town and Parish Councils to support sharing of information, training opportunities and recruitment of staff. The Wild East Youth Partnership has met twice to share ideas and good practice in working with young people in CC Bruton, Henstridge and Wincanton.

CCTC supports the Cary Carers who meet monthly and from the information desk we promote a range of health and well being activities for older people. We continue to work closely with the surgery team to become a Dementia Friendly Town and promote good health. We also give a grant for the CAT bus.

The new Pavilion Project is just starting to be planned. We have engaged a firm of architects and we are working with the Cricket and football clubs to update their facilities and encourage more sport on the DP field. We plan to include facilities for the Youth Club to run from the Pavilion in the future.

Our planning group works hard to lobby against inappropriate aspects of development and give comments to SSDC. The recent decision from the planning inspector following the Foxes Run appeal was gutting for residents, Councillors and Care 4 Cary. Again volunteers enhance our case and support with further professional advice in planning.

The recent initiative from our Horsepond volunteers to renovate the Horsepond has been a staggering fund raising success. It has gained more volunteers, help from national charities, help from our generous Community and from local businesses. We look forward to seeing the developments in the next few months. Many congratulations to the whole team on their enthusiasm and success.

Greener Cary has gone from a tiny start up group to running a Fair last September and is now planning another for this September. Another voluntary group which has enhanced our community

is the Castle Cary Community Library initiative. This was started as a direct response to the County cutting library services in rural areas. We have given them a grant along with our neighbouring parishes. Without their action and support we would have lost another valuable service in our town.

The Castle Cary Chamber of Commerce has been formed to help businesses respond to pressures in the world of business and of course our High Street shops. Penny will report more about this initiative

From 1st April we all became the proud owners of the Market House. Some of you will remember the MH as an open roofed space riddled with pigeon poo and mess. The transformation of this space was the vision of our Council ten years ago and the building is now very much the heart of Castle Cary used by the community, businesses and services. We continue to promote its use for many different community events, support embryonic catering pop ups and provide meeting spaces for local businesses.

The parking and state of our roads and pavements continue to be a concern. We constantly lobby the County Council and hope very much that they will initiate three small improvement schemes for North Street, the A371 and Station Road in this funding year. Cllr Mike Lewis is working on this.

Volunteers monitor the use of the car parks and report that the free parking still provides space for residents and visitors alike to shop and park here daily.

I hope you can see that our many community volunteers are essential to the smooth running of the town. We are extremely grateful to everyone previously mentioned and to our frontline information volunteers at the Market House. Also to the cemetery chapel volunteers who are creating a legacy for our community with their beautiful panels which have been on display this evening. Everywhere we go someone is helping us maintain the clean welcoming environment in Cary and Ansford. Thank you....you know who you are.

Finally we are delighted that we now have a full Council of 13 Councillors. We recently co opted 4 new Councillors and we welcome them with open arms . We've promised them an easy start but have great plans for them! They are of course all volunteers and I am very grateful to all our Councillors for their help and support in all sorts of ways . They are a dream team!

We are supported by our very able team of colleagues. Our new Town Clerk Zöe Godden is, at the moment part time until she completes her 3 months notice from her three part time clerk posts!! That means our Deputy Clerk Claire and our Bookings and Promotions manager Holly are keeping everything going at the moment.

We are also grateful to our maintenance manager Mike and our domestic cleaner Angela both of whom have to regularly deal with despicable things. The team's knowledge and commitment to making everything work is outstanding and we are very grateful.