

**Annual Town Meeting 21 April 2015**  
**Report of the Hednesford Town Council**

The Annual Report of the Town Council covers the Municipal Year – May 2014 to April 2015

Since the elections in May 2011 your Town Councillors continue to be George Adamson, Sheila Cartwright, Derek Davis, Brian Gamble, Alan Pearson, Diane and Bob Todd, Wendy Yates and myself Doris Grice. It is with sadness that I have to report that we have one vacancy due to the death of John O’Leary in February

I was honoured to be elected to serve as Chairman of the Council for the current year and I have been supported by Brian Gamble as Vice-Chairman

On the 7 May 2015 there will be Parliamentary, District and Town Council Elections. All 10 places on the Town Council will be contested

To comply with statutory requirements the Annual Meeting of the Town Council this year will be at 7:30 pm on Tuesday 19 May 2015

Members of the public are cordially invited to all Council meetings and, at the commencement, there is always an opportunity for questions and discussion

First of all, it is appropriate to take a moment to reflect on the last 12 months

Due to the sterling efforts of the Friends of Hednesford Park and Cannock Chase Council work continues to carry out improvements to the park and the War Memorial. The Town Council was pleased to support the proposals for the creation of all-weather pitches on the site of the former West Cannock No.5 Social Club in Bradbury Lane. This will see a vast improvement to what has been an ugly derelict site. Although just outside the Hednesford boundary the Council also welcomed the progress regarding the future development of the Festival Stadium site. All these schemes will provide first class leisure facilities for the people of Hednesford

The transformation of the town centre continued and the floral decorations during the summer were, once again, outstanding

Business is still showing confidence in the area, For example with the redevelopment of the Anglesey Lodge by J D Wetherspoon into the Hedgford Lodge – which should help to boost the night time economy

The Town Council has been consulted on the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village and believes that by working closely with the developer there could be beneficial spin offs for Hednesford

The Town Council continues to deliver a package of measures that are designed to benefit the local community and to promote Hednesford

As a continuing commitment to the economic wellbeing of Hednesford, each year the Town Council contributes about £25,000 towards the cost of CCTV. Less than £2.00 per year per elector.

This ensures that Hednesford still has the only free town centre car parking in the entire district and as well as the

economic benefits we should all feel safer due to the cameras deterring crime and anti-social behaviour  
We have received regular reports on CCTV activity and are delighted that 2 cameras lost as part of the Victoria Street development are about to be replaced

The Council is working to increase public pride in our town and the surrounding area which is regarded as the “Gateway to Cannock Chase” - an area of outstanding natural beauty

As part of the World War I centenary, the Council has continued a project, in association with Keele University, to record information about people who were living in Hednesford at the time

We have also participated in several commemorative events associated with our armed forces including the granting of the Freedom of the town to Corporal (now promoted to Sergeant) Watchman V and the rededication of the archway once located at the entrance to the former Drill Hall which has been expertly restored

The heritage of Hednesford is being promoted as much as possible and the Town Council has hosted several

talks including one in respect of the “Hednesford Ripper”, Henry Gaskin which was attended by over 100 people

One of the most important roles of the Town Council is to represent the views of the local community and ensure that these are made known to the District and County Councils and other bodies. For example since the last Town Meeting the Town Council has been asked to submit observations on over 60 planning applications which is a slight reduction on the previous year

When commenting on planning applications the Town Council seeks to improve highways and car parking arrangements and for developers to contribute to the provision of other benefits for the people of Hednesford

In order to enhance this influential planning role during 2014 the Town Council commenced the process for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for Hednesford as this has the potential for ensuring that planning decisions accord with the local needs

It will also provide a higher contribution to the Town from the Community Infrastructure Levy that developers will have to pay in future

The Town Council needs to keep local people informed. There is a vast amount of information on the web site and this is currently being overhauled so as to make it more user friendly. On Twitter we have 513 followers - an increase of 20% from the 426 last year

New residents are now being provided with a “welcome pack” containing a variety of sign posting information to introduce them to Hednesford and let them know what is available on their doorstep

The Town Council remains supportive of various organisations that do so much to promote the area and generate community involvement and appreciates the establishment of Hednesford in Partnership which will aim to coordinate various issues

In this respect I should like to thank everyone involved in the recent Spring Clean carried out on the Co-op car park

Let's look at what else the Town Council provides for the local community – and remember that these services would not be provided by anyone else

The improvements and extension to the Pye Green Community Centre have been a great success. Regular hirers continue to be attracted

Each week there are bookings from dance groups, marital arts trainers, zumba, keep fit including weight watchers providing activities for all age groups and abilities

There are opportunities for young people to train in dance and performance and weekly mothers and toddlers sessions

Every weekday evening is fully booked. However it was a great disappointment when the County Council closed the Friday evening youth club

Now that there is a permanent base for the Town Council, many personal enquiries are being dealt with from callers to the Pye Green Community Centre where the office is open on most weekday mornings

CAB provide an Outreach Advice service on Thursday morning of each week. The Town Council funds the service which has assisted many clients during the year

The Centre is providing IT training where adults who live in Hednesford are offered free tuition in the use of computers. Additional volunteer tutors need to be recruited so that more courses can be offered

Many statutory and other bodies choose the centre for their public meetings. The new meeting rooms have proved to be popular with commercial training providers

The function room with fully licensed bar is regularly booked for private parties such as birthdays, weddings and anniversaries

The Town Council worked closely with local organisations and charities to arrange and promote a successful Christmas evening and is grateful for their continued support and involvement

This year the planned date is Friday 4 December – but we desperately need someone to take a lead role in organising the event. Anyone who is interested should make themselves known to the Council as soon as possible



Small financial contributions have been made to several organisations including:

AFC Greenheath	£500
Cannock Area Cats Protection	£250
Cruse Bereavement Care	£250
Hednesford in Partnership	£500
Katharine House Hospice	£500
St. John Ambulance (Hednesford)	£500
Staffordshire & West Midlands North Sector	
Hednesford Detachment Army Cadets	£130
Support Staffordshire Cannock Chase	£370

As the lead organisation promoting Hednesford as a dementia friendly town we were extremely pleased to award £500 to the Monthly Alzheimer's Support Evening

In terms of finance, the Town Council was able to keep the precept at £130,000 meaning no increase for the last 4 years

The Annual Audit of Accounts was undertaken by an independent firm of private consultants and once again the Council's accounting and financial arrangements have been approved unreservedly

Governance is an important consideration for the Town Council and, in advance of the election of a new Council in May the current members have undertaken a thorough review of procedures including Standing Orders and Financial Regulations which ensure that we operate in a fair and transparent way and accord with best practice

Looking to the future the new Town Council will face many and varied challenges – not least the future of our much loved library and the constant problems regarding provision of health and other public services which are threatened with closure or cut back

Whoever is elected on the 7 May I should like to wish them all the very best for the future

That concludes the report of the Town Council

Before moving on are there any questions?