

5. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

Berkshire Vision AGM

The afternoon of 2nd October I was at Wokingham Cricket Club for the Berkshire Vision AGM. It is always a pleasure meeting not just the Trustees of the charity but the residents of Berkshire who use their services every day. I really enjoy hearing firsthand the great job they are doing to improve the lives of residents with sight problems which, in this world we live in today, is difficult to cope with even for sighted people.

One of the clients, Chris Owen (AKA 'Blind Man with Backpack') did the Pembrokeshire walk to raise money for the charity and was a guest speaker talking about his experience. It was fascinating and I must admit I would not do such a long walk. I was sat at the same table as Chris and whilst making the acquaintance of his quite young dog, we talked about daily life of being a father and both working and traveling by train to get to work and the difficulties to be overcome. We mostly talked about public transport particularly traveling by train and how important a manned station is to him (he travels from Tilehurst Station). He made a point that the staff there have got to know him, and it is an important part of his day to meet with nice friendly and helpful staff and I am sure he not alone in this.

High Sheriff Reception

This was held in the garden of High Sheriff's own property in Binfield on Wednesday 6th September and the weather did not disappoint - the evening was lovely with a fabulous sunset. The evening's highlight was a display by a police dog searching in the large and beautiful garden for drugs and weapons (hidden earlier). These were found very quickly by Luna a lovely dog and to make everyone's hearts melt even further, they bought in an Alsatian puppy who was just about to start his training.

The evening had many dignities from around Berkshire including many Mayors. The High Sheriff gave a speech, and the time went very quickly because it was so enjoyable,

His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire Awards 2023

The evening was a ceremony to recognise the achievements of some of the Services' reservists from our armed forces along with the relevant cadet forces. This was held on Thursday 28th September at Sandhurst Military Academy in the Indian Room which is stunning. The evening started with the Lord Lieutenant presenting British Empire Medals to Ms. Victoria Robertson BEM for services to victim of domestic abuse in Wokingham and founder of Kaleidoscopic. Her citation was amazing as it describes just how much Victoria does for her community. The award was an extremely well-deserved honour. The other medal went to Mr. Clive Waterman BEM for services to music and he was integral part of WASMA. Having been to a couple of the WASMA events he organised, directed and conducted, he did a great job and another well-deserved award.

This then led onto awards to the various adult volunteers assisting the cadet force - eight awards in all from reservist to civilian and an important award to the reservist Corporal Joshua Southwell of the 73 Military Intelligence Company. This was His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant's Meritorious Service award. Corporal Southwell gave a talk on his experience which for a very young man was long and read like something from a novel by John le Carre. But he did make the point that, as a reservist it

had helped in his civilian life gaining valuable experience to help with his career. After graduating from university, he was working in a call centre but now works for the National Crime Agency.

Along with the awards, was the announcements of His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant Cadets 2023 to 2024 - the four named cadets, one each from the 4 areas of cadets (combined, sea cadets, armed forces and air training), will accompany the Lord-Lieutenants at his various functions. The present Lord Lieutenant, Mr Puxley, is retiring soon after 13 years of service. Leading Cadet Daisy Ashley, one of the chosen four from last year gave a speech about her life in the cadets and she was also part of the Kings Coronation and said what a great day it was that she will never forget.

This was followed a meal and then home.

Cllr Caroline Smith

Earley Town Mayor