

## CLlr Frank Pearson – Annual Report March 2018-2019



Title: Mayor of Winchester

Term of Office: May 2018-May 2019

Ward: Central Meon Valley

Committee Appointments: Council Chairman

Appointments to outside bodies: River Hamble Management Committee (Deputy)

Other: Winchester District Board of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

The year since March 2018 has been interesting, exciting, fascinating and varied.

I was a member of both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Personnel Committee up until my election as Mayor of Winchester for the year May 2018-May 2019. This was to be my second term in that position having been the 813<sup>th</sup> Mayor of Winchester during 2012-2013. The last person to serve a second term as ‘first citizen’ was Barbara Carpenter-Turner in 1974. That was the year that the size of the City Council changed from that of the urban area of Winchester with 24 Councillors to 250 sq. miles and 57 Councillors. We now have 45 Councillors covering the whole of the Districts 250 square miles.

The position of Mayor of Winchester represents more than 819 years of history. It was the second Mayoralty to be created – after Southwick (London) and before Exeter – by Richard 1<sup>st</sup> in 1193.

Then the Mayor was ‘in charge of the City’, holding it on behalf of the Monarch. He was assisted by two Bailiffs. The creation of a Council (Corporation) to assist the Mayor came in the reign of Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century thanks to the representations made to her on behalf of the City by Francis Walsingham the High Stewart of Winchester. It is possible that the newly created Marquess of Winchester (William Paulet) – 1551 – may also have had influence. The Mayor still held executive powers and thus still ‘ran the City Corporation’

As a result of a Royal Commission in 1832 that investigated the ‘governance of Cities and Towns’ a Municipal Reform Act 1835 that withdrew the ‘executive’ power of the Mayors. Or Civic role dates from this Act.

As a Civic Leader, the only Council ‘job’ held by the Mayor is that of Chairman to the Council. We act as ‘Conscience of the Council’. I must say that there is a degree of uncertainty as to what that means, but as an apolitical Chairman we act as a neutral commentator governing Council proceeding.

Our main role is ‘official host’ to greet VIPs on behalf of the Council. This ranges from members of the Royal family, to prestigious politicians, and to other VIPs of the moment.

This year I have welcomed Princess Anne, the Countess of Wessex, the CEO of Afghanistan and his Ambassador, the Ambassador of Nepal, the Mayor of Shiyan (China) and his entourage, and the High Chief Justice of India. The latter at Southampton University.

The Mayor also attends the Graduation ceremonies of the Winchester University in the Cathedral, as well as that of the Southampton School of Art in the Nuffield Theatre in Highfield, Southampton.

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There has always been a close connection between the City of Winchester, the Cathedral, and Education; as well as with the elements of Winchester Garrison, now at the Sir John Moore Barracks and Worthy Down.

This means that the Mayor is not only a 'Governor' at the Hospital of St Cross, but also at St Swithun's School. I have also visited various schools throughout the District – Westgate School, Swanmore College and Winchester College, as well as several Primary Schools – Hambledon, Swanmore, and Highfield.

A privilege of the Mayor is to be able to visit and meet with the many volunteers that help our many local Charities to exist. There are over 500 charities represented in Winchester, the Mayor is honorary President of some, all who have a significant number of volunteers and few paid workers. Unfortunately, we cannot visit them all, but we do our best.

The Mayor visits the Cathedral (Winchester) regularly. There are three services significant to the Council – Mayor's Sunday, Legal Sunday and Remembrance Sunday; but the Mayor attends several other services, especially Carol Services for both schools, but also the Cathedral's own carol service.

Launches of..., and Openings of, figure largely in the Mayor's diary. Many will have seen reports of these in the Hampshire Chronicle. The most unusual was, perhaps, was the 'opening' of an extension to Magdalen Hill Cemetery in Winchester, along with the Bishop of Basingstoke and representatives of the Muslim community. Other 'openings include such things as the new 'Travelbag' shop in the High Street, and a new Thai Restaurant (the 'Khin Khao Thai') in New Alresford; and three new shops in Warwick Lane, Wickham.

Other visits are made to various Care Homes around Winchester to meet with, and sometimes help to entertain the resident guests.

Art, Music, dance and sport also figures large in the Mayor's diary. These include 'The Master's Graduate's Exhibition of work at the School of Art; launch of Art exhibitions at the Minster Gallery, and the Cavendish Gallery in Winchester, various concerts at schools and in the Cathedral; Demonstrations of dance at the Theatre Royal and St John's House, in Winchester, Band concerts at Westgate School, Swanmore College, and Soberton Church Fete; either starting or finishing various races e.g. the Clarendon Marathon, the Winchester Criterion, the RAF 100 Relay Race in Winchester, and the end of the Giessen to Winchester Relay Race. I am also pleased to have been invited to open the new Winchester City Flyers football fields (along with Mike Channon), the launch of Tai Chi classes, and Cricketball in the Riverside Leisure Centre. The Annual Fest with the Winchester Morris Dancers was great fun.

Our association with the Winchester Garrison is varied. Mayoral functions include Freedom Parades (none this year!), visits to functions at the Military Museums of which there are five in Winchester – the Hampshire Regiment at Searle House, the Gurkha Museum, the Royal Green Jackets, the Rifles, and the AGC Museum all at the Peninsula Barracks site. We have also attended displays at the Winchester Museum and the Museum at the West Gate.

The 'Chain Gang', as Mayor's and Chairmen of District Councils are called, hold various Civic Days. We try to display some of the things that our Councils are 'proud of'. For example, I took the Chain Gang to Winchester College, had lunch at the Hospitole of St Cross and then went on to Marwell Zoo to show them the new Tropical Environment House.

Finally, but far from least, the Mayor attends Award Ceremonies and makes presentations. These range from the WOW Awards at Oakley Hall Hotel, near Basingstoke, Winchester Area Sports Awards

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at the Holiday Inn, The Mayor's Awards at the Winchester Science Centre. I was also asked to present Community Awards at the Badger Farm Community Centre (Horticulture), and to 'cut' a multitude of cakes to celebrate various anniversaries.

We also try to visit various meetings of Parish Council, although Mayoral engagements frequently intrude. Hopefully I have all this year's Annual Parish Meetings in my diary!

All-in-all the year involves travel. We have a budget of up to £12000 for a Mayoral car but so far that has driven us perhaps 500 miles while we have driven some 2000 miles ourselves!

The most interesting – meeting and talking with people from around the World, and the District;

The most exciting – involvement in 'pomp and ceremony';

The most fascinating – meeting and talking with the Mayor of Shiyon, the High Chief Justice of India, meeting British Astronaut Michael Foale CBE, talking with various artists about their work;

The most varied – various Civic Days held by the 'Chain Gang' and preparing speeches as Civic Welcomes to Winchester or talking about the history of Abbey House and Winchester.





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