

Mayoral handover brings changes

Reflections on past successes were twinned with challenges to come at the Business and Annual General Meeting of Spennymoor Town Council on Tuesday, 26th May. For the outgoing Town Mayor, Cllr. Geoff O'Hehir, it was a chance to appreciate the privilege it had been to serve in office, travelling 3000 miles on civic business to promote Spennymoor from Richmond to Tyneside. Personal highlights had included unveiling the blue plaque for Norman Cornish; meeting the Duke of Kent when he opened Whitworth School; and being one of only two mayors from County Durham to attend a Royal Garden Party; but what stood out in all the events he attended was the sense of community and well-being that flourishes in Spennymoor. That was also reflected in the contributions from all the people and

organisations to Cllr O'Hehir paid tribute. He highlighted the support of his wife and Mayoress, Liz, the Deputy Mayor, Pat Lawton, and fellow councillors; and the Town Clerk and all her staff. Wider support came from the Editor and team at The Spennynews; a wide range of local businesses; Spennymoor Town Band; and the town's "own" regiment, the Rifles. George Teasdale deserved particular mention, having been much more than the official photographer at events throughout the year. Finally, he reported on the success of the Mayor's Charity, the Spennymoor Sports Academy. Under the guidance of Deborah Swinburne from Evans and Co. this new organisation exists to provide local youngsters of all abilities with routes into support. Cllr O'Hehir was delighted to report that, so far, the charity



Incoming Mayor Pat Lawton with outgoing Mayor Geoff O'Hehir

has raised £10,000, with more to come from the efforts of Lloyds Bank manager Steve Webster on the Coast-to-Coast a month ago.

Cllr Ian Geldard, proposing the vote of thanks, added his support to the new charity, wishing it every success. Charity continued to be the theme as the newly appointed Town Mayor, Cllr Pat Lawton, introduced her chosen charities for the year. Firstly, following personal experience, she is passionate about dementia help and support, aiming to make Spennymoor the first accredited dementia-friendly town in County Durham. Her aim is to raise money for training; carer's cafes; and respite care. Her second charity is Papyrus, a national charity working to raise awareness of a huge, but hidden problem -the mental problems that cause teenage suicide. Again, the aim is to raise awareness and provide training and helpline support. Both causes received an unexpected support when Pauline Waterston, the Town Clerk, and Cllr Geldard announced that, as a result of a failed weight loss challenge, they would each be donating £100 to the

Mayor's appeal.

Reviewing the previous year, Cllr Geldard highlighted the Town Council's achievements. Restructuring had saved over £60,000, and the council had still been able to purchase both Byers Green allotment sites and carry out improvements to the Cow Plantation nature

reserve. The planned skate park was out to tender; improvements were planned to play areas; and a capital works programme was in place to improve provision and reduce maintenance costs in the town. However, these plans had necessitated a change in the Town Council's standing committees. All councillors will now serve on the Policy and Resources committee, the Facilities Committee, and the Recreation Committee. The improved transparency in decision-making will speed up the business of the full council, and create a suitable environment for a forthcoming town-wide consultation exercise, facilitated by Durham University Business School. Cllr Geldard warned last year that re-organisation would be a long and comprehensive process; we look forward to seeing the results this coming year.