

The Council year began with the re-election of Cllr Baker as Chairman of the council and Cllr Mitchell as Vice Chairman. There were 3 councillor vacancies. Cllr Dent was co-opted in June, but, following the resignation of Cllr Pattison in August 3 new members were still required. Cllrs Astle and Durning were cop-opted in October and Cllr Woods in December taking the council to full membership. The Council paid tribute to ex-councillor Kevin Webster who died in June and ex-councillor Eddie Mardell, once deputy editor of the Epworth Bells who died in February, his unique humour would be remembered.

Following an extra-ordinary meeting convened in November under powers granted to the Council in the Local Government Act 1972 sec 249, the Council was able to confer upon ex-councillor Peter Davies the status of "Freeman of Epworth" in light of his exceptional service to the community of Epworth. A specially commissioned certificate was presented to Peter in January 2018 by the Vice Chairman, Cllr Tim Mitchell.

Grant funding: The council has the power to grant fund voluntary groups under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and other sections as appropriate. Application forms, explanatory notes and guidance can all be obtained via the Epworth Town Council web-site.

Grant funding 2017/18 financial year

June	Epworth & District Agricultural Society	£1,000.00
August	Street Beat	£200.00
September	Isle of Axholme Physically Handicapped Society	£250.00
November	Thurcroft Welfare Brass Band (Christmas event)	£150.00
2018		
January	Epworth Music Day	£895.00
March	Epworth Royal British Legion	£1,000.00
	Epworth Bowls Club	£1,500.00
	Total grant funding	<u>£4,995.00</u>

Public Participation: Members of the public are encouraged to attend all council meetings and may address the council on any subject; in May Mr Fish speaking as a representative of the "Axholme & Hatfield Chase Landscape Partnership" introduced the "geo-phys" survey of Vinegarth and Kings Head Croft to establish the extend of the Mowbray Manor and was scheduled for August. Members of the business community attended to complain about over-zealous parking officials. The Council discussed the issue the following month and wrote to North Lincolnshire Council echoing the complaint. Parking was mentioned again in June when Albion Hill parking restriction changes were proposed by Mr Woods. Ms Benson spoke of the "shop local" campaign. Following the North Lincolnshire Council Community Governance Review and the decision to reduce the number of councillors at Epworth (from 15 to 9) and other Town Councils within the North Lincolnshire area, Mrs Turner attended in October explaining that she was "appalled" by the decision. The Council had written a letter of complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman but to no avail. The Council was delighted to receive Mr Hunter the Police and Crime Commissioner for the area in November; his talk was instructive and enlightening.

In February the Council was presented with a petition on parking by the Business Forum, this the Council has forwarded to North Lincolnshire Council. Representing the local police PC Jane Proud also addressed the meeting explaining that greater resources were being made available, the station would be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays and at other times. Mr Fish attended again in March explaining that the exploratory focus would be on Vinegarth and that school children and members of the public would be encouraged to take part.

Precept (local portion of council tax): £58213.00 (including the grant portion £3324.00) was resolved as the precept for the 2017/2018 financial year and £57618.35 was resolved February 2018 for the 2018/2019 financial year, however, with the reduction in the "grant funding" element this has resulted in a small increase in council tax for Epworth residents.

Planning: Chris Barwell from North Lincolnshire Council addressed the Council in April on the new Local Development Framework which would be applicable until 2036 and scheduled for adoption in April 2019. An initial response was

submitted via the Planning Committee. A stage 2 "issues and options" consultation response was discussed and submitted by the Planning Committee in March 2018.

As a statutory consultee, Epworth Town Council responded to sixty two planning applications in 2017 the majority of which have received full planning permission. A few, more controversial decisions remain to be concluded and are awaiting North Lincolnshire Council or Appeal decisions. (See separate planning report for full details).

Interests & issues: The Town Council continues to work on the restoration and maintenance of the Chapel of Rest and Cemetery Lodge, approving the expenditure of nearly two thousand pounds on the re-painting of the Chapel in June in recognition that it is "prudent to protect the structural integrity of the buildings". A number of rooms in Cemetery Lodge have been re-plastered and now painted. Externally, works have been done to make the roofs watertight and the guttering has all been replaced.

Epworth Show: was supported not only with grant funding but the council also "manned" a stall, Vice Chairman Cllr Mitchell & Cllr Johnson enjoyed the good weather, high turnout and a successful show. The Chairman, Cllr Baker attended in his official capacity.

Summer Sports: The council is pleased to have provided FREE summer holiday sports provision for youngsters aged 8 to 14 and has approved similar provision for summer 2018 when five "2 hour" sessions will be available at the Epworth Leisure Centre. Available facilities will cater for indoor or outdoor sessions "whatever the weather".

Hanging baskets: Provided and managed by the Town Council with financial support from Epworth Businesses, the baskets were watered throughout the season helping Epworth to a "Highly Commended" award in the North Lincolnshire Best Kept Village competition. Having received grant funding for North Lincolnshire in Bloom which has provided two additional road-side planters and a new border at Kings Head Croft the council hopes to do as well, if not better this year.

The council joined the "cycle mania" by supporting the presentation of two decorated bicycles for the local stage of the Tour of Britain. Many other bicycles were presented on the day as crowds lined the A161 for the "oh so brief" glimpse of the tour as it sped through Epworth, a memorable occasion.

Council administration: Throughout the year the Council has received and amended a number of policies which are required to ensure that the council is compliant with new laws and regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulations which come into force in May 2018. A policy for dealing with Vexatious Complainants and a Complaints Policy were adopted in April, and a Disciplinary Policy and Retention & Preservation guidelines were adopted in July. The Volunteers Policy was adopted in November, the Recording of Meetings Policy was re-adopted in November and amended Finance Regulations were re-adopted in March as were the Social Media and Equality Policies. In line with the council's Freedom of Information Policy all policies should be available on the web-site or as hard copies from the clerk.

Kings Head Croft (QEII Field): The area has been plagued by vandalism all year where a growing trend of incidences of criminal damage were a cause for concern and the clerk reporting fire damage in July, following which the Neighbourhood Action Team made it one of their priority areas. The adequacy of the CCTV coverage has been questioned whilst the police continue to prioritise the area. Public thanks were due to James Smith Construction in August when, following severe vandalism, part of the church-yard wall was destroyed. The Company repaired all the damage completely Free of Charge. The council has had to pay for repairs to damage to the team swing, the climbing rope and through insurance the picnic tables can now be replaced.