Mayor's Report - November 2026

This is a busy time of the year for most of our staff team and Members, and it's certainly been busy for the Mayor, though often fun. This month's events began with the Hallowe'en parade and party, for which I tried - and failed - to match Cllr Morag Bailey's flair for dressing up by going as the Phantom of the Opera. At the party we led probably the longest running single game of musical bumps in history, and distributed prizes to pretty much every child who attended.

I have also been involved with food surplus and Food poverty during the month, meeting with Scott Bees at Kaleidoscope, with Corey Eadson and with others including folk at the Ponthafren Project and in the churches, with the aim of setting up a meeting for everyone involved in this work, which is due to take place next Tuesday as I write this, so a spoken report will accompany this written one. I want to be sure that, especially in this intervening period before a Food Bank is re-established we can work together across the various voluntary agencies, churches. etc, and support each other.

Friday 6th November saw me setting up the sound system for the Memorial service in the Garden on Howell Drive. This went well, and was very well attended, but the new microphone I provided didn't in fact function as well as I'd expected, so I replaced it with an older and better one for the Armistice Day silence on Wednesday 11th.

The fireworks display on the evening of 6th was I think the best attended we've had, and everything went very well. I would like to commend Kim, the Ops Team, and all who volunteered including the cadets for the work they did to ensure smooth running, safety and the collection of an amazing £3100 or so. After the show I called in to see how they were getting on at the Bowls Club, and was invited to open the Christmas fair at Neuadd Maldwyn (Saturday 21st, so maybe another verbal report). Then I called in at the Feathers and helped paint a few placards for the Bed Push.

The Remembrance Service was well organised and well attended, and my thanks to all who ensured things happened as they should, and to the excellent band. Particular thanks to the cadets, the Town Clerk and others who assisted Phil Pritchard after his collapse, and to the paramedics who attended. A good number of people came back to the Town Hall for refreshments. The previous day, the Town Clerk, Deputy Mayor, Gwen Evans and I had presented to Adele Nicoll the Freedom of the Town, recognising not only her athletic achievements at both summer and winter sports, but the way she has represented Welshpool and given back to the town and especially its young people, particularly in her work with the Feathers Club. She is a very deserving recipient of this award.

Mike Harris is one of the chief sponsors enabling Adele to compete at such a high level, and on Saturday 7th I was also privileged to attend one of the two preview nights at the Pinewood, which I hope in its new form will be an asset to the town. It was good to hear from Mike and Rhian about their plans, to meet some old friends there, and also to have some useful conversations about our hopes and plans for the town centre area.

A meeting on Monday 9th put the final touches to plans for the March and Bed-Push on Saturday 14th, demonstrating our opposition to the planned cuts in health provision in our county, which will if implemented mean the downgrading and, in my mind, probable closure of the Victoria Memorial Hospital. As a former chaplain of the hospital and a user of its services at various times, I have tried to make as much noise as I can on this issue, and will continue to do so. The march itself was so well supported that it completely blocked the town for a while, and other towns in Powys are copying what we have done. I had the unenviable task of being the last speaker, so I hope I did all right - at least I got everyone making a bit of noise! It is so important that we get the same level of response on 1st December when the Board stage their drop-in consultation here.

In the evening of Armistice Day, as some of us were discussing Operations and Development issues, the weatherman, drummer and broadcaster Owain Wyn Evans arrived in the town in the course of his 400 mile cycle ride through all four countries of the UK. The BBC used the Rugby Club as a base. Being by now an old hand at radio work, having done a piece on Radio Wales the week before to publicise the Fireworks Display (obviously the main reason why so many people attended), I was asked by the BBC Radio 2 early show to be their Welshpool correspondent on Thursday 12th. I even got to do a weather report, which for me as an eager amateur meteorologist was a great honour. It did, however, require me to be up, washed and dressed for a voice check at 6 am, and interview somewhere around a quarter past.

I then had to head down to the Rugby Club, with as much regalia and bling as I could find, in order to meet with Owain and award him the title of Lord and Bailiff of Welshpool (live on the Sara Cox show on Radio 2). I have to give full honour to Richard who composed the most superb script, and laid it all out really well as both a scroll and a framed document. I got to read a bit of it on the show, and Owain was genuinely thrilled at the gift, which I'm sure played its part in helping him complete what was probably the most difficult cycling of the entire ride - that last bit into Blaenavon is, I'm told, a killer. If Owain happens to return to Welshpool and tries to drive sheep over one of our bridges, please do let him. I think it's in the small print.

On Tuesday 17th David Griffiths and I - and Cllr Vix Davis - attended in this chamber the second meeting of the Business Forum, which like the first was well attended; there were some tough messages for us - tough, but delivered in a friendly and constructive way, and on the whole things we need to hear. I think this will be a very useful endeavour, and I hope in the New Year that we can do something similar with voluntary organisations - a Community Forum, perhaps. We need to speaking to each other, and listening, and acting together on what we hear.

On Wednesday 18th the Town Clerk and I, and Cllr Phil Owen, attended the official opening (or reopening) of the Powysland Museum and Library at Y Lanfa. This is well worth a visit. I was very opposed at the move of the library from Union Street down to the museum, and was disappointed that we were unable to stop what was proposed. Some important facilities were lost to the town. However, the ability to use grant funds to expand and change the nature of Y Lanfa has to some extent rectified things, and facilities there are now much improved, both in terms of the library and the museum, including places where educational and group activities can take place. As is often the case at such gatherings, it was also a chance to have some very useful discussions with Powys CC people and others.

All in all this has been a remarkably busy time, but mostly very enjoyable - though it has included some very early mornings, lots of very late nights - and, somehow, all the other stuff I do still fitted into the mix. I suspect it can only get more hectic . . . for example, Tony Brooks seems to have this strange idea that it would be good for the Town Mayor to cycle the Tour de France route at some point. My first thought was, yes, I can do that, what's the problem with a quick little cycle ride up Broad Street, through the Castle Park and down Red lane? . . . but it seems he means all the way to Cardiff. The jury's out on that one . . .

Bill