

Mayor's Christmas message

The theme for my Mayoral year is working with the community for the community and at this time of year, for those who are on their own, struggling to make ends meet, suffering from loneliness or dealing with sickness or bereavement, the services and support provided by our voluntary sector are perhaps needed more than at any other time of the year.

Over the last few weeks, I have seen some wonderful examples of how the Farnham community help each other. Earlier this month, the Farnham Lions did a fantastic job of collecting donations of food items from local people for redistribution to those most in need.

Christmas is the season of Goodwill and thanksgiving and for some, it is a time when we thank God for the gift of his son to the world. We had chance to do this at the recent Civic Christmas Carol Service and also to remember those less fortunate than ourselves.

I would like to thank all those who gave so generously and helped to raise £1,500 for Step by Step, which is a charity that helps young people facing adversity, including homelessness, to realise their aspirations and reach their full potential. Just £30 will provide safe accommodation and specialist support to enable a young person to break the cycle of homelessness.

A further £500 was raised for space2grow and Hale Community Centre which are the charities I am supporting during my Mayoral year.

On Christmas Day I will be visiting Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice followed by Brightwells Gostrey Centre where Churches Together are organising Christmas lunch for older people who would otherwise be alone this Christmas.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the emergency services and medical staff who will be on duty over the Christmas period. You do a wonderful job and we are grateful.

Finally, as we move forward towards Christmas, I wish each and every one of you and each member of your family, a truly joyous time.

Councillor Pat Evans, Mayor of Farnham, David Evans and daughter Sian

Farnham in Bloom celebration

A magnificent year for Farnham in Bloom has concluded with a reception to thank the many members of the community who contributed to Farnham's success at this year's South & South East in Bloom and Britain in Bloom.

The Mayor of Farnham Councillor Pat Evans hosted the reception at The Bush Hotel on 11 December. The guest list included sponsors, volunteers who enthusiastically carried out tasks ranging from planting bulbs to picking up litter and representatives from the many schools and local organisations who proudly showed the judges their projects which helped secure numerous gold wins and the coveted title of Best Town in the UK

Speaking at the reception, the Mayor of Farnham said: "Farnham in Bloom is very much a community effort and it is wonderful to see so many of the people who were involved here at tonight's reception."

She added: "Farnham looked its very best this year and I am thrilled that everyone's hard work was rewarded by the honour of winning gold at South and South East in Bloom and being crowned the best town in the UK at Britain in Bloom.

"I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in Farnham In Bloom from the staff, councillors and the outside services team at the Council to our wonderful community, volunteers, partners and of course our generous sponsors including The Farnham Institute Charity, this year's Principal Sponsor of Farnham in Bloom."

2020 will mark the 30th anniversary of Farnham in Bloom and so there will be even more opportunities for the community to get involved. To be kept informed about opportunities, email bloom@farnham.gov.uk.

Hundreds join Mayor for carols

The sound of hundreds of people singing traditional Christmas carols filled St Andrew's Church, Farnham on 12 December at the Civic Christmas Carol Service which was hosted by the Mayor of Farnham, Councillor Pat Evans.

Councillor Evans, says: "The choir sang beautifully and the service, led by the Reverend David Uffindell, reminded us of the sentiments at the heart of Christmas: compassion, forgiveness and community. It was such an honour to host

the service, which is held each year partly to thank volunteers who help others in our community and also to bring local people together at this time of year.”

Farnham Youth Choir led the singing and performed a number of songs before an enchanted audience. Joanna Tomlinson conducted the internationally acclaimed choir which was supported with musical accompaniment from Matthew Rickard and Brian Cotterill. As well as the Mayor, readings came from Bridget Biddell High Sheriff of Surrey, Colin Channon Editorial Manager at the Herald, John Negus a community volunteer and Ewan Chisnall representing the young people of Farnham.

The Civic Christmas Carol Service is organised by Farnham Town Council and supported by the Farnham Herald.

Speaking after the service, the Mayor said: “I would like to thank all of those who came along this evening, particularly our wonderful local volunteers whose contribution to the community we celebrated in the service. My thanks also go to the many people who entered the public ballot in the Farnham Herald for tickets and came out on a very wet winter evening to celebrate Christmas with us. The team from St Andrew’s welcomed us warmly and helped make sure everything ran smoothly.”

A collection carried out after the service raised over £1,100. This will be divided between Step by Step Housing’s Open Doors Christmas appeal and the Mayor’s two charities, space2grow and the Hale Community Project.

Following the service, all guests were invited to join the Mayor for refreshments.

Christmas Market draws in crowds

Farnham town centre was packed with shoppers on Sunday (8 December), much to the delight of the more than 180 stall holders and small traders who took part in the Christmas market and the many local shops who opened their doors for the day.

“Shoppers flocked to the Christmas Market to pick up Christmas presents and festive goodies as well as enjoying the entertainment we put on for them,” says Iain Lynch, Town Clerk at Farnham Town Council. “Thanks to our wonderful sponsors – Abbeyfield Wey Valley Society, The Castle Inn, Kidd Rapinet Solicitors and SA Refurbishment – who threw themselves into the festivities, we

were able to provide a free Santa's Grotto, free face-painting, live music and Christmas carol singers. We put on free hoppla shuttle buses too, which I know many tired and laden-down customers greatly appreciated."

Also at the market was a live nativity and children's funfair. Farnham Town Council, which organises the market, estimates that around 15,000 people shopped at the market and in local shops throughout the day. The market straddled The Borough and Castle Street, taking in The Bush Hotel.

Street-food galore was available all over the market, including artisan coffee, freshly made crepes and Spanish churros served with hot chocolate sauce.

As well as the chance to stock up on festive food such as cured meats and cheeses, and drinks, including locally produced spirits, liqueurs, ales and wines, the market provided Christmas shoppers with numerous unusual and original gift ideas. Homewares such as table lamps, candle holders, cushions and throws were available from local independent traders, as were popular choices of clothing and jewellery such as scarves, accessories and handcrafted silverware.

At the end of the market, Iain Lynch commented: "Putting on an event of this scale would not have been possible without the support of an army of volunteers. My thanks go to The Lions, The Hedgehogs and Network Scouts for helping with everything from stewarding to litter picking. Thanks must also be given to the business community – to The Bush Hotel for allowing use of their facilities, to Bill's for keeping our volunteers going with coffee and bacon rolls and to The Botanist and John Davis Funfairs for providing power for stalls. Finally, thank you to Biffa for the giant clear up operation at the end of the afternoon."

Shoppers will have another opportunity to shop for locally produced treats for the Christmas table and last-minute stocking fillers and gifts at the Farmers' Market on Sunday 22 December from 10am to 1.30pm in Central car park.

Town Council takes on parks

New planting and improvements to paths are just some of the changes coming to local public parks as Farnham Town Council announces that it has taken over the management responsibilities for five new sites.

The Town Council will manage the maintenance of Gostrey Meadow, Battings Garden, Riverside Home Park, the Haren Garden and the Evelyn Borelli Garden which were all previously looked after by contractors working for Waverley Borough Council.

“Having had the opportunity to take a fresh look at the gardens and how they were looked after we already have plans for improvements. At the Evelyn Borelli Garden for example, our outside workforce team is putting in a brand new planting scheme including some great shrubs and plenty of colour. We are also reviewing environmental and horticultural practices to make sure our gardens are benefiting from the latest know-how and expertise,” says Iain Lynch, the Town Clerk at Farnham Town Council.

“The benefit of taking on these extra sites at the same time means that from the outset we can improve standards across the board, having a great impact on the overall quality of our green spaces,” says Iain Lynch.

As well as putting best horticultural practice in place, the council will be overseeing improvements to the gardens’ infrastructure such as paths and entrances. Much of the work will take place over the winter months for minimal impact on visitors and maximum improvement in time for spring.