

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF KNARESBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

PRESENT: The Town Mayor (H Westmancoat) in the Chair

Councillors: J Batt, A Bell, M Flood, D Goode, H Gostlow, K Lacey, M Longhurst, J Pickard, M Walker and Shan Oakes

Staff: The Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Community Projects Officer

AM26/001 ITEM 1 – ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR 2026/2027

1.1 The Town Mayor (H Westmancoat) asked for nominations for the election of Mayor for the ensuing year.

Councillor Mark Flood proposed, and Councillor Margy Longhurst seconded, and it was

RESOLVED: Councillor Shan Oakes be elected Town Mayor for the ensuing year 2026/27.

AM26/002 ITEM 2 – APOLOGIES FOR INABILITY TO ATTEND THE MEETING

Apologies and reasons for absence were received and accepted from Councillor K Davies.

AM26/003 **ITEM 3 – WELCOME BY THE RETIRING MAYOR –**
Councillor H Westmancoat: REPORT ON THE MAYORAL YEAR
2025/26 and presentation of awards

The Mayor explained that she had very much enjoyed being Mayor and that it had been an honour to have represented the town. She gave a vote of thanks to the Clerks, the Community Projects Officer and her fellow councillors for the support they had given her and all the hard work they put in to achieve the best for the town. She also thanked Cllr Andy Bell who, as Deputy Mayor, had stood in for her on several occasions. She also thanked the Town Criers and the Mayor of Knaresborough's Town Guides for their help in promoting the town and for being present at some of the local events.

She continued by explaining that it had been a busy year and her focus had been on the importance of community, whether that involved visiting care homes or civic events. She had attended many events in the town and surrounding areas, and had met many people, including Mayors from other towns, otherwise known as the 'Chain Gang'.

One of the first mayoral engagements had been the Golden Wedding service at Ripon Cathedral and it was noted that they Mayor and her Consort had also attended many

other events at the Cathedral over the year, including at least four events in the run up to Christmas.

She referred to the renewal and refurbishment of St John's Church when Bishop Anna from Ripon had blessed the church, which is now much easier to access and has integrated new technology, as well as child friendly areas.

She spoke about 13 August last year which had been Knaresborough Forest Day, the 255th commemoration of the Enclosures Act, and which had seen a series of events in the town celebrating all things nature connected and the purchase of land for Knaresborough Forest Park through public shares

As Mayor she had also been invited to assist with the inauguration of the Mayor of Knaresborough's Town Guides, which her predecessor Cllr Margy Longhurst, had set up, and which promote the town on Wednesdays and Saturdays through their walking tours. As the Town Crier says regularly, "what they don't know about Knaresborough is not worth knowing". This year they are working on coach friendly status for the town and a new Film and Movie tour. Some of the guides are now looking at working towards Blue Badge guide status.

She referred to the 'main annual events' in the town including the Bed Race, FEVA, Remembrance Day and Bright Friday and noted that many of them would not happen without support from many organisations in the town, including Knaresborough Connectors, the Knaresborough Silver Band, Knaresborough Lions and Knaresborough Rotary Club amongst others.

She recalled that at the Bed Race she had inspected the beds on the Castle Top, taken part in the parade and had helped set off the beds at 10 second intervals. Following a long day, and a stumble on the pavement, a passing police car had stopped to help and had taken her home – much to the consternation of her neighbours! She had been delighted to cut the ribbon to open FEVA, judge the annual Town Crier competition and had seen the Knaresborough 11 play on the Castle Top.

In August the town had commemorated Victory in Japan followed in November by Remembrance Day when the town remembers those who made the ultimate sacrifice so we can live freely.

In December the Town Council hosts Bright Friday when the Christmas lights are switched on; this year a display from Blind Jack's had also contributed to a wonderful display of lights.

The Mayor then gave details of many other events attended, including: Open Gardens, assisting with the Yorkshire in Bloom awards, visits to both Hillview Manor and Manor House for their 10th anniversary at which Julian Norton, the Yorkshire Vet buried a time capsule in the grounds, visits to Chain Lane Community Hub and again cutting a ribbon to open Yorkshire Eyewear in the Market Place. She and her Consort had also attended civic services in other towns, including Pateley Bridge and Morley as well as hosting my own recently.

She referred to the Mayor of York and North Yorkshire's mayoral fund for events in the town, Eventure, and noted that staff and councillors contribute on a regular basis. She

referred to the recent Colour Run at Conyngham Hall where she had thrown blue powder at the runners, but which had resulted in her also being similarly covered!

She referred to Knaresborough in Bloom which continues to flourish and was awarded gold in the Yorkshire in Bloom competition.

Turning to Town Twinning the mayor noted that in June delegates from Bebra were welcomed to the Bed Race and for the first time in several years they sported a team in the race.

In October the Mayor and Consort, John, went to Bebra for Kirmes. It was the first time she had visited the town, having hosted visitors from Bebra over several years. She related amusing stories about taking the mayoral chain with her and being stopped at Customs! It was noted that they had very much enjoyed the events and the parade round the town, together with visits to nearby towns.

She explained that Town Council has put in a bid for the Town of Culture 2028 and are waiting to hear whether or not the bid has been successful in the first round.

She referred to the recent appointment of a Town Development Manager who is working hard along with our Town Ranger and Councillors to take over the market which Town Council hopes to do over the summer.

The Mayor concluded by again acknowledging the help and support received from the Town Clerks and fellow Councillors. Most of all the Mayor was very grateful to her Consort, John, who had helped her put on the chain and had been there to socialise with the people they had met. She quipped that he calls himself the 'Bag Carrier', and noted he even has a badge to prove it!

She once again thanked all for an interesting year and wished the incoming Mayor, Councillor Shan Oakes all the best for her time in office.

The Mayor then presented awards as follows:

The Environment Cup – presented to Knaresborough Open Gardens
The Community Cup – presented to Knaresborough Connectors

AM26/004 ITEM 4 – Invest the Incoming Mayor

The outgoing Mayor, Councillor Helen Westmancoat invested Councillor Shan Oakes with the Chain of Office.

The new Town Mayor, Councillor Shan Oakes, took the Chair henceforth.

AM26/005 ITEM 5 - Town Mayor's Declaration of Acceptance of Office and appointment of Deputy Town Mayor

5.1 Councillor Shan Oakes read out and signed the declaration of acceptance of office of Town Mayor.

5.2 The Mayor gave a vote of thanks to the outgoing Mayor and thanked Members for her appointment.

5.3 The Mayor announced that her Consort is to be Mr Bill Rigby and the retiring Consort, Mr John Westmancoat, invested the new Consort with the Chain of Office.

5.4 The Town Mayor (Councillor S Oakes) proposed, and Councillor M Walker seconded, and it was

RESOLVED: That Councillor Kit Lacey and Councillor James Pickard share the Deputy Mayor role for the year 2026/2027.

AM26/006 ITEM 6 – To receive communications from the Town Mayor, including:

The Mayor's Chaplain for the Civic Year 2026/27 – to be advised
Mayor's Charities for the Civic Year 2026/27 – to be advised
Date of Civic Service – to be advised

Members of the Council and invited guests then processed to the Committee Room to be received by the mayoral party.