

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

29 November 2018

COUNCILLOR MRS KATHY MELLISH - CABINET MEMBER FOR FACILITIES AND ICT

For the period 19 October to 29 November 2018

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Due to our forced cancellation of last months Full Council meeting I thought it a good time to take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to the numerous Borough Officers who worked alongside the Emergency Services helping to mitigate what could have been a very different scenario. When fire took hold and destroyed the Sue Ryder charity shop at the southern end of the High Street our Officers undertook the following work:

The CCTV control room staff escalated the emerging event internally and ensured a Senior Manager took control and provided support and resources where necessary, utilising their existing dedicated TV link to the Police Operational Command Control Centre in Wymondham sending live images of the fire from when it started as a small incident through to the fully engulfed building. CCTV was a great help when you consider at one point the blaze took hold at the back of the building which is not apparent when you are on the High Street, the Baker Lane cameras were invaluable to allow the Fire crew full knowledge of fire spread to both sides of the building.

Our Parking staff both those usually deployed to on-street and others who are normally office bound along with the Town Centre Manager deployed to the scene and helped the Police to quickly establish the cordon and maintain that cordon to ensure Public safety whilst the myriad of emergency services sprang into action to deal with the fire itself.

Colleagues from Emergency Planning and Housing dealt with issues around potential pollution and helping those displaced with accommodation needs. Our CIC and Communication team staff took and dealt with calls during the incident.

Following on from that once the fire was under control the Public Open Space Manager and his team of street cleaning staff were already engaged in clearing the ash debris which had extended around the Saturday Market Place and the site in general. As soon as it was safe to do so our electricians worked with the Fire Service to remove Christmas light fittings immediately in front of the store allowing the Fire Service to then better evaluate the extent of the damage with the Building Control Officers.

With the help of all concerned the High Street reopened to pedestrian traffic within 7 hours of the initial fire call. Our street cleaning staff revisited several times to sweep and scrub the High Street of soot which had been washed for quite some distance due to the firefighting efforts.

The Town Hall itself being approximately 20 feet from the centre of the blaze was evacuated early on having ensured that the fireproof document archive store was secured.

This displaced an internal training course which was able to recommence shortly afterwards at a different venue, as was a meeting and a Registration Service marriage ceremony was also relocated.

As soon as it was safe to do so the staff inspecting the Town Hall identified a significant amount of smoke odour which, given there was a marriage ceremony the following day triggered a collective response from the Town Hall staff themselves and an external contractor was called in who worked into the night to deal with the lingering smell and returned at 6am the following day to ensure that the wedding planned for that Friday could go ahead without interruption. Full Council was cancelled for two reasons – the initial lingering effect of the smoke and the clean-up issue for the Town Hall itself and for the wedding the next day. The Bride and Groom were on site at the time the fire broke out, taking into account their initial distress and consideration of a whole lot of planning potentially resulting in no wedding they were reassured and kept updated throughout the afternoon with a final call at 5pm to confirm all was ok and works had been arranged for the evening/night to ensure all was perfect for them to continue as planned for their special day. Many phone calls occurred but at all times my discussion with staff was, please do whatever you can to ensure their wedding happens and the staff certainly did do so. In summary this was an exemplary example of Borough Council staff and Emergency Services working together to not only deal with an emerging incident but also to ensure that normality was resumed as quickly as possible with the minimum impact to all those affected both immediately and from a wider aspect.

There has also been a further cheque donation at Mintlyn of £5000 to the Big C charity. I was pleased to be able to be there and meet the organiser and CEO who were very grateful for the donation which will be spent locally to provide a wider support service for those affected and their families.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Regular meetings with Officers and Executive Directors

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Officer meetings
Cabinet meeting and Portfolio updates
Cheque presentation at Mintlyn
Cabinet Sifting