



**BEVERLEY
TOWN COUNCIL**

WORKING AS A COMMUNITY

Address given by the Mayor of Beverley Councillor Linda Johnson at Mayor Making on Tuesday 4th May 2021

Thank you, fellow Councillors for electing me as your Chairman of the Council and bestowing on me the title of Mayor of Beverley for the next year. For someone who isn't a born and bred Beverlonian, this is a huge honour. Not that I don't have some East Yorkshire in me – my paternal Grandfather was an East Yorkshireman – and I've been visiting Beverley since I was a youngster, where I aspired to live. I moved to the area 32 years ago and now I've been made Beverley's First Citizen, it's more than a dream come true; I am, truly, privileged.

So, here before you sits the 418th Mayor of Beverley, and the 13th woman to hold the position. The first Mayor of Beverley was installed in 1573 so the role brings with it 448 years of history. Every new mayor is very conscious of those who came before them and the difference they have made during their year. I am very grateful to my predecessor, Tom Astell, who has been forced to do things very differently to previous mayors, due to the pandemic, but has shown true leadership in what he has achieved.

Tom would be the first to admit that his mayoral year was not what he thought it was going to be! Opportunities for him to wear the gown and chains and meet people face-to-face have been few, but he has been visible in other ways. Tom will go down in history as being the first mayor to have spent a whole year chairing virtual full council meetings on Zoom; Tom's social media presence has been bigger than any other mayor; he's the first mayor to have hosted a Facebook cabaret to raise money for his charities AND, I think, his impact on Beverley has been the most colourful – remember all those fabulous flags during Pride week when a rainbow flag even flew from County Hall? So, thank you, Tom, you will be a hard act to follow and I guarantee the flags will reappear, whether we are able to hold a Beverley Pride this year or not!

So what about the next year? How can I be as innovative a Mayor as Tom Astell?

Well, I want to make a difference by building on the community spirit that the response to Covid-19 has engendered. It's very fitting that Beverley Town Council has changed its logo to 'working as a community' because that's what Beverley has become. Everyone has become connected. So many have put themselves out for others in so many different ways – volunteering, donating, caring – and the Town Council has been able to support some of the community responses with practical and monetary donations. I want the Council to continue that support and

continue building community spirit by becoming partners with some of those community groups.

Beverley has many different groups, organisations and clubs which make the town special but they tend to do it in isolation, applying for grants rather than asking for other support or working with the Council in a joined-up way. For some groups, working in partnership could be mutually beneficial with cross-fertilisation of ideas and reciprocal endorsement. For others, the restrictions of being a working group of the Town Council can be lifted, liberating that group and allowing them control of their own destiny and funds. To further enable this new way of working, I'd like to announce that such Partners can apply for cash or other support, up to the value of £3,000/year from the Town Council, guaranteed for up to 3 years, depending on agreed criteria being met when the Partnership is formed. The paperwork to apply for Partnership status is now on the website, along with the terms and conditions, and we hope that many organisations in the town will want to explore this initiative. There is no restriction on the type of organisation applying as long as they are within the scope of types of organisations which can be supported with public money and they are properly constituted.

One of the great things a Mayor can do is to help raise funds for deserving causes. But there are so many deserving causes that I am finding it difficult to choose! I'm a passionate advocate for equality, diversity and inclusion and hate to hear of people facing discrimination for who they are or hardship because of other people's actions. So, if your charity meets these criteria and you have a fund-raising idea which I can add weight to, please let me know. I have had 2 approaches already and I look forward to more!

I am confident that, as lock-down to control the Coronavirus relaxes, Beverley will return to being the thriving market town which we know and love. Under my watch, though, the areas where we live will be considered as important as the town centre – so there will be more attention paid to enhancing areas of the town which might have been neglected in the past; there will be all-year lighting for some of our interesting features, more benches, more highlighting of our history and more initiatives to make Beverley cleaner and greener.

But to enjoy Beverley at the moment, we all need to be safe! So I will finish this short acceptance speech with a plea and a promise. Please, have the vaccine when called and remember, wash or gel those hands regularly, wear a mask over your mouth and nose if you can and maintain space between yourself and strangers until we are told it's safe to mingle. And when it is safe and we have the coronavirus under control, we will celebrate, but we will also commemorate those we have lost and we will recognise those who have worked as a community to help those who have been in need. Meanwhile, may God bless us all.