

Mayor's Report – January 2016

Watford Police Station

Following the closure of the Custody Suite at Watford Police Station I met with Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner David Lloyd to discuss policing in our town.

Police budgets are very tight, and the Home Secretary made a statement in December that every police force in the country will need to make spending cuts every year for the next four years. On top of this Mr Lloyd has promised cuts in the police council tax precept.

However, I made it very clear to the Commissioner that we still need a proper police presence in Watford, and that I had serious misgivings about closing the custody suite.

I am grateful that in the meeting Mr Lloyd assured me that the new custody arrangements will be monitored to make sure that officers aren't taken away from frontline policing. There will be reviews in February and May.

I hope that the new system works as intended, but if it doesn't I shall demand that the Watford custody suite opens again - and I know lots of local residents will join the campaign.

Crime has gone down in recent years, but we shouldn't get complacent. Watford is the largest town in the county, and so near to London. There will always be some crime, and we will always need Police Officers in our town centre and in our community.

Anti Social Behaviour has fallen again for the sixth year running in Watford.

Last year reports of ASB fell by 8% - that means that ASB in the borough has now halved since 2009. We are not complacent, though, and we will continue to work with professionals and residents to stop all ASB in our town.

There will always be some random nuisance and anti social behaviour caused by those who don't care about the quality of life of others, but it is reassuring to see that while the town continues to flourish and grow such incidents of ASB across the borough have fallen dramatically.

The Council continues to encourage residents to report any incidents to the police non-emergency number 101 as they occur. This makes it easier to spot trends and tackle any potential problem areas.

Watford Markets

This year the High Street hosted Watford's first German Christmas Market. It was a new experience for the town, and looked great. We are currently evaluating its success and whether we should host a German Christmas Market next year, and if so, what format it should have.

The windscreen covering Watford New Market is currently under construction. The scaffolding is in place for the steel work and panels to be put in place.

A new Marketing Manager who will have responsibility for Watford Market has started at Town and Country Markets. Over the coming weeks TCM will be finalising their marketing and events plans in consultation with the traders. These will be shared with the Markets Board in February.

Free WiFi Launched in Town Centre

Free town centre WiFi was unveiled in time for Christmas shoppers. The new WiFi network provides seamless, 'always on' connectivity for users out and about in the town, at no cost and without time or bandwidth limitations. Over 2,500 people are already using the fast, free WiFi in Watford. This is a partnership with intechologyWiFi meaning that the network will operate at no cost to the taxpayer.

Wiggenhall Road Lane Closure

Hertfordshire County Council's closure of the southbound lane on Wiggenhall Road has caused significant delays for many residents. There was a publicity campaign including newspaper, radio and social media stories in the weeks running up to the closure and 10,000 residents were sent letters.

Unfortunately, it is always the case that roadworks on an arterial road in Watford will cause delays – especially in the early days when motorists are not used to the official diversions.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank officers and County Councillor Stephen Giles Medhurst who have been working tirelessly to minimise disruption.

Car Parks Refurbishment Ahead of Schedule

I'd like to thank residents for putting up with the inconvenience of the refurbishment of our town centre car parks. I'm confident that everyone will agree that the upgrades will make the car parks cleaner, brighter and nicer to use.

The good news is that the works are ahead of schedule. All the spaces are

open to the public in Gade and Church car parks, and Sutton is well on its way.

Mayor's Christmas Card

The Mayor's Christmas card raised £3,850 for New Hope, who help over 500 homeless people every year in Watford. Thank you to the sponsors: Warner Brothers Studios Leavesden, Watford FC, intu Watford, Camelot, Sigma Pharmaceuticals, West Herts Golf Club and Humphreys Data Management.

W3RT's Pancake Race

Finally, I urge you all to have some flipping fun and sign up for Watford's first pancake race. It's a fundraiser for the W3RT Community Fund which works at a grass-roots level providing vital services to disadvantaged or vulnerable people and families. You can sign up at

www.goldengiving.com/event/WatfordPancakeRace2016