

**Mayor's Communications, Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**Reflections led by Ven. Rhiannon King**

**Archdeacon of Ipswich & Director of Inspiring Ipswich,  
Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich,**

The last four months have probably been the most challenging period in most of our lives and our thoughts go out to all those who have been affected by Coronavirus.

We remember those who have died and those who have lost loved ones. We think of those who are personally fighting the virus and its after effects and also those whose work, training and education have been affected and particularly those who have had to shield.

It is with sadness that I mention the recent death of former Mayor David Hale. David served as an Ipswich Councillor for Holywells Ward from 1999 to 2012, and was Mayor of Ipswich from 2008-2009. I also remember Nick Ridley, former Leader of Babergh Council, who was dedicated to many charitable causes in Ipswich including the Wolsey Theatre, the Hospice and the Historic Churches.

The recent months have been very difficult for everyone with almost all of our usual events postponed or cancelled. There have however been a few moments where our community came together.

We marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day, remembering the sacrifices of so many in the Second World War. As Mayor I was pleased to post a video message via the Council's social media channels and we saw celebrations of the end of war around the town. In June we marked Armed Forces Week and flew the flag on the Town Hall.

Since the last meeting of Council we have seen the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, following the killing of George Floyd by Police in Minneapolis. A well ordered and peaceful event took place in Christchurch Park, and the Town Hall was lit up to show that Ipswich supports a fairer society where people do not have to live with prejudice and discrimination. I hope that by working together all of us can help to build that society.

There have been various online initiatives which I have taken part in from home. For example, I was able to contribute video messages for an awards ceremony on Instagram at Suffolk New College and for Northgate School's *I have a dream for a post Covid world* Great Get Together Campaign which took place on Facebook and Twitter.

All charities are under enormous pressure and it has been fantastic to see different groups come together at this time for the benefit of people across the town. For example Volunteering Matters, who host my Mayoral Charity Projects, have been working with Ipswich Museums, Ipswich Libraries, Let's Talk Reading and other partners to prepare and deliver high quality packs of fun and educational resources to many families including those who have English as an additional language. They

have also been taking part in the Respect family support programme, bringing them into contact with hundreds of families during lockdown. I was particularly pleased to record a message for children which was used as part of Volunteering Matters' youth social action online engagement

This year Christchurch Park is celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary and a beautiful flower bed display has been created in the park to mark the occasion. During the lockdown our parks have been critical for our physical and mental health, and I would like to thank everyone in our Parks Teams for keeping them safe and available to us.

I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard to keep us safe during the pandemic, especially our Council employees who have given outstanding service and gone on providing our priority services during this very difficult time.

Having thanked our own staff I must recognise the work of our local hospital, the wider NHS and everyone caring for the elderly and vulnerable; their tireless work has undoubtedly saved many lives and the debt we owe them is immeasurable.

I also thank our teachers and school staff for keeping schools open for the children of key workers and vulnerable children. Schools, their pupils, and those pupils' families have worked so hard to adapt to learn, educate and work online to ensure that education, which is so important for our future, has continued as far as possible.

So many have come forward to support our voluntary and community groups and to help others. Great community networks have been set up or strengthened. Our faith groups have also provided both practical and spiritual support. The strength of Ipswich's communities is shown in adversity and I am proud to thank you all for what you have done, what you are doing and what is yet to come.

Councillors, we are here because of our commitment to serving our Ipswich community. We all wish to keep our town safe and take care of those who are affected by the impact of Covid-19. We are united in the important work of serving our residents and making Ipswich a better place. I hope that we are able to meet the many challenges we face in this new landscape.