

The image features the coat of arms of Charnwood Borough Council as a background. At the top is a golden lion passant guardant holding a black banner. Below it is a shield divided diagonally. The upper left is black with a golden scallop shell. The upper right is golden with a black letter 'M'. The lower left is black with a golden cross pattée. The lower right is golden with a black scallop shell. The shield is supported by two black birds with golden beaks and feet. A white ribbon scrolls across the bottom with the Latin motto 'IN VERITATE VICTORIA.'

# **Charnwood Borough Council**

## **Civic Office of the Year Award**

## Introduction

This entry is submitted to enable you to consider the Civic Office of Charnwood Borough Council for the Civic Office of the Year Award.



Charnwood Borough Council exists to serve the needs of local residents and those working in or visiting the area. The Council's policies on how we deliver our services are decided by our 52 councillors, each of whom represent one of the Borough's 28 wards, which have one, two or three councillors depending on their size.

2014 was a typically busy year for both of the Mayors who were in office: Councillor Sandie Forrest until the Annual Council Meeting in May and Councillor Paul Day since then. During the course of the year the Mayor and Deputy Mayor attended 495 events, 87% of which took place in the Borough.

## *The Borough*

With a population of over 171,000 Charnwood is one of the largest district councils in the country in terms of number of residents. The Borough sits centrally between the three cities of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester, extending from the town of Loughborough in the north to the edge of Leicester to the south. Charnwood benefits from good transport links including the M1, the high speed rail link between Sheffield and London and the nearby East Midlands Airport.

Charnwood is a Borough of contrasts and cultural diversity, from the bustle of urban life to rural tranquillity, providing a dynamic mix and making it an attractive place to live, work and visit. Just over one third of the population live in the thriving university town of Loughborough – an important centre for business, commerce and retailing which also has a strong reputation for further and higher education and expertise in engineering, pharmaceuticals and (increasingly) in advanced technologies. The remainder of the residents of Charnwood live in a broad mix of countryside, villages and towns that reflect a varied and thriving heritage.

*“The Civic Office is an integral part of the Democratic Services team and at the heart of the Council. The Mayor is very much the figurehead of the Council, whether that is when chairing Council meetings, hosting civic events or representing the Council at engagements. The Mayoralty in Charnwood is widely recognised as exemplifying good practice and this is in large part due to the hard work and professionalism of Mike and Carol.”*

*Adrian Ward, Head of Strategic Support*

### *The Team*

The Civic Team consists of two Civic Officers, Mike Hollingworth and Carol Hardy, who both started in the role five years ago. Their main aims are to ensure that each Mayor’s year in office runs as efficiently as possible and to provide a professional service acting as the conduit between the Mayor and his or her customers both internally and externally.

The team provide a full range of services for the Mayor including office administration, acting as macebearers and chauffeurs and also accompanying the Mayor on his or her visits. Because they have a thorough knowledge of all engagements from initial request to completion they are able to ensure that the Mayoralty runs smoothly and performs an exemplary ambassadorial role for the Council. They are also responsible for the Mayoral chains and robes and ensure the general welfare and safety of the Mayor.

To achieve this they work a shift pattern, alternating weeks covering evening and weekend engagements with weeks covering the office during the day to deal with enquiries, correspondence and daytime engagements. This working arrangement allows the Mayor to be accompanied on engagements seven days a week including evening engagements.

One of the keys to their success is teamwork and they are always willing to change shifts to help each other out or assist the Mayor; along with the Mayor and Mayoress or Consort they form an unshakable team.

## Quality and Innovation

### *Remembrance*

The Remembrance Service and Parade is a major event in Loughborough that has grown steadily each year. It has become the largest in the East Midlands with the parade involving 400 people from the Armed Forces Reserve, University Typhoon Squadron, Grammar School cadets, army, air and sea cadets, Boys' Brigade, Scouts, Guides, several bands and veterans. The event is attended by a further 3,000 spectators.



This expansion has also meant that issues of safety have become more prominent and there was a risk that the scale of the event would have to be limited. The Civic Officers have worked with the Royal British Legion, the Police and other partners to ensure that the increased numbers of people wishing to attend the event can be accommodated. Improvements were made to the route making use of the new pedestrianized area in the town centre which meant that a safer route could be used which required less Police resources to manage and enabled the Police to cover a wider area. The new route also made the march past the saluting base and medal presentation in the Market Place easier for the public to see.



## Twinning



The team play an active role, with Loughborough Twinning Association, in developing Loughborough's links with its twin towns of Epinal (France), Schwäbisch Hall (Germany), Gembloux (Belgium) and Zamosc (Poland). The Mayor visits Epinal, Schwäbisch Hall and Epinal each year and Zamosc every two or three years. Mike and Carol arrange all the visits and one of them accompanies the Mayor. This has enabled them to forge strong links with their counterparts in the twin towns.

A key aim is to make twinning more than just a visit once a year and to find new ways to link communities, education and businesses for the benefit of all. One example of this was to organise a visit by representatives of all four twin towns to Loughborough with the theme of volunteering which was funded by an EU grant. This came about from conversations when on visits about how much volunteering is done in each of the twin towns. As part of the EU-funded event a volunteering fair was organised so that local organisations could meet the visitors and share knowledge with them which proved a great success.



Other visits to Loughborough's twin towns resulted in Epinal sending over art students to spend time at the School of Art at Loughborough University; links that they are going to continue. Mike and Carol have also organised school visits for teachers from Schwäbisch Hall, and a work placement was found in Loughborough for a student from Schwäbisch Hall for 3 months, with the Mayor insisting that she stay at the Mayor's home during the placement.

Through Loughborough's twinning links each year a student from Loughborough is offered a three and half week study scholarship placement to study German at the Goethe Institute in Schwäbisch Hall. This is provided through partnership between the Civic Offices in Charnwood and Schwäbisch Hall and the Loughborough Twinning Association. The Charnwood Civic Office is responsible for advertising the opportunity, receiving applications and arranging interviews for candidates, with the interviews being undertaken by the Mayor and a representative of the Twinning Association. The town of Schwäbisch Hall meets the costs of the successful candidate's course fees, accommodation and food for the duration of the placement.



## Visits to Sheltered Housing Schemes

For years the Mayor had traditionally visited the Council's sheltered housing units in December. When it became necessary to come up with a new format for these visits, Mike and Carol come up with one that was special for the residents and provided an opportunity for them to engage with the traditions of the Mayoralty. The Mayor's entrance is announced by the macebearer with mace, and the Mayor arrives fully robed. This provides an opportunity to learn about the mace, robes and the Mayor and Mayoress's chains as well as the past history and current role of the Mayoralty. Rather than risk losing the benefits of these visits the Civic Officers persevered to provide a new service; the new format has proved popular and take up is growing. Residents of one unit who were unable to see the Mayor before Christmas decided to invite the Mayor and Mayoress to a social evening with music and dancing in January instead so as not to miss out.

## Promotion of the Office of Mayor

### Links with Council Staff

The Civic Officers work closely with the Council's Staff Forum to ensure that the Mayor plays a full part in recognising the work that Council officers do on behalf of the residents of Charnwood. The Mayor presents the awards recognising long service and special achievements by staff and annually visits all departments to meet and thank staff in a tour

organised by the Civic Officers.

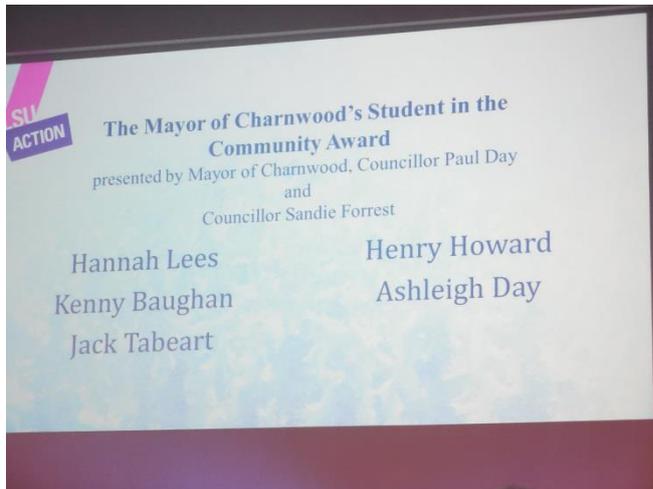
The Mayor is also heavily involved in the charitable fund raising events organised by staff that are held in the run up to Christmas. These include the best decorated office and baking competitions, which the Mayor judges, and a quiz. These events all raise money for the charity or charities chosen by the Mayor each year.

## New Councillors

2015 is an election year and there are likely to be a significant number of new councillors. Mike and Carol have already prepared a civic presentation aimed at new councillors explaining the role of the Mayor, the history of the Mayoralty in the Borough and the civic regalia. This presentation is only an hour long and will take

place in the Council Chamber. It is hoped that this will form a valuable part of the induction process for new councillors by introducing them to the role of the Mayor as chair of Council meetings as well as the wider work the Mayor does on behalf of the Council and the Borough. It will also form part of promoting the office of the Mayor in a positive way.

### Links with Loughborough University



One of the things that makes Charnwood special is Loughborough University. The Civic Office has worked hard to develop the relationship between the Council and the University as part of wider partnership working. Student links have been made through the Mayor's involvement in twinning and the Mayor now attends all the summer graduation ceremonies each year.

The Mayor also inaugurated a special award recognising the contribution that students make to the community which is presented each year as part of the University's action awards.

### Democracy and Schools

Mike and Carol realised that more could be offered to schools to help with the teaching of democracy in schools. They made it one of their aims to increase the number of visits the Mayor make to schools to give talks on democracy, the importance of voting and the role of the Mayor. Leaflets about Democracy and the Mayoralty are now sent to all schools at the beginning each civic year and each school year. Providing more publicity for these events has resulted in a 66% increase in visits in the last two years.

Citizenship & Local Democracy Presentations	School visits to the Council Chamber at Woodgate Chambers	Mayoral visits to schools
<p>Every year members work as part of our commitment to provide local leadership and to promote good citizenship, the Office of the Mayor offers a range of presentations relevant to all ages in order schools to the teaching of citizenship as part of the National Curriculum.</p> <p>Presentations can be designed to fit with previous assemblies or can provide an introduction to the subject. The Mayor is invited to the first Civic of the Borough and principal education of the Council, either for other pupils to meet challenging citizenship questions and answer them or discuss the Mayor's role as Chairman of the Council and look at each topic in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why have local councils?</li> <li>What makes the local council leader?</li> <li>The three tiers of local government - which council provides which services?</li> <li>How are the Councils elected?</li> <li>What do the Councils do?</li> <li>What is the Leader of the Council?</li> <li>What is the Mayor's role?</li> <li>What career opportunities exist within local government?</li> </ul> <p>Please contact the Mayor's Office to discuss your particular requirements.</p>	<p>Visits can be booked on any day of the week subject to the availability of the Mayor. Presentations normally last 10 minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils are asked to be the rotational member of the old Magistrate Court.</li> <li>The Mayor enters wearing the robe and crown of office.</li> <li>The Mayor addresses the pupils.</li> <li>The Civic Officer leads the presentation.</li> <li>The Mayor raises questions.</li> <li>Group photos can be taken with the Mayor.</li> <li>Tea and juice and biscuits can be served.</li> <li>Pupils can explore the Chamber and the Mayor's Fiches at the Town Hall.</li> <li>The Mayor interacts hands with pupils as they leave.</li> </ul>	<p>Visits can be booked at any time on any day of the week subject to the availability of the Mayor. The presentation will be varied according to the time available and is often based into a slightly extended assembly or single period lesson.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The visit gets to start at the school door by a member teacher and/or pupils.</li> <li>The Mayor enters (if required) in a suitable room (often the Head Teacher's office).</li> <li>The Mayor is introduced and enters the hall/assembly room.</li> <li>The Civic Officer leads the presentation.</li> <li>The Mayor raises questions.</li> <li>The Mayor raises and changes (if needed).</li> <li>The Mayor can hear the questions being more questions if required.</li> </ol>
<p>Each presentation is tailored to suit the requirements of the school. Where the time becomes available to discuss your particular needs. Supporting material in the form of leaflets on citizenship issues can be supplied in addition to following a presentation. A wide range of information is also available to the Council and Democracy section of the Charnwood website.</p> <p>There is no charge for any of the services provided by the Office of the Mayor. We request that you are able to contribute towards the travel expenses for visiting groups. Woodgate Chambers is fully accessible to all &amp; pre-prepared risk assessments for all visits is available to request.</p>		

## Value

### *Leasing of Mayoral Car*

The Council has found that leasing the Mayoral car is more cost effective than purchasing. At every opportunity the Council reviews the lease to ensure that it is providing value for money. The last time this was done a 16% reduction in costs was achieved while at the same time changing to a car with lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

### *Working to the Council's aims and objectives*

The Civic Office make use of technology as a matter of course. The Mayor's diary is linked to an engagement database that produces a weekly report of the Mayor's engagements. This report is used in a number of ways: as part of the engagement pack that is discussed with the Mayor at weekly diary

Who	From Where	Time
Mayor	Home	15:00
Mayoress	Home	15:00

and planning meetings and to circulate to Borough Councillors, Council officers and the press to inform them of events which the Mayor will be attending.

The database is also able to record other information about the Mayor's engagements, such as whether they were located inside or outside the Borough. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are asked to look closely at any invitation to attend events outside the Borough with local invitations taking precedence. The NACO scoring system is also built into the database. Mike and Carol also added the Council's Corporate Plan aims to the database so that each invitation and event can be assessed to determine the extent to which it matches these aims. Recent events that score highly in this regard include those to open new affordable housing schemes and awards evenings to recognise people who are active in their local communities. In a time when there are pressures to ensure that the value of the Mayoralty can be measured this innovation ensures that the Mayoralty at Charnwood continues to work as one with the rest of the Council with same goals for the Borough and its residents.

## Message from the Mayor and Mayoress

As Mayor and Mayoress we are expected to carry out approximately 500 duties in the 12 months we are in office. This would be impossible to do without the aid of the civic officers. Charnwood Borough Council as a very efficient Mayoral office run by two excellent civic officers, Mike Hollingworth and Carol Hardy.

Their role is to organise bookings for events which the Mayor and Mayoress have been invited to attend. They ensure we arrive on time and at the correct venue and make sure the contact person is there to greet us.

They organise civic services, carol services, visits abroad to twin towns. We give democracy talks to groups which are organised by the civic officers and thoroughly enjoyed by all. They advise on protocol and generally look after us.

We can't express enough how safe we feel in their hands.

We are the envy of all other Mayors and Chairmen in Leicestershire.

Mayor and Mayoress of Charnwood  
Councillor Paul Day and Mrs Pauline Day.

