

ANNUAL TOWN ASSEMBLY MEETING, 17 MAY, 2023

Report of the Chair of the Town Council

I (think) I was delighted to be elected Chair of the Town Council last year – it has been a challenging and rewarding time for the town and the Town Council.

Whilst the technical and cost issues associated with re-opening the Brow footpath and ‘Saving Ruskin’s View’ have perhaps been the main topics considered by the Town Council, there have been many other issues that have brought the Town closer together.

Many organisations joined together in what has become the ‘Community Share’ to make the Christmas celebrations in 2022 such a success and in arranging events around the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations, the passing of Queen Elizabeth II and the coronation of Charles III. Whilst the town is a major tourist destination, many of these events were locally focused and brought the community much closer together.

The Town Council has supported local initiatives as much as possible and in particular has part funded the Community Interest Company (CIC), given grants to a number of local organisations and both last year and in the coming year has provided significant financial support to the Community Cupboard, an initiative born of the pandemic but recognising the long standing needs of our community.

During the year the Town Council held an Extraordinary meeting following a number of issues that arose at the early August Bank Holiday in 2022 and a number of actions were put in place to try and avoid a recurrence of these issues – we will see if these are effective in a few months’ time!

In the coming year the Council has committed funds to improving access to the Play Park and carrying out improvements to the Park itself; relet the Grounds maintenance contract which should result in the town parks and open spaces being maintained to the high standard achieved over recent years; and we may even get a large metal ram on the A65/Booths roundabout

I started with the Brow/Ruskin’s View, so I will finish with it.

Deciding on the final work programme to re-open the Brow footpath and raising the funds to do this are the biggest issues facing the Council. In the next month it is expected that a final programme of works and the likely costs will be identified by the Council’s engineering consultants, Fairhurst. A further public meeting will be arranged to update residents.

The Town Council has employed a specialist (Sam Millar) to develop and implement a Funding Strategy and a Fundraising Co-ordinator (Laura Keeler). Sam and Laura have been instrumental in establishing a Friends of Ruskin’s View Group and in turn that Group has helped implement the strategy and organise a variety of fundraising events, all of which have been given wide media coverage, particularly in AKL.

The Town Council will continue to lead on this campaign and to date the support from the town and local area has been amazing. Whilst we have a long way to go, I am confident that we will achieve the re-opening of the footpath, when, I am not sure!

Members of the Town Council give their time and effort free of charge and have to accept both praise and criticism. I am grateful to all of them for their efforts over the last year and to the Clerk to the Town Council, Kevin Price, for his support, advice and guidance.

Mike Burchnell, Chair, Kirkby Lonsdale Town Council