

Chairman's Accompanying Speech to Written Report, AGM 2017

Thank you to all for your continued interest in the Partnership Trust and what it has achieved in the last year for our Community.

The definition of the year can be vague, officially it is the financial year in conjunction with the official accounts, i.e. to April 5th, but it also tends to make reference to what progress has been made since the last AGM.

This year's report will be very different in style. Firstly it will be a lot shorter in length; my speaking on my feet for 40 odd minutes is not going to be physically possible. This is only my second public appearance since my dramatic call up to Guy's Hospital for a kidney transplant operation in late August and all that entails. The recovery is not quite complete but seems promising. Since the first public appearance was at a County Council meeting this morning, endurance is going to be questionable. To aid that eventuality I have prepared a written statement which hopefully all had copies of at your seats on arrival. I will try and not duplicate between the two mediums. To add to your entertainment, the power point presentation in Joanne's control behind me will illustrate some of the references made in either report. Both this speech and the written statement will form part of the official record on the website and in our Company Report and those reports to the Charitable Commission.

A year ago we said goodbye to John Tolley, up until then both Company Secretary and Deputy Chairman. A hard act to follow but splendidly now done by two people. Trevor Goldsmith became my Deputy and Peter Bailey took on the onerous task of Company Secretary, more onerous partly because of the meticulous style of his predecessor. However I should immediately compliment both for their adoption of new duties and most especially the skills they have brought forward in those roles. Neither would have anticipated the dramatic demands on both as the year developed. I will say up front in this report how much I have depended on both for their advice and guidance but more recently for their ability to run the organisation in my sudden absence.

I would also acknowledge my thanks to Caroline Barlow for her term as Director. Understandably her challenge to get the College properly funded at the same time as increasing the performance was too formidable to do and spend time on our Board. The performances both at GCSE and A level have increased dramatically and the 6th Form is now superior in all East Sussex. Director Richard Karn, as Chairman of the Board of Governors, must also take credit for that under his leadership.

We were going along swimmingly until the beginning of this calendar year. In January I took a call from the new Managing Director of Tomorrow's People, Martin Brookes. He advised me that his Board were going to pull out of their involvement in the partnership with our organisation in the running of Heathfield Works! and this would in effect be by the end of March, their financial year end.

It transpired that this was no fault of Heathfield Works! but a reality for the financial affairs of the National Trust, "Tomorrow's People" were now extremely vulnerable and retaining their city services was essential to their survival. Two months' notice was not very helpful. What stirred my determination was the absolute need for this operation to continue as the production line of young people in need was not diminishing. In February we raised a stakeholder presentation in the Youth

Centre to present the predicament to all interested parties. We had a fantastic turnout and not least from representatives of Uckfield, Crowborough and Hailsham.

Lisa Crozier and I made presentations and both of us took questions from the floor. People made cash contributions on the night and the whole occasion was uplifting for all concerned. From that moment on it was exhilarating to find the number of people who had thought about this issue sufficiently to recommend possible grant bodies, who may be interested and/or even better make personal introductions. That list is too long but is still ingrained on my brain.

I had set in motion a bid to two national organisations who might consider our set up qualifying for a revenue payment for the graduates we engineered successfully into work or more productive education pathways or apprenticeship futures. Here I was very grateful to the advice and guidance of Caroline McKiddie, a senior officer within Children's Services at the County Council, who provided an able ally as I set out to find the support we needed. Collectively the Partnership and Lisa Crozier and Victoria Bowdler, the remaining team, both made bids for capital investment in the future structure. We were also extremely mindful of the many graduates still needing support as they made their independent way and unless we could seek a means of survival they were going to be left stranded.

March and April were frantic times for me as I sought the means to continue the operation I had first launched in 2011. It was also the time of the County Council elections and I was supposed to be promoting myself for the Heathfield seat. During this uncertainty regarding the future of Heathfield Works I was rewarded by 5 experiences on my campaign trail which also included Five Ashes and Mayfield for the first time. During my campaign I was hugged by four mothers and one grandmother, each responsible for one of our graduates and the story of how much impact this had on each household was immense. In each case they had the young person they loved back now with self-esteem and purpose in their lives from someone they were previously trying to kick out. I never know where our cohort live, I occasionally know where they now work due to graduation ceremonies, for example, and so was surprised by the sudden apparent molestation from strangers. A variation on the kissing babies theme.

Because of the track record of the past 5 years we justified the backing of UK Skills and their contract for revenue was the first strong building foundation. That first contract will run until July 2018. We have now reached agreement to bid in their name for European Social Fund money but with ourselves as named sub-contractor. The revenue commitment was further embellished by £120,000 of capital grants, large and small, which created the structure on which the Partnership Board were confident of making a start in what turned out to be May this year.

Here I would pay testimony to Lisa and Tora who had no guarantee of employment but who continued to work really hard to find a way forward. They also had to put up with their previous employer trying to renege on their committed redundancy fees because we were trying to continue with the service. It was then we determined to launch again but with a different trading name, Wealden Works, we even removed the exclamation mark.

Equally vital were things like telephone numbers for connections with previous graduates where texting questions or requests were the norm. Change of numbers would also have caused stress. Trevor Goldsmith continued a remarkably long teasing out of the rights to numbers to ensure continuity this from an organisation that had guaranteed a formal 12 months of continual service to

all graduates. Trevor's patience was remarkable and successfully achieved. Computers had to be stripped of all information and databases started again. Here we were ably helped by Newmans, an ICT company from Crowborough, who have gone out of their way to provide expertise in setting up of our computer system and back up database. They charge us for components but not expertise and this is their contribution to our cause, which is massively reassuring to our team. The introductions of Sally Frost and Peter Bailey to Newmans was invaluable. Overall it was an exasperating period which proved irritating but because of the initiative of the team was not damaging in the long run.

A number of people to mention in despatches here. Firstly Alan Staples whose advice to Peter Bailey and myself on company structure has led to our continuing under the umbrella of the Heathfield Partnership Trust and using our existing charity status whilst trading under the created Wealden Works brand. This then led to the creation of a small Board to run the Wealden Works operation and its provision of a suitable structure to support the expert front line team. The Partnership Directors Peter Bailey and Trevor Goldsmith and honorary Treasurer Tim Hough came across to join with me. Here we added two people of extraordinary experience and expertise. Firstly Sally Frost whose presence on the Executive Committee of Heathfield Works had already demonstrated her commitment as an employer who had so frequently helped young people get a footing in their careers but also knew all influential people in the South East whom might be able to help. Sensational efforts on her behalf to drive across the county to seek out funders proved extremely helpful in the early stages as well. Then we needed an insight on the working Board of the needs of our new team and this was provided by Julie Kaye returning now as Director. She had been the hugely successful first Team Leader throughout the first three years of Heathfield Works! and her representation on the Board of our whole team is invaluable.

We have been busy in the intervening months to try and calculate a revenue cash flow to ensure we are sound through not only this first year but years two and three. Tim Hough has shown his colours in that exercise as well.

We are now away to a sound start, have mastered the incredible monitoring forms to justify our revenue supply and are now ready to take on our team as employees for the first time as intended. They have all been operating as self-employed for the interim period. This will be a new experience for the Heathfield Partnership Trust as we have never employed anybody directly before. However new regulations make self-employed status not possible for one employer possible beyond 11 months and a change is essential.

I have blithely got through this story without mentioning the addition of the original Frances Conway. Original by virtue of being here from the launch in 2011 and decidedly part of the successful launch, and capable of huge persuasiveness to convince all that this scheme would work. She will be vital in converting new territories such as Uckfield and Horam, our first two ventures of expansion. She retains a style of conversation with would be clients or contributors which sends strong business people quivering and by any definition is original. We are now very glad she is on our side again. Her departure from Tomorrow's People had been traumatic and I will draw a veil over that but her return is a joyful compliment to the skills of the rest of the team.

We will shortly be having our second quarterly meeting with our stakeholder representatives and by this means we keep all of them up to date with progress and the stories of our young people.

We continue the practice of not disclosing the names or personal details and that confidentiality is shared by all concerned.

In my recent absence Peter Bailey has taken temporary charge of Wealden Works and his judgement has been exemplary.

The other turmoil in the year centred on Joanne. She has been centrifugal to the Partnership's progress for most of the 15 years I have been Chairman. Soon after taking over from Barbara Clark who had only recently taken over from the founding Rosemary Mays –Smith, I was to find that Yvonne Hutchinson was shortly to be leaving at the turning of the year into 2004. She and her husband at the time ran CY Logistics and this demanded more of her time. Ironically the business continues to thrive under former husband Chris Hutchinson and is now located on the Crown business estate in Heathfield.

We put out our less than sophisticated adverts and drew a small field from which Joanne stood out as having by far the most potential. She has since grown into the extraordinary asset she has become.

In the summer she confidentially conferred in me that would I possibly do a testimonial as she had applied for a post at the County Council as aid to one of the Directors. I now guiltily possessed the perfect means to quash this unwanted departure. I recovered my integrity and wrote a glowing piece irresistible to any recruiter let alone the County Council. She breezed through the interview and was appointed. Suddenly we were in trouble. I appointed a trio of Trevor Goldsmith, Peter Bailey and myself to deal with the recruitment of Joanne's successor on behalf of the Board. We first set up an advertisement (I hasten to add with Joanne's input of job illustration) which now enjoyed the sophistication of social media promotion and probably to my surprise we found we had a shortlist of at least 4 capable ladies with sound experience. First of all let us not doubt the power of "Heathfieldabout" or at least the Facebook version from where all of our successful applicants came from. We set about the interviews and at least three of the candidates were strong possibilities. Then I took a call from Joanne saying "this job is not what was described, not sure I want to pursue it." Alarms now going off.

Luckily we had not made any appointment and we set out to interview Joanne in the same manner as the other interviews to be fair to all. Hardly surprising that Joanne with her significant knowledge and expertise excelled and we started again. I had charming responses from the 4 candidates to my letters of explanation and would be willing to share a recommendation with any potential employer. In my subsequent absence a successor would have really struggled without me to guide through procedures and the irony was that Joanne helped Peter and Trevor steer through the sudden removal of the Chairman. She has gone on to demonstrate her commitment and to add new creativity to her role.

Throughout the year there has been a background noise in the community that could well influence the strategic future of the Market Town and its surrounding villages. This was Wealden District Council's draft local plan first issuing expectations of 1,200 new homes in the town and 400 further homes in the outer reaches of the parish.

Our earliest representation was to suggest a strategic approach to ensure sufficient infrastructure mindful of the detail of GP Practices, Dental Practices, Schools and other vital services before

getting to roads, broadband and leisure options. We were offered dialogue with the Planning Director but this was delayed by what was to become a profound change in approach.

The nitrogen pollution readings of Ashdown Forest were of serious alarm and vehicular traffic through and around were suddenly to be restricted. This meant curtailing most of the volume of development previously planned in the north of the District. Developers and landowners suddenly went into palpitations about their potential sites and research costs that had been invested. We and our strategic partners will maintain a very close monitoring of this situation as challenges will inevitably come forward and indeed some have reached the Parish Council Planning Committee already.

So far Wealden have held their ground but it is difficult not to acknowledge the fearsome pressures that will be brought to bear by both the inevitable developers and landowners seeking to gain but also central government pledges of housing development and significantly surrounding authorities now pressed to take up the slack in housing numbers. Heathfield needs to be ready for whatever results from new or current resolutions on policy. It also has to get on in accommodating that which has already been given planning permission. This an important issue for all interested in the prosperity and viability of the town. Decisions made by the planning authority or independent Planning Inspectorate will be hugely influential on our future. There will be more noise no doubt, to deal with in this coming year.

Because of the Police Commissioner and Chief Constable's decision to absolve Sussex Police of a statutory duty in dealing with parking enforcement in the Autumn of last year we have witnessed serious alarms regarding safety issues especially for the more vulnerable in and around the town. I made the most aggressive of representations to all of the hierarchy of the Police and landed plenty of punches without raising any constructive response. Since that time no policing of highway matters with the exception of speeding matters has taken place. For a long time I managed to persuade our Chief Inspectors to deal with safety issues such as obstruction of junctions or pavements discretely even though the Chief Constable was trying to ban such initiatives. This was stopped for the first time by the same directive and a specific instruction given to our new Chief Inspector. This is now a serious issue for all the Wealden market towns and will affect their prosperity.

I have been aware of the Leader of WDC being approached by the Chief Constable to encourage his move towards decriminalisation. Fortunately the wise members at Wealden have resisted for a long time but now would seem to be succumbing to the pressures. The pressure is in effect partly coming because irresponsible people in Heathfield visiting or working in the town have not observed safety regulations regarding double yellow lines or pavements to take selfish advantage of the short term absence of policing enforcement. That is now trying the patience of all law abiding citizens wanting enforcement.

Whilst I was absent due to my sudden operation, the possibility of decriminalisation was moved on a few stages and I have been catching up as fast as possible. Both Rother and Wealden have requested a business case be presented by ESCC to them for their consideration as to how to implement enforcement and what implications that would have in how it was paid for. This would be an estimate of a business case for the financing of private car parking attendants to enforce the parking regulations of Heathfield and all Wealden market towns and Rother District have commissioned the same analysis. Wealden District Council are saying that they intend to take a

paper to the cabinet in December to consider introducing a consultation exercise on applying to decriminalise the streets of Wealden. It is possible they may reject that invitation.

There are several implications to this, should it be passed. It will then go to ESCC Cabinet for final approval and there I may be able to do something but a futile gesture which may end my political career looks unlikely at this time to be able to stay the damn. The second is that Wealden may not charge on their own car parks even though they are enforced at the moment by penalty clause first and underwritten at tax payer's expense. The direct change will be car park charging machines in the street parking places which they hope will pay for the extended enforcement staff. I have had a brief opportunity to look at the Wealden business case today and I somehow doubt the fees for on street car parking in Heathfield could cover the estimated costs so then what?

There is another implication here in that I have long had agreements with the Co-op management of Manchester, the Sainsbury's management when getting them to come to Heathfield and also persuaded the Waitrose management on arrival to resist car parking charges on their own premises. They have all honoured that knowing full well that the town staff frequently park in those car parks all day. All of these agreements had the caveat that this was no longer binding if car park charges were entered into Heathfield. Should that happen, the supermarkets would introduce machines on their premises, and fees would be refunded to paying customers of their stores with receipts from that day.

The upshot of this is that shop staff and office staff throughout the town will have to pay for car parking throughout their day. The footfall of the town will inevitably diminish and shopkeepers will have no means to pay their staff any more. The result being empty shops and even less footfall.

In very abrupt terms this may now become a fight for the very existence of the Heathfield we know. Decriminalisation of itself is not necessarily the problem, it is the introduction of car park charges that will be damning and puncture the marketing mantra for Heathfield, that of convenience and frequency. Such an introduction of policy, no matter how restricted that might be, or how low the tariff will diminish the footfall to Heathfield. Those discussions will be ongoing and do possibly have a pragmatic solution which we will seek with vigour. The town now needs to come together to ensure Heathfield does in effect have a future.

I need to be very clear that nothing has happened yet and we have not even reached the consultation stage. Implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement might take 18 months by estimate and variations may appear at some time during the process. The Partnership, in conjunction with the Chamber and with the backing of the Parish Council, have fought vigorously against such a proposition for many years and certainly the duration of my time in public life. I would be irresponsible if I did not warn the members of the Partnership together with our strategic partners that we clearly need to be prepared for developments and all possible actualities.

Still with Police matters, the senior management removed all policing presence from all market towns, also in the autumn of 2016. This contradicted the Commissioner's manifesto pledge towards neighbourhood policing and has disturbed many people in the community and of course crime levels particularly vandalism and minor felonies have increased and been well documented. The Partnership's response was to re-institute the Police Local Action Team Committee where appointed representatives of the whole community meet with the newly appointed Chief Inspector to discuss the needs of the whole Parish. As a direct result of crime patterns being reported

several investigations took place and resulting prosecutions delivered. This will continue on a quarterly basis and indeed the next meeting will be on the 17th November.

That takes us up to almost today. I still have not returned full time on any of my public roles due to needing to fully recover and still not being able to drive, a particular restriction. I have committed to a small number of specific appointments during October and anticipate being back full time at the beginning of November.

The full Partnership Board and the Wealden Works Board have both met in my absence and seemingly without batting an eyebrow. Either I have got the art of delegation to perfection or more likely they are not dependent on my presence at all. Either which way the ship is stronger as a direct result of the personal calamity, not that I wish to challenge it again.

In the very recent publication of the 2nd edition of the East Sussex Official guide 2017 illustrating recent economic growth across the County, the section regarding Wealden and then Heathfield is revealing. I quote the paragraph:

“North of Hailsham is the small market Town of Heathfield, situated on a ridge surrounded by beautiful, rolling countryside, the town still retains links with the farming industry and is also part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. “The Heathfield Partnership” established in 1995, works for the People of Heathfield and the surrounding villages to revitalise the community, from holding a monthly farmer’s market to supporting young people who are not in education employment or training.”

No mention of the £1 million we raised for the regeneration of the town or public website but an odd compliment nonetheless.

It is a demonstration of the commitment of so many volunteers to the Community as a whole and the sheer value of the harmony of the various institutions as they seek to work in partnership for the betterment of the people they serve. Take one brick component out, however temporarily, and the structure won’t fall down. We are confidently in a better place than we were in 1995.

Please all support the Christmas festival on Saturday 2nd December.

Thank you.

Rupert Simmons

17 October 2017

Heathfield Community Centre

CHAIRMAN'S WRITTEN REPORT 2017 – HARD COPY CIRCULATED AT AGM

Elected Members, Distinguished Guests, Fellow Directors, a very warm welcome to everyone attending this Annual General Meeting.

Once again we seek to conduct our formalities in the public eye. We very much appreciate the turnout at our Annual General Meeting of so many people who have worked with us over the past 12 months. It is important that this Trust Company properly records its activities publicly and its business and its accounts are presented for approval by the people we seek to serve. It is also the appropriate time to recognize the contributions made by our strategic partners in carrying out all of our duties, almost none of the operations are conducted in isolation. The collective value in Heathfield, of collaboration across the many parties involved in the community, towards shared objectives defines Heathfield as seemingly a one off amongst South East market towns and bemuses surrounding towns especially.

This report, hopefully more succinct this year, will be recorded on our website for the community to have access to and together with our Annual Company Report, the report to the Charity Commission and our Annual Accounts, will ensure a transparency not afforded by many such organisations. We also run an Executive Committee, Chaired by Director Colin Williams, which meets quarterly and engages with all the organisations in the Heathfield area and conducts its business with all the appointed representatives of those bodies to ensure all projects are open to scrutiny and constructive involvement. Those committee minutes are also published publicly on www.heathfield.net, the public community website.

The Annual Accounts which have been approved this evening were put together by a team of our Treasurer Tim Hough, our Company Secretary Peter Bailey and Alan Staples our honorary Auditor. This is done with meticulous care and again I and I am sure both Directors would acknowledge our gratitude to Alan for his expertise and generous time and guidance.

Transport Committee

Since October 2008 the Transport Committee has been running a transport service for the young people in the community. This was named as the "Youth Express" by the Youth Council in the Youth Centre and had a number of dimensions. Its main objective was to provide, for young people living in the rural hinterland of Heathfield, access to attractive activities being put on by the Youth Service. Term time weekly trips were also run to take youths from the Community College to Freedom Leisure Centre, Hailsham. One-off trips, which continue, have been organised for Youth Centre members. This is not as dynamic as had been the case due to cut backs of youth workers in the Youth Centre. There are discussions about how this might be revitalised but nothing is secure as yet.

Also between 2008 - 2015 local community groups/organisations were able to access a transport service whereby minibuses were provided by a consortium of local organisations and commercial companies when not in use by them.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) Committee

During the year continued programming has gone into improving and updating the website www.heathfield.net. We thank 21st Century for all the expertise and support contributed. The website was updated in October 2014 to make it mobile phone and tablet compliant. The number of hits to the site is now in excess of 5,000 per month and the business directory is now fully sophisticated with modern mechanisms to help customers gain access to appropriate information by providing, since October 2016, the business with a free link to their own website.

We launched in May 2015 a Facebook account and this was soon followed by a Twitter account (both called heathfieldabout). These are complimentary to the website. The Facebook account is still proving to be very popular. From August this year Joanne has taken over responsibility for social media for the Partnership and has been on training courses to bring her up to speed. This will enable the founding partners; the Community College, Parish Council and Chamber along with the Partnership to have more editorial control and help stimulate interest in the town and its surrounds. I would pay my respects to Parish Councillor Jean Holmwood who is the Parish Council representative on the Executive Committee but also a major contributor to the overall ICT Committee and played a generous part in ensuring the collective social media initiative got away to a very good start and has been feeding editorial ever since.

Inward Investment Committee

BDUK scheme – the Partnership's representation for Broadband to be installed in Heathfield in the early stages of the project was successful and cabinets have been installed throughout the parish. The County Council are continuing to complete all the rural stretches of the whole county and a further investment is due in the Waldron village centre this autumn.

The Partnership, working with other groups, once again helped put on the opening of the Christmas lights at the launch of the Christmas shopping season. These lights were annually maintained and improved via funds from the Partnership and Chamber of Commerce. We installed long life LED bulbs to the majority of shop fronts in November 2012 which, along with the harnesses, have started to fail. This is an important asset for the town and particularly all its traders in potentially the busiest season of the year. The Parish Council have, very kindly, from this Christmas, taken over responsibility for the lights throughout the town centre as yet more investment was found to be necessary. All in the town should acknowledge the foresight of the Parish Council and its leaders in this investment in the prosperity and vitality of our town centre.

As a committee we have also been heavily involved in making representation to Wealden District Council (the Local Planning Authority) for commercial development opportunities in the town in their drafting of a new Local Plan. Sustainable planning means jobs as well as housing otherwise you will only generate vast commuter traffic on insufficient roads. It has been a confusing time as first Wealden consulted on 1,200 homes in the parish. Now only 200 houses need to be built in Heathfield and this is covered by housing schemes already approved. The largest factor behind this change of policy has been the reported pollution of Ashdown Forest. Thus will no doubt be challenged by developers and maybe central government but until broken this stance will be maintained. For those screaming for infrastructure investment first, this may be a relief. The

Committee will continue to liaise with Wealden District Council and monitor developments in every sense.

Suitable sites for an Enterprise Centre are still being sought and we continue to investigate other opportunities to bring this objective about.

Sports and Leisure Committee

There has been no material change in the funding landscape over the last twelve months and the position, therefore, remains substantially as at the time of preparation of last year's AGM report. We remain unable to substantially move towards our capital funding target to enable us to progress the swimming pool project.

In order to conserve operating funds we have reluctantly agreed to maintain a watching brief on the national funding landscape in order to judge when our project might be best placed to achieve the level of investment required. We intend to maintain this position over the coming twelve months. Any opportunity for funding will, however, be sought with vigour.

We are, however, taking an interest in Wealden's assessment of the condition of the Uckfield swimming pool complex. This is now being questioned as to whether it is sustainable. The policy of the Leisure Authority will be well worth monitoring as there is doubt as to whether building a swimming pool for both Heathfield and Uckfield can be justified. Discussions on this subject will be of interest for the whole community and the offer of full planning permission and a 125 peppercorn lease may well be worth putting on the table.

Farmers' Market

Stall numbers have remained fairly constant throughout the year. We are always trying to attract new stallholders and customers to come to the market. The market compares very well with the markets in surrounding towns and is very popular with the stallholders who, in a number of cases, have ceased trading in other local markets.

The Co-ordinator for the Partnership has undertaken to bring new innovative schemes to generate a growth in visitors to the market. She has also ensured greater efficiency in the costs endured in running the market such as storage contracts being on better terms. A lot of effort has been taken by the Committee to ensure financial stability of this founding project and the Chairman, Colin Williams and Manager, Joanne Aldous, deserve great credit.

Police Local Action Team (LAT)

The 4 CCTV cameras continue to provide the Police with good evidence about crimes and disturbances, in some cases leading to convictions. The installation of a fifth camera was discussed. The Committee also discussed specific local problems of street parking and thefts from outbuildings during the year. In June 2017 The Street Pastors completed their 9th year on Heathfield streets. Their work clearly avoids many small problems becoming larger ones.

We should report the withdrawal of all local policing by the Chief Constable and Police Commissioner with effect from late 2016. This has raised the importance of the LATs Committee in ensuring communication with the Chief Inspector is maintained and all parts of the community can help in feeding useful information forward.

Chief Inspector Emma Brice has attended one LATs meeting in August 2017 and has confirmed her attendance at the next meeting scheduled for November. The committee is made up of representatives of all the local institutions and neighbourhood groups. My determination to maintain this alliance has proven confrontational with overall Police policy but has proven to be the saving grace for our community. We continue to lobby for a greater Police presence.

I would acknowledge our gratitude to Pat Clark who has now stood down first as a Parish Councillor and secondly as the Partnership's appointed Chairman of this committee. She has lead with great diplomacy and skill and meetings have been conducted in the most constructive manner. Her appointed deputy will chair the Autumn meeting.

Heathfield Works!

The twenty second cohort on the Heathfield Works! completed on the 29 March 2017. All 220 young people aged 16-24 are now in either full time employment or full time education. This was a fully mentored 10 week programme for cohorts of 10 young people who are not in education, employment or training to gain work placement experience with suitable training at the same time. The mentors will stay in touch with those young people for a further 12 months to offer any on-going support needed. We have had wonderful support from the County Council, Parish Council, Chamber of Commerce and the business community.

From April 2017 this unique rural initiative is no longer being led by national employment charity, Tomorrow's People, in partnership with The Heathfield Partnership Trust Ltd which has now taken sole responsibility for running the project. From May 2017 it was relaunched as Wealden Works.

Conclusion

This has been a mad rush through the year on our various projects. Once again Heathfield working in remarkable harmony on all fronts with shared objectives and ambitions. That happens because of the close working relationships our organisations and institutions have in working together. It is not rocket science but it is common sense and the considerable efforts of a lot of people make that happen to the benefit of the whole community. Here I would make particular reference to the excellent efforts of the Rotary whose initiatives are of huge value to the community.

Christmas Festival

The Christmas event, which I always publicise on this occasion, is to run this year on Saturday 2 December. It will officially begin at 10.00am and finish at 3.00pm. There will be a grotto with children's activities in Kings Church, stalls in the WDC car park behind Tesco, primary school choirs singing, with other entertainment and a shop window front competition. The Chamber have been brilliant again in organising this but support from all partners would be appreciated as we promote the most important retail season for our businesses.

Productivity

Each year we, the Partnership Trust, calculate the return in monetary value of our voluntary service plus the grants we secure and compare those to the outgoings incurred. This year was not so spectacular as some of those in the past but we still returned an impressive 383.6% on the original grant given by the Parish Council. We remain extremely good value at a time when all resources are strained.

Trust Board

Caroline Barlow, who took over from Alan Powell as Principal of the Community College unfortunately stepped down as a director in February due to work pressures. We still hold our Board meetings at the College and are grateful for the College's generosity. I should say that in standing down from the Partnership Board, Caroline has put her energies behind the College with considerable gusto and in two consecutive years they have exceeded all increasing expectations and the performance of the 6th Form is the crowning glory.

The end of our 22nd year and my 15th report as Chairman.

Thank you for your presence this evening and your ongoing collective support.

Rupert Simmons

Chairman

The Heathfield Partnership Trust Ltd

Tuesday 17 October 2017

Heathfield Community Centre, Sheepsetting Lane, Heathfield