

HEATHFIELD PARTNERSHIP TRUST LTD CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2018

Elected Members, Distinguished Guests, Fellow Directors, a very warm welcome to everyone attending this Annual General Meeting. This will be my 16th as Chairman and the conclusion of our 23rd year in one format or another as earlier steering group and then Partnership. I hope to address the report in a slightly difference manner and to everyone's relief, in hopefully a more succinct fashion.

As our policy dictates we conduct our formalities in the public eye and provide a platform for questions from the general public we serve. We provide an executive Committee (Chaired by Director Colin Williams) which currently meets 4 times a year for elected representatives of all institutions in the Parish to engage in the programmes and have their say on directions taken. Those minutes are published on the Heathfield.net website for all to see. We are going to be surveying all of our Stakeholder Organisations to see what they would like to see from this model and by doing so adapt to their needs and the frequency they wish to attend. This we hope will lead to a greater attendance when we do meet.

As a limited Company we make an annual report to Company House and as a Registered Charity we report to the Charity Commission. The Annual accounts are once again subject for approval by those attending the meeting this evening. Talking of Policies, the Partnership Trust has always endeavoured to ensure it has the right policies in place with which to conduct its business in the public arena with due care and responsibility. In taking on the responsibilities for Wealden Works it has undergone a policy review and with help from our Mentors (particularly Frances Conway) and expertise from the Lets do Business organisation we have spent the year putting in place well researched policies which will give both ourselves and Stakeholders assurances that we carry our responsibilities forward with the greatest care and diligence. This is considerable work and we are almost there now following a report to the Board meeting last week. I would pay my Public acknowledgement to Peter Bailey who has lead most of this initiative. Having put all policies in place we no doubt will have to keep them regularly under review to ensure we are reacting to an ever evolving world and absolutely up to date.

I would emphasize the important role that our Strategic Partners play in ensuring the Partnership Trust operates in harmony with collective objectives. It was of course set up by the Parish Council in 1995 to enable grant bids to be made by a steering group set up to be an independent outreach for the Council and led in that initiative by then Parish Councillor Rosemary Mays-Smith. That independence has been accelerated by becoming a Company limited by Guarantee in January 2002 and of course the registered Charity in May 2003. The connection however has been maintained with the principle of an elected Parish Councillor being on all project committees to ensure the parish is aware of all of our activities. We also provide a progress report to the members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee which meets quarterly every year.

This report, once delivered will be available in full on the Community Website, www.heathfield.net and is available way beyond our boundaries and interested Parties have often quoted a passage back to me which is a sharp reminder to me to be both accurate and in a position to stand by what we say. I am proud to say we have always maintained our integrity.

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 independent Examiner. This is done with meticulous care and again I am sure both Directors would join with me to express our gratitude for Alan's expertise, generosity of advice and indeed his own Company's contribution to their Community. I will be making a further acknowledgement of the Company's expert help later in the Report with a very new development this year.

It is now very important to inform everybody of the change to the make-up of the Trust Board. Our Founder, Rosemary Mays-Smith stood down in July of this year after 23 years of involvement. The early progress of the High Street development programme which eventually took 6 phases was wholly the initiative of Rosemary and her passion to revitalise Heathfield High Street which by then was looking bedraggled at best. One of her first allies in that project, Patrick Coffey, then a Senior Planning Officer at Wealden District Council, was party to that driving force which found the resource for the first stage where designers appeared from County and a style was established but funds were always at a stretch, an irony given the paucity now. Wealden helped with CO-OP Development money and later McCarthy & Stone Ltd were persuaded by Rosemary to make a contribution to the development of the Parade, the very definition of squeezing blood from a stone. All other phases were subject to grant applications and often interesting off line lobbying but all requiring huge business cases and presentation material. We eventually raised over a million pounds in all 6 phases and by then we had the High Street able to withstand the worst of the austerity period 10 years ago where other Market Towns succumbed. That would not have started without Rosemary and her ambition set the whole Town to regenerate. Once that crucial momentum was started, the rest of the programme was sometimes championed by other people but would not have got that far without Rosemary's Vision, enthusiasm and determination.

She tried her best to take the Cycle route (Part of Avenue Vert, Paris-London) north of Heathfield via the old Railway track with intended compulsory purchase but we have not yet made that progress. Cycling now becoming a far more important means to so many people may eventually open up resources to take that initiative up again. All the way through her passion was also for a public Swimming Pool and although that project has made stunning progress, Planning permission, 125 year leasehold agreements, an Olympic Pool from London 2012, it has stalled in the last couple of years with the a strangling of public funds. There is a sniff of an opportunity for potential significant contributions with the Wealden Local Plan being introduced and Director Richard Karn is now leading our challenge on that front and more of that later.

Although now having left the Board, Rosemary on the phone (usually at dawn) is not infrequent as she continues to champion the Partnership and Swimming Pool but now from a distance. I would say this evening on behalf of all my colleagues how grateful we and our Town and Parish are for Rosemary's massive contribution.

The Board has set an objective of recruiting female Directors to reflect the public we serve more appropriately. Rosemary's presence was, of course, immense but it is some time since Teresa Blaxland stood down. Caroline Barlow, the Principal of Heathfield Community College arrived, attended but found her workload overwhelming. The quality of the exam results have risen dramatically which is rewarding for the whole community

and my compliments for the Leadership of Director Richard Karn as Chair of Governors for that improvement in demanding circumstances but the lack of resources at all times demands Caroline's attention as the first priority in maintaining that progress. It was unreasonable of us to insist she sit through meetings lasting long into the evening on a school day.

A new light is upon us as Paula Gear has joined us as a new Director. She comes with experience and expertise in Market Town business and is now building her knowledge of our portfolio of projects. This evening is part of that induction process and we warmly welcome her involvement.

Here I would make mention on very sad news. Colin Williams' wife Sue sadly passed away three months ago. She was an ever present at the Farmer's Market and supported with many of her family, all of Colin's endeavours and especially the provision of hot or cold drinks for the stall holders on Market day. It made Heathfield Farmer's Market more civilised in both hot and cold weather and a greater attraction as a direct result. Colin heroically turned up to the Board meeting that week which is a devotion beyond the call of duty. A lovely lady fulfilling the spirit of Heathfield with an enthusiastic dance in her step.

Farmer's Market

The first project I would then make reference to is the Farmer's Market. Here we have seen significant change in the committee and Colin has moved from manager of the project to Chairman of the Committee and still carries out the project finances. With a great deal of creativity Joanne has taken over the running of the market, has maintained market numbers of stalls where in many cases other markets are struggling. Many of these initiatives have combined new marketing ideas and cutting unnecessary costs wherever possible. My compliments in despatches here to John Miller, manager of the CO-OP, who demonstrates how important the market is to the COOP business by working with us at all times in harmony. We use the "Heathfieldabout" Facebook medium to promote the market each month with any new features being prominent. David Turton, a local Farmer has stood down as Chairman and we should mark our appreciation of his long term services and indeed we will miss his excellent Pork. The Market, running this coming Saturday, the 20th is well worth a visit. Open from 9am to lunchtime, it proves a very tempting launch pad for ongoing shopping in Heathfield

Inward Investment Committee

One of the most important matters we got heavily involved with during this year was, from my point of view, critical to the ongoing state of our Town. Having invested heavily in its appearance, amenities, ambience and vitality over recent years, we were faced with the threat, not for the first time, of car park charges. This is the third time I have been involved with that battle and here I would pay tribute to Director, Trevor Goldsmith who also as Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, went the extra mile on behalf of the Town in trying to impress on various people of influence the importance of keeping our Town Car Park charge free. Many will know that our Sussex Police have now simply forgone their statutory duties to enforce car parking offences. This has implications throughout our Parish at primary school arrival and departure times for example. It also has implications in the High Street where people have gratuitously parked on double

yellow lines or the pedestrian pavement where particularly disabled people or indeed young mums with prams are obstructed.

Given that much of our million pounds of expenditure in the High Street and Station Road development was to comply with the Disabled Access Act of 2004 Heathfield is now recognised as one of the safest environments for disabled shoppers to go about their business independently and safely. When cars are seen parking on our pavements that facility is broken.

We have plenty of free car parks to serve the needs of shoppers and visitors to the Town and Trevor and I have counted every one of them and we have produced signage to tell people where they are and how many. We promote Heathfield for its convenience and accessibility for frequency and car park charges initially on the street would have led to serious implications. First of all the supermarkets have a gentleman's agreement with me to maintain their parks free and herein lies the caveat, provided there is no car park charging in the Town. Great and indeed of course they have honoured their part of the bargain. One of the keys to that agreement is that the supermarkets know that office staff from the Town or indeed shop employees use the free supermarket car parks to park all day. What would immediately impact on the economy of all of our shops and upper floor businesses is if all employees have to pay for all day parking. The shops especially would lose footfall and resulting business, the employees would demand pay rises to compensate for the car park charges and shops would close like a an entertainers' card trick ricocheting across the table. The value of the Town as a shopping centre would evaporate and subsequently the Mass Value deterioration would see Banks, Building Societies possibly services such as the Post Office closing. The imminent Ghost town of 1995 might reappear. The Town came together to fight the threat and Parish, Chamber and Partnership were at one to defend the status quo.

Here I must pay tribute to the Wealden Members who stood up to all sorts of threats and defiantly said they were not going to comply. That bravery has bought us two further years of freedom. Rother District Council sadly succumbed and now face the implementation in just under two years. That now highlights Wealden in isolation in the South East and further pressure being brought to bear. Here I am talking about street car parking places and decriminalisation where the maintenance of street car parking enforcement is maintained by private car parking companies who earn their income with either car park charge metres, fines and or both.

We do have an option that can provide an enforcement service with qualified officers but without the financial burden which stimulates the urgency by which the Police wish to remove their statutory duties. That sensible discussion needs to be progressed. I will no doubt report on it this time next year. My caution is not to enjoy the relief too much, as we may have to fight for the Town's future once again.

The Inward Investment Committee have been very active recently on two fronts. Firstly last night we invited all of our retailers and prominent businesses in the Town to a meeting at the Kings Church to discuss certain matters of concern to them. This was intended to consult our retailers on two critical issues for them, rates and rents. We were becoming alarmed at the reports of 23% increases in lease terms and wished to see whether there was any representation we could make on their behalves. We have become well aware of the pressure being brought to bear on our retailers by the

financial pressures in family homes and the resulting reduction in disposable income. The other momentum is the take-over of web based shopping of course and then add that to the pressures I have listed and for some Traders it is not far from insurmountable.

Whilst all that was going on the explosion of the schedule for the High Street rebuilding programme became apparent. This was due to be done in August during the school holidays and was welcomed. The Parish Council have been campaigning for this work to be undertaken for a long time and I was also requesting repairs to the entry into Mill Road adjacent to Kensingtons and the Fire Station which had got itself into a poor state be done at the same time. Just before I went on holiday for the first time in 4 years, (it became my correspondence from Tuscany throughout) I became aware of the scheduling into November and raised hell. This was further stimulated by Director Chris Macklin grievous at the apparent disregard for the Traders in their most valuable season. I have ever since tried to bring it back at least into October but found the ground impossible to shift, the deferment meant April due to other commitments already in the bag and the winter weather would by then have further endangered the safety of the road structure already collapsing in places.

I then arranged for a senior Officer from Highways to come and add his presence to the meeting last night to ensure all businesses knew the road was not going to be shut to them for a whole month. The meeting last night also enabled two representatives of the Contractor to demonstrate the means being made for each Shop to continue their business throughout and answer questions. Contractor staff also visited all businesses on the High Street within the last two weeks to discuss details and offer leaflets.

About 50 to 60 Traders turned out and two members of the Public who were asked to leave. It is fair to say there was a venomous grievance on the part of a small number and reasonable questions from the remainder. One of the attendees has written to me today in a very sensible and courteous language and I will attempt to reply tomorrow. After all questions had been asked some left the meeting and clearly had no interest in discussing rents, rates and marketing of Heathfield. The remaining half then entered into a very constructive discussion and gave us the authority to represent them in terms of Rates and Rents. We will set out on that journey shortly. Good ideas came forward regarding marketing not least towards our own Housing estates. Some other ideas on ICT matters will go to the ICT Committee as well. Their reaction to the retention of free car parking was appreciative but that was only half the audience who remained to discuss constructive representation of Heathfield as a whole.

It will inevitably be a difficult time in November but every effort was being made to facilitate access at all times needed for each and every trader. The pavements and all car parks will be open throughout. My discussions this morning before Full Council was about speeding up the programme to be out earlier than expected.

The other area that the Inward Investment committee has been highly active in, literally all the way until the 8th October when we submitted the Partnership Responses to the new Draft Local Plan recently published by Wealden District Council. We concentrated on issues relevant to the Parish of Heathfield & Waldron. We are favourable for Housing growth for two particular reasons, one the ongoing vitality of the Market Town and secondly the serious need for affordable housing in our community. What we are not

about is the careless siting of development that might cause serious safety issues or destroy the very definition of our community by tearing away AONB boundaries. At each step we have followed the objectives set for our charity by the Charity Commission. A huge amount of work was undertaken to ensure our responses were to the point and accurate with all suitable references. We made much of no apparent infrastructure investment to support new housing. May I pay public tribute here to a colleague who brought a lifetime of professional experience and dedication to the task and that was Patrick Coffey who may not ever wish to see a local plan again having been consumed in the Parish Council response as well as representations on behalf of clients both, in favour or against, the allocations. Patrick, a fully paid up member of the Inward Investment Committee was not with us last night as he was at an important occasion for his own family, a new grandchild being born.

This morning I received responses from WDC to what turned out to be 26 responses (each essays in their own right) made by us, the Heathfield Partnership Trust to the Local Plan. 17 have already been considered valid and 9 are under further consideration. I suspect not a bad return and perhaps we will get the opportunity if any are considered inadmissible to make representation by other means on those. We have requested an opportunity to speak from the Inspectorate at the resulting public inquiries and that to use a well worn current phrase could be our "backstop."

Overtime we have made representations at planning inquiries and planning meetings in order to either defend our retailers against adverse impacts on their businesses or to promote affordable housing in relevant locations, the most obvious being the Inquiry held regarding the Police Station Site where the whole Town came together to help persuade the authorities that this was the correct site. I would emphasize the point that we did not support the outline planning application for housing at the Tilsmore Lodge site further up the Hill with what could easily be a fatal exit point onto the A265, under the crest of the hill with no possible vision for oncoming traffic, as much chance as rabbits stunned by headlights and very possibly similar outcomes. There was more consideration for that site in the Parish Planning meeting held at the Ian Price Room on the 24 September.

One outstanding objective for this committee is to try and find land or buildings with which to develop an incubator unit. We succeeded with a previous site and generated a grant in excess of £70,000 to kick start that project but it fell though without the money being spent, I hasten to add. However an opportunity to support start-up businesses from our own Community (those in back bedrooms or garden sheds) remains high on our agenda and if the Local Plan can reveal such an opportunity or a site is referred, then we will rise to the challenge.

One objective now almost completed is getting superfast Broadband into the whole Parish, both Town and rural surround. We had triumphantly secured a funding resource from an early scheme to promote the Parish or a pilot part of it well ahead of any siting in the rural stretches of our Country. The work done to present our argument later ensured that the BDUK scheme with both Government money and East Sussex County money as well which started in 2013 came first to parts of Heathfield A tortuous journey at times since but the last remnants of the Parish in its outer stretches are being serviced now. Crucial to all Businesses, Home businesses, sophisticated operations in converted farm buildings, Trading estates, Farmers themselves, all of our 6 Schools but

also Residents in their homes enjoying a greater, now essential, quality of life. I doubt we will be remembered for our research and resulting injection of energy into this cause, but for those in the know, a gentle satisfaction.

Transport Committee and Youth Centre

In the past this committee has done wonders to make representation to defend the bus services operating in and around Heathfield. For the most part this has been done remarkably well. However the contractor who undertook the Heathfield to Uckfield Service struggled and then collapsed. This had an implication on our representation in Uckfield for Wealden Works. I arranged with the County Council's Transport Manager responsible for organising routes and companies to run them to come and meet with myself and Lisa Crozier and about the reduction in route times from Uckfield to Heathfield already essential for some young People coming on the programme. Although willing to see what he could do the knock on effects were insuperable. The key here is the planning gain on the Police Station site should be released when a percentage of the houses have been sold and some of the £400,000 raised should go to stimulate the frequency previously provided and Uckfield would open up again straight away. The benefit, the other way is for Heathfield citizens to have access to Uckfield and its transport links with the County Town and Brighton.

In the summer the Youth Workers at the Youth Centre led by Noosha Robinson organized a 60th anniversary of the Centre and created a Friday night festival. At next to no time for the preparation or fund raising or publicity they managed to put a fine event on. They were rescued by help from the Street Pastors and Rotary as well as generous sponsorship from the COOP supermarket. In retrospect it was bad timing in terms of holiday leave in full motion and the school being down a lack of promotion as well. However those that came enjoyed the bar-b-que and non-alcoholic cocktails and music. It was an insight into how precious it has been to hold onto our Youth Centre (when many elsewhere have long since gone) but a sharp reminder of how much is arranged for Youth activities in our Town. The Youth Centre now specialises in provision needing social care or those with disabilities. These are honourable causes but reveal the lack of help being generated for the ordinary youth (if there is such a thing) and their socialising needs.

Our brilliant "Youth Express" project flourished when the Youth Centre entertained youth groups throughout the week and went on expeditions. There is no such organiser on the staff now and missions are sporadic. The Parish Council investigated the capabilities of the building and its assets and no doubt are keen to contribute to ongoing provision but that has not yet come to pass. There are volunteers in the community who would no doubt wish to help but they are not qualified and would need staffing assistance. This is an area of need that the Partnership and our Strategic partners need to be aware of.

Wealden Works

That brings me onto the current flag bearer of our service, Wealden Works. This time last year I reported on the phoenix like rise from the ashes of what was Heathfield Works! now becoming Wealden Works and getting away to a good start. Now a further year on it has flourished into the outstanding organisation it has become.

Partnership Projects are usually served by a project committee incorporating all experts required. On this occasion this was to take on a scale beyond that of more ordinary programmes. We needed to employ the staff who were our front line team. To that end we appointed a Board of 6 people, inviting the presence of Julie Kaye, who had been the Team Leader when we launched in 2011 and who brought a magnitude of experience to bear and also could offer advice and guidance to our appointed Team Leader, Lisa Crozier, for our new mission. Critical to the success of Heathfield Works! had been the cooperation of our businesses and so we invited Sally Frost who had employed many of our graduates and given them really good starts in their careers. The Board has shown a major commitment to execute the task set by the Trust and so far so good. Peter Bailey has taken the role of Vice Chairman and is the first point of contact for Lisa when needing help of any nature, or simply cash!

The Trust Board still carries the responsibilities and indeed liabilities and enables the operation to continue with charitable recognition. Nonetheless we publish tonight for the first time the annual accounts for the independent Wealden Works and that integrity is maintained throughout. I would pay my own gratitude to Alan Staples whose Company conducts that independent examination and also provides the system for payroll, pensions and national insurance for our team. That hopefully spreads confidence from within but also confidence for our donors and grant bodies in that their contributions are specifically ring-fenced for Wealden Works. A tireless Tim Hough as Treasurer maintains the discipline with seemingly fearsome security.

We had presented the prospect of closure of Heathfield Works! to an audience of supporters and prospective stakeholders at the February public meeting in 2017 at the Youth Centre and established the goodwill being offered.

That has transpired into huge gifts of real generosity from private citizens, grant bodies and local Councils. We have a succession of bids to a spread of local Parish Councils for example which will help our objective of spreading the service to the outreaches of Wealden District. This has then led to another provision, a Stakeholder committee meeting held currently once a quarter and where all donors can nominate a representative to attend in person or receive a quarterly newsletter produced by Lisa, Tora and Frances to keep all briefed on progress. That meticulous care (without divulging confidential personal information) has proven invaluable and has received many compliments from such people.

The Wealden Works Board has set a business plan for the next three years and Tim's projections throughout that detailed exercise have already proven remarkably accurate in this the first documented year. The business dimension is sound and has sufficient finance promised or already received to trade for another further year. This does not mean we take our foot off the bidding process and further prospects are sought after throughout the year.

Talking of money and the business structure should not for one moment take our concentration away from the brilliant team who have already served so many under the newly branded title. One thing we never got wrong was the appointment of Lisa, Tora and Frances, a dynamic team of self-inspired experts in this unique field and whose compassion for the people we endeavour to help, is nothing short of magnificent. A mention in despatches to our voluntary practicing psychotherapists who give of their

time so generously to ensure where it is needed, one to one consultation is readily available. If I can think of one dimension which makes our operation unique it is the sensational mental health provision in a society where waiting lists for CAMHS (children and adolescent mental health service) are reaching 18 months for the first appointment. It is an essential ingredient in our success story.

Very good news is the acceptance of an invitation to become a further Patron of Wealden Works by Baroness Stedman-Scott who will be gracing us with her presence at the Achievements awards ceremony at the Youth Centre on the 4th December. This is an inspirational event now just once a year but please do come if you have not been before. Baroness Stedman-Scott or Debbie, as known to her friends was appointed to the House of Lords in recognition of her 30 year career at the forefront of Youth Employment programmes throughout the UK. She has also recently been appointed as the House of Lords advisor to her Majesty, the Queen.

Earlier this year when it became known that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex were to adopt that title at their marriage, I was quick to suggest a visit from their Royal Highnesses in their first venture into Sussex. Perfect ambassadors for the Youth of the Country with an insight into mental health as well. As it turned out last week a pop into West Sussex, the Brighton Pavilion and then a visit to Peacehaven Youth Centre was compact and diplomatic in serving locations in all three territories but further questions revealed that the avalanche of enquiries to the Lord Lieutenants office had buried the Officer involved. I did not frighten Lisa whilst this consideration was going on but in terms of publicising the service we are making and no doubt a highlight for the Town of Heathfield as well, well worth it. I cannot think of a better mechanism. I have not given up. Sadly the person buried, has now set up forms to be filled in. Joanne has started the process. The news yesterday morning of the pregnancy may postpone some of the early plans anyway.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) Committee

During the year continued programming has gone into improving and updating the website www.heathfield.net. During the year we have protected the licence for the site and indeed its portal. All of that work has been conducted by 21st Century on our behalf. We would thank 21st Century and Nick Potter in particular 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 slightly less because of the advance of social media but the purpose of providing a comprehensive guide to the whole community with all businesses with free links to their own websites, news and events, contacts for all social, sport and arts clubs, the history of the Town's origins and much else besides is still invaluable to the resident and visitor alike.

The "HeathfieldAbout" Facebook page (founded by Parish, Chamber, College and Partnership) has now become another essential tool for the community seemingly now neglecting their local newspapers. I would acknowledge the constructive help of Susan King who seemingly is fast becoming the only journalist employed by the Sussex Express newspaper. The Courier, no longer in the empire once ruled by Director Richard Karn, has withdrawn its focus to Tunbridge Wells. In future I would predict that our own initiatives will become increasingly important. Joanne's editorship of both the website and Facebook and Twitter accounts, with a generous acknowledgement of

Parish Councillor Jean Holmwood's help with the Facebook page are excellent but we now have two competitors, the Heathfield Community Group, gossip and conversation and Heathfield News, set up, I understand, to support self-run consultancy businesses without a commercial address. They have different objectives and that is fine.

Sports and Leisure Committee

Director, Richard Karn has re-invigorated this project. A lady with excellent grant fund chasing experience for similar projects has been involved in consideration of the next funding campaign. Discussions have taken place with potential contributors from within our own community. Meetings are being set up to refresh our relationship with Sport England and of course we have notified Wealden District Council of the Local Community's need and it being deserving of planning gain contributions. That has also been supported by the Parish Council in their responses. There will be refreshed talks with ESCC who in principle have offered a 125 year peppercorn rent package. The County Solicitor for estates has agreed to a meeting shortly with Richard and myself to maintain our original agreements. There is a new Leadership at the Leisure Authority which may open discussions regarding the placement for a new swimming pool complex to replace the deteriorating Pool at Uckfield, where the Secondary School are busting to expand. Some of these factors will hopefully bring about a new momentum in a year where baking weathers in the summer drew many in the community to gasps of grief for the now lost lido at the College.

Police Local Action Team (LAT)

At a time when the Sussex Police have withdrawn from Neighbourhood Policing, the Partnership initiative to maintain our Police LATs committee has been invaluable. During the year we have had three meetings with another due later this month. Chief Inspector Emma Brice whose empire continues to grow showed her support at the end of last year. This year we have had two visits from Acting Chief Inspector Anita Turner and on the 22nd October we will be meeting the new Inspector, Jonathan Gross. The meeting I had with him recently was very promising indeed and once again our mechanism to ensure sensible and responsible accounts of crime or unsocial behaviour have led to positive initiatives and in some cases prosecutions. I am not going to pretend this is a satisfactory replacement for the Police Station and local Team but the Police Commissioner has just announced the recruitment of 2000 more Police officers in the next 2 years which might give us hope of a new neighbourhood Policing system that gives reassurance to all citizens. Objectives are getting the CCTV scheme we championed and the Parish Council so generously managed back into full action. A Police presence even if with PCSOs was wonderful in building intelligence communication throughout the community and would be welcomed back in a flash. A mention in despatches of the Street Pastors who completed their 10th year in June and still maintain a presence on Friday and Saturday nights. The Police to be fair do hit Heathfield with their blitz operation on a generous frequency with a van load of Police Officers dropped into Friday night or Saturday night scenes in the Town centre like a military operation. All corners of our Parish are represented by this committee including neighbourhood watches and so the reach is considerable.

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 spectacular in as returning a dividend of 1,400 percent on the money granted by the Parish Council towards our running costs. With the best will in the world, that is money well spent. With public money still in short supply that is extremely good value and led to a warm reception by the Finance & General Purposes Committee when considering our bid for the following financial year. I would pay a compliment to the Chairman of that Committee, Cllr Richard Ridley who took time out to make detailed inquiries before the bid was formally submitted. The support from the Parish Council is fundamental to all that we do and the incorporation of an elected Parish Councillor on all project committees is an essential accountability in the way we go about our business.

Stakeholders

Our Stakeholders have all had sound years. The Secondary College has returned excellent GCSE results in the controversial new format and its 6th Form, some of the best in the South East of England. Academically this College is making real headway. There is caution about the provision for more vocationally minded students as we learn from our experience with Wealden Works. Generously Lisa and her mentoring team in conjunction with Governor, Trevor Goldsmith and Sally Frost, a Director of Wealden Works, have initiated a scheme of advisory work with students needing support in the run up to their GCSE year. That may prove a sound investment in their future but has been provided free of charge in its explorative period.

Rotary Invited Tora Bowdler and I to a dinner earlier this year where the President at that time, John Kay, presented a cheque towards Wealden Works and their ongoing support has been massively appreciated. The understanding that Rotary have for the principles of the programme is impressive and I think more than most, the full social value to the whole community is properly appreciated.

A much cherished mention in despatches to the organisers of Le Marche on August Bank Holiday. The Heathfield Twinning Association and the Event Committee work tirelessly to get this event off the ground each year and once again triumphed. My compliments especially to Richard Ridley as Chairman of the Organising Committee and this year to Sheila Drennan who has taken over as chairman of the Twinning Society in place of the much loved Gill Temple who passed away in the spring. It brings in huge numbers from a very wide hinterland and now the Heathfield shops are opening and showing their wares to people who once having sampled are then tempted to come back on a more frequent basis.

Not a stakeholder as such but a prestigious event in the Heathfield year is the Agricultural Show in May. This the largest single day show in the Country, it is surely going to be of increased importance post Brexit and separation from the European Common Agricultural policies paying compensation or incentive payments, the industry has got used to. It is brilliantly run and of massive value to the wider area.

Christmas Festival

The Christmas in Heathfield will be championed by two separate events. The Parish Council who have wonderfully now taken full responsibility for the lights will celebrate with lit Christmas Tree at the Fire Station with carols being sung by the Cross in Hand Primary School Choir on Friday 30 November. This will also celebrate the completion of the High Street work although the last phase will be on Mutton Hall Hill. There is the Christmas Family Fun day on Saturday December the 8th from 10am to 3pm. There will be a Santa's Grotto at the Youth Centre with a balloon entertainer and face painter, activities and two dance studios performing. Market Stalls will also be found at the COOP Car park. This is all being led by the Chamber and trying to attract families to do some of their Christmas Shopping in Heathfield hopefully by then with a sparkling new High Street. Please support this initiative where you can.

Conclusion

This has been a mad rush through the year and hopefully this more themed approach was coherent both to my audience this evening but also on the website over the coming year. Again we have witnessed a Town and Parish that works really well together and apart from a hiccough with a farmer's market Saturday clashing with a Dame Heffel festival, everything else was harmony itself. The Partnership is a voluntary organisation that continues to serve the community as a whole to the best of its capability. It has had to adapt to the increasingly professional bidding world and enjoys the hugely appreciated and frequently heroic Joanne Aldous as our co-ordinator and now the team of experts who run the Wealden Works programme. That is a level of depth and responsibility that we could never have envisaged those 23 years ago.

Is Heathfield in a better place than it was in 1995? Without a shadow of doubt and this enables me to use one of my favourite words:-Indubitably!

Thank you for your presence this evening and your ongoing collective support. May I wish you all a splendid Christmas when you get there and a very prosperous and happy 2019 ahead for us all.

Rupert Simmons

Chairman

The Heathfield Partnership Trust Ltd

Tuesday 16 October 2018

Heathfield Community Centre, Sheepsetting Lane, Heathfield