

Mayor's Report 2024-2025

It was a great privilege to be elected as the Mayor of March for the year 2024/2025.

I was fortunate to be able to attend some great events during my term. The first event was the lighting of the Beacon in West End Park to mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings. Appropriately my last event will be lighting the Beacon once again, but this time for the 80th Anniversary of VE-Day on the 8th May.

During my term I have attended 75 official engagements. It has been a great honour to attend many events across the county and wider as the Mayor of March. I have had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of many other mayors and dignitaries who have been an inspiration. The first engagement was the Mayor of Peterborough's Thanksgiving Service on the 5th May that Nicola and I attend. We attended the High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire's Garden Party at Elton Hall which was an amazing setting and that evening we attended the Independence Day event at RAF Alconbury for the USAF 501st Combat Support. We later in the year attended their winter reception on 5th December. We attended the Mayor of Peterborough's installation ceremony on 16th June, the Mayor of St Ives Civic Parade on 9th August, both of the Mayor of Peterborough's Fundraisers, the FDC Chairmans three events, the Mayor of Ely's fundraising event on 17th January and the Mayor of Ely's Civic service on 2nd February, the Mayor of Chatteris's event on 21st February, the Mayor of Huntingdon's Civic Service on 23rd March, and the Mayor of Market Deepings event on 28th March.

Of course we can't go without mentioning the amazing Remembrance Day Service that takes place in the town. As usual Lt Col Nigel "Spence" Spencer MBE and his team did a tremendous job. It was a privilege to lead the parade of councillors and to lay the wreaths on behalf of the town.

There were the two events for March that I held. The first being the Civic Service that had the theme of Harvest Festival. We had tractors and strawbales for the service and there were many dignitaries that attended along with the High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire.

The Christmas Carol service this year was attended by pupils, staff, family and friends of Burrowmoor School. It was a lovely service where the children sang a number of Christmas songs and hymns.

My greatest pleasure has been the supporting of events and causes for March. When I undertook the role of Mayor of March my promise was to do all that I could to help the town prosper and to build communities.

I have attended a wealth of events in support of good causes, community groups and businesses in March that I am very proud to have been a part of. There are so many events I have attended. These included attending a number of events and presentation evenings for 1220 March Air Cadets. I also visited All Saints School, Burrowmoor School, Cavalry School and Neale Wade Academy for events ranging from careers events, various celebrations and music shows. It was a pleasure to meet pupils and they never failed to have a whole host of questions for the Mayor. I have attended events for March Library, March Town Cricket Club, March Town Football Club, March Athletic Club, March Parkrun and March Junior Parkrun, where I now volunteer as a marshall each week, March Rugby Club with Scotty's Little Soldiers, Colin Bedford's badminton coaching anniversary (Colin taught me badminton many years back), and Fenland Poet Laureate. In relation to the Mayors allowance this has been used to cover the travel expenses for attending the civic engagements around the county and neighbouring county's, or for the arrangement of March Mayoral Events. Attending fundraising events has been paid for out of my own pocket. This I believe is the right thing to do as it is a matter of choice to attend the charity fundraiser events and pleasure to contribute. To this end from the allowance of £3,450 the amount used to cover civic engagements is £989 pounds. The balance has been retuned and paid into the Mayor's Charity account to be distributed to causes that support March.

I also wanted to do everything I could to help local businesses as well in any way I could. I spent a lot of time talking to local traders to understand the challenges that they face. I was also keen to create our own events to help bring footfall into the town, support local businesses and bring the community together. The first was the Minis in March Market Place. This was a great event that was organised in conjunction with the Cambridgeshire Mini Club and was well received by everyone. It was a glorious day and as part of the Mayors fundraising I held a raffle for my Mini Cooper S Clubman which raised £2,300 alone.

The next idea was to run a Farmers Fayre in the Market Place. This to promote local farm business and small businesses that use local farm produce in their goods. Various treats were available such as scones, cakes, eggs and a local butcher attended. Local coffee shops and cafes opened up specially for these events. The events in March Market Place have been supported by The Fenland Farmers group. By popular request more Farmers Fayres and variations of this will be coming soon.

These events have been totally self-funding and a great example of how the investment in the assets of March such as the Market Place can be used for the enjoyment of the community while helping the local economy even if on a small scale, as every little bit makes a big difference for small local businesses.

Throughout my term I have been continuing to fundraise through the various events. As well as the Market Place Events, and apart from giving away my car, I have run a number of raffles.

Unfortunately the Mayor's Ball had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers, a problem that has hit the events of a number of mayors across the county. I did though instead have a Spirits Tasting Fundraiser organised with Fensprits, a local distillery, that was well attended and enjoyed by all. Throughout my term I have raised £6,500 to distribute to my chosen causes.

There are three core charities that I know provide services in March these being Break, FACET and Camsight. I will be giving Break £1,500. FACET £1,500 and Camsight £1,100.

There are youth groups and local organisations that I would like to thank for their assistance in fundraising, again all of which I know do good work for March and have supported me during my year. The first are the March Air Cadets and the March Army Cadets to whom I would like to make each a donation of £400. I would also like to donate £400 to March Churches and £400 to Fenland Farmers for the support and assistance they have given me during my term.

I know it is very difficult for groups that are organising events for the town and of course music, arts and culture are things that can bring a community together and the type of events I am passionate about. I would like to donate £400 to the March Summer Festival working towards putting on the event this year for the 25 year anniversary. We are very lucky in March that there are two amazing music events happening this year and likewise I would like to donate £400 to Estafest towards making this year's event as successful as the first award winning event last year. There are two very special people I would like to thank.

The first is my wife Nicola who has worked so hard organising many of the fundraising events and who has attended civic engagements with me. Without her support it would not have been possible to achieve everything that we have been able to do this mayoral term.

The second person is Cllr Mark Purser. I know Mark was disappointed that he had to step down as mayor while I was Deputy. Cllr Purser has been there and supported all of my events and has helped in the background with organising, plus kept us entertained with his jokes! Cllr Purser it is very clear has the Town of March very close to his heart.

Another notable achievement is creating the Mayor of March Facebook page. This has been a great way to communicate out the work of the mayor and in just over 9 months is now up to 398 followers, so if anyone isn't following it yet be good to get you on it.

Finally, to say a big thank you to everyone that has supported me during this mayoral term. There are so many people to thank. In many ways it is a great pity it comes to an end as it only feels like it started yesterday. So thank you for giving me the privilege of being Mayor of March.