

**MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

What a spectacular autumn this has been for Havering.

We were extremely honoured to have Her Majesty The Queen visit Drapers' Academy in Harold Hill last month.

She spent a full morning there, and officially named the main hall as the Diamond Jubilee Hall. She was serenaded by the school choir, watched pupils doing science experiments, and joined them for lunch in the school canteen. It was a wonderful day for all involved and made us very proud that Her Majesty had chosen to visit our lovely borough in what is her glorious Diamond Jubilee year.

Last month I was delighted to see thousands of local residents and visitors thronging the streets of Romford to cheer on the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment – who we also know locally as The Vikings.

They were exercising their right to march through the town centre, as they have the Freedom of the Borough of Havering. They marched proudly up from South Street to the Market Place, where I had the immense honour of helping to inspect the troops. The Royal Anglians are a true credit to this borough and it was a privilege to see them in full uniform, with their band playing, drums beating, and colours flying.

On a more sombre note, I was among the dignitaries who laid a wreath on Remembrance Sunday in Coronation Gardens, Romford. It was an extremely moving service and I was very proud to represent the Council. I was joined by more than 1,200 residents, local groups and veterans, who had also wanted to pay their respects and say a quiet thank you to those brave souls who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom today.

Remembrance ceremonies also took place that morning across Havering, including in Rainham, Hornchurch, Harold Hill, Havering-atte-Bower, Upminster, Collier Row and Elm Park. And in January, we will again pay our respects at Holocaust Memorial Day.

Last week, I was very happy to see this Council Chamber full of residents, who were attending the very first Havering Community Questions event. This event was very important, in terms of local democracy, and the panel were able to meet and engage with many people and talk about a wide range of issues. I look forward to the next meeting!

And did you know that we also helped stage a special Q&A session with students at Havering College? The event gave 150 young people the chance to debate issues which affect and concern them with some prominent people, including the human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell.

It was chaired by the BBC journalist Richard Lindley and was a superb success. I enjoyed watching it very much, and I know the students had a good time taking part. They filmed the event and are editing it right now, to put on the YouTube website.

Some snippets of good news now:

We heard some brilliant news yesterday – Havering has done exceptionally well in the Ofsted primary school league tables. We are joint 25th best of all local authorities nationally, with 79% of our pupils attending schools which are described as ‘good or outstanding’, and we are joint 11<sup>th</sup> best in London. It just proves that Havering really is ‘top of the class’!

The accolades continue to come in for Havering’s banking protocol scheme, which has been shortlisted in the prestigious Local Government Chronicle Awards 2013.

Banking protocol is a very important scheme. It sees the Council working with local banks and other partners to protect elderly and vulnerable people from having their savings plundered by conmen. For example, if a bank cashier is concerned that an elderly person is withdrawing a large sum of money, they can take swift action to find out why and, if necessary, protect them.

Also in the LGC Awards, our Havering 2014 programme, to make the Council more efficient to meet savings targets while protecting frontline services, has been recognised in the Business Transformation category. The awards will be judged in January.

Over two days this week, I had the great pleasure of handing out 70 awards to our parks and StreetCare staff, who had taken part in the equivalent of NVQ qualifications. We are all so proud of them and their achievements.

I was delighted to meet some of the borough’s most green-fingered gardeners who had won the Havering in Bloom awards. Over the past year, many residents have been busy digging, planting, potting and growing, and it was a pleasure to see the ‘fruits’ of their labours!

And I was honoured to attend our Caring Neighbours Awards ceremony, which is organised by the Over 50s Forum. It was very touching to see how many of our residents, young and old, have been quietly working behind the scenes to help and look after their neighbours. It’s nice that these unsung heroes receive some recognition for their compassion and good deeds. This is the true definition of community spirit!

We are in the midst of our traditional Christmas lights and Christmas Fayres season. I hope you enjoyed the switch-on events we have already had in Romford, Elm Park and Hornchurch.

We still have Christmas Fayres and events to come in Rainham this Saturday; Harold Hill next Thursday; and Collier Row next Friday. It is a wonderful way to welcome in the winter months.

And therefore may I be one of the first to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Finally, I’d like to invite all of our Councillors to join me for a Christmas Reception in the Mayor’s Parlour and Committee Room 1 on Wednesday, December 19 at 6.30pm.