It seems hard to acknowledge but this time last year we were in the middle of the Spring Covid booster vaccination campaign, which Warwick District Council played a key role in organising locally. The Council through various programmes supported residents and businesses alike as we eased out of the Covid restrictions. This continued into the summer booster campaign as the Omicron variant (remember that?!) emerged.

With the success of the vaccination programmes there was confidence to allow the District Council, through their incredibly busy Events Team, to help communities organise over 30 street parties across the District to commemorate the Queen’s outstanding 70 years on the throne. Many were held in Warwick including on my own street, and despite it being forecast to rain, the weather thankfully held so many residents across Warwick had a terrific day of celebration along with friends and neighbours. Her Majesty’s sad passing in September contrasted sharply with those happy Jubilee events. The District Council along with the County, Parish and Town Councils coordinated memorial events including the opening of public books of condolence, laying of flowers, religious services and public speeches.

In between those two momentous events affecting the whole country, the District proudly helped bring the Commonwealth Games directly to our Town, in particular the Men’s and Women’s Road Cycling races on the 7th August. I remember as a volunteer driving the Canada Team medic and media teams to the start of the races at St Nicholas Park. Throughout the Games the District Council organised the CultureFest celebrations at various venues including in the Market Square here, where live events from the Games were streamed and much entertainment laid on during that period of glorious sunny weather. The Games brought significant legacy benefits to Warwick including a sizeable share of the nearly £4m of income generated across the District from visitor spend. In addition, Warwick along with other towns benefited from global TV coverage boosting the Town’s profile as an attractive, vibrant tourist destination for years to come.

As the Cost of Living crisis emerged the District’s Finance Service sprang into action and coordinated a range of measures to ease the burden on residents, including creation of the Hardship Fund adding the sum of £200,000 to similar sums given to the Council by central Government. These funds went directly to support households already on low incomes and feeling the hardest effects of price increases. As a result, households were able to benefit from payments of up to £200. In addition, a Council Tax rebate of £150 was awarded to all properties in bands A to D. Other measures include financial support for local food banks and helping set up warm hubs throughout the winter.

Neighbourhood Services, in coordination with their counterparts at Stratford District Council, rolled out the new 123+ Waste Collection Service which started on the 1st August. It was preceded by an extensive public information campaign and subscription service for garden waste. Although there were some challenges in ensuring all properties received the bins they requested, it has proven to be a popular scheme and has helped to increase recycling, reduce waste and improve the environment. The new scheme, including the popular app, means collections are more efficient, reducing resources needed and helping achieve economies of scale that couldn’t be achieved under the previous contracts.

The District Council has played a key part in supporting the restoration and renovation of important local heritage assets including finally being able to confirm ownership the Medieval Leper Hospital site and associated heritage buildings. This means the Council, working alongside the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust, can secure the legacy of the Leper Hospital site and ensure it has a successful, sustainable future. The Council also awarded a grant of £100k towards the restoration of St Marys Church Tower and is a key partner in the programme of restoration and improvements at the Lord Leycester Hospital.

Other schemes the District Council has supported locally include the recent launching of the new Veterans Contact Point here at Pageant Gardens to support our local veterans, and supporting funding for community centres such as at Heathcote and Chase Meadow, and the new 2nd Warwick Sea Scout centre. The Council has funded improvements at the Leisure Centre at St Nicholas Park, and also at St Nicholas, as part of the Council’s Trees for our Future project, 30 “twinning trees” were planted to celebrate more than 30 years of twinning with Verden in Germany.

In terms of supporting sustainable transport the Council has installed EV charging points in its local car parks and progressed plans for a new footpath and cycleway linking Myton Road to Fusiliers Way and beyond to Bishops Tachbrook. And as part of its Zero Carbon agenda all new authority housing is built to net zero carbon standards.

So, a busy and productive municipal year which has demonstrated how the Town and District Councils are working cooperatively and effectively for the benefit of residents, visitors and businesses in Warwick.