Hello and welcome to the Winter issue of Chronicle.

This year has flown by and as it draws to a close it’s a really good time to look back at all that we’ve achieved together this year, and look ahead to what promises to be an interesting 2018.

Early next year we will share exciting news about our town centre regeneration plans. Throughout 2017 lots of you have come along to the range of events we’ve hosted in the town centre, and the improvement work that we’ve done in some of the open spaces in Queensway is already proving a hit. You can find out about those on pages 5 and 16.

Announcing the winners of the Pride Awards is always one of my favourite tasks and this year was no exception. You can meet the 2017 community champions on our centrespread. I’m sure you’ll agree that their efforts to help make a town a great place to be and the support they’ve given to other people who live here is a real inspiration and truly worthy of celebration.

Talking of community champions, the friends and family of a sorely-missed champion, Councillor Sherma Batson, came together this autumn to put on the concert she founded to celebrate our cultural diversity, in her memory. As we report across the page, it was an event tinged with sadness but also a chance to celebrate her achievements, and the rich cultural talent we have across our communities.

I am sure she would be as impressed as I am to see the next generation of community champions starting to emerge at Peartree School, where they are transforming a neglected alleyway into a fittingly beautiful approach to the school. You can find out about that on page 7.

As the weather turns colder we also wanted to let you know what we are doing with our partners to help people who are sleeping rough, and how you can help them, in a story on page 6. It is a difficult issue but by supporting local charities who help people get their lives back together, we can all make a difference.

Towards the back of this issue of Chronicle there is information on how you can recycle your Christmas trees and cards, and details of when you can contact the council over the Christmas holidays. If you follow us on Twitter or Facebook, you can keep completely up-to-date on there with our opening hours and any changes that bad weather might cause.

We will bring you news of our activities in future issues of Chronicle, and we would love to hear from you if you have some news that you’d like to share with your fellow residents, or an idea for a story you think we should cover. Please do email to let me know.

I hope you all enjoy the Christmas holiday, and have a happy and healthy new year.

Councillor Sharon Taylor
Leader of Stevenage Borough Council

Hollywood stars film in Stevenage

Some of Hollywood’s finest descended on Stevenage in October to shoot scenes for an adaptation of the Shakespeare classic, King Lear.

Sir Anthony Hopkins, Jim Broadbent and Andrew Scott caused quite a stir in Market Place when they recorded scenes from the film, which is being adapted and directed by award-winning director Richard Eyre.

King Lear will be broadcast on BBC television next year so keep your eyes peeled for Stevenage.

Front cover: Anya Cripwell, 8, and Sienna Schneider, 7, at the Stevenage Old Town lights switch-on.
Binners are winners

Stevenage’s younger generation are making sure the town stays neat and tidy by giving the council’s collection vehicles a makeover.

Year 2 pupils Charlotte Tierney, Brock Clarke, and Tommy Taylor-Wells from Woolenwick Infant and Nursery School won a council competition to create banners encouraging people who live in Stevenage to throw their rubbish away properly because it’s good for the environment.

Charlotte’s slogan ‘Where would you like to live? Put your rubbish in the bin!’, Brock’s design of ‘Keep our planet happy. Bin your litter!’ and Tommy’s motto ‘Litter is rubbish. Binners are winners’ are now displayed on the sides of three of the council’s waste and recycling collection vehicles.

Charlotte, Brock and Tommy came to the council’s environmental services depot to show off their designs and were taken for a spin in one of the council’s collection vehicles before taking over the controls and emptying the rubbish onto the tip. Congratulations to them.

Concert-goers Celebrate!!! Sherma

Stevenage came together to put on a special multi-cultural Celebrate!!! show this year, in memory of Councillor Sherma Batson, who championed diversity.

Sherma, who died in January, was the first female black mayor of the town, an MBE, and long-time community champion. She was influential in setting up Celebrate!!! in 2002 – an annual showcase of multicultural talent at Stevenage’s Gordon Craig Theatre – and helped organise the event every year.

This year pop singer Gabz and soul singer Nathan Boyce Watson performed, along with Punjabi Gidda dancers, Grant School of Irish Dancers, Warriorz performing arts academy, and many other talented local people and groups.

It was a worthy tribute, organised partly by Sherma’s long-time friend, Councillor Michelle Gardner. She said: “People came together and everybody helped. The amount of love and heartfelt support we received was incredible. It was very emotional.”

At the show, Sherma’s family – her widower Howard Rooke, daughter Ahisha Ferguson and mother Yvonne Batson (pictured above) – were presented with the Campbell Younge Award in remembrance of her outstanding service to the community.
A fun place to be

Our Town Centre Manager looks ahead to Christmas and back on her first year.

Hi everyone, as 2017 comes to a close I thought I’d take the opportunity to thank you all for helping make it such a memorable 12 months in our town centre.

One of my aims since becoming Town Centre Manager this year has been to get people into the town centre and show that it is a place to shop, work and have fun.

We’re lucky to live in a town that is full of enthusiastic people and organisations, and with your help I’ve been able to put on some fantastic, well-supported events this year. From turning the town centre animal-tastic with a mobile petting zoo, to the first-ever outdoor cinema, it’s been great to have so many different events on offer.

I’m thrilled to say there will be a skating rink in the Town Square for three days from Friday 15 December. Tickets can be bought from the reception desk in the Westgate centre and there are some great family offers available so keep an eye out on my Facebook and Twitter pages for details. We’ve also got a Christmas Market in the town centre until Sunday 31 December, and those of you wanting to see Santa should visit the Indoor Market on Saturday 16 December and Saturday 23 December.

As I look ahead to 2018, I want to hear more of your ideas on the things you’d like to see in the town centre. You can get in touch with me by following @lovestevenagetc on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram or by contacting me directly at tcm@stevenage.gov.uk.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Tina Benson
All in a day’s work

We gave you a behind the scenes tour of the council services we provide when we took part in the Local Government Association’s tweetathon #OurDay. Here’s what we got up to.

Stevenage Council @StevenageBC
Jo from our environmental health team is carrying out a food hygiene inspection in #Stevenage #OurDay.

Stevenage Council @StevenageBC
Our Housing Development team are looking at plans for future homes in #Stevenage #OurDay #Stevenage.

Stevenage Council @StevenageBC
Keeping the council connected. Our IT service desk has dealt with 27 calls this morning #OurDay #Stevenage.

Stevenage Council @StevenageBC
Mick is fitting a new kitchen at a vacant council home in #Stevenage so a new family can move in. #OurDay.

Stevenage Council @StevenageBC
Rita is getting ready to roll in #Stevenage on #OurDay.

Stevenage Council @StevenageBC
Our tree surgeons are tending to one of 2,180 #Stevenage street trees to be cut this year #OurDay.

Stevenage Council @StevenageBC
Get Active Specialist Hannah is helping the health and wellbeing of people in #Stevenage #OurDay.

Stevenage Council @StevenageBC
Keeping 45km of #Stevenage’s cycleways clean and tidy #OurDay.

Stevenage Council @StevenageBC
Tending the #stevenage allotment where our community safety team work with people to grow veg and develop new skills #OurDay.
Join our safety panel

Since the Grenfell Tower fire we have been out in the community reassuring our tower block tenants and leaseholders on safety. Some of you have asked us how you can get involved in monitoring the safety of your homes, so we are setting up a new Joint Safety Compliance Panel.

It will be responsible for monitoring our work on fire and gas safety, asbestos and legionella, meeting quarterly to analyse performance information, discuss good practice examples, and report to councillors.

We are looking for people to join the panel - council tenants, leaseholders, councillors, council officers and representatives from appropriate organisations. If you are interested, please email resident.involvement@stevenage.gov.uk and tell us briefly what knowledge and experience you can offer. An interest in health and safety is desirable and training will be provided.

Applications close on Monday 15 January 2018. For more information, please call the Resident Involvement team on 01438 242183.
Pupils make a clean sweep

Pupils, parents and teachers from Peartree Spring School are brightening up a local alleyway to create an inspiring entrance to their school.

Council staff joined them for a litter picking session to start the project off, after the School Council, Eco Team and Rights Respecting pupil leaders championed the cause. Pupils have come up with lovely ideas to brighten it up with child-friendly murals, colourful paving and planting.

Mijke Pechey, the Curriculum Leader at the school, said: “By adopting it, we have the opportunity to turn this forgotten alleyway into a bright and welcoming space that will start the school day off on a cheerful note and make it more pleasant for everyone in the community to walk through. It is a wonderful community project and all the children at school are excited to be part of it.”

• Do you have an area you would like to brighten up? Find out more online about how you could work with us to improve our town: stevenage.gov.uk/ourneighbourhood

Artwork adds to The Oval

Local Community Artist, Mark Tanti, has given the Oval underpass a colourful new look with a vibrant mural that reflects the local area. Martins Wood councillors supported the project through their Local Community Budget and Mark called on talented young local artists as well as passers-by to give him a helping hand with the artwork.
This year’s winners are:

**THE DEDICATION AWARD**
to recognise long service and longstanding dedication to voluntary or community work in Stevenage:

**Bill Pilgrim**
Bill has spent the past 40 years raising money for charity and good causes. As a younger man, he walked from Lands End to John O’Groats for charity, and he now continues his charity work by volunteering for Age UK, arranging events and collecting on their behalf, as well as delivering food parcels.

**THE GREEN AWARD**
for those who help keep Stevenage clean and green:

**Stevenage Gardens and Allotments Association**
Stevenage Gardens and Allotments Association (SGAA) manage the lettings, waiting list, invoicing and plot inspections for allotment sites across the town. They also run an allotment shop for plot holders, host an annual show and are a great source of useful information and advice. The committee dedicate many hours, week in week out, throughout the year to ensure that our allotments remain useful, tidy spaces for the whole community to enjoy.

**THE TEAM AWARD**
Sponsored by support and opportunities to community members:

**Park Run volunteers**
Park Run is a free event that takes place every Saturday morning in Fairlands Valley Park and is run by volunteers. More than 200 people – of all ages and abilities - regularly take part, running, jogging or walking around a 5km course. Volunteers help set up and marshal the runs, organise the finish funnel, and scan runners’ barcodes to record their finish times. Park Run would not happen without them.

**THE CARING AWARD**
for someone who carries out acts of kindness, including charity work and fundraising:

**Jane Shann**
Jane runs the Phoenix Group for Deaf Children, an independent charity that aims to empower young people who have a hearing impairment. Jane is an experienced Teacher of the Deaf who is herself hearing-impaired. She is passionate about promoting deaf children’s skills for independence and confidence, and has done so much to improve Phoenix.
**THE SPORTING AWARD**
for achievements in sport in Stevenage:

**Stevenage Health Walks**
Stevenage Health Walks are a range of organised walks in the local area that help local people get more active and enjoy the outdoors. Walks are free, very sociable and anyone can join. The Health Walk leaders also help with the Stevenage Walking Festival in May every year.

**THE ENTERPRISE AWARD**
for a business, individual or organisation that makes a real contribution to life in Stevenage:

**Hart Learning and Development’s traineeships**
The traineeships are short programmes designed to help young people prepare for and find work. They include intensive pre-employment training, a work experience placement and an interview with their host employer, and learners work towards nationally recognised qualifications.

**THE YOUNG STAR AWARD**
for a group that has made significant achievements at school, college or in their local community:

**Stevenage Army Cadets**
Stevenage Army Cadets are an enthusiastic, dedicated and hardworking team of volunteers who play a key role in making the Stevenage Race for Life events a success and are happy to help in any way they can. Whether it’s helping to set up the start/finish area, setting up the site, handing out water and medals or supporting our participants out on the course, the Army Cadets will do everything they can to ensure event day goes smoothly.

**THE JUDGES’ SPECIAL AWARD**
was presented to **Roy Nicholson**, who has spent many years dedicating his time and energy to Scouting in Stevenage. The accolade recognises his long and successful contribution to the lives of young people in Stevenage.
Online services available for you

We are expanding our range of online services and you can now report any problems with damp or with mould in council homes via our website. There is also a handy guide on how to reduce condensation in your home but if you still have problems you can report them through the link, at a time that suits you.

You can also use our website to pay bills and apply for council services including licences and garages, make enquiries for skip services and waste disposal, or report environmental issues using Fix My Street. If your family need help, you can refer a relative for our Careline service, for Flexicare or an assisted refuse collection.

Or you can sign up for a free online service for council tax, business rates, leasehold charges and housing benefit to view your payments, outstanding balance, correspondence and request bills are sent to you by email. If you are a council tenant, you can also sign up for an online account and access current rent balances and recent transactions, update personal information, report and track repairs.

Here are some of the key addresses you may need:
- Report Damp and mould: stevenage.gov.uk/report-mould
- Waste services: stevenage.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste/
- Report problems such as vandalism: fixmystreet.stevenage.gov.uk/
- Pay bills, report a change of address and more through the links at the top of stevenage.gov.uk

Scam reminder

We had reports this autumn of three men claiming to be Liberty Gas engineers knocking on people’s doors asking to carry out gas and safety checks inside the property. Any call outs by Liberty Gas are made by appointment only and engineers will always carry identification. If anyone knocks on your door and asks to be let in without official ID please do not let them in and call the police.

Keeping you safe by the lakes

New facilities have been installed to improve water rescue from the Main Lake at Fairlands Valley Park. The new cabinets will ensure that vital rescue equipment is always on hand when needed, and that Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Services can be alerted and quickly send help.

Swimming is not permitted in the lakes, but if people do get into trouble, help can be provided in seconds. There is a light on top of each cabinet so they can be found quickly at night. Just follow the instructions on the cabinet to summon help.

Help to keep you warm

In the cold winter months there is extra help available to help you to stay warm. We run the Hertfordshire Warmer Homes scheme in partnership with other councils to help with the cost of heating your home.

The World Health Organisation recommends that safe indoor temperatures for older people, young children and those with a long-term health condition is 21°C (70°F) during the day and 18°C (64°F) at night.

With Hertfordshire Warmer Homes, we can provide free or discounted household improvements such as insulation that will make homes easier and cheaper to heat.

For more information about the scheme and other support staying warm, contact HertsHelp on 0300 123 4044 (local rate) or email info@hertshelp.net
Step back in time

A new exhibition at Stevenage Museum revives memories of Stevenage’s Polish community. After World War Two ended, Shephall Manor became a boarding school for Polish children, when 30 were brought from a camp for war orphans in Cheshire. All lessons were conducted in English and as the head teacher, Mr Jaworski explained, academic progress was not the only focus. He said: “It must not only be a good school, it must be a good home, also.” The Polish school closed in the late 1950s.

Visit Stevenage Museum

The Museum is celebrating Polish Papercuts in an exhibition of the traditional art, which runs until 3 March. The exhibition looks at the intricate designs traditionally made for religious festivals and family celebrations. There is a lunchtime talk on Polish Papercuts, on Friday 12 January, and on Saturday 27 January you can work with a local artist in an art class to produce your own papercut. The talk is from 1-2pm, and costs £3.75 (£3 concessions). The art classes will be 111-12noon for ages 8+ free, and a class 1.30-4pm for adults, cost £15 (£10 concessions). Details on Facebook: facebook.com/stevenagemuseum. Please book in advance

Marking Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) takes place on 27 January each year, the anniversary of the liberation of the largest Nazi death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. It is a time to remember the millions of people who have been murdered or whose lives have been changed beyond recognition during the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Darfur.

The theme this year is The Power of Words, which can have a huge impact, good or bad. Activities focus on the impact that words had in the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, through propaganda used to incite, through slogans written in resistance, and through memoirs written to record and respond to what was going on.

On Holocaust Memorial Day we bring together diverse strands of the community here today to commemorate this day; it is a real demonstration of how the lessons of the past can inform our lives today and ensure that everyone works together to create a safer, better future.

Saturday 20 January

There will be a drop-in session at Stevenage Central Library from 11am to 1pm, should you have any questions about HMD.

Monday 29 January

Stevenage will be commemorating HMD with an event hosted by the Mayor of Stevenage, Councillor Pam Stuart. There will be speakers ranging from a Holocaust Survivor to commentators of recent genocide. The event takes place at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber at Stevenage Borough Council, Danestrete, Stevenage SG1 1HN.

Please contact Tracey Frost on 01438 242227 or email tracey.frost@stevenage.gov.uk, if you would like to attend.
Pay your rent before it’s spent

As we approach the festive period, spending on gifts and food can all add up, so we’re reminding tenants to make sure their rent is paid over Christmas.

We will do all we can to support you through money difficulties, but it’s important to be aware you face eviction if you do not pay your rent. Prioritise your rent so you don’t put yourself at risk of losing your home.

You can pay by:
- Online at Stevenage.gov.uk/pay
- Direct Debit - find details and download a form from Stevenage.gov.uk/council-housing
- At your local Post Office - with a Post Office payment card.

Free and independent rent, money and benefits advice are available from:
- Citizens Advice Bureau call 0844 411 1444 or visit stevenagecab.org.uk
- National Debt Line call 0808 808 4000

Your income advisor may also be able to give you advice and assistance on paying your rent.
- Stevenage Borough Council email income@stevenage.gov.uk or call 01438 242666

Festive opening hours

Over the Christmas holidays, you can visit the Customer Service Centre during the following hours:

- Friday 22 December — 8.30am to 11.30am
- Monday 25 December - closed
- Tuesday 26 December — closed
- Wednesday 27 December — 8.30am to 5.30pm
- Thursday 28 December - 8.30am to 5.30pm
- Friday 29 December — 8.30am to 4.30pm
- Monday 1 January - closed
- Tuesday 2 January - 8.30am to 5.30pm

Remember you can find information about all council services on our website Stevenage.gov.uk all day, every day. You can also make payments to us, report issues such as flytipping or graffiti, and check your refuse and recycling collection dates.

For emergencies during the holidays, such as emergency repairs to council homes, or homelessness, telephone 01438 314963.

When winter strikes, Stevenage Borough Council staff work hard to make sure that services across the town are not too badly disrupted.

If we do experience extreme weather, such as snow or ice, we may have to make some changes to our work.

Keep up to date with service changes on our website, Facebook or Twitter pages.
Recycle more this Christmas

Christmas cards and wrapping paper

Christmas cards without glitter or electronics can be recycled as can regular non glittered wrapping paper. Make sure to remove any tape. Foil wrapping paper cannot be recycled. Don’t forget you can also put cartons (Tetra Pak) in your blue box.

Waste reminders

Our text and e-mail alert service can be very useful during extreme weather when the collection schedule may be disrupted. You can sign up for the service here: stevenage.gov.uk/waste-reminders

Extra recycling

If you have extra recycling such as glass, cardboard and plastic you can leave it out for collection with your recycling. Please put it in a suitable box or container but not black sacks.

Real Christmas trees

You can recycle real Christmas trees in your brown bin or place it by the side of your bin on your recycling collection day, up until the end of January. Make sure to remove all decorations from your tree.

Download

Your 2018 refuse and recycling calendar by typing in your address online at: www.stevenage.gov.uk/find/ or call 01438 218 888

Please note, the Household Waste and Recycling Centre on Caxton Way is closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day. On open days you can check the new live webcams to see if there is a queue before you leave the house. Check online before you go: hertfordshire.gov.uk/hwrc
Concillors and ward surgeries

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Councillor surgeries
Come and meet your local councillor at one of these monthly sessions. Councillors can help if you want to obtain information and advice, make a complaint or enquire about services that the council provides. You don’t need an appointment just come along.

Bandley Hill and Poplars
(Labour Councillors)
Saturdays 6 January, 3 February, 3 March,
10 to 11am, at The Phoenix Building at The Hyde Out.

Bedwell
Wednesdays 18 January, 15 February, 15 March,
10 to 11am, in the Café at Bedwell Community Centre.

Chells
Fridays 5 January, 2 February, 2 March,
6 to 7pm, at Timebridge Community Centre

Longmeadow
(Conservative Ward councillors)
Saturdays 13 January, 10 February, 10 March,
10.30 to 11.30am, at Hertford Road shops

Manor & Chells
Liberal Democrat Borough Councillors for SBC Manor Ward and the County Councillor for HCC Chells Division (most of Chells Ward, all of Manor Ward and parts of Martins Wood and St. Nicholas Wards)
Thursdays 11 January, 8 February, 8 March,
7 to 8pm, at Chells Manor Community Centre

Martins Wood
Saturdays 27 January, 24 February,
24 March 11am to 12noon, at The Oval Community Centre.

Pin Green
Saturdays 6 January, 3 February, 3 March,
10 to 11am at Hampson Park Community Centre.

Roebuck
Tuesdays 9 January, 13 February, 13 March,
12.30 to 1.30pm, at St Peters Church Hall.

Shephall
Saturdays 6 January, 3 February, 3 March,
11am to 12.30pm, at The Hyde Out.

St Nicholas
Saturdays 6 January, 3 February, 3 March,
11am to 12.30pm, at The Hyde Out.

Symonds Green
Saturdays 27 January, 24 February, 24 March
11am to 12noon, at The Oval Community Centre.

Conservative surgeries for
Bandley Hill, Longmeadow,
Old Town, Roebuck and Woodfield wards
Tuesdays 16 January, 20 February, 20 March,
6 to 7pm, in the Conservative Office in the Daneshill House Foyer.

You can get a list
of Council meetings
by logging onto:
stevenage.gov.uk/council-meetings
Festive fun
over Christmas and into the new year

Shoppers in Stevenage can glide into Christmas as a pop-up skating rink comes to the town centre. The skating rink, carol singing and a month-long Christmas market are some of the highlights as we celebrate the festive season.

The Christmas market is already underway with stalls along Queensway offering an array of gifts and refreshments. The centre skating rink will be in the Town Square for three days, from 15-17 December offering fun for all ages, and under 2’s can skate for free. Tickets need to be booked in advance, see details in the What’s on guide below. There will also be stalls by the rink offering snacks including mulled wine, popcorn, and German chocolate.

There is more traditional fun at the Indoor Market where you can watch or join in with carols, enjoy competitions and a visit from Santa Claus on Saturdays 16 and 23 December.

What’s on in Stevenage

Now - 31 December
Christmas Market. Queensway. 10.30am to 5.30pm. Free

Now - 28 Jan 2018
Jack and the Beanstalk. Gordon Craig theatre. Tickets £14.50-£25

15 - 17 December
Skating Rink. From 11am to 6pm on Friday 15, 10am to 5pm on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17. Tickets need to be bought in advance from Westgate Centre management reception. On sale now. Free for under 2’s, £4 for under 12’s, £7 over 12’s. Special offer 4 to 6pm on 15 and 10am to 12pm on 16 and 17: £2 under 12’s, £5 over 12’s or £10 family ticket

16 and 23 December

Now – 3 March
Polish Papercuts. Exhibition at Stevenage Museum. Open Wednesday to Saturday. Free

From 10 January

13 January
Film Club. Family film with arts and crafts. 2pm. Stevenage Museum. Cost: £2 per child for arts and crafts, film free.

Friday 19 January
Memory Makers. Quizzes, games and refreshments. Stevenage Museum. 10.30am -12noon. Free

Saturday 27 January
Paper crafts class. Stevenage Museum. 11-12noon 8+ free. For adults £15 (£10 concession) materials provided

There are more events coming up at Stevenage Museum next year. Find out more and book through Facebook: www.facebook.com/stevenagemuseum or email: museum@stevenage.gov.uk

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