

# Civic Office of the Year 2024

## Introduction

### How is the team comprised?

The London Borough of Hillingdon is a beautiful area in North West London with a population of more than 305,000 residents, covering 44.67mi<sup>2</sup> and hosting a wealth of green spaces that have been awarded 67 Green Flags.

As with most local authorities, the Council has looked to improve its efficiency and effectiveness whilst also saving money which has meant that the structure of the team supporting the Mayor has seen some substantial changes over the years. The most recent restructure of the team took place in 2023, with the current team being in situ on 31 October 2023. In addition to providing support for the Mayor, the new Civic and Ceremonial Team is also responsible for organising and running civic and ceremonial events, health governance and Member development. All of this is provided with just 4.38 FTE (comprising the Democratic Civic and Ceremonial Manager, the Mayor's Executive Support Officer, the Civic and Ceremonial Events Coordinator and two part time Mayor's Officers).

Since its creation, the new Team has been keen to ensure that it provides a comprehensive and tailored service to all of its stakeholders and raises the profile of the mayoralty. To this end, the Team has created its own five-year strategy (2023-2028), setting out what it wants to achieve, as well as what it wants residents and other stakeholders to say and feel about the mayoralty, strengthening partnerships and pride in the Borough.

## Quality and Innovation

### In the service you provide your Mayor

#### Citizenship Ceremonies

The Civic and Ceremonial Team fully supports all aspects of the Mayoral function. Citizenship ceremonies are conducted by the Mayor and require careful coordination, speech writing and mace-baring duties. Each Mayor requires their own, personalised speech which evolves during their term and the Team ensures the consistent quality of this evolving document.

#### Past Mayor Engagement

When engaging with Past Mayors, it was highlighted that, once a Mayoral year was over, there was very little engagement with the outgoing Mayor. This is a great shame as every Mayor has a wealth of knowledge accumulated over their term. They are also unique in understanding the pressures and strains of holding the Mayoral post. Encouraging the Past Mayors to continue their support of the mayoralty after their term is both



helpful to the Parlour for continuity, but also to the incoming Mayor. In addition, they understand how challenging the post can be, including fundraising, and utilising their extended networks for the good of the Mayoralty and the charities is incredibly beneficial.



To encourage continued engagement, the Team now organises self-funded, Borough-specific, Past Mayors' events which enable the local Past Mayors, Mayoresses, Consorts and Escorts to socialise, share experiences and add value to the ongoing office of Mayor. In 2024, an inaugural Past Mayors' Spring

Afternoon Tea and a Past Mayors' Christmas Meal were held. Organised in their entirety by the Civic and Ceremonial Team, both events were held at no cost to the Borough and all who attended expressed their joy at having new, ongoing opportunities to meet with old friends and offer support to the current Mayor.

### **Youth Engagement**

Youth engagement is paramount to the mayoralty in Hillingdon as the future of the Borough lies in their hands. The Team is now currently working on the introduction of a Mayor's Scout and a Mayor's Girl Guide which will act as a useful conduit for the Council to engage with the youth in Hillingdon. The proposal is that the local Scout and Guide districts from within Hillingdon will nominate and select the best of the best to represent their organisations and the youth of the Borough at events. They will work with the Mayor, increasing networking opportunities and offering younger people an avenue to have open discussions with the Mayor. The Mayor's Scout and Mayor's Girl Guide would wear a specially designed sash and badge and the positions would offer a prestigious opportunity for older Scouts and Guides to aspire to. Meetings have been held with local Commissioners from both organisations and this work is currently at the internal risk assessment (including safeguarding) stage.

### **Fundraising Events**



The Battle of Britain Bunker is a wonderful museum in Hillingdon. It is also the perfect backdrop for a very informative and noteworthy Mayoral event, offering an opportunity to fundraise for the Mayor's Charitable Trust. In 2024, the new Team conducted our first

event here. It was a great success. Due to the volume of those attending, two tours were organised and a delightful afternoon tea was sourced from new, local suppliers who, along with a 1940's singer, offered an authentic vintage theme to the event. A small raffle was held during the event, with prizes donated from local business, helped raise further funds for the Mayor's charities.

*"It was an absolute pleasure to attend the inaugural event of 2024 at the iconic Battle of Britain Bunker. This historic venue not only provided a remarkable backdrop but also set the stage for an engaging and memorable Mayoral event in support of the Mayor's Charitable Trust. At Hillingdon Chamber of Commerce, we are proud of our heritage and work very closely with the Mayor in supporting the local business community."*

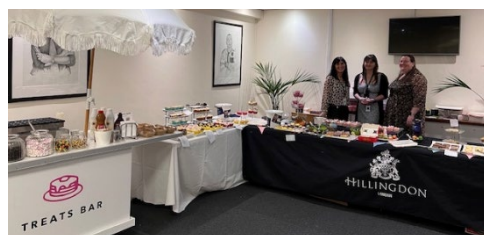
*"The event was well organised with refreshments and afternoon Tea sourced from talented local suppliers. The guided tour on the day allowed all attendees to fully appreciate the significance and heritage of the Bunker. The presence of a 1940s singer further elevated the vintage theme, creating a truly immersive experience and added a touch of warmth and community spirit to the day."*

*"Equally commendable was the generosity of local businesses, who donated prizes for the raffle, helping us raise additional funds for the Mayor's charities. This collaboration highlighted the strong sense of community and shared purpose that defines Hillingdon."*

*"The event was a resounding success, and I extend my gratitude to everyone involved in making it possible. The Battle of Britain Bunker remains not only a treasure of historical importance but also an outstanding venue for bringing people together for meaningful causes."*

**Chamber of Commerce**

Amongst their many skills, members of the Civic and Ceremonial Team love to bake, which is fortuitous when you work in a large building full of Council officers and staff who love little more than eating sweet treats! In 2024, two fundraising cake sales were hosted by the Team: one at Easter and the other at Christmas. The Team created advertising, publicised the events within the Council and encouraged cake donations from others who might want to support the charity. Capitalising on the skills of the Team to increase fundraising donations shows an innovative approach. A short video of one of the cake sales can be viewed [here](#).



Further new events scheduled for the coming year include a St. Georges Day quiz night hosted at one of our catering suppliers' venues, with the quiz written and facilitated by the Team.

### **Weekly Mayoral Briefings**

Weekly face to face briefing meetings between the Team and the Mayor have been initiated to ensure awareness of the plans for the coming three weeks. It allows queries to be raised and conversations around transport and expectations to be raised and discussed. A Microsoft Teams option is also offered for members of the Team that are unable to attend in person due to other commitments or part time working. The data for the briefing meetings is generated from the Mayor's calendar which is managed by the Team. The Team provides complete diary management for the Mayor (and for the Deputy Mayor in relation to Mayoral events) and ensures that protocol is followed both within the Borough and when the Mayor is traveling outside of the Borough.

## In the service provided to your council

In these times of austerity, the Team has been particularly keen to introduce innovative ideas to its working practices to streamline and simplify the way that others within the Council engage with the mayoralty, but also with each other. The Team has looked to increase the value for money of the support that it provides whilst promoting inclusion and wellbeing and increasing awareness of the third sector.

Engaging young people in democracy is difficult...unless you are the Mayor! The Team has liaised with the Council's Education & SEND Team to use existing mechanisms to circulate information directly to all head teachers in the Borough to encourage school engagement with the mayoralty. This has led to numerous primary and junior schools sending in small groups of pupils to visit the Mayor's Parlour and take part in exciting debates in the Council Chamber (debate topics have included the pros and cons of building a new school on greenbelt land).

When faced with financial pressures, it is all too easy to revert to a siloed approach to delivering services, which is not an efficient way of working. However, it is precisely these times that it is most important to adopt a collaborative approach to our work in local government. To this end, the Team spotted an opportunity to raise the profile of the Mayor's chosen charities within the organisation whilst also providing space for team building by organising staff quizzes. Staff quizzes are now scheduled twice each year at lunchtime on a weekday and provide staff from across the Council with the opportunity to come along for some friendly rivalry (?), pizza and snacks, whilst also supporting the Mayor's charities. These events have proven to be a sell-out whilst also raising much needed funds for the Mayor's charities.

*"Congratulations to our Civic and Ceremonial team...for putting on a Christmas quiz, raffle, and bake sale which generated more than £800 for the Mayor's charities!"*

**Chief Executive, London Borough of Hillingdon**

To help improve the recording of training and development opportunities undertaken by Councillors, the Team have worked with HR and IT to adapt the staff learning and development portal to accommodate Member training. This innovative approach has meant that officers from across Democratic Services are now able to access the training records of all Councillors themselves rather than having to rely on the Team to look up the information they require from paper records.

## In the service provided to your community

### Hillingdon Community Awards



Every element of the Hillingdon Community Awards is organised by the Team each year. The Awards are seen as a cornerstone of the Council's commitment to recognising and celebrating the incredible contributions made by individuals, groups and organisations in our community. These awards highlight the dedication, talent and passion of those who work tirelessly to make a positive impact in our Borough. Through the Community Awards, we ensure that those who selflessly support and improve

the lives of others are acknowledged and celebrated. The Team has worked tirelessly to ensure that the event includes all of the "bells and whistles" that it should rightly be afforded whilst also being cost conscious. For example, members of the Team serving and clearing up and ensuring that advertising materials and backdrops are branded but not date specific so that they can be reused time and time again (some of which can be used for other events or by other Council teams).

*"I would like to thank you, the Mayor, Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and your team for putting on a first-class evening. From the moment we were met at the car park entrance to parking the car the staff showed us where to park, greeted us if we needed help and then escorted us to the lift. In the council chamber the staff were greeting us with smiles and again showing us to our seats. The reception was very well attended, and the food was very tasty. Thank you once again for the award."*

**Award Winner**

## Mayor's Information Sheet (MIS)

Inviting the Mayor to an event should be simple. However, that was not the case with the system inherited by the new Civic and Ceremonial Team which involved the completed Mayor's Information Sheet (MIS) either being scanned, printed or photographed and sent into the office by post or email. This process was causing issues with notice periods for events and culminated in an administrative mess. In a bid to streamline and simplify the process, remove duplication and automate the system as much as possible, an online request form was devised by the Team. A link to the "[Invite the Mayor](#)" form (known as the MIS) has been included on the Council website which allows groups or individuals to request the Mayor's attendance at events, at least three weeks in advance (the system will not allow the date of the event to be less than three weeks hence). The online form prevents information being omitted by the organiser by making completion of certain sections compulsory and prohibiting them from moving onto further sections until the obligatory ones have been completed. The form is the same for internal and external requests which ensures uniformity in the data provided.

Keen to utilise all available open-source technology in the review and progression of the Parlour, the online MIS forms now request [What3Words](#) links to ensure that exact locations are provided in relation to parking and the meeting point with the event organiser (a link to What3Word is included in the MIS so that organisers can look up the location words if they do not already know them). This has been very well received and ensures there is no confusion around drop off locations, especially where there are multiple entrances or car parks at a venue.

## Mayor's Picnic in the Park

*"Hillingdon Brain Tumour and Injury charity were delighted to support LBH and the Mayor at the Picnic in the park event. The charity supported the event by providing facepainting, (with the chance for those who can afford to) a donation to the Mayor's charity.*

*"It was a wonderful day full of joy and laughter and extremely well attended. The team worked extremely hard in securing stalls and events for the residents of Hillingdon and their families. From what we experienced 'The team' went over and above their normal duties and we could see time and effort and we are sure a few 'out of hours' had gone into the preparation, which positively impacted the successful day.*

*"There was a smile on every child face and adults too. As a stall holder the information distributed prior to the event was precise and clear, especially with respect to the parking and our plot. The staff managing the traffic were efficient and polite making it easy to navigate.*

*"Once we arrived a member of the team came and welcomed us. We settled in and before long we had a queue of children eager to have their faces painted.*

*"The real jewel in the crown for the event was that families were not disadvantaged by money, it was an all-inclusive event.*

*"We believe that this is extremely important in today's times. Many of the stalls were free or a donation which meant people could put in what they could afford. There was also a chance for families to connect with each other, make new friends and take time out as a family to enjoy the company of the Mayor of Hillingdon.*

*"It was certainly one of the best Picnic in the parks, with a wide range of stall holders which made the event packed with fun.*

*"Thank you to everyone who worked so hard in bringing the "community spirit" into Hillingdon.*

*"Our residents like myself and my team are thankful and grateful for such an important event that celebrates diversity and brings communities together. This to me is truly one of the most well received event that the council holds."*

**Past Mayor Testimonial**



In 2024, the Team organised the Mayor's Picnic in the Park in its entirety. This was a free and inclusive community event that was attended by around 2,000 people. It was designed to celebrate local green spaces, leisure and culture and featured a variety of entertainment centred around the park's bandstand. The Mayor spent their entire time at the event engaging with local residents and was joined by the Mayoress, Deputy Mayor and the Deputy Leader of the Council. The Team had organised activities and entertainment such as a Punch & Judy stand, balloon artists, bouncy castles and a mobile library. There were also interactive stands from uniformed services (Police, Fire and Cadets) and a variety of catering vendors (who made a £560 donation to the Mayor's charities).



The event successfully brought together a diverse community of attendees, with positive feedback from the public, performers and stallholders. Despite it not being a fundraiser, the event raised £1,800 for the Mayor's charities. It also fostered positive relationships with other teams within the Council as well as with local businesses, uniformed services and charities, whilst providing valuable team-building opportunities. The event successfully met all of its objectives and, importantly, did so within a very tight budget. Click [here](#) to watch the video testimonial of a young person who attended.

### **Christmas Lights Switch On**



The annual Christmas Lights Switch-On, held on the Civic Centre forecourt, continues to be a beloved community event, offering free entertainment to residents. The event features a brass band, school choirs and complimentary refreshments, and its popularity has steadily grown each year. It is particularly rewarding to involve local schools that may not otherwise have had the opportunity to perform in public.



The Team continues to organise this family-friendly event which brings together Past Mayors, local business representatives and key community supporters. This year, the Team was pleased to have LED stilt walkers, generously sponsored by a local business, which added a unique and festive touch to the celebration. In addition to the entertainment, over 300 presents that had been donated by local businesses were put in shoe boxes, gift wrapped and sold on a stall at the event. Despite this not being a fundraising event, this initiative, alongside a raffle, raised more than £2,000 for the Mayor's charities. The gift-wrapping was carried out by Council colleagues in the Mayor's Parlour, where they were greeted by the Mayor and plied with

tea and mince pies, providing a wonderful opportunity for cross-functional collaboration and relationship-building between teams.

### **Remembrance / Armistice**

Whilst Remembrance services are not directly organised by the Council, the Civic and Ceremonial Team plays a crucial supporting role in assisting around 12 event organisers from across the Borough. This support includes managing the administration for each event (coordinating road closures, conducting risk assessments, handling parking suspensions, etc). Additionally, the Team ensures that any Council-owned green spaces that are hosting these services have been properly maintained, with site visits conducted to ensure the locations are in optimal condition. Memorials are also inspected and cleaned, and repairs carried out in advance if necessary, to ensure they are ready for the services. In addition, the Team coordinates the attendance and wreath laying by Councillors on behalf of the Mayor and residents.

With regard to Armistice, the Team also organises the firing of maroons from eleven sites across the Borough to mark the start and end of the two minutes silence at 11am on 11 November. This coincides with an Armistice event that the Team organises and facilitates on the forecourt of the Civic Centre. This event is attended by the Representative Deputy Lieutenant (DL), Past Mayors, Freemen of the Borough and representatives from the Northolt RAF Base, the Royal British Legion (RBL), public services (including the Police, Fire and ambulance services). A reception with refreshments is then held in the Mayor's Parlour following the event and is well attended (the refreshments are prepared and served by members of the Team).

### **Emergency Services Flag Raising**

The raising of the 999 Day Flag on the Council forecourt is an opportunity to bring members of the public and emergency services together and remember those who have lost their lives in public service. The Team organises an event at 9am on 9 September which is attended by Past Mayors, the Representative DL, the Borough Commander for Fire and Borough Commander for Policing, along with representatives from the local NHS Trusts and London Ambulance Service, to both mourn and celebrate in union. The event follows the approved national standard and is followed by a breakfast reception in the Parlour with the provision of refreshments which are sourced and served by the Team.

## **Armed Forces Flag Raising**

Due to having RAF Northolt in Hillingdon, and them having been awarded the Freedom of the Borough in 1960, the RAF play a pivotal role in the Borough's celebrations for Armed Forces Day. The event is fully coordinated by the Team and involves the RAF marching through the High Street to the Civic Centre where they parade and where the flag is raised. The local Royal British Legion branches are also invited to lead the march with their Standards and provide a true spectacle for all that see it. The event involves road closures and the temporary suspension of buses from the road, so accurate communication between the Emergency Services, Highways, Council traffic team and TFL is required from the Civic and Ceremonial Team. Council process is adhered to and the Team ensures all traffic notices are completed prior to the event. Service members, special guests and dignitaries are invited back to the Mayor's Parlour for refreshments after the event which is catered and served by the Team.

## **60th Anniversary Civic Service**

The Team has identified that, in April 2025, it will be the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of Hillingdon Borough. As the Mayor has asked the Team to organise a Civic Service this year, it has been proposed to merge the two events to provide a special celebration for the Borough, whilst being budget conscious and sensitive to the potential financial situation of residents and the Council. Plans are in place for a Civic Service to be held in a church close to the Civic Centre whose vicar, Rev Canon Andy Thompson, is the head of Hillingdon Interfaith. Plans include a parade through the town centre to the church from near to the Civic Centre with invited dignitaries dressed in their formal regalia. Although ideas are still evolving, a brass band and catered reception are also planned for the event. Neighbouring mayors are being invited and it is hoped that they are able to attend and support the Mayor and the Borough in these celebrations.

Collaborative work is ongoing with the Council's communications department to ensure printed materials are ready in good time. The Team is taking the lead on all aspects including the design and content of a commemorative brochure and a keepsake Order of Service for the event and plans to communicate with local libraries to arrange a series of displays to promote and celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Borough.

Freemen of the Borough, including the RAF will be asked to join the parade to celebrate the history of the Borough. Past Mayors and Consorts will also have a key role in the event, ensuring their experiences are recorded for future generations. The Team is also looking into ways to engage with the schools in the Borough to offer further opportunities to promote the anniversary and engage with the mayoralty.

## **Interfaith Charter for Hillingdon's Leaders of Faith**

The Team organised an interfaith service in April 2024 at St Margaret's Church in Uxbridge. The event was attended by 14 various faiths represented within the Borough, all of whom signed a "Pledge" to work together for a common goal to build a better society grounded in values and ideas. The afternoon concluded with a communal sharing of food, where representatives from all faiths brought dishes that symbolised their respective traditions. This provided an opportunity for participants to engage in meaningful conversations, further deepening their understanding of each other's beliefs and cultures while enjoying the diverse offerings in a spirit of unity and camaraderie.

The church service offered numerous benefits, including promoting unity and understanding by bringing together people from diverse religious backgrounds. It strengthened community bonds, helping to bridge cultural and religious divides, and encouraged tolerance and respect through open dialogue. By celebrating the richness of different religious traditions, the service highlighted shared values such as compassion, kindness and justice, contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious society. This focuses on one of the Council's commitments of building Safe and Strong Communities. Click [here](#) to watch a video testimonial from one of the faith leaders that attended the event.



## **Parlour Visits**

The Civic and Ceremonial Team undertake outreach to local schools, youth organisations and voluntary groups to promote the mayoralty and highlight opportunities for engagement. The Mayor's Officers have wide and detailed knowledge of items and artifacts housed in the Mayor's Parlour and lead talks within the Parlour, explaining the history of the mayoralty in Hillingdon. They also accompany the Mayor on visits to local schools where they can lead assemblies and classes on all things Mayoral, including hosting debates

and the Mayoral regalia. This raises the profile of the mayoralty whilst providing opportunities for young people in the Borough to see them as their first citizen and understand what that means. Click [here](#) to watch the Gurkha Vlog created following their visit to the Mayor's Parlour.

### **EMI 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

The Civic and Ceremonial Team was contacted by a representative from a local historical group who explained that it had been 80 years since the local EMI disaster. Further research showed that a Nazi bomb had landed on part of the EMI Gramophone factory in Hayes which had been repurposed during the war to make radio parts and munitions. Many were killed and wounded and a memorial was built by EMI at one of the Borough's cemeteries.



A memorial event was organised by the Team at short notice, with EMI being invited to the event, along with local RBL, Hayes Town Partnership representatives, Hillingdon Historical Society and the family and friends of those who had been killed or wounded in the incident. The Representative DL attended and a short service of memorial was read by Rev Canon Andy Thompson. The Mayor read a

speech that had been drafted by the Team based on the research that they had carried out. A piper played the last post and a two-minute silence was held. Wreaths were laid and those gathered were given the opportunity to tell their stories of the event. It was a poignant event and much thanks was passed to the Team for marking the occasion with such dignity and reverence. Click [here](#) to read an article provided by Hayes Town Partnership about the event.

### **Polish Airforce Commemoration**

The team has continued to work with the Polish Airforce Commemoration Committee (PACC) to provide arms-length support for the annual commemoration event held in August / September each year. Whilst this is not a Council-run event, the Civic and Ceremonial Team has continued to provide support by acting as a liaison with various teams around the authority to ensure the event runs smoothly. The Team makes arrangements for the PACC to borrow a large number of conference chairs, plastic seat covers and umbrellas. Arrangements are also made with the Green Spaces Team to ensure that the event site (the Polish War Memorial) is tidied up in advance and Highways is contacted to ensure that the area will be blocked off a few days in advance to prevent public parking in the vicinity. Authority is also sought from the Council's Armed Forces Advocate for funding to provide stewards at the event.

### **Engagement Support**

Many organisations would love to engage with the mayoralty, but don't really understand how, or what is possible. As such, the Team provides coaching to Council teams and external organisations to ensure their expectations are exceeded in every way possible. From offering the use of (and organising) the Council Chamber for award ceremonies, to advice around catering and loaning equipment, the Team help people to devise and develop the perfect event for their young people, charity or organisation. Additionally, the Team acts as the point of contact for advice on mayoral engagements, helping people to get the most out of their mayoral visit.

## **Promotion of the Office of the Mayor**

### **In your council and / or community**

The Team has placed a strong emphasis on building positive working relationships both internally and externally, with some great examples of collaboration. One notable initiative is the work undertaken with Project Search, an initiative that provides work experience opportunities for a small group of young adults with special needs. The Team has actively involved this group of young people in various projects, such as assisting with the setup of the Christmas Lights event, helping to wrap 300 presents for the shoe box lucky dip and seeking donations from local town centre stores. These efforts not only provide valuable work experience but also strengthen community ties and promote inclusivity.

A strong partnership has been established with the Uxbridge Chamber of Commerce, which has been instrumental in supporting the Mayor's Charitable Trust. As a result of this collaboration, the Chamber has committed to directing its fundraising efforts towards the Trust, making a generous donation of

approximately £1,285 this year. This partnership has significantly contributed to the success of the charitable initiatives, further strengthening our community ties and supporting local causes

The Team has been in regular contact with the London Fire Brigade and Police and they have graciously attended events such as the Mayor's Picnic in the Park. Their presence has been an invaluable attraction for young families, providing both entertainment and important safety education. Their participation has greatly enhanced the community experience, fostering stronger ties with local services while engaging and educating the public. We have also supported the uniformed services recruitment day, facilitating the use of the Civic Centre forecourt and amenities throughout the day. This obviously helped in a collaborative approach for the future.

The Civic and Ceremonial Team has established contacts with Brunel University, which has actively supported local initiatives by sourcing volunteers for a community fun run (the Student Union has also raised money for the Mayor's charities during Rag Week). The University's involvement has been invaluable, contributing to the success of events whilst fostering stronger connections between the University and the local community.

### **Staff Engagement**

Coffee with the Mayor is a quarterly event that has been initiated by the new Team where a blanket invitation is extended to all Council staff via the Intranet and staff emails. An online booking system allows staff to book onto the event which the Team hosts. The session lasts around 90 minutes and includes a Q&A with the Mayor, a guided tour of the Mayor's Parlour and its artifacts, and a visit to the Council Chamber (surprisingly, many staff have never been in the Council Chamber and largely haven't ever been in the Parlour).

The Team is committed to staff wellbeing and identified the possibility of starting a staff yoga session for Council employees during lunch breaks. A local instructor was found, a small discount was negotiated by the Team with the Council for the hire of the room and the idea was circulated to all staff. Sign up to a six-week course exceeded the 20 people required to run the course and the sessions proved very popular.

As there are only 4.38 FTE in the Civic and Ceremonial Team, stewards are needed to help run the larger events that are put on to ensure adequate resources are available. The stewards are recruited and managed by the Team but can be utilised by any team across the Council on request. This collaborative working ensures that suitably trained stewards are available for all Council teams without multiple individual recruitment processes, reducing expenditure and bureaucracy.

### **Local Engagement**

Engagement with residents within Hillingdon is of utmost importance to the mayoralty. The Team has been hosting local schools and youth organisations such as Scouts, Guides, Police Cadets, Sea Cadets, Fire Cadets and St. Johns Ambulance in the Parlour which allows them to see into the day to day running of the mayoralty, what the Mayor does and why, and the artifacts on the Parlour. Holding debates in the Council Chamber helps to bring politics to life for the young people. Equally, the Mayor visits libraries, schools, youth meetings, residents' associations, care homes, historical groups and care homes within the Borough. This engagement is organised and facilitated by the Team. Promoting the mayoralty and what it can do for the people on the Borough is key to the work of the Team. The range of people coming into the Parlour and inviting the Mayor to external events continues to increase year on year. Utilising the Deputy Mayor and the two most recent Past Mayors has become the norm due to the volume of clashing requests.

To help promote the mayoralty and engage with residents, the Team uses and manages the Mayor's Facebook and X accounts. These platforms can be used to publicise fundraising events as well as provide an insight into what the Mayor has been doing. Increasing engagement with local groups is mutually beneficial and has resulted in Cadet services volunteering at Mayoral events and helping with fundraising.

The Mayor is honorary president (Ex-Officio) for five associations within Hillingdon (these positions belong to the role of the Mayor rather than to a specific person). When the new Team started, communications with these organisations appeared to have lapsed and so work was started to rebuild a mutually beneficial relationship. The Team organised an afternoon tea in the Parlour with the Mayor hosting representatives from each of the associations. This provided an opportunity for networking between groups, but also set firm foundations for an ongoing, supportive relationship between the mayoralty in Hillingdon and the respective bodies. AGM invitations and charitable support have followed, with the Mayor accepting and assisting whenever possible.



## International Engagement

Various delegations from China have approached the mayoralty seeking trade arrangements. In some boroughs this may be appropriate but, as the Mayor of Hillingdon's role is ceremonial, they are ill placed to assist in this respect. The Team therefore signpost the delegations to the Chamber of Commerce who facilitate visits, which include meeting the Mayor for a Parlour visit. The initial communication with these groups can be challenging due to the time differences and language barriers so the Team needs to maintain a flexible approach to expedite arrangements.

A local language school recently contacted the Team as the mayor of a small town in Spain had funded a group of their students to visit the Borough. A tour was arranged so that the young people could engage with Hillingdon's Mayor and see how this ceremonial role is relevant in today's society. It was an opportunity to see the differences between the role of their home mayor and that of the Mayor of Hillingdon.

This international collaboration continues to raise the profile of the Mayor of Hillingdon and Hillingdon Borough itself on a global level. Further engagement is being discussed with education services to link with the twinned towns, an initiative from World War II. As there is no longer a Town Twinning Committee in Hillingdon, the responsibility to make arrangements will fall to the Team. The plan is for the mayoralty to become further involved with exchange students visiting the Borough and strengthening links with Hillingdon's two twin towns (Schleswig, Germany and Mantes-la-Jolie, France.)

## Charitable Trust

The Mayor has a Charitable Trust and each year they brief the Team on what types of organisations they would like to support. The Team researches local charities which fit the criteria and arrange interviews with shortlisted charities. The Mayor and the Team then meet with the charities to discuss what the partnership would mean and what the expectation is from each party. The Mayor then decides who they would like to nominate for their Mayoral year. This partnership with the Mayor offers an opportunity for the charities to not only raise funds, but also increase their profile within the Borough. The Mayor hosts many events where the charities can network with the local business and these organisations can significantly raise their profile and awareness of their causes. The charities that are selected are expected to support the Mayoral fundraising events by attending events and selling tickets and promoting fund raising events to their communities. Wherever possible, the charities are invited and incorporated into engagements, maximising opportunities to network.

# Value

## **How have you used your resources to best effect?**

In the face of continuing financial challenges and constraints, the team has taken significant steps to ensure the Council's resources are utilised efficiently and effectively. Through a series of innovative money and time-saving initiatives, the team has demonstrated unparalleled commitment and creativity in preserving the public purse and enhancing the quality of services offered:

- **Partnership / Sponsorship** - The team has sought out sponsorship opportunities and forged partnerships with local business and organisations to offset costs and ensure that services continue to operate smoothly. These relationships have been developed with organisations such as Hasbro and the Uxbridge Business Improvement District, both of whom have provided hundreds of gift donations that were included in the Mayor's Christmas Shoebox Lucky Dip charity fundraiser. This crucial support has raised significant funds for the Mayor's charities and allowed the team to concentrate resources in other areas of its work.
- **Laundry** - It became apparent that laundry expenses, particularly dry cleaning, had been a notable cost for the team with it costing more than £10 to dry clean one tablecloth. To mitigate this expense, the team has introduced its own in-house washing service for items like sleeves, jabots and tablecloths where members of the team will launder the items themselves at home with the Council bearing the cost of the cleaning products. This initiative has significantly reduced the costs associated with maintaining clean and presentable ceremonial wear and putting on professional events.
- **Stock Audit** – The newly formed team had undertaken an audit of the stock that it holds in its storage room to ensure proper management of resources. This means that, not only does the team know exactly what it has (and doesn't have) in stock (so doesn't buy unnecessary items), it also means that there is a list of items that can be made available to colleagues elsewhere in the Council, thus reducing costs for other teams. Consideration is now being given to the possibility of hiring out the equipment externally (perhaps to those having wedding or other events at the Civic

Centre).

- **Catering** – Catering for events is another area where the team has made significant savings. By creating a vetted shortlist of suppliers, the team has ensured the quality and cost-effectiveness of catering for different events depending on the requirements of those events. In addition, the team has taken on the responsibility of ordering, collecting and serving buffet food and other catering supplies from sources such as M&S, Wenzels, Costco and Bookers. Additionally, the shift from disposable paper plates and banqueting roll to in-house crockery and cutlery and elasticated table covers has not only saved money but also promoted sustainability.
- **Volunteers** - The team has harnessed the power of volunteers to support various events and initiatives, for example, twenty volunteer photographers had worked at the Mayor's Picnic in the Park event, capturing memorable moments without incurring additional costs. The Project Search initiative and adult learning programmes have also contributed significantly by sourcing and wrapping donations at Christmas for the Shoebox Lucky Dip, showcasing the community's willingness to support the Council's efforts.
- **In-house Alterations** - To further reduce costs, the team has brought minor Mayoral regalia alterations and other sewing projects in-house. These alterations have included adding shoulder pads and moving shoulder ties on robes, as well as creating new flag bags and creating a new velvet backing for the Mayor's single chain. By managing these alterations internally, the team has avoided the high costs associated with outsourcing these services.
- **Communications** - The team has adopted a sustainable approach to communications by storing and reusing laminated signs and printing generic materials that can be repeatedly used at different events. This not only reduces waste but also ensures a consistent and professional presentation.
- **Team Building and Morale** - Recognising the importance of team cohesion and morale, the Civic and Ceremonial Team has instituted regular lunches with the Mayor and separate team lunches. These gatherings provide an opportunity for members of the newly created team to bond, share ideas and reinforce their collective commitment to the Council's goals.
- **Environmental and Sustainability Efforts** - The team's dedication to sustainability is evident in its choice of a hybrid car for official duties and the use of paper bags for bake sales. These initiatives highlight the team's commitment to reducing the Council's carbon footprint and promoting eco-friendly practices.
- **Health and Safety** - Ensuring the wellbeing of all team members and participants in Council events, the Civic and Ceremonial Team includes trained Fire Marshals, Mental Health First Aiders and First Aiders and Basic Food Safety Certificate qualifications. This comprehensive approach to health and safety underscores its dedication to providing a safe and supportive environment, not only for the team itself, but for everyone that it comes into contact with.



## Conclusions

### Why are you the best?

In conclusion, the new Civic and Ceremonial Team has demonstrated exceptional leadership and ingenuity in navigating the financial challenges faced by local government. The initiatives introduced have not only optimised the use of the Council's resources but also fostered a culture of sustainability, mutual support, community engagement and team spirit. These efforts serve as a model for other departments and councils and underscore the importance of proactive and innovative resource management in the public sector.

The newly formed Team focuses on innovation, quality service and community engagement, ensuring efficient support for the Mayor and fostering pride in the Borough. Our commitment to excellence and our unwavering dedication to the well-being of our community make Hillingdon the best choice for the Civic Award. We are proud of our achievements and remain committed to making the London Borough of Hillingdon a better place for all to live, work and volunteer, focusing on the Council's overall vision of "Putting our residents first!".