

The Mayoral Team of 2024-2025's annual report

Wow, what a year it's been! It has been a complete honour to be able to represent Lancaster District at events throughout the year, meeting people from many different charities, local organisations and schools and seeing all the good there is in our community. We are so lucky to live in such an amazing city and have the most beautiful district around us and the best bit about being Mayor is being able to celebrate all of this. There are way too many to list, but I would like to thank each and every organisation for inviting us to your events.

The most heartwarming experiences have been meeting the young people and the staff from the King's Trust. To see the young people standing up and giving their final presentations about their journeys on the programme has brought me to tears more than once, hearing how the programme has changed their lives. I have also particularly loved meeting and getting to know some of the refugees and asylum seekers who live in our district, at various events.

It's been wonderful to celebrate the Polish Community in our district, and build relationships with our friends from Lublin, one of Lancaster's twin cities. Last year we met representatives from Lublin in Williamson Park, where I was presented with a medal of the Union of Lublin on behalf of the City of Lancaster in recognition of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Lublin and Lancaster partnership (twinning) agreement. I also attended the 20th anniversary celebration of The Polish School, at Morecambe Bay Academy – the children who attend were so proud of their wonderful Saturday school.

Another highlight of the year has been spending time at many events with the fabulous High Sherrif of Lancashire, Helen Bingley - she's been an inspiration to us all.

I have attended several commemoration events including the Holocaust Memorial Service, D-Day Anniversary events, Remembrance Sunday, and will attend VE Day commemoration events on May 8th. It's been a pleasure to meet and get to know many Veterans and learn more about the support offered to Veterans in our community.

The Mayoral team was honoured to host the Slavery Family Trees Project in the Mayor's Parlour. We had a wonderful launch event with children from local schools, who heard all about the exhibition from those involved with the project. Visitors to the Town Hall have been able to see the exhibition about how the prominent families of Lancaster in the 18th century were all involved in the Transatlantic Slave Trade in one way or another.

It's been absolutely amazing to work with Citizens Advice North Lancashire on the Music With The Mayor project. Over the year we've hosted or attended 16 different music events of varying genre, to celebrate the local music scene and to raise vital funds for the charity. I'm incredibly proud to be able to say that we've raised over £30,000. A couple of the highlights from the MWTM has been an evening at Lancaster Castle where the Patterers sang ballads about previous inhabitants of the castle. Another highlight was when Lancaster District CVS and North Lancashire Citizen Advice staff had a dance off at the Christmas disco – it was hilarious and very hard to judge the winner! I'd like to give enormous thanks to all the local bands, the production teams, (and in

particular BaccyJ n Folio Productions), the venues, and everybody who's helped us throughout the year to raise so much money – it has been a highly successful blast!

Other fundraising events have been me doing the 12 dips of Christmas where I raised over £3000 for Cancer Research, a 'Blood on the Clocktower' games in the Lancaster Town Hall Council Chamber for Smile for ME and a sponsored walk up Clougha to raise money for CancerCare – as both charities are very close to my heart.

I wouldn't have been able to have got through this year without the support from some absolutely amazing people, Jon - my consort and husband, Hamish - my son and deputy mayor and Sam - my friends and assistant deputy mayor. Between us we've managed to attend well over 100 events throughout the year celebrating the diverse community in our district. A million thanks to all three of them.

I'd also like to thank everyone in democratic services for their support over the year, but in particular Chris the Beadle. His support and friendship have meant a lot to me this past year and I certainly wouldn't have been able to get through the year without him - thank you Chris.

The main bit of advice I'd like to give Margaret starting your year as mayor is 'watch out, your cheeks are going to ache from smiling so much'. I wish you a wonderful year.

Cllr Abi Mills – Mayor of Lancaster 2024-2025

Over my year as Lancaster City Council's Deputy Mayor, I have had the privilege of meeting so many of the wonderful people across the district and many from across Lancashire.

It seemed to have fallen to me to take on, alongside the Assistant Deputy Mayor, a number of the events and functions from further afield. It has been extremely interesting to learn about the districts across our county and some of the hard-working charities that work across Lancashire, especially the Abaseen Foundation - who's Chief Executive is our former High Sherrif, Helen Bingley OBE. The foundation, based in Lancashire, works across Northern Pakistan to improve the lives of so many through projects including building hospitals, schools, sports facilities just to mention a few.

Through these events across Lancashire, I have been able to meet the Mayors and dignitaries from all of the other districts and organisations, it has been an eye-opening experience to learn so much about our neighbours across the County, how their councils work and what they all get up to.

One of the parts of the role I have enjoyed the most is meeting children and staff from all of the schools across Lancaster District and beyond. I had the privilege of watching the school production of Jacob's Technicolour Dreamcoat at Caton Primary School. Abi and I were also able to watch the year 6 production at the very primary school I went to, Bowerham Community Primary School - in the hall where 12 years ago I had acted in my own year 6 production. It wasn't just my primary school that I was able to return to, my high school, Lancaster Royal Grammar School, also kindly invited myself and Abi to a series of their events, including the yearly school award ceremony. It was finally nice to be on the stage for Speech Day. In returning to my old

schools, I was able to talk with many of my old teachers, reminiscing about my days at school and talking about what I have been doing since.

Lancaster Grand Prix was another highlight of my year where I got to wave the start flag of one of the races, I was able to talk in depth with the organisers and gain a greater understanding of their work.

Throughout the year I have chaired all but three of the full council meetings. This experience has certainly provided me with a great deal of experience in chairing, it was a daunting task at first, but I believe I have learned to manage the chamber quite well, with some very helpful support, and learnt some useful skills.

I would like to thank all of the Democratic Services staff who have helped me in my role over the last year, the support and assistance has been invaluable. I would also like to thank all the people I have met and spoken to over the year across all the events I have attended, you have made the year unforgettable. I would like to thank all the Councillors who have helped and supported me in the role, particularly Roger Dennison, who I have spent many events alongside and Sam Riches, my great Assistant Deputy Mayor for being there when I couldn't and doing such a great job throughout the year.

I am sure you can all understand that this last year has been very difficult for myself and the Mayor, and I would not have got through it so smoothly without all the help and support of everyone around me, especially my mum, the Mayor, who I know at the start of the year had no idea of what we had ahead of us. Thank you, Abi, for the opportunity you have given me and the support along the way.

Cllr Hamish Mills – Deputy Mayor of Lancaster

I am very conscious of the difficult circumstances that led to the creation of the post of Assistant Deputy Mayor, and I would like to thank the elected members of Lancaster City Council who took the bold step of agreeing to change the Council's Constitution in order to enable the post to be established. I'd particularly like to thank Cllr Hamish Mills, who selected me as his Assistant, and Chris Clifford, the Mayor's Beadle: they have both been very generous in their support of me as I did my best to carry out this new role. Other council officers have also gone above and beyond in enabling me to play a meaningful role in the Mayoral team - Jenny Kay, Stephen Metcalfe and Phil Abel deserve special mention. Above all, I'd like to thank Cllr Abi Mills, whose ambition and vision for her mayoral year has been maintained through all her health challenges. I know that she has worked very hard to shepherd her energy so that she can use it to best effect, and it has been a privilege to play a small part in enabling so many mayoral invitations and obligations to be fulfilled during her term of office.

Since my appointment as Assistant Deputy Mayor in July 2024 I have represented Lancaster City Council, and the district more generally, at a wide range of events, and there are more to come. I have attended events for charities, community groups and voluntary organisations, and I have found that the presence of the Mayor's representative is really valued as it demonstrates an official recognition of the vital part played by these organisations in our city and its district. Notable highlights were the beautiful service of Nine Lessons and Carols held in aid of St John's Hospice in a packed Priory church, the AGM of the Samaritans held in a Morecambe

hotel, and a Christmas party for service users and their families of a local care agency, held in Slyne-with-Hest.

It has been a particular pleasure to meet Richard Brock on two occasions - at the regimental dinner following the Duke of Lancaster Regimental Remembrance Service at Blackburn Cathedral, and more recently at an event held at St John's Hospice to mark their achievement of 'Veteran Friendly' status. Richard is a delightful man and also a genuine local hero - now in his 101st year, this native of Bolton-le-Sands is one of the last remaining veterans of D-Day and he graced the cover of *Radio Times* for Armistice Day in 2024. Richard is a recipient of the Legion d'Honneur, the highest award made by France, it was a privilege to be photographed (by Chris Clifford) with Richard with all his medals proudly displayed. I am awaiting a copy of Richard's memoirs, and hope that the Mayor's Office will be able to ensure that a copy is made available for future generations alongside the official regalia and ceremonial treasures that pertain to the ancient office of Mayor of Lancaster.

Cllr Sam Riches, the Assistant Deputy Mayor