

# HERE AND NOW in HUNGERFORD

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## REALITY SHOW

These days you can't throw the remote control at the television without stumbling over a reality show of some sort or another.' I'm A Strictly Apprentice Pop Idol Made in Chelsea, Get Me Out Of Here!', or whatever it's called; there is almost no end to the opportunities available to see 'celebrities' or wannabes on a 'personal journey'.

Although I have a weakness for the Glitterball Trophy, I, like my colleagues on Hungerford Town Council, prefer to take part in the life of the town in our own reality show rather than watching from the sidelines, and as the council is coming to the end of its latest 2011-2015 series, I think it is a good opportunity to review this long-running show.

Cast members were thin on the ground when leading man and matinee idol, Mayor Martin Crane, stepped into the limelight at the beginning of its present run. A casting session was held soon after. Council numbers swelled and we enjoyed an influx of fresh faces, talent and energy all of which was very ably channelled by director and assistant, Town Clerk and Deputy, Claire Barnes and Alison Blake.

One of the most important sub-plots has seen the council take a 99 year lease on the Croft Field and its building. Viewers were kept in suspense as to whether or not this valuable resource would remain in its present form or sold for development. When negotiations between the Town and Manor and West Berks reached an impasse the Town Council stepped into the picture and ultimately came up trumps.

Another long-running story had been the raising of funds for the upgrading of the changing rooms at the Triangle Field. Viewers will remember how generous sponsors such as Chilton Farms Estate, Englefield Trust, Greenham Common Trust together provided much of the money for this project and how the refurbished facility has breathed new life into our town's sporting centre.

Who can forget the-will-they-won't-they saga of the public loo takeover. Faced with the possible closure of the public toilets adjoining the library, the council decided that we should take over the running of the

facility from West Berks. We engaged a Hungerford-based cleaning company to manage the toilets and have ended up with a better service for both townsfolk and visitors alike.

Another story-line with a happy ending.

These are all examples of stories which have, at least for the moment, run their course. There are, of course, many others which are still on-going and will appear in the new series which begins next month.

On a personal level, I would like to say how much I have enjoyed the last year as leading man, alongside my very able understudy, the retiring (not usually known as such), Roger Thompson who is to be written out of the series. After serving as understudy to Martin Crane (3 years as 'The Mayor'), I stepped into the lead role in May 2014. Taking on the position from someone who had worked so very hard to turn around the council's fortunes has certainly made my time centre stage much easier. Hopefully this has not seen viewing figures drop too much. If they have, I may hear those fateful words... "You're Fired!"



*Cllr Dennis Benneyworth, Town Mayor of Hungerford*

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