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News from Bennett's End  
Spring 2019



## Welcome Sobaan!

**Sobaan Mahmood** is just 23 years old. An Accounting and Finance Graduate, Sobaan has lived in Bennett's End for 15 years and attended Belswains Primary school and Longdean Academy. He is a passionate ambassador for his community knowing many residents and businesses.

His interest was sparked by helping in previous elections in the ward. Sobaan wants to engage the youth of Bennett's End and give them motivational things to do with their energy such as Sporting clubs. He would love to motivate young people in Bennetts End to become engaged and interested in politics, and would like to represent a voice for the younger residents of Bennett's End.

Sobaan says "Bennett's End is the most diverse of all of the Dacorum wards. It has a mixed community that lives and works well together. I will pro-actively engage with all members of the community to address local issues and make a difference to the people of Bennett's End."



Sobaan Mahmood being welcomed by Rt Hon Sir Mike Penning MP outside the Community Centre

### Our Priorities for Bennett's End:

- Better Transport Links eg Buses
- Build Local Business Relationships
- Build Community Focus around Bennett's End Community Centre
- Engaging Youth in activities eg Sports and Clubs
- Tackle Anti-social behaviour



### **Business Emphasis**

Popular P/Cllr Mark Rogers outside the shops at Bennett's End with Sir Mike Penning. Mark says he would like to encourage involvement of local businesses in supporting new Bennett's End initiatives. The results will be a more integrated, happy and thriving place to live and work.



**Conservatives**

Working for the Residents of Bennetts' End

# Working for You in Bennett's End!

**A Christmas Carol** Christmas was a long time ago but Bennetts Gate shops has a saga that it's worth telling, even if only to experience the feel-good factor. The shops and Bennett's End Community Centre committee wanted to join other Hemel shopping centres with our own Christmas tree and lights. Conservative Councillor John Birnie would take up the challenge as it would prove to be a great way of generating greater community spirit in Bennetts End. Other Dacorum neighbourhood communities had raised money to buy their own lights but the direct challenge was that £4,000 would be needed.

First step was to put forward a bid for a community grant and Cllr Birnie succeeded in getting nearly £3,000 out of the Borough – Almost there! Secondly, with the support of other Conservative connections, he secured a 'Locality' grant from Conservative County Councillor Tina Howard. There were no other resources available and so now it was all about reducing the costs of the project. Enter Sir Mike Penning, our MP, who put him in touch with a friendly tree grower. A large throw-away Xmas tree would need to be replaced every year but a smaller rooted version, which would be cheaper and could be used for years to come was decided upon. The local community would need to keep it watered in dry spells. A little friendly persuasion at the Cupid Green depot then got the Clean & Green department on-side saving £100s in setting up the tree - Result!

A rally round by our local shopkeepers found further contributions to bring the final amount so close. Indeed, special thanks are due to Both **Tom Phillips of the TJS Store** and **Dave Boggins of the Greenacres Tavern** who each made particularly generous donations. There were still a few more £100s needed but fate was on our side. You may remember when the lights first went up, they vanished, but they weren't stolen, as many suspected. A film company was shooting a TV film at Bennetts Gate but it wasn't a Christmas-time scene. As luck would have it, the Community Centre was acting as a catering facility for the film crew and so when they requested for their temporary removal, our **Centre Manager Sharon Lowe** stepped up. With ingenuity, Sharon succeeded in securing all costs associated with the taking down and putting them back up with a contingency for breakages. It was this latter factor that tipped us over the remaining deficit in the project costs.

So thanks to the very great community effort all ended well in our saga. Sir Mike did the great switch on with hundreds of local residents increasing the shops footfall. Most importantly a local carol singing choir performed under the tree, the Rotary Club brought Santa's Sleigh to visit, some shops provided drinks and snacks, the rain held off, and everybody had a great time.

Plans are already in place for the 2019 Christmas switch on, hopefully with more lights and trees in the square. It just shows that we can, as a community, achieve notable successes no matter how large or small they may be. Lots of small achievements can build into a big difference for now and in the future. The tree and lights will be with us for many years to come – So long as we all keep watering the Christmas tree!

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