

Thank you to all those performers who took part in our main Christmas switch on events in St Helens and Earlestown last weekend and to all those who attended. It was great to see so many people enjoying the entertainment and having fun. Special thanks and congratulations go to the outstanding young people I met who helped switch on the lights in Church Square – Jayson, Jake, Fearne and Molly. Well done!

Readers will be aware the council secured sponsorship for the trees and tree lights and thanks again go to English Cities Fund, Balfour Beatty and City Fibre for their generosity.

There's another packed weekend of events coming up with Christmas markets, live music, crafts, fun fairs and more taking place across the borough including at Victoria Park, Ruskin, Newton High Street, Teardrops, St Mary's Market, the Citadel, the Mason's Arms in Billinge and many more. You certainly can't say nothing ever happens in St Helens!

Follow the Star and What's On In St Helens on social media and visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/christmas to find out more.

At Cabinet this week we're discussing the next stage in our plans to develop a new state of the art leisure and community venue in Parr. Our desire is to demolish the old Parr leisure centre and, in partnership with Saints and others, create a new training base for the club and facilities for the whole community to use.

Cabinet are being asked to approve a significant financial commitment to the next feasibility stage. This demonstrates we're serious about this, but keep in mind it's a long journey to delivering anything of this size and cost – a cost which because of spiralling energy prices, interest rates and inflation is far higher than it was just a year ago.

However, we are moving heaven and earth to make this and other projects happen. We're currently delivering Glass Futures, Lea Green station improvements, the Ashurst Primary rebuild and Parkside, with town centre regeneration plans progressing on time behind the scenes, and we want more.

Best wishes to all Star readers.

These are tough times for all of us. There is no shame at all in asking for a helping hand, and there are plenty of people and organisations ready to give one. If you need support please reach out. Visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether for all the latest information and advice.