

County Councillors Report after 12 months in the Job

It is almost 12 months since I became your County Councillor, so what's been happening at WCC and in my division? I found that my 11 years' experience as a District Councillor stood me in good stead to assimilate the County Council procedures and I quickly made contact with the communities that I serve and represent. There are 16 villages or hamlets in my division and I attend and support 6 Parish Councils, namely Bidford on Avon, Clifford Chambers, Dorsington, Salford Priors, Welford and Wixford.

The County Council is administered by a minority Conservative Team of 26 with 22 Labour, 9 Liberal Democrat, 3 Independent and 2 Green Party Councillors. I serve on the Planning & Regulatory, Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committees and I am a member of the Warwickshire Waste Management Partnership.

The two main messages from the Administration are: -

To provide safe, secure and sustainable services for all, especially vulnerable people and

To grow the economy to provide jobs within Warwickshire.

Setting a balanced 4 year budget in February 2014 was quite a challenge requiring £92m savings and the necessity to introduce a 1.99% Council Tax increase; albeit the first for 4 years. The savings have been applied across the board but we have minimised the impact on care packages and vulnerable children and protected the level of highway maintenance and winter gritting. We shall be investing £1.25m (over 4 years) on flood alleviation and highway drainage and £2m (over 4 years) on "schools-to skills-to employment".

County-wide matters.

Fire Service - We shall be working with our neighbours in the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service to consider collaboration of services. There is sufficient synergy between us to offer the prospect of making savings whilst continuing to ensure that we provide a good and sustainable service for the future. The Peer Review has just been published and we are in the upper quartile, which is excellent news.

Local Enterprise Partnership - We shall be working with Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership to secure investment in our sub-region and build growth with the main focus on Advanced Manufacturing

and Engineering.

Superfast Broadband - Further funding, recently received, will allow the roll out to reach 95% of our residents but we are still seeking more funding to expand even further. The Infrastructure is now underway with part of my division already completed.

Local Matters

Bidford-on-Avon

Murray House - Land at the rear of the Fire Station

Creative Support have now confirmed the date and time for the Murray House opening ceremony, which will be on Thursday 26th June between 1.30 and 4pm. This is a Supported Living/Extra Care scheme for Adults with Learning Disabilities, and is the first of 2 schemes that Creative Support are providing on WCC-owned land (the other being at Wharf Street, Warwick)

Bidford Bridge – Work is ongoing to mitigate HGV'S exceeding the weight limit over the bridge with funding from a developer's 106 agreement and we are awaiting WCC officers to arrange a site meeting ASAP.

High Street – New parking restrictions have been implemented to allow the bus service to operate more efficiently through the pinch point, although not supported by all local residents the new restrictions allows the local bus service to operate without encountering obstructions.

Road Works – Surfacing and drain clearance have been completed in several locations and new parking arrangements implemented in Crompton Avenue.

New Medical Centre

From my County Councillors Community Grant Scheme I have awarded £1,500 towards a much needed Heart Monitor. I have also raised strong objections to the need for elderly and infirm patients travelling by public transport to have to cross the busy A439 when arriving or leaving the new medical centre. A recent meeting with our MP Nadhim Zahawi and all interested parties met to discuss alternatives, which are to reported on ASAP.

Bidford on Avon Youth Club – I awarded £900 from my Councillors Community Grant Scheme for an additional youth worker

Welford-on-Avon

Flood Alleviation – Work is ongoing for a flood alleviation scheme following meetings with the Environment Agency (EA), WCC Flood Management Team, Welford Parish Council, local residents and our MP Nadhim Zahawi. I also went to London to speak with Brendon Lewis, the Under Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government about Flooding Resilience. A scheme for Welford is estimated to cost 1.4m, and the EA has no funding available so we are trying to obtain funding directly from the Government. Next meeting with the MP, EA, PC and myself will take place on 23/5/14 to discuss further developments.

Binton Bridges Weight Mitigation - Ongoing work following a site meeting with representatives of the Parish Council, WCC and myself to consider a priority system and pedestrian footpath with appropriate signage. Scheme now approved .

High Street – Footpath, drains and driveway thresholds have been repaired.

School – A meeting on site has been held with the Head Teacher, Chair of Governors, Parish Clerk and WCC Officers regarding capacity issues and building works to accommodate growing pupil numbers. Improvements to drop off areas outside the school were also discussed. I also negotiated funding for two new storage sheds now installed at the school.

Welford Scout Group - A new refrigerator for the scout group and the two recently installed AED defibrillators for which the community made the main contribution towards.

Clifford Chambers – I have bid on behalf of the Parish Council for a reduced speed limit down to 20mph to improve road safety which has been approved. Drains have been jetted and cleared. Negotiations are ongoing with landowners and WCC flood management team to improve flood alleviation. Unfortunately the cogs turn far too slowly.

Salford Priors – Highway resurfacing has been implemented and drains jetted and cleared. A scheme has been approved for improved road safety measures on the B4088 and Salford Priors Junior School has received £2,600 for library facilities from my County Councillor's Community Grant Scheme.

Barton – Following a fatal accident in December 2012 at Barton/Honeybourne Crossroads I have supported a scheme of improved signage and a reduced speed limit , which has now been approved and should be implemented soon.

Wixford – I have obtained funding from WCC to match that provided by the Parish Council for improved road safety measures to support the 30 mph limit through the village.

Weston on Avon – I have again obtained funding from Global Gathering to refurbish the fabric of All Saints Church. Drains have been jetted and cleared.

Global Gathering Fund.

I will be negotiating again this year for funding for charities and projects in my local villages, so if you have a charity or project needing funds please mail me with details as soon as possible.

Finally I look forward to working with constituents and Parish Councils in my Division over the next twelve months and beyond. With kind regards and thanks for your cooperation.

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