

Cllr Gwilym Butler Unitary Councillor
ANNUAL REPORT

I will start my report with the subject which has been on most peoples mind over the past year and which has been a major problem , Highways.

Following the Beast from the East March last year a damp winter and then the hottest summer in living memory this has created the perfect storm for our roads . The problem has been in Shropshire and nation wide with the issues not unique to our area but pot holes and road break up common all over the nation. This has been further complicated with our provider Kier having delivery issues within their contract and the recognition of the council that a redesign and restructure of the highways department was required which now is finally coming to fruition .

I have welcomed the visit of the portfolio holder for highways to our area recently and took the opportunity to take him down many of our lanes and roads to show him how dire things are . There is a bigger issue here and that is funding from government to rural areas which I will come to later .I strongly believe we cannot keep patching up our roads but they need to be completely over hauled .

They were not designed for the volume of traffic or the large agricultural vehicles which currently use them .How we achieve this will be a challenge and without central government support will not be happening soon. I good example of this is the B4363 from Cleobury to Bridgnorth it is falling apart. A patch up will not be a long term solution. Central government needs to wake up to local infrastructure needs as well as Cross-rail and HS2 .

I am pleased to report that although delivering a balanced budget that our statutory requirements of Safeguarding both Adults and Children are performing well with a Good Ofsted received by Children services which in the current environment of funding is a great achievement and I congratulate officers in their achievement . At present we now have over 400 children in the county in our care , this is an all time high and represents a huge pressure on council funds, We are constantly looking at ways to reduce this and encourage foster carers and adoption where appropriate , any one interested please contact Shropshire Council or visit the web site.

Adult social care have won national awards for some of their delivery models which are changing the traditional way in which we support Adults. Local prescribing , getting in early is proving to be so beneficial in stopping many people getting into the costly system .This can be supported by local community groups such as CoCo Compassionate Communities which help so many people in our area both to stay in their own home and to create local groups to help with Anxiety, Depression, loneliness, all of which can be the Start of much bigger problems if not addressed early .

I am pleased to become a trustee of the newly formed Cleobury Mortimer Mens Shed looking at providing a facility for men to meet up and undertake hobbies such as wood work, metal work or just meet for a cuppa ,again to offset isolation and depression make friends and support each other. The group has already secured

the site at Tenbury Road business park the footings are going in donated by a local company and funds have been donated from many Parish Councils and Cleobury Town council for which I thank you . Grants have been applied for and I am hopeful the shed shall come to fruition in the coming months , watch this space .

I would personally like to thank everyone who volunteers in our communities whether in an organisation or a local council .Giving something back and helping each other is at the heart of what makes our area and communities a special place to live.

How we shape our communities may appear local government speak and not important to many individuals and families but it is so important .

If we do not undertake a hard strategic look at our communities, towns ,villages and hamlets we in the rural areas will become more and more isolated in the delivery of essential services such as Health ,Education ,Utilities and transport etc . As I have mentioned in previous annual reports unless the existing communities grow and become more sustainable they will not maintain the viability of services we take for granted at present . School numbers generally are falling in the south of the county and although we are currently well served with medical provision other rural areas are struggling to recruit GPs and support staff . Education for 16-18 year olds is already an issue as we have no provision locally and we are struggling to get providers to tender for any forms of public transport .

We are currently undertaking a review of the Local plan county wide.I would also like to congratulate the Cleobury Neighbourhood plan team on the work they are doing in developing their Neighbour hood plan shaping the Cleobury of the future.

On a wider note Shropshire Council has been awarded funding for the Shrewsbury North west relief road and Mile End at Oswestry and is looking at a green belt review with developments at Cosford, junction 3 M54 and around Shifnal for employment and housing . This along with other major projects may not appear important to us but will effect the finances of the council generally in a positive way which in turn will hopefully improve funding which will effect us locally.

I sit on an independent body for Shropshire RSN , Rural Services Network. This organisation which has membership from most rural areas of England specifically looks at rural issues and lobbies central government for a fairer funding for the rural areas . At present the rural areas have the worst funding per head for education and the least funding for highways all of which we are fighting against .RSN has formulated a group of over 80 MPs signed up now to support fairer funding for the rural areas and they have agreed not to support the government budget should this not be forthcoming .

The current funding for local government has come to an end and we are awaiting the outcome from the Fairer funding review next spring which will be what the government gives Shropshire to help deliver services .Funding ring fenced for Education and any other funds on top of what we obtain in Council Tax to help us deliver Adult social care and then what is left can go on other services such as Highways, Leisure, arts, libraries etc. We are aware that the proposed formula has

changed and density of population has been removed and travel time it takes to access services has been introduced following our lobbying . Not a done deal but hopeful for an improvement , hopefully I will report this back next year .

The Council has recently set up its own housing company . The purpose of this is to fill the gap in our communities across Shropshire and help deliver the right home in the right place . The government run a nationwide policy which currently supports developers which when a site obtains planning the developers usually build the housing which provides the most profit usually large detached houses.

This does not support local need which maybe for starter homes or small bungalows or houses to private rent at an affordable rent for key local workers who may not succeed to obtain affordable housing in their area through the current qualification procedure.

Working with local Town and Parish councils Shropshire Council will try and deliver housing for the communities where the current market is failing . If you have any ideas or land in a sustainable area which maybe worthy for community benefit please contact me .

The University in Shrewsbury is working closely with the Council to identify courses which will deliver to local need . We currently are struggling to recruit nurses to Shropshire and the council is working with the University for them to deliver the appropriate courses for nurses with the council then looking at delivering accommodation to support key workers such as nurses so that we have a complete package to encourage people to learn ,live ,work and deliver key needs but supported accordingly .Grow our own ,and hopefully reduce the outflow of young people from our county and make it more self sufficient .

Last February I was asked by the Leader of The Council to take up a role back on the Cabinet on Council.My new role is Portfolio Holder for Communities Place and Regulatory Services.I now oversee the Town and Parish councils county wide the Voluntary Sector, and Regulatory services such as Licensing and planning delivery.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow Councillor Madge Shingleton with whom I work closely with and who will provide updates on Health ,Transport and Youth issues to mention but a few .

Please feel free to contact me on Facebook or by email
Gwilym.Butler@Shropshire.gov.uk or 07801099015 .