

REPORT TO ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - 2018

This past year has not been dissimilar to previous years. The Ward remains, like all our rural areas, in the Borough devoid of real investment.

Our roads and footways all require substantial investment. Rights of Way would also benefit from some time and resources and the threat is still around that aggressive developers could bring forward unwanted, large developments which may lead to permanent loss of our beautiful countryside.

Despite this somewhat pessimistic overview, both myself and my colleague for this Ward, Councillor Steve Burrell, continue to fight for a fair deal for the Parishes in our Ward and other rural parts of the Borough. We are also aware of the local views regarding inappropriate developments and we have represented the Parishes and local individuals at Planning Committee meetings on a number of occasions.

Steve Burrell and I attempt to attend as many of the Parish Council meetings as we can. I mention this because the Vicar of Dibly perception of local councils still exists among our communities and we are keen for local residents to know that we are available to support them and represent them at every opportunity. This perception is, however, far from the truth, without the proactive approach taken by the local Parish Councillors, who all give their time voluntarily, the role of your elected Members on the Borough Council would be even more difficult. Their support and partnership working with us both is valued very highly.

Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Clerks and Parish Councillors of all the parishes in our Ward for their proactive and positive work that they have done throughout the past year. Through that approach some of the cuts imposed by the Borough's current administration have not been as noticeable in our areas.

Parish Councils have invested in some additional work and services, they have regular meetings and dialogue with their neighbours and TW officers, and the partnerships that have been formed are to be congratulated and I hope they can continue, supported appropriately by TWC, into the next financial year.

Local councils are statutory consultees in the planning application process. On most occasions, the planning officers have listened to local concerns, but there are times when we have not been successful. The production of Neighbourhood Plans will assist in ensuring that TWC know what is acceptable to the rural areas, and of course, what is not acceptable. Neighbourhood Plans are an important part of Planning Policy – congratulations to Edgmond, whose Plan is nearing adoption and good luck to Tibberton & Cherrington and Ercall Magna, both of which are working towards their important documents. I would encourage all Parish Councils to work towards a Plan!

Neighbourhood Plans belong to the community -the comments, observations, objectives and direction come from the people who live in the Parish – how important is that!

As I come to the end of my annual report, I feel it appropriate to mention the continued despicable crime of Child Sexual Exploitation that is continuing to blight the Borough. The efforts of the Telford MP have finally persuaded the Government to include it into a National Enquiry, whilst I and my

fellow Conservative Councillors welcome this, we still challenge the Administration at TW to commission their own independent enquiry – we feel that it is the duty of Telford & Wrekin Council to bring justice to any person who has enticed, for any type of gain, vulnerable children into this evil web. I cannot imagine the pain and suffering, emotional and physical, that the victims and their families have endured over the years and we owe it to them to not only bring justice, but to do everything possible to prevent others from becoming victims in the future.

Therefore, if anyone knows of any information to if you are aware of a victim, please come forward to speak with the leaders of this National (and I hope Local) enquiry. All the information must be available to them, for them to complete the investigation and this will then support victims and families but also protect future generations from such evil predators.

The Truth Project can be contacted, as a confidential call, on 0800 917 1000 (8am – 8pm) or via truthproject.org.uk. We have had assurances that by contacting them, you are not committed to anything and all calls and interviews are strictly confidential.

Best wishes for the next 12 months, thank you for your support throughout the year and I look forward to working with you all again into the future.

Councillor Stephen Bentley

Ward Member

Edgmond & Ercall Magna Ward