

Dear All

As I write this report, I am reminded that none of us could have imagined that over 12 months later our Nation, and all its communities, would still be in lockdown.

Hopefully, especially as the vaccination programme continues at full momentum, the Government's planned lifting of restrictions will see a gradual move towards normality for us all. I suspect, however, that it will be a new normal.

It is important to remember that return can only be achieved by everyone following the guidelines and advice and the nationwide vaccination course completed. It is only then that families and friends can come together, meet in their homes, dine out or simply go to their local for a quick one.

Many may wish to celebrate, retrospectively, weddings, birthdays, births or to remember loved ones who passed from their lives without being able to say goodbye in the respectful manner we have grown accustomed to.

This report also provides opportunity for me to give thanks not only to the NHS, who we must agree have been magnificent throughout, but also to thank the many local residents who have provided much needed and much appreciated support and aid to many within the community who have been isolated or vulnerable, as they have gifted their time and dedication to ensure that food, medication, along with other essentials, have been provided or delivered. Saying a very big THANK YOU to all these selfless volunteer individuals is potentially a small accolade but it is one that I send with genuine heart-felt sentiments.

I also wish to recognise the work of your local Parish Councillors, during this past year, they have continued, on your behalf, to carry out their duties as your chosen representatives, to ensure that the community's wishes, needs and objectives have been delivered.

As one of your Ward Members, unfortunately, I feel the pandemic has provided some unwarranted decisions and opportunities, which have had a difficult and detrimental effect right across the Ward and these have impacted on many local residents, such as

- The loss of essential public transport
- Numerous road closures
- Delays in highway maintenance
- Contentious planning approvals etc.

Yes, there have been virtual meetings but in general these are time restricted and certainly not as robust as a meeting in a venue, where everyone has an opportunity to participate, which from my experience has provided a more democratic outcome.

As I close this report, my thoughts are with everyone who has lost loved ones over the past year and in this I include HM Queen Elizabeth on the passing of HRH Prince Philip. Yes, he was a titled statesman of this Nation, but ultimately, he was also a Husband, Father, Grandfather and Friend. I know you will share with me in sending deepest sympathy to his family at this sad time.

Thank you all for your tremendous support and for the privilege bestowed on me as one of your Ward Members. I look forward to working with you in the months to come and together we can bring about more success and projects for the people of the Parish.

Councillor Stephen Bentley
Edgmond & Ercall Magna Ward