

## **District Council Report – Broadwas & Cotheridge - February**

It has been a busy month.

At the council's first Overview & Scrutiny (we've had two since we last met), which both myself and David attended we approved the council's budgets and the council's five-year plan along with listening through a report on apprenticeships in the area which we're looking at with various important stakeholders.

Two weeks ago the task and finish group panel on Apprenticeships met with Worcestershire Apprentices and the LEP to learn more about their role with Apprentices and this week we met with secondary schools and training providers, again to learn more about what is happening in our district with Apprentices before we make recommendations in April.

We want to support business, schools and individuals when it comes to Apprenticeships in order to have a skilled workforce in Malvern and businesses going from strength to strength.

I have emailed a copy of the five-year plan and all useful information from that Overview & Scrutiny panel to everyone via the Clerk.

Both, the budget and the five-year plan were then later approved at full council.

The focus for the 5-year plan is on communities, the environment and supporting business – and where we can bring those things together. In line with the budget we are also looking to maintain a sound financial standing knowing that there will need to be savings as district councils continue to receive less in funding.

We have in recent weeks announced a £2 million refurbishment of the Splash in Malvern, which is now overdue. Priory park will be next.

Last Tuesday we met with various partners in relation to poverty in the area, these were Malvern Hills Foodbank, Action for Children, The CAB, Christians against Debt and Platform, once Fortis housing. Via this meeting we're looking at actions and support we need to undertake as a council, working with these partners to minimise poverty and the effects of poverty in our district. Again, more on this will come to light as actions are developed.

One early action is the Maggs homeless centre in Malvern is now open and it is being well used. I will make sure I pass on figures for usage.

Our economic development panel is looking at our economic centres and what we can do to revitalise the three shopping areas in Malvern, the centre of Upton and the centre of Tenbury. It is a challenge but without addressing it we know, like we're seeing in places in Worcester even now, we will end up with vacant shops. As part of this we're also looking at tourism.

Part of this is looking at alternatives to just shops and ensuring our centres can become destinations.

On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January myself and David visited Broadheath school and held an assembly to explain what we do as councillors. We then went into a class of years 4 and 5 and had a great morning with the children helping them to set up their own political parties and going through the voting process. The feedback was great and Broadheath school sent a very kind letter to MHDC thanking us and Claire, our communities' officer, for the morning.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> there was a great event at the Council House where we looked at transport in the district. Having received some significant funding towards supporting local community transport we looked at existing community transport, care share schemes and even electric bike loan schemes in villages. This is an ongoing process but at the end of it we are hoping to have developed a plan to support our communities with better transport – and of course keeping in mind our aims around the environment as well. I'd like to see options within our villages that means that despite our falling bus coverage we aren't cut off or limited with options.

I reported on the informal " car lift " scheme that Broadwas do and that gave us a good conversation around car-pooling.

Our full council meeting was on the 28<sup>th</sup>, two weeks ago, and as well as voting through our 5 year plan and budget we also approved our environmental panels Destination Zero Carbon neutral plan which aims to make MHDC Carbon Neutral by the end of this decade, If not sooner. It follows a set of recommendations which will leave us with some carbon usage still and that usage to then be offset, primarily through tree planting.

Last week we took the first planning decision of my time as a Councillor to committee, against officer's recommendations, and got the vote we felt the application deserved given the sound reasoning for it to go ahead. This was for a home in Lower Broadheath.

The council's business has been moving fast over the past month.