

Broadwas & Cotheridge Parish Council Meeting – District Council Report – October

As for everyone Covid-19 continues to dominate what we do and whilst we've had concerns over rising numbers of cases which led to us asking residents not to visit loved ones in care homes – following Covid increases in these areas we're also seeing significant increases in unemployment across the district. The figures are still under the national average, which itself is increasing but it is the increase in the number of unemployed young people which is of the most concern.

Both the Covid-19 CPG group and the recent Apprenticeship report has highlighted solutions and support to combat this going forward and it is a priority moving forward that we support both local business and young people to support Apprenticeship schemes.

On combatting Covid-19 over this difficult period we're asking people to follow Government advice and whilst that is not always clear we're ensuring that what is put out by the District Council localises the advice and ensures it's clear to residents. This includes the Rule of 6, the importance of washing hands, sanitising and social distancing.

Whilst numbers have increased across Malvern Hills, they remain some way below the level where government intervention would occur. It was 86 cases per 100,000 in Birmingham and 177 cases per 100,000 in Bolton.

And of course, the Test and Trace App is now active. In my workplace we have our QR code at the doorway and anyone entering the building must scan it to show they've been on site. Unfortunately, I am visiting a lot of places where the QR code isn't show and so whilst the App is being used by many if they can't scan their location its effectiveness is limited.

Worcestershire County Council has been given £595,631.97 as part of the Government's Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies. The money is to help support people struggling to afford food and other essentials due to Covid-19.

Almost £50,000 of this has been allocated to the county's holiday hunger scheme and emergency food parcels. The remaining £546,000 has been allocated to district councils to managed and distribute where it is needed. Malvern Hills received £54,112.

After consultation with relevant stakeholders, we have decided to give our money directly to our Food Banks, based on population size. This is because our Food Banks are best placed to identify and provide support to people in crisis. As well as providing emergency food parcels, Food Banks work with a range of partners to assist people to access additional support, so they can break the cycle of circumstances that led to them being in crisis in the first place.

We have also received fund to support rough sleepers across the district and our Space Hive funding platform is continuing to receive support to support people locally.

We have begun our annual Residents' Survey, which started on Sunday, 6 September 2020.

We are asking residents from Malvern Hills Districts to tell us what they think of their local area and services.

This year, the survey includes questions on how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted residents, as well as the response and support provided by the council. It will also ask questions about such issues as litter and homelessness.

Feedback will be used to improve services and the ongoing recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. A summary of the results will be published anonymously on the council websites.

It takes about 15 to 20 minutes to complete but progress can be saved so it can be completed in stages.

Last year, the survey received 1,049 responses for Malvern Hills (with health services, improving town centres and fly-tipping voted as the top priorities).

The survey will run until 4 October. Please promote this to residents using whatever channels you have available. People can take part by visiting

www.malvern hills.gov.uk/performance

At a recent Executive meeting at which I attended as a guess, but David is a member of it was reported by David Harrison, the portfolio holder for planning, that we had a 8.71 year housing land supply. On behalf of someone else I've since questioned this and received the following reply which I thought would be useful for councillors.

Elected members are properly briefed on such matters and receive updates on the Housing Land Supply position for the various housing sub-areas, when they are updated, or new information is available. Recently, members received a report on the council's housing land position, and this confirmed that for Malvern Hills District the supply figure is 8.71 years. The council continues to use the method for assessing housing land supply that it has used since the SWDP was adopted in February 2016 and this has been upheld at appeal on a number of occasions.

The Government is consulting on a new Standard Method, but this has not been introduced in national policy or planning guidance yet. As such, it would be inappropriate to start using this new standard method, but the council, like a number of planning consultancies has been looking to see what implications it would have. The council does not dispute the views expressed in the Lichfields blog, but importantly, we do not know what the final version of this new standard method might look like.

Developers have been testing the council's housing land supply position for many years now and an appeal relating to a site on the edge of Rushwick village is expected to be heard later this year. Notwithstanding the Government's intention to introduce a standard method, the council continues to submit figures using the long established and accepted methodology and will be telling the inspector that the council has a 5 year plus housing land supply and therefore its development plan policies relating to the supply of housing are up to date and should be afforded full weight.

I know this was covered at the last meeting but during the lockdown period Enforcement have continued to operate although under more difficult circumstances. There has been an increase in the number of reported cases although also an increase in the number of cases that are not actually enforcement cases. There has also been an increase in the number of people who have carried out work which doesn't have planning, so a lot of time has been taken into looking at many cases across the district. I've reported two new cases alone on our patch in the last week.

We used to receive a report on enforcement during David's time as leader and this was ended when it was felt that Enforcement were on top of things. Because the department has become busier David has requested that it be returned and that all Councillors will start to receive an Enforcement report – which I think is very useful and will allow us to report back to Parish Councils.

We've also asked for the individual enforcement case reports we get to be sent with more details, so we have more information on each case as it's sent out to us.

As I'm sending this 9 days in advance of the meeting and I'm away for the meeting I have asked Aaron to send any updates direct to the Parish Council as any planning update I do now is bound to be out of date by the following weekend.

September has been a busy month, so I am bound to have missed something. As always if there are any questions please let me know and I'll reply when I'm back from the 15th October.