

Arden Division Annual Report 2017/2018

Arden Division of Warwickshire County Council was created on May 4, 2017. I was elected with a large majority, taking 83% of the popular vote. Given such a strong showing the weight of expectation on me personally has been high.

We are lucky to live in a wealthy part of a wealthy county. Warwickshire is ranked in the top five of 143 local authority areas in the country for sustainability and in the top 5 most equal places for wellbeing. Although good news this has the downside of meaning that we are net contributors to the District, the County and nationally and due to Government savings aspirations we have had the central government revenue support grant reduced each year since 2010 and we lose it altogether next year. As a result the Council has had to raise the maximum cash it can from tax increases and this year tax has been increase by 3% for general activities and an additional 2% to fund social care for all ages. However Arden Division's wealth means that we tend to be at the back of the queue for Council support services and I have been exploring with officers ways of enabling Parish Councils to fund services specifically for the benefit of their residents. Although my suggestions were initially met with strong resistance I have meetings scheduled with the Police over additional uniformed presence in the Division, the Chief Constable is carrying out a review of public funded average speed cameras of the kind on trial in Hockley Heath. I am continuing pressure on County Council officers over the lack of double and single yellow line enforcement in villages and I am pleased to report that the Chief Constable has finally responded to my request for additional traffic enforcement and he has increased the number of mobile units this year.

We have held four Arden Parish Chairs and Clerks meetings where matters concerning Parishes are discussed. Most recently we met with Redditch BC and Worcestershire CC to explore ways of alleviating the traffic that floods through Arden every morning and evening on its way to Leamington Spa and M40 Jct15. There is no statutory duty on areas building houses to mitigate the effect of the developments outside a small area. Warwickshire say they have no funds and I am in active discussion with officers about including the A3400 and A4189 to join the A435 on central government's designated Major Road Network. If included it might mean some funding is released for traffic mitigation on our main roads.

The Public Health department has continued its initiative of Dementia Awareness and has initiated a mental health awareness programme. I was surprised to learn that suicide in the leading cause of death for males between the ages of 18 and 25 and 26 and 40. Trading Standards have focused on Internet crime and phone and mail scams while also having success prosecuting contraband cigarettes sales and other fraudulent trading activities.

The bad weather over this winter has taken its toll on the roads with crews having to unblock drains and fill potholes. We carried out a total of 94 gritting runs compared to an average winter needing 55 runs. I am pleased to see that the puffing crossing at Henley High School is now working and brighter lights will be installed in the lights on Henley High Street this summer.

Communities Grants were awarded to Henley Library, the Hub, Henley Guildhall Trust, Wootton Wawen landscaping and Earlswood Village Hall.

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