

County Councillor Report September 2016

My intention is to provide you with a written report each month regardless of whether I am able to be with you in person. This being my first one it is, as you might expect, very much an impression since it was only last week that I ventured into County hall to swear the necessary oath and receive a plethora of forms which needed completing and signing. The councillors are supported by 2 member support officers and I am very much in their hands at the moment as they try to fix up appointments with the chief officers as part of my induction course.

Having been a district councillor for just over 5 years my first impression of County is that the scale is different. The building itself is huge compared to Wychavon, the council employs around 2600 people directly and if you include those who work in the county's maintained schools you can add a further 9,100 people. Compare that to Wychavon with circa 220 employees and you begin to get some idea of the difference in scale.

Financially the scale difference continues. At Wychavon we manage a budget of around £11 million a year, County is looking at a net budget of £322.5million for this financial year. It took me some time as a new district councillor to understand exactly what Wychavon was responsible for and I am not sure even now whether I fully understand every area the district council is involved in, but I very soon had to come to grips with planning and planning enforcement. In fact it would be fair to say that at district level most of my time as a councillor is taken up with issues to do with planning and enforcement. As you are no doubt aware we are about to produce an overview and scrutiny report looking at Wychavon's enforcement process and effectiveness. The report will be available to all on-line within the next 2 weeks.

A brief glimpse of what County does and how it impinges on parishes tells a very different story.

I do know that County is responsible for highways (apart from the motorway and its junctions) as I have had to deal with problems in my parish for some time but nearly two thirds of the County spend is on adult social care (£132.7 million) and supporting vulnerable children, skills and improving education (£77.2 million) Highways, transport and household waste come next in spend

(£64.5 million) and I don't know yet how that is broken down but will find out, and the rest of the spend is on support functions and community services (libraries, arts etc). In terms of what is most likely to be of concern at local parish level it looks to me like highways, broadband, crime (the responsibility of the Police and Crime Commissioner) and possibly infrastructure (eg Northern relief road). However the more I get to grips to with the job and the more you question me, the better able I will be to help in terms of what County can do and cannot do.

I realise that in the case of Hartlebury waste became a highly sensitive issue and no doubt you will be bringing me up to speed when I come next week to your meeting.

So far my induction meetings carry on right through September. It is somewhat of a steep learning curve but please do not hesitate to contact me if you have an issue or problem and you think it is a County responsibility. The quickest way for me to learn this trade is to be fed a problem and have to go chasing officers to find a solution.

I have 9 parishes in the Ombersley division and I still have responsibilities as a district councillor for Ombersley (a position I will step down from at the next district elections in 2019 as I don't believe you can do the 2 jobs effectively at the same time) so I will not be able to be present at every meeting but I will be available via email and telephone and presumably I will be receiving your parish minutes after each meeting. I am happy to meet with your clerk and chairman outside meetings if necessary too. In Ombersley I try to meet with the chairman and clerk before each meeting, although it is not always possible to get the three diaries to coincide.

I look forward to meeting you all in the near future.

CLlr Peter Tomlinson September 2016