

Bewdley Town Annual Meeting April 19th 2021 6.00 p.m.

Councillor Report Cllr Calne Edginton- White Bewdley Town Councillor West Ward and Wyre Forest District Councillor Bewdley & Rock.

The last Council year 2020 – 2021 has been very challenging and while the community has not been able to come together with annual events that usually take place in our beautiful town, the voluntary response to support vulnerable residents in our community has been exceptional.

Flood Groups: During 2020 – 21 I have continued to support residents with the ongoing temporary flood barrier issues at Beale's Corner as both the BTC lead Councillor on flood defences and co-ordinator of the Bewdley Town Council Community flood volunteers group. Working with the Beale's Corner Residents Flood Group and the Environment Agency we assessed the effectiveness of Property Level Resilience, continued voluntary assistance with the deployment of the temporary barrier and assisted with stakeholder meetings to progress towards a permanent flood barrier solution. Currently we are faced with the additional challenge caused by the failure of the temporary barrier in the January 2020 floods, when 19 properties were flooded for the second time within a year. The current engineering investigations into the highway substructure, which has commenced at Beale's corner is due to be completed on 29th April. From these investigations the environment agency will be able to assess what measures will be required to be able to reinstate the temporary barriers while waiting for the completion of a permanent barrier scheme.

The January floods have also resulted in the initiation of a community volunteer programme to provide physical support for flooded residents during any future incidents. There will be further group meetings to prepare and coordinate a future emergency response to support residents. I am very grateful to the local Environment Agency team who have provided ongoing support to residents and are continuing to support and respond to the work required to achieve a permanent barrier solution for Beale's Corner. The resulting benefits of a permanent barrier scheme will support residents at Beale's Corner and the whole Bewdley community and residents who rely on Bewdley Services. Communication with residents through a regular EA newsletter and a local facebook page for sharing flood updates has also been provided. These communications are all posted on the Bewdley Town Council web site. The EA provided a drop in session following the January floods and have attended a BTC meeting two months ago and were present at the meeting tonight.

In my District Councillor role I have been able to encourage the District Council to engage with the Environment Agency, WCC Highways, Severn Trent, Emergency Services and the residents of Beale's Corner to collect evidence regarding the 2020 February Floods. The evidence gathering took place over three Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, this has been followed up with a further meeting with the Environment Agency on April 1st 2021 regarding the failure of the temporary barrier in January. Severn Trent representatives also attended the meeting. A further meeting with Worcestershire County Council Highways regarding highway investigations and the Environment Agency over the proposed permanent scheme will take place at the May Overview and Scrutiny meeting. We have taken two separate motions to Wyre Forest District Council regarding both the February 2020 and the January 2021 flooding in Bewdley and as a result the District Council has contacted DEFRA, the Minister, the local MP, the County Council and Agencies to press for co-ordinated support for a permanent barrier scheme to be implemented at Beale's Corner as soon as possible.

Bewdley Town Council Road Safety Group: I have chaired the Road Safety group three times and attended this group remotely regularly throughout the last year. The major ongoing issues are to try and address traffic speed in the Town Centre and the gateways including High Street, Dowles Road, Cleobury Road, Wyre Hill and Habberley Road. We are seeking support from the County Council to have adequate signage across the town to reduce the speed of traffic to 20 mph. Pedestrian safety is an item that is regularly explored by the group. Working with the local police the group monitors a wide range of local issues with regard to speeding vehicles, dangerous parking and pedestrian safety. While a number of issues we deal with rely on County Highways input or District Council enforcement the installation of Vehicle Activated Signs purchased by the Town Council is being extended to include more permanent locations and reinforce traffic calming.

Localism Group: As a member of the localism group we have worked with Wyre Forest District Council to negotiate asset transfers to the Bewdley Town Council. The Bewdley Town Council are completing transfer of the Load Street Toilets, the offices in Load Street and the Riverside North Park and will be busy during the coming year developing these facilities for the town. With these new facilities to manage there will be some restructuring of committees to support the development of these and existing facilities.

Neighbourhood Plan: I would like to express my gratitude to the community representatives who continue to support the work of the Neighbourhood Plan group. The introduction of new reports requiring policy adjustments and some unavoidable delays has resulted in the Council being advised to hold a second regulation 14 consultation, which is likely to happen in the Summer. We will then be able to submit the plan for examination before going to public referendum in 2022.

Bewdley Museum Management Board: I have represented Bewdley Town Council on the Bewdley Museum management board for the past two years. Through my District Councillor role I have made representation to the District Council about safeguarding the Guildhall, Museum buildings, Listed buildings and the Jubilee gardens as heritage assets for the Town. While the District Council continue with their plans to create an Independent Museum Charitable Trust to run the museum in the future the protection of the listed buildings and heritage assets are still a priority for Bewdley.

I have attended all of the Finance and General Purposes meetings as an observer and I am also a member of the 2021 Bewdley Christmas Lights Committee.

The last year has been very busy and liaison between the Town and District Council has led to many extra meetings and an extra workload for our officers. This has included the challenges of online meetings and homeworking and I would like to record my thanks to them for helping the Council maintain its role of serving our community over the past year.

Report presented: 19.04.21.