

BEWDLEY TOWN COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR R STANCZYSZYN – Report for 2020-2021

This has been an unusual year. The Council and its committees were not able to meet in person following law changes made in March 2020. However, the change to meeting remotely via internet video conferencing software was quickly put into place and a full programme has been undertaken for the past twelve months. I want to thank the Town Clerk, and other staff, for their hard work in making that possible.

For 2020-21, I have continued to represent Bewdley residents with the three responsibilities from the previous year. I was voted to the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee which oversees the important checks on the accountability of the financial dealings of the Council as organised by the Clerk. In addition, it provides the acknowledgement and agreement of the Internal and External Audit processes which are statutory requirements for all Councils. Perhaps more importantly, I was involved with more recent discussions with two other Councillors in preparing budget proposals for 2021-2022.

At the start of this report period, I changed from the position of Chair to Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee. It has been an eventful year with planning applications in Bewdley with many lodged for house extensions and improvements; a good number of those concerning usually minor changes to listed buildings in the Conservation Area. In addition, there has been a number of more substantial, and sometimes contentious, applications such as the purchase of the former Fire Station by Sainsbury. The main contentious issues have been the retrospective applications for fixed chalet buildings at Blackstone Meadows, at two locations to the south of Bewdley off the B4194, and at Horsehill. Each was recommended for refusal by our committee. I spoke in support of refusal of the Blackstone application at the relevant Wyre Forest Planning Committee last summer. However, that committee voted unanimously that the siting of a “temporary” chalet at this location was acceptable.

My other responsibility has been as the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Community Steering Group. There has been slow progress with this issue over the year. After receiving comments from both Planning Officials at Wyre Forest and a Planning Consultant, changes were made to the Plan. Also, it was confirmed that the Strategic Environment Assessment process had to be followed. When it was discovered that the government would provide the finance for this through an organisation called Locality this process was started in April and ended in the autumn with the decision that a full SEA would not be required.

It has been a full and interesting year and I look forward to the next 12 months as Deputy Mayor with much excitement.