

District Councillor's Report to the Preston Annual Parish Meeting - Thursday 13 May 2021

I'm sorry I can't be with you this evening as I will be chairing a meeting of the District Council's Cabinet while your meeting is taking place.

This is my first report to the Parish since my election as your District Councillor in 2019 due to the cancellation of last year's meeting. Following my election, I was appointed by the new Leader of the Council to act as his Deputy and the Cabinet Member for Finance – a role I continue to hold.

Not surprisingly, the last year at the District Council has been dominated by the Coronavirus pandemic. The Council has provided additional support to homeless and vulnerable people during this period as well as administering Government grants and reliefs to support our businesses. The Council has been hit hard financially through both increased costs and through loss of income. Major factors were the enforced closure and restrictions on its leisure centres and a big reduction in revenue from its car parks. However, the Council has been able to set a balanced budget for 2021/22 and I am hopeful that we can work within that as we come out of the Covid-19 restrictions.

Over the last two years I have regularly attended meetings of the Parish Council to inform myself of matters of local concern and provide advice and support when requested - in the last year on video conference calls.

I have worked with the Parish Council to seek improvements to the crossing at the Toll Bar and on various planning matters, most significantly the recently approved Neighbourhood Plan.

As the ward councillor, I have a role in the Council's process for dealing with planning applications. If an application is the subject of an objection, a Planning Officer will produce a written report and send it to the ward councillor to see if s/he wishes to refer the decision to the Planning and Licensing Committee rather than allow a decision to be taken by officers. On most occasions this role is uncontroversial and the process runs smoothly. Occasionally, a recommendation is made by planners that is strongly opposed by local residents and ward councillors must judge whether there are material planning reasons why the Committee might come to a different opinion to the planning officer.

I'd be happy to answer any questions residents may have by email or telephone.

Mike Evely

Councillor for Siddington and Cerney Rural

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