



Tom McDonald
Conservative District Councillor
- Fladbury Ward
(Bricklehampton, Charlton,
Cropton, Fladbury and Wick)

December 2012

A difficult year but Wychavon District Council has continued to maintain local services.

As your ward member on the Executive Board of the Wychavon District Council Executive board I have been able to resolve a number of issues before they ever reached a contentious stage or impact on the ward. I continue working with the five parish councils and residents to ensure they have access to council officers at all levels – they know us and we know them. As to the immediate future many of you ask will services remain the same in this financial climate? Who better to answer that than Jack Hegarty, WDC Managing Director – so over to Jack *“Thanks Tom, I welcome the opportunity to be included in this Round Up and the question is a good one. The starting point for public sector finances next year is the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement which he delivered on 5th December. Just before Christmas we will know what specific level of savings we need to make next year and also plan for savings over the next four years. Having made £2m worth of savings in the last 2 years and taken the net budget of the Council down from £13mpa to £11m pa, we expect to have to repeat that over the next 4 years. To date, we have taken out over £830,000 of staff savings and will continue to look to service reductions very much as the last resort. Wychavon will continue its philosophy of wishing to keep our services. We are intending to undertake a budget choices consultation next year to ensure that we don’t take any quick knee-jerk cost cutting measures affecting services but make informed decisions”.*

Parish Councils play an increasing role in the wellbeing of the ward under the banner of Localism and Community. I asked our parish chairmen what they saw as good news and if they had any concerns, so here are the responses and my comments.

Ian Southcott (Fladbury Parish Council) –
“Good news - the Wychavon New Homes Bonus was used to support a defibrillator project and our Jubilee celebrations. The major concern is the urbanisation/ industrialisation of the settlement gap between Fladbury and Lower Moor”.

The New Homes Bonus (NHB) is a national initiative designed to ensure that the economic benefits of housing growth are returned to the councils and communities where that growth takes place. Wychavon, unlike other councils, have not seized an opportunity to bolster up their budget with these monies but took the decision to allocate 40% of the NHB for reinvestment where development has taken place. To date we have approved 14 proposals from parish councils for 17 projects amounting to a total of £71,778 and I have been pleased to successfully support recent ward applications including the Fladbury defibrillator project. These monies are normally provided on an annual basis over a six year period, but I suspect that there will be a time when the percentage return to local communities will change. I believe that there are some really beneficial projects which are in effect multi-parish that require consideration.

Urbanisation/industrialisation of the Fladbury settlement gap with Lower Moor

Since the planning approval of a small mushroom farm, much has changed along this area of the A44. With a new roundabout, glass houses and anaerobic digester, the area is fast becoming unrecognisable. Now there’s a proposal for more change - a haulage lorry and trailer park at the Oakland farm products site opposite the Glasshouse complex. The County council (who have received a letter of concern from WDC) will formally object to the relevant authority (Traffic Commissioners). Residents have also sent in letters of objection on the grounds of unsuitability and safe use of the entrance, site parking and manoeuvring capability, accidents and the unsuitability of this type of business at this location.

David Scott (Wick Parish Council) –
‘ Flooding is very much in my mind. The Wick Flood committee worked so well with sandbags being delivered to all potential flooding areas - even at 3.00 am in the morning”.

November was rain, rain and more rain.

Wychavon District Council received 46 weather warnings, and 13 river warnings. During that period we had over 100mm rainfall. Council staff and senior managers worked long hours over the weekend issuing sandbags, warning residents, monitoring flood levels and generally ensuring that the impact of any flooding was minimised.

Over 4,000 full sandbags and many more empty ones were distributed. Recognising that the situation could have quickly become critical the local authority had also prepared staff and premises to operate as emergency centers. Fortunately, these were not needed. Statistically 2012 has been a busy year with respect to flooding issues, the district has had over 880 mm of rainfall (2011 = 467 mm and 2007 = 966 mm). Essentially we are now seeing the benefits of the £1.2 million investment in flood alleviation schemes, combined with efficient land drainage management.

My involvement assisting ward flood concerns has been positive thanks to Wychavon staff who were on hand to help at a very difficult time.

Brian Browne (Charlton Parish Council)

“Good news is undoubtedly the Environment Agency scheme to make homes at risk to flooding resilient to future floods”.

The Charlton Flood Alleviation Team

Charlton has a very positive Flood Alleviation team working with the parish council and community to make things happen.

“Despite the brook rising very quickly on a couple of occasions in Charlton at the end of November it did not get to the level where houses were actually flooded. The rain has highlighted some further areas of the village where we need to review with the authorities what action can be taken to further reduce flood risk”.

Bob Annis (Crophorne Parish Council)

“I believe the good news is the New Homes Bonus which will be put to good use in our village. Also the way you dealt with the floods is to be commended and the extra work your

people did to put out sandbags to try and stop the houses being flooded”.

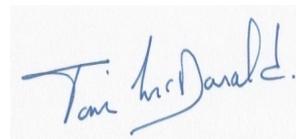
A demand for Affordable Housing

There continues to be an increasing need for affordable housing in both our urban and rural areas but that need must be sensitively located and designed so that affordable housing developments blend in with our villages and countryside. Within Crophorne the parish council and residents did have their say on the design and positioning of a recent development and that did lead to some changes being made.

Edward Stephens (Bricklehampton Parish Meeting)

“I guess the highlights of the year were all the Jubilee celebrations in the village and surrounds and across Wychavon. Unfortunately the weather ‘scuppered’ the lunch at Bricklehampton Hall but a few hardy villagers braved the conditions. Chief areas of concern are more County Council orientated, loss of buses through the village (they only pass the end of the road now) and the continuing decline of the roads. In terms of the District Council I am not aware of any specific problems and we are satisfied”.
Thanks Edward, a good note to end on.

Many thanks for your inputs and a very happy Christmas and a good 2013 to you all.



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My 'mini round-ups' and other information can also be accessed via my website at www.wychavon.gov.uk

