This is my first written report since February and life has considerably changed for us all over the past 10 months. While I propose to focus on what I’ve been doing recently in Upton, I do feel it’s only right and proper that I should mention all the incredible work in Upton that has taken place to support our own and other residents and in particular anyone in need or vulnerable. This work continues through the Covid-19 group and the Crossroads Community Hub.

The recent wet and windy weather has highlighted the need for the leaves to be swept from our streets and the long standing issues of blocked drains and gullies in the ward. Because of the flooding caused by blocked gullies on Caughall Road I met on site with highways officers two weeks ago and it was agreed that the gullies would be cleared from the junction with A41 to Acres Lane. We also discussed the need for trees and hedges to be cut back and some footway repairs. I also highlighted the flooding and muddy footways on Liverpool Road. These have been addressed.

I have received complaints that the work to clear the gullies on Caughall Road has not yet been carried out. I understand this is disappointing and I get as equally frustrated as residents. However our highways teams cover the whole of the borough and they have only limited time and resources. I don’t have the power to insist that work is carried out within a certain timescale. I don’t believe in being ‘heavy handed’ with our hard working officers as that’s not how to get things done. I have followed this up and asked to know when we can expect the work to be carried out. I’m sorry if some residents find this approach unacceptable but it’s how I like to work and in general this approach gets results and I hope serves our community well.

I have attached as couple of links which I hope are of interest. The first is the CWaC Environmental Management Strategy consultation. May I encourage residents and the Parish Council to engage with the consultation, particularly around the identification of ‘green corridors’? Without being prescriptive I and I hope others have a preference for ‘native’ species over designer when it comes to wildflowers!

<https://participatenow.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/environment-strategies>

The link below gives helpful advice for anyone planning Christmas activities.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-the-christmas-period#carol-singing>

The Friends of Group and other volunteers at the Countess Country Park give up their time and spend a great deal of effort keeping the Park well managed and clean. I the have noticed some comments about number of bins at The Countess Country Park and complaints to due with them sometimes being full.

I would like to remind everyone that the park is not owned by the Council, it's a charity and nearly all its legacy goes on emptying the bins. The bins are sometimes overflowing because visitors can't be bothered to take home their rubbish.

One of the volunteers recently built a new bin shelter that was sponsored by a user of the park. There are five large bins in sheds, there is a twin recycling/general bin by the rangers cabin. A smaller bin near the benches where hospital staff sit. A smoking bin by the woodland, a dog poo bin near the entrance from Countess Way.

There is no obligation for the charity to provide bins. They are there to

assist visitors. The answer to the litter issue is easy, it’s for everyone who takes a dog, a picnic or a snack to the park to just take their litter home.

After a recent site meeting with our Highways officer and our local Police it was agreed another assessment will be carried out to see if Weston Grove qualifies for a crossing. I hope the traffic volumes recorded by PCSO Tapley and the CSW volunteers will help with proving a crossing is a needed.

Although I continue to support the call for a reassessment of the bus lanes on Liverpool Road and elsewhere in Chester, I am not including my work on this in any detail here as the item is on the agenda and will be debated at our meeting.

I have also again highlighted the dreadful state of the road surface on Weston Grove. There are many potholes and cracking which have been reported. I received a positive response from the Highway engineer who has arranged for the potholes to be repaired and he has told me the road is on his wish list for repairs as soon as possible.

Upton Parish Council is now the proud owner of equipment to help address speeding issues on our local roads in Upton ward. This of course includes the non parished areas on and around Plas Newton Lane and Wealstone Lane. The training and support for using the gun will be provided by PCSO Jenna Tapley but it cannot take place at the moment due to Covid restrictions. However PCSO Tapley has already been out accompanied by a variety of Chester Speed Watch (CSW)

volunteers with the gun checking the speed of traffic. Drivers found speeding will receive advisory notices and further action can be taken. I am delighted to have used my community budget to purchase the gun and hi-viz tabards which are stored at the Pavilion and I look forward to joining the newly forming speed awareness group in Upton. If you would like to be involved please do let the Parish Clerk or PCSO Tapley know.

https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/transport-and-roads/road-safety/community-speed-management.aspx

The planned planting of primula at Lodge Gardens for some winter colour, was postponed because of the dreadful weather. A new date is Friday 18th December. Should you like to help we will be out from 10.30. Please bring your own trowel and gloves.

The area by the Parish Council bus stop on Upton Lane is looking so much tidier thanks to the work by residents, members of the Upton Community Group (UCG). In order to prepare it for planting up I arranged for the tree stumps to be ground out. As the local authority no longer has stump grinders the work was done by contractors and it was financed from my ward budget. The excess soil will be moved to Lodge Gardens and the area made ready for planting up in the spring. I have requested the our locality team put in an order for snowdrops and I will consult with the UCG for ideas of other plants. The litter bin has already been moved to the other side of the bus stop. We are now waiting for highways to arrange road closure and confirm that the contractors have the proper insurances.

I’d also like to thank residents who are taking the time to sweep leaves from their local areas. There are plenty of green bags available, supplied by CWaC StreetScene, should anyone like some to collect leaves near their properties.

There’s been many comments on Facebook from residents concerned by the amount of dog faeces in Upton because irresponsible owners are not picking up after their pets. In response to my requests our warden will be attending the areas specifically mentioned and the StreetScene manager has arranged for a cleanse of the footways to be combined with leaf collection.

There are concerns that cyclists on the bridle path through the Zoo from Flag Lane North to Pretty Bridge and return are not taking cognisance of the other users on the public right of way. This is disappointing as there is no need to speed. This bridle way has become increasingly popular and therefore increasingly busy. I hope cyclists will be aware of the possible dangers use a bell or shout out to warn others of their approach. I contacted our Public Right Of Way team to see if improved signage is possible and I’m pleased to learn this is currently being considered. As a result of the same issue with horses elsewhere in the borough, the team is proposing having signs made showing the countryside code that amongst other things asks users to “consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors” and to “follow paths but give way to others where its narrow”.

I’m pleased that bags of 500 daffodil bulbs have been delivered to some of our schools. In addition Sanctuary and Vivo have taken some for their residents to plant out.

These may be small improvements but I like to feel they all make Upton a little brighter.

There is no new update on the old Posh Spice site on Newhall Road or the White Gables site on Plas Newton Lane. Ownership issues and Covid are slowing the process in both cases. I have called in the application for Lodge House on the grounds of concerns about the change in appearance of the building should the chimneys be removed. They are part of the charm and history of the property.

As I have verbally reported to Parish Council, the decision to put the site of the run down youth club on the market, has been taken by CWaC as part of the assessment of its assets. The building is beyond salvaging.

Highways have informed both borough councillors that after careful consideration and many complaints and taking into account the views of the parents and governors at Acresfield school the crossing marked on Caughall Road will be removed.

One of our Upton residents contacted me about preparing Christmas Stockings and Boxes to give to children who may otherwise go without this Christmas. I was happy to put her in contact with the Director of Childrens Services who will arrange the distribution of the gifts. The response from members of our community to this project has been amazing. The gifts will be delivered wrapped, to our children to ensure that as the resident put on the Facebook page -

‘Let’s make sure every child has a huge smile on Christmas Morning’

May I take this opportunity to wish members and our community a happy and peaceful Christmas. I am like everyone looking forward to a more positive and kinder new year.

Jill Houlbrook

1.12.2020