

Borough Cllrs Report

Cllr Houlbrook – December 2022

A huge thank you to Upton Baptist Church for the new Cheshire railings replacing those that were in such a poor state they could not be revived. The area looks so much more inviting now. I was very pleased to support the project with part of my ward budget.

You will also have seen that the long-awaited work on Lodge Gardens took place in November. Not only have the beds been planted up but there are now some fruit trees in the garden. I hope, if my application for the Community Pride money is approved, to invest more in the area and in the Cockpit.

This week Cheshire West and Chester cabinet will consider the Property Asset Strategy and Management Plan.

Part of the strategy will include the disposal of properties such as the old Upton youth club building.

I have received this confirmation from the relevant officer.

‘We have received verbal confirmation that the site is not required for Education purposes. The next step would be for the site to be declared formerly surplus by the Council. As you may be aware the December Cabinet is considering the proposed Asset Management Plan along with supporting documents which includes a Community Asset Framework. This should set out the process for assets such as Upton Youth Club building and will hopefully enable us to provide indicative timescales for the promotion of the site and building.’

The report for 13th December is extremely detailed and long but can be found on the website under public meetings and is in the Agenda reports pack PDF 11 MB.

I am still working my way through the report and I’m particularly interested in the items which cover community assets.

I am also in the process of rearranging the public meeting that was postponed because of the by-election. It will most probably be in mid-January.

I’m at happy to share this from our Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner John Dwyer. He is encouraging local community groups, businesses and members of the police family across Cheshire to apply to the Community Cashback Fund over the Christmas period.

Taken from money seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA), each of Cheshire’s nine Local Policing Units (LPUs) has been allocated £10,000 from the fund. The aim is for local residents and businesses to work with their neighbourhood policing teams on projects to improve their community.

‘Not for profit’ organisations such as charities, ‘friends of’ groups, neighbourhood groups, social enterprises and community groups are encouraged to apply. Local businesses and Parish Councils can also apply to the fund, as well as local policing teams themselves.

The fund is open now and will close at 9am on Friday 27 January 2023 All applications must meet the criteria and support one of the six aims of the Police and Crime Plan. These are:

- Prevent and tackle crime
- Make Cheshire’s roads safer
- Deliver justice for victims of crime

- Protect vulnerable and at-risk people
- Improve public confidence in policing
- Modernise our police service

For information about the criteria, frequently asked questions and how to apply, visit Cashback fund open county-wide for Christmas (cheshire-pcc.gov.uk)

Cheshire West and Chester Council has again arranged a roadworks embargo for the Christmas period to keep the festive season running smoothly.
Here's the details from the website

There will be a suspension of all non-essential roadworks in Chester city centre and all major towns and major retail outlet areas across the borough from noon on Sunday 20 November 2022 until 11.59pm on Sunday 8 January 2023.

The suspension will cover Chester city centre, Ellesmere Port, Frodsham, Neston, Northwich and Winsford town centres. Only essential emergency repairs to utility services will be granted permission to work on the road network in these areas.

At this time of year there is a significant increase in visitors in and around major shopping centres, in the run-up to and through the Christmas and New Year periods.

A roadworks suspension has worked well in previous years helping freight, visitors and shoppers access the borough's shopping and leisure facilities by keeping traffic running smoothly.

Chester's Park and Ride is a great way of getting into Chester this Christmas.

The Council may need to grant permits for work on the road network during these dates if emergency repairs are needed to ensure the supply of vital utility services to homes and businesses.

The suspension only applies to the borough's road network, however the Council's Highways Service is working with the other network operators, including National Highways and Network Rail, to minimise the impact of any proposed works on their own networks, through promoting off-peak and night-time working.

Recently I submitted a list of areas in Upton where residents would like to see wildflowers. This was as part of my plans for using the new Community Pride funding.

I was originally informed that these plans had been refused as verges and other green spaces apparently do not fit the Community Pride criteria. However there appears to be a reversal of this decision so I have submitted a list of 9 locations to made be wildflower areas. As each area is costed at £350 this means I will invest half the Community Pride money in wildflowers.

Last week the Trustees of The Heath Youth Club presented to CWaC Chester Councillors as their bid for funding from Cheshire West Crowd Funding. Although I could not attend the meeting I submitted my comments in support of the youth club. I have watched the excellent presentation given by Sue Stanley and supported by Beth Bensley. I sincerely hope that the club will receive backing from the fund. One of the questions asked by a councillor was whether the Parish Council would consider raising their precept to support the club. I would like this to be considered as part of the budget for the next financial year.

The winter weather continues to play havoc with the road and pavement surfaces. I report those which I see but I do appreciate the help from residents who increasingly make their own reports using the app or the website.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish our community a happy and peaceful Christmas time.