

Borough Councillor's Report – Cllr Jill Houlbrook, 14.02.22

Last week I met with Highways and Chester Police and our Local PCSO to discuss various highways issues.

I know we have been waiting for some for a survey in order to determine whether Weston Grove qualifies for a crossing. I've also asked for a survey on Caughall Road and to expedite both surveys I have agreed to fund the costs from my ward budget. I have no dates yet but at least there is some progress. I would like thank you to Highways for working with residents and me on this important step.

In the meantime may I also remind drivers to park considerately around all our schools? The area round Westlea is particularly bad at the moment and our PCSO Beth George is also looking for solutions. Thanks Beth!

Following concerns from residents about the loss of BT connectivity on Kingsmead I contacted our Highways team on the very morning they received a repairs permit request and work will take place to restore BT phone lines between 11th and 15th February. This was good news after a long and frustrating wait for BT customers.

I am aware that recently a plethora of anti vax stickers appeared around Upton. Thank you to the resident who let me know and I immediately notified the Police and CWaC of this. It's unlikely that the culprits will ever be identified but should residents have any information please do let me know and I can pass it on.

Recently residents and businesses alerted me to the issue they had not received any notice of CityFibre work before it happened. City Fibre has put in place improved communications and residents should now receive prior warning.

During the high winds a week ago yet again debris and a hoarding from the old Gamekeeper site blew onto not only the footway but the highway. I have asked planning again to raise the issue of the security and safety of the site with the owners, who frankly seem little interested in working with the community. I am told that the council has no powers or enforcement authority to insist that the site is made safe. I find this extraordinary and am still asking questions. I've suggested that if nothing is to happen on this site it should be turned into a car park to relieve the pressure on Weston Grove.

I attended the Chester Sustainability Forum HyNet event which was arranged to further understanding of and challenge hydrogen production, pipeline transmission, carbon capture and storage, etc.

Importantly, there was discussion about the social licence for this new industry, and it provided an opportunity for attendees to question the merits, wisdom and limitations of HyNet and blue hydrogen which will affect all our lives and environment.

The surface condition is really poor on so many roads and constant patching work leaves much to be desired yet we are told these are unlikely to meet the intervention level for improvement at the moment. This is a constant theme of complaints.

Upton Drive

Upton Lane

Mill Lane to name but a few

Residents can report potholes and other issues via this link:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/contact-us/report-it/report-it.aspx>

An App is also available to download, more details here:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/contact-us/report-it-app.aspx>

We have many green spaces in Upton some the responsibility of our Parish Council, some of CWaC and of course some privately owned. I am working with Kieran of the Community Engagement team at Chester Zoo to put together a project which will engage and motivate residents based on the recovery corridor concept in Upton. We will soon be announcing the date and place of the first exploratory meeting and hope it will be well attended.

There is also good news from the Cheshire Care Community Chester East group. I sit on the Chester East Care Community Steering Group which has been allocated **£21,144** to kickstart projects and pilot activities which make a positive difference to how people live and are supported within their community. Chester East has chosen to use the funding from Cheshire West Integrated Care Partnership (CWICP) to fund:

- Kick start community sessions to support socially isolated adults
- Contribute towards a joint mental health crisis project across Chester, being led by Café 71
- Cookery equipment for a plant-based community café
- Deliver mental health first aid training to school teachers
- Fund sports equipment for Upton Youth Group

I'm thrilled that the group supported my proposal to fund both the Heath (Upton) Youth Club and the community based sessions for the adults. These sessions are in Upton for Upton residents.

Members I am often asked what I do as a councillor. It's important to remember that the reports you receive are not a record of my work but rather they reflect the 'big ticket' issues and those which affect our community in a general manner and interest our residents. I do not include concerns which might identify an individual or issues such as helping residents with housing, reporting litter, potholes, street lights, taking telephone calls or dealing with the daily stream of emails.

Over the past 3 weeks I made two email requests for an update on the derelict Upton Youth Club building. As I received neither acknowledgement nor a reply last week I sent in a Freedom of Information request. That prompted a response from the new Operational and Valuation Manager within Property Services.

Below is her reply to me. I have arranged a virtual meeting with her this week. Will members please let me know of issues they wish me to raise at the meeting and if they wish her to attend a Parish Council meeting.

*'I will need a little time to collate all that you are asking for but in the meantime I wanted to advise you of the process we are now undertaking in respect of the property. Property Services will be consulting with all Heads of Service to seek their feedback on whether the asset would be of value to their service. Through this process we can assess whether there is any Council need for the site or whether the site can be confirmed as surplus to Council requirements. This action follows the process of the draft disposals policy that has been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.*

*Should the asset be considered surplus to Council requirements we can engage with our local members and relevant community groups to advise them. This engagement can be undertaken in advance of the asset being confirmed for disposal.*

*Should we proceed to disposal it will be necessary to re-market. Due to the length of time since the last marketing exercise it is felt that the offers received may no longer be relevant or represent best consideration.'*

The whole issue has taken far too long to resolve and no mention has been made of the funding of which senior Councillors spoke at our meeting last year.

Jill Houlbrook

