

Rushwick Parish Council Meeting - 2nd September - District Council Report

Covid 19 still dominates much of what we are doing but the focus is on the recovery as we come out of the eye of the storm and much of the district tries to return to some kind of normal.

The difference to planning the recovery phase for this crisis is that it is highly likely that it will be a prolonged one and the response phase will continue alongside our recovery.

For the local authority sector there have been many impacts and in particular for district councils there are particular impacts including such matters as governance, service delivery, financial pressures, unplanned expenditure and loss of income, workforce matters and reduced demand for some services.

Looking at recovery we are split into 4 main pillars:

1. Our communities and the local economy
2. Resetting the business of the council
3. Recovery of the organisation
4. Councillors and democracy

These four banners cover a lot of what we are doing. As well as looking to return some areas to normal we are keen to look at what we have learnt from the crisis, what can be improved and what we did during the crisis that continue to help after the crisis, as part of the recovery.

There are many things that have come from the monitoring work of our response but not least that support for vulnerable people has to remain a priority, we have to continue to support our businesses across the district and that there is concern for young people who have either had their education interrupted or future jobs hanging in the balance, as well as the disruption to their leisure time and activities.

It will be a long recovery but I'm confident in the officers and all of the councillors that we're working hard to support people.

Some good news is that visitors to The Malverns' tourism website have rocketed as the area benefits from the number of people opting for a staycation this year. Obviously, maintaining our tourist industry and building on it is vital for the district.

The number of people using visitthemalverns.org increased by 44% during July and 66% so far in August, compared to the same period in 2019. Almost 80% of website traffic came from people visiting the site for the first time. A vast majority of the website visitors live in London, followed by Birmingham and Bristol, with people looking to escape to the countryside.

Following the January floods and the Covid-19 outbreak, the local tourism industry has been severely impacted, which has affected people's livelihoods and jobs. An increase in visitor spend will help to support the District's shops, restaurants, accommodation providers, attractions and more.

The Malverns is increasingly being seen as an attractive place to visit and stay, particularly with the large number of walking and cycling opportunities available across the district (details are available on the Visit

The Malverns website and self guided walks can be downloaded on the MalvernsWalks App).

As well as visitors from across the UK and the region, residents are also becoming more aware of what is available on their doorstep and are choosing to be tourists at home.

Tourism is hugely important to The Malverns attracting 3.5million day trips and 211,000 overnight stays a year. This adds more than £137million to the local economy, supporting 2,780 jobs.

Another good news story is that the £2million revamp of Malvern Splash is on course to start at the end of August. The project will involve the full refurbishment of the swimming pool changing rooms and toilets, including dedicated changing facilities for people with disabilities and additional family changing areas.

I know it's one building that's widely used by people all across our district and I've had plenty of questions on the work.

There will also be a new interactive water play feature for younger swimmers, underwater lighting, a PA system, a new flume and improvements to the pool side area.

Further works have already been completed since the Covid-19 outbreak with the installation of a new wave machine and a UV filtration system to improve the water quality and lower the levels of chlorine.

A range of environmental measures including more efficient pumps, new boilers and LED lighting have been completed and new energy efficient pool side glazing and solar panels will also be installed as part of the main project.

There will be limited disruption to the facility's current fitness users once the project starts.

Vic Allison has now taken over the mantle from Jack Hegarty as our new Chief Executive. As everyone had vouched for prior to him joining - Jack was a difficult person to follow but we've clearly got a great replacement in Vic.

Also, since last meeting, we have had the Annual General Meeting of the council where Sarah Rouse was confirmed to continue leadership of the council but there we are some movement in terms of the political parties

The make up of the council is now:

Lib Dem - 5

Conservative - 14

Democratic Group (Independent and Green) - 19

Labour - 1

As you'll see from the numbers there was some movement from Liberal Democrats to the Independent Group.

Within Rushwick I'm sorry I couldn't join you to help with playscape but I note there's an increasing concern again about when the re-fit will happen which I'm sure will be covered in the meeting.

I'm getting further questions on the landscaping at Kier which I'm dealing with and the same with the completion of Snowdrop way.

The curbs at Christine Avenue should be carried out In September.

On the subject of the SWDP the completion of the review of the South Worcestershire Development Plan has been delayed due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was hoped the document would be ready for public examination in early 2021. But lockdown restrictions have made it impossible to complete a number of technical assessments and evidence gathering needed to support the plan.

This revision to the original SWDP currently has the proposal to build 1,000 homes in the area of Rushwick on top of the 2,300 homes being built at Crown East.

This includes additional traffic and air quality modelling. These cannot be carried out currently as vehicle movements are still not close enough to pre-lockdown levels.

Traffic modelling is very important to the final results of the consultation given the concerns of local residents as expressed as part of the consultation.

I've also had several meetings over lockdown about this and continued to push for the need for clarity around how the County Council are arriving at their figures and what it would mean for the village.

Over the next few months the necessary assessments and studies will take place. The plan to be sent for public examination will be published, subject to approval by all three South Worcestershire Councils, in October 2021.

I'll keep on top of this, as I know David will as well.

16 sites were submitted in respect of the Country Park Call for sites exercise and an assessment of these is taking place soon.

And - really looking forward to face to face meetings happening again!

