

Town Councillor Report- Councillor Sara Bishop 20.6.2024

On June 4th I attended the meeting of NWAC in the NWBC Council Chamber, deputising for Councillor Barnett.

Thanks were recorded for the grants that had been received from County Councillors including Councillor Mejar Singh.

Information was shared by a Borough Councillor that each Borough Councillor now has £15,000 to award in grants, which was part of the budget setting in March 2024.

There was concern that funds available from WCC e.g. Green Shoots Funding, were not clearly and accurately described. It had only been made clear after a lengthy application form for the fund had been completed that the funds were only available to villages/towns with at least 8000 residents.

Thanks were expressed to NWBC for providing free use of the Council Chamber and refreshments.

Warwickshire Local Charter

This has been sent to all councils for consultation with a deadline of June 14th for response.

There was discussion about neighbouring parish councils joining together when contracting for various services to get the best value for money. Neither the County Council nor Borough have been helpful in recommending approved suppliers/contractors.

The Charter mentions "Parish Champion", but there was lack of clarity about who this might be, what their function would be and how they would be chosen.

Succession Planning

There was concern that some parish councils don't have a full contingent of councillors. Councillors from Kingsbury praised the support they had received from WALC whilst they were operating without a clerk. An on-line survey and application form has been developed and is available to other councils to engage their residents who may wish to become a councillor themselves. The Co-option application form was demonstrated by S.Stuart, North Warwickshire Borough Councillor. Those councils that may be interested to contact Richard Hapgood (Chair of NWAC) in the first instance.

Consultations

It was noted that consultations that are being sent to councils from County, Borough and external companies often have a very short deadline to make a response, particularly in relation to planning. There was a feeling amongst some council representatives that the deadlines were set with meeting dates in mind to prevent a response being given. It was also suggested that parish councils as consultees should be given the opportunity to make site visits to inform their response.

HS2 and its impact

It was noted that Water Orton Parish Council had not been invited to a meeting about the development, which had been convened by Craig Tracey. It was also noted that no further meetings can be held due to the forthcoming election.

Birmingham Airport

It was reported that since the demise of Fly-B there were fewer flights. However, there was an increase in the number of passengers as there were more larger aircraft in operation. Concern was expressed about the deviation of flight paths and the noise affecting those living under the flight paths. Solihull Council is, currently, the only one in receipt of S106 money.

WALC

AGM will not be in North Warwickshire as had been hoped, but at WALC HQ. Membership of WALC is essential for insurance cover and for access to NALC. Questions were raised as to whether councils could seek providers of similar services elsewhere. It was emphasised that WALC provides education and training for all Councils in Warwickshire, provides advice for Clerks and is a not-for-profit organisation. There was a call for a comprehensive list of acronyms for all bodies associated with local government, their full names and a brief summary of what they do. There are few representatives of WALC in the North of the county and it was hoped that there would be greater involvement in the future.

Religious Buildings

It was reported that Councils are now allowed to give grants for maintenance of religious buildings.

Next meeting at Council House, NWBC September 4th, 2024