

WITHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2012

Firstly, my profuse apologies for missing tonight's meeting. Unfortunately, I have an infection which is proving difficult to get under control.

It's been reasonably quiet in August due to holidays etc. Thankfully, the summer has allowed our Highways Teams to undertake a huge number of highway repairs some of which I know has been in this area. We are still a long way from being completely up to date with the outstanding defects, but we are getting there. More monies have been made available to allow us to plan for even more work over the coming months.

Shrewsbury Town Centre Pedestrianisation

Other matters that have been occupying my time include the pedestrianisation trial in Shrewsbury. As you are aware this "trial" was supposed to continue until October however it has been stopped as of today as there were too many serious issues for us to ignore.

I am very keen to hear from residents what they really think about the pedestrianisation of the town centre and if they have visited any other towns and cities that have good schemes. To be blunt we have received a lot of negative feedback from visitors, traders and people with disabilities and yet I am being told that 80% of the feedback is very positive. This is not showing up in my inbox and, like several other schemes, the feedback is coming from a particular sector of the population. Shropshire is a rural county and although we will soon see improvements to our bus services, residents will always require use of cars, especially in areas such as ours where public transport is unlikely to be an option. If you and/or parishioners would like to feed back their thoughts to me I would be most grateful. They can do so by emailing lezley.picton@shropshire.gov.uk or lezley4tern@gmail.com.

Variable Message Signs

Other things happening around the Town include the installation of 12 variable message signs (VMS) which will be used to inform drivers of delays, roadworks and incidents on the road network, warn of possible congestion related to events or festivals, advise visitors which car parks to use – or avoid – and warn drivers about road closures due to flooding or other emergencies.

Other important public messages will also be displayed, when appropriate.

The signs will be located at specific locations, including: A49 south towards Battlefield roundabout; A53 southwest towards Battlefield roundabout; A51125 towards Heathgates Roundabout; A5112 south Bage Way towards Reabrook Roundabout; A5 west towards Preston Island roundabout; A458 north towards A5; A49 north towards Meole Brace roundabout; A458 east towards Churncote Roundabout; A5 south towards Churncote Roundabout; B4380 east Shelton Road; A5191 South Castle Foregate; and A458 English Bridge Gyratory.

The signs are being currently being installed and are set to be in operation from the autumn once testing and commissioning has been completed. The signs on the National Highways (formerly Highways England) network may take longer to come online due to finalising arrangements for power supplies, which are limited in those areas.

Shropshire Supports Refugees

As you will have seen on the news Shropshire is doing what it can to help with the resettlement of Afghan refugees. Five years ago, we successfully helped a number of Syrian families to settle in Shropshire. The response to the appeals made have been overwhelming and at present the organisers at Shropshire Supports Refugees has asked people to hold off sending anymore donations of clothing etc. One thing the team would like to know is of any residents who can speak any Middle Eastern languages, particularly Pashto, Arabic, Kurdish Sourani, Farsi and Dari. If you know of anyone please ask them to contact: amanda.jones@shropshiresupportsrefugees.co.uk

Further information can be found by visiting their Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/shropshiresupportsrefugees>

Budgets

I am currently working with our finance teams to look at our budgets for the next financial year. We are starting early this year with our budget process to ensure we have time to work through the various options. As you know Shropshire is not fairly funded in comparison to other areas and it is certainly more expensive to deliver services in a rural area. However, I continue to lobby Cabinet Ministers and our MPs but, in the meantime, we must prepare a balanced budget for 2022/23. This will create pain and I find myself dealing in the “least, worst options”. Ensuring our most vulnerable are looked after continues to be a difficult task, in this financial year approximately 85% of our budget will be spent on 3% of our population. I am sure this will demonstrate to you how crucial it is that the Government announces its social care reforms sooner rather than later and that fairer funding is essential.

Again, my apologies for missing you all this evening.

I will look forward to seeing you on 3rd November if not before and in the meantime stay safe.

Lezley Picton,

Shropshire Councillor for the Tern Division,