

BOROUGH COUNCILLOR LEIGH HUNT

REPORT FOR CLIFTON UPON DUNSMORE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Over the past few years Rugby Borough Council has been in a strong financial position. Whilst other Local Authorities have been feeling the pinch, Rugby has built and opened both a new crematorium, and a new sports centre. However, times change.

The way in which Government funds Local Authorities has been reprofiled, with much less money coming from the exchequer to help pay for the services which the borough provides. Therefore, after an unprecedented 8 years of freezes to Council Tax, and even one decrease, the decision was taken this year to levy a 1% increase on the Rugby Borough Council element of the Council Tax bill. This still represents excellent value for money.

At the same time, it has been necessary to look hard at the services we provide, and everyone will be aware that the decision has been taken this year to start charging £40 per year for green bin collections. This equates to around 76p per week over the year. Green waste collections are a discretionary service, which have previously been provided free of charge. However, as we move towards self-sufficiency by 2020, in other words no Government grants whatsoever, it is important that we are able to deliver a balanced budget whilst protecting front-line services.

Closer to home, my work as your Borough Councillor has once again focussed on solving local problems – and on planning issues. Current planning matters include the development that has been carried out at Clifton Cruisers, and another canal-related matter that has come to light near to The Locks where (once again) a redundant canal arm is being brought back into use, apparently without the required planning permission.

There have been ongoing issues with the charges that Orbit levy for grounds and tree maintenance on the Manor Estate, and I am told that a letter detailing the charges and the service level agreement will finally be going out this week. It's only taken two years so far!

Whilst highways matters do not fall under the Borough Council, I have also spent a lot of time working with WCC Highways and the developers on the traffic calming scheme and vehicle weight reduction for Clifton. All necessary permissions are now in place and final touches are being put to the lighting plan. My understanding is that once this is complete the works to install the traffic calming and weight limit signs can commence.

I do have one concern on this point, however, my understanding is that Urban and Civic, who are developing the masts site have purchased Wharf House, which is the last property on the left before the canal as you travel into town. They apparently plan to use this as access for the construction vehicles that will be building the new link road. Whilst this may seem in principle to be a good idea, it will be impossible for them to swing lorries into the site from the canal bridge, so it looks as though we will be getting the traffic calming, and at virtually the same time or immediately thereafter we'll have lorries thundering through the village to access the site! I'm trying to get a resolution to this, and would like to see it linked to an improvement in parking for residents on Avon Street. This is very much a work in progress.

I have also been working to try to improve matters at the St. Thomas Cross junction. This is now being monitored and both Urban and Civic and Prologis, the developers of Houlton and DIRFT III respectively, have agreed to pay for remedial works when the traffic levels reach certain levels.

Clifton is fortunate to have an excellent parish council, with a broad range of skills and professional expertise, supported by a highly competent Clerk. I would like to thank them all for their ongoing support.

It is a privilege to serve as your Borough Councillor, and is something that I do not take lightly. If there are issues that I am able to deal with then I'll do my best to see them through to a satisfactory conclusion.

As in previous years, I will include reports from this evening in future District Diaries, together with any other Group reports that are emailed to me – even though we no longer get paid by the Advertiser!