

Cllr Barbara Jones -Williams
2021 Annual Parish report

I have represented Martley Ward on Malvern Hills District Council for 26 years next months, I feel very privileged and proud to do so.

As we all know it has been a very difficult twelve months or so for everybody due to covid, I am extremely proud as to how our residents have coped and rallied round to help one another during this crisis, we certainly live in a very caring community, and for that I thank you all.

I have had yet another busy year dealing with planning matters, and general enquiries from my residents as well as attending Parish Council Meetings via zoom.

We have continued to hold Full Council, Planning meetings, training session and all other meetings etc at MHDC via zoom.

As Rural Champion I have had a very busy year with meetings and events; In September 2020 I met with a representative from the National Farmers Union, the Leader of the Council and officers to talk about various issues, mainly about what impact Covid is having on farming, such as milk being wasted and a grant being available to dairy farmers from DEFRA. We also talked about flooding, rural crime and a possible shortage of seasonal workers because of travel. It was decided at the meeting that the Leader and I would write to Harriett Baldwin MP with our concerns and we received a response from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food, Victoria Prentis MP.

In October 2020 I joined a Rural Service Network via zoom talking about Rural Vulnerability. I asked about how we can make our farmers aware of the support available as we are a rural district with a large farming community.

Most recently, I wrote and presented a paper on rural poverty for the council's task and finish group. I also circulated an open letter to farmers in the district to thank them for how they are coping through these difficult times.

At full council in 2019, when we declared a climate emergency, I stressed that we should consult and work with the National Farmers Union and they have been invited to join our partner workshops on the matter and I believe are an important partner going forward.

As we are a predominantly rural district, farming is one of our biggest economies, also farmers are the custodians of our countryside. They are a hard-working sector of the community providing much needed food for the table and local produce, we must therefore secure their future and generations to come.

In the current crisis, we have seen some wonderful acts of kindness in our rural communities. MHDC has started to capture some of these examples through our Good

Neighbour Network at www.malvern hills.gov.uk/community/malvern-hills-good-neighbour-network. To date 23 schemes are registered and we are supporting the development of new schemes in places like Martley and Tenbury.

Domestic abuse also continues to be a hidden issue which is more acute in rural communities. Throughout the pandemic we have read nationally and locally of increases in reports of domestic abuse and the council has been working to continue offering support and changing our practices have gone further throughout the pandemic with the council working with Wychavon District Council to seek a national Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation. This accreditation has seen the development of both customer and staff domestic abuse policies, moving forward training is anticipated for all staff and members via a catalogue of options tailored to suit all needs. We also work closely with Worcester Community Trust to support the DAWN project to support individuals living in rural communities.

What I hope to achieve in the next 12 months

Moving forward, from a community safety perspective, I will continue to support the Council to work closely with police and other key partners to tackle exploitation in the agricultural sector.

Fly tipping continues to be problematic for rural communities and particularly our farming communities. The Council has seen a surge in reports since lockdown. I want to support the Council to work with farmers to protect their land/property from future fly tipping as well as promote the SCRAP fly tipping campaign that focuses on resident's duty of care and using the SCRAP code of Suspect all, Check license, refuse unexpected offers of clearance, ask where waste is going and Paperwork -get a receipt.

Continue to support and develop good neighbour networks to protect our communities and become more resilient in hard times such as responding to events of flooding.

I have enjoyed a close working relationship with my Parish Councils and will continue to do so..

Best wishes,

Barbara