

West Felton Annual report 2021

The year gone by has been extremely challenging as I am sure everyone already knows. It has meant incredible changes at Shropshire Council.

For most staff it has meant working from home, which as anyone who has been doing it knows, has huge benefits, but also its downsides, where informal chats can yield so much.

One huge benefit has been that it has allowed the Council to fast track its plans to relocate from Shirehall, the building now has restricted usage due to a safety report, so a limit of 200 people in the building at any time. The site will be sold for housing, with several very substantial bids being considered already.

Meanwhile the Council will be relocating to the lower floors of the former Pride Hill Shopping centre, the Top floor is being refreshed for Leisure use. Both new uses will bring increased footfall into the centre of Shrewsbury, helping boost the High street of our County Town

The three shopping centres were bought approx. 3 years ago, Darwin centre is now the main retail space and continues to attract new stores.

Riverside is due to be demolished in the next few months, opening up approx. 20 acres of real estate which will be rebuilt with a mixture of office accommodation, leisure use and some very luxurious riverside apartments along what is currently Smithfield road. The road will be rerouted. The Council also has a number of top hotel chains queuing up to sign agreements. It is anticipated that the whole development will bring in over £100 M for the council, so a good job we took the brave decision to buy the centres, otherwise most of the Town centre would be boarded up .

The Council has also been busy processing grants to Shropshire business, in the past year over £140 Million has been passported through to companies via the various different grant schemes, a huge success considering that nothing was pre prepared for Covid support when the first lockdown happened.

The local plan is finally coming towards its final stages, it will be submitted to the inspector later this year and we will await their comments.

As we look around the county we see plenty of new housing, and Shropshire council now has its own Housing company, designed to build the houses that regular developers don't consider profitable enough, so "Cornovii Housing" will be building energy efficient, affordable homes for a mixture of private rent and sale, plus passing a large amount to STAR Housing to boost the Councils housing stock and replace those that leave our ownership via the right to buy scheme. A scheme is being set up giving Shropshire residents a period of exclusivity to access these properties, before they are made widely available.

Roads.

We all know that a mixture of historical weather such as Beast from the East and flooding events have played havoc with our road network, but engineers are working hard to repair and replace surfaces all over shropshire. The Councils administration recognises this and has pledged to spend an additional £40Million over the next 4 years to ensure road surfaces can withstand the savage winter weather.

Many will have heard about the North West relief road, certainly neighbours in Ruyton and Baschurch cannot wait for the road to be built, thus removing so much traffic from that route. The road is mainly funded by central government, Shropshire Council is committed to funding the shortfall, this will be funded from income generated by sales of housing and employment land in the Oxon area, which the Council has a huge land ownership waiting to be unlocked by the new road.

Locally

My main correspondence has been around planning matters, I have been very pleased to speak with many residents to assist with planning enquiries.

I have also been happy to involve myself in the school expansion project, unlocking huge chunks of CIL funding for the development, and its something that I look forward to being involved with throughout the coming years.

WFPC will be continuing to accrue CIL funding from housing and I would encourage ongoing support for the School project as it will touch so many residents lives.

Residents will also be aware of a forthcoming opportunity to change the way they recycle, the administration at Shropshire Council has pledged to introduce a new wheelie bin, residents can choose, either keep the systems they have at present, or get rid of the boxes and take a new wheelie bin instead. There is no cost, its completely up to residents which system they want. This is planned to be rolled out over the summer, if the current administration remains in place.

That concludes my report, I hope that we all have a year where we can return to something nearing normality.

Steve Charmley