Borough Councillors’ Report – JH 11.09.17

I am sorry I'm not at the Parish Council meeting to answer your questions but I'm happy to reply to any written queries.

There are several planning applications about which I and neighbours are concerned and I have called in two of them to planning committee. These are the applications for development at Moston Garage and 55 Daleside. I am consulting with and supporting residents and neighbours of each of these applications.

You may be aware that outline plans for The Countess of Chester Hospital site have again been submitted but these are at a very early discussion stage. I have asked that the planners keep me updated on the discussions as they happen particularly as proposed development includes green belt land.

I'd like to thank the developer of the Newhall Road site for listening to residents and taking on board the concerns they and I expressed and changing the intended use of the remaining land in the site. Extending the gardens of the newly built properties rather than building a further property is a win win for everyone. If only all developers were so accommodating and community minded.

I am so pleased to see the Frog public house open again and hope that lots of Upton residents will support Steve the new landlord and his team. The Frog is registered as a community asset so it part of our community and I hope will so remain.

The Countess of Chester Health Park is a wonderful green space available for everyone to use. The recent picnic in the park day was a big success with many families taking advantage of the free fun and educational activities. The park is supported by the Friends Of group and without the hard work of the members many of the events wouldn't happen. In addition to fundraising and action days the Friends Of group is lobbying CWaC for a controlled crossing on Countess Way. The huge popularity of the park means an increase in the volume and variety of pedestrians crossing the busy road so we feel the current crossing is unsafe. Support for the crossing has been sought from Blacon, Newton and Upton councillors as well as our Member of Parliament.

To date we have not had a reply or response from Highways department.

You are aware that in previous reports I have mentioned my concerns that some officers are slow to respond to email requests for help or advice. This unfortunately continues to be the case which is frustrating not only for me but of course for our residents. I find myself having to apologise for the delays. I do understand that officers may be busy but a simple acknowledgement would at least show me they have received my email and will deal with it in due course. I am aware of a specific issue in the Highways team that has had an impact on response times.

Following on, this leads me to advise Parish Council that often the issues I have reported take an inordinately long time to be addressed. For example I reported the poor state if the grounds of Holy Ascension church yard and the overgrown hedges on Church Lane nearly a month ago as I write this report nothing has yet happened.

Each time the grass verges in Upton are cut, which seems to be irregularly and poorly, I receive complaints from residents. The quality of the work leaves much to be desired as does the fact that the grass cuttings are left to blow around the streets.

I am constantly having to send requests asking for areas like the cockpit and other green spaces to be kept clean and tidy. I am assured work will take place but I see no evidence that it has happened.

Rubbish bins over the recent bank holiday weekend were left overflowing with rubbish giving an impression that Upton is looking neglected and scruffy. I feel disappointed by this not only because I know how proud we all are of Upton but also this reflects poorly on me as a Borough Councillor.

A big thank you to the residents who spend time and effort keeping Upton tidy. In particular the gentleman who has taken on the task of cutting the grass at the war memorial. I'd like to ask Parish Council to agree to invest a small sum of money in some some bee and wildlife friendly plants at the garden now the bedding plants have been removed. I did a quick dead head of the roses and tidy of the shrubs last weekend and the garden is looking bare. I have also asked the Clerk to arrange a working weekend to prepare the war memorial for Remembrance Sunday. Perhaps we should ask the Royal British Legion if their members would like to join us?

I have a meeting with our localities team arranged in the middle of September. I shall be raising ideas for Upton and receiving updates on those which are ongoing but I'd like to include issues which members of the Parish Council may wish to raise. Please do email me any ideas or concerns you'd like discussed.

Members, I have been contacted by the few remaining shop keepers on Weston Grove. They are rightly concerned that the regrettable closure of the butcher will increase the downward spiral of empty properties and make the individual shops unviable. This I think the area should be a focus of community action and I have asked the Clerk to add an agenda item for discussion at our next full Parish Council meeting. May I suggest that we invite the shop keepers to attend for public speaking time? I am happy to take on that task. May I also suggest that this should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan?

I hope you find this report useful.

Jill Houlbrook

4.9.2017