

## **2022 Annual Report – Cllr George Jeans, Wiltshire Council, Mere Division**

The Mere division for which I am elected, includes Mere, Stourton with Gasper, West Knoyle, Zeals and Kilmington. The committees and task groups I sit on at present are Audit, The Financial Task Group, LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) task group, Southern Planning, The South West Area Board, Licencing and Full Council. The task groups are part of Wiltshire Council scrutiny. The Broadband project board which now only intervenes in the north of Wiltshire, this board is an officer led board.

Wiltshire Council business for me is busy at present. The Wiltshire Climate Strategy was approved at Full Council, which I attended on Tuesday 15th February, it was a marathon, from leaving home to returning was 13 hours. The agenda was nearly 600 pages.

Hazzards Hill, Mere I get complaints regarding parking on the hill plus blockage to vehicle access on Burton Path White Road entrance. Highways have agreed a sign to help the householders access saying Private Road with footpath only across. It is hoped then if the police are called to a disturbance caused by an access blockage, the situation will be clear to the police.

Shreen Harmony Choir and other individuals complained regarding the reduced light on the steps at the rear of the Salisbury Street Car Park, when sodium was replaced with LED Light, I was pleased Mere Town Council paid for enhanced lighting.

I have tried with the Area Board and Mere Town Council to establish a Car club and EV points in Mere Salisbury Street Car park, at present this may go ahead.

I have helped the Mere platinum jubilee committee all I can, helping achieve area board grants and third party funds plus supporting a grant for the villages around Mere, which although a small grant will help kick start some functions.

I help with practical functions when possible, for instance I cleaned the “Welcome to Mere” Chamber of Trade sign on the B3092 coming from Frome to Mere. I attend local functions and forwarded pictures and text to the media to help publicize Mere. I lay a wreath on behalf of Wiltshire Council on Remembrance Sunday in Mere each year. I have done my best to make all aware of any road works in the Mere area. I run a site called comparethemere.com to promote business, community groups and The Mere Chamber of Trade. I support many local clubs, I belong to many however often I have no time to join in. Mere and West Knoyle Christmas Light display awards, were organized by their Town or Parish Councils, I help organize the awards.

Wiltshire Council are enlarging the premises of Mere School. As part of the expansion project will be significantly more parking spaces. I managed to achieve increased lighting in parts of the car parking area for safety reasons, Mere Town Council also are aware of lighting and safety issues.

£180 million is available for new council housing construction, some ex-council houses are being bought back by Wiltshire Council in Mere and around. Lynch Close, after an initial meeting a lot of the residents who are elderly went away under the impression that they would be removed from Lynch Close to a new development in Angel Lane, too which many were upset and worried. It will be at least three years before Lynch Close sees improvement or redevelopment. The Mere Day Centre at Lynch Close will have its Wiltshire Council funding removed. A new scheme is available to bid for, at Full Council it was agreed to let this new scheme go before scrutiny so as providers amongst others can have some input to its implementation, it appears to me the funding may be a challenge to obtain.

Fives Court in Angel Lane is being considered for development and one of the options is to build flats aimed at older people. I have pointed out an adequate footway is required and the buildings need to be low in height and respect the conservation area. I would like to see somewhere on the site some provision for medical use, even if it is only for visiting medical persons.

I would like to see a B3092 Acceleration Lane at Coombe Barn Farm junction – the Clerk of Kilmington Parish Council has written to Paul Shaddock at CATG (Community Action Transport Group, that is soon to become the Local Highways & Footways Improvement Group – LHFIG) and is the Traffic Engineer of the Salisbury Transportation Team asking if there would be any funds available from WC for improvements at this junction. Any monies would most likely have to be awarded on a substantive bid application. Kilmington Parish Council resolved that they would support me on this issue.

Area Board funding for community grant funding is reduced and the South West Wiltshire Area Board will be finding it more difficult to satisfy applications.

In adverse weather conditions and power cuts some over three nights as we have seen recently, note for a few more years many have a traditional land line, these works with a basic non battery powered phone. I had to explain this to several as the household internet fails when there is no power, eventually I lost my O2 data on my mobile phone, therefore the only communication left was the traditional phone line.

I understand and hope the mechanism of reporting highway and other issues will be revisited; officers seem aware of the problems. The My Wilts App for instance in my opinion needs improvement.

Non-commercial intervention aid for broadband in our area has finished, the Mere area has benefited from this program, it is now down to individuals and commercial forces to provide what fibre broadband is provided. I and others in Mere have received request for Gigaclear to cross land, to expand a Full Fibre, Ultrafast Broadband network throughout the local community. I have been informed by a Kilmington PC councillor that if procurement has started between Wiltshire Council and BDUK local voucher schemes such as Stourhead have implemented will not be able to go ahead until any such Wiltshire intervention Ultrafast Broadband plan is implemented. I have been informed by a Wiltshire Council officer that this is correct.

Wiltshire Council are now cutting verges from September. I have received a number of complaints regarding the verges in some areas. I wish to see wildlife however I consider safety at junctions and other situations paramount. I have reported junctions as I have noticed problems as others have, in the main they have been cut back. The coming season I understand the cutting will be further considered to allow for situations some dangerous in my opinion that have occurred last year.

I sit on the Southern Area planning Committee, Kilmington Parish Council achieved their wish to have overturned a planners report to refuse planning permission to a young couple, to live in a converted small barn/garage in Kilmington.

The new Wiltshire Council require all new councillors when appropriate to receive training. During our training we were informed planning was not a means for a councillor to become popular. I take issue with this; councillors are popular if they try and do what the majority want, I considered that is what we are elected for, we cannot always achieve the majority view. We have the ability on occasion to take applications to an elected committee, yes the committee has to balance the issues however localism comes into play and is considered.

Along the southern side of the A303T by-pass trees have grown up in places since around 1973 when it was opened. In places the trees cover a high percentage of neighbour's property and they are losing sun from their gardens. I met with Highways England and the trees have been thinned in areas.

"Waltons Footpath" after considerable input by many who wanted this route, the inspectors did not support. For pedestrians using the Manor Road route I am sure the issue of conflict for pedestrians with motorist still needs addressing.

Wiltshire's policy of not allowing application forms to be printed from their web site or in some cases not providing any, for amongst other applications, blue badge applications, tree works in conservation area applications etc., has caused complaint to me. Please note if you phone customer services on 03004560100, should you have no access to IT equipment, they will phone you back for a verbal application.

The issue of Dog fouling and the depositing of plastic bags with excrement in public places is a problem, some local people do what they can to improve the situation and I support where I can.

The lorry parking site next to Leaping Frogs Nursey at Zeals have been the subject of planning applications, I have supported the wishes of Zeals parish councils.

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