

Roads in the Mere Division consisting of Mere, Kilmington, Stourton, West Knoyle and Zeals need repair on some of them, some are in very poor order such as by Park Corner Farm West Knoyle, for which I was pleased to receive the following email content:- “Park Corner Farm - The C297 at Park Corner Farm (This is Mere) coring and testing carried out earlier this year have identified that the carriageway at this location is suitable for in situ recycling and the team are now in the process of agreeing the design with the contractor, with the aim of carrying out the works this financial year.” At present Wiltshire has about 1600 potholes to repair at any one time. Wiltshire has machines such as Bobcats that can repair very effectively even in the winter although many are still repaired manually. An officer said in public there should be no potholes, rarely if ever is a pothole seen on a motorway, this is because of better maintenance. Wiltshire has put £22 million towards highway repairs, which is extra this year to the Government’s contribution of £20.7 million. Potholes are a problem nationwide. Wiltshire empty 60,000 gullies each year, with many emptied on a scheduled basis. Gullies on A and B roads are cleaned out each year, while those on lesser roads are visited over a two-year programme. Wiltshire have also identified around 5,000 high-risk gullies that receive an annual visit. If you or a member of your community sees a blocked gully, the best way to report is using MyWilts, which I can do for you in my division should you not be able to.

After part of Salisbury Street Mere had been resurfaced, I was hoping the yellow lines would be painted back as the traffic regulation order (TRO), as it has been annoying for some receiving a parking ticket and to have to get it void, as in places the yellow lines are not enforceable. I have been informed the lines will get removed where they should not be. With the extra £20 million plus becoming available for highway, I and I am sure the Town Council will be pushing for our share of it, as Mere and the surrounding villages which include West Knoyle need improvement. A Wiltshire Council officer said we have not the money for good maintenance, therefore we have potholes and have to repair them. Wiltshire has put £22 million towards highway repairs, which is extra this year to the Government’s contribution of £20.7 million. Potholes are a problem nationwide however I and Mere Town Council will be “fighting” for our share of the above budgets.

The local transport plan (LTP4) has been adopted. I at the request of a local resident have informed a officer besides public transport, cycle and vehicle use, horse use should be considered, that is all forms of transport, the reply I received was it is included. It was stated most accidents in Wiltshire occur on rural roads.

I attended an open Mere WI meeting where The Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust put on a presentation. We learnt of a scheme called Buy with Confidence, if you have a problem with a member of the scheme or any other trader, you can contact Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 08082231133. If you are a business interested in becoming a member you can also contact the above number. A scheme called trueCall which stops nuisance calls was advertised, if interested call 08000336330.

Wiltshire Council controls the Household Support Fund. The primary objective of The Fund is to provide crisis support to vulnerable households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need and who require crisis support.

Fibre broadband by Wessex Internet in Mere has been cancelled until further notice due to lack of funding and the need to prioritise their government-funded BDUK/Project Gigabit projects There are 80 properties that they are in a position to install, based on SDNs (service delivery nodes) that they know to be ready for

service. These are in the western edge of the Town. The future of Wessex Internet in Mere essentially relies on being able to secure funding through BDUK.

Bourton & Zeals: Anything that has not been built to already will unfortunately not be built to now. There are no plans to return to these unfinished areas, at least not in the short to mid-term, while we are involved with Project Gigabit contracts. Communications were sent out last year to those people registered who were affected by the cancellations. The projects were split into two sections on Wessex Internet system: those properties ready for service and those that were cancelled. This should reflect in a postcode search on our website, such that people can check whether their property is covered or not.

Kilmingtton: On a more positive note, this is included in one of Wessex Internet BDUK projects scheduled for summer 2026 and comprises properties in Kilmingtton, Kilmingtton Street & Common and Norton Ferris.

A load of waste including carpet was dumped in the road at Kilmingtton. It is worth noting Wiltshire Council is reminding businesses owners of their legal responsibility to dispose of their commercial waste correctly after a Warminster resident was issued with a fixed penalty notice (FPN) for waste offences. There is no suggestion that a business dumped the above, that is to be investigated. Fly-tips in Wiltshire have been on a downward trend over the course of last year. A 31% increase in fly-tipping prosecutions year on year.

I sit on the Police and Crime Panel which The Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr. Philip Wilkinson attends. When I attended the Police and Crime Commission Panel in Swindon, it was stated 90% of 999 calls should be answered in 10 seconds. I was interested to also learn Drones are now being used more and more with the aim soon that they can get to an incident firstly. It was mentioned that discussions were taken place with schools to enhance School uniform, with the aim of visibility especially during the dark periods of a winters school day, when travelling to and from. I was also informed some shops now have radio communication in some form with the Police. I was also informed the prisons are full again and to my surprise the number of days courts can run are limited and to be reduced. The Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Action Fund Grants support voluntary groups to deliver activities in line with priorities of the Wiltshire and Swindon Police and Crime Plan 2022-25. Grants are up to £5,000 for one year. The amount of shoplifting officially reduced in Wiltshire, it was acknowledged, this was probably not the case as shop keepers are not reporting. I can say it is a problem in Mere and I have encouraged the Police to visit shops which they have to understand the scale of the problem locally.

I also was informed regarding Operation SNAP. Operation (Op) Snap allows members of the public to submit any type of footage directly to the Police Force where an offence occurs. Operation SNAP is a response to increasing submissions of video and photographic evidence relating to driving offences that members of the public have witnessed. Until now, these reports have been submitted to the police in all sorts of ways and so a streamlined process has now been developed to deal with them. This will hopefully make it easier for all involved. You can upload your footage to the Police.

The Wiltshire Marque, a new county-wide food accreditation scheme, was launched. The program that supports local businesses in Wiltshire. The program aims to increase the visibility of Wiltshire-made food and drink, and to help local businesses grow. I along with Mere Town Council have informing local businesses.

Wiltshire council cannot demonstrate the requisite five-year housing land supply and can demonstrate a 2.03 years supply. The housing requirement in the emerging Local Plan will meet less than 80% of the

revised Local Housing Need. The changes introduced on 12 December 2024 mean that the council now has a substantial shortfall in its housing land supply position (2.03 years). Biodiversity has to be considered when permission for development is sought. Contributions for off-site biodiversity can be considered.

A high proportion of older people use library services and therefore demand is predicted to increase in the coming years, just as the county's ageing population does. Also, regarding printed matter, I have asked for the Salisbury Journal be brought back for sale in Mere after a local resident noted it is still on sale nearby.

If people see someone on the streets, which has been known in Mere, they can provide details to StreetLink. Streetlink will provide the council with details, so officers (Rough Sleepers Team) can talk to the rough sleeper, help them find a warm place to stay and offer ongoing support. Streetlink will get in contact with the council's, which can then go out and support.

Councils must now offer households a regular collection of the following recyclable items: Glass, Metal, Plastic (including flexible plastics from 2027), Paper and card, Food waste (from 2027), Garden waste (charges for collection may be applied). This means from 2027 it is anticipated that residents would be asked to present recycling in one wheeled bin or weighted reuseable sack for paper and cardboard, a second wheeled bin or weighted reusable sack for mixed plastics, cans, cartons, and bagged flexible plastics, and a box for glass. Recycling old or unwanted electricals, some electrical items smaller than a 'shoe box' can be recycled using the small electricals collection service. leave these items beside the blue-lidded bin or recycling sack in a supermarket carrier bag.

I attended a disability event at St Thomas's in Salisbury organized by Karen Linaker from the local area boards. One stall was All Together, if you are a parent or carer or young person needing support and advice, for more information contact 08009704669.

The Snooker club benefitted from AIM (Activities in Mere), which has now made the club viable. At its AGM I attended it was stated both rooms are now used, membership has increased from 15 to 28 which includes 4 ladies. Perhaps some from the surrounding villages might like to also join.

Wiltshire Council seeks more Shared Lives carers to provide a welcome home. Shared Lives and Shared Days Carers work from home, providing support and care for people while they live with them in their own home as part of the family.

I spend many hours visiting local function across the Division from Kilmington to West Knoyle. I find this is a good way to find what people want, number one being good roads and housing.

I spend time supporting the wishes of the locally elected Parish and Town Councils which sometimes is over a long period of time. It is a matter of continually raising the subject when the opportunity arises.

More additional school places for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) will be available in Wiltshire following a successful bid by Wiltshire Council.

I have attended the Postmaster Conference at Warwick. The Government and many want Post Office to survive, with some claiming about 200 have closed in recent years and the Post Office seem to be claiming there are still about 11500 Post Offices and about 7000 Postmasters, someone is possibly wrong. It appears many Drop and Go points have opened which seems to be classed as a Post Office. I was interested for our area what additional services and hence income may be on the horizon for Post Offices I could hear of none except retail which many Post Offices have done as an extra for decades.

Wiltshire Council supports “No Mow May”, a national campaign that looks to allow grass to remain unmown for the month to create habitats for pollinators. As ever, the challenge is to find a compromise that attempts to meet the requirements of those who want grass cut regularly, and those who would rather grass was left to grow to encourage wildlife to thrive. Wiltshire also have to ensure highways are safe, and that communities still have opportunities to play, for example, on community football pitches. This May, as in previous years, Wiltshire have continued to support No Mow May, but only in specific areas.

A review of the boundaries of Mere town was requested by Mere Town Council, in relation to the boundary with Zeals near and including The Hill Brush site. Full Council voted for this area to become part of Mere and not Zeals as it is at present. I abstained as I represent both Mere and Zeals.

Wiltshire Council has confirmed that holders of Wiltshire concessionary bus passes will be able to use their passes for travel from 9am on local bus services on weekdays from 1 May.

Fly posting is taken to be the display of advertising material on buildings and street furniture without the consent of the owner. If permission is gained from the landowner, which would include Wiltshire Council Highways, then it is not fly posting as permission is given. The council will allow advertising on the highway by charities and community groups if requested and allowable.

I have the following items if you have Community use for them, for short term free loan If you have any use at any local community function for a small free standing amp and microphone, plus a buzz wire and stand. I have both for free barrowing, insurance not included.

Residents can now borrow thermal imaging cameras from Wiltshire Libraries to check for heat loss from their properties to inform home upgrades and save money on energy bills. The cameras are available free of charge.

Mr Martin Nye, Wiltshire’s new High Sheriff was sworn in on Friday, 4th April 2025 in a ceremony which dates back to Saxon times. Elections for Parish, Town and Unitary Councillors, election results will be confirmed Friday 2 - Saturday 3 May.
