

CWAC SANDSTONE WARD BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT 2023/24– report
prepared by Hugo Deynem

The year in the main my resource has been taken up by three key areas of attention.

The condition of our roads is becoming a constant one. A new contractor has been appointed by CWaC, this is Colas. The approach is one best described as 'fire fighting' and it does not bode well for road users or tax payers. Repair teams are given specific pot holes to repair, these are allocated on size and depth of the pothole. Often the area being filled will have numerous other potholes in the same location but these are off limits to the repair teams so road users often notice some potholes being repaired and others apparently ignored. Council "resources are limited" despite maximum council tax increases and as a ward councillor I continually engage with the Highways Teams to ensure we in the Sandstone Ward get our fair share of repair resources that are available across the Borough, this resource has been increased by additional central government funding recently, see below. If you see any potholes or other council infrastructure that is deficient then please use the "Report It" App that CWaC offer.

Road safety and speeding issues again are regular features in my inbox again this year. I have arranged numerous speed monitoring surveys across the ward, many in Kingsley and Ashton Hayes. Where the speed surveys indicate that no speed limit reduction is recommended, which is often the case, I then will sit down with Highways Safety Engineers and local PC's and residents to see what other options might be an alternative. These often include considering improved signage, road markings, speed indicating devices and engineering solutions to manage traffic and driver behaviour effectively. One of the most effective engagement tools is the use of the Mobile Speed Indicator Device (SID). A number of PC's now have their own and the Borough Council also has devices. Local residents can be trained to use and deploy these devices which serve as an excellent reminder of speed but can also capture valuable vehicle speed data. If you would like to get involved or just to know a little more about SID then please contact either myself or your local Parish Council.

I was fortunate and very honoured to have been selected as the Sheriff of Chester for 2023/24. I have been on numerous civic engagements throughout the year, ranging from shop and new business openings, school visits, charity launches and events as well as numerous attendances at Chester Cathedral. I have been supporting two charities during my term of office and these are Dementia UK and the Ashton Hayes CBS. I very much look forwards to providing both charities with some much needed additional funding as my civic year draws to a close.

On a broader note, as always, the financial situation is forefront for everything that a Local Authority does, that said, LA's have been helped considerably through Conservative government grants, though none the less it is the maximum Council Tax rise that will once again be brought in by CWaC with a Band B charge now rising to £1465, when Police and Fire & Rescue charges are included this rises to £1740. There was also a very welcome announcement of additional central government funding for local authorities, for CWaC this amounts to £1.262m of additional funding for the current financial year, and £1.262m for 2024/25.

As a member of the CWAC Scrutiny Committee much of my committee work is focussed on tax payers value for money and scrutinising the councils plans and spending to ensure we are all getting the best services possible. Business areas that have been through the Scrutiny Committee recently include Cheshire West Recycling, Planning Application process, Council Performance, Council Budget and Council owned Companies among

others. My work continues here and I hope that my voice for our more rural areas is one that is heard very plainly and frequently at Committee.

The Sandstone ward's PC's Forum continues and the 6 Parish Councils across the Sandstone Ward to come together to discuss shared issues. Where collective objectives can be identified and agreed and facilitating a joint approach to identifying possible solutions whilst giving weight to our 'collective' PC's voices. Much of the meeting time has been focussed on planning, road condition and road safety matters.

Planning matters continue to be a high priority for many residents and involves a considerable amount of my time in relation to a councillors workload. The majority of my inbox in relation to planning is related to enforcement matters or problems at sites where unauthorised development has already begun. High profile sites under enforcement notices such as the one at Pingot Lane which has been working their way through the Planning Appeal system and Appeal decisions have highlighted the considerable gaps in CWaC's planning policies and in particular the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), these challenges have been exacerbated by the recently amended definition of G&T in planning terms by central government. It will be a key focus of mine going forwards to try to work with and encourage planning officers to ensure that the CWaC planning policies are suitable, effective and robust enough to protect our Green Belt from unauthorised development becoming approved by default.

Financial support through the Ward Members grants alongside other funding streams have allowed me to support numerous projects and community groups across the Sandstone ward during the year. I have provided a summary of the projects that I have supported directly for reference below.

CW&C Libraries	Summer Reading Challenge
Chester Pride	Pride 2023
Tarvin Rex FC	New football posts
Dunham on the Hill PC	Planting & milestone painting
Childrens Services	Christmas vouchers
Cheshire FA	Girls Football
CW&C Fostering Service	Fostering Families festive party
Kingsley Players Youth Theatre	The Hundred and One Dalmatians - Young Persons Project
Dunham Hill and Hapsford Parish Council	Supply of Electric lights for decorating the village green in Dunham on the hill
Dunham Hill and Hapsford Parish Council	Planting Wildflowers around the verges of Hapsford and Dunham Hill
Manley Parish Council	Replacement boiler at Manley Village Hall
Cheshire Search and Rescue	Missing Vulnerable People- Cheshire Search and Rescue
Ashton Hayes and Horton-cum-Peel Parish Council.	Flood Mitigation

Ashton Hayes and Mouldsworth Community Shop Ltd	Provision of a bench
Kingsley Parish Council	Community Mobility Ramp

The applications for Ward Members Grants is now closed for the current financial year and will reopen again on the 7th of May. Should you wish to apply the application page can be found on the CWaC page by searching for Ward Members Budgets or feel free to reach out to me directly.

Of course we have Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) elections in May, though there are no local council elections in our area this year. I very much look forward to working with you all in the coming year and thank you for your support and engagement throughout 2023/24.

Cllr Hugo Deynem

CWaC Borough Cllr for the Sandstone Ward