

Report of Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst

Representing Llangarron Ward

November

World War 1 Centenary

Sadly, due to time pressures, my intention to restage 'Remembering Them – Welsh Newton to Wipers' which had been performed in 2014 proved to be impossible, but I did get included in The Gathering Wave concert in Hereford as a reader and was grateful for the opportunity to 'do my bit' (albeit slight). It was a wonderful evening with the combined choirs and a fitting tribute.

Many villages in the ward had commemorative events and I would like to pay tribute to all the organisers and volunteers who put in the work to make it possible.

Take over week

Once a year the council invite young people to get directly involved and 'take over', you might feel that this would be an improvement...I couldn't possibly comment!

One session that I was involved with, was a scrutiny meeting involving young people in care. The subject for debate was whether Herefordshire should reduce the voting age to 16. Whilst the meeting was a 'mock' debate it was exactly like the real thing. The officers put in a great deal of time and effort to make a presentation of the main issues for and against and the meeting was conducted formally in the imposing council chamber at the Shire Hall.

Initially the young people were reluctant to speak up but in a short while they grew in confidence and were not only contributing to the debate but making excellent, well thought out and persuasive arguments. One participant tends only to ever write their comments and someone else reads them but by the end of the meeting they were speaking up and being listened to by everyone present. I can't tell you how moving and inspiring it was to be in that meeting – can't wait for the next one. The upshot was that we felt that the only real impediment to voting at 16 was the lack of practical political knowledge – the moment when you step into the voting booth and exercise your democratic right should be supported by an education in what it all means and the principle differences between the major parties. Politics can be pretty complex – no more so than right now – and, as they say, with rights come responsibilities. It is not enough to know who you want to vote for, you should also know why.

Young people from a number of schools also met with me to discuss the draft Children and Young People's Plan which is due to be published. They fed in a number of ideas for the look and contents of the plan, the one page version and the presentation of the plan on media. These ideas are being worked in and will inform the design and contents of the final draft.

Planning

Due to a high level of public interest I was in attendance at Planning Committee to highlight areas of concern over a planning application for 8 houses in Bridstow. The application was of high quality and was recommended for approval by the planning officer but there were a number of issues that needed to be given full consideration by the committee including the highway capacity, the impact on the AONB, drainage, residential amenity, character of the settlement, impact on a PROW and landscape impact. Bridstow is a difficult village to build in due to the AONB, two trunk roads,

flooding and the somewhat spread out nature of the settlement. It was the nature of the settlement that had been the most nuance area of debate for me, in past decisions it had been decided by Herefordshire Council planners that the main settlement of Bridstow comprised the Claytons and the area south of the A49, however, subsequent appeal decisions had made it clear that the inspector took a different view and believed that areas of housing at some distance from the services were still considered to be within a settlement (and therefore coming under policy RA2 of the core strategy). The careful landscaping proposals, net environmental benefit due to tree planting schemes, highway assessment of the road capacity and the need to deliver housing in the parish all weighed in favour of the application which was duly passed by the committee.

Since I was in attendance in any case I offered to substitute for the rest of the all day meeting which included a number of interesting applications. The proposed works to the Masters House in Ledbury, made possible by a section 106 agreement, will improve the setting of this fine building and whilst it may not go as far as I would like it will be a significant enhancement. Two applications for agricultural occupancy houses had split decisions, one was decided in favour (supported as it was by the parish council and local residents, being modest and located proximal to the sheds) the second was refused (principally on lack of demonstrated need and landscape impact). In both cases the recommendation was to refuse due to lack of 'essential need' and/or failure to demonstrate that the need cannot be met using existing buildings.

Highways England

I raised a number of issues with Highways England on behalf of residents of Bridstow and Marstow at a meeting last week. I hope that we shall see some improved communication and actions as a result.

Festivities

I may not manage a report again before Christmas so, in case I don't,

Compliments of the Season to all the residents of Llangarron Ward.

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