

Droitwich Spa Town Council

MINUTES of the meeting of Droitwich Spa Town Council held in the Council Chamber at St Richards House on **Monday 19 June 2023** at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs K Fellows (Mayor)
Councillor Mrs C Bowden
Councillor E Bowden
Councillor SJ Brazier
Councillor M Brook
Councillor GR Brookes
Councillor Mrs JM Chaudry
Councillor PD Clements
Councillor DI Davidson
Councillor RCC Deller
Councillor GA Duffy
Councillor N Franks
Councillor J Grady
Councillor RP Hopkins
Councillor AL Key
Councillor RJ Morris
Councillor AM Sinton

NOTES

(1) Webcasting Members of the Council are reminded that meetings of the Council are Webcast on the Internet and will be stored electronically and accessible through the Council's Website. Members of the public are informed that if they attend this meeting their images and speech may be captured by the recording equipment used for the Webcast and may also be stored electronically and accessible through the Council's Website.

(2) This Meeting will be webcast and live streamed on the Internet. It is anticipated that all Full Council and Committee Meetings will be live streamed from June 2023 onwards.

APOLOGIES for absence: Councillor VP Humphries.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS SESSION

There were none.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were none.

62. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 24 APRIL 2023 (Previous Administration)

Councillors DI Davidson, RCC Deller, N Franks & J Grady all abstained for the reason that they were not present at the Meeting on 24th April 2023.

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 24 April 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

63. MINUTES OF THE EXTRA- ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 15 MAY 2023 (To confer the Status of Honorary Alderman upon Ex Councillor Mr Edgar Harwood).

Councillor RCC Deller abstained for the reason that he was not present at the Meeting on 15th May 2023.

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Extra- ordinary Meeting of Council held on 15 May 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

64. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15 MAY 2023

Councillor RCC Deller abstained for the reason that he was not present at the Meeting on 15th May 2023.

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on 15 May 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

65. MAYORS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Mrs K Fellows updated the following information.

Mayor's Announcements 19.06.2023

“That it has been a busy year so far including the recent Local Elections and welcomed new Councillors to the Town Council. Thanks were expressed to Councillor GA Duffy for the opportunity to support as his Deputy Mayor during 2022/2023 and the valuable experience of the Mayoral Role and Civic Duties to come for this ensuing year.

So far as Mayor since 15th May 2023 Councillor Mrs Fellows reported that she had enjoyed various events and functions including garden parties, visiting care homes and the Westlands ward. Other recent engagements have included the St Richards Festival weekend in April, supporting the opening of the resurrected Weekly Charter Market from 21st April 2023 and visiting both the Air Cadets Squadron and the Young Fire Fighters to present Certificates. Appreciation was expressed to all Town Councillors for their support. Special thanks was made to Councillor AM Sinton for his help & guidance and for accepting the Role of the Deputy Mayor this year.

Moving forward there continues to be many functions, engagements and Civic responsibilities taking place. These include representing at a Small Business forum for the High Street traders, Droitwich CVS Networking meetings, CVS Volunteering for support for Community Bereavement Counselling and Droitwich Youth Group. Forthcoming events include the Food & Drink Festival in Lido Park from the 23- 25 June 2023 , The Mayor of Worcester’s Civic Service and the 76th Anniversary Hanbury Show which takes place on 1st July 2023 and will be the first time that the Mayor has attended. Other functions already in the diary are the Three Counties Shire Jam, Glovers Piece Farm Day and the Norbury Wymysical Theatre Performance”.

RESOLVED That the information be noted

66. POLICING IN DROITWICH SPA

The Mayor welcomed Sergeant Catherine Atkinson to the meeting which was the first occasion following the retirement of Sergeant Sarah Kent in April. The Town Clerk updated that the Police Report had been provided by Catherine last week and had been circulated to all Elected Members in advance of this Meeting on Friday 16th June 2023.

(a) Police Report –

Sergeant Atkinson updated from the following report.

POLICING IN DROITWICH SPA

Firstly, I just wanted to provide an update to the changes to the Droitwich SNT policing department. Sgt Sarah Kent has now retired, and Sgt 2113 Catherine Atkinson is the new Sgt covering the Droitwich area and has been in post for the past 6 weeks.

The team also includes PC Warren Edmunds and PC Sarah Clarke, who is new to the team. We are hoping to also have a third PC in the near future which is much needed.

The PCSO's include Vicky Elliott, Maria Francolini, Andrea Leslie and Dee Bushall.

There currently seems to be a significant issue with graffiti around the Droitwich area, including on people's walls, fencing and now there seems to be an increase in the underpasses.

This first was prevalent around November 2022 and seems to have increased since the latest school half term in May. The graffiti appears to be linked to one person or gang using the words "BASIC" and "2 HB" which appears to have now changed to "3 HB CREW." I am aware a lot of work has been conducted with the Town Clerk and Councillor's, which is very much appreciated. During their work an Instagram account has been identified which the culprits are using to advertise their graffiti.

We are currently liaising with our High Tech Crime unit in an attempt to identify who created the account, which will hopefully lead to further investigations and the suspects. This work is still ongoing.

SNT officers have increased their patrols around the area's targeted, although have not come across anyone causing damage. We are also currently linking in with the youth outreach workers to conduct some joint patrols to engage with the local youths and to patrol these affected areas. We are currently in the process of arranging this.

Additionally, the Droitwich team have been engaging with Droitwich High School to gather any information from the students and teachers about the graffiti.

I would encourage any graffiti to be reported officially to the police, so we have this documented on our police systems.

I have also asked for some extra assistance from our Special Constables to help with patrolling these hotspot area's as a deterrent and in an attempt to identify those responsible. I am just waiting for a reply on these extra resources.

Burglaries are still a priority, although compared to the winter months, burglaries in Droitwich have seen a decrease. However, we have several car key burglaries, the most recent being 28th May, whereby an Audi TT was stolen from Ombersley Street. The cars targeted have been sport/high value cars.

In response to the vehicle thefts, we have Design Out Crime officer who visits the victims at their home (if they wish) to provide security advice.

Some arrests have been made in connection with these car thefts and we have been successful in retrieving some of the stolen vehicles by monitoring the car trackers.

We have also seen units on Berry Industrial Estate and other industrial estates targeted. There have been some linked names identified via vehicles used. Officers are still currently progressing their enquiries.

Any burglaries that are reported to the police are either followed up by our SNT team or the Design Out Crime Officer, this includes increased patrols for reassurance. The policy is the victim of the burglary is visited, provided support and issued free smart water. Additionally, neighbours are also visited and they are provided crime prevention advice. Any vulnerable people will be identified and provided extra support from the team.

Community surgeries continue at Droitwich Spa library, although the drop-in session at Westlands Community Centre have ceased this was not well attended.

These sessions are mainly conducted by the SNT PCSO's and even though the Westlands Community Centre does not currently provide a surgery, PCSO Leslie is in regular contact with the school and patrols the Westlands housing estate.

The library drop-in sessions are advertised by PCSO Bushell on "Neighbourhood Matter's".

ASB – Youths and adults gaining access to the Raven building and causing damage. This has improved since the building's exterior has been secured recently. Until developments begin on the site this will continue to be an ongoing issue. However, I have seen reports over the last few days to confirm youths have gained access to

the roof again. This is a concern, not only regarding the damage to the building, but also to the youths themselves (and potentially members of the public). The local Droitwich team regularly patrol the area, albeit cannot access some of the grounds.

The town's ASB is sporadic, usually around Morrison's and Waitrose and Boots. Youths are responsible for this but unfortunately these reports are not always being made to the police at the time. We always endeavour to secure CCTV to try and identify those responsible. If they are identified the youths are dealt with according to their actions.

The town centre is regularly patrolled by both PC's and PCSO's for reassurance and as a deterrent.

Those youths that cause ASB issues are dealt with robustly and the matter is taken seriously by the police. We have issued several ASB letters and in the process of trying to secure CBO's for the persistent offenders.

I have recently been made aware on ASB issues at the Copcut park, whereby damage has been caused to newly planted trees. I have made the Droitwich team aware of this so patrols can be conducted. Droitwich SNT have previously conducted joint visits to this area (as well as others) with the town council and with the Design Out Crime officer to assess the area and to see if any environmental changes could be made. There were some recommendations regarding cutting back some of the foliage in the area. I have no other information about this. SNT are keen to work with other agencies to have a joint approach to problem solving. Droitwich PCSO's regularly conduct "Housing Walk Arounds" predominantly with housing officers. This is so ASB issues can be jointly addressed, and members of the public have an opportunity to raise any issues.

We are aware that ASB seems to increase during school holidays, particularly around the summer period.

During this time, we are planning on increasing patrols around the hotspot areas, such as parks and underpasses, by utilising officers from other SNT areas and Special constables. I am also seeking permission to have a dispersal order in place, particularly around the school summer break, as they appear to be an increase on ASB and underage drinking around this time. This enables police to deal with any issues of anti-social behaviour and gives powers to order a person to leave the area with no return within the specified time period.

Thefts – On Friday 2nd June two elderly females had their handbags stolen whilst shopping in Morrison's Supermarket. A single male has been identified via CCTV as being responsible. Both female's handbags were in the trolley.

This matter is still in the early stages of the investigation and the male is still to be identified.

There have been no other handbags reported stolen to the police.

We had a spate of diesel thefts from HGV's the Berry Hill estate. The offences took place overnight. Officers successfully arrested those responsible and since their arrests there have been no other thefts of fuel since these arrests.

Speeding – Speeding still remains an issue, particularly on the Kidderminster Road (dual carriage way), leading to/from Big Bear Ltd. We have received several complaints about vehicle speeding around this area and residents' concerns. SNT are currently looking into this. Unfortunately, we do not have any registrations or descriptions of those responsible. The team have requested intelligence to review specific times/days this appears to be occurring, so a more targeted approach can be adopted. Unfortunately, at this time the "Boy Racers" who are driving at speed on this road occurs sporadically. Those responsible seem to be travelling around different areas and may only attend the Droitwich area if they have been moved on from other areas. Droitwich SNT are planning on conducting a speeding/traffic pre-planned Op (date and time not confirmed) along with other agencies such as VOSA, trading standards and the Road safety team to target speeding and address any other offences identified.

Droitwich officers regularly conducted speeding surveys in various locations. Speeding issues are addressed at the time and several speeding tickets have been issued through this process.

Finally, Droitwich SNT were involved with "Op Sceptre" which addresses knife crime. This operation ran between '15th May to 21st May 2023. During this time the team conducted patrols around hotspot areas, knife sweeps in open areas and near schools, provided education to youths about the dangers of knife crime and an Operation was carried out at the train station, along with network rail and BTP. Stop searches were conducted and intelligence gathered. The team are planning on running something similar again at the train station.

The Mayor thanked Sergeant Atkinson for her report. Councillor RJ Morris asked for support in the Community with three points,

- Guidance through Social media from the Police with regard to help protect against car key burglaries leading to vehicle thefts.
- Consideration for the resurrection of a public counter service at the Town Police Station and possibly options for volunteer opportunities to assist with the resourcing.
- Consent to share the Police Report with constituents within the Community - which was granted.

Councillor GR Brookes highlighted issues with E Scooters in the Community and asked for greater publicity as to the legislation and restriction that applied.

Councillor DI Davidson requested more forward notice from the SNT about their Community engagement sessions.

Councillor N Franks asked for wider consideration of littering and fly tipping within the Safer Neighbourhoods Team categorisation of crimes. It was added that the Droitwich Spa Litter Squad do a tremendous job volunteering to help combat these aspects, but their work is sometimes challenged by the prolific levels of littering and fly tipping in parts of the Community

RESOLVED That the information be noted

- (b) Safer Neighbourhoods Team and Local Policing Charter - To coincide with the New Council Administration, to review and prioritise the Safer Neighbourhoods Team (SNT) – Local Policing Charter chosen priorities for the Town Council. The three priorities previously resolved are measures against – Drugs, Anti- social behaviours and Speeding [*Full list of categories attached to Agenda*].

Following general debate it was resolved to reaffirm the existing Police Charter priorities in the ranked order of,

1. Anti- social Behaviour
2. Speeding
3. Measures against Drugs

RESOLVED To reaffirm the Local Policing Charter three priorities in the ranked order of Anti- social behaviour, speeding and measures against drugs.

There were 15 votes in favour. 2 abstentions were recorded from Councillors PD Clements & RJ Morris for the reason that they disagreed with the ranking order of the three chosen priorities.

67. HIGH SCHOOL

Gabe, George & Brandon represented and updated on activities and news from the High School including the New School Council & Elections, fund raising events & charities, end of year exams and the forthcoming Sports Day and School Prom. Details were provided about two current initiatives – The Student Mental Health Awareness Campaign and the Sixth Form taster and induction sessions available for students joining next September. The Mayor thanked the Senior Student Team for their comprehensive report and wished those moving on every success for the future and with their examinations. The creative element of their update and School activities was commented on as being very impressive.

There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED That the information be noted

68. YOUTH COUNCIL

To note that the Youth Council updates will resume in due course. There was no report for 19th June 2023.

RESOLVED That the information be noted

69. INTERNAL AUDITORS YEAR END REPORT FOR PERIOD ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023 - To receive and approve the Internal Auditors Report and Recommendations as presented to the Resources Committee on 12 June 2023, pertinent to the Town Council's Accounts and Annual Return report for the year ended 31 March 2023. Resources Committee minute number 53/2023-24 from the meeting of the 12th June 2023 refers.

There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED That the information be noted and Internal Auditors report and recommendations accepted.

70. GOVERNANCE STATEMENT - To receive and approve the Town Council's Annual Governance Statement made as part of the Annual Return report for year ended 31 March 2023 [*Governance Statement and Annual Return attached with Agenda for information*].

The Town Clerk referred to the Governance Statement and explained the process. There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED To accept and approve the Governance Statement made as per of the Annual Return report for year ended 31 March 2023. Signed by the Mayor in confirmation.

71. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS - To receive and approve the Town Council's Annual Accounts pertinent to the Town Council's Accounts and Annual Return report for year ended 31 March 2023 [*Accounts and Annual Return attached with Agenda for information*].

The Town Clerk referred to the Annual Accounts Statement and explained the process. To note the details of the period for the exercise of public rights for the Accounts as outlined by the Town Clerk – announcement date Friday 23rd June 2023, Period commencing from Monday 26th June 2023 until Friday 4th August 2023. There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED To accept and approve the Annual Accounts Statement pertinent to the Town Council's Accounts and Annual Return report for year ended 31 March 2023. Signed by the Mayor in confirmation.
To note the details of the period for the exercise of public rights for the Accounts as outlined by the Town Clerk – announcement date Friday 23rd June 2023, Period commencing from Monday 26th June 2023 until Friday 4th August 2023.

72. NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE.

To receive an update report from Councillor GR Brookes in his capacity as the designated Town Council Member with responsibility for the project, including Communications & Liaison and the Steering Group. The previous report was included as part of Full Council on 24 April 2023 - Minute Number 343/2022-23 refers [*report circulated to all Elected Members in advance of Meeting on Friday 16th June 2023 and following the Steering Group Meeting of 14th June 2023*].

Councillor Brookes referred to the full report and summarised the following points.

Supplementary Information

The Steering Group Meeting went very well on Wednesday last week with good contributions and engagement from those attending. Progress with the project overall is being maintained to plan. Next steps & Key points to be included as parts of the Agenda for the July Steering Group include,

1. Communications Strategy – To populate the Full List of Consultee Groups and Local Organisations – (Section 4.3). This will then enable final publication on the Town Council website and form the basis of additional evidence gathering to align with the Residents and Business & Commerce Questionnaires (expected September onwards).
2. To receive a full overview report and collated analysis of the Initial Questionnaire from Launch in March 2023. To be provided from Consultant
3. Initial Drafted Residents and Business & Commerce Questionnaires. To be provided from Consultant. Both questionnaires are scheduled for public release in September.
4. Further Engagement and input with the Place Board to support the Business & Commerce questionnaire process.

There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED That the information be noted

73. CHRISTMAS LIGHTING PROCUREMENT - Pursuant to the procurement exercise undertaken, the recommendations of the Working Group from the meeting of 5th June 2023 and Minute reference 33/2023-24 of the meeting of the Community & Amenities Committee on 12th June 2023- to ratify the contract award and renewal arrangements in accordance with the outlined and considered proposals for a period of five years. To note that all arrangements be delegated to the Town Council Officers including notification to the unsuccessful Companies that had submitted bids for the procurement consideration.

The Town Clerk explained the delegation, assessment and evaluation process undertaken including as recommended to the Community & Amenities Committee on 12th June 2023. There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED – To award the contract for the Christmas Lighting renewal for five years as outlined in the recommendations from the Working Group evaluation and scoring of the 5th June 2023 and then accepted by the Community & Amenities Committee at the Meeting of the 12th June 2023- minute reference 33/2023-24 refers. To note the renewal of the contract with the existing Service Provider for a five year term in accordance with their proposal.

There were 15 votes in favour. 2 abstentions were recorded from Councillors RP Hopkins and AL Key.

74. To receive and consider the Minutes of the under-mentioned Committee meetings:-

1. Planning Committee – 12th June 2023 [*circulated with Agenda*]
2. Community & Amenities Committee – 12th June 2023 [*circulated with Agenda*]
3. Resources Committee – 12th June 2023 [*circulated with Agenda*]

There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED That the Minutes of all of the listed Committee meetings be accepted on block.

75. FULL FIBRE – BROADBAND APPARATUS PROPOSAL - To consider the following motion and rationale statement put forward by Councillor RJ Morris.

“Lately several communities in Droitwich have been subjected to Full Fibre and plans to site poles for Superfast Broadband. Residents have noticed markings on pavements and then received letters, with only a few weeks’ notice, notifying that poles will be placed in their roads. This has caused, for many residents, distress, and annoyance. This Council calls for a public meeting to be arranged at the soonest opportunity to call on Full Fibre to explain their plans for Droitwich, their plan of communication and consultation with communities and for Wychavon District & County Council to explain the planning consent.”

In general discussion Councillors raised concerns and examples towards the approach of Full Fibre through the arrangements for the ongoing broad band enhancements and infrastructure in different parts of the Community. The examples described were from personal experiences, observations and individual cases referred from constituents. The consensus reached was that the communications channels and the strategy for the installation needs to be significantly improved as well as forward notification timescales for all ongoing and proposed works.

Councillor N Franks asked for an amendment to the proposed motion to be considered to the effect that - the Local Member of Parliament be formally notified of the level & number of concerns being raised by residents within the Droitwich Spa Community affected by the Full Fibre installation works and for the MP to be provided with the details of the Public Meeting arrangements.

RESOLVED – To amend the proposal with the additions as outlined by Councillor N Franks to the effect that - the Local Member of Parliament be formally notified of the level & number of concerns being raised by residents within the Droitwich Spa Community affected by the Full Fibre installation works and for the MP to be provided with the details of the Public Meeting arrangements.

RESOLVED - This Council calls for a public meeting to be arranged at the soonest opportunity to call on Full Fibre to explain their plans for Droitwich, their plan of communication and consultation with communities and for Wychavon District & County Council to explain the planning consent.”

In Addition that - the Local Member of Parliament be formally notified of the level & number of concerns being raised by residents within the Droitwich Spa Community affected by the Full Fibre installation works and for the MP to be provided with the details of the Public Meeting arrangements.

Councillor RJ Morris confirmed that he was making provisional arrangements for the Public Meeting and details will be confirmed as soon as possible. The indicative date is set for Wednesday 26th July at 7.00pm in the Main Hall of the Community Hall on Heritage Way (subject to final confirmation in due course).

76. **COUNTY COUNCIL MATTERS** - Councillor RJ Morris had provided the following report in advance of the meeting including a request for paper copies to be circulated and provided for Elected Members present through the Clerk.

Droitwich West County update
19th June 2023

1. Pathway resurfacing due.

- a) Hunters Way and adjacent paths such as East Park Drive
- b) Ploughman’s Piece (though not all paths as a couple are owned by Platform, they have been advised)

2. Westlands crossing & Westlands Wellbeing Hub

- Stakeholder meeting set up to hopefully progress Westlands Crossing
- Met with Director of Public Health, Cabinet member for health and the Wellbeing Hub to discuss a sustainable future for the initiative. A stakeholder group is being set up to develop.

3. Divisional Funds - new year.

Support for Droitwich Spa Disability Football Tournament - £580

4. Natural Networks

A project to connect habitats and increase the abundance of wildlife in Worcestershire is celebrating the securing of funding to extend the project for another two years.

Natural Networks, a partnership between Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Worcestershire County Council,

initially received funding from the European Regional Development Fund in 2018. The original three-year project was so successful that it was extended to a five-year project, which comes to an end this month.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Worcestershire County Council have succeeded in pulling together funding in order to extend the project into 2025.

The Natural Networks team works with landowners and provides match funding for work on their land that helps nature. Over the last five years, Natural Networks has provided conservation advice on more than 2630 hectares of land right across Worcestershire. As a consequence, projects on more than 130 hectares have received funding to carry out the advice.

As part of the project:

- 25,700+ trees and shrubs have been planted
- 71,500+ bulbs and plug plants have been planted
- 620+ bird, bug and bat boxes have been erected
- 4,300+ metres of hedges have been planted
- 1,250+ metres of waterway have been enhanced
- 50+ ponds and swamps have been created or enhanced

5. Chairman of the Worcestershire Covenant

As Worcestershire Armed Forces Champion, I ask that we recognise that it is **Armed Forces week** and thank the Town Clerk for raised the union flag above St Richard's House.

Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant:

Worcestershire signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012 and is committed to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. The Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership works collaboratively to strengthen local delivery of the Covenant, and in particular, to support Worcestershire veterans who are experiencing problems either in transition or future years.

The Partnership represents the public sector, charitable and voluntary sector, council members (Armed Forces Champions representing Worcestershire's six District Councils), public health, police, and the regional Army Welfare team. The main aims of the Partnership are:

- to foster collaboration and integration between the Armed Forces and civilian communities and make it easier for service personnel, families and veterans to access help and support available from statutory providers and from the charitable and voluntary sector
- to implement a framework to gain a better understand of local issues in relation to members of the Armed Forces Community
- to prioritise and address key areas of need, driven by an Action Plan
- to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant to wider stakeholders such as employers, the business community and local communities

Worcestershire's Armed Forces Covenant is facilitated by Worcestershire County Council as part of their ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces. Worcestershire County Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant as a dedicated forces-friendly organisation in November 2020 and achieved ERS Bronze in 2022 extending their to support the armed forces, including existing or prospective employees who are members of the community

Councillor GR Brookes updated that that there would be a County Council initiative running through the School summer holidays at the Library buildings (including the Droitwich Spa Library at Victoria Square) to help young people aged between 13 and 24 to improve their reading skills. To this effect there is also a call out to engage volunteers who would be able to support this activity providing their time and help with reading instruction.

There were no questions arising

Councillor RJ Morris proposed that the Town Council consider signing and formal adoption of the Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant as presented. This was unanimously supported with delegation to the Clerk to coordinate with the County Council Officer responsible for administering the signing of the Worcestershire Armed Forces Covent.

RESOLVED That the County Councillor updates and information be noted.

That the Town Council make the necessary arrangements to sign and adopt the Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant as outlined in the report as follows - "Worcestershire signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012 and is committed to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. The Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership works collaboratively to strengthen local delivery of the Covenant, and in particular, to support Worcestershire veterans who are experiencing problems either in transition or future years."

77. DISTRICT COUNCIL MATTERS – Councillor GA Duffy updated the following report.

#FoodSavvy report in Wychavon

In May last year we started our #FoodSavvy campaign. This was a joint campaign with the environmental charity Hubbub and Worcestershire County Council. The aim was to raise awareness amongst residents of how much food they are wasting and of the simple and inexpensive things everyone can do to cut food waste and save money.

Recent waste analysis revealed about a third of the contents of the average black bin in Wychavon is food waste. The majority is packaged so was at one stage edible. This is costing the average family in Worcestershire more than £700 a year, as well as being a waste of energy and water.

The #FoodSavvy programme was divided into four themes focusing on bread waste (one of the most wasted foods), simple storage and meal planning tips, reducing waste at Christmas and making best use of your freezer.

We used a variety of methods to promote messages. The impact report is attached for more information.

Following the success of the Wychavon project, Worcestershire County Council is now funding the scheme entirely and rolling out across the county. Wychavon will continue to support this and promote our own Food Savvy content while also looking for other opportunities to encourage people to reduce their waste.

Energy Support – fast-approaching deadline

Residents who don't use the mains network to heat and power their homes, or who do not pay their fuel bills directly to a supplier, are being warned they are running out of time to apply for support from the Government.

The deadline for applications to the Government's Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) and Alternative Fuels Payment (AFP) is **31 May 2023**.

The EBSS provides a £400 discount to help with the soaring cost of electricity and gas bills. While anyone who pays their bills directly to an electricity supplier should have received their discount automatically, those who pay their bill through a third party, such as those in park homes, care homes or with permanent moorings, must apply.

A £200 Alternative Fuel Payment is also on offer to anyone using tank or bottle gas, liquid petroleum gas (LPG), oil, wood, or solid fuel. Most qualifying homes will have received this payment as a credit on their electricity bills. But again, those who do not have a direct contract with an energy supplier or who live off the main electricity and gas grid need to apply.

Some 930 households have already received support, but several hundred have yet to apply and will miss out unless they act fast.

Links to online application forms on the Government's website for both schemes can be found at www.wychavon.gov.uk/cost-of-living. Anyone who cannot apply online can call the support centre for free on 0808 175 3287.

Exemplar Award for Address Data for Wychavon's LLPG Addresses

On 11 May 2023, at the Exemplar Award ceremony, Wychavon was awarded the highest award achievable for the quality of their addresses.

These awards are in recognition for quality of our addresses and the judges based their criteria on the overall quality, giving particular focus to data quality and compliance to the National Improvement Schedules. Councils are measured every month against the National Improvement Schedules.

Town Centre accessibility audit consultation sessions

Direct Access and Wychavon District Council invited deaf and disabled people to consultation events to discuss the accessibility of Wychavon town centres, the event for Droitwich Spa happened on Thursday 8th of June.

The accessibility audit has been funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The event will give residents the opportunity to make comments and feedback ideas on the accessibility of their local towns.

If residents are unable to attend the event they can contact Direct Access to let them know their thoughts and views.

Advisory Panel co-options

We're asking residents to volunteer to become co-opted members of our Town, Communities and Rural advisory panels.

These volunteer roles have proved successful at offering people the opportunity to work with councillors and officers and providing constructive challenge, support and fresh ideas.

More information and an application form can be found on our [website](#). The deadline for applications is **5pm on 5 June 2023**.

Homes for Ukraine Year 1

Officers recently submitted our end of year report on the Homes for Ukraine scheme to Government. We reported that during the first year of the scheme, from its launch in March 2022, Wychavon welcomed 362 Ukrainian guests to the district. Our Finance Team processed 931 'thank you' payments to hosts and our Housing Team has supported 60 households into settled accommodation in the private and social rented sectors.

We continue to provide ongoing support to both our Ukrainian guests and their hosts. If you have any questions, please contact the team at homesforukraine@wychavon.gov.uk.

Parks update



Gateway Park, Droitwich – work has started on site this week to replace the rotten timbers to the central area of the car park.

Abbey Park Evesham water play area has officially opened and is proving very popular during the warmer weather.

78.

Listening to tenants: the changing face of social housing regulation in England

Social landlords have been given a year to improve the ways that tenants scrutinise their services as part of a tougher system of housing regulation.

From 1 April, councils and housing associations with more than 1,000 tenants were required to carry out annual surveys asking about not just the quality and safety of homes, but wider services. This includes ways that landlords handle complaints and the contribution they make to neighbourhood well-being.

The new system of regulation, which will lead to inspections based on new consumer standards from 2024, follows the fire at Grenfell Tower six years ago and widespread criticism of squalid conditions in some social housing.

Surveys must be based on 22 tenant satisfaction measures, 12 of which depends on answers given directly by tenants. Landlords may choose to carry out more regular surveys and back this up with further consultation, such as scrutiny panels.

Among the issues that tenants will be asked about are:

- satisfaction with repairs

- safety in the home
- handling of complaints

Landlords will be responsible for reporting on:

- whether homes meet the decent homes standard
- fire and other safety checks
- cases of antisocial behaviour

From 2024, all social landlords with more than 1,000 homes will be inspected against new consumer standards at least once every four years. For housing associations, the inspections will be in addition to those covering finance and governance.

This briefing looks in detail at the new system and suggests ways councils and other social landlords should be preparing. It will be of special interest to officers and members with responsibility for housing and health and safety. The full briefing is available online: <https://lgiu.org/briefing/listening-to-tenants-the-changing-face-of-social-housing-regulation-in-england/>

There were no questions arising.

Councillor AM Sinton updated on the work of the WDC –Droitwich Spa Place Board which had been set up since the launch of the Town Centre Prospectus in May 2022 to take various public realm improvements and projects forward. Following the May 2023 Elections, Councillor Sinton’s term of Chairmanship has now come to end and his successor has recently been announced as Local Businessman Mr Matt Nicoll.

There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED That the information be noted.

The Meeting Closed at 7.30pm

Chairman of Council -----
25 September 2023