

## **Cllr Bryn Williams, District Councillor Report for 2017-18**

Firstly, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council for their support over the past 12 months and also for the support of our community. I have lived in Deddington for over 22 years and through initially being a parish councillor and now your district councillor it has enabled me to meet many people from different walks of life that otherwise I may not have, that is a great reward in itself, especially if I'm able to assist as your district councillor. I'm extremely happy and proud to represent the Deddington Ward which as you know two years ago was extended due to boundary changes. This has meant that we now have three Cherwell District Councillors per ward and between Hugo Brown, Mike Kerford-Byrnes and myself we represent the 13 parishes within the Deddington Ward. Between us we've divided the ward into thirds with Hugo taking care of the western side, Mike the eastern side and me the central area, therefore Deddington, the Barford's and North Aston. This has worked remarkably well and from time to time we do also attend parish council meetings in each others' patch in order to introduce ourselves and provide those communities with an alternative should their designated councillor be unable to attend or deal with their issues.

At Cherwell District Council, I sit on the Personnel Committee, Standards Committee, Appeals Panel, Overview & Scrutiny and the Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee.

In addition to attending parish council meetings, my phone and email are always effective ways for parishioners to contact me, and I'm glad to report that many do that and I'm delighted to be able to help in any way I can.

More often than not, parishioners' concerns tend to be planning related, be it their own planning application or an application that affects them in some way. Planning is an emotive subject at the best of times and I find that the best way forward is not via email but to engage the planning officers in face to face meetings on site, this allows the applicant or in some cases the objectors to share their concerns and hopefully resolve their issues. Only in extreme cases are planning applications called-in to committee as we at Cherwell are fortunate to have a dedicated, professional and extremely competent planning department who are sympathetic to communities and the environment and thus only a very small proportion of applications are brought before the committee.

Planning Officers are also willing to attend Parish Council meetings, to answer residents' questions, and we were pleased to welcome Alex Keen to our Annual Parish Meeting to give a brief overview of the planning system and how and why decisions are made. I hope residents and councillors found it informative and worthwhile, when Alex kindly visited Barford Parish Council last year it was the best attended council meeting they'd ever had, so we are extremely grateful for his time and commitment to our community.

We have had our fair share of planning related issues within the ward which I'm pleased to say have been resolved, sometimes following several months of negotiation, site visits, more site visits, more revisions but finally mutual agreement and approval has prevailed.

As I say we are very fortunate in Cherwell to have exemplary planning officers who care deeply about our communities, our environment and conservation.

Away from planning, my responsibilities have ranged from neighbour disputes, anti-social behaviour, clearing roadside hedges of litter, fly tipping (which is sadly on the rise), footpaths and their upkeep, regular emptying of dog bins and even the removal of a dead badger at Castle Grounds. Even though this is not something normally undertaken by CDC, they kindly stepped in to remove the unfortunate badger. Another example of how CDC are prepared to go beyond their duty to ensure Cherwell is one of the finest places to live in the UK.

I am also pleased to report that CDC's share of the Council Tax remains unchanged for a ninth consecutive year. Considering this has been achieved whilst we've been in a state of austerity and others around us have increased their share of the Council Tax, I'm extremely proud that CDC have not cut back on any of our frontline services despite the doom and gloom elsewhere. This has been achieved through 'joint working' with South Northants District Council and careful budgetary planning, another advantage of living within Cherwell and having such an efficient council. This may change in future due to the ongoing situation at Northants County Council; however CDC are exploring a similar joint working with OCC which will deliver the benefits and savings previously enjoyed with South Northants.

We have of course had our challenges such as the ongoing battle to maintain a fully functioning maternity unit at the Horton General Hospital. After a long-running campaign and some disappointments along the way I believe that now, thanks to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel, we are winning the battle.

The other major decision that CDC was faced with towards the latter part of 2017 was the future of Castle Quay and that of the proposed Castle Quay 2 development. This came about as the majority owner wanted to exit and sell their equity. CDC stepped in as it did not want the centre of Banbury to be controlled by either a third party or disinterested investor who see no reason to invest in the town. By acquiring both Castle Quay and Castle Quay 2, CDC can now shape the future of the centre of Banbury to create a worthwhile destination for the people of Cherwell and the many thousands of tourists who visit.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Parish Clerks and Members of Parish Councils who have been a great support to me over the past year and to all the residents of Deddington, Clifton, Hempton, the Barfords, North Aston and the remaining communities within our ward for continuing to place their trust in me to represent and to help them. I am extremely grateful and proud to represent you and despite the odd ear bashing now and again, I really do enjoy it, thank you.

*Bryn Williams*  
*1 June 2018*