

Parish Council report February 2019

My Concerns regarding Rural Crime and Anti-Social behaviour

As Rural Champion for Malvern Hills District Council I was proud to have been actively involved in the recent 'Protect Your Farm, Protect Yourself' event which shone a spotlight on issues affecting rural communities, and in particular our farming communities. Although the event itself was a tremendous success, what it hammered home to me is the fact our rural communities are living on the edge. Crime and anti-social behaviour are leaving our rural communities, Farming and businesses frustrated, undervalued, isolated and vulnerable, so at the last Full council meeting I asked the leader, what as a Council are, we doing to help to keep rural communities, Farming and businesses and our homes safe and make them feel safer? I have summarised his response

Leader's Response

"Our rural communities are an essential part of our district and its way of life and they deserve a better deal. That's why we're working hard to do more to help support them whilst also lobbying and encouraging our partners to put more of a focus on these issues.

We recently made a corporate commitment to work with partners to reduce the crimes most affecting our district, which includes noticeably our rural communities. We intend to do this through:

- Supporting communities to develop and maintain neighbourhood watch and rural watch schemes
- Delivering education and awareness campaigns, such as speed awareness, which we know is a particular issue on our rural roads, and
- Coordinating a series of community days of action to tackle issues such as fly-tipping which particularly affects our rural communities and property marking events.

We will also continue to lobby the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure that the needs of our rural communities are met through local policing. We are encouraged by his commitment to appoint 150 additional officers and will be making the case for an appropriate share of those to be allocated to address rural issues. We have also witnessed first hand the important role that the Business & Rural Crime Officers has in providing crime prevention advice to our rural communities in relation to security around property. The District Council is actively supporting West Mercia Police campaign, Rural Matters, to help reduce crime in rural areas.

Social isolation is an emerging health crisis. Loneliness can be as bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Again, that's why we have also made it a corporate priority to tackle social isolation through two additional commitments:

- Work with schools and partners to develop a series of events that address loneliness and social isolation
- Work with community transport providers and Worcestershire County Council to support local bus services and local transport needs.

As a council we need to ensure we are looking after residents across our district and that no-one feels left behind. We already do a lot for our rural communities but working together with our partners we can and will do more”

If any residents in my Ward have any ideas about where we should be focusing our efforts then I would be glad to receive them.

Council Tax

MHDC will increase Council Tax this year by £5.00 based on a Band D property. That is an increase of £5.00 for the year.

Residents should note that when they receive their Council Tax bill from MHDC, just 10% of the total amount is retained by MHDC. The remaining 90% goes to the County Council, West Mercia Police, Herefordshire & Worcestershire Fire Service and the precepts of Parish and Town Councils.

Rough Sleepers

The Rough Sleepers Forum on 27th February which was organised by MHDC was a great success and all agencies throughout the County, including Shelter, have agreed to work much more closely together. A task and Finish Group is to be set up to look at “entrenched rough sleepers” and the leader of MHDC has placed “Homelessness and Rough Sleeping” on the next agenda of the Worcestershire Leaders Board.

Route to the Hills

“Great Malvern Route to the Hills” has been shortlisted for an award at the “UK Visit Heritage Awards” in London on 26th March.

CLlr Barbara Williams

