

## From the Diary of the Dunsmore Ward Councillors

Cllr Howard Roberts (WCC & RBC), Cllr Peter Eccleson (RBC), Cllr Deepah Roberts (RBC)

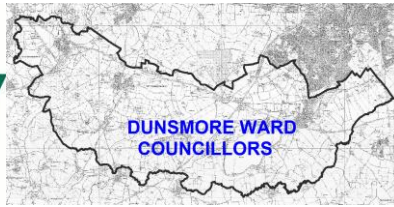
### MARCH 2021

#### Warwickshire CC

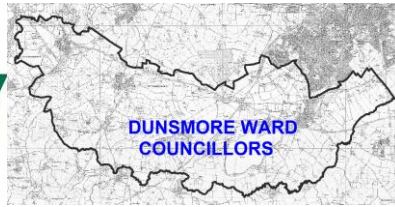
- Formulation of the County budget and the Corporate Plan have remained prominent this period.
- Local Travel Plan (LTP) - WCC is in the process of updating the current LTP which is a document that sets out the transport needs, challenges, priorities and objectives for the county. A reminder that this consultation closes on 18<sup>th</sup> March  
<https://ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/insights-service/ltp-themes/>
- Howard has also been involved with issues of flooding over the period. Meetings have taken place with those affected, the most recent being with representatives of Grandborough Parish Council and selected residents.
- Warwickshire's Country Parks Service is undertaking a survey of visitors and non-visitors to help with a whole service review in 2021. This is a public online survey which will enable WCC to take account of your views and they are encouraging individuals to participate as this will help WCC to explore future options for our parks and greenways. It will affect areas such as Ryton Pools etc. The Survey can be found on the WCC webpage and closes 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021.
- The parking scheme project at the top of Adkinson Avenue is still ongoing. The design is still in for re-approval before public consultation can commence .
- Howard, Peter and Deepah have been supporting the lobbying of WCC to extend the current opening hours of Hunters Lane re-cycling centre as a result of requests from the public in our Ward.

#### Rugby BC

- Warwickshire and Coventry have been praised by the Sec of State for Health Matt Hancock in Parliament as being outstanding and ahead of target for vaccinating the public against Covid19. This is good news for us all!
- RBC budget was approved at last week's Council meeting. This is our Covid-recovery budget prioritising climate change, economic recovery and health and wellbeing. All Political leaders agreed that the funding was 'tight' this year and the Council Leader, Seb Lowe expressed a view that past prudent financial management had ensured that RBC was in much better shape than some of the Councils in the area and thus able to better weather the storm. Despite indicating support for the budget as presented, all of the Liberal democrat members abstained from voting, however, the vote was carried.



- Peter, Howard and Deepah have written in support of a grant application by the new Baptist Church on Coventry Rd to Cemex for the provision of £20,000 to install disabled changing facilities under the 'Changing Places' initiative. The specially-designed facilities have both the space and equipment to allow disabled people, supported by family members of carers, to use toilets in safe and comfortable surroundings. This application by the Baptist Church which plans to rent its meeting facilities to groups etc fits with the initiative by RBC in the town centre of Rugby where we will be introducing a similar facility.
- Planning has featured prominently over the period. A controversial housing development at Stretton-on-Dunsmore was rejected by planners whilst the new access to the proposed holiday lodge development at Leam Valley Golf Centre was approved. This development had been the subject of rejection by DPC a few years ago based upon what was seen to be a dangerous entrance/exit arrangement. This has now been rectified and meets with approval from WCC Highways safety officers. Howard has requested a visit by the Planning Committee to Thurlaston Nursing Home where there has been another planning application for development. The visit will be a 'virtual' visit on Teams where planners will instruct a Planning Officer who will have video presence at the site.
- Fly Tipping continues to distress residents around the borough. Isolated country areas such as Stretton seem to be regularly targeted. Our strategy for dealing with fly tipping involves liaison with the police and environment agency to gather intelligence, working with parish councils and local residents again to gather intelligence, and then target areas with patrols from our Community Warden and recently the use of portable surveillance cameras. This is a similar strategy to those used by other rural authorities, but to be honest, with so much open space in the borough, and with so many different types of individual fly tipping (e.g. small domestic, contractor saving disposal costs and career criminals dumping on an industrial scale) it is very difficult to catch those involved. There have been a significant number of programmes about this on TV and so the fly tippers are better informed about our tactics and it is rare now for evidence to be left in the waste. This includes ways of defeating cameras. Our main success is clearing it quickly for the benefit the residents. We are deploying portable cameras but clearly their locations must remain confidential. We would ask our parish councils and residents to be vigilant and report any instances of fly tipping as they discover it. One Parish is considering a 'residents patrol' of regularly targeted areas. If we can obtain evidence, we will prosecute.  
Residents should be reminded to only use licenced waste disposal operatives.
- The issues surrounding general littering are also of concern. We have seen a huge increase in littering since lockdown which is a very worrying trend. Once again, it is easier to police this issue in town but more difficult in the villages.



- RBC is ramping up on its public space maintenance. You will note that Cawston Lane hedgerows have been cut and that the bottom end of the lane near Limetree Village is due to be closed for a day for resurfacing later this month.
- Warwickshire Police are looking to generate support from the local communities to gain information and intelligence around the potential production and distribution of cannabis. You may have seen from their Twitter and Facebook feeds the strategic media campaign about OP SPIGOT. Engagement with the community is paramount in identifying potential offenders and preventing the distribution of drugs which is becoming a major problem in the community. Please advise your local communities to be aware of the tell-tale signs of a potential cannabis production:

#### **Strong, sickly smells**

It may sound obvious, but most cannabis grows are discovered by passers-by or keen-nosed residents catching a whiff of the drug's familiar smell. A cannabis crop takes about three months to grow and in the final weeks, the plants stink. Crimestoppers has previously sent out cannabis-farm scratch-and-sniff cards to more than 200,000 homes in the UK to help home-owners tell if they live close to a budding farm.

#### **Windows are constantly covered**

Do your neighbours have the curtains drawn all day long? It might make it look like the house is unoccupied, but having windows blocked up with panelling or sheeting would suggest there's something they don't want you to see. This could be a sign that there are many budding plants inside soaking up bright artificial light.

#### **Excessive security**

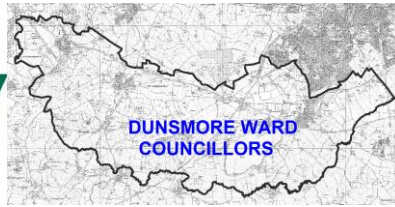
Growers live in constant fear that their home grown farms will be discovered by police, landlords or rival drug dealers. If there are padlocks on the gates, massive grilles and double and triple locks on the doors, that should raise eyebrows – especially if the street is relatively safe. On bigger, high value farms, portcullises, bars on the windows and even CCTV cameras can be evident.

#### **High levels of condensation**

Are the windows always misted up? From the inside, landlords might notice damp on the walls or peeling wallpaper, while from the outside a neighbour might spot condensation on the windows, even when it's not the depths of winter. The condensation may well be due to inside having been turned into a makeshift greenhouse. For the best plant growth, cannabis needs an atmosphere similar to a greenhouse, and this can cause a lot of condensation.

#### **Lots of visitors – and at unsociable hours**

Frequent and varied visitors to a property, often at unusual times, could mean you just have a popular neighbour with a big family. But if unfamiliar faces are turning up next door day and night, it might be a sign that there's something more sinister going on. One thing to watch for is lots of new faces coming knocking.



### **Rocketing electricity bills**

The lights, dehumidifiers, hydroponic systems and heaters take a lot of electricity. Many farms have been found where drugs gangs have hacked into the electricity wires before the meter to that individual house, and so bypassed having to pay for the electricity. If you are a landlord who gets a copy of the bill, has it dropped or gone up suddenly? If so, your neighbourhood growers could have tapped into your supply and are charging you to power their drug operation. You should contact your supplier and the police immediately.

### **What happens when it snows?**

Cannabis factories produce a lot of heat, which can cause tell-tale signs, especially in winter. When it snows, the roofs of cannabis farms can be obvious as the snow melts, meaning it is probably the only house on the street without a snow-covered roof.

### **Bright lights day and night**

It's strange for anyone to need unusually bright lights on 24 hours a day. Cannabis needs light to grow, so watch out for homes with bright lighting at all times of the day and night. Lights will often be on a timer switch, coming on in the middle of the night.

### **Constant buzz of ventilation**

If you can hear the constant noise of a fan, at all times of the day or night, chances are it could be acting as ventilation for the cannabis grow.

More information is available on the Warwickshire Police website.

There have previously been reports of cannabis growing in a number of villages in our ward and evidence of 'spent plants' found as part of fly tipping waste in certain areas.

### **Keep safe**

