

Burford Ward District Councillor – Annual Report – May 2023

Thank you for electing me a year ago. It has been a very interesting year, up a steep learning curve, helped by Derek Cotterill and a very friendly and supportive set of fellow councillors.

The West Oxfordshire Alliance of Lib Dems, Labour and Green parties has worked well and constructively, and will continue with the same 9-strong Executive member team into the coming year.

My main committee workload has been attendance of the Uplands Planning Sub-Committee where we have considered around 40 applications brought to committee as major planning applications or where the planning officers' recommendations were at odds with the relevant town or parish council view. The two planning sub-committees also met twice as a combined Development Committee to consider major cross-District planning issues and the Mullin project application. It will also be the body that decides on WODC's consultation response on the Botley West solar farm application.

I have also been a member of two scrutiny committees – Finance & Management and Climate & Environment. I have to say that I have found them rather less influential than I would have expected, but this is perhaps because the new chairs and members have been finding their feet. My membership of these committees will continue.

My door (and email) are open to anyone wanting help with a District problem. During the year I have been (or still am) dealing with around 50 separate planning, licensing, housing or waste related queries and issues. It is easier for me to gain access to officers, than the general public, but not always! At least it is easier for me to demand a response!

I continue to work on the Ward issues that appear never to be resolved:

- Cole's Field: Helping to strengthen the case against, in anticipation of another appeal
- Burford bridge: Supporting Burford and Fulbrook in their attempts to improve pedestrian safety on the bridge over the Windrush
- Car parking: Working with BTC on expanding the Guildenford car park and making it more flood resilient
- HGVs: responding to the stakeholder consultation aspect of OCC's study into area HGV restrictions, with the first report expected imminently.

At a District level, I am working with the Executive member responsible (Lidia Arciszewska) on parking issues which will include EV charging points, and will engage in the development of the local plan which will be drafted this year. I will also take an active interest in the District response to the detailed plans for Botley West Solar Farm and the various planning and council tax initiatives that we hope will be made available when the Levelling up and Communities Bill becomes law.

Hugo Ashton

Councillor for Burford Ward, comprising Burford, Fulbrook and Taynton