

Mayor's Annual report

Celebration

On 5th June Burford held the Platinum Jubilee Street Party in Priory Lane, supported by Matthew Freud, who was kind enough to open the lawn of the Priory and provide a funfair provided free for visitors.

Planning

The refusal of the application for 144 dwellings to be built on Coles Field made in early 2022 was appealed by the applicant, and the hearing was held for 8 days late June 2022. The inspector refused the appeal on a number of grounds, but within weeks the developer put in another application, this time for 70 dwellings, designed to mitigate the objections made by the inspector. This was heard in February and refused by WODC planning. The developer has 6 months in which to appeal if they wish.

Recreation

Cotswold Gate is now almost complete, and the play area has now been opened. The council are in the process of taking this over for the benefit of the community and visitors. In addition, a team led by Cllr Jo Rushton has been working on a plan to replace the aged play area on the recreation ground. They have consulted the community, especially the children and teenagers, to see what they would like. We are hopeful the replacement can be made in the coming year and are now fundraising for the finance.

HGVs

The HGV saga has not changed with OCC working at snail's pace on a countywide plan to include the A361. We continue to press for a reduction in HGV traffic through the town. We have at least got agreement and funding for a weight limit on all minor roads in Burford of 7.5 tonnes, and a new 40mph speed limit on Witney Street from the footpath by the river to the existing town 20mph limit, which should come into effect later this year.

A Challenge

In early September a group of travellers took over Westfield on a Friday afternoon. After a frantic weekend of research and help from other parish clerks in Oxfordshire who had experience of a similar problem, we managed to employ Bailiffs at quite a high cost to the council and evict them on the Monday morning. In the following 2 days, councillors and volunteers cleared up the shocking mess they left behind. From that experience, we now know how to handle any similar incident, and have installed security posts on the three gates from the road onto the recreation ground and Westfield as added protection.

Burford Bridge safety

Burford Bridge was damaged in June by a van demolishing a few metres of the parapet. There were already concerns for the safety of pedestrians on the bridge as there is no pavement, just a white line, and a proposal had been made to use bollards to keep traffic from running over the marked area for pedestrians, but this was rejected by Historic England, as the bridge is grade 2* listed. Following a pedestrian's minor injury caused by a vehicle on the bridge, OCC are now forming a design team to find a better solution. There is still no date for the repair of the bridge at writing.

More road safety

We are hopeful that we can replace the dangerous halfway uncontrolled crossing on The Hill near the path to the recreation ground with a full Zebra crossing to make it much safer. Funding is the problem, but we will work on that.

And finally

My sincere thanks to Maggie Andrews, our Town Clerk, John Yeatman, our responsible Financial officer, and David Buckland, our Lengthsman for their continued service to the town and the council, keeping everything running smoothly, and my thanks too to my fellow councillors who give their time, knowledge, experience and expertise to serve the town.

Peter Higgs.