

Corvedale Division
Annual Report to Parishes 2021/22
Shropshire Unitary Councillor
Cecilia Motley

It is a relief to be finally emerging from the Covid pandemic which has had such a disruptive effect on so many in our community over the last two years. Let us hope we can all withstand any future outbreaks and I hope everyone who is eligible is taking up the offer of another booster jab.

It has really been a strange year; first covid and then the horrific events in Ukraine, together with unexpected fuel cost increases and climbing inflation. Shropshire Council is working hard to roll out the Government's Council Tax rebate programme of £150 to eligible households with approximately £10m rebated across 65,000 households throughout the county.

The Council has been supporting the Homes for Ukraine programme and we have set up a 'one stop shop' web page: [Homes for Ukraine|Shropshire](#). To date 434 Ukrainian individuals are due to come to Shropshire with 74 individuals having already arrived. Our housing officers have been working to organise payments, DBS checks, property checks and safeguarding checks as well as seeking school places and GP practices through the CCG. Corvedale residents and parishes are opening their homes to Ukrainian guests as well. A hub to welcome Ukrainian nationals has been set up in Shrewsbury and Ludlow is also working to set up a similar reception centre.

We haven't had much luck with Government funding over the year. The local government financial settlement was disappointing as, having promised a three-year funding programme it reverted to a one year rollover budget. The settlement still failed to recognise the huge burden that is placed on large rural authorities like ours by the demands of social care. Over the period of the covid pandemic the number of children requiring our care has increased to over 600. Despite the government's introduction in April of the National Insurance surcharge to pay for health and social care we know that very little of the funding raised will be heading into local authority social care services. Once again this puts our finances under serious strain.

The first two rounds of the Levelling Up Fund did not help Shropshire either. We put in bids (strongly supported by our MPs) for three excellent projects, including one in Craven Arms. All of them were rejected. We then applied for the big public transport fund, the Bus Strategy Improvement Plan. We believed we had put in an excellent and imaginative application to enable us to run a truly county-wide public transport service and - along with all our neighbouring rural authority areas – were once again rejected. Since then together with our Passenger Transport manager I had the opportunity of meeting the Transport Minister to explain our plans to her and she has strongly encouraged us to reapply in the next funding round which comes in July. Hopefully we will be third time lucky.

Another Government initiative which is likely to affect us is County Deals, whereby local authorities are encouraged to work closely together and potentially elect a mayor or governor to represent them, as in the city regions. We are unsure of the benefits of this in Shropshire as we are such a large county already, but we will certainly look at options for how to do this at maximum benefit to the county.

Closer to home one of my portfolio responsibilities is the Community Governance Review, involving the Town and Parish Councils reviewing their boundaries and considering the case either for merging with neighbouring parish councils or for straightening out anomalies in some of the boundaries. The other is a more official review by the Local Government Boundary Commission, asking us to make recommendations for changes to the Council's Divisional Boundaries. The timing on this is strictly controlled – we must start the review process in October 2022 to be completed and signed off by Parliament in 2023. No pressure there then! It means that we will have to stop work on the Governance Review to concentrate on the divisional boundaries but by then we should have a good idea of where the areas of difficulty lie. Nevertheless, it will take a lot of time in the ensuing months. I am really grateful to all the Corvedale parishes for looking very closely at this and coming up with some constructive suggestions for their own boundaries.

Corvedale parishes have been working hard on plans for traffic calming measures over the last year including getting VAS signs set up and considering particular calming measures to slow traffic speeds on our very busy B roads, which are so often used as diversionary routes when the A49 is under repair/resurfacing etc. The Cabinet is meeting with the Police and Crime

Commissioner and the new Chief Constable later in May and I will take the opportunity to press the case for funding for traffic calming measures for the parishes since this is such a widespread problem.

On the subject of highways, I hope you have seen improvements in the work to reduce the pothole problem in the county. We now have a full complement of local traffic engineers and a new way of reporting problems – Fix My Street – is being rolled out which is a far speedier and more responsive tool than the My Shropshire app which was extremely slow. There is also more resource going into sorting out the many clogged and damaged road drains which cause localised flooding and damage to the roads and lanes.

Once again this year the Corvedale has done a great job in mitigating flooding through the Flood Action Groups and I am delighted to have been asked to act as the flood champion for the south of Shropshire. I have since recruited Dan Thomas, Member for Much Wenlock as another champion for the south east of the county.

Finally, the new recycling wheelie bin with a purple top is being rolled out now in the south of the county. If you haven't already applied, there is still time to do so on the Council website. This bin will take all the bottles, plastic, tins etc which currently go into the recycling boxes. The blue bag will still take newspapers and cardboard. You don't have to return your old recycling boxes. I'm going to use mine to grow tomatoes...

As ever, please don't hesitate to let me know if you have a problem with the Council services that I cazzn help with.

Cllr Cecilia Motley

Corvedale Division Councillor, Shropshire Council

Portfolio Holder Communities, Place, Culture Leisure Tourism & Transport

May 2022

