

## **Report from Cllr Bernice Froud for W(E)RS AGM**

**11 March 2024**

It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to serve the residents of Woodcote & Langley Vale for another year.

Highlights have been my appointment as Vice Chair to the Community & Wellbeing Committee, a role I hope to continue in during the next municipal year and being part of the very challenging process of steering the council, (along with all other Members) in their preparation of the still emerging Local Plan. I have learnt much in these roles and will continue to listen to residents' views in order that I can input into the decision-making process in a way that ensures that local democracy remains high on agendas. That said, I along with my fellow Ward councillors do have to take heed of national law and policy but that does not mean that I agree with all of it!

### **Community & Wellbeing Committee**

The Committee continues to work hard to support our most vulnerable residents alongside their general responsibilities towards all residents. I am pleased to say that we are managing to continue to support voluntary organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Age UK, The Sunnybank Trust, Central Surrey Voluntary Services and RELATE. These organisations have a very good understanding of our residents and the help they give means that in many cases the council are not asked to step in to unravel complex problems further down the line, as those in need have received appropriate advice at the beginning of a problem.

The Committee are being updated regularly about the work of the team at Surrey County Council responsible for developing a Suicide Prevention Strategy; that work is gathering pace with the council adopting the same practise as Surrey so that we are all on the same page in managing our approaches to this tragic dilemma that affects too many families.

A big achievement at the Council in the past few months has been the work of the Arts, Heritage & Culture Officer. We have seen several successful exhibitions launched around the Borough and much partnership working with local schools and arts establishments such as NESOT and the UCA. The aims of the Arts, Heritage and Culture Strategy are advancing a pace and I have been pleased to see residents of all ages attend or contribute to these inclusive and

accessible exhibitions. There is much more to come and those interested can look at the strategy on the council's website.

### **Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation (TA)**

In my role as Vice-Chair of C&W, I, along with the Chair, have continued to press officers to investigate empty properties in the Borough and plan how they may be brought back into service. The work on this is progressing and officers are doing much to try to make this happen. Two new members of staff have been recruited to what is a very small team and this should make a big difference in work streams and timescales to achieve outcomes. The TA budget is still too high and this is acknowledged by all Members as we work together to try to solve our homelessness problem.

### **Communication with Residents**

Much of the concerns are to do with the responsibilities of Surrey County Council and this can be frustrating for residents. Concerns to do with adult social care, schools (and bus passes), highways and streetlighting, the dreaded potholes and yellow lines are all under the remit of SCC and I thank you all for your patience when I must refer these concerns on to others to resolve.

I thank every resident that has contacted me over the past year and encourage all to do the same if there is anything council-related I can assist you with.

Cllr Bernice Froud

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