

# District Councillor's Report – April 2021

## Batcombe

I see the playground will be closed soon for installation work and must celebrate this great achievement by the people of Batcombe, the volunteers who led the charge and the Parish Council. I have added my concerns to the mighty number of residents who have engaged with the application at Valley view irrespective of the outcome, this demonstrates that residents care deeply about their Parish, and I thank all those responding for their involvement.

If anyone feels that they have made a response that they cannot see recorded on the application, please let me know by email to :[cldr.gay@mendip.gov.uk](mailto:cldr.gay@mendip.gov.uk)

I also note on the Agenda a question relating to the Parish Council advice to residents about applications. My understanding is that the applications are mentioned on the Agenda for the meeting where they will be considered by the Parish Council, and that is sufficient notice for all residents. However, I would also suggest that people register with the Mendip planning portal and then they can set up an email alert for nearby applications: I attach a pdf that shows how this can be set up.

## Council Matters

Purdah. Although County elections have been delayed due to Unitary discussions, the Police and Crime Commissioner role election will be proceeding so all Councils are in Purdah, any concerns should be discussed with the Monitoring Officer at Mendip DC.

The Government have sent a statement saying they were not allocating any Parliamentary time to renew the emergency powers allowing virtual meetings of Councils, so face to face meetings are expected after 7 May, though I understand social distancing will have to be maintained. A consultation will be made to see if Councils wish to retain the ability to hold virtual meetings if they choose. The Local Government Association is making a representation on behalf of its members asking the Government to re-think this: some councils feel they have had a greater public participation via virtual meetings, since people find them more convenient.

Mendip DC will be bringing forward its Annual meeting to the 26th April so that it can be done within the time period where virtual meetings are allowed. Likewise, Batcombe PC could make a decision to bring forward its annual meeting and annual parish meeting to hold them virtually if they so choose.

There are also councils who are active in trying to form groups for the purpose of acting in concert on services after the Unitary decision is made. Frome TC and the Parish of St Cuthbert Out (surrounding countryside around Wells) are two examples looking to band councils together. My own view is that these are very early days, since the decision and details on how things will work probably won't be known for a while. In the interim one can listen to what is suggested without commitment. It's very important that the individual

voice of Batcombe Parish Council isn't lost within some larger concern: the agenda of five hundred local voters being outfaced by thousands in bigger areas.

This matter is noted in the PA Consulting analysis of the bids, which states

*'The expert report says the 63% reduction in the number of councillors (from 269 to 100) would leave them with significantly larger footprints compared with now, creating higher workloads and making it more difficult for the voices of local communities to be heard. The report says this is likely to result in the nuance and detail of local issues being aggregated upwards and lost (especially where rural areas are included with a market town in a councillor's remit, for instance).'*

## **My work at Mendip**

I am corresponding with Mickey Green, CEO of Somerset Waste Partnership and neighbourhood services on the subject of prevention of fly-tipping; have been attending Challenge Board meetings at Bristol Water on behalf of MDC. I continue to work with Finance on the provision of better information for residents and Audit requirements. I am working with many residents and councils on particular issues.

## **Business**

Mendip are continuing to administer Government grants, and businesses should keep a careful eye on the MDC Business Grant page. There is also a business service which provides free training and advice

<https://www.heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk/> or ring [0345 604 7047](tel:03456047047). Unlike many agencies currently, they picked up their phone straight away (always a plus point). If there is any business in Postlebury that is struggling and needs Council help, I would welcome their email at [cllr.gay@mendip.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.gay@mendip.gov.uk)

## **A final suggestion**

It's great to see the bees around and providing food for pollinators is a positive action we can all take. Please read this article which shows how we can all contribute by doing nothing! At the right time....

[ps://www.gardensillustrated.com/feature/lawn-mowing-when-flowers-may/](https://www.gardensillustrated.com/feature/lawn-mowing-when-flowers-may/)

Kind regards  
Michael

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