

AYMESTREY PC WARD COUNCILLOR REPORT FEB 2020

I am sorry I am unable to attend tonight's meeting but it does mean it will be over sooner!

Once again, the flooding, this time caused by Storm Dennis has badly affected many parts of Mortimer ward and was actually worse than previous storms with more homes being subjected to flood water. Corner House has once again been affected and I have been in regular contact with the owner. I have been advised by the Environment Agency to possibly expect more flooding this week-end due to high levels of rainfall in Wales this week. I have warned all those vulnerable residents I have contact details for about preparing for this.

There will be a meeting open to all parish councillors at Aymestrey on the 4th March at 6.45 pm to update councillors on work done to date, work planned and measures that parish councils and residents can do to make their parishes and properties more resilient. I am also hoping that parishes will consider setting up a Flood Group. One has been set up in Walford and Buckton which I believe also includes residents of South Leintwardine. I have been in touch with Bodenham Flood Group who would be happy to send someone to talk to parish councils about what this entails. There is money available to support Flood Groups/Flood Wardens.

I am meeting with Paul Shipton, Head of Balfour Beatty on the 5th March to discuss the Annual Maintenance Plan, I have a feeling as he has asked to meet with me, that none of the roads I originally requested for resurfacing or surface dressing have been included in this year's plan. I did in fact attend a Balfour Beatty quarterly update briefing for councillors on the 29th Jan and we were advised that following the flooding they had 500 Cat 1 defects (risk to safety) and 4,500 Cat 2 defects. All work being carried out by BB was re-active and they had employed extra gangs and were working week-ends. In order to cope with the backlog most C & U roads were being temporarily filled, which is probably the right solution due to how wet the roads still are however it is was not possible to say when a permanent fill would take place. I would suggest that since that briefing and the arrival of Storm Dennis that the situation is worse.

The Council budget was set on Friday 14th Feb and I seconded an amendment to spend an extra £2 million capital money on resurfacing and surface dressing C & U roads across the County, this amendment did win the vote by just 1. I have now drawn up an amended list of about 6 roads in Mortimer ward which are in a very bad state. One of those on the list is in Yatton.

The gully jetting programme has been suspended in order to focus on priority sites and there were 200 gully jetting backlog I am sure that is greater now. The water table in many areas is still very high, ditches are full and the water is coming up through the road. Following the flooding, all road bridges are being inspected.

Just to give you an idea of the dire situation, according to the DfT it would require an investment of £8 million per year to be spent on our roads just to stand still and BBs budget for 2020/21 is £1.7 million. £2.2 million on bridges and their budget is £700,000. Their high priority backlog of work amounts to £15.9 million so you can see the huge challenge they have. There are 300 drainage schemes on hold awaiting funding.

Balfour Beatty's total revenue spend for 2020/21 is £6.55 million and capital £12 million, this will now increase to £14 million and they have applied for various grant funding for capital works. On top of this there will be some S106 money from some developments in the County.

We have one Velocoraptor we own which will work on potholes for 26 weeks of the year and one leased for 12 weeks. To add to the problems the heavy and then standing water is, when it subsides, revealing the break-up of many roads included the A4110 into Leintwardine.

We are expecting in the March budget for the government to allocate more funding the local authorities and I will push for this to be spent on roads. We are also hoping this time that we will benefit from some extra flood money as Herefordshire was one of the worst hit areas. We missed out last time.

Following on from your decision to work on Climate Change projects in the parish, Leintwardine, Wigmore and Border Group have also supported this. Leintwardine have suggested that we consider a ward-wide discussion on this as each parish to some extent impacts upon another and I have agreed to arrange a meeting in April/May for all Mortimer Ward parish councils to discuss this with Council officers. **Would you be happy to support this initiative?**