

The past year has seen the Council continue to hold all its meetings by Zoom and whilst this is convenient in terms of saving time and travel, I do feel that to some degree it does restrict effective representation. Contact with officers has been particularly difficult but fortunately, the return to working at the offices is soon to start, so this should improve.

The period of lockdowns has been accompanied by a higher workload of planning enforcement, from which Shrawley has not been immune. It is a concern that the system too easily accommodates those who do not comply with planning rules and conditions and I will continue to pressure officers to take action where appropriate.

The SWDP revision unhappily is not progressing with the same level of acclaim as it has been held up by the COVID pandemic. As a result developers are attempting to argue that the 5 year land supply is insufficient and seeking further speculative development. In spite of a recent appeal decision, the Districts still consider that the SWDP is sufficiently robust to be the determining factor as to whether developments should be permitted.

Much government grant support has been distributed by the Council over the past twelve months. In addition £0.5m has been set aside by MHDC to support recovery in the District. The precise use of this money is being worked on but there are suggestions that some of it should be used so that the Council can act as the named body for community gigabit broadband schemes. In due course, I will be asking for details of the actual expenditure of the fund and evidence that the spending has produced benefits for the whole of our District.

Pam Cumming