



Cyngor Cymunedol Rhiwabon Ruabon Community Council

Chair's Report – February 2021

Introduction

I hope that all of you and your families are well and managing to cope in these strange times. For those of you lucky enough to have shared a small break with family this Christmas, I hope it was a good one. However, many of us are again having to be apart from our loved ones. As a diverse community we are always there to support one another. I ask that you look out for each other and spare a thought and offer a hand of kindness to those who have lost so much this year.

This year has been a year like no other, but nonetheless, it has been an interesting and eventful year for Ruabon Community Council. Obviously, we have been very busy with the challenges raised by Covid-19. The full lockdown meant that the Village Hall had to be closed; suddenly, there were no classes, meetings or parties. However, we were one of the first Community Councils to move our Public Meetings online. I think we haven't missed one scheduled meeting during lockdown. I should like to thank our Clerk who got us organised on Zoom, spread the word on social media, and reached out to digitally excluded residents with our posters on the noticeboard. It is a bit different, it is a bit difficult, but it has also been great to continue to meet as a community.

Finding opportunities

Council logo and website

This year we saw the creation of our new Ruabon Community Council logo and Website. I'm sure you will agree they look fresh and pleasing to the eye. This opportunity prompted us to explore how to improve and protect our communications for the future and how to reach our residents getting our messages, information, activities and news out there. With an up-to-date webpage, and input into Ruabon Community Council and Neighbourhood Watch Facebook pages, we hope to keep our residents informed, inspired and connected.



Village Hall improvement

We took the opportunity of the Hall being empty to decorate it throughout and deep cleaned the kitchen. Many thanks to one Councillor and her daughter, who decorated the Hall, and to another Councillor and her family, who restored the kitchen to its best.

As lockdown continued, work started to plan for reopening the Hall in a Covid-secure way. Councillors and Clerk prepared the Hall to comply with the rapidly





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changing regulations and guidance, with a one-way system to minimise contact, guidelines for hirers and users of the hall to ensure their safety, and provision of anti-viral hand gel for regular use. As a result, we were able to reopen the Hall for a number of regular classes and private groups starting in September. Plans are in place for larger, Covid-secure events when they become possible.

Christmas lights

In 2020 we had to plan for a very different Christmas. Notably, in 2019 the Community Council had budgeted to replace some of the older Christmas lighting column displays and to extend them towards the roundabout. In 2021, the Council hopes to consider extending column displays towards Gardden View.



A Christmas tree was planted at the Village Hall a year ago, but until it grows taller, there will always be a Christmas Tree at the hall.

A small group of local children sang Christmas carols in front of the Hall which was filmed and made available on the RCC and Friends of Ruabon Facebook pages and RCC website.

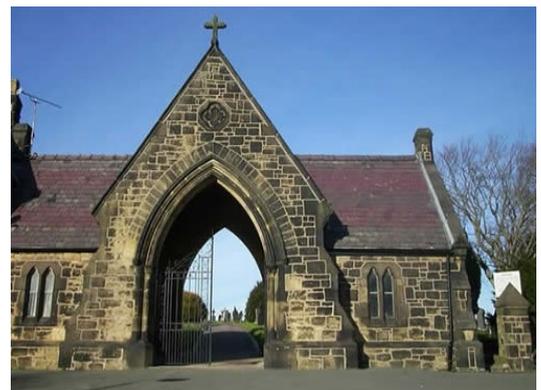
Due to Covid, the village Frost Fayre had to be adapted. Local community group, Friends of Ruabon (FoR), ran a virtual Frost Fayre. In addition, FoR, supported by the Council, enabled Santa and his helpers to conduct a non-stop Santa sleigh tour of the local villages.

Resident/Council surgeries

Surgeries were established to enable residents to voice and discuss their concerns with councillors and Clerk. These were held as a mixture of virtual and physical surgeries (in the Village Hall). A suggestion box for residents was also placed on the Council website.

Cemetery digitisation

One of the highlights for me has been the investment the Council made; to digitalise Ruabon cemetery. There are a number of reasons to digitise our burial records, from vastly speeding up satisfying enquiries by making them searchable, to preserving the records' precious information in digital form in case the worst should happen. The digitised burial records are available to the public as an online resource.





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Immense thanks to the Councillors and Clerk for taking on this significant planning project and the progress they have made so far. This will add to an already beautifully kept and efficiently run cemetery, thanks to RCC's two groundsmen.

Community health & wellbeing

Community Agent

Loneliness and isolation are some of the key social causes of poor health and wellbeing, which have been shown to have a marked impact on mental and physical health. Ruabon Community Council is fortunate to have the services of their experienced Community Agent until late summer 2021. Agents provide an overview of services available in the borough and offer help to access them. They help in myriads of other ways too, thus winning the trust of those they help and enabling particularly older people to stay independent for longer. The Community Agent is known to many in our community. His role is to support people aged over 50 years who need support, advice or simply someone to talk to. He has been helping a number of older people feel more independent, secure, and cared for.

Friends of Ruabon

The Welsh Government Coronavirus Resilience Fund allocated £2000 to the village to help with cream teas, making activity bags, the cost of PPE, cleaning products and a fogging machine for the hall. FoR have been busy picking up prescriptions and shopping for residents.

FoR organised litter picking kits for individuals and families, so we could continue helping to keep our village tidy. I would like to thank FoR, its volunteers and the residents of Ruabon for their help and support throughout 2020.

Council matters

- a) Lamppost event poppies were displayed throughout the main road through our village leading up to Armistice Day. Each year we look to replace those damaged or lost to increase the display, this year was no exception. A Councillor, on behalf of Ruabon Community Council also laid a wreath at a socially-distanced formal service at St Mary's Church;
- b) Grants were allocated to community groups in the village;
- c) The Community Agent in position (covering maternity leave) for the over 50s, continues to work successfully with residents and groups;
- d) The Clerk directly helped a number of villagers with issues involving Wrexham CBC, and worked closely with the Community Agent;
- e) An exciting project from FoR is almost complete; Encouraging the Gateway to our Heritage Trail.



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- f) A donation from the Coronavirus Resilience Fund was given to Maggie's Army; knitting ear protectors for masks.
- g) Unsurprisingly, due to the pandemic 2020-2021 the Council has financial pressures. Thanks to judicious saving, our bank balance can sustain us for a while, but the money reserved for capital projects, such as the redevelopment of the MUGA, is being eroded. We have therefore made the difficult decision to increase Ruabon's precept from £80,000 to £85,000. **This is an increase of £2.77 per household per year.**

Future opportunities

Childcare facility

In 2018, Wrexham CBC made a bid to the Welsh Government's Childcare Offer Capital Grant Funding Programme for monies to provide childcare facilities within the Wrexham area. Ruabon Community Council was part of this bid and proposed the building of a new purpose built, environmentally friendly childcare facility in our village. The Council worked hard to get the almost £500,000 grant and, supported by Wrexham CBC, has been trying to get through the significant challenges to implement it. A Covid-safe public consultation regarding the facility will be offered in due course.

Sporting facilities

With the creation of a football club in Ruabon after many years without one, the Council has been working hard to accommodate their requirements, whilst maintaining a balance for other community groups, including ongoing support for the bowling club.

I should like to record my appreciation of my fellow Councillors and our members of staff for their help and support throughout 2020/2021. I would also like to offer a huge thank you to all those residents who have helped to look out for their families, friends and neighbours. So 'Buy Local!', please stay safe, be kind, care lots and may you find occasion to laugh heartily and give thanks for your lot.

Councillor Supriya Kapas

Chair, Ruabon Community Council