

# ANNUAL REPORT

MAY 2014 - MAY 2015



Councillor James Pritchard

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**ELECTORAL WARD:** Morgan Jones

**PARTY:** Labour

**PROFILE:** Equalities Champion

## COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Council  
Education for Life Scrutiny Committee

## SUBCOMMITTEES/WORKING PARTIES/PANELS

Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee  
Caerphilly Town Centre Management Group  
Scrutiny Leadership Group

## OUTSIDE BODIES AND ASSOCIATIONS

Young Persons Forum  
GAVO  
Equalities Champion

## SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

Plasyfelin Primary

## ATTENDANCE

From May 2014 to May 2015 my attendance at Council meetings was as follows:

| <u>Meeting</u> | <u>No. Attended</u> | <u>No. Held</u> |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|

|   |    |    |
|---|----|----|
| Caerphilly Town Centre Management Group | 2  | 3  |
| Community Council Liaison Group         | 1  | 2  |
| Council                                 | 11 | 12 |
| Education for Life                      | 7  | 8  |
| Scrutiny Leadership Group               | 2  | 7  |

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

I undertook the following training and development seminars and courses: -

Scrutiny Leadership Group (Annual)  
 Education for Life Scrutiny Committee (Annual)  
 Caerphilly Collection Services (Seminar)  
 20mph Zones (Seminar)  
 Webcasting  
 Performance Objectives

## **CONSTITUENCY ACTIVITY**

### **Crime / ASB / Community Safety**

An important issue raised to me is crime and ASB. Over the last year I've tried to tackle this issue by working with local residents to promote positive initiatives. In December 2014 I held a residents meeting in Hazel Grove with Community Safety Officers and residents. Practical steps have been taken to address fears of crime and signs have been put up warning people of a police presence in the area. In January 2015 I consulted residents living in Celyn Avenue & Celyn Grove about installing a barrier in a nearby lane to reduce illegal motorcycle activity. Twenty votes were cast in favour with only one against. The barrier went in a short time after and there's been no illegal driving since. In March 2015 I met with residents and representatives from the Council's Housing Department and Community Safety to discuss vandalism in the area. Following that initial meeting I consulted residents living on Nantgarw Road and the Morgan Jones Flats on whether they would support CCTV being erected near Morgan Jones Flats. The Council also ran a consultation and there was widespread support for the proposal. CCTV is now in place here. Also in 2015 I continued to support a bollard being erected behind Mill Road to prevent illegal access from Celyn Avenue to Dol – Y – Felin Street. I'm pleased to say following a consultation, this will shortly be happening. The problem has failed to be addressed for many years but I'm pleased this will now be happening.

### **Old Caerphilly Library Victory**

In 2013 we launched a campaign to retain the old Caerphilly Library building for a future community benefit. In the last twelve months we received the news that local residents have been awarded the facility to operate a social enterprise on the site. This is fantastic news for the community and mirrors exactly what local residents have spoken to me about. "The Old Library" will be a community coffee shop and will hopefully be open this year. The facility will offer a range of community facilities such as a bring and borrow book service, free Wi – Fi, community rooms, soft play and employment on the Living Wage.

## **Membership of Caerphilly Town Council**

As a member of Caerphilly Town Council I regularly attended meetings the last year. I regularly raised issues affecting the community and on occasions asked on behalf of local residents for the town council to agree funding or part funding for some projects. Working with colleagues on the Town Council we reviewed and approved numerous applications to assist various local schemes, clubs and organisations in the area. Last year I strongly argued for the Town Council to actively consult local residents on the annual budget. I've been in constant contact with both the County Council and the Town Council Clerk about making this provision possibly via a questionnaire / survey. I'm hopeful we'll be in a position very soon to consult local people on the future of the budget. Over the last year I've valued my membership of the Town Council immensely and would encourage anybody who's interested in local decision making to come along to the meetings so see local democracy in action.

## **Improving the Local Environment**

Last year I continued to do what I could to improve the environment. I took part in two large clean ups in the ward. The first was in Gypsy Lane in between the Pontypandy and Park Avenue Estate. The lane had fallen victim to disrepair in recent years and I joined a community effort to help clean up Gypsy Lane in January 2015. A great team effort has vastly improved the lane and now we can be proud of the effort for only what turned out to be a few hours work. In March 2015 I took part in a clean up in aid of Comic Relief. The clean up concentrated on Mill Road, Pontygwindy Road, Nantgarw Road and Bedwas Road. A few hundred pounds was raised for charity and a great team effort saw the local environment improved.

## **Regular Surgeries**

Since becoming a Councillor in 2012 I made it a priority to hold a regular surgery. Since August 2012 I've held a twice – monthly surgery in the old Caerphilly Library building and shortly after the building closed I transferred to St Catherines Church. I feel it is important that I try to reach as many people as possible and not wait by the phone for residents to call me. Over the last twelve months I've attended 24 surgeries seeing an average of 1.5 people per surgery. Constituents have raised a number of important personal issues with me which I've addressed.

## **Door Knocking and Leaflet / Letters**

I regularly go around the doors to speak to people about the issues of the day. On average I knock on about 250 doors per month and this enables me to knock every door in the ward in a year. The big majority of the issues I take up come straight from door knocking and I've found there are local issues residents would like to raise face to face, rather than over the phone. Every enquiry I take up on behalf of a resident I send them a letter for their records. Through door – knocking alone I made hundreds of enquiries on behalf of residents primarily to the Council but also to a range of agencies including the Welsh Assembly Government, Arriva Trains Wales, Natural Resources Wales and Gwent Police.

## **20mph Policy**

I'm a strong believer in 20mph limits in residential areas. In February 2015 I polled residents living in the Park Avenue Estate whether they would be supportive in-principle to a reduction in the speed limit. A clear majority were in favour of this so I've adopted this as a policy to take forward. In April 2015 I attended a members seminar on 20mph zones / limits and outlined my full support. I'm hopeful in time this authority can act as a leader for 20mph. We need to send a clear message that 20mph in residential areas is enough.

## **Residents Association**

I continue to attend residents meetings of the Heol Trecastell Residents Association. Meetings are called to discuss local issues on the estate and we try and work together to improve problems that arise.

## **PACT meetings / Your Voice**

PACT meetings no longer exist in the Morgan Jones Ward, instead they've been replaced with 'Your Voice'. Unfortunately the first meeting clashed with a meeting of Caerphilly Town Council so I was unable to attend. I will endeavour to attend these important meetings over the next year to address community issues in the ward. Over the last twelve months I've kept in regular contact with Police Officers and PCSO's regularly passing on key information picked up from constituents.

## **Equalities Work**

I became the Council's Equalities Champion in February 2014 and since I've taken up my post I've been busy promoting the equalities agenda. Last year I met with Equalities Champions from across Wales and Leighton Andrews AM, Minister for Public Services, to discuss the White Paper, Reforming Local Government, Power to the People. I outlined the need to diversify local government to the Minister to refresh democracy. I'm enrolled on the Welsh Government's mentoring programme and I'm looking to mentor somebody within Caerphilly Borough from an underrepresented group to encourage a wider participation in local government. I attended meetings of the Caerphilly Access Group and the Council's Disability Equalities Group and I'm personally pleased that more buildings have been brought up to being DDA compliant. I support the Welsh Language and regularly attend the annual Ffilifest summer event founded by Menter Caerffili.

## **Keeping in touch with residents**

Last year I produced more newsletters than ever before. There always seems to be a local issue to tackle and getting the word out is vitally important. I always keep constituents up to date with my activities by offering a weekly update to all those residents who want one. I've maintained a facebook and twitter account providing regular updates about things going on locally. My Facebook and Twitter account has gained many more followers.

## **Membership of Plas – y – Felin School**

As governor on Plasyfelin Primary School I've been working closely with the Head Teacher and fellow governors. I've been particularly interested to work with the school on community – related activities and it was a privilege to work to try and achieve this.