Report to Tysoe Parish Council from Cllr Izzi Seccombe on behalf of Cllr Chris Williams

Over the last year we have all had our lives turned round. A full year ago we were about to go into lockdown for the first time in our lives. We have learned resilience that we never expected of ourselves and have rallied to help our communities and residents brilliantly.

Warwickshire County Council immediately enabled a central location for the purchasing and storage of food parcels, these were distributed to the District Councils and they organised distribution of these parcels to those vulnerable and socially isolating. This went on for the whole first lockdown. In recent lockdowns WCC have arranged for those in the same position to have priority statues in Supermarkets. Where that is not possible or available they will still arrange food parcels.

Libraries have stepped up to ensure that books are delivered to those alone and in needs through a network of volunteers. Providing important connections. Libraries have also provided education support to children out of school and fun sessions on line to engage with through out all lockdowns.

During the first lockdown our Waste sites were closed but these opened on a booking service which proved popular and is still in place. It ensures that when residents go to the Waste Site they will be managed without having to mix with larger crowds and also the staff on site are as safe as possible. It is worth noting that our own staff in very many settings have had significant amounts of COVID illness themselves and some have very sadly lost their lives.

The operation of WCC moved within one week to remote working – we were fortunate to have put in place a sifnificant transformation programme which was planning to move to more remote working in June and we were able to start early. Our staff have been fantastic and our productivity has even increased slightly with the sickness absence falling dramatically.

Throughout all this many services have remained fully operational - Social Care staff still provide support to those in need. Childrens Safeguarding – we have seen an increase in cases and now have more children in care than we have ever had. Fortunately we have also seen a great increase in people wishing to become Foster Parents. These young lives have been impacted for ever over this last year and we need to give them the best chance they can have.

We have provided unprecedented support to businesses with grants from Governments and also grants that we have been able to provide and add to. As we move into recovery this will be an area where a great amount of support will be provided.

We launched our Adapt and Diversify Grant for business last week and within 24 hours had had over a million applications. It is oversubscribed and we are now seeing if we can put more money toward it.

We are about to make the most significant support available. We are launching a Warwickshire Recovery Investment Fund (WRIF). This is a 5 year recovery fund which will be available on a loan basis with a repayment agreed, but it is not in order to make profit, but to get the social benefit of supporting businesses, helping new start ups ( of which there is enormous interest with a record number of Patents being logged) and jobs at a time when people are loosing them. The fund will be significantly large (£140million). It will allow us to help get more apprenticeships in place and young people into work. We hope to be able to encourage a recovery that looks at reducing carbon and has an eye to climate change. We will be looking at a few larger grants to bigger Businesses, but also smaller grants to Community and Enterprise – these may be small community groups and start ups.

It is our aim to ensure that our economy in Warwickshire recovers as quickly as possible and gives security back to our workforce. We went into COVID as one of the strongest economic areas in the Country and this was largely due to our priority over the last 8 years of building a strong and vibrant economy.

We turn now to Recovery; both of the Economy and how we support that as discussed, but on the recovery of our Organisation and Services. Will we need to look the same or different and what part of living with COVID will that now mean for the capacity as a Council. Warwickshire County Council is well ahead with this and we are undertaking work on ensuring that we continue to deliver the services people need and expect, efficiently. Nor must we forget how communities have stepped up to the plate and what those groups will want in the future to continue to help shape their communities.

We have delivered our Budget for Recovery based on the above. We have this year had to levy a Council Tax of 1.99% and an Adult Social Care precept of 1%.