

LINDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

17.07.19

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

1. Council Members

As I said to the new Tenbury Town Council meeting early last week, it was good to see so many new faces on the Council. I wished them, as I wish all of you, a very enjoyable and productive period representing the views of your local residents. As I wrote in a recent column in the Tenbury Advertiser, the community is very dependent on people coming forward to offer their time and expertise on civic matters. The contribution of councillors like ourselves is vital to see that the very best decisions are made concerning the provision of services in the area.

It is not widely acknowledged that people such as yourselves do not receive any remuneration, but you can be the subject of complaint when matters don't turn out the way some people might like. I am very aware of the selfless devotion to duty expressed by the service of councillors in all the 18 town and parish councils in my division, and I trust the service you all give is recognised by your communities.

2. County Council Affairs

There will be a full Council meeting tomorrow, and those who do not already know might be interested in watching it live through the webcast. I cannot promise that it will be rewarding, but it is a way in which the general public, anywhere in the world, can listen and watch what we are doing in your name.

There are six notices of motion, not all of which will get debated, but one pays tribute to the efforts of people like yourselves, working in Parish Councils for the benefit of the community. I hope there will be many supportive comments, in response to some unwise words of a Labour councillor, who appeared to discount your worth.

I will also be presenting a report on our minerals policy. You may see this as relevant, given the quarrying on Witley Hill and the historic open cast coal mining in Mamble. One overriding principle is that we will not allow District Council to permit building over areas where valuable minerals are to be found, even if there is no demand for them at present. Germany has fallen foul of this principle, and various villages and old churches are in the process of being demolished to liberate lignite found beneath them. This should never happen in this county.

In Cabinet last Thursday, we approved the development of Adult Social Care, a burgeoning area of concern and expenditure, and one where we are all keenly awaiting the much delayed publication of a new adult social care policy from central government. In recent years we have been dependent on one-off grants to cover the increases in costs and we would all appreciate a long term solution to the problem.

We will also heard the report on the results of the extensive consultation on the future of our libraries. For reasons that are not worth rehearsing, there was a prevailing feeling that some libraries were in danger of closing. This report to cabinet demonstrated that the required savings have been achieved without any such closures, as had always been the policy.

You may be interested in the future of Tenbury library. It is secure but will not be the site of the Post Office. We offered facilities but would need a rent, while I understand two other enterprises have offered accommodation for the Post Office rent free. Quite where the Post Office ends up is not clear to me at present, but we hope it will be resolved and open soon.

3. South Worcestershire Development Plan revisions

The SWDP covers the three southerly districts of the county and is undergoing a thorough revision to reflect expected increases in population numbers. This will require the provision of more houses in the county and the plan is intended to indicate the preferred areas for such new housing.

Villages in the Tenbury division have seen a lot of new building in the last few years and there are plans for more such estates. Lindridge residents may be aware of the controversy that surrounds such developments, when they appear to change the character of the village. A common complaint is that there are no jobs for new people in this rural area, but I have been keen to see the plan is not predicated on the minimising of distances to travel to work. Pursuing such principles, for whatever reasons, would lead to the impoverishment of rural areas.

At present, some 26% of county residents live in "rural areas", while only 13% of new building takes place in rural areas. Current plans seem to indicate that the latter balance of only 13% of build being in rural areas should continue to 2040. I am not sure that is sensible.

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