

LINDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

15th JANUARY 2014

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

1. BUDGET PROBLEMS

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Tomorrow, Thursday the 16th January the Full Council will, in all likelihood, approve the budget for the coming year. For the first time for several years, an increase in the County Council precept will be approved. Following extensive consultation through road shows around the county, the increase of 1.94% will be devoted to the children's department budget to help pay for the increasing number of children taken in to care.

This Friday sees the end of the consultation about the reduction or elimination of the £3million subsidy for 80 or so bus routes. This is only 20% of the total number of routes but could have a great effect on certain rural communities. The responses are being analysed as they come in and I would urge anyone who uses the bus services, under threat or not, to fill in the consultation on line or by post, so that decisions can be made with the best possible information.

In addition, there is consultation on the reduction of the supporting people budget that is set to be reduced from £15 million to £6 million. All of this money is spent on discretionary services that are not a statutory requirement of the Council. Nevertheless, the money is valuable to all who receive it and I would be grateful if you would take part in this consultation as well. It ends on the 21st January.

2. PLANNING MATTERS AND CLIFTON

You will probably be aware of the bizarre decisions of the Northern Area Development Management Committee concerning housing developments in Clifton. I was surprised and disappointed that Sir Anthony Winnington's application for Steps Farm was turned down, when the previous month the same committee approved the Hope Lane development. The former was strongly supported by the village, the latter was equally unpopular with the village, while the logic of approval to save the cost of an appeal applied to both sets of plans. You may also have noted that the Walshes Farm development in Abberley was approved at the same time, despite strong opposition from the Parish Council.

On one point I am clear. We need developments in villages to ensure the prosperity of rural communities, the maintenance of rural schools, shops and public houses. It is not a sensible argument to say that, because a school is full, no more houses should be built. Numbers can easily fall away (especially if there is a demographic shift to older retired people like myself) if there is a lack of affordable houses for young people who may have children.

Similarly, there is an argument that jobs will follow people, rather than the opposite that is often stated. As a commuter from Great Witley to the BBC for 20 years, I cannot criticise such a lifestyle. Equally, we see small rural businesses flourishing, despite the possible extra travel involved. It cannot be sensible to let planning be determined by minimising travel distances to work.

3. HIGHWAYS FUND

I note your continued concern about highways issues and drainage. I trust the problems at Frith Common are being overcome. With regard to overhanging hedges and blocked ditches, it is the responsibility of land owners to see that hedges do not overhang the highway and that ditches remain clear. Lengthsmen can obviously help where it is safe, but that does not shift

the legal responsibility. Meanwhile the County highways service will seek to pressurise delinquent land owners, where they fall down on their duty.

Despite having allocated most of my allowance from this fund, I would be keen to know of any small highway maintenance problems that could be eligible for this support.

4. ENERGY FROM WASTE

The final decision approving the Energy from Waste plant for Hartlebury should be taken at the Full Council meeting tomorrow Thursday, January 16th. I am entirely satisfied that this is the right decision for the two counties and it is distressing to see so much false and misleading information peddled in the press. There is no proven cost effective alternative. WCC is dedicated to reducing waste, to reusing it, to recycling it and then recovering energy from the residue. I would be very happy to bore any resident for hours with more detail if they wish to know it.

5. DEFIBRILLATOR FROM WMAS

I am very pleased to see that you have been offered a defib machine by WMAS. Elsewhere in my patch, these have been funded by local efforts, with a supplement from my Divisional Fund. I hope you have secured yours without too much difficulty.

6. TENBURY HIGH SCHOOL

It was announced last week that Tenbury High School has been placed in special measures, following an Ofsted inspection last October. The new Head Teacher and the Governors, of whom I am one, were very disappointed by this outcome, but are confident that with the new management team in place and several new teachers, the perceived weaknesses, especially in maths and English, will be remedied soon. Meanwhile, the Governors and the County Council are very keen to point out the caring ethos of the school will not change during this period of intense support. It is hoped that the school will leave special measures in the next few months and that it will still be a very satisfactory destination for children currently in Lindridge Primary School and other feeder primaries.

Cllr Ken Pollock,
14th January 2014

LINDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

15th JANUARY 2014

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