

LINDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

13th NOVEMBER 2013

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

1. FINANCE

The County is developing plans to save £30 next financial year and £25 million for the three years after that. Prominent savings will need to be made in bus subsidies – the nearest one affecting Lindridge and Eardiston is the 291 R&B service from Tenbury to Kidderminster. At present that is subsidised to the tune of £3.11 per passenger, even though there are 21,878 passengers per year. It is most likely that the frequency of the service would be affected, although we are just entering a consultation phase.

We are just starting a consultation on this plan to save £3million by eliminating these subsidies. The result of this consultation is unlikely to be the stopping of all these services, but rather some trimming of frequency and the like to make them commercial. It seems likely that the response will be similar to the 758 Tenbury to Worcester two years ago, where the loss of the Whitehall subsidy resulted in a decrease in services from 6 to 4 by Yarrantons. It should be remembered that 80% of all the County's bus services are profitable and receive no subsidy.

Please let me know of your response to this possible change and do urge as many people as possible to take part in the consultation, so that any changes can reflect the needs of the residents.

In adult social care, the intention is to try and build on the personalisation agenda where people choose to spend their money as they wish and encourage more people to take control of their care. This will probably mean more people being cared for in their own homes, which is preferable all round, if feasible.

At last Thursday's Cabinet meeting there were 10 contributions from the public about the changes planned under the Future Lives initiative. Many people made strong cases for maintaining their services and these will be taken into account in the consultation. It should be emphasised that all of these services for the disabled people subject to possible cuts are discretionary and not statutory and some other counties spend nothing at all on some of them.

Children's services are absorbing a lot of money, with an increase in the numbers of looked after children, which means an extra £2.5 million on their budget next year.

Services under increasing pressure will be positive activities for youth, arts and the countryside, while road maintenance is seen by the public as very important. A new contract is being signed soon and that is likely to result in the same standard of care for less money.

2. MINERALS

The County has developed, as is required, a minerals policy, whereby all potential mineral deposits are mapped and assessed. It can be viewed on the website, but these are none thought to be of any commercial significance in the immediate area and in consequence there should be no cause for anxiety that mineral workings will take place in the village.

3. USE OF THE WCC WEBSITE

I note that you put details of your meetings on the County website, although the agenda for this meeting has not found its way there yet. Some parishes find this a useful method and I

would be interested to hear of your response to the possibility of using it. Some parishes use the County website itself, rather than having their own.

I hope you will be able to add this report as an appendix to the minutes.

4. ACT LOCAL

The County council is anxious to promote the idea of localism and has prepared a website under the Act Local banner, to seek to encourage all sorts of alternative ways of delivering services. Some may be by private operators or social enterprises and some by volunteers. I would be very interested to hear of any feedback from those who have tried to use the site or who have looked at it as a result of this note.

5. DIVISIONAL FUND.

There is money left in the divisional fund, should any good cause spring to mind in your parish. In the financial stringency of the moment, there are plans to remove the councillors' discretionary highways money, worth about £5,000 per year. In fact, this year we have extra funds available, and I would be keen to know of any small highway maintenance problems that could be eligible for this support.

6. BROADBAND

I trust you are pleased with progress with the Broadband roll out. You will have noted that those parishes like Abberley and Ombersley who opted to go for DEFRA funding have been stymied, as Defra has decided to wait until it sees what services will be provided under the BT contract before handing out any money. It seems to me a gross betrayal and a very poor way of rewarding two years of local effort by the moving spirits in those villages.

Cllr Ken Pollock,
13th November 2013