

## LINDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

8<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017

### COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

- **County Affairs**

The full council passed the 2017/18 budget last month, including the increase to council tax by 0.94%. This was in addition to the 2% rise in tax to provide money for adult social care. Only a third of the total increase will actually go to the normal local services, while the rest seeks to cover the large demands of our ageing population.

The Labour group's amendments were defeated. They would have limited officers' salaries to £100,000, and cut the size of the Cabinet to seven from nine at present. Their proposal to eliminate the 0.94% increase in council tax would have cost £2,300,000. They also wanted to increase the budget for Children Centres by £1million, paid for by taking more fostering in house, and they would have balanced the budget by taking £2,145,000 from reserves.

The 2013 Group, made up of Liberal Democrats and Greens, proposed a further increase in Council Tax of 1%, to support council services, to make 3.94% in total. This was also defeated.

You may that we have had ministerial approval for Worcestershire Parkway station in Norton and contracts for that work have now been signed. Last Thursday, I was able to take part in a small ceremony of "sod-cutting" to mark the start of the work at Norton, just the other side of the M5 from Junction 7. The plan is to open the station in the winter of 2018/19. Yesterday afternoon, I was at Norton Juxta Primary School awarding a prize to the child who designed the best poster to go on the temporary fencing alongside the building site during construction.

A full business case for the new Carrington Bridge and causeway to Powick roundabout was submitted last month, and we are hopeful of a positive response by the summer. The plan there is to start work in two years' time and have the bridge and dual carriageway open in the spring of 2021.

After the disappointing Ofsted report into Children's Service that rated the county as inadequate, a comprehensive programme has been started to improve performance in all areas. Ofsted agreed the current leadership was good and heading in the right direction. We now need to demonstrate in the near future that the pace of improvement has accelerated and that all our children are being properly safeguarded.

The £12 million programme of highway repairs is underway under the Driving Home banner. The £6 million work on pavements is also progressing, largely in urban estates. In addition, £5 million has been allocated for small congestion hot spots, where relatively minor works may be expected to have a large benefit on relieving congestion.

In addition to the broadband stakeholders' board that I chair, that seeks to facilitate the extension of broadband as fully as possible, a new connectivity board is being established to seek better mobile connectivity across the county. This will aim to get better coverage from all the suppliers, applying pressure nationally and locally. This may include the adoption of 5G technology, and I am joining a small delegation visiting the University of Surrey tomorrow to see how their research in this area is progressing. We hope that Worcestershire will be a pilot for this latest development.

- **Tesco's in Tenbury**

You will know that Tesco's have announced that their new store in Tenbury will open on April 27<sup>th</sup>. This replaces earlier plans to open last week after strong representations were made from various organisations and individuals, including myself. I am pleased to note that they have honoured their commitments to their many new employees and that they are working in other stores in the run up to the new opening date.

Now their contribution to the Public Realm work is planned to be completed before they open the store, to the benefit of all concerned. I understand that as soon as the drainage work necessary outside the old council offices is completed, the traffic lights will be removed and two lines of vehicles can be maintained along the length of Teme Street. This should greatly relieve the congestion and delay for all caused by the traffic lights.

In addition, the new overflow car park in Palmer's Meadow is now complete, and this will help relieve the extreme parking problems in the town.

There a number of outstanding questions. The design of the left turn lane in Burford has resulted in damage to the new kerbing that will be repaired more strongly later this week.

I have always hoped that the County Council could start its own work, between the Regal and Crow Corner, as soon as Tesco's contractor, Smiths, had completed their work. There is some doubt about whether we have the crews to do that, given the amount of other Public Realm work being undertaken around the County, and it may be that it will be necessary to delay starting until September. That leads to the danger that work won't be finished before the busy period running up to Christmas.

Various retailers have made known their preferences for the schedule, but it may be that our choices are more limited than we might wish.

- **Eastham Bridge**

The steel beams for the new Eastham Bridge were installed the weekend before last, when the A443 was closed for the weekend. A huge crane was able to lift the two pairs of beams into position, as the wind had dropped sufficiently to make it safe. We are looking forward to the bridge being open to traffic around the end of next month.

- **Speeding on the A443 and LTP4**

You may know of the arrangements to alter the signage in the region of the Cutmill road T junction. I failed to persuade the highway officers to install a double white line but there will be various adjustments that may assist. Please let me know what you think is their effect.

I am aware of your contribution to LTP4 and accept your arguments about the need for better control on the A443 and the A456. I will continue to press for lower speed limits in places and some mitigation of the dangerous features on both roads. Sadly, there is not simple and cheap solution to the inherent dangers along both roads, largely due to topography.

- **Road works at Frith Common**

#as I understand it, and as I hope your clerk has been informed, the C2089 Frith Common road will be closed from the 3<sup>rd</sup> April for geotechnical work to stop further slippage. The wording of the notice does not say the road will be restored at that time but 33 days have been allowed for the work, but that is usually a conservative estimate.

There is no way round the problem and I just hope this will be the last work on this section. As with all such work, I would be keen to hear of any problems in the conduct of the road works.

**Cllr Ken Pollock,  
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08.03.17**