

LINDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

15.01.20

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

1. The New Year

A lot has happened since I last reported to your Parish Council back in November. The General election result should mean a stable government for around five years, during which time we will leave the European Union, and institute a new relationship with them, covering a variety of matters that affect us all.

We are expecting a new Budget from the Chancellor, Sajid Javid, the MP for Bromsgrove, in February and the signs are that there will be more money for a variety of causes. We hope to see Adult Social Care properly financed, rather than on an *ad hoc* basis year by year. We would like to think rural authorities would receive a better settlement, relative to our urban/metropolitan cousins, to ease funding pressures for County Councils that are reflected in council tax settlements.

Agriculture will be watching closely to see how it might be supported when the CAP is no longer relevant. I hope the farmers' representatives will do a good job in ensuring the sort of support that has effectively funded our cheap food policy since WWII. While this may move to an environmentally beneficial system, it will need to be feasible, capable of repetition year on year, and to command general support.

We know that the government has pledged to bring forward ultrafast broadband coverage, especially in rural areas, with a view to helping social workers monitor their charges remotely, as well as helping farmers and school children use the internet for their needs.

Needless to say, we will be monitoring these matters closely at County Hall, and we are very keen to hear of any concerns by other councils that might reflect problems that are being overlooked or ignored.

So with that cautious assessment of where we are at present, may I wish you all a very Happy and Prosperous New Year!

2. Local matters

I trust that the work on the retaining wall by Mill Lane has been well received. One may reasonably assume it will not shift as a result of the passage of HGVs, no matter how big or frequent.

It is disappointing to read of the judgment on the glamping proposal at the Priory, if only as it seems to indicate that the junction is too dangerous for extra traffic, but is acceptable for the current levels. We know, of course, that the latter include a lot of mothers and children. I am open to any suggestions as to how we might make that junction safer, while maintaining access to the houses, the church and the school.

I am aware that there are further works in progress around Frith Common and trust that liaison with Hannah Davies is working well, to ensure necessary work is done effectively and expeditiously.

Under the SWDP revisions, it appears that Eardiston is classified as a class 4 village, meaning no further development should be permitted. I find this hard to accept and would be pleased to discuss it with councillors if there is a feeling that it is detrimental to the community.

3. County Matters

The first full council of the New Year will be held tomorrow, Thursday, 16th January. A number of decisions already made will be reported on by the leader, Simon Geraghty, including the Passenger Transport Strategy, the Kepax Bridge, various aspects of the education system and child care, as well as preparation for Brexit. In addition, the leader will be summarising the year in his annual report, covering all aspects of the Council's work.

Of particular relevance to your parish council is a Notice of Motion drawing attention to the significance of roadside hedges, especially where they may overhang footways and obstruct progress by walkers and those using mobility scooters and buggies.

Often the hedges are owned by the adjacent landowner and they can sometimes be slow or reluctant to trim back the hedges. Procedures for county officers to affect such trimming and receive reimbursement are slow and can be ineffective. The motion calls for a better scheme, maybe involving parish councils, to ensure the footways are kept open properly to the benefit of all.

You may be aware that the new Worcestershire Parkway station did not open in December, as originally planned. We anticipate that it will open later this month, once approved by the Office of Road and Rail, and will then prove a useful access point to the rail network, particularly for residents in rural Worcestershire, who would prefer not to have to drive into the city to catch a train.

**Cllr Ken Pollock
Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire,
GL50 2BZ
15.01.20**