

LITTLE WITLEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

11.09.17

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

1. County Council affairs

At county level, we are very concerned about balancing the books for this current financial year. You will be aware that our Children's Services have been judged inadequate and the complicated and detailed remedial system that has been activated will cost many more millions of pounds than has been budgeted.

Despite this the results of our many road shows around the county and the Viewpoint surveys are reasonably encouraging and seem to endorse our priorities, namely vulnerable adult and children and maintaining the roads and pavements in good condition. While we are all rightly critical of poor performance in the latter, it is worth noting that this county has better road conditions than most of its near neighbours.

2. Velo Birmingham Bike Event

I would just like to confirm that the Velo Birmingham cycle event, a "sportive", will take place on the 24th September, involving some 15,000 riders. After all the controversy, I think most problems have been overcome and I hope it will be seen as a successful enterprise, particularly for the 1,400 riders from Worcestershire.

The changes that were made at the end of June came about because of the inherent problem of enclosing so many homes and businesses within the planned figure of eight in the west of Worcestershire, as well as a reluctance to accept the disruption to Bromyard on behalf of Herefordshire Council.

I recognise that this event will have a serious effect upon Little Witley as the A443 will be closed from 08.00 to 15.30. While relatively few properties lie to the north of the main road, their occupants will either accept staying at home during that period, or park their cars to the south of the road, and thus be able to travel when they wish.

It should be noted that pedestrians will be able to walk along the road during the closure period. We are taking steps to clear the footway that runs from the bottom of Bank Lane towards Great Witley as far as Primrose Cottage to permit walking along that section without taking to the carriageway. This will start tomorrow and require temporary traffic lights. Other paths will be cleared as well, though not with the same priority.

There has been criticism of the organisers, CSM, being a profit making business. The County Council has many such relationships, most obviously with Ringway, who maintain the county's roads. It is not the fact that these companies wish to be profitable, as that they fulfil our requirements at a reasonable price. CSM are faced with two mass mailings, to 208,000 each, huge amounts of unique signage, many barriers and cones to be deployed, as well as costly provision of police support. While they may have taken well over £1 million in entry fees, I can believe them when they say they will not make a profit in 2017.

It is important to restate that this County Council has a very strong pro-cycling and walking policy, confirmed in the latest local transport plan (LTP4). This is demonstrated by our continued support for the Redditch bike race in May and the Tour of Britain. This started last Sunday, 3rd September in Edinburgh and finished yesterday, 11th September, with a leg that started in Croft Road, Worcester. It was shown live each day on ITV4.

Velo is, by contrast, not a race but a mass participation event, called a sportive, to promote general wellbeing and appreciation of the countryside. We are assured that it will also bring economic benefits to the county, as with the Wales Velothon, based in Cardiff, and also Ride London, now in its fifth year and requiring a lot of closed roads in London and Surrey.

3. The A443 layby

I am aware of the controversy about the layby formed by the old road outside what used to be Des Buggins' garage. My understanding is that the "no parking" signs have been removed. Anyone can stop there to drop off or pick up bus passengers, or take a short break.

All of us can understand the desire of residents not to have vehicles, especially HGVs, parked there overnight or in such a way as to block their access. Likewise, fly tipping should be discouraged in any way possible.

I am content with the attractive planting that has been put in to deter any driver running over the corner of the grass island. There are two such grass sections in Great Witley and I am pleased to note that they do not need maintenance from WCC. I think the same applies here.

Cllr Ken Pollock
Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire,
GL50 2BZ
11.09.17