

LITTLE WITLEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
09.01.17
COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

1. Happy New Year, 2017

May I wish all Little Witley parish councillors, and indeed all residents of Little Witley, a very Happy and Prosperous New Year. The year promises to bring some major changes both locally and nationally and I have even seen speculation that there might be a General Election on May 4th, the day when all 57 county council seats will be contested, to give a new administration at County Hall. Before then we need to approve our County Council budget and seek endorsement for our plans to increase council tax by 0.94%. This will be in addition to the 2% rise in tax to provide money for adult social care, using a device arranged by the government for councils to raise the amount of money they think we need locally for this essential service. We are keen to point out that only a third of the increase will actually go to the normal local services, while the rest seeks to cover the large demands of our aging population.

Beyond that we are keenly awaiting news on further government funding for big projects like the second Carrington Bridge, and improving the A38 through Bromsgrove. Some of this money has been promised, but the needs always seem to expand beyond the available cash.

This year should see the start of the new Worcestershire Parkway rail station at the intersection of the London line with that serving Birmingham and the south west. This will bring huge benefits in terms of connectivity and shorter travel times, leading we hope to a 2 hour trip to and from London every hour.

2017 will also see the expansion of superfast broadband coverage into some of the more remote parts of the County. Anyone who does not receive decent speeds can be very frustrated to learn of how good the coverage is elsewhere and we are very conscious of the need to fill in the gaps as quickly as possible. Airband has been expanding rapidly and there is also interest in the county from Virgin and Gigaclear.

Meanwhile the Council is backing efforts to get better mobile coverage across the whole county, a campaign strongly supported by Harriett Baldwin our MP. This may mean higher phone masts and more of them but many people will benefit from being able to use their mobiles from home and on the move.

2. Tesco's in Tenbury

We can expect the new Tesco store to be completed soon but before it an open, the Public Realm work that they are paying for will need to be completed. This will run from the bridge to the Regal, after which the County will complete the remaining section up to Crow Corner.

All this work, plus that needed in Shropshire at the junction with the A4546, will undoubtedly cause some disruption and delay but will bring great benefits once completed.

3. Eastham Bridge

Work on Eastham Bridge continues apace. The steel spans should be installed soon, leading to the construction of the carriageway and balustrades.

There has also been concern about gritting. On some occasions, the drop in temperature comes too soon after rain for normal gritting, leading to some roads being missed. It is better to grit before the temperature drops below freezing, but it is not useful if the surface is still wet from rain in the last two hours. In addition, the brine making machine has been out of action over Christmas meaning dry grit has been spread recently. We entered the winter with 17,000 tonnes of salt in store. So far, we are confident that we can handle whatever the weather throws at us. I trust the works on improved drainage on the A443 between Little and Great Witley will not prove too disruptive.

4. Divisional Fund

More money is available in my divisional fund, and the financial year end is approaching. Let me know, please, of any projects that might deserve assistance.

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