

LITTLE WITLEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

24.07.19

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Council Members

As I said to the new Tenbury Town Council meeting two weeks ago, it was good to see so many new faces on the Council. I wished them, as I wish all of you, a very enjoyable and productive period representing the views of your local residents. As I wrote in a recent column in the Tenbury Advertiser, the community is very dependent on people coming forward to offer their time and expertise on civic matters. The contribution of councillors like ourselves is vital to see that the very best decisions are made concerning the provision of services in the area.

It is not widely acknowledged that people such as yourselves do not receive any remuneration, but you can be the subject of complaint when matters don't turn out the way some people might like. I am very aware of the selfless devotion to duty expressed by the service of councillors in all the 18 town and parish councils in my division, and I trust the service you all give is recognised by your communities.

County Council Affairs

There was a full Council meeting last Thursday, and there were six notices of motion, only three of which were debated, but one paid tribute to the efforts of people like yourselves, working in Parish Councils for the benefit of the community. There were many supportive comments from across the chamber and the political spectrum, in response to some unwise words of a Labour councillor, who appeared to discount your worth. He was not present, but his group leader, Cllr Robin Lunn, spoke warmly of the contribution made by volunteers, such as yourselves.

I presented a report on our minerals policy. There are many mineral deposits in the County, of various types, and these are grouped into corridors. We have had four calls for sites for development, as the intention is that this county, like all others, should seek to provide essential minerals from their own resources. These corridors are all published, so anyone can see where they occur, and where, at some time in the future, they may be exploited.

At last week's full Council, we had a delegation of residents from the Lea Castle area, near Kidderminster, concerned about the possibility of a new quarry being excavated near them. This will need to go through the full planning process, and I sought to reassure them that the County would be vigorous in ensuring any conditions applied were fully observed.

One overriding principle is that we will not allow District Council to permit building over areas where valuable minerals are to be found, even if there is no demand for them at present. Germany has fallen foul of this principle, and various villages and old churches are in the process of being demolished to liberate lignite found beneath them. This should never happen in this county.

In Cabinet the previous week, we approved the development of Adult Social Care, a burgeoning area of concern and expenditure, and one where we are all keenly awaiting the much delayed publication of a new adult social care policy from central government. In recent years we have been dependent on one-off grants to cover the increases in costs and we would all appreciate a long term solution to the problem.

We will also heard the report on the results of the extensive consultation on the future of our libraries. For reasons that are not worth rehearsing, there was a prevailing feeling that some libraries were in danger of closing. This report to cabinet demonstrated that the required savings have been achieved without any such closures, as had always been the policy.

[South Worcestershire Development Plan revisions](#)

The SWDP covers the three southerly districts of the county and is undergoing a thorough revision to reflect expected increases in population numbers in the light of the National Planning Policy Framework, the NPPF. This will require the provision of more houses in the county and the plan is intended to indicate the preferred areas for such new housing.

Villages in the Tenbury division have seen a lot of new building in the last few years and there are plans for more such estates. Little Witley residents may be aware of the controversy that surrounds such developments, when they appear to change the character of the village, as with the proposals for 175 houses in the centre of Great Witley. A common complaint is that there are no jobs for new people in this rural area, but I have been keen to see the plan is not predicated on the minimising of distances to travel to work. Pursuing such principles, for whatever reasons, would lead to the impoverishment of rural areas.

At present, some 26% of county residents live in “rural areas”, while only 13% of new building takes place in rural areas. Current plans seem to indicate that the latter balance of only 13% of build being in rural areas should continue to 2040. I am not sure that is sensible.

Cllr Ken Pollock,
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