

LITTLE WITLEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

20.11.19

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

1. Local matters

I was very sorry to hear about the flooding in Market Street, Tenbury, as when I toured the town, the water was high, but not that threatening. I was pleased to see that a number of businesses had deployed their floodgates and I received enquiries about the availability of sand bags.

There is no easy answer to the dangers of such events, and we cannot expect huge sums of money being spent to guard against such flooding. You will know that the floods were widespread throughout the county, along the rivers Teme, Severn and Avon. Our officers worked very hard to mitigate effects as much as possible, but there was extensive flooding on the A443 at Lindridge, the A456 at Newnham Bridge as well as closing both bridges across the Teme just downstream of Shelsley Beauchamp.

I hope there have been no lasting effects of the damage caused and that we can be sure that effective systems are in place for future occurrences.

Diversion signs were deployed for a number of reasons. Firstly, HGVs were directed away from Eardiston because of the work to rebuild the retaining wall on the A443. The single lane was too narrow for HGVs.

In addition there was flooding between Lindridge and the Eastham bridge, while on the first Saturday, Newnham Bridge was also flooded, so traffic was not directed to Clows Top. The safe way through to Tenbury was via the B4204 and Hanley.

You will also know of the flooding in the dip just before the Elms Hotel. This covered the road for some time and one car at least was stuck there, before the water drained away.

I hope there were not any more serious problems within Little Witley, but please let me know of any difficulties.

2. County Matters

There was a full council meeting two weeks ago, where the Hereford and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority reported on their year. I have been pleased to be a member of FRA for the last two years, and it was good to see the Tenbury appliance deployed on two occasions on the Saturday afternoon when I was in the town, to assist with mitigating the effects of the flooding.

You may know that there is a plan to put the Fire and Rescue Authority under the management of the Police and Crime Commissioner. While this makes good sense, in combining such blue light services, we have voted against it, partly on the grounds that cooperation works very well at present. We await the outcome of an appeal against a judicial review that approved the amalgamation.

Among the several other reports on the agenda, there was a detailed account of the capital projects to be undertaken or continued in the coming months. Among these are the various town centre improvements, along the lines of the Public Realm work in Tenbury. Then there are the developments of the rail stations, including the rebuilding of Kidderminster and the new Parkway station at Norton.

As part of the commitment to encourage walking and cycling, there is provision for work in refurbishing the Sabrina Bridge in Worcester, as well as providing a further walking and cycling bridge to the north at Kepax, leading to Gheluvelt Park. I reported on the latter in Cabinet last Thursday.

3. Extinction Rebellion

Many of you will have read the two page spread in a recent copy of the Tenbury Advertiser, recording the demonstration in London by over 100 Shropshire residents, as part of the Extinction Rebellion protest. While the report illustrates very effectively how the event caused a deal of disruption and could have left no-one doubting the sincerity and passion of the protesters, the report was short on actual policies that they wish to see followed.

In that regard, I would like to be bold enough to suggest that the “emergency” is not as urgent as many would have us believe. I will attach to this report a short exposition by Paul Homewood, who writes a blog entitled “Not a lot of people know that”, criticising the recent BBC TV programme “Climate Change – the Facts”. He and others protested that the programme did not live up to its title.

From the information in the supplementary report, you may also come to believe that the problem is exaggerated, at least in terms of how urgent it is for us to take action. Indeed, I wrote a 10 page critique of the programme myself, and I would be happy to send that to anyone who may be interested.

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20.11.19**