

# LITTLE WITLEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

22.01.20

## 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 March 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 am hopeful that some of my locally determined road fund will be used to improve the footway running from Well Lane to Bank Lane. It is disappointing that this narrow footway should be sufficiently blocked as to discourage walkers, especially as it runs so close to a busy A road through the cutting.

It would appear that the layby on the A443 has reached a stable situation, with a large sign discouraging HGVs from using it, and a small plantation of shrubs plus stones stopping motorists cutting the corner. With luck, this will no longer be a bone of contention.

### 3. County Matters

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

Of particular relevance to your parish council was 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 called 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 had anticipated 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.

For the moment, there is no news of a definite opening date.

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**22.01.20**