

Mrs Rachel Hooper
Clerk to Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council
clerk@chaddesleyparishcouncil.org.uk

5th February 2024

Dear Rachel,

Re: Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council Meeting, 5th February 2024

Please find my report for reading at the meeting and circulation to Parish Councillors.

Chaddesley Issues

1. As reported previously, regarding extending the pavement that ends at Lower Chaddesley on the Fox PH side of the road I have made further progress. It has been 'agreed' that this will be done. The total cost will be circa £150,000. I have allocated my total £22,500 devolved highways monies for 2024-2025 to show commitment on my part and 'pump prime' the project as WCC do not usually create new pavements unless externally funded.

The minimum pavement width needs to be 1.4m and WCC does not own a sufficiently wide strip all the way up to the school and therefore will need to acquire land from 3rd party landowners, in particular Rowberry's and the Chaddesley Corbett Education Foundation (CCEE) (as owners of the school land). These conversations have yet to be formally had but I am delighted that the trustees of the CCEE have agreed in principle to transfer the necessary land to be adopted highway. I am advised that the pavement should be done in 2024-2025 and I will keep the Parish Council and local community posted on progress.

2. Regarding the fence at Winterfold, I believe this is now completed.
3. I am dealing with a drainage issue in Drayton and looking at raising a kerb just down from properties below Barrow Hill Lane. Again, progress has been slow but a job pack has been drawn up. This was due to be done but has been pushed back due to the flooding! A revised date has been given of 14th February for 3 days.
4. I continue to report speeding issues to the police.
5. I have reported a new flooding issue in Drayton as a result of Storm Babet. I have been sent photos by a local resident and am taking this up with WCC. Investigation work has ascertained this is not on a watercourse by NWWM and the legal team are looking at options in respect of the run off. It would require a substantial amount of work by the landowner to deal with this. I will update when I have further information but this is likely to be a long running

issue. I am going to get a meeting with WCC highways and NWWM on site about this.

6. Last but by no means least the closure of the A448. I have no doubt it will substantially affect the Parish for the lifetime of the closure and certainly at the beginning whilst things settle down.

You will all be aware by now that the A448 between Mustow Green and the village will be closed from 19th February for circa 12 weeks. The actual stretch is 525m in the Brockencote area just past Harvington Hall Lane. The official diversion is the A456/A491/A38. Clearly local residents will use local routes and I suspect that there will be considerable extra volume on the A450 through Harvington and then along Woodrow, down Briar Hill and through the village and out as many locals use this shorter route to get to the village businesses, Brockencote, Rowberry's, Callow's and Chaddesley Corbett Primary School etc... Given that lanes such as Harvington Hall Lane and The Holloway are very narrow I am more optimistic that drivers will soon realise these will just become grid locked if they use these to 'rat run'.

I have done a full Facebook post so won't repeat everything here but am acutely aware that local residents fear not being able to get out of their lanes and also concerns for all of the many businesses affected. In advance of the closure there will be yellow backed signs saying, 'Businesses open as usual' and red warning signs saying on many of the lanes, the two I have just mentioned, plus lanes like Dobes Lane, Fox Lane and others, saying, 'No Through Road'.

I have been fully briefed on this matter by WCC highways. The official routes will be signposted. Regrettably, given that a water main has to be replaced and working is required in the middle of the road, temporary two lights are not an option, for safety reasons it must be a full closure. You may recall that these works were attempted last year under temporary lights and were aborted due to a serious RTA involving one of the contractors and a vehicle going through the lights. The works have reduced to 12 weeks and there will now be 7 day working. There is no night working due to the proximity to residential properties.

Many residents have contacted me regarding speeding, but I have to be honest, I think that is the wrong thing to be worrying about. There is bound to be substantial traffic volume as drivers use the short cuts and I suspect that the key one of these will be the A450 route, through Woodrow, Briar Hill and the village. I am expecting there to be tailbacks as the village will be the bottle neck and so rather than speeding I am actually more concerned about grid lock!

Yellow warning signage giving advance warning of the closure were placed all along the A448 in both directions.

This closure will obviously affect my parishes of Rushock, Stone, Broome and Churchill and Blakedown too.

Apologies I couldn't make the Severn Trent meeting earlier this evening, I will try and pop in for the engagement session on 12th February.

Wyre Forest Issues

Bewdley Bridge continues to operate one way over the bridge into the town for approximately 18 months whilst the Environment Agency (EA) undertake the work for the construction of the flood defences. This is now circa a £9.3m scheme, of which £500k is from WCC and the rest from the EA. The Government increased the capital funding by an additional £1.5m from the original funding grant for additional work.

Strategic Issues County Wide

Worcestershire has a fantastic website Here2Help which is a community action response to Coronavirus. There is also a dedicated phone number 01905 768053 for those without access to the internet. There is now a Here2Helpbusiness scheme as well. (simply google Here 2 Help Worcestershire and it comes straight up.)

As stated previously, Full Council met on 14th September and approved the Council's submission to the boundary commission.

The proposal for the Chaddesley Division is to retain the Spennells estate and the parishes of:-

Broome
Chaddesley Corbett
Churchill and Blakedown
Rushock
Stone

In addition, to add in the Lea Castle development, currently in the parish of Wolverley and Cookley.

The Boundary Commission has now published its consultation document on the proposals and the final order with the new divisional boundaries is scheduled to be made in July 2024 with the elections on 1st May, 2025.

You may not wish to comment on all of the proposals, but could I invite you to consider writing in to support the proposals for the Wyre Forest area and in particular the proposed new Chaddesley Division. This proposes keeping all 5 parishes within the Division, together with the Spennells Estate as is but with the addition of the new Lea Castle development. This is because at present, the numbers for my division are only 7,064 and they need to be + or – 10% of 8,687 and will be 9,010 so + 4% which will be fine. At present the average is 7,992 and the Chaddesley Division is way too low. Taking Lea Castle is a neat fit as the numbers for Cookley Wolverley Wribbenhall, the neighbouring Division are too high already and without moving the Lea Castle electors into a new division would be well out of the 10% + or – tolerance and as the two Divisions border each other this is a neat solution.

Any helpful and supportive comments you could give would be appreciated. The deadline for consultation responses are 18th March 2024.

WCC, like all upper tier authorities are facing significant financial pressures on demand led services, children's and adults social care and in particular on our placement budgets, together with Home to School Transport. This has been in the

national news recently and in fact, £500million has been made available. Worcestershire's share is an extra £5million and whilst not nearly enough is helpful.

The Cabinet met on 1st February to propose its final budget recommendations onto Full Council which will meet on 15th February to agree its budget.

Our net revenue budget is £401m for 23/24 and at the end of **Period 8 (30th December)** we are already forecasting a £21.6m cost pressure following the use of budgeted risk reserves without further action.

The forecast overspend is as follows:-

Childrens	£29.4m
Adults	£5.6m
Communities	£0.6m
Economy and Infrastructure	£0.7m
Commercial and Change	£1.0m
Total	£37.3m

Less forecast underspend/reserves/additional income as follows:-

Corporate underspend	£2.6m
Use of reserves agreed at budget setting	£9.0m
Business rates additional income	£4.1m
Total	£15.7m
Net overspend	£21.6m

In adult social care, long term placement numbers have increased by 4% in Q1, equating to a net increase of 238 packages of care. Over the last 3 years – April 2020 to April 2023 there has been an overall increase from circa 6,400 to 6,900 packages of care. In terms of Older People services we have seen an increase in 171 packages (3%). There is an increase in service users going into residential care with an average 10% increase in unit costs which is an average £73 per week. Nursing care packages have increased by 15 with an average 9% increase in unit costs. Home care packages have increased by 64 with an average 7.6% increase in unit costs which is an average £23 per week.

In terms of Learning Disability services we have seen an increase of 62 and significant increases are being seen in the average unit cost of placements with residential placements increasing by 10% (£170) per person per week and supported living costs by 9% (£105) per person per week and home care by 11% (£43) per person per week.

In terms of Physical Disabilities services home care average weekly costs have increased by 15% (£43) per person per week and nursing care by 6% (£64) per person per week.

In Childrens Services placements for Looked after Children are currently forecast to overspend by £16.9m, which is 18% above budget. Current placements are 1,039, a 11% increase from 939 in June 2022. There has been a sharp increase between January and March 2023 alone.

For example, some packages of care are costing £10k per week, over £500k per year per child and some packages of care are now costing £20k per week, over £1m

per year. The average weekly cost has gone from circa £1,000 per week to £1,500 per week over the last 3 years.

It is absolutely or statutory duty to keep young people safe but this is an example of the financial pressures WCC and all other authorities are currently facing.

Home to School Transport (HTST) is forecast to overspend by at least £9m this year due to inflationary pressures on providers. There is also an increase in demand with more parents seeking to use transport with a 12% increase in mainstream numbers over the last 12 months. The predicted overspend could also increase further if there are more children requiring transport as part of their (Education, Health and Care Plan) EHCP.

Clearly, the Council is cognisant of its budget framework and is working up plans to mitigate the end of year overspend by looking at ways it can make further savings, reschedule its large capital programme and if needs be the use of reserves.

The net revenue budget for 24/25 is proposed to £438million. Council tax is proposed to increase by 2.99% and the adult social care levy by the maximum 2%, thus 4.99% overall. A Band D property will therefore pay £1,538.92, which is WCC's share of the overall council tax bill. WCC makes up circa 70% of the bill. This is an increase of £73.14 per annum per household on 23/24, or £1.41 per week.

Council tax income will bring in circa £336million towards the net revenue budget requirement. Worcestershire will still remain in the lowest quartile of comparative county councils.

Across the council there is a structural deficit of £35million, together with £51.5million of new investments and pressures, totalling £86.5million. These are to be funded from £22.5million additional government funding, £19.6million additional council tax income and £37.2million of savings and efficiencies. This leaves a gap of £7.2million to be funded from general reserves.

The capital programme will be £389million.

The net revenue budget for adults and communities will be £168million, children's services £102million and therefore circa 2/3 of our net revenue budget is spent on protecting our most vulnerable residents. There are circa 600,000 residents in Worcestershire and this spend would represent about 2% of the population.

WCC held a virtual engagement event for Parish councils at 5pm on 30th January.

As a result of the significant savings and efficiencies required it is proposed that the way the council operates internally is restructured with the deletion of a corporate directorate and therefore a strategic director and associated assistant director posts. A number of other posts across the organisation will be deleted and a voluntary redundancy scheme was launched before Christmas. The proposals are of course subject to formal consultation and employment rights and law in the usual way.

It is also proposed that when the Worcestershire Children's First contract ends in September this year it is not renewed and Children's Services is brought back into the council and the company cease. You may recall it was government that requested this alternative delivery model when children's Services were inadequate 5 years ago. Last year we were ranked good.

There has been some national media coverage last week as a result of the tragic child death of Alfie Steele, who was from Worcestershire who sadly died in February

2021 as a result of being murdered by his mother's partner. His mother was convicted of manslaughter. I am not going to go into the details, much of which have been in the public domain already and indeed the 6 week trial was last year but there was as is normal practice a serious case review and there are clearly some lessons to be learned by the statutory agencies.

Finally sincere apologies as I would have liked to have been with you but it is my birthday tomorrow and I am stopping away for the night with my wife and my son as we are watching a show this evening and it was arranged some time ago.

With my best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr. Marcus J. Hart
County Councillor – Chaddesley Division

Copy to: District Cllr. Ian Hardiman, Wyre Forest District Council
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