

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

29th February 2024

Dear Rachel,

Re: Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council Meeting, 4th March 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. The drainage issue in Drayton has finally been addressed and the work done in February as promised with the kerb being raised and some re-tarmacing. a
3. I continue to report speeding issues to the police.
4. I am still dealing with two flooding issues in Drayton. I have been sent photos by a number of local residents, one is at Egg Lane as a result of significant discharge of rain water from fields belonging to a third party landowner. I have been involved with WCC in this issue previously and met with residents and extra capacity was installed. There is a similar issue with the discharge of rainwater from field off Barrow Hill Lane. However, WCC believe that it is the landowner that should be tackled here and WCC are looking at their legal powers as investigation work by NWWM has ascertained this is not on a watercourse and so 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.

5. Hayley advises me she is dealing with the saga of the VAS sign and batteries with your clerk.
6. I have received complaints about hedges/bushes obstructing pavements at Mustow Green and have asked for this to be inspected.
7. We have obviously received a lot of rain recently. I am aware of at last 3 times in the last year the A448 has had to be temporarily closed due to flooding on the bend at the junction of Fox Lane as a result of run off from the adjacent fields. This nearly happened the other week during the closure but WCC highways were dispatched to keep it clear. I have asked WCC to look at this with a view to a permanent solution given that this is a major link from Kidderminster through to Bromsgrove and the M5. I have also asked for flooding on the A450 at Tandy's Lane to be looked at. There are one or two other areas just outside the Parish. If you have any other areas you would like WCC to tackle then please let me know via your clerk.
8. Last but by no means least the closure of the A448. I have no doubt it is substantially affecting the Parish as we enter week 3 and will do so for the lifetime of the closure. I am hoping that things will 'settle down' but that may be wishful thinking!

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 and not so local residents are using local routes and there is considerable extra volume on the A450 through Harvington and then along Woodrow, down Briar Hill and through the village and out as many drivers 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 still optimistic that drivers will soon realise these will just become grid locked if they use these to 'rat run'. For some reason the 'no through road' signs were not put up at either end of the Holloway and a resident contacted me last week and these are now in place.

I have requested for 'no through road' signage at A442/Cursley Lane junction and at Cakebole Lane/Cursley Lane junction.

I have done several full Facebook posts so won't repeat everything here but am acutely aware that local residents are concerned about both traffic volume and speed. A number of local residents have contacted me with their concerns on speed and volume. I very much sympathise and understand and do all that I can but obviously roads like Woodrow and Briar Hill can't be closed and 'no through roads' on these signs would just be ignored. The 'no through road' signs need to be used for the narrow lanes so that they are more likely to be observed.

I am aware of the RTA on the A448/Woodrow junction on 23rd February but can't comment on the cause of that as I am unaware of the facts. I do know the road was closed for a while and there were police and ambulance in attendance and that thankfully no one was seriously injured.

I am also acutely aware of the affects of the closure on some businesses and have stressed the need for signage 'Businesses open as usual'. These are in place on the A448 (I have driven the routes at both ends) and also the road closure signs showing how many miles before the road is closed.

As stated in my last report, 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.

I am in regular liaison with our highways officer and there are daily meetings with WCC highways and Severn Trent to respond and deal with issues. Things have already been tweaked, additional signs installed, some confusing diversion signs removed and the traffic management moved closer to the village due to some HGV's 'risking it' and not being able to turn round, to name but a few.

I have written to the police to ask for extra patrols to monitor dangerous and careless driving and speeding motorists.

This closure is obviously affecting my parishes of Rushock, Stone, Broome and Churchill and Blakedown too.

If there is anything I can do to assist, please let mw know.

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.)

Full Council met on 15th February and approved the Council's submission to the boundary commission, based on the boundary commission's proposals and supported them 'en bloc'.

As stated, 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.

We will know the final proposals from the boundary commission when they are published on 2nd July and then the order needs to be laid before Parliament to be formally made.

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.

Full Council met on 15th February and by majority vote agreed its budget. No alternative budgets were put forward by alternative groups.

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 £438million. Council tax has increased 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 is £389million.

The net revenue budget for adults and communities have been set at £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.

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. To date a considerable number of redundancy requests have been approved.

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.

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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