

Clerk Louise Harris
Clerk to Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council

9th February 2026

Dear Louise,

Re: Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council Meeting – 10th February 2026

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

Churchill and Blakedown Issues

Ongoing Issues

1. I have asked for permanent barriers on the A456 as opposed to the temporary red and white plastic ones. I am now advised finally that a costing has been done for this scheme at circa £500k and is not a priority for the current administration and so will not be pursued. The remaining barriers have been inspected and remain fit for purpose with a life span of a further 25 years. Given this response, I don't think I can pursue this any further.
2. The work on the gully on the A456 dual carriageway as you head in the Kidderminster which is broken which I was told will be repaired this autumn hasn't been. It has been on the list for a while for a scheme of work as the gully blocks and ponds here when we have flash flooding. It hasn't been done yet and I am advised
3. WCC highways were waiting for heavy down pours before inspecting Station Drive. This has now been done and response as follows:-

"I visited the other side of the road with a technician from maintenance, where water is pooling, the new gully is slightly higher than the road, I understand that this was because the fall is so shallow, the gully couldn't go any lower. I will update you further once they have had time to consider next steps.

I reported the above in my January report and having met Dean on 23rd January he advises that WCC are going to wait until the developers have finished all of their junction works and then look at next steps and what is required.

4. A local resident has contacted me regarding the dead trees and overhanging trees in Crown Lane and I have reported these for inspection. I am told these have been inspected now as has the Yew Tree check. There is a lot of work

to be done here and dead trees will be removed. Some trees are on WCC land and some are on private land and WCC will liaise with private land owners. Dean updated me on 23rd January is a large declining Beech tree with Meripilus root decay fungi. The 'stage 2' letter has now expired and Dean is chasing the 'Green team' for next steps!

5. I have now asked Dean for two new 'police notice no station parking' signs and am awaiting an update now.
6. A stage 2 hedge letter was sent to a landowner regarding the hedge on the A456/Churchill Lane junction. This expired on 31st October and so the Green Team are looking at this. I am chasing that they will cut the hedge back and seek to recharge the resident. I am very unhappy as this seems to be a constant battle. I still don't believe this has been done and again on the list for 23rd January. Following the meeting on 23rd January, Dean is still chasing. This is a constant frustration that it takes months for action!
7. The clerk raised with me a new issue in relation to the flooding on Birmingham Road in Blakedown at the bottom of the hill. Dean from WCC reports, "I've been informed today that the gullies have been inspected and are all fine. There is debris and silt at the location and I have submitted a request to WFDC to have the area swept. The Clerk stated that there is a soak away at the location, I am trying to confirm this and look into it accordingly in case this needs work doing here." Dean will be reporting back to me more fully on 23rd January. Dean now advises following our meeting on 23rd January that outlets to ponds need attention with landowners and this is likely to be for the major works team on 26/27, date TBC.
8. In respect of the BT Openreach issue, I will not rehearse at length this issue as I did so fully in my January report and the Parish Council will be fully aware of this matter following public participation at the January meeting. Suffice to say I was very pleased the community did come together and following the subsequent survey there was a very strong majority in favour of the 'Wannerton Estate' being put back into the scheme. I am pleased to hear confirmation that this has now been done.
9. As I reported in January, I have seen on social media of continued issues on Stakenbridge Lane by the railway bridge, it appears a car left the road on the bend and ploughed into the neighbouring wall and caused damage to this and street furniture. I am aware this is not the first time this has happened! By coincidence I had already planned to raise the issue of road safety on Stakenbridge Lane with WCC highways and ask them to take a more serious look. I have a question submitted to the Cabinet Member for Highways at WCC for full council this coming Thursday and it reads as follows:-

Would the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport agree with me that urgent action needs to be taken to address highway safety on Stakenbridge Lane by the railway bridge and in particular will he request that highway engineers from the relevant teams carry out a full safety assessment of this location to consider even greater warning signage and given the narrowness of the road further consider the assessment for the installation of traffic lights?

No doubt you will have seen his rather dismissive response at the meeting which I felt I needed to put on Facebook. He has since reached out to me and I will be discussing the matter further. He has at least now said they are going to improve signage but I am still not happy at what appears to be a

complete lack of an acknowledgement of the road traffic collisions that have taken place there. I will be setting up a petition shortly.

10. As I did say previously, I have been contacted by a local resident regarding a WCC grit bin that has been removed from the junction of the A456 and Churhcill Lane. I must admit, I have no recollection of there ever being one there and WCC have come back and said that having gone back on google images as far back as 2009 there has never been one there and they say it is not listed as one on their asset list for this location. Thank you to parish councillors who confirmed that they had no knowledge of a WCC yellow grit bin. I have written back to the local resident who raised this with me and they have not come back to me. I think I will therefore close off this issue.

New Issues

1. A number of residents have contacted me regarding the major felling works taking place at the woodland at Knoll Hill. It is clearly visible from the bridleway and I did have a complaint about the pass ability of the bridleway and did get WCC out to inspect. They did say it was heavy under foot but passable but would mention this to the contractors.

Regarding the actual works. The Forestry Commission have granted a licence advising these works are being carried out as part of good woodland management and major replanting will take place.

Wyre Forest Issues

Nothing major to report other than WCC have obviously been dealing with flooding issues over the last few days.

Strategic Issues County Wide

In respect of local government reorganisation WCC and the six districts worked together to put in their initial proposals by 21st March and final proposals have now been submitted by the 28th November deadline. It will be at least next Summer before the Government make a decision on the submission.

There was not total agreement across the seven authorities as some are supporting a unitary in the north and a unitary in the south and some support a unitary for the whole of Worcestershire.

Regarding county hall, they have now deemed this surplus and will market the building for sale. They plan to demolish it within 12 months. They have ruled out building a new secondary school on the site or indeed one at all now and have scrapped the proposals. They will bus school pupils from Worcester to Malvern!

Car parks have been rented out for use by the neighbouring hospital.

The Reform administration published their cabinet report ahead of the meeting on 13th January. Of most significance, the administration have requested Government for a higher than a 5% council tax increase, which ordinarily would require a referendum and have asked consent to increase to up to 10% without the need for a referendum. They are also consulting on a 10% council tax rise for 26-27. The County Council's part of the bill for a Band D property in 2025-2026 was £1,615.71 and therefore residents face a circa £162 per annum increase in their bill which is £13.50 pcm. I am advised that they have been granted up to an additional 4%, therefore

with the allowed 5% they can go up to 9% and we are awaiting to see what the final announcement will be. This is very interesting given they stood on a mandate to reduce council tax!

They are proposing a whole host of amendments to the capital programme and ultimately this will mean cuts to front line services that residents value most such as infrastructure projects and highways. They have decided not go ahead of car parking charges at country parks following the cabinet meeting on 13th January. Full Council met on 15th January and the Reform administration have agreed to a whole host of cuts to the capital programme.

The proposal is to set a net revenue budget of some £618,670 million, the highest I can remember in 20 years.

Full Council will now meet on 26th February to set the budget, having moved from 19th February. The 'reserve' council date is 6th March. Prior to this, Full Council meets this Thursday, 15th January, to consider a whole sweet of proposals affecting the capital programme. We await the decision of Council later this week.

You may recall that I previously reported that the Leader of the Council, Cllr. Jo Monk removed Cllr. David Taylor, firstly from his post as Deputy Leader of the Council and then subsequently from his post as Cabinet Member for One Worcestershire, with Council Leader, Cllr. Jo Monk taking on this role. You may have seen that he resigned at the weekend, actually on the TV!

I am pleased we were able to persuade the administration regarding the additional pavement funding that allows me a £22,000 pa discretionary spend in my division that they should continue this.

I will update on the final budget in my March report.

With my best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr. Marcus J. Hart
County Councillor – Chaddesley Division

Copy to: District Cllr. Robin M. Drew, Wyre Forest District Council
District Cllr. Ian D. Hardiman, Wyre Forest District Council
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