

Clerk Louise Sahota
Clerk to Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council

13th May 2024

Dear Louise,

Re: Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council Meeting – 14th May 2024

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

Churchill and Blakedown Issues

1. WCC are taking action regarding cones, rocks and wooden posts reappearing in which I have reported and WCC have reported this to the police. Hayley has now spoken to the SNT and they have investigated. They will require evidence to prosecute. The SNT have now stated that they do not currently consider this an obstruction of the highway. The SNT have stated WCC can continue to send letters and will accompany Hayley to deliver one, but this is the action we have already taken including physical removal of the objects. Hayley is looking at this issue still as WCC and I feel there is an obstruction of the highway. Hayley is still pursuing this and it is ongoing.
2. Regarding the £2,400 from my devolved highways monies for a new VAS, the sign will be placed on a pole near Churchill House and has been ordered. This post should be installed/swapped with the repeater post by now.
3. Double yellow lines at the junction of Gladstone Place and the Belbroughton Road are shortly to be formally consulted on. I know you have been consulted at the preliminary stage. No update at the moment although I haven't been notified of any objections thus far. I am chasing an update.
4. The Hodgehill garden centre sign which was on the left as you leave Kidderminster in the Blakedown direction has yet to be repaired, as does the directional sign in the central reservation. This is in hand but a new special post is being made for the one sign and then when that is ready they should do both together. The date for this is scheduled for 16th April and will be done at night and there will be a road closure. This has become a total farce!
Update re: the aborted works on 16th April from Hayley:-

“The Hodgehill sign wasn’t done at the time as they came across a shallow 11kv cable directly in line with where the posts were to be erected. Whilst the cable was shown on the plans, the depth of the cable was not. The gang did not feel it safe to break ground due to it being a reinforced concrete pad covering the cable.

Our Senior Technician has now taken the works over and is enquiring about a surface mounted set of posts, which will be bolted onto the existing concrete pad.

They have contacted the company who supplied the original posts when the scheme was first done and have asked what the lead time to supply the new posts will be.

Once the items we need are delivered to us, the works will be programmed in almost immediately after.

The Senior Technician managing this is off today, so I will get more information when they return on Monday. I have been tentatively told a 28 day maximum on this, and have subsequently passed on your comments following our phone call, so they understand the pressure is on.”

Still not resolved as an issue with the correct sized post for the sign on the lefthand side verge coming from the Kidderminster direction but agreed to install the one in the central reservation on Sunday 12th May late afternoon. Sign installed but facing the wrong direction! Rest assured I have made my views known.

5. WCC have still not been able to recruit a crossing patrol (lollipop lady/man) for the Primary School despite advertising gain and making it clear this could be a job share.
 6. Hayley and I also inspected ponding on Station Drive reported by a resident. All drains were clear. This has now been inspected by an engineer and there will be some surface realignment to ensure the excess water can drain away effectively. Hayley has chased for mini patching, date TBC.
 7. The narrowness at 10 Churchill Lane has been inspected and obviously there is no scope to widen the carriageway but WCC will be installing a matching narrowing sign on the other side, near to Mill Lane junction. Date TBC.
 8. There will be a complete edge of carriageway scheme the whole length of Deansford Lane later this year which will cover all the 3 parishes that the lane is in. This will be done between 15th July and 27th August.
 9. Flooding at Bridge Farm, Churchill Lane has been investigated and Hayley believes this is actually on private land and has reported back to your clerk accordingly.
 10. I have received a request via your clerk regarding bollards outside the Equestrian Centre on the B4188 Belbroughton Road. I reported on this in my April report. Please let me know if you have a view either way.
 11. I am chasing the removal of the bollards and cones in the refuge on the A456 outside the Primary School.
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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.

WCC highways are currently undertaking verge cutting. I have stressed the need to take care by wild flowers areas etc... There is always a balance as cuts are often required on visibility/safety grounds and verge cutting certainly divides opinion!

WCC are also undertaking surface dressing at present.

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.)

Annual Council meets on Thursday 16th May to elect the chairman and vice-chairman for 2024-2025. This is the final year of the 4 year term as there are all out elections for all 57 seats on 1st May 2025.

The Boundary commission for England is due to report with its final proposals on 1st July 2024.

The Leader has reshuffled his cabinet with three new cabinet members coming in and three exiting for a variety of reasons. On a personal note, I remain in the Cabinet and as Deputy Leader of the Council but my role has changed from Communities to Corporate and Communications.

At the end of the financial year our overspend was circa £4million, a lot of work was done to bring the overspend down, which was at one point, predicted to be circa £30million.

There are a number of HR and staffing changes, with a number of staff seeking to take voluntary redundancy as we reduce our head count to keep wage costs under control.

We are also considering our options in respect of our county hall HQ due to the RAAC issues. No decisions have been taken and we are undertaking all of the necessary work in order to make an informed decision. Full Council currently meets at other District Council locations across the county. Other meetings are still being held at county hall.

There is a Parish Council conference to be held at Wyre Forest House (WFDC HQ) on Wednesday 12th June at 6pm. Your Parish clerk and Chairman should have been invited. There will be a market stall time before the conference starts with representatives from the Police, Highways, Health etc...

Should you have any issues please do not hesitate to contact me.

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
District Cllr. Marcus J. Hart, Wyre Forest District Council

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