

Clerk Louise Harris
Clerk to Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council

8th October 2024

Dear Louise,

Re: Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council Meeting – 8th October 2024

I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer.

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

Churchill and Blakedown Issues

Ongoing 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. However, this has all gone very quiet over many months now so I am going to remove this from the list after this meeting and just keep an eye on things.
2. 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.
3. 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. I am advised this sign was installed w/c 30th September.
4. I have asked for a blue backed directional arrow sign to be raised on a pole so as to warn HGV's well in advance of the refuge outside the primary school on the A456. This would be between the bollards. This has now been inspected by the road safety team and they don't feel this is necessary as

they assert the refuge is clearly visible from both directions. I am challenging this on the basis that the bollards are frequently hit.

5. The pavement along Churchill Lane from the railway line up to Stoney Lane has been inspected and it will be patched. The location of the advisory is around the Baytree House and Damas House area. Having told we were just awaiting a date I am now told only the safety defects will be done in the short term and that it does need a full scheme but the cost is circa £40k and I would have to fund this from my devolved budgets but I have allocated all of mine for the A456 already and other schemes. I am not happy and have escalated this.
 6. I have met local residents in Churchill Lane regarding trees along the lane between Wannerton Road and the junction of the A456. WCC are going to undertake a safety inspection. This is still ongoing.
 7. I have reported hedges overhanging the pavement on Churchill Lane and the A456 to WCC for inspection and to ask them to make contact with the landowners again. In particular, the laurel hedge on the corner which is now obstructing the 30 mph speed camera sign yet again!
 8. Trees overhanging Churchill Lane have been reported to WCC highways to inspect.
 9. I have asked for permanent barriers on the A456 as opposed to the temporary red and white plastic ones. This is still being considered is the update and this is ongoing.
 10. The date for the pavement near Ismere House has now been set for 6th – 17th January, 2025. Date TBC still for outside the Old Waggon and Horses.
 11. I have reported overhanging hedges obstructing the pavement between Blakedown and Hagley and have asked for these to be inspected.
 12. I contacted your clerk and she kindly replied regarding the lining scheme for the car park spaces at the station and thank you for confirming that we will leave things as they are for now and we won't pursue this at this time. I will remove this item from the list.
 13. As reported in September, I have been contacted by a number of residents concerned re: road safety outside the Primary School and met a parent on site last week to discuss this issue. I have asked for the barriers to be repaired. The only thing I can do is ask WCC to consider the installation of a further pelican crossing outside the school. The existing one will not be moved. This is located as it is as it serves the whole of the village. I am going to ask if there is any s.106 funding from the station Drive residential development. There is no funding available in the s.106, it has been allocated as part of the outline planning application previously approved and WCC didn't feel it necessary to ask for part funding at least which I am unhappy with but cannot turn back the clock. I have met with a senior officer and asked if there is any other s.106 funding that could be linked to this but we don't think there is. I have said it is my aspiration for a new crossing there.
 14. Roxall Close and Lynwood Drive pavements have been inspected and minor repair work has been undertaken.
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15. I continue to report blocked drains for emptying across the Parish.
16. The damaged bollard in Hurcott Lane has been repaired following an RTC.
17. I have now held a meeting with the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner on 26th September together with a representative from the Safer Neighbourhoods Team and the Safer Roads Partnership to discuss speed enforcement across the Parish, namely the A456 through Blakedown, the B4188 Belbroughton Road and Stakenbridge Lane through Churchill.

The police advise that they have not done any enforcement on the B4188 and none is planned as the speed data taken shows that the scheme has worked. I am going to ask for the speed survey to take place and this will show us the up to date information as it is a couple of years now since we had the data.

The police are continuing to enforce on the A456 and this remains a community concern site.

The site was visited 35 times between Sept '23 ~ Aug '24 during which, 397 offences were detected. Speed data collected this year reveals the following:-

Northbound: (towards Birmingham) Mean – 26.0 MPH 85th% ile - 29.0 MPH
Southbound: (towards Kidderminster) Mean – 24.0 MPH 85th% ile -26.0 MPH

It is Stakenbridge Lane I was the most vocal about as the police accept there is a speeding problem here with mean speeds 32mph both east and westbound but the 85th% ile is 37mph eastbound and 38mph westbound so too high.

The police have agreed to look again at assessing the suitability of using the pavement near the bench which would be on the right if you were driving towards the Hagley direction. WCC have committed to doing the necessary to install the infrastructure to make this happen. The police now have 3 enforcement bikes whereas they only had 1 before so frankly this appears to have been the main issue. I am going to keep the pressure on and report back.

New Issues

1. Posts on the highway signage 'Welcome to Blakedown' on the A456 which are rotten have been reported for replacement.
 2. WCC have been in liaison with your clerk regarding a bench by the bus stop on the A456 and Hayley has said that the pavement doesn't look quite wide enough but if you provide a scale drawing I will pursue this for you.
 3. I have been made aware of the volume of water on the A456 when we had heavy rain a couple of weeks ago at a property opposite the Swan PH. I have been sent some footage and asked for WCC to look to see if the drainage connections are all ok and look at the capacity.
 4. I have had a resident in New Wood Lane contact me regarding a drainage issue.
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5. I have reported the ponding/flooding on the A456 just up from Deansford Lane. This has happened twice since the last meeting and again I have asked for the connections and capacity to be looked at.
6. Hayley has been liaising with your clerk re: the VAS signage on Rocky Lane. This signage belongs to the PC and the best advice is to liaise with Westcotec.
7. I have received a report of overhanging hedges past 77 Belbroughton Road from a local resident and have reported these.

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 has undertaken weed spraying around the ring road network in Kidderminster recently and is working with WFDC on this issue and WCC will be replacing the damaged highway barriers on the island at the bottom of Comberton Hill in mid-October.

Hayley Steele our highways liaison engineer has left and Barry Barnes is looking after me as an interim.

Strategic Issues County Wide

County Hall is still closed whilst contractors assess the scale of the RAAC issue. At its July cabinet meeting, Cabinet approved a budget for this work to be undertaken. We should know more as to the scale of the problem and potential cost over the next month or so.

WCC is nearing the end of an employment process which has had some local media interest over the last few weeks. In 2011 we employed all new employees in non-protected posts on 35 hours as opposed to 37 hours. This was to reduce salary costs as we had circa 3,500 FTE's back then and we obviously were in times of austerity. It was done as a way of safeguarding jobs. We have 143 employees still left on 37 hour contracts in comparison to 880 posts who are employed on 35 hour contracts.

Protected posts still on 37 hour contracts are predominantly children's and adults social workers.

WCC yet again, is already facing in year pressures on its revenue budget as a result of demands on its adults and children's social care budgets together with SEND pressures. Due to placement pressures after Q1 we are already forecast to be £15m overspent.

Nearly £5m is in adults social care on a £147m budget, with unit costs for providing care for the last 3 years being higher than forecast.

Those requiring packages of care is growing.

Children's social care is over spending by nearly £6m on a £138m budget.

The home to school transport overspend is £3m on a £35m budget.

Our SEND is still a cause for concern but this is a really complex area and WCC and Education are only one part. A lot of the criticism at our recent inspection was aimed at Health.

WCF has now moved back in house to WCC.

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

Marcus Hart
Deputy Leader
and Cabinet
Member with
Responsibility for
Corporate and
Communications

Electoral Division
Chaddesley

County Hall
Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2NP

Home
Silkwood Barn
Crundalls Court
Crundalls Lane
Worcestershire
DY12 1BN

Tel: 01299 402424

Email
mhart@worcestershire.gov.uk