

Charlton Cllr ELIZABETH EYRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT January 2021

County Issues

WCC Finance - As part of a plan to narrow the £26.5m gap in its budget, Worcestershire County Council is looking to increase the Council Tax in Worcestershire. The draft Budget is in the public domain. We are proposing an increase in spending on Highways – to £7.2m for footways, from £12m to £20m on roads, and four footway gangs will become ten or twelve, three paver machines will increase to four, an extra 2.5m is proposed for gully cleaning. Active Travel and Congestion reduction are key themes, as are reducing our Carbon footprint through our LED street lighting programme and other initiatives. Extra funding is proposed for Children’s Social Care.

Covid – as of 5 January 2021

Communications: WDC is ramping up its communications on social media, and signs are being printed to put around our parks and public spaces urging people to stay apart and limit the time they spend outdoors. The separately attached poster explains the rules.

I will be on social media and am sending posters to you with a request for you put up locally; including a Covid-19 advice leaflet. WDC will be using supermarkets to get the bulk of them out and ask our voluntary sector, town and parish councillors to support us with this.

Worcestershire’s infection rates are at the highest we have ever seen. In the past seven days alone, the County has 1,888 positive Covid-19 cases, which is more than all positive cases seen during May, June, July, August and September 2020 combined

Hospitals As well as an increase in the community, we have a number of Covid-positive in-patients in our hospitals. This is causing significant pressures on our local services. There have been no new Coronavirus-related deaths in hospitals in Worcestershire.

Vaccination From 4 January GP-led Primary Care Networks (PCNs) across Worcestershire will now have started running Covid-19 vaccine clinics for their eligible patients. PCNs are groups of general practices working more closely together, meaning that patients may be invited to receive the vaccine from a different location to their registered practice but will still be nearby to where they live. Patients are reminded that the NHS will contact people in priority groups when it is their turn to receive the vaccine, and they should not contact their GP practice directly asking for an appointment.

Care home vaccinations: PCNs across Herefordshire and Worcestershire have also now started to vaccinate local care home residents and staff, who are being prioritised with people aged 80 and above as part of this first phase of the vaccination programme.

Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine the NHS started the rollout of the new Oxford AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine in some parts of the country. The first Oxford AstraZeneca vaccinations are being delivered at a small number of hospitals for the first few days for surveillance purposes, as is standard practice before we expect to receive supplies in Worcestershire. The new Oxford vaccine is easier to transport and store than the Pfizer jab, which has to be kept at minus 70 degrees until shortly before it is used, which will make it easier to deliver in settings such as care homes.

Community: Use of village and community halls: The guidance on village and community halls has been updated. While most must close, there are a small number of activities that can still be used in a Covid-19 Secure way; this includes hosting blood donation sessions, polling stations, etc. WDC is sharing guidance with parish and town councils to pass on to relevant contacts where they do not directly operate the hall, but please feel free to circulate as well.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>

People in need of help

If people need help accessing food or other essentials, please ask them to contact **Worcestershire County Council's Here2Help** service is available to anyone who needs support or is clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding). If you have no-one to turn to for help, our service can respond and assist by collecting medicines and shopping. You can reach the service online; <https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help> They will then direct them to support locally.

During the first Lockdown, we sadly saw an increase in incidents of domestic violence. It is important to stress that fleeing domestic abuse is a reason to be outside your home in law. Our housing team can offer support and signpost people to the right help if they need it. There is also advice at www.wychavon.gov.uk/support

Libraries will remain open from 5 January to provide access to computers and the internet for people who cannot get online at home. The mobile library service will be suspended, and study desks will be unavailable until further notice. Customers will be able to return books into drop boxes at library entrances. Return dates for all existing loans will be extended until 28 February 2021, and no fines or reservation fees will be applied. Revised opening hours may be implemented at some libraries see [local library online](#) or by calling the customer contact centre on 01905 822722

A free 'Reserve and Collect' service will replace browsing and borrowing.

All computer sessions will be reduced to 50-minute slots and must be booked in advance.

Online services continue to grow. The Digital Library Hub is home to a growing collection of e-books, e audiobooks and e-magazines and a wide [range](#) of online resources. It also provides 24/7 access to a range of library services, events and activities. Current online library activities include Digital Book Groups, Storytimes, Bounce & Rhyme sessions, Lego Challenges, Coding Clubs, Wacky Wednesday family learning, Business and Employability Webinars, exclusive Poetry Performances, Virtual Language Cafes and Connect Bubbles; launched in November 2020 provides a safe way for Worcestershire residents to connect with other people online over a shared interest or activity. Library Digital Champion volunteers are providing 1:1 support with 'Introduction to Zoom' sessions. Connect bubbles and 'Introduction to Zoom' sessions can be booked via the Libraries Eventbrite page (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/worcestershire-libraries-18603259594>)

Library membership is free, and it is quick and easy to sign up for [digital membership online](#) ([https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20313/join the library](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20313/join_the_library))

Worcestershire Libraries www.worcestershire.gov.uk/Libraries

Business - A new campaign, 'New Year, New Start, New Opportunities', to support start-up businesses and entrepreneurs has been launched by Enterprising Worcestershire.

Business support- The Chancellor has announced one-off top-up grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property to help enterprises to through to the spring. Another £594 million is being made available to councils to support businesses that do not qualify for the grants but might be affected by the restrictions (businesses in the hospitality supply chain, for example). This is on top of any existing funding businesses were receiving during the tiering system. There are now several support schemes operating, and we are trying to make sense of the guidance as fast as possible so that we can start getting these payments out to businesses. The furlough scheme has also been extended to April 2021, and the 100% government-backed loans have been extended until March 2021. Our town centre recovery

officers are working with businesses on a new campaign to encourage people to support local traders from their own home's safety.

Education - Worcestershire County Council has welcomed the latest increase in funding for schools from central government. The County Council has received an expansion of the **financing for Worcestershire's schools** from Central Government. Over the last two years, funding policy has seen over £300 million allocated from Central Government to support the County's schools. The Council has seen a significant increase in the Schools Block Dedicated Schools Grant, which has risen from £314.6m in 2018-19 to £369.5m for 2021-22.

The local formula will continue in Worcestershire, as required, to include the DfE's statutory Minimum Funding Levels, which are increasing in 2021-22 to £4,180 from £3,750 for primary and to £5,415 from £5,000 for secondary.

Following the recent news that Catherine Driscoll will be leaving Worcestershire to become the new Director of Children's Services at Dudley, **Tina Russell** has been appointed Interim Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First and Interim Director of Children's Services initially for nine months, after following all appropriate governance arrangements. Tina is currently Director of Social Care & Safeguarding and has delivered significant Children's Social Care improvements since joining us four years ago. The recruitment process to appoint a permanent replacement for Catherine will begin in Summer 2021.

Transport- The Governance of West of Midlands Rail Ltd has changed to strengthen its position. The West Midlands Mayor was appointed as non-voting Chairman of West of Midlands Rail Ltd. The options were do nothing, Mayor as an observer, Mayor as non-voting director, voting director and voting chair.

Environment - 16,500 LED lanterns have now been installed across Worcestershire, marking the completion of the Council's **LED street light replacement project**. The quality of the white lighting produced by the LED luminaires provides a more controlled standard of illumination and minimal light pollution. Besides, the conversions to LED lights will result in a

significant and welcome reduction in the County's energy consumption. As part of the project, the Council has also replaced 750 concrete columns. Street lighting upgrades also continue to be delivered as part of the Council's Major Infrastructure Projects. Lighting improvements have already been made across many schemes, including Southern Link Road Phase 4, and Pinvin Crossroads with more to follow as other schemes progress. Besides, lighting improvements have also been made at several locations where new zebra installations are being introduced.

Highways: New Highways arrangements during Lockdown Following the Government's announcement of another national lockdown, WCC has been obliged to take the decision not to hold meetings with members of the public or Members themselves. The Liaison Engineers will continue to hold virtual meetings with members, so that face to face discussions can continue via Teams, and they will still carry out site visits alone to look at my issues and will, of course, report back to me. This is yet another challenge for us all, which I hope will not impact on our ability to deliver highway services for residents. These measures are in place until mid-February, in line with Government advice, when WCC will review the situation.

Parish Lengthsman scheme. WCC are now in a much better position for this latest Lockdown, and we are *not* proposing to fully suspend this again. WCC will write to Parishes to encourage them to revisit their earlier risk assessments with their Lengthsman to ensure that they have taken into account any change in circumstances and turn to WCC if they need more support.

Gullies - The Council cleared nearly 60,000 **gullies** in 2020 - over half of all the County's gullies! Keeping the gullies clear is an essential part of highways maintenance and ensures that the overall drainage system will not become blocked. It also helps to reduce the likelihood of flooding and helps surface water drain away quicker.

Winter maintenance teams were particularly active over the Christmas and New Year period, and wintry weather is set to continue so the teams will remain on high alert.

Weather and drainage: The vast majority of road closures associated with flooding have now reopened, and flood defences and pumps have either been removed or are in the process of being so – nevertheless, with groundwater tables at a high level, teams will remain in close contact with Environment Agency partners. The combination of wet and wintry weather looks set to present challenges that officers and contractors are ready to meet.

Local Issues

Minerals Local Plan Examination in Public later in the year

What the parish mad do to reduce local speeding

- Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS), a second one? Checking in both directions.
- Planters and cut verge enhancement at specific locations discuss with Barry.
- Education – make posters, possibly designed by children attending local School, a practical approach in other villages, such as Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire.
- On roads where speed is less than 34mph try Community Speed Watch. Parish would need to discuss which roads would be acceptable then set up enough volunteers for those roads if accepted. Fladbury good example of how it can work.
- If the road's speed is more than 34mph then the village should request police carry out enforcement activities – note (Dave Perridge) 85th percentile figure for all vehicles seems to be 38MPH.

Highway issues and what the county might do in terms of speeding – many of the points below relate to speeding. Note a recent proposal to the county was costed out at £3658.58 for road marking. A reminder

of 2k from my budget, parish money, and a bit of highways money can set the ball rolling. Suggest a meeting with Barry Barnes and Kieran Hemstock re all the items under this heading

Ch Footway on the Strand – tree roots damage, being priced up this week, traffic lights will be needed for work, kerbs replaced cannot be the old lias kerbs need to be concrete for strength. It is a problematic site due to the tree – lights will be required.

Ch Cemetery Bridge repaint – done?

Ch Hampton to Pershore Cycleway – no sign of any activity on this item. I have contacted the officer. I have support from you D Cllr. I am asking the officer to come to zoom with the parish.

Ch 21 Canada Bank spoil and trees in the road – believe this point is resolved.

CH 22 & 23 Boston Lane hedges and verge growing into the road, space for vehicles is very restricted, urgent action needed – Barry was working to identify whose hedge WCC or Riparian owner – this is policy.

Ch24 Surface road Cemetery Bridge to Jubilee Bridge

Ch26 Field Barn passing places – need repairing in a quality manner.

CH27 Rural Broadband end Ryden Lane – may be poor – not sure on this one?

CH28 – 912379 Poplar trees in Haselor Lane. RL(+Western Power) had all bar one chopped down before Christmas. One old poplar remains a risk to road users and compromises telephone supply. Need to check whose land – policy, if WCC will need an exact location. Three words location would make it easier 912379

Ch29 – Cut hedge between Jubilee Bridge and Cemetery Bridge.

Ch30 Haselor Lane surface water off the tracks – can something be done?

Ch31 Church Leys – Issue – may link to 35?

Ch32 Canada Bank move 30mph village gateway and 30mph marks on road Southern approach to Charlton along Yessell Lane and Canada Bank, where the road runs downhill sharply at point 30MPH sign is located, difficult for drivers to reduce their speed from the 60MPH National Speed Limit. 30mph moved from the 30MPH speed limit signs c.75 metres south from Canada Bank onto Yessell Lane to coincide with the existing village gateways. A short length does not need TPO I believe BB agrees to this?

Can33 300 / 200 / 100 yards countdown markers be installed on Yessell Lane blind slope prior to the 30MPH sign? Not usual and would be high maintenance cost for the parish.

Ch34 Where appropriate change some limit and other warning signs to be mounted on either yellow or grey backgrounds to increase driver recognition levels. Please identify which ones and include any new ones.

Ch35 Dragons Teeth on the roads leading into Charlton on Yessell Lane, Church Leys (Crothorne Parish) Canada Bank and Mill Bank (Fladbury Parish). Clarify where but need a survey.

Ch35 Gullies filled with spillage after the flood - Church Leys and Strand – can these be cleared, has street sweeper been used?

Ch36 Stile at the junction of footpath 506(B) and Ryden Lane Charlton - done?

Ch37 Consideration should also be given to implementing a weight limit of 7.5 tonnes HGW to stop heavy goods vehicles using Haselor Lane as a cut-through to avoid traffic congestion on the A46. Asked before will see if policy change.

Ch38 Haselor Lane, request for a change in speed limit from national speed limit of 60mph, along the entire length - reasons road width mainly <5.5 metres, residential and farm properties with access/exits directly onto the road, often hidden by blind bends in the road. Farm consideration should be given to further reducing the limit for c.300 metres either side of the entrance due to poor visibility around the bend, poor road surface, Frequency of pooling of water following heavy rain. I will put forward, but I do not think it will meet policy criteria based responses in other areas more built-up than Haselor Lane

Ch39 Increased number of 30mph repeater signs on the main routes through the village, Mill Bank, Canada Bank and Yessell Lane – I believe this has been agreed do not forget the backing

Ch 40 Can we add legends such as “remember it’s 30”, “it’s still 30” etc. on to highway signs. Could this be a parish initiative?

Ch 41 Extend the 30mph limits in both Crothorne and Charlton along the entire length of Church Leys to reduce the speeds of vehicles approaching the junction of Church Leys, Mill Bank and The Strand, where gravel run-off from the adjacent fields often causes skidding, and flooding occurs after bouts of heavy rain. Church Leys between the outskirts of Crothorne and Charlton less than 400 metres in length and <5.5 metres in width for most of its length is 60mph.

I think the officer response was ‘The Department for Transport Circular 01/2013, “Setting local speed limits” states in Section 3: *The minimum length of a speed limit should generally be not less than 600 metres to avoid too many changes of speed limit along the route’* Need to check if can do.

Ch42 D images painted on the surface of all roads approaching Charlton village- I understand this is not a practice in Worcestershire yet so not agreed.

Ch43 Warning signs such as “beware farm entrance”, “hidden vehicle entrance/ exit”, “beware farm vehicles” or similar should be installed at defined points along Haselor Lane. I understand this is feasible – part of the costs.

Ch44 Pedestrians’ warning sign on Canada Bank requested moved c.100 yards further south to give drivers more warning of the potential hazard due to the lack of a footpath. I understand this was agreed with Barry Barnes.

Ch 45 Gradient signs* between the village gateways and the junction with The Strand and Ryden Lane. *Canada Bank to warn drivers – I understand Worcestershire does not do this – we need to check.

Ch46 Plate stating “No footway for 400 metres” should be added. This may not be a priority.

2021

CH1 Damage to Bridge Nu Wels engineering – work being costed including scaffolding, awaiting quote before the decision.

CH2 Canada Bank Bridge – post-flooding on 23rd/24th December loose silt washed away, a pile of gravel under the bridge on the downstream side – ditto where two arches and concrete plinth upstream? Silt, gravel, tree roots under the bridge that need EA team? EA always stress that the entrance, area under the bridge and outflow areas should be kept clear to maximise water flow. Jetter to shift the pile of gravel and remaining silt on the concrete plinth from under the bridge. Get this out. Whose jobs WCC or EA..