

MINUTES OF LICHFIELD DISTRICT PARISH FORUM

Wednesday 7 March 2018 at 7.00 pm
Held in the Council Chamber
District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield

CHAIRMAN: Councillor R A J Bamborough (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

PRESENT:

Lichfield District Council Parish Forum Members – Councillor C Greatorex and Councillor Mrs N Pullen

Also Present:

Councillor Mrs J Altham (Alrewas Parish Council), Councillor Mrs B Brettell (Burntwood Town Council), Councillor S E Brown (Curborough, Elmhurst, Farewell & Chorley Parish Council), Ms Jean Burton (Clerk, Alrewas Parish Council), Councillor J Cannon (Whittington & Fisherwick Parish Council), Councillor Mrs M Conolly (Burntwood Town Council), Councillor R Cox (Armitage with Handsacre Parish Council), Councillor D Cross (Fradley & Streethay Parish Council), Councillor R Dyott (Swinfen & Packington Parish Council), Councillor Mrs J Eagland (County Councillor for Lichfield Rural North), Councillor G D King (Hammerwich Parish Council), Councillor Mrs P Kynaston (Hints and Canwell Parish Council), Councillor G Kynaston (Hints and Canwell Parish Council), Councillor J Pegg (Alrewas Parish Council), Ms Kate Roberts (Fradley and Streethay Parish Council), Councillor M Warfield (Weeford Parish Council), Councillor K V Wasdell (Hammerwich Parish Council), Councillor M Wilcox (Leader – Lichfield District Council), Mr Peter Young (Hints & Canwell Parish Council & Wall Parish Council)

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Councillor Bamborough welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs S Barnett, Councillor Mrs S Banevicius, Councillor Mrs B Constable, Councillor D Constable, Councillor Miss B Fisher, Councillor D Leytham, Councillor J Powell, Councillor M Tittley and Councillor J Crowe (Wall Parish Council).

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 6 JULY 2017

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 July 2017 as circulated were received. Councillor Cox explained that he attended these meetings representing Armitage with Handsacre Parish Council not as a Lichfield District Councillor and this was noted.

4. PRESENTATION ON PLANS FOR DELIVERY OF HS2 PHASE 1

Tahir Ahmed, Engagement Manager for HS2 introduced himself and his colleagues - Andy de Bell (BBV Community Engagement Manager) and Matthew Price, (LM - Engagement Advisor) and presented an update on HS2 Phase1. The current HS2 works with Lichfield include an Electricity pylon diversion from Kings Bromley to Lichfield and ecological – surveys across the area with the creation of mitigations sites. All traffic routes are discussed with Staffordshire County Council including any limited lane closures. Andy de Bell explained the work being undertaken by BBV in delivering against their staged detailed design plans. This work is due

to be completed in November 2018 with main works construction commencing in Spring 2019. BBV will be conducting Ground Investigation surveys over the coming months and will engage with communities and stakeholders prior to undertaking the works.

Traffic Management is a key concern for local communities and HS2 has set up a Traffic Liaison Group with Staffordshire County Council, Lichfield District Council, Transport providers, Highway England, emergency services and other key stakeholders to discuss how we mitigate the traffic impacts across the area.

Parish Councils were asked to inform their communities to record the license plate number of any HS2 vehicles which they feel may be obstructing or causing a hazard in the area. This can be reported to the HS2 Helpdesk on 08081434434 and will be investigated with our contractors.

An overview was presented on the Community and Environment Fund and the Business and Local Economy Funds (details provided in the presentation). Parish Councils were asked to consider projects in their area for which they could apply to these funds for. These funds will fund projects which will offset the impact of the construction of Phase One of HS2 on local communities and businesses.

A question and answer session then followed:-

Q. When can we expect to see significant construction?

A. *The detailed design phase should be completed by November 2018, with construction commencing late Spring 2019. HS2 will continue to engage with communities and stakeholders over this period.*

Q. As we have to deal with two sets of Highways – Highways England and SCC we generally know in advance of road closures, will this be the same? Also in some areas there are weight restrictions on the roads. At another group they have said HS2 vehicles will take precedence, is this true? Will weight restrictions not apply?

A. *HS2 have met with Parish Councils already and will continue to engage across Lichfield during construction. All traffic routes are set out in the Environmental Statements and HS2 is committed to only utilising these roads. Any additional highway requirements would have to be approved by Staffordshire County Council. We would communicate any road closures through existing channels (Highways England etc.) and notifying communities and stakeholders. We will be happy to come out and meet any Parish Council to discuss any concerns. Also there are a number of drop-in sessions including one every 2 weeks at the Council's Frog Lane Offices if anyone wants to raise concerns/questions.*

Q. A lot of concern around compounds and where are they going to be?

A. *The compound locations are detailed in the Environmental Statements and HS2 are happy to discuss these at drop-in sessions or willing to come out to Parish Council meetings.*

Q. Can churches apply for Community Investment?

A. *Yes, churches who have project ideas which benefit the wider community can apply.*

Q. As utter chaos is imminent and disaster to communities they represent, we would be interested to know who had been contacted in Handsacre around the new access road due to go there as it is by a school. The construction vehicles passing through are a great concern and we would like to know how many vehicles and how often? Why hasn't the Parish Council (Armitage with Handsacre) received notification? It is imperative the Parish Council receive exact details as and when.

A. *HS2 have engaged with the current Head Teacher at Hayes Meadow Primary School in relation to recent Ground Investigation works near the school and considered the needs of the school. We are aware of the narrow roads in the area and the limitation of the proposed access route around the school. All traffic routes and movements are detailed within the Environment Statement.*

Full Presentation attached.

5. EMERGENCY PLANNING/REST CENTRE ACCOMMODATION

Gareth Davies, Head of Regulatory Services, Housing & Wellbeing introduced himself and explained his colleague Alex Smedley from Civil Contingencies was not able to make this revised date and so he presented the Rest Centres Presentation on his behalf. Mr Davies appealed for support and asked if any Parishes could identify any new Rest Centre locations as currently Lichfield District Council only has the Leisure Centres as identified Rest Centres. He explained that the Presentation detailed the facilities needed to become a Rest Centre which included basic kitchen facilities, basic utilities, toilet and multiple rooms if possible. He confirmed that Elford Village Hall and Fazeley Parish Hall had previously been used and sought support from all Parishes. Mr Davies said letters had gone out to all Parish Clerks asking for Rest Centres to be identified but as yet, only one response had been received. Therefore, Mr Davies said a further letter would be sent again in the near future and if anyone could help to please contact either Alex Smedley, Civil Contingencies Officer (contact details on the attached Presentation) or himself at gareth.davies@lichfielddc.gov.uk. A full assessment and exercise would be carried out at any locations identified.

6. THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY: MEANINGFUL PROPORTION PRESENTATION

Craig Jordan, Head of Economic Growth introduced himself and Maxine Turley, Spatial Policy and Delivery Officer. Mr Jordan gave some background on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the charging areas and Meaningful Proportion (Presentation attached). Mr Jordan suggested that members look at the Regulation 123 List as this sets out the infrastructure requirement.

Mrs Turley explained that CIL regulations place a duty on the collecting authority (LDC) to pass on a meaningful proportion of the levy to local councils, which in LDC's case were our parishes and that this must be paid every 6 months which has been identified as the end of October and April. Mrs Turley said her department would be talking to the Parish Councils who are due their meaningful proportion very soon and gave a brief description of what this can be spent on (detailed in Presentation). She asked for all members to give it some thought and discussion as it was hoped when the visits take place there can be some work done together to address the community needs. Mrs Turley explained there are stringent report needs i.e. annual monitoring to be done and her team would provide guidance on this when visiting as it must match the LDC monitoring. Mrs Turley advised that there will be a Member training session around this shortly but suggested if anyone wanted to understand more they could look at LDC's website/the Planning Portal or contact any member of the Spatial Policy Team who would be happy to help and discuss further and even attend any Parish Council meeting. Mrs Turley also said there would be Parish Council leaflets published hopefully by the end of April which would be self-explanatory and sent to all Parish Clerks.

A question and answer session then followed:-

Q. What is the justification to determine "infrastructure" and is there a dispute mechanism?

A. *Infrastructure improvements is the definition given by the regulations including the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure or anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development place on an area.*

Really it will be for the District Council and the Parish Council to talk about as there is no dispute mechanism in place.

Q. Is it floor area not floor prints?

A. Mrs Turley confirmed that the CIL amount for each development was calculated on floor space (X£ per square metre) and not the footprint of the development and therefore it was correct that first and subsequent floors would be included in the calculation.

Q. Do the Parish Councils get consulted at how the remaining CIL money gets distributed?

A. *Both LDC and Parish Councils need to engage together and must start the consultation on how to distribute as soon as possible. Mr Jordan confirmed The Regulation 123 List identifies the strategic infrastructure required to support the Local Plan Strategy. Mrs Turley agreed to circulate this to members with the Minutes.*

Q. As Fradley has 1,000+ houses due to go up soon, to plan ahead Fradley Parish Councillors need to have insight in to what monies have been and will be secured to have a full picture and to be able to plan for their Parish – how can they find out what’s going on?

A. *The Spatial Policy and Delivery Team are aware of the Parishes request for information relating to planning obligations including triggers and phasing and this work was currently being completed.*

7. UNIVERSAL CREDIT – PRESENTATION

Pat Leybourne, Head of Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits delivered a Presentation on Universal Credit and explained that this is a new monthly payment for people of working age who are on low income or out of work. For the Lichfield District the roll out of Universal Credit was to be in four stages with the bulk of the District being affected from 29 November 2017. Mrs Leybourne gave an overview and said as time has gone on it has become more and more refined. In Lichfield it is linked to the post codes of the Job Centres. Mrs Leybourne confirmed that the Lichfield District Council will still administer Housing Benefit exceptional claims – i.e. pensioners, people in supported accommodation, people with three or more children – detailed in the Presentation attached. Mrs Leybourne said there was a lot of support from DWP and our Revenues & Benefits Officers had had training to help claimants if they have any queries or questions. Our Customer Services Teams have also informally started digital support. Mrs Leybourne explained that the claimants have a journey and must apply on-line initially; they will then be called within 7 days for an interview and must take all evidence requested to that interview; interaction with the Job Centre/DWP throughout is a must. A heavy emphasis has been put on to the on-line claiming which may be problematic for some but phone or face-to-face is another option. Mrs Leybourne explained that Universal Credit is intended to mimic a monthly salary payment and the expectation is to move to one monthly payment from perhaps three or more payments coming through. From April 2018 anyone moving from housing benefit to Universal Credit will get their housing benefit paid for an additional two weeks, that will overlap with their housing costs paid with their first payment of Universal Credit and there was an opportunity for claimants to apply for an advance payment. Mrs Leybourne said there was additional support for landlords detailed in the Presentation also and landlords can ask the DWP for a “managed” payment. Full details can be found at www.gov.uk and www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/residents/benefits/Universal-Credit.

A question and answer session then followed:-

Q. In relation to the advanced payment - do claimants have to pay it back in one payment or can it be taken out of their monthly allowance?

A. *The claimants can have up to 100% of their first payment and pay it back over the year and pay it out of their monthly allowance by agreement with DWP.*

Q. Do claimants get referred to a Food Bank by either LDC or Job Centres?

A. Anyone going to a Food Bank must have a voucher and these are available from the Doctors, Citizens Advice Bureau, Social Workers, Job Centres and in certain circumstances our Housing Team. Front line staff here at LDC give out the phone numbers and useful website addresses to people who need support.

Q. If a Landlord is worried and asks for support from DWP to have their rent collected direct will this be with the claimant's permission?

A. Assumingly the landlord will need to talk to the tenants (claimants) first and if the landlord then contacts the DWP for direct payments they wouldn't give out this information with the tenant's (claimant's) permission.

Q. What about people who are unable to manage their money who may have additional problems and this could lead to homelessness, especially people who have children.

A. The DWP are very keen to identify vulnerable people to make sure they get the correct support, especially around budgeting and assure us that if people are vulnerable they will do all they can to help.

8. CHANGE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Councillor Wilcox stated that the message from Central Government was that Authorities need to become more self-sufficient in the coming years. Therefore we need to look carefully at the services we provide and take any opportunity to work with parishes in looking to them to take over certain functions i.e. grounds maintenance, parks, open spaces.

Councillor Wilcox talked about the introduction of Universal Credit and its potential issues around the idea of individuals taking personal responsibility to pay their rents etc. and that the District would work closely with our housing providers to ensure tenants do not get themselves in to debt.

Councillor Wilcox spoke about the uncertainties facing Local Government in the form of the "Fair Funding Review" and that all tiers of Local Government were trying to ensure they received their fair share of the "pie" - it was important that as part of a two tier system that we work closely with the County Council in this matter.

Councillor Wilcox also stated that by 2020 we would not receive any financial support from Central Government and in fact we would be paying monies to the Government which meant we would need to be able to generate income from new sources such as the recent charge for garden waste.

Councillor Wilcox commented that Government see Lichfield as an affluent district who have over many years acted responsibly and created efficiencies and yet still be able to deliver key front line services. Other financial uncertainties are from New Homes Bonus and Business Rate Retention which were still being decided upon by Government.

Councillor Wilcox also informed the Forum that the Council had a balanced budget for the next financial year, but that in subsequent years we would see a funding gap begin to appear and by 2020/21 this would rise to £2m.

A comments, question and answer session then followed:-

Comment - If more emphasis is to be given to joint working, it was felt this Forum was even more needed.

Comment – If you add up all the precepts in all the Parish Council areas and quote the Lichfield District Council precept being the lowest – this would be useful as an explanation on the Council Tax bills.

Comment – This has been my first meeting and I have found it extremely useful. However, the agenda and invite for the Parish meeting goes to our Ward Councillors every time but it is never replied to and they have never attended.

A. Councillor Wilcox said good practice would be for the District Councillors to attend Parish Council meetings and he stated that he would ask all his District Councillors if they could try to attend in the future and reply to invitations.

Q. As Parish Councils are not capped in terms of their precept, is there not a danger of District Councils and Borough Councils offloading on to the Parishes? Also of SCC offloading to LDC?

A. Difficult one; Lichfield District Council does work tightly with SCC and feel all District Councillors should be invited to the Parish Council meetings so everyone is fully advised and communication is key.

Q. Is there any talk about a dual level of Council?

A. In future, certainly this could be an option as there are a lot of models across the country now. Funding is such that you have to do with it what you can whether it be unitary or not. As a district we have a lot to offer and we need to make our services work as best we can.

Q. As everyone has done their budget for next year's precepts; can we say when they will receive their meaningful proportion?

A. With regard to the Lichfield district, we are just going to talk to Fradley within the next two weeks and other parishes will follow. It has to be collectively talking between the District and the Parishes.

Comment – Councillor N Pullen said she was a Staffordshire County Councillor as well as a District Councillor and had some responsibility for the maintenance of the roads as a County Councillor. She advised that she would be attending the next meeting with a colleague – Mr Wayne Mortiboys (a County Council Officer) to deliver a new County Council initiative called PHP (People Helping People). She said Mr Mortiboys would be open to questions on that date.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman reminded all that there was a GDPR Training Session next Wednesday 14 March 2018 in the Council Chamber at 7pm for all members to attend and learn all about the new General Data Protection Regulations which come in to force in May 2018 replacing the Data Protection Act 1998. Everyone welcome.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 22nd October 2018 – 7pm

(The Meeting closed at 9:25 pm)

CHAIRMAN