
County News

Report by Councillor Chris Saint

March 2008

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New budget for drainage

I was one of a group of members who have promoted requests for more money to spend on highway draining – or rather more money to keep the drains and culverts clean.

I have been and remain critical of highway officers who keep telling us that the work done on draining since the July floods has been adequate, when we can see that this is just not the case. Recently I asked for clarification on how they commission gulley emptying and got this reply:

We have two machines countywide to do some 60,000 gullies. 2 further jettors are available to deal with problem sites. The work is being done effectively within the available resources. The floods have greatly increased demands and backlog of work to over 1200 days.

That is not the hunky-dory message that has been given out on some occasions. However, your County Councillors have realised, for some time, that there is a need for more resources and I am one who has argued for better budgets targeted at the problem. On 5th February, the County Council budget was decided and £500,000 extra was set aside for each of the next two years to keep gullies and culverts cleared. I sincerely hope that some of the money will be spent on steps to stop the grime and muck getting into the gullies in the first place.

Budget

WCC has set its budget for 2008/09 with a 3.9% increase in Council Tax.

Mill Street access

After all the chaos of last October, I could not believe that Severn Trent wanted to dig up the road again at the junction of Mill Street and West Street to do even more culvert repairs. What was even more incredible was the four mile diversion via Tredington island just to be able to turn from West Street into Mill street as the right hand turn by the saddlers was going to be blocked for up to three weeks. When I described this as bizarre, the officers quoted rules at me!

Traders rightly feared for their livelihoods again. We need to encourage the shoppers into Shipston without having heavy lorries diverted on minor roads, so I asked for a highways officer to attend the Town Council on Monday 11th February, the day the diversion was set up. He agreed to ask Severn Trent for changes in signage, and has made that request.

Last October, Severn Trent appeared to ignore requests to alter their temporary road signs. Lets hope they do better this time.

Family Information Service

Our Children's Information Service (CIS) has developed into the Family Information Service (FIS) giving free impartial advice and signposting for Warwickshire families, children and young people (aged 0-20), schools and practitioners.

For information on childcare, early education places, working parent's rights, support services, special needs and/or disabilities and more:

Contact: 084 5090 8044 (low-rate)

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis

First anniversary for PHILLIS

Somebody rang me the other day and asked for advice about disabled parking. My reply was *Ask Phillis*, the County Council service that helps people aged over 50 to live independently in their own homes has just celebrated its first anniversary.

Trained staff can advise those who contact PHILLIS on many aspects of living, so that older people can independently get jobs done around the house, get in shopping, socialise, join leisure groups and a host of other activities. PHILLIS has just celebrated her first birthday so keep he busy

Want to know more? Ring PHILLIS on 01926 731144 or use the County Council website:

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/phillis

Localities are near

Work is progressing to reshape the Area committees of both Stratford District and Warwickshire County Councils, incorporate the PACT panels set up by the Police and invite other public agencies to take part in a bold new venture. Starting, perhaps in May, we expect there to be two types of Committee with all your local councillors.

1. The localities forum
2. The joint area committee

The localities forum will cover Shipston and the six rural wards that cover all the parishes in south Warwickshire. A further, quite separate, localities forum will cover Stratford-upon-Avon town.

The joint Area committee will combine the two localities fora for decision-making.

However, I hear of problems resolving just what powers will be delegated to the new area committees. The county Council is asking Stratford District council to delegate more of their decision making to the proposed new joint committee.