

# Lighthorne Parish Council Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019

## County Councillor's Report

### 1. General

September has been a very quiet month at the County Council with our first full Council meeting scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019. Staff continue to understand their new responsibilities as they return from their summer holidays. I will give a comprehensive review of any decisions taken at the full council meeting in my next report.

Indecision over Brexit continues to hold up long term planning as does an impending General Election whose date is not yet known. The Budget preparations next year are beginning to take shape but changes to the financial allocations from central government does imply that no final financial decisions can be taken at the moment.

### 2. Children's Services

I am really pleased that the DfE has announced that Warwickshire has been chosen to be part of a new project called "*Strengthening Families, Protecting Children*". This means that WCC will be able to go further and faster with its restorative practice cultural change across the County Council and partner agencies. Restorative practice is about starting with strengths and building relationships. The announcement is very appropriate as the Children's Safeguarding Partnership has also agreed that other agencies will adopt the same approach and work together to implement a Restorative Child Protection System across Warwickshire.

The project will mean that we will work with our colleagues in Leeds to implement a similar model in Warwickshire. We will receive a proportion of money to complete this. The total DfE investment for the whole project, across 15 Local Authorities is £84 million. We do not know yet exactly how much money we will receive but we will be working with Leeds and the DfE to finalise the implementation plan and budget.

What we do know, is that we will be looking to:

- **Expand the Family Group Conference (FGC) Service.** This will enable FGCs to take place earlier and with a targeted support level. FGCs support families and communities to establish their own solutions to problems.
- **Expand our Special Guardianship Support Team.** So that we provide proactive support to family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles or other connected people who are caring for children.
- **Provide further training and support in relational practice.** This will be within the County Council and extended across our partner agencies. The objective is to train 10,000 professionals including teachers, health professionals, police, voluntary and community organisations in restorative practice.

This investment will enable us to extend services so early help is provided, keeps families together and will reduce the need for children to enter care.

### 3. HS2

In August 2019, the Government launched an independent review, chaired by Douglas Oakervee, into whether and how to proceed with the High Speed 2 project. In September 2019, the Secretary of State for Transport instructed HS2 Ltd "to consider what works affecting ancient woodland clearances can be delayed for the duration of the review. This ensures we avoid irreversible decisions without major impacts on cost and schedule".

HS2 has confirmed that it must strike a sensible balance between keeping the programme on track and recognising that some works are irreversible. HS2, therefore, has been working with the Department for Transport and contractors to assess the planned ancient woodland works. The decision-making process has also involved discussions with relevant, specialist stakeholders, including Natural England.

Other essential preparatory works will continue during this period including general vegetation clearance, fencing, preparation of site compounds, and ground investigations. HS2 is continuing to assess and monitor this programme of work and any related impacts on ancient woodlands. Should that ongoing assessment result in any changes to its position, the public will be informed as soon as possible. They are delivering an extensive community engagement programme to ensure that local people are kept up-to-date with any works in their area.

Highway maintenance and other disruptions will continue as utilities are provided for any new housing.

**Cllr Chris Williams**  
**Member for Kineton and Red Horse Division**  
**06.10.2019**