

County Councillor's update for Warndon Parish Council meeting on 8th April 2024

New secondary school off Newtown Road – put back by 2 years

At county cabinet meeting on Thurs 28th March, a detailed report on secondary education provision was provided. This included an update on the proposed new secondary school of Newtown Road. It is well worth reading.

You can download the documents (agenda reports pack, item 8, plus appendices) at <https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=131&MId=7178>

The very short summary is:

- **The planning application has not yet been submitted** (to county, not city, planners)
- **the new planned opening date is now Sept 2028** (was Sept 2026)
- **the lowest capital cost estimate has increased to nearly £60m** (was £50m) plus ~£2.6m for additional accommodation & repurposing at existing schools (excluding resolving highways capacity constraints)

Para 63 (printed page 45) of the meeting agenda documents states: *“Due to the complexity of the ecology, the linked Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and highways capacity constraints in the surrounding area, further work is required to address these within the planning application. This will result in additional works and an impact on the programme.”*

At the meeting I asked the cabinet members whether the words *“...highways capacity constraints in the surrounding area...”* refer to the issues that Warndon PC raised with John Hobbs, County Council Director of Economy and Infrastructure, in a meeting facilitated by the late Cllr Andy Roberts, in June/July 2023.

Those issues included: the likely impact on active travel arrangements, from traffic congestion on Newtown Rd; local fly-parking issues arising from insufficient parking at the hospital site; potential ASB issues in relation to the proposed (dead end) access road off the by-pass.

I am very keen to follow up on these issues and for our county council to continue their engagement with Warndon Parish Council and local residents, and asked for a meeting with the project leaders before the planning application is submitted.

County council finances:

At full council 15th Feb 2024 the -2024/25 Proposed Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025-2028 were determined.

In common with the majority of county councils and unitary authorities, the our county council has experienced significant financial pressures. These result from increasing costs in Children's Social Care placements, Home to School Transport and Adult Social Care. These demand-led pressures continued and, after mitigation measures during the year, left a projected £19m overspend at the year end. However, the underlying pressures totalled £35m (structural deficit).

In addition, the Council needs to make reasonable provision for the likely pay and price inflation, further predicted demand in social care and the cost of delivering planned works projects and improvements which added a further £52m. When added to the structural deficit, these total £87m worth of pressures that need to be addressed through the budget.

Council have lobbied central government for extra funding, securing £27.9m (£5m of which announced in recent weeks). The financial pressures were recognised as needing national attention through funding and reform.

It was agreed that council tax would be increased by 2.99% plus 2% increase for Adult Social Care. Together with the changes in the base budget, this is due to generate an additional £19.6m.

The draft meeting minutes can be viewed at

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=129&MId=5628>

The next full council meeting is on 16th May 2024 at Wychavon District Council (Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 1PT

Two key environmental plans have been approved by Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet.

At the County's Cabinet meeting on 28th March, the go-ahead was given to move forward with the brand-new Environment Improvement Plan and the updated Net Zero Carbon Plan.

The Environment Improvement Plan sets out the Council's strategies, detailing what will be done and how the Council is working with partners to preserve and protect the environment for future generations.

The Net Zero Carbon Plan, builds on the first plan, published in 2020, to detail the Council's plans to tackle climate change.

Sue Crow, Worcestershire County Council's Strategic Programme Manager for Economy, Sustainability and Tourism said: "Both of these plans are incredibly important in supporting the Council in its ambition to enhance the county's environment."

The Environment Improvement Plan defines eight key priorities, including natural environment, energy, waste, transport, Net Zero Council, green economy, flooding and communities.

The plan will be monitored by the number of trees planted, hectares of biodiversity gain, reduction of carbon emissions, reducing waste produced, active travel improvements, new or improved cycleways, County Council carbon emissions, growth in the green economy, protecting homes and business from flooding, homes benefitting from energy advice and grants and healthy walks delivered across the county.

Details available via <https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/environment>

Flooded local footpaths:

Woodgreen Drive to Tolladine Road: I understand that blocked drain gullies will be cleared in the next few weeks, to reduce rainwater ponding on this path.

A local resident has complained about **water ponding at Sudeley Park entrance**, approximate location <https://w3w.co/soil.humble.tender>: I understand that this is a long-standing situation and complicated by the land being one of the parcels awaiting adoption by city council. I am grateful for Cllr Dawn Merriman's help and patience in dealing with this issue at this location and look forward to hearing how its resolution progresses.

Path beside Tolladine wood, near Harlech Close, approximate location <https://w3w.co/tanks.intro.lock>: I am keen to hear how its resolution progresses and am keen to help if I can.