

FOCUS



LIBERAL
DEMOCRATS

May
2017
Thelwall

www.warringtonlibdems.org.uk

Bob to stand in General Election

Warrington Liberal Democrats have selected Cllr Bob Barr to stand again for Warrington South in the General Election.

Bob said, "On 8 June every vote for the Liberal Democrats is a vote to change the direction of the country and stop a hard Brexit. We offer the people of Warrington a real alternative and a vision for Britain that is open, tolerant and united. Theresa May's hard Brexit agenda will be bad for Warrington and a disaster for the country. It risks crashing our economy and leaving us isolated on the global stage.

Jeremy Corbyn would be a disaster for the country too. The Labour Party is hopelessly divided. Their leader has no plan for the economy and offers no leadership. Every time it has mattered, he has given the Prime Minister a blank cheque on Brexit.

The Prime Minister promised many times that she would not call a snap election. She broke this promise." **Since she called it, over 12,000 people have joined the Liberal Democrats.**



Pride in Warrington

Warrington Councillors have agreed unanimously that the Leader and the Chief Executive should jointly write to the Chairman of Peel Holdings asking the company to paint the town's swing bridges and put in place a regular painting programme for the future. This came about from a motion proposed by the Liberal Democrats at a Council meeting.



Cllr Wendy Johnson says, "The swing bridges look dilapidated and give a very bad impression of Warrington. The Company has been totally resistant to requests from thousands of residents who have signed petitions as well as the MP for Warrington South. What kind of impression do swing bridges give to visitors?"

Peel Holdings has ambitious plans for developments in Warrington so the least it can do is show the town the respect it deserves. Painting the bridges would be a small price to pay to show its intention of having a productive partnership with the town from which both the company and Warrington's residents can benefit."

No homes without infrastructure

Local Liberal Democrat Councillors are standing alongside residents in objecting to the new houses proposed for Grappenhall Heys and Appleton Cross. Plans went before Warrington Council's planning committee but had to be deferred because over a hundred residents were left outside the Council Chamber unable to hear the debate.

Following on from months of meetings between the Homes and Communities Agency, the Council and local councillors, we were disappointed that the proposals are being taken forward without properly taking into account residents' concerns over traffic and infrastructure. Roads are already grid-locked at times.

Disappointment

Councillor Bob Barr who sits on the planning committee says, "It was quite wrong for these two major applications to be on the same long agenda as minor applications. Residents have every right to a proper consultation and a vision of how the area will develop sustainably. They need reassurance that school places, medical facilities, shops and community centres will be in place to serve the expanded population before houses are occupied.

Cllr Ryan Bate, Chairman of the Parish Council, adds, "Residents have worked alongside local councillors to publicise and mobilise support for the campaign. It has been a fantastic effort and I thank them for their support. We are now asking the Council and the HCA to stop and rethink."



Bob with the Chairman of Stockton Heath Parish Council, Peter Walker

The Canal deserves better



It is not just the swing bridges that need proper maintenance. There are other problems too.

Cllr Bob Barr says, "A few weeks ago there was a public relations disaster. The voyage of Daniel Adamson, a 114 year old newly restored steamship, was delayed when the Knutsford Road swing bridge broke down and refused to open for 75 minutes.

We all remember Boxing Day in 2015 when the sluices didn't work properly causing flooding in parts of Thelwall and Lymm. We have never received a satisfactory answer from Peel about what went wrong."

Cllr Wendy Johnson adds, "The state of the Locks leaves much to be desired. They are a very poor advert for visitors travelling along the Canal. The Company appears to take no responsibility for the congestion and air pollution that swings during the day cause."



Ongoing anger at No 6 Bus Route change



In the last FOCUS we said how angry Thelwall residents were at the changes to the No 6 bus route made in September. Sadly little has changed despite the efforts of your local councillors!

Cllr Cliff Taylor says, "In late March the Parish Council and the Head Teacher from Thelwall Junior School sent a joint letter to Network Warrington pointing out that our main concern was safety. We said that there were persistent reports from residents who live nearby and from

parents at the School that buses are often brought to a halt as children leave School. Sometimes they are forced to mount the pavement to get through. This is deeply worrying and although there have thankfully been no reported incidents during the last twelve months, the issue is plainly not going away. We are dismayed that there is no sign of flexibility by the bus company.

Cllr Louise Fernyhough adds, "We have suggested an alternative route using Bell Lane instead of All Saints Drive but there is no sign they have looked at this seriously. A month later they replied to our letter claiming the road is no more dangerous than any other road along which they operate. They claim it would take too long for the bus to be re-routed down Bell Lane and would require an extra bus which would cost too much! They have looked at Stanton Road too but this would leave current customers stranded so has sensibly been rejected too."

Cllr Ian Marks says, "We are not impressed by their attitude to all this and we will continue to press the bus company for a satisfactory solution."



Working for an open tolerant and united Britain

Welcome for new shop



We welcome the new shop that has opened on Thelwall New Road opposite the Locks. Cllr Cliff Taylor says, "I am delighted to see a shop back on this site to serve local people. We fought hard and objected to the plan to build houses on the site. We

believe strongly that this area should be there for community facilities."

Volunteers needed?

The Parish Council is moving ahead with the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

This would give local people more say in 'shaping' future development of our villages. It would not prevent future development nor would it be able to consider traffic issues. But there would be an additional financial benefit to the Parish Council from any development.



Because of the need for full consultation, preparation of the Plan could take up to two years. Grants are available to cover the costs of its production.

Preparation of the Plan will be under the guidance of a Steering Group composed of a mixture of councillors and residents. **If you are interested in volunteering to help out, please let us know?**

New Council Roles

Cllr Elaine Welborn is the new Chairman of the Parish Council. Cllr Wendy Johnson is the new Vice-Chairman. Both Elaine and Wendy have a wealth of experience on both the Borough and Parish Councils.



Road resurfaced at last

The road next to the swing bridge has recently been resurfaced. This follows constant pressure over many years by your local councillors to have roads resurfaced on a more frequent basis.

Community Centre carpark

Visitors to Grappenhall Community Centre will know that the car-park has become run down over the years with an increasing number of potholes. After much constructive dialogue the Parish Council and the Community Centre have agreed to a full resurfacing taking place over the summer.

Grappenhall Hall School

Following a lengthy wait, the Department of Education has given Warrington Council approval to dispose of the Grappenhall Hall School site. No decisions have been made about the future use of the site but we are assured that local residents will be consulted on any proposed development. The site is in a Conservation Area so this provides some protection for what happens.

Lib Dems condemn 'wish list' budget



The Liberal Democrat Group voted against Warrington Council's Budget. The Council approved a 4.98% increase in Council Tax together with savings of nearly £9 million. They voted against because of the lack of clarity on what the cuts involve.

Finance Spokesperson Cllr Ian Marks says, "The Council had little option but to increase council tax by just under 5% like nearly all other councils. 3% of this is to pay for social care. This is not enough to pay for the crisis, but all that is allowed without a referendum. Consultation on the budget has been minimal but is especially important when tough decisions have to be made.

We have asked questions about the proposed cuts in the budget but we haven't had proper answers. Last year's cuts to the library service and charges for green waste collection came as a shock. The proposals for cuts this year have not been thought through and are just part of a wish list. The huge sum for capital expenditure of nearly £1.2 billion concerns us. There is a need to be innovative but this is high risk and what if interest rates increase significantly?"

Speeding concerns



Residents have complained to us about speeding on Thelwall New Road and Bradshaw Lane.

Cllr Ray Fisher says, "This is a concern because of the schools in the area. We need to find ways of slowing traffic down and would welcome suggestions from you about how best to do this?"

The Toll of Tolls on Warrington



Lib Dems have slammed the Government over the broken promise on tolls for Warrington residents using the new Mersey Gateway Bridge due to open later this year. Cllr Bob Barr says, "It is a wonder of civil engineering and will bring much needed capacity to crossing the River. But it will cost residents who need to use it for work an extra £1080 a year. Our MP supported by George Osborne, the then Chancellor, promised it would be toll-free for Warrington residents and made this a major plank of his election victory two years ago. To avoid the toll, drivers will 'vote with their wheels' and take another route - through Warrington adding to congestion."

Library closures shelved

Warrington Council has shelved the plan to close or downgrade libraries in the town. They did this because of the vast public outcry against the unpopular proposals including the 4000 signature petition to save Lymm Library.



Cllr Ian Marks, "The Council and Livewire have set up a working group to look at alternative options. They are due to report back in the autumn. In both Stockton Heath and Lymm, local working groups have been set up to try and move things forward at a faster pace. There are lots of exciting ideas about how the buildings can be used for the benefit of the community and how the libraries can be improved. We are not there yet but we are confident that with goodwill all round, we can save our libraries."



One hour free parking to return in Lymm

Warrington Council has agreed that one hour free parking will be re-instated at their car-parks in Lymm. This has happened following a vigorous campaign by local councillors there. The trade-off is that there will be a charge for parking after 5pm. The village centre has suffered as a result of the loss of free parking and businesses have really struggled. Hopefully this will now change for the better.



Anger at Green Bin charges

Many people accept the Council's principle of charging for green bins and accept that people who do not have a green bin should not subsidise people that do. But they object to paying £3 more if they don't apply on line. We have pressed the Council to remove this discriminatory charge next year.



Please help with our General Election campaign?

- I can help deliver leaflets
- I will put up a poster
- I would like to make a donation
- I want to join the Lib Dems

Your name:
Contact details:

Return to Bob Barr or Ian Marks



Unfair School Funding

Teachers and School Governing Bodies are up in arms at the government's new 'fairer funding formula' for schools in Warrington. Cllr Wendy Johnson says, "At the Town Hall we were happy to support a Labour proposal for a fairer deal but we were amazed when they sided with the Tories and refused to support our amendment criticising Government policy on education.

The Government is pouring money into free schools while existing state schools are crumbling due to lack of repairs. The Prime Minister has a personal crusade to expand grammar schools which is divisive and does nothing to help social mobility. We have an excellent High School in Lymm and don't want to go back to the days of having two separate High Schools. We want local authorities to be given more control over school provision in their areas."

Your FOCUS Team – can we help you?

Warrington Borough Councillors

Cllr Bob Barr 2A Dane Bank Road 750910
bbarr@warrington.gov.uk
Cllr Wendy Johnson 37 Clearwater Quays 637398
wjohnson@warrington.gov.uk
Cllr Ian Marks 80A Whitbarrow Road 753051
imarks2@warrington.gov.uk

Thelwall Parish Councillors

Andy Bennett 631995 Hasan Kazi 453199
Louise Fernyhough 86012 Cliff Taylor 265636
Ray Fisher 602591 Patrick Warner 263174
Wendy Johnson 637398 Elaine Welborn 268769