

FOCUS



**Winter
2022
Thelwall**

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Lib Dems on the up

The Liberal Democrats won a stunning victory in the North Shropshire by-election.

This follows the success in the June Chesham and Amersham by-election. Councillor Bob Barr says, "These results show that people are fed up with the Prime Minister and his failure to provide leadership during the pandemic. The revelations about all the parties are dreadful and generated huge anger amongst people who have done their best to abide by the rules. Support for the Liberal Democrats is growing and we look forward to more successes this year."



New local Lib Dem Chair

Warrington Liberal Democrats have elected retired solicitor, Mark Browne, to be their new Party Chair. Mark is a member of both Appleton and



Grappenhall & Thelwall Parish Councils. He says, "We have a shambolic government and a country beset with problems of the Prime Minister's making. Liberal Democrat values are very much in keeping with those of a large number of people so our task is to get our message through that we are the Party for them. I am passionate about the need to take urgent action on the Climate Change emergency. The Local Plan consultation is over but we must keep the pressure on the Council and the Government to ensure our Green Belt is protected."

Trans Pennine Trail upgrade

We welcome the plan to upgrade part of the Trans Pennine Trail through Lymm. Cllr Cliff Taylor says, "The scheme will provide an improved all-weather surface to benefit all users. New access barriers will make it easier for disabled people. We must press for the Trail through Thelwall to be upgraded too."

Opposition to risky investments

Liberal Democrat Finance Spokesperson, Cllr Ian Marks says, "**Right from the start we have opposed the investments in Together Energy and Redwood Bank.** They were too risky and Councils have no expertise in such businesses. Sadly the collapse of Together Energy and the downgrade in the valuation of Redwood Bank shows we were right."



We supported the attempt by the Council to work with the energy company to try and find a way of preventing it from going into administration by attracting new funding. This was a forlorn hope in the current volatile energy market but worth trying.

We support the Council in many of their commercial investments to generate income to meet the shortfall caused by large central government cuts. Regeneration in the town, solar farms and housing are risks worth taking.



We question why the Government has not made it clearer about what kind of investments are legal and justified. We live in a strange world where a Council is allowed to borrow money cheaply and then invest it in commercial ventures in totally different businesses to make a profit. Local Conservatives have never told the public how they would protect vital services if there was no investment income.

We hope that ongoing discussions over the next few weeks between the regulator OFGEM, Together Energy and the Council will minimise the financial impact on council tax payers. The 2017/18 Council accounts have still not been signed off by the External Auditor."

Opposition to Six56

Six56 is a proposed massive new logistics site located at

Junction 20 of the M6. It is a joint venture by property company Langtree and logistics company Panattoni.



Cllr Sally Chisholm says, "We strongly oppose this development which would require the release of 137 hectares of Green Belt. To approve this prior to agreement on the Local Plan would be premature and totally wrong. The motorway junction is already congested and the development would generate a huge number of extra vehicular movements."



We are very unhappy that the developers were able to give private briefings to the Council's planning committee with no members of the public allowed to attend. There is no level playing field. When the application comes before the planning committee for consideration, objectors are only allowed three speeches of three minutes each. This is grossly unfair."

Warburton Toll Bridge

The Manchester Ship Canal Company (Peel) has submitted an application under a 1992 Act for new tolls, concessions, byelaws and collection arrangements.



Cllr Wendy Johnson says, "We strongly oppose what Peel wants to do and there are many reasons why we object. Peel is a very profitable company and they should have spent money on maintaining the bridge and approach roads before now, from the money raised by tolls. Increasing the toll from 12p to £1 is outrageous. Ideally we would like the toll abolished completely."

Local Plan update

Thanks very much to everyone who responded to the Local Plan Consultation that finished in November. Cllr Cliff Taylor who chairs the South Warrington Parishes Planning



Working Group says, "We hope that the Council will take on board what the public have said."

We welcomed some of the changes in the latest version of the Plan but it's still not nearly good enough. The whole Plan needs rethinking so that it avoids Green Belt release. That is what we said in our response to the Consultation prepared by our Planning expert.

The alternative proposal we set out in 2020 looks like a better vision for the town than the proposal the Council has now come back with. We are waiting to see what further changes the Council might make. Come what may, we will be there for our residents at the inevitable Examination in Public later this year."

An uncaring government

Liberal Democrats have criticised the government for delays in improving social care. Cllr Helen Speed says, "Announcements about extra funding for health and social care are a step in the right direction but in no way solve the crisis 'once and for all' as promised. The NHS needs the new money to sort out the backlog of cases but once again social care will lose out.



Unpaid carers are under intense pressure with well over 100,000 vacancies for care workers due to poor conditions and pay. Many are leaving for better paid jobs in supermarkets and delivery firms. This will lead to blocked beds and delayed discharges. The government's policy paper on Social Care won't result in more money for caring staff for years."



Climate Change Action

At its September Meeting the Parish Council agreed to support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. Cllr Mark Browne says, "In December we set up a Working Party to measure the environmental impact of the Council itself and to develop a plan to reduce its impact. We want schools, businesses, community groups and residents to contribute their ideas to improve the local area with the climate emergency in mind."

Planning process unsatisfactory

The Parish Council fully shares residents' disappointment at the decision by Warrington Council to grant planning permission for the Urban Splash Grappenhall Heyes development. Cllr Sally Chisholm says, "We were also very unhappy with the lack of clarity and openness in the way the decision was made. We have taken professional advice and voiced our concerns to the planning department."

Fencing replaced



Fencing on Stockport Road has been replaced at last. The fence was damaged three years ago by a car but despite requests for a replacement nothing had happened.

Cllr Helen Speed says, "There is a steep drop behind the fence which is potentially dangerous. The Parish Council agreed there was a safety issue and it has now been replaced."

Clarity on Blue Bin recycling

Residents have complained about their blue bins not being emptied because they were contaminated. Cllr Ian Marks says, "Stickers were put on bins because contaminated ones were rejected by the Council's waste contractor so reducing the recycling rate. I agree the Council needed to tighten up to increase recycling.

I am pleased they accepted my suggestion of changing the sticker to be clearer about what could not be recycled. Some of the common items that cannot be accepted are crisp packets, confectionery wrappers, polythene bags, gloves worn by carers and polystyrene."

Bus use should be encouraged

More needs doing to improve the bus service in Thelwall. Cllr Louise Fernyhough says, "Reliable, frequent and low cost services are needed to encourage more people to get out of their cars and onto buses. Smaller buses are needed on some routes and we hope the plan to convert Warrington's Own Buses to electric vehicles will provide this opportunity."



Tree Initiatives

The Parish Council is in discussion with various groups about planting more trees. Cllr Bob Hignett says, "This links in with the 'Queen's Green Canopy' which is a national tree planting initiative to mark the Platinum Jubilee.



HELP NEEDED!

We have a team of volunteers who deliver FOCUS to you. Every now or then we lose someone due to age, health, job / family commitments or moving out of the area.

Please can you help out by delivering our FOCUS community newsletters to an area near where you live?

Affordable Housing



Liberal Democrats are extremely disappointed at the failure of the Labour-run Council to support a motion on affordable housing. Cllr Bob Barr who proposed the motion says, "A safe, secure and warm decent home is a basic human right. Sadly there is not enough genuinely affordable housing for everyone and we are constantly failing to build enough homes. I want the Council to set up a cross-party Working Group to bring together housing expertise in the town to pool ideas and suggest solutions. Actions not words are needed but sadly Labour rejected this."

NEWS FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL

Litter picking

Following a successful litter picking event in the autumn, the Parish Warden hopes to plan another event this year.

Waste bins

A dog waste bin has been installed on Ferry Lane and double bins in both Grappenhall Heyes and the canal-side of Chester Road.

Speed Indicator device (SID)

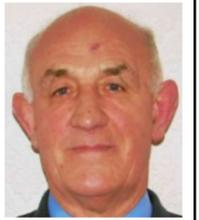
A new SID has been purchased and the Volunteer Speedwatch Group informed.

Parish Precept

The Parish Council element of council tax has been increased by 5% next year. This increase is all for the benefit of Grappenhall and Thelwall residents.

Blocked gulleys

Cllr Ray Fisher says, "Let us know if there are any blocked gulleys near you causing flooding in the gutter. We will report them."



Meeting flexibility needed

The Liberal Democrats have joined with others from all political parties up and down the country in asking for flexibility to decide whether to hold decision-making meetings in person, on-line or as 'hybrid' meetings.

A motion proposed by the Party at a recent Council meeting was approved and a letter sent to the Government. Cllr Wendy Johnson says, "Until last May we had to hold meetings on-line due to COVID. Then overnight this changed and by law we could only hold in-person meetings. Holding on-line or hybrid meetings has many advantages such as COVID safety, transparency, public and press access and savings in travel."

Your FOCUS Team – can we help you?

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