

Report from the Ward Councillors for Wroughton Annual Parish Meeting on 24th May 2022

I'm speaking on behalf of myself, Brian Ford & David Martyn. Brian sends his apologies that he's not able to be here tonight.

The latter part of last year was dominated by hundreds of emails from residents raising complaints & concerns about roadworks and road closures, which dominated the lead up to Christmas through to the New Year and beyond. We had multiple phonecalls and/ or email discussions with the Borough Council, Stagecoach, the Police, local businesses and residents who were all impacted. Thank goodness those road closures have now finished because after 5 months, we've all had enough of them. Brian, David & I have all put forward suggestions about how communication could be improved going forward, and how we would like to be able to make clear to the contractors, in advance, the impact on residents and agree in advance how that impact could be mitigated. Let's hope it won't be necessary.

So it was with a sinking heart that I looked out of the window yesterday evening to see Marlborough Road being closed once again!! This time it was Thames Water who were dealing with a water leak in the pavement as an emergency – they worked through the night to stop the leak, for which we're very grateful. Mind you, we would have been even more grateful if they'd come to repair it before the road was re-opened 7 weeks ago! Thames Water still need to re-tarmac the pavement, but we hope they will come to finish it as a matter of urgency, and re-open the pavement for pedestrians.

A couple of weeks ago, we also attended the Public Inquiry into the appeal by Earthline to overturn Swindon Borough Council's decision to refuse their retrospective planning application – Earthline withdrew their other 2 planning applications just before decisions were due to be made on them. All 3 of us attended with residents, in person on the first day of the Inquiry, to speak on behalf of all those residents who are against Earthline operating from their site on the old airfield, which is in the AONB. Because we believe there is no suitable route for up to 50 Earthline earth-moving lorries and all the associated staff to get into or out of their site, without having a significant negative impact on local residents & local roads. We also believe that the site is unsuitable, and that Earthline should not be operating from there without the required planning permission. After speaking on the first day, we were then able to attend the Public Inquiry online, and listen to the witnesses and the arguments put forward by each side's QC. The Government's Planning Inspector advised he hopes to be able to give his decision on whether or not to grant planning permission within the next couple of months.

During the year, we've also dealt with a large number of queries from residents about Swindon Borough Council services, ranging from winter gritting routes, highways issues, concerns about pedestrian crossings, inconsiderate parking and streetlights, to empty homes, land ownership, kitchens & bathrooms in council homes, anti-social behaviour, planning applications, blocked culverts, trees, hedges and more.

In January, all 3 of us voted against the Borough's draft revised Local Plan due to the number of houses which it would require Wroughton to take. We are not against development per se, but we believe that the start for any new housing should be the sites identified in Wroughton's Neighbourhood Plan, which was agreed by residents when it went to local referendum.

We have continued to lobby the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to commission the new health centre on Mid Wichel, near Waitrose, so that the people living on Wichelstowe have access to a GP service close to where they live, and to relieve pressure on surrounding surgeries, including here in Wroughton. We've recently been advised by the CCG that the health centre should be built within the next 2 years.

We supported the British Horse Society's 'Dead Slow' campaign, asking drivers to give horses and their riders a wide berth whilst overtaking, and also to drive past slowly. We were able to persuade Swindon Borough Council to allow the British Horse Society to put up some signs on Bassett Down to warn people that horses use the road and to drive carefully.

Back in August last year, following a meeting with residents and Sir Robert Buckland QC MP, we requested a width reduction & weight restriction for Brimble Hill/ Marlborough Road, together with a speed reduction, due to the impact of HGVs on the residents, particularly those in the old houses with no foundations, and also those who live in the older houses which directly front the road. We also have concerns about the proximity of HGV wing mirrors to pedestrians on the pavement, because the pavement and road are so extremely narrow. We're still waiting to hear the outcome of that request.

We know that speeding is a concern for many residents and Swindon Borough Council has provided an opportunity for all Borough Councillors to request 20mph zones. However, these need to be evidenced in the form of support from residents. To that end, we have put a 20mph survey on social media. If you want to see a reduction of 20mph on our local roads, please complete the survey and encourage your friends and neighbours to do the same. There are still approximately 3 weeks left to take part and we will be promoting the survey again on fb in the next few days. Alternatively, if you don't do fb but you have an email address, please email David and he can email you a link to the survey so you can still complete it. Our contact details are at the end of this report. If we don't get the evidence, we're very unlikely to be able to get any more 20mph zones in our local communities.

As your Borough Councillors, we are here to help with any Borough Council related queries. We will always try to get you answers, and we will always try to get some action taken, if it's within our power to do so. We will always try to help you where we can. We are your voice on Swindon Borough Council. We put forward your views and ensure that the Council understands how decisions which are made will impact you. We are here for you.

Thankyou.

Cathy
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