

County Councillor's Report, 19/2/18

There are two issues dominating my work at the moment and those are Highways and IT.

Highways: The problems facing Nettleham road-users because of potholes and other safety issues are dominating the village social media pages and are causing considerable stress and expense. Several people have reported damage to cars after going over potholes and, although they should be compensated for their financial loss, there is no compensation for loss of time or for their inconvenience, which can be considerable. I keep receiving reassurance from officers that the holes have been 'made safe', but have, as yet, not received an explanation about what that means when the potholes are still there. An unacceptable response to residents' queries about the state of Scothern Road has now been moved to a Stage 2 complaint, which I will support. Unfortunately, officers are refusing to tell me who has made the complaint on the basis of data protection. I understand that, but it makes it much harder for me to be supportive if a resident has contacted the council itself and hasn't contacted me as well.

Yellow Lines: I've written to Richard Davies asking for double yellow lines on Mill Hill and on the junction of Vicarage Lane. I hope to have some sort of response in the next few days. I will see him tonight and will ask again then.

ICT Issues: The ICT functions of the council continue to struggle and we now have a situation where some councillor can't access their emails at all, while others lose everything while they are reading or writing emails. It's quite extraordinary, because the whole inbox disappears and then takes hours or days to return. There are numerous other problems emerging, but the result of all this is that councillors, including myself, are unable to use email as a reliable form of communication. I do have some good news, though. Last week, I changed my personal provider at home from TalkTalk to Virgin Cable and my download speed went from 0.8 mbps to 70mbps. As a result of this, 17,023 (yes, that's seventeen thousand and twenty-three!) emails dropped into my inbox, none of which I had ever seen. Most of that will be junk, but I can already see that there are emails which required my attention some considerable time ago and for which I will now have to do some rapid catch-up work. Extra emails also dropped into my county account, but I still can't see any email more than four weeks old on the county system. Some new equipment is to be brought online next week, so I live in hope of an improvement.

Budget: The council's budget meeting is to be held on Friday and considerable care has been taken to keep as many services going as is possible. The 'Fairer Funding for Lincolnshire' campaign has helped to bring in an extra £3,000,000 +, but this is a drop in the ocean and we can't let up in our fight to have the whole local government funding formula changed. To put things in perspective, if we were to hand that whole three million over to Adult Social Care, it would be used up in one week, such is the demand for services. The proposed hike in council tax is very likely to go through, but even though 4.95% sounds like a lot, it is actually a small amount each week. The problem occurs when everyone else also puts up their precept...Police, District etc. It all adds up to a bigger chunk then, but until we get more money from central government, this is the only way forward. Some councils are opting for 12% plus, so the county's proposed increase is modest by comparison.

Linelands: Along with Parish Councillors, I'm finding that we're having to keep a very close eye on this one. The officers' memory of what was said in our meeting at County Offices is very different from what the Parish Councillors, the Clerk and I remember being said. Certain promises were given and when a new officer started to appear in the correspondence, expectations changed again. A quick contact with Kevin Kendall sorted that out, but we really can't afford to miss any nuance or hint about potential uses of the site. The County Council has certain legal obligations when it comes to the selling of land and they have to get the best outcome for the taxpayer, but we can still influence that outcome.

Good Citizen Award Do please get nominations in and let's get the award into the village!