

Borough councillor's report

Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council meeting

13 November 2023

Leaves on the road

I have had a flurry of complaints about Ubico street cleaning not fully clearing leaves and debris during their Autumn campaign, eg in Merlin Way. I have raised this with officers but suspect there may be both budgetary and environmental factors at play.

New A417 link road

Slightly out of area but of concern to us, I have raised with the A417 National Highways team the new link road which goes up Leckhampton Hill, past Crickley Hill country park and up to the new Air Balloon roundabouts. It seems very tight to me - more like a country lane than a key access route to the new road and the Cotswolds. It looks particularly challenging given the number of sports and recreational cyclists who share this route up to the hills - often in groups organised by the likes of CTCC. I have asked NH if they need to rethink this road and if separate cycle routes will be part of the final design.

Local government reorganisation and devolution

Gloucestershire councils are in regular correspondence with Angela Rayner, Deputy PM and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government at the moment about the new government's plans to delegate spending and powers to a top tier of local government, the combined authorities under executive mayors. No council in Cheltenham is currently part of any such set-up which elsewhere sit on top of lower tier councils but are more common in big metro areas. Gloucestershire councils have suggested a new combined authority for these devolution purposes (sans mayor) at Gloucestershire level, coterminous with the county council. But this appears to fall below the ideal size for a CA so we may yet be directed to join Bristol and South Glos or even Wilts and Swindon. Watch this space.

Cheltenham council housing

Cheltenham Borough Homes has been formally wound up and council housing in the borough - including the 100 or so in Leckhampton and Warden Hill - is now once again managed directly by the council. This will have little day to day impact on tenants as the staff and roles at local level continue but there are obviously changes and savings at senior management level and may be closer attention to the decent homes standard and opportunities to improve damp, insulation and other issues. The original incentives from the then Labour government to set up arms-length management organisations like CBH ceased some years ago.

Housing land supply and the NPPF

The latest data reported on five year land supply is still below 5 years - a key consideration in planning appeals as we know to our cost in Leckhampton. In fact the latest data show a slightly weaker position than earlier in the year and the new government is now adding back the 20% buffer removed by the last government, in effect making it six years' supply. This does not bode well for appeals against inappropriate development. The government's proposed revisions to the NPPF will also raise the numbers expected from local councils in their plans (the so-called 'standard method') but other proposed revisions focus on previously developed land, for instance so-called 'Grey Belt' in current Green Belt, and on renewable energy infrastructure. The Local Green Space designation remains untouched as a strong protection against development although consultation is continuing. The Parish may want to consider making its own response to the consultation.

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Pong in The Lanes

There were further reports over the summer of bad smells emerging from drains in The Lanes. Correspondence has restarted with Severn Trent - Chan has been in touch with their chief exec's office - and has now involved borough officers again and both offices of the new MPs for Cheltenham and Tewkesbury in an effort to put pressure on Severn Trent. ST are supposedly close to adopting the sewers on the Redrow estate which we suspect to be implicated in the smells. Redrow insist their data shows no problem from their pumping station (but absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence...) while Severn Trent still maintain the cause is a 'private issue' but have agreed to review further. Chan may have further updates for you all. I have reminded CBC's environmental health team about the continuing issue, their earlier conclusion that a statutory nuisance declaration was legally possible and Severn Trent's responsibility for the drain.

Cllr Martin Horwood

Borough and parish councillor for Leckhampton

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