Apologies - Devizes Area Board Meeting – 9 November

Apologies that I cannot be with you this evening due to Devizes Area Board. The meeting will include an update on the Area Board's priorities for the coming year, including work with Devizes Town Council, Wiltshire Council, the police and other local partners to reduce anti-social behaviour in the town.

Melksham Bypass Cancellation

Following the Government's decision to cancel the Melksham Bypass, Cllr Nick Holder (Bowerhill) and I are calling for Wiltshire Council to undertake an urgent strategic review of the highway and road safety implications of planned growth across Melksham and Bowerhill. Major developments, including the proposed Gompels distribution centre and significant new housing, are moving forward on the basis of transport assessments prepared when the bypass was still expected to form part of the area's long-term transport strategy. With that scheme no longer progressing, there is now no clear plan for accommodating future traffic growth on the A350 or managing wider impacts on routes such as the A365 and A3102.

We believe the Council must now assess the cumulative impact of existing traffic and proposed development on congestion, journey reliability and road safety across the wider Melksham area, including Seend. Particularly the routes serving Melksham Oak Community School, as well as the potential impact of the forthcoming Gompels Reserved Matters application and additional housing growth. Future planning decisions cannot be considered in isolation from the wider transport network. We are therefore seeking a comprehensive review of highway capacity and traffic movements to ensure that development is supported by a robust, evidence-based transport strategy in the absence of the bypass.

Grants available to support Wiltshire town centres

A new £220,000 funding programme has launched to support events, pop-up activities and the occupation of vacant premises in Wiltshire town centres.

Funded through the Wiltshire Towns Programme, Activating Places aims to increase footfall, support local businesses and create more reasons for people to visit town centres.

Funding is available through three routes:

- Events grants (£5,000 to £12,500)
- Pop-up and temporary use grants (£1,000 to £3,000)
- Long-term occupation grants (£5,000 to £12,500)

Applications are welcomed from businesses, charities, social enterprises and town and parish councils. Funding is available for projects located within designated town centre and primary shopping areas in Amesbury, Bradford on Avon, Calne, Chippenham, Corsham, Cricklade, Devizes, Downton, Ludgershall, Malmesbury, Marlborough, Melksham, Mere, Pewsey, Royal Wootton Bassett, Salisbury, Tidworth, Tisbury, Trowbridge, Warminster,

Westbury and Wilton. These designated areas cover the commercial heart of each town rather than the whole settlement. Wiltshire Towns Programme - Wiltshire Council

Planning Scheme of Delegation
At a recent meeting of Full Council, councillors considered proposed changes to Wiltshire Council's Constitution in response to planning reforms introduced by the Labour Government. The planning reforms mean that more planning applications will be determined by Planning Officers, rather than Planning Committees, and therefore members of the public and Parish Councillors will not have an opportunity to speak in a public meeting.

Conservative Councillors voted against the constitutional changes, reflecting concerns about the impact on local democratic oversight and public participation. However, councillors were advised that the Monitoring Officer has the authority to implement any changes required to ensure the Council remains compliant with national legislation.

Operational Flood Working Group
The Operational Flood Working Group Meeting takes place on Wednesday 11 November (10am-12noon) Monkton Park Chippenham and Teams. This is a regular meeting bringing together partners such as Highways, Wessex Water, Network Rail etc. to maintain a focus on persistent flooding issues. Please let me know if there are any issues in Bulkington which should be highlighted.

Local Highways Footpath Improvement Group
LHFIG took place on Thursday 5 November. Recommendations will be tabled for ratification at the Area Board meeting on 9 November. Please let me know if there are issues that you would like to raise at the next LHFIG meeting. (date tbc – March).

Bulkington Village Hall
I have been contacted by the Chair of the Village Hall Committee regarding repairs and maintenance that are needed. I have suggested a number of possible grant funding routes and said that I am happy to help further. Please keep me updated.

Wishing everyone in Bulkington a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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