

Frances Taylor - Independent County Councillor for Magor

Magor Church in Wales School Playing field

As you will be aware I have been working on the issues relating to the playing field attached to Magor Church in Wales primary school on an ongoing basis since elected last May. Both the Community Council and Monmouthshire Council have expended significant amounts of public money on legal fees over the past four years and I am extremely keen to assist in bringing the matter to a conclusion. I set out below my understanding of the issues at hand, and invite you to contact me or to discuss at the meeting.

You will also be aware that Paul Mathews has asked to be invited to your meeting, so that he may clarify any matters for the benefit of Councillors in their deliberations.

In the summer, Council officers and Governors undertook a risk assessment of the field and this identified that the current situation of having open access to the field during the school day as posing certain risks for children and staff. Following this formal risk assessment the County Council are duty bound to minimise these risks and properly exercise their (in loco parentis) responsibilities. This was discussed by Governors in September and the Chief Education officer advised that in order to comply with the Estyn Safeguarding framework the County Council would need to invest in an appropriate boundary fence. The Chief Executive wrote to the Governors and the Council to advise that he would be in the process of commissioning a boundary fence for the field and inviting all parties to meet to discuss. I felt that the meeting between Donna, Jeremy, Paul and myself was very positive. Donna made it clear that she wanted to resolve 2 outstanding issues, the deed and also the issue of the hard play area being accessible to the public. Paul Matthews has committed to having a signed deed with you prior to your scheduled meeting on 4th. Jeremy Harris committed to providing public access to the hard play area subject to meeting to clarify responsibility and liability areas, between the school and the Council. It was also agreed that direct face to face contact was the best way to ensure matters can be discussed information shared and issues resolved.

The Council propose to commission a fence to follow the line of the east west footpath (adjacent to the playpark), allowing unimpeded access across the existing path, with a gate which can be locked. The gate which has been discussed at the bridge over the reen would also be lockable. The proposal is that access is restricted during the school day (roughly 9am to 3pm), during term time only, 190 days per year. The proposal is to improve the health and safety of all users of the field.

However, I want to stress that this is a very important community open space also and outside of the core school day, weekends and holidays the field would remain open and accessible to everyone. I am hopeful that prior to the end of the year we will see a positive outcome. I am extremely keen to promote a position of open discussion, mutuality and trust for the benefit of all our residents. Please note I declare an interest in the matter as I have a child at the school.

Magor Action Group on Rail

Good news here. We have been actively lobbying the Council regarding the case for a station at Magor and in the summer the cabinet member for Highways and County Operations agreed to develop a further business case for Magor. In addition, you may have seen Welsh Government announcements about the South Wales Metro project. The Metro initiative is likely to be the biggest

and most important public transport initiative for a generation. Although Monmouthshire was not mentioned in the earlier Task Force group, MAGOR has worked very hard to ensure that Severn Tunnel Junction and Magor are mentioned as Tram/Train potential interchange stations. This is not a guarantee, but it is a big step from being overlooked.

Magor Square and the Homezone

I have received many concerns and complaints about the safety and accessibility aspects of the current Homezone. In my view it is also important to preserve our historic Cenotaph and prevent the damage caused by parking around it. The community council agreed to undertake a public consultation in January 2013, however due to workload I have been advised that this is delayed. I am hopeful that the community council will be in a position to organise this soon, and I would be grateful for a timescale.

Local Development Plan Hearings

You are aware that the Welsh Government has asked Monmouthshire County Council to make provision for an additional 900 houses. Magor with Undy has already been allocated 200 houses at Rockfield Farm, however it is proposed that this number is increased to 270 and in addition the site above Vinegar Hill should accommodate 225 new homes. The hearings with the inspector took place in the first week of October and I, along with Cllr Crook, residents and the Community Council spoke against these additional houses. Our principal concerns relate to the fact that the proposals are unsustainable due to lack of infrastructure, amenity space and concerns over the dormitory nature of some areas. The inspector's report is due in January.

Redwick Road and other Highway related issues

I am sure that you will be as pleased to see Redwick Road resurfaced as I am. I have received a number of queries about highway related matters such as Dancing Hill, Kensington Park, Main Road, Greenmoor lane, Llandeveyney and The Meadow. I am in correspondence with officers about these and hope for some clear advice in due course.

M4 Relief Road

There were 2 consultation days at the Baptist Chapel in early October regarding proposals for a new M4 from Magor across the levels. Many people attended, as did I and I have received a great deal of feedback from residents. Many people were concerned that the events were not really consultation events, more information about a fait accompli. The events appeared to lack in detail about the impact on Magor. I did manage to speak with the project director Martin Bates and he advised that whilst there was no detail at present, the Welsh Government's preferred option is a 6 lane motorway between the Llanwern access road and the village.

I am personally minded against the preferred option for both economic and environmental reasons. I feel that it is irresponsible and unrealistic to spend £1.25 billion on a scheme that will not solve the problems of and will cause irreparable damage to the unique environmental and historical landscape of the Gwent levels. I favour a situation where the money is invested in integrated public transport, the M48 link Road becomes a reality and links to a Park and Ride for Severn Tunnel Junction. I would

also prefer to see the newly opened Llanwern Access road linked effectively with the Southern distributor Road to provide an alternative route to the existing M4.

Whatever your own views, please respond to the consultation. <http://www.m4newport.com/> by 16th December.

Budget Proposals

Monmouthshire County Council has announced that this year it has to make over £9 million of budget savings, and £23million by 2017/18. There are currently a number of proposals put forward by officers to achieve some of these savings, ranging from reducing the winter gritting schedule, turning off some streetlights, removing the free pest control service etc. It is hoped by achieving savings in these areas we will avoid the cut and close approach of some Councils. The Council is asking all residents to contribute their ideas for saving money, and things we might do cheaper, better or differently. If you want to see what others have said or you have any great ideas then please share them on via the website www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/futuremonmouthshire/ If any Councillors would like a copy of the current budget proposals then please let me know.