

COUNTY Matters

The County Division of Lichfield Rural East
December 2006

Bonehill, Canwell, Clifton Campville, Drayton Bassett, Edingale, Elford, Fazeley, Harlaston, Haunton, Hints, Hopwas, Swinfen, Thorpe Constantine, Weeford, Whittington & Wigginton

Tories driving change

“The pressure is on for the Labour administration at Staffordshire County Council.”

After 25 years of large Labour majorities at the County Council, Conservative success in the 2005 election saw Labour's majority slashed to just two Seats, meaning they rely heavily on the unstinting support of the two remaining Liberal Democrats.

Matthew Ellis, Lichfield Rural East's County Councillor explains, "For years, with Labour's big majority, finances have been getting worse with 'efficiency' a dirty word, the workforce has become huge (almost 35,000 employees) and Labour's policy of no redundancies and maximum bureaucracy has reigned supreme".

With Conservatives now in a stronger position, expensive and unnecessary building schemes are being axed and Labour are being shown how to utilise modern IT opportunities to improve front line services whilst cutting waste and costly bureaucracy.

Their biggest U-turn to date, forced by dogged Conservative opposition, was the scrapping of



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plans by Labour to rush headlong into building a new County Headquarters which would have cost Staffordshire tax payers a staggering £43million. Matthew continues, "But remember, Conservatives are not yet in control. We are driving through change by arguing hard in committee, winning the moral debate and publicly exposing Labour's bad management and bad policies".



“Work in the community gives me a real buzz!”

Lichfield Rural East's County Councillor, Matthew Ellis, has had a busy year! As well as attending 147 County meetings, Matthew's also been working hard in the community. He's responded to over 570 requests for help or information from residents, assisted in funding 32 community projects and has attended more than 70 local events.

Matthew explains, "It's been very satisfying using my Local Member's Initiative Scheme funding, and finding other sources of money, to help a wonderful variety of community projects. The wide and varied range of issues that local people have contacted me about have also been interesting and often challenging."

and to complete your local Conservative team



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On Yer Bike!



Further 'cycling surgeries' are planned around the area

In a twist to the 'Walking Surgeries' earlier this year, Matthew Ellis recently donned cycle shorts and a helmet to join in with Staffordshire Police's initiative to make officers mobile and easily accessible.

During the ride around Matthew and the local 'bobby' chatted to a large number of local people about issues affecting their area.

Matthew explains,

"Having enjoyed a short cycling break in the New Forest a few months ago I decided to stick at it when we got home. With the decent weather over the summer it's been a great opportunity to cycle to as many parts of the 'patch' as possible. I've managed to clock up over 300 miles under pedal power since June, despite the time constraints I often face.

Riding around has allowed me to talk with far more people than on foot. It has been really useful and I've picked up new issues that need urgent attention".

The number of police officers who have access to bicycles is increasing and Matthew is also planning more 'cycling surgeries' in 2007.

1000 years of sickness at the County Council

Conservatives at the County Council have called for Labour to 'get a grip' on Absence Management.

The latest astonishing figures show that over 340,000 days - equivalent to almost one thousand years - were lost to sickness across the County Council, at a cost of £17.6million to tax payers last year.

Ian Parry, Conservative Spokesman for Resources said, "These figures are madness. We are not suggesting that people can't be ill, but this shows that there is a real problem. It is quite clear that, with an average 10 days of sickness for each employee, something has to be done now."

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Disability... No Barrier to Sporting Kids

A few Saturdays ago, Matthew Ellis, Lichfield Rural East's County Councillor, visited Steve Kirk and the coaching team from Whittington Football Club at their monthly Soccer Centre at King Edward Leisure Centre in Lichfield.

The coaching sessions there encourage disabled and special needs youngsters to play soccer and a key aspect is able-bodied and disabled players training together.

Matthew was there to present the Club with a cheque for £1100 from his County Members' funding scheme.

He said, "The work that Steve and the other Whittington coaches are doing is absolutely great. The kids are fully involved and having a great time no matter what their disability or special needs."

Whittington FC is Lichfield's only F.A. approved 'Community Club' and is

recognised as one of top 200 clubs in the UK for work with children of all abilities. The grant funding will be used to purchase more equipment including specialist items for use by disabled players.

For more information contact Lesley Makin (Whittington F.C. "Football for All" Co-ordinator) on 01543 250828.



Steve Kirk and Matthew Ellis with members of the Disability & Special Needs football group

Stafford Arts Space to Cost £70 a Household

Plans by the Labour controlled County Council to spend over £20million on building new performing arts facilities in Stafford Town are being fought tooth and nail by the County Conservative opposition.

The cost of the proposed 750 seat venue equates to £70 for every household in Staffordshire at a time when bosses confirmed the County Council's borrowing now totals a staggering £355million.

In numerous heated debates, opposition Conservatives have slated the plans as being 'ill founded, highly risky and an appalling use of public money at a time when front line County services are being cut'. Fronting the Tory opposition to the proposals, Matthew Ellis says, "With financial crisis looming at the County, the Labour administration's determination to proceed with this is

extraordinary. Even Labour backbench Members are against the plans and it's only the dogged support of the Liberal Democrats that have carried the day for Labour. I fail to see why everyone in Lichfield and Tamworth should pay towards what is obviously a local project for Stafford Town. Conservatives forced Labour to scrap plans for a new £43million County HQ earlier this year and we will continue the fight against this latest white elephant."

The Arts Space proposals are being led by Labour County Members for Stafford Town, Robert Simpson and Maureen Compton.

See Matthew's weblog at www.matthewellis.org.uk for more news on this.

Lives at Risk!



Frank Bartlett, Matthew Ellis and Michael Fabricant with CFR Whittington

Michael Fabricant, Whittington's MP who has been leading the fight to save Staffordshire Ambulance Service from merging with West Midlands, has now joined forces with County Conservatives to stop the withdrawal of vital drugs from Community First Responders across Staffordshire.

Whittington's highly trained CFR team is called out on a daily basis to provide vital medical assistance, in the locality, prior to a full time ambulance arriving at the scene.

The life saving drugs and equipment have been withdrawn on 'safety grounds' after instructions from the West Midlands Service, despite being used in numerous other counties across the UK.

Mobile Station Out and About

Staffordshire Police have been out and about in the rural areas around Lichfield and Tamworth recently. Using a high profile approach, local officers have taken the Force's mobile police station to summer fetes as well as villages, most recently Fazeley and Swinfen.

Matthew Ellis joined officers on several occasions and says, "I find that visiting the police when they are out and about in this way is very useful. It gives me the chance to find out about the work they are doing locally as well as talking to local people. It is important that police are seen in rural areas on a more regular basis and I'm currently talking about ways of increasing the number of villages that police officers can visit with the mobile station".

The Government's plans to merge Staffordshire Police into a West Midlands Super Force fell apart when the only merger that was immediately imminent in the country - Cumbria and Lancashire - was scrapped.

Labour controlled Staffordshire County Council supported the merger plans whilst County Conservatives started a County-wide petition against Staffordshire disappearing into a massive Regional organisation.



"Rural visits by the police need stepping up" says Matthew Ellis

Life Education is "Vital"

A mobile education centre aimed at teaching children of all ages how their bodies work, has been hailed 'vital for children' by Matthew Ellis.

The two Life Education Centres for Staffordshire visit schools in the county promoting citizenship skills, explaining the dangers of alcohol, smoking and drugs and working with parents, carers and teachers to promote healthy lifestyles for everyone.

Matthew Ellis wants to see an expansion of the service and says,

"This was a tremendous experience for the kids who, in the session I visited, were 9 and 10 years old. Inside the mobile unit is dark and futuristic but

with many coloured lights which really caught their imagination from the start. The way our bodies function was explained using an interactive mannequin and the kids were fascinated and seemed to take it all in. A key message, repeated in different ways time and again, was the dangers of smoking, drugs and excessive alcohol. I was hugely impressed with the whole thing."

He is planning to allocate some of next year's County Members' funding scheme money to increase the number of schools in the Lichfield and Tamworth area which are visited by the Life Education Centre. He will also be lobbying Education bosses to find alternative funding to expand the service in the county.



How to say 'NO' and being proud of personal achievements were key messages

My new Weblog... www.matthewellis.org.uk

Find out what I do on your behalf

How much time do I spend doing it?

My regular blog on local issues
Useful links and 'Contact me'
Grant funding for local organisations

Got a community event or meeting you want to promote FREE?... see the new 'What's On' page for details

 **Conservatives**

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
from your Conservative Team, Alan, Colin, Matthew and Michael