

# COUNTY Matters

The County Division of Lichfield Rural East Aug/Sept 2006

Bonehill, Canwell, Clifton Campville, Drayton Basset, 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 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.”*

## Your local Conservative Councillors...



District Cllr. for Bourne Vale  
**Charlie McEwan**  
cllr.charlesmcewan@lichfielddc.gov.uk  
01543 414622



District Cllr. for Fazeley  
**Ian Lewin**  
cllr.ianlewin@lichfielddc.gov.uk  
01827 260483



Town Cllr. For Fazeley  
**Lee Bates**  
lee.bates2@ntlworld.com  
01827 701118

## 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 couple of months ago I decided to stick at it when I got home. With the decent weather this summer it’s been a great opportunity to cycle to as many parts of the ‘patch’ as possible. I’ve managed to clock up nearly 200 miles under pedal power since the beginning of 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' this summer.

## 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.”*

[matthew.ellis@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.ellis@staffordshire.gov.uk)  
a fair deal for everyone

**Matthew Ellis can be contacted... 01543 480644** (office hours)  
County Buildings, Martin Street, Stafford, ST16 2LH • E-mail: [matthew.ellis@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.ellis@staffordshire.gov.uk)



Cllr Charlie McEwan and Matthew Ellis with the fancy dress winners

# Super Heroes in the Sunshine

Around 400 people, many donning England attire, braved the scorching temperatures just hours before the crucial World Cup match to gather at the first Drayton Bassett fete for many years.

The event was organised, in only a couple of months, by the VEGES, a small group of Drayton residents determined to make the most of village activities.

As well as pigeon racing, a live band and a visit by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue, there was also a hard contested Welly Wanging competition.

Matthew Ellis, Lichfield Rural East's County Councillor, who opened the fete said, "What a great day, what a turn out and what an achievement by the organisers in such a short time. A great party atmosphere and a real sense of

community, not forgetting the glorious sunshine and great side shows. The day did prove one thing though. I certainly won't be taking up Welly Wanging full time!"

There are also plans by the organising group to hold another Christmas Carols event on the village green later this year.

# Battle to Save Top Performing Service?

The fight is back on to stop the merger of Staffordshire's top performing ambulance service into the debt ridden and less effective West Midlands Ambulance Service.

There was fury when the Labour administration at the County Council made the key decision to support Government plans to scrap Staffordshire's forever. For months, Conservatives have been gathering signatures from the public in support of keeping the life saving Staffordshire Service completely independent.

Despite the Government's recent "promise" to defer any merger for Staffordshire, Conservative concerns have been realised as the Government are now suggesting the West Midlands Super Service will happen sooner.

Christopher Pincher, Tamworth's Conservative Parliamentary spokesman and Matthew Ellis, Lichfield Rural East's County

Councillor have been working hard to fight the merger.

Christopher says, "The battle to save Staffordshire's independent ambulance service continues after a leaked memo from the Staffordshire Ambulance Trust Chairman reveals Labour is pushing ahead with merger plans. We have warned for weeks that the Government's promises are not worth the paper they are written on.

Labour's merger mania is one of those issues which come along from time to time when we all have to stand up and be counted".

Matthew added, "The Government seems determined to scrap Staffordshire's Ambulance Service and Police Force and we must all continue to oppose the plans which would mean poorer emergency cover for people in Staffordshire".



Christopher Pincher and Bill Cash MP take the fight to the heart of Whitehall

# 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

# Bikers Beware!

After numerous complaints about noisy and dangerously ridden motorbikes from residents living close by the A5, A513 and A38, Matthew Ellis has been in talks with County Highways and the Police to try and find a solution.

Matthew says, "I've been taken to see this problem in a couple of different areas. There is a small minority of motorcyclist who have illegally noisy exhausts as well as others who ride in large groups weaving in and out of traffic at excessive speeds. The latter, which I witnessed on the A5, left me speechless".

Recent talks with Matthew Ellis have resulted in a coordinated approach by County Highways and the Police. Included will be a series of covert enforcement operations on key routes, the use of newly purchased motorcycle identification technology and the proposal to instigate a new scheme where offenders could have to pay nearly £200 to attend a specialist motorcycle safety course run by the County Council.

# Supporting Sporting Youngsters



"The work the club are doing with the kids is truly spectacular"

Footballers as young as 3 years old are 'over the moon' having received £1300 for snazzy new soccer kits. 70 children showed off their new bright orange strips during a Fun Day, at Longwood Primary School in Mile Oak.

The event, which involved a series of sponsored penalty shootouts, raised hundreds of pounds. 25% went towards new facilities at the school and 75% towards helping children suffering from Cancer.

Matthew Ellis, Lichfield Rural East's County Councillor, who donated the £1300 from the Local Members'

Funding Scheme, is delighted.

He said, "The work being done with the children is truly spectacular. It's more than just soccer training, it's teaching the kids to be respectful, honest and sportsman like. Today's event will also make them understand the importance of helping other children who are ill. And the kit looks great!"

Bellgrave Bullets and Longwood Primary School Development Club caters for children from 3 to 11 years of age and they are keen for new players to join. For information call Lisa on 01827 735425.

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