

## Leader's Newsletter May 2022

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Welcome to this, my newsletter reflecting on Cabinet activity in May and looking forward to June.

My apologies for getting this to you rather late this month.

This is my first letter since the AGM when I was re elected as Leader of the Council. I count it as an honour to have been chosen and I will do my best to fulfil your expectations. The next twelve months are likely to be challenging, following on from the many challenges of the last three years. The increased cost of living is a concern as households try to balance their spending with pressure on food, heating and fuel bills. We have in Talk Community a structure which will help the County to come through this difficult time.

Notwithstanding the difficulties ahead this administration continues to look forward as we improve the outcomes for children in our care, explore as many solutions as possible to resolve the issue of phosphates in our rivers and take advantage of monies we receive from Central Government to invest in projects of a largely capital nature including the Stronger Towns Funds, Levelling Up fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

A number of us will be attending the Annual Conference of the Local Government Association later this month. This is an opportunity to share mutual concerns and seek solutions.

Regards

*David Hitchiner*

**Councillor David Hitchiner  
Leader of the Council**

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### **Children and families – Cllr Diana Toynbee**

Many thanks to all colleagues for your support when were in the media spotlight. I know we all appreciate all our staff who continue to support families every day, especially when there is extra pressure.



This Friday June 10th I will be attending Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership event 'Voice of the Child' at the Kindle Centre, which will showcase good examples of listening across Herefordshire, and launch the new HSCP Voice of the Child Participation Toolkit. Safeguarding children and young people is a concern and responsibility for a whole network of organisations around the county, not just the council.

### **A welcome to new members of staff:**

Alex Kubeyinje is our new interim Service Director (Safeguarding and family support), and Phil Bullingham started on 1 June as our permanent Service Director (Performance and Quality Assurance). Lisa Arthey is interim Service Director for Improvement, which will be invaluable in driving our Improvement Plan.

And two Service Manager appointments: Stacie Lane is our new was appointed Service Manager for Corporate Parenting, and Maggie Gribbin our new Service Manager for fostering.

### **Improvement Plan:**

The latest Improvement Plan was signed off at cabinet two weeks ago. I was very pleased with how many people contributed to its development, and it is naturally a live document. The next Improvement Board is Monday June 13th.

### **Schools and Colleges:**

The schools and colleges are now fully engaged with the post COVID planning, mainly around curriculum delivery to reflect the loss of learning some children have suffered. The Key Stage 2 tests were completed satisfactorily last month – for the first time since 2019 - and we are now into the GCSE exam period. This one will be a slightly different from normal, so very best wishes to all our school students well and huge thanks to the staff for their efforts to deliver the system again.

I'm looking forward to our first face to face School leaders conference on the 14th June. It will include input from DfE, the Confederation of Schools trusts and workshop sessions aimed at supporting mental health and well being, language acquisition and managing inspections.

We will also be exploring whether there is interest in a Local Authority sponsored MAT. This follows the recent Education White paper, which contains a strong government push towards a fully academised system by 2030. We are working on a county wide approach to this, and as we have strong Herefordshire opportunities we are exploring a locally led system.

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## **Finance, Corporate & Planning– Cllr Liz Harvey**



### **Finance:**

**£150 energy rebate scheme:** As at 1<sup>st</sup> June nearly 38,000 payments have been made to households with direct debit arrangements for their council tax. Households in tax bands A-D who don't pay by Direct Debit will be able to apply manually for the rebate scheme from July onwards.

For households above Band D facing hardship Cabinet has approved the eligibility criteria for a discretionary payment scheme. Payments under this scheme will be started later in July once the A-D manual application process has been rolled-out. Residents advised to look at website for regular updates:

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/council-tax-1/council-tax-discounts-exemptions/19>

### **Corporate Services:**

**Refugee Week:** This takes place in June each year, and the council will be marking it this year with several events. One of the key events for council staff will be a 2-hour "Refugee Awareness Workshop" at the Kindle Centre on the morning of Friday 17 June delivered by a professional trainer. It will run from 9.30-11.30am, and people are invited to arrive from 9am. To book a place please e-mail [diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk).

**Herefordshire.gov.uk**

**Refugee Week 2022: Launch Event**

The Courtyard, Edgar Street, Hereford, HR4 9JR

**Monday 20 June 2022, 11.30am for midday start**

Refugee Week is a UK-wide festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary. This is an open invitation to all to attend the launch of Refugee Week in Herefordshire.

- Welcome speeches (midday)
- View the art exhibition on the theme of "Sanctuary"
- Screening of local film "Shared Freedom - Shared Future" (20 min duration, screened on a loop)
- Food and drink will be available to purchase from the Courtyard Café Bar

**Entry is free of charge.**  
Please register your interest at (or send queries to): [diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk) Walk-ins on the day are welcome.












[hfdscouncil](https://www.facebook.com/hfdscouncil)

You should start to see orange hearts dotted around the county as a sign of welcome to refugees. If you can help by making some orange hearts (out of any material), or displaying them for us, please get in touch.

**Census 2021:** The first results from Census 2021 will be out on Tuesday 28 June 2022. They will provide estimates of the Census population of Herefordshire by sex and 5-year age group, and the number of households in the county. They will provide communities across Herefordshire with a glimpse of how our local population has changed in the past decade.

Released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the results will also provide estimates of England's and Wales' population. Carried out in spring 2021, the census was a huge success, which helps to shape public services across the country.

Following the first population estimates in June, the ONS will release further results from the census from September onwards. These will include data on ethnicity, religion, the labour market, education and housing. For the first time, it will also include information on armed forces veterans, sexual orientation and gender identity.

For more information about Census 2021 results, visit [www.census.gov.uk/census-2021-results](https://www.census.gov.uk/census-2021-results).

Website snippets:

Let us see your Jubilee



LET US SEE YOUR JUBILEE

1837

2022

Upload your pictures to  
[herefordshire.gov.uk/jubileepics](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/jubileepics)  
to be archived as part of Herefordshire's History

Herefordshire Council

If you attended any of the many Jubilee events held around the county in June there is still time to submit your pictures to our [jubilee webpages](#) and we'll preserve the photos within [official records](#) so they form part of the county's heritage for future generations.

**Armed Forces Day:** Takes place on Saturday 25 June 2022 and is your chance to show support for the men and women who make up the armed forces community – from serving troops to service families, veterans and cadets.



Armed Forces Day celebrations begin on Monday 20 June when the Armed Forces Day flag is raised around the country. The Herefordshire County Flag Raising Ceremony will be held in High Town Hereford at 11am. There will be similar events in Ross on Wye, Ledbury and Leominster

On Saturday 25 June the Armed Forces Day celebrations on behalf of the whole county will be held in [Ross on Wye](#). This is a free family day of celebrations including a spitfire flypast, civil; war and horseback re-enactments, military vehicles and much more!

## **Planning:**

**Covid Backlog:** I am pleased to let you all know that the planning backlog has now been cleared. Planners have been working alongside a dedicated group of consultants to reduce the backlog of planning applications from over 370 in January to zero at the beginning of June.

I am particularly pleased that we have been able to continue to provide a full planning service whilst dealing with this backlog - unlike some authorities who placed their core service on hold. We are urgently procuring additional support for Ecology advice and hope soon to be able also to deal with the applications which are awaiting ecology comments.

**Herefordshire Local Plan Update:** The Place Shaping Consultation commences on Monday 13 June and will run for 6 weeks through to Friday 29 July 2022. This third public consultation sets out potential strategic and smaller development areas for Hereford and for each of the County's market towns, together with a range of settlement hierarchy options for the more rural parts of Herefordshire.

This consultation has used the approach of focussing most development in Hereford and the Market Towns on the basis that this was the scenario most broadly supported in the responses received to the Spatial Options consultation that was held in January and February 2022.

For the rural areas of the county, there was a general preference expressed in the January consultation for a less dispersed distribution of new development in future. The options suggested for revising the rural settlement hierarchy in this current consultation therefore seek to consider ways to distribute development to fewer settlements than is identified in the present Herefordshire Core Strategy policy framework.

**It is really important that this consultation provides the opportunity for everyone to have their say at this formative stage of plan making.** The consultation does not set out firm proposals, these will come later in the process.

A number of events are planned across the county as well as on-line sessions for Members and Parish Councils. Please encourage local residents and businesses to look at the consultation material on-line, attend any events in your area and respond to the consultation. This is everyone's opportunity to shape the planning policies which will apply to your own local area out to 2041.

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## **Housing, Regulatory Services and Community – Cllr Ange Tyler**

### **Community Thank You Events:**

Talk Community and HALO are hosting Community Thank You Events across the summer to say a big thank you to our communities. We are offering everyone the opportunity to get out and active, have fun and access services to help support their health and wellbeing, Local residents will have the opportunity to participate in free activities, such as family swimming, badminton, exercise classes, gymnastics and much more.



### **Queen's Baton Relay – Commonwealth Games 2022:**

This historic Baton Relay is set to pass through Hereford on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022 placing Herefordshire on the Commonwealth map. An afternoon of activities promoting health and wellbeing will surround the route through the city centre.

### **Holiday Activity and Food Programme:**

The summer HAF planning is well under with some new providers on board and some exciting new enriching activities. A great new booking system has been sourced helping to make it as easy as possible for families to take part.

### **Talk Community Hubs:**

There are 57 Talk Community hubs live across Herefordshire. There are a number of exciting new hubs preparing to launch after the Jubilee weekend.

### **The Shires nursing home:**

Following successful staff training sessions at The Shires, group sessions to the residents are now being delivered, covering understanding what you eat, eating and shopping on budget and physical activity. Cooking sessions will also be included, teaching the clients simple easy recipes that can replicate takeaways and easy meals.

### **Walk & Talk:**

The health & wellbeing trainers have been supporting Herefordshire & Worcestershire's, Adult Participation Officer in the development of their walking projects, helping to identify areas for walks within their local area, signposting and supporting people to access the walks.

To date they have started 3 walks, Hereford city, Ledbury and Leominster. They are working together to develop further walks across the county.

### **CCTV:**

I am pleased to attach the latest version of the Herefordshire CCTV News & Annual Report for 2021-2022 by Debbie Turner, CCTV Compliance Manager. They are a small team supporting the Police, retailers, pub licensees' and communities to reduce crime and help to keep us safe on our streets.



CCTV News Yearly  
Report 21-22.pdf

### **Leominster and Hereford May Fairs:**

Great to be able to welcome both Leominster and Hereford May fairs back to the streets once again following an absence of two year. Both fairs were well attended which was wonderful to see along with a lot of positive comments from visitors and reports in the local news.

A lot of work goes into the preparation of both events with support from across the Council and BBLP which is appreciated by both organisers. However special thanks to both Kevin Price and Wayne Sheehan (Markets, Fairs and Street Trading Team) for the months of work leading up to this, also to Sean Pocket and his colleagues from BBLP who arrange and carry out the logistics of removing street furniture for both Leominster and Hereford and in particular the relocating of the tree planters in Hereford which was no mean feat.

### **Bereavement Services:**

Highlight the scheme which Tracy Morris has been working on these past months. 12 months ago, he launched a volunteer scheme at Hereford Crematorium and Cemetery. People are encouraged to join us as a volunteer, and become an important part of our team,

learn new skills, meet new people and play a vital role in helping to preserve the crematorium and cemetery as a place of historic interest and beauty.

Tasks include general weeding care of memorial trees within the three gardens, pruning, caring, and planting. All volunteers receive induction training, including, an introduction to the cemetery site and buildings, staff, working practice, customer care, health and safety and emergency procedures

In recent months Tracy has been working with the Kindle Centre where they have been nominating people to come and work within the site. This is early days, however this can not only benefit the service, but provide support to those seeking to gain some experience in the workplace.

Tracy is also leading on biodiversity with the Hereford site and working with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and Herefordshire Meadows, have set up areas for wild flowers as well as the introduction of small bird, owls and bat box across the cemetery.

Once established this we will look to be rolled out across the other Herefordshire Council managed cemeteries of Leominster, Kington and Wigmore.

### **Official Opening of Hope Scott House:**

Herefordshire Council's Strategic Housing team have been working with the Trustees at Hope Scott House, the homeless hostel within the County for a number of years and have provided approx. £300,000 grant funding to assist with the refurbishment of the building and delivery of a new build extension.

With the councils assistance Hope Scott House have been able to provide an additional 7 units including 2 Pods, refurbish and remodel the existing 8 units of shared accommodation to provide 5 en-suite units, extra laundry facilities and toilet facilities for visitors. These are all accessible for disabled clients and visitors. Hope Scott House now comprises of 13 en-suite units.

The facility at Hope Scott House plays an important role and is part of the Project Brave pathway to celebrate all of the changes they are holding an open day on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 between 2pm and 4pm.

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## **Environment and Economy – Cllr Ellie Chowns**

### **Fastershire progress:**

Around 94% of properties in Herefordshire can access a superfast broadband connection (30mbps and above), with over 41% able to access a gigabit capable connection and Fastershire's current rollout contract with Gigaclear and Airband and grant schemes are working to increase this further.



Gigaclear's work continues in north Herefordshire, with the project now reaching 50% of subsidised premises. New contractors have now taken over from Complete Utilities, who recently ceased trading. This means we can expect residents to see an increase in activity across the region for these builds. In Ledbury, the project has reached the 30% milestone.

Additionally, we have rural networks being built by Airband entering into their end phases as we look to complete builds in these areas before September 2022.

### **Marketing and Communications:**

Fastershire's new website is now live, making it easier for users to find relevant information. The content on the site now places more emphasis on current activity and celebrates project achievements with a growing number of case studies and videos.

A 'Broadband Explained' section features information and videos to help people understand how to make the most of their connection to the internet.

The latest digital content featuring video stories and photos about how faster broadband is making a difference in personal and working lives can be found [here](#). This content is also shared on social media channels, with Facebook proving to be the most effective platform. Between April 24th and May 24th, Fastershire Facebook content reached 43,168 accounts, with an engagement of 5,111 and 13,914 video views.

An awareness campaign will also take place shortly with large posters featuring the strapline Fastershire: Making rural broadband possible' placed on the back of buses and an advert promoting digital inclusion activities in the Hereford Times.

### **Digital Inclusivity:**

#### **FREE help to use tablets, smartphones and computers**

Fastershire's free 'Introduction to the Internet' workshops are held at the main libraries every month, offering help to send messages and make video calls using WhatsApp, get to know your tablet or smartphone, learn how to use email and Facebook, and stay safe online. Workshop details are [here](#). Please let members of your community know. If any Parish Councils, community groups or venues would like their own free beginners' workshop or longer course, please contact [jennie.morgan@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jennie.morgan@herefordshire.gov.uk)

### **Digital Household Grant:**

The Digital Household Grant is being made available to the 2,324 premises in South Herefordshire descoped by Gigaclear and with a broadband connection of less than 30Mbps. A new [webpage](#) has now received 155 expressions of interest to the grant, covering the installation cost of a 4G LTE internet connection using external directional antennas only. A low earth orbit satellite solution will be explored with the resident for properties where a 4G signal is unavailable. Satellite And Terrestrial Works Ltd have been identified as the highest scoring and best economic value company and therefore will be the primary supplier. [Sat Works](#) have 15 years experience and over 73,000 installations to date. The framework also means that should this supplier be unable to fulfil the requirements over time we have two others who can step in (Metricell Limited and Posisoft).

### **Community Broadband:**

Since 2020 Fastershire has operated a community broadband scheme that finds solutions for clusters of premises with no existing or planned superfast connections.

To date, the grant has contracted Communication Service Suppliers to deliver ultrafast broadband to 538 in 11 communities. A further 12 communities are at various stages in the grant process.

### **Business Grant:**

Businesses can now register for a grant to part-fund the installation of fibre or alternative faster broadband connections via the postcode checker at <http://www.fastershire.com>. The Business grants allocate up to £20k per eligible premise with a 20% contribution from the business.

[Click here](#) to watch a short film about how Fastershire supported a Herefordshire business.

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