

## **Report of Cllr. Elissa Swinglehurst Llangarron Ward**

### **August A49 – roadworks.**

I don't need to tell you that there was an issue with the works being done on the A49 – what I do want to say though is that due to the constructive engagement of local people, the effective engagement of our MP, Herefordshire Council and Peterstow Parish Council and the willingness to change things by Highways England, the situation was improved. Things do go wrong, decisions can be wrong despite the best intentions of everyone involved – the important thing is to recognise this and make a change, not 'get in a hole and dig'. I think this is a good example of recognising where things had gone wrong and doing something to make it right. Credit where credit is due – particularly in this case Peterstow Parish Council who managed to arrange a meeting between Highways England, Jesse Norman MP, Herefordshire Council and residents which unlocked the situation.

### **More road news.**

The new administration has announced that it is pausing the Hereford bypass scheme. This, probably the most important decision in the county, on a subject debated for the last 50 years, was not allowed to come to cabinet or council but was made by the cabinet member. I have been one of the councillors who has called in the decision for scrutiny because I do not think that such an important decision should be taken behind closed doors, with no consultation, with no challenge or debate. By pausing the road schemes it is highly likely that the funding will be lost and the opportunity to alleviate the traffic congestion in Hereford will be lost with it. Not only that but also the possibility to really deliver sustainable and active travel measures in the city (about 30m of the 180m funding) – at the moment it is a city bisected by a trunk road carrying HGVs which is not a good environment for cycling or walking. The cabinet member says he needs time to look into the eastern route – that would be the route that has been the subject of 11 investigations, has been ruled out by government and would not be funded. He also needs the time to experiment with turning the traffic lights off and to look into electric trams etc.

If the road is not built then the enterprise zone in Rotherwas will be limited – just when we were getting some great new companies in there and the council has invested several million in the Cyber security centre – the constraint of the A49 threatens to curtail any further growth. The housing planned around Hereford will also be on hold and may have to be delivered elsewhere in the county – to give to an idea of scale, the entire housing requirement for the rural areas in the core strategy is 5,500 – the housing that was planned around Hereford was 6,500 but without the road it will not be possible to guarantee that and the examiner's view was that development would be limited to 3000 – so where do the other 3,500 go??

Whatever your view – pro or anti the road – this decision should never have been just for the cabinet member – it is just too important. The scrutiny meeting will be on the 9<sup>th</sup> September, members of the public are welcome to attend and have been able to submit questions along with councillors. I have submitted a question with a view to participating but it appears that the asking of a supplementary question is not going to be allowed because the subject is covered in the agenda – this is strange because the questions have to relate to the agenda or they are not allowed in the first instance. The point is that submitted questions get a written response crafted by an officer but a supplementary question is asked of the committee in the meeting. The first question is, in my view, a priming tool, it is the supplementary that carries the argument. Certainly, when I was cabinet

member for Children I had to answer multiple supplementary questions during a scrutiny debate. I am disappointed to be denied this right from the other side of the room.

The agenda is available on the council's website.

### Doing Our Bit

Very happy that Herefordshire Councils latest Greenhouse Gas Report (2018/19) shows that Herefordshire Council have not only met their 2020 target for 40% reduction in CO2 but exceeded it with 43% reduction.

Exceeding the target 2 years early shows just how seriously the past administration of the council had taken the climate change emergency (even before we formally declared it), it shows that work has been underway for some time and we are delivering substantial CO2 reduction. This reduction of 11875 tonnes has been achieved through investment in LED lights, solar PV, renewable energy, greener vehicles, energy efficiency, consolidation of council accommodation and better building standards.

It's great progress and must be accelerated to meet the revised targets since the adoption of the climate change emergency. I feel sure that the new administration will carry on the good work of the previous administration. The council is doing its bit, the county isn't far behind – we can all do our bit.

**Reminder** Herefordshire ART runs from 7th – 15<sup>th</sup> Sept. [www.h-art.org.uk](http://www.h-art.org.uk)

### Ross recycling

Due in no small part to an endless moaning chorus from me about the need to increase the opening hours in Ross the council has been trialling an extra day. I would like to see that as a permanent feature, indeed I would like the site to be open all week. The other thing that I go on about a lot is the need to triage the waste stream more effectively. I am now starting to get some traction with this and have a meeting coming up where I can put the case for better and more creative use (re use) of so called rubbish. As the old saying goes 'where there's muck, there's brass' and any amount of it is getting incinerated when it could be upcycled, repaired, restored, reused and generally given a new lease of life.

As always – please get in touch with any concerns you may have.

Elissa Swinglehurst

Llangarron Ward

Herefordshire Council