

Report of Elissa Swinglehurst June/July 2021

Representing Llangarron, Welsh Newton and Llanrothal, Marstow, Sellack, Peterstow and Bridstow.

I had my second 'jab' this month at Elgar House in Hereford and have to take a moment to congratulate the NHS and volunteers on a very smooth system. On both occasions there was calm, control, plenty of help and support and no delay at all. Brilliant, well done to all concerned.

The council is a mixture of virtual working, physical meetings and hybrid meetings. The democratic services officers are having to get very creative with the technology to enable meetings to go ahead – especially as we don't have any council owned spaces large enough to accommodate meetings with the required social distancing.

I chaired two meetings this month – both for Adults Wellbeing Scrutiny committee. The first was virtual and the second was a public meeting held at the Three Counties Hotel. If you are ever interested in what is happening in any of these meetings you can watch them on the council You Tube channel.

The subject of the scrutiny was to receive an update on the Learning Disability Strategy (2018 – 2028). We can easily forget all the responsibilities of the council – I often see people posting on line about an overflowing bin or a pothole and asking what they pay their council tax for. There are 2000 individuals in the county with a learning disability and the council supports 590 adults and 42 young people at a total cost of £20,859,241 each year. Although we are only 3 years into the strategy there has been good progress with 50% of the original tasks complete. There has been welcome input to the strategy and the boards delivering the actions from 'experts by experience' and some good progress with technology enabled living. As with Adult Social care the emphasis is on the 'strengths based approach' which basically means enabling people to live to their full potential and supporting them at home wherever possible. Part of this work is also about supporting them into employment – the council and NHS have to lead this element by example and I asked for a recommendation to reflect this commitment.

The earlier scrutiny of Commissioned Home Care came before cabinet this month and I was pleased to note that all of the scrutiny recommendations about that decision had been accepted and actioned.

Also discussed at Cabinet was the Hereford Transport Plan. You might have seen some stories about this in the Hereford Times. This was no great surprise to anyone and is the next logical step in developing options that do not include a Western bypass or Southern Link Road (A49 – A 465). The cabinet approved spending 1.24m on a raft of schemes that include a road and bridge to the east of the city and increased cycling and walking. I am very much in support of increased cycling and walking – from 2011-2015 the previous administration invested nearly 5m in cycling and walking infrastructure in Hereford as part of 'Destination Hereford'. The scheme was reviewed, and a modal shift (all modes) had been achieved of 2.7% with the potential for a total of 3.6% shift overall (modal shift being people changing from car to walking/public transport/cycling). This is part of the reason why Hereford has 5% of travelling public on bikes against a national average of 2% (2018); another great success in getting more people on 2 wheels has been the Beryl bike scheme that was first introduced during the previous administration.

The current administration are planning on spending 875,000 to 2023 to increase cycling and reduce congestion in Hereford. What puzzles me is if it cost £5m to get a 2.7% modal shift (and those early

adopters are probably the keenest cyclists) then how are we going to get a massive increase in cycling and walking when the level of investment is so much lower?

I have asked the administration to benchmark their scheme (as with Destination Hereford) so we can see the increase and know if it is enough to deliver the reduction in congestion that is needed. I haven't had an answer yet (despite first asking the question at a council meeting in March), but am ever hopeful!

Water Quality in the River

As a result of the motion put by myself and Cllr Fagan the council have asked the government for more support to deal with the issue of phosphate in the river. I have posted the full text of the letter on my Facebook page.

<https://www.herefordtimes.com/news/19404086.need-boots-ground-save-herefordshires-failing-river/>

There is a documentary coming up on July 14th called 'Riverside' which will focus on the Wye.

<https://fb.watch/6r7lxNSGB/>

It has been crowd funded and you have to watch it online – although George Monbiot and I are not politically aligned I am really pleased that he is fighting on behalf of the rivers. Jesse Norman MP has also been very supportive and is working to get the help we need.

Other news.

Economic Recovery – a £6.144m Covid Recovery Plan has been approved, including a wide range of activity to support the economy and the wellbeing of local people as we look to build back a greener, fairer society for all. The plan includes some innovative ideas to incentivise local residents to get back out socialising, spending time with friends and family, getting active and supporting local businesses. There is support for businesses to start up and grow, and to help and advice for those that are seeking new jobs or to re-train. I am also delighted that the plan will help continue the excellent business led visitor economy marketing and PR campaign when the current LEP funding ends in July. Further details of the cabinet decision and report can be found at: [Decision - Covid 19 Recovery Plan - Herefordshire Council](#)

Two videos have been launched to help support the re-opening of businesses on high streets across the county, one for Hereford City and the other to promote the five market towns (Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross).

The videos, for use on websites and social media, aim to promote the individual character and unique shopping experiences of the city centre and high streets across the county as high-



quality, welcoming, safe, visitor and shopper destinations to the county's residents and those in areas bordering Herefordshire. They are available via YouTube, where there is also a link to further information about the council's economic and wellbeing recovery plan. Please feel free to share through your networks.

[View the Hereford video](#) on YouTube.

[View the market towns video](#) on YouTube.

Hereford Town Investment Plan - On the 8th June government announced an allocation of £22.4 million to Hereford to support the wide range of activity proposed in the Town Investment Plan. This is really great news, supporting the regeneration of the city through a range of significant projects that will be of benefit for many years to come. This is a real example of how the local community and partners can work collaboratively to identify our longer term local needs and aspirations, and make a strong case to government for the resources required to support our economy and communities. The Town Investment Plan can be found here: <https://strongerhereford.co.uk/our-vision/>

Marches Renewable Energy

Walford Timber, manufacturer of timber products, based near Ross-on-Wye have completed the installation of roof mounted solar panels on their factory and warehousing following the award of a £52,239 grant from the Marches Renewable Energy scheme. The installation is forecast to save Walford Timber 26 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year over the next 25-30 years.

Schools Travel Fund grant

The Schools Travel Fund grant scheme has recently opened and offers funding for active travel facilities at schools in Hereford City and Herefordshire market towns. Grants of up to £3,000 are available to enable schools to install facilities such as cycle or scooter parking.

Cycling activities

Independent cycling provider Bikeright! have been appointed to deliver all the Council's cycling activities. This includes Bikeability cycle training in schools, led rides, cycle skills sessions, learn to ride, cycle maintenance sessions and bike loans. Bikeright! will be delivering in schools shortly as well as kicking off summer holiday activities.

If you see it, report it

Our partner, Balfour Beatty Living Places, fixed 2,927 potholes across the county during May 2021. If you see a pothole, dog muck, fly tipping or problems with a Public Right of Way, [report it through our app](#).