

March 2022

Report of ward councillor Elissa Swinglehurst serving the parishes of Sellack, Bridstow, Marstow, Peterstow, Llangarron and Welsh Newton and Llanrothal.

The council tax was finally set (including precepts) at the full council meeting this month. A number of councillors, including myself, abstained from the vote because they had voted against the 2.99% council tax increase at the earlier meeting. There is a real concern about the pressure of inflation and increased living costs where wages are not rising to the same extent. Although the council does have a scheme for those who meet the criteria to have their council tax reduced this does not cover those who are 'just about managing'.

Ukraine.

A motion was proposed by Cllr Shaw the text of which can be found on the following link:

[\(Public Pack\) SUPPLEMENT: Urgent Matter motion on Ukraine - Agenda Item no. 11 - Notices of Motion Agenda Supplement for Council, 04/03/2022 10:00 \(herefordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Please take the time to read the motion – it is very moving and resulted in an emotionally charged debate. Of course the motion was carried.

A second notice was one brought by Cllrs. Roger Phillips and Yolande Watson for a greater awareness of rural needs in the council's decision taking processes. I was happy to support this great motion as those of us who live in the rural areas can feel as if decisions are taken without due regard to the specific issues facing rural areas.

Back to the Future Farming

I spent a brilliant day visiting Townsend Farm in Brampton Abbots to learn a bit about the regenerative farming techniques of Ben Taylor Davies. We are so fortunate to have a farmer like Ben in Herefordshire, he is a great communicator and has a great deal of wisdom and expertise. The visit was one of a series funded by the Environment Agency for other farmers and interested parties to attend. Particularly impressive was Ben's potato harvest which, although grown with minimal inputs (fertiliser, pesticide etc) and lifted a month early was only 1 tonne light per ha which, once you have costed out the inputs that were not used (£1850 per ha) is a pretty amazing result. Not only a good result for potatoes but also for bio diversity, soil health and water quality. So many of the things he is now doing on Townsend Farm are things that were part of traditional mixed farming practice so, in a way, it is about recovering the old ways and making them new again.

With this in mind I am going to draw your attention to a couple of open consultations being run by Government which you might find interesting

[Consultation on environmental targets - Defra - Citizen Space](#)

[Nature recovery green paper - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Storms Eunice and whatnot

It seems a long way off now but we have been battered by a series of named storms which resulted in trees coming down, localised flooding and power outages in some areas. It is always useful to know who to call....

Local Emergency Numbers

Environment Agency: 0800 80 70 60 (24-hours) or visit www.gov.uk/report-an-environmental-incident

Flood alerts: Floodline 0345 988 1188. Sign up online at www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings to get Flood Warnings from the Environment Agency by phone, email or text message. If you live by a river or stream, keep a watch on current and expected water levels.

Power cut: Call 105 or visit www.powercut105.com

BT phone line issues: www.downdetector.co.uk/status/bt-british-telecom

Gas leak: 0800 111 999 or visit www.wvutilities.co.uk/services/smell-gas

Welsh Water: [0800 052 0130](tel:08000520130) (Water emergencies) or [0800 085 3968](tel:08000853968) (Sewer emergencies) or visit www.contact.dwrcymru.com/

Report a flooded road or highway obstruction- Balfour Beatty Living Places : **01432 26180**

Gigaclear contract BROADBAND

The council agreed to introduce the Digital Household Grant that will be made available to the 2,324 premises in the south of the county descoped by Gigaclear and have a broadband connection of less than 30Mbps.

The Fastershire [webpage](#) is now ready to receive expressions of interest to the Digital Household Grant scheme. The grant will cover the installation cost of a 4G LTE connection using external directional antennas with a theoretical speed of 150Mbps, although most properties will realistically benefit from speeds of 10–45Mbps. A low earth orbit satellite solution will be explored with the resident for properties that qualify for the Digital Household Grant where a 4G signal is not available.

Business Grant

The Fastershire Business Grant project has reached the final part of the development stage. The website based application portal is being built, and the grant process and eligibility criteria have been agreed. Businesses can register via the postcode checker at <http://www.fastershire.com>.

The new scheme increases the range of businesses that can apply for a grant to part-fund the installation of fibre or alternative faster broadband connections. The Business grant will allocate up to £20k per premise with a 20% contribution from the business.

Community Broadband

Since 2020 Fastershire has operated a community broadband scheme. The scheme aims to connect clusters of premises that the existing or planned delivery has not covered.

The grant has contracted suppliers to deliver broadband to 11 communities, 538 grant funded premises that will all benefit from a gigabit-capable connection. We are engaging with a further 12 communities, which are at various stages in the grant process.

Llangarron news.

Llangarron now has a Neighbourhood Development Plan (88.5% vote in favour) so the majority of local views can be given proper weight in the planning process.

I also attended, and very much enjoyed, the coffee morning at Llangarron in aid of Ukraine. Congratulations to all involved.

Sellack News

Sellack parish council organised a lovely tree planting for the Queens Canopy – a rowan tree was planted at Sellack Marsh which will give pleasure for many years.

Bridstow Parish

The Neighbourhood Development Plan was not supported by the majority of the residents (31% turnout) which is a shame after a great deal of hard work and expense over many years. The parish will now not have an NDP and planning will be judged against the National Planning Policy Framework and the Core strategy (Herefordshire local plan).

Housing refugees from Ukraine.

If you would like to know more about housing a person or persons fleeing from the terrible situation in Ukraine please go to the govt website

<http://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk/>

for information on the local response please look at

[Support for Ukraine – Herefordshire Council](#)