

## **Report of Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst**

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

#### **January 2023**

The council is back in full swing. The annual budget is coming up and I have been looking at elements of this for the Scrutiny Management Board. There is never enough money and there are always increasing pressures on social care and children's services which inevitably leads to reductions in service elsewhere. Following consultation the council's cabinet are recommending an increase in council tax of 4.99%, which is 2.99% increase in core council tax plus 2% adult care precept, this would raise an additional 2.5 million pounds to support pressures in the social care budget. The increase is equivalent to a band D charge of £1,786.61. In addition Police, Fire service and Parish Council precepts will be added. The finance council meeting will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> February and I will update after that meeting.

#### **Phosphate**

Other activity this month – the second phosphate summit is on its way and I will be attending in Cardiff next month. The preparations are underway and show that the Welsh Government are taking this matter very seriously indeed. The Welsh SAC Rivers Oversight Group met this month as well to update on progress and support the Nutrient Management Boards. They are taking a 'team Wales' approach with an overall board working nationally and regional boards alongside. DCWW (Welsh Water) are investing 60m out of a total of 98m to reduce phosphate in the Wye in the current period, they will be investing 95m in the next period and 91m after that (not just on the Wye). So there is some real action coming from them. On top of that they are investing 100m on reducing combined sewer overflows with an additional 70m by 2025.

#### **Childrens Services**

We had one of the regular updates on Children's Services. Members expressed concerns about the level of investment that the council is making here and whether or not we are seeing the right outcomes. It's a really difficult area and there is no way of seeing the outcome in advance – all these things take time and you just have to have faith that the money is what is needed to turn the situation around. The Government's appointed commissioner, Eleanor Brazil, has submitted her report to the Secretary of State, and it will be considered by Claire Coutinho MP ( Minister for Children, families and wellbeing).

#### **Waste**

The Environment and Sustainability scrutiny committee met to have a look at the waste contract. I had already served on the deep dive into this subject and was disappointed to see that recommendations based on the waste hierarchy had not appeared in the later stages of the proposal. I am specifically calling for reuse sites proximal to the recycling centres so it is possible to leave anything that might have a useful onward life for other residents to buy/take for free/repair.

I also suggested that public messaging around waste needs to join up with other stakeholders – for instance, Welsh Water are intending to message around wet wipes which must not be flushed down the toilet (causes blockages and sewer overflows into the river). Best not to use them in the first place but if you have to...use the correct method of disposal.

The committee also looked at the council's performance in delivering actions in response to the climate and ecological emergency. All of the actions in the report were focussed on net zero as if the ecological bit had been forgotten about. It is a complex area but we need to keep it all in focus in all of the decisions we make. I pointed out that some actions to reduce carbon might not be the most effective use of investment and we needed to develop a scoring matrix to judge one scheme against another to demonstrate CVFM (Carbon value for money). For instance, there is a plan in the capital projects to purchase 4 ebikes with cargo panniers and two bays for them. 4 bikes, 2 bays. This has an embedded carbon cost but a carbon benefit if it replaces fossil fuel vehicles. It will cost around £73,000. I don't know whether that money would be better spent retrofitting a house with a known carbon footprint and a clear benefit, less embedded carbon cost etc. It's a choice and we need to have a mechanism to assess one project against another – or at least that was my view.

### Local Transport Strategy

Government's drive to net zero is also driving change locally and this will influence the new transport strategy. There will be more emphasis on active travel, EV infrastructure and public transport. Rural areas will always be difficult in this regard and as a rural ward member I feel it is important to remember that this cannot be a one size fits all approach.

I will provide a supplementary update following on from the full council meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> February.

See below for other useful bits and bobs.

## My Account

The My Account service on the council website, has updated to a new and improved ['My Herefordshire' portal](#).

The new system will allow users not only to manage their council tax account but also access all our services from one central point. Users will also be able to track their service requests with us whether they logged themselves or called our Customer Services team.



When users sign up for a My Herefordshire account they will see information on when their bin is due to be collected, planning applications in their area, and other local services, along with quick links to our most popular services.

This is an exciting change as it will mean we will be able to provide an enhanced service to our residents, enabling them to track their service requests, building a history of their requests to enable us to provide better joined up service delivery.

Account holders will still be able to access the system from the home page and will maintain access to existing My Account details such as council tax and benefits records.

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Last September the Government announced 60 million pounds to subsidise bus fares and this will also be extended to Herefordshire. It will allow single bus journeys at £2 to help increase passenger numbers on our local services from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March.

More information can be found <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/public-transport-1/bus-travel>

January and February are testing times for our highways please report potholes  
<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/maintenance/potholes>  
<https://link.edgepilot.com/s/e3b2b34e/ttjzBlvlfEewR-39NN73dA?u=https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole>

#### **Footpaths issues –**

- PROW - [PROW@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:PROW@herefordshire.gov.uk)
- PROW No – 01432 383 550

**Report fly tipping** it will be dealt with in a much quicker time frame. by either calling the Contact Centre on 01432 261800 or by logging the fly tipping via the council website on the links below as your

[https://link.edgepilot.com/s/f452e836/Hy5YWk\\_SgEGkleekL2ROFQ?u=https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200226/report\\_a\\_problem/98/fly\\_tipping](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/f452e836/Hy5YWk_SgEGkleekL2ROFQ?u=https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200226/report_a_problem/98/fly_tipping)

#### **Census 2021 – Economy figures**

- An ageing population has driven a fall in economic activity, with rising numbers of people who are retired - 59% of Herefordshire's usual residents aged 16 and over were either working or seeking work in the week before the census 2021, down from 63% in 2011.
- Over a quarter (28%) of usual residents aged 16 years and over were economically inactive because of retirement (compared with 22% nationally).
- 12% of all 16+ year-olds in Herefordshire are self-employed – one of the top 10% rates out of all local authorities across England and Wales.
- Herefordshire's working residents were more likely to work in agriculture, forestry and fishing than in England and Wales as a whole (5% compared with 1% - the tenth highest rate in the country).
- The lockdown meant that significantly more people in employment worked mainly at or from home than in 2011 (26% compared with 6%).  
You can explore the data yourself using the [Census maps](#) on the ONS website.