



Public Realm Service Changes – Key Update for Parish Councils

From 1 June 2026, Herefordshire Council will take back **direct day-to-day control of Public Realm services**. This update explains what is changing, what it means locally, and what Parish Councils can expect.

What is changing?

The Council will directly oversee and manage Public Realm services, rather than relying on a single external contractor. This brings clearer accountability, greater local responsiveness, and more transparency.

Services coming in-house:

- **Highways maintenance and drainage** (roads, potholes, gullies and structures)
- **Green spaces and verges** (grass cutting and public open spaces)
- **Street lighting and street cleansing**
- **Winter service** (gritting and snow clearance)

How services will be delivered

The Council will control delivery through a **mixed model**:

- **M Group Highways** as the main Public Realm contractor
- The Council's **Highways and Public Realm Framework** of approved local and regional contractors
- National or regional frameworks where specialist support is needed

This provides:

- Greater flexibility to respond to local priorities
- Cost certainty through pre-agreed rates
- Stronger control over what work is done and when

Service structure and accountability

Public Realm services sit clearly within the Council's own structure, with defined service areas responsible for:

- Highways maintenance and drainage
- Streetscene, parks, green spaces and street cleansing
- Street lighting, road safety and traffic management
- Public Rights of Way
- Flood risk and drainage management

This creates a **single, accountable Council structure** responsible for performance, standards and county-wide priorities.

Investment in depots, vehicles and sustainability

Electric vehicles

- Introduction of a **new fleet of electric cars and vans** for Public Realm teams
- New **EV charging points** being installed at Thorn and Kingsland depots
- Supports lower emissions, reduced running costs and fleet modernisation

Depot improvements

- Installation of an **asphalt hot box**, allowing hot material to be reused efficiently for local repairs

- Installation of **HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) fuel tanks**, enabling lower-carbon fuel use in operational vehicles

These improvements support:

- Faster and more efficient local repairs
- Reduced waste and environmental impact
- Improved resilience for winter and urgent works

The Annual Plan 2026/27 – what will be delivered

The Council has set out a clear **Annual Plan for 2026/27**, focusing on improving the condition, safety and usability of Herefordshire's highways and public spaces.

Key commitments include:

- Better **road resurfacing and drainage**
- **Safer walking routes** for communities
- Repairs to **bridges and highway structures**
- Improvements to **Public Rights of Way**
- Upgrades to **play areas**
- Targeted action to tackle **ash dieback**

Investment to support delivery:

- **£23.697 million** Government highways maintenance funding
- **£6.385 million** highways infrastructure investment
- **£5 million** specifically for resurfacing Herefordshire's roads
- **£1 million** to improve Public Rights of Way
- **£600,000** to tackle ash dieback affecting highways and open spaces
- **£1 million** for play area upgrades
- **£945,000** for the **Parish Lengthsman Scheme**

This investment is intended to deliver visible improvements while supporting both urban and rural communities across the county.

Parish Lengthsman Scheme

- The Parish Lengthsman Scheme continues under the new arrangements
- Funding for 2026/27 is confirmed at **£945,000**
- Further guidance will be shared on delivery and coordination

What this means for Parish Councils

Clearer accountability

- Herefordshire Council remains the single point of responsibility
- Priorities, standards and timescales are set by the Council

Better use of local knowledge

- Parish Councils remain key partners in highlighting local concerns
- The new model supports more locally informed decision-making

What stays the same

- Parish Councils can continue to raise issues and local concerns
- Partnership working with Parishes continues
- Safety-critical repairs remain the top priority