

June/July 2026 Report Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst Llangarron Ward

Happily serving the parishes of Llangarron, Marstow, Bridstow, Peterstow, Sellack, Welsh Newton and Llanrothal.

Goodbye Balfour Beatty - Hello M Group

Following a procurement process Herefordshire has a new contract partner from the 1st June . M Group is a large UK infrastructure services company that specialises in maintaining and improving essential services such as highways, transport and utilities. It will act as the council's main delivery partner for the new public realm contract, carrying out practical work residents rely on every day, including road maintenance, drainage, street lighting, street cleansing, grass cutting and winter gritting, while operating under a new model where the council retains day-to-day control and commissions work at pre-agreed, transparent rates.

This contract is important because it marks a major shift away from the previous fully outsourced approach (with Balfour Beatty), giving the council greater control, flexibility and accountability over how services are delivered, improving value for money and ensuring that highly visible, day-to-day services that shape residents' experience of the county are delivered more efficiently, consistently and to a higher standard.

Category one potholes will remain with a 24-hour repair from notification deadline, the new Category 2 potholes have a 28-day repair deadline reduced from six weeks in the previous contract. M Group has also secured the contract to be Welsh Water's contractor in our area which hopefully can improve liaison between the council and Water company.



PLEASE Report potholes and concerns

[Report problems on the road –](#)

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/report-problems-road

[Check on progress of a defect](#)

herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/pothole-road-defect-progress-map

Report a serious pothole, flooded road or highway obstruction-: 01432 261800

Performance report So, how's it going?

We get quarterly performance reports at Cabinet – the most recent can be seen here:

Report Template Cabinet

<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50134346/Appendix%201%20for%20Q4%20Performance%20Report.pdf>

The headlines are that 184 out of 255 milestones have been delivered, 11 have been discounted and 60 have been carried forward. In many cases the carry forward is due to a planned longer timeline to completion crossing into another reporting year.

I know this is a bit more detail than I might generally share with you, but I just thought it would be worthwhile to offer a glimpse into the 800 or so services that the county council provides and to give reassurance as to the grip on the delivery of those services and projects.

I would also like to take a moment to focus on my colleague Cllr Peter Stoddart. Cllr Stoddart is the cabinet member in charge of finance, so it falls to him to carry the responsibility of the budget and the performance elements. In these times that is quite a task. Cllr Stoddart is a retired Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment. He was speaking the other day of principles of his service first articulated by Lt. Col. David Stirling in 1942 – all worth paying attention to and trying to live up to.

Rank, not class. Humility. Sense of humour and the relentless pursuit of excellence.

Standards he has applied to his time as a Herefordshire Councillor and that we all try to embody.

The Big-Ticket items

I recently attended the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee to answer their questions about the various major capital projects we have on the go. The council are in a period of intense focus on delivery of multiple, complex and significant investments which will be a boost to Herefordshire's economy, culture and environment.

The Connected Communities Scrutiny is one of a number of scrutiny panels where elected members can investigate and hold the administration to account. It was attended by a number of cabinet members, including myself, as well as the senior officers responsible.

The projects that were under consideration were: the Transport Hub, Ross Enterprise Park, the Holme Lacy active travel scheme, the new Library in the Shirehall, the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery and phase one of the bypass.

Not all of the schemes were instigated by the current administration, for instance, the transport hub was already very well advanced with design decisions and delivery underway which meant that to make any changes would have been very costly indeed. Principally funded by government grants it will improve the connection between rail and bus travel as well as making a more pleasant environment for people coming into Hereford on the train. There were some concerns about the design from the bus companies, but the hub is all but complete now so we will have to see how it functions 'in real life'. The bus companies had, of course, been extensively engaged with and consulted during the entire process but there have been changes in staff and new companies are now operating in the area.

The Ross Enterprise Park is underway and will deliver an employment site with a focus on high wage, high-skill jobs. The demand for the sites is so strong the council will be moving to phase 2 as soon as possible. Each phase creates 4 acres of sites for development. It will be a real boost to the local economy of Ross on Wye.

Holme Lacy Road – Like the Transport Hub this was a legacy project started under the previous administration and delivered by the current one. It is designed to encourage active travel in this area of Hereford by creating safe cycling and walking routes. It is under construction and coming in under budget.

The Hereford library – this is one of the items that sits partially in my portfolio now I am also responsible for culture. The building work sits with the Cabinet Member for Contracts and Assets; the cultural bit sits with me. When the current administration took over, the plan was to put the library in Maylord Orchards – a 1980's retail development in Hereford, which currently is occupied by Poundland and others as well as having a number of empty units. The council also owns, and is responsible for, the Shirehall which is a fine listed regency building in the centre of Hereford designed by Sir Robert Smirke who also designed the British Museum. The previous administration had no plans for the Shirehall and the building had been closed off due to being in an unsafe condition.

The current administration made the decision to restore the Shirehall and make it the venue for the library, learning centre and cultural hub. As you can imagine, buildings like the Shirehall are complex and difficult to restore so the plans have had to adjust in order to shape a design and end use that is both affordable and worthwhile. It will fall to a subsequent administration to see this project through and I truly hope that they stay true to the vision of a splendid civic building housing a library that is a place where people – and especially children – want to spend time, where the assembly hall will once more host great music and exhibitions and the undercroft provides a learning centre and makers space for our young people to enjoy and use. I think it is better than a 1980's shopping centre – it says something about the importance of learning, culture and art.

Like the Shirehall, the **Broad Street Museum** building is a complex project. The initial plan was devised by the previous administration – the design was bold and beautiful (although the civic society had their doubts) and included a 5th floor with a café and viewing beacon to look out over the city and surrounding countryside. Unfortunately, this plan, once properly costed, was £14m more than we could afford, so we have had to do some serious thinking about what is necessary and what is nice to have. In other words, we have to cut our suit according to our cloth.

The massive scale of reconstruction and structural alteration needed to support the extra floor accounted for most of the £14m – that is a lot of coffees that the café would have to sell! So, we decided to lose the 5th floor and focus on the working museum elements which are the core business of the building.

The first phase of the **bypass** is the final big-ticket item. It is progressing with land acquisition, planning and construction preparation. We have tried our very best to reach agreement with all of the land owners – offering a premium to buy land by agreement rather than by compulsory purchase. In nearly all cases this is progressing well with agreement on all sides but if agreement cannot be reached a compulsory purchase will be undertaken. Still on target to break ground in December.

The scrutiny panel made three recommendations at the end of a long session. On Monday the same scrutiny committee will be discussing the bypass – the agenda is over 700 pages (so that's my weekend reading sorted).

Parish Summit

Many thanks to those parish councillors who attended the parish summit, either in person or online. I hope you found it useful.

I will be sending a note about the proposed changes to planning once the NPPF is published in the near future.

Charter for the River Wye

The first parish council in the catchment has now signed and pledged to the River Wye Charter – well done Newland Parish Council. The Consortium of Wye Valley Councils (which includes Bridstow and Marstow) were also signatories on the launch day- although that doesn't mean that individual councils can't also sign (Newland is also in the consortium) . If you would like to consider this for your parish please feel free to ask me any questions or check out the website for information.

[The Charter for the River Wye - Wye Catchment Partnership](#)

That's all for now!