

Leader's Newsletter August 2022

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Welcome to this, my newsletter reflecting on Cabinet activity in August and looking forward to September.

It is with great sadness that we have had news of the death of Queen Elizabeth. She has been a solid rock and foundation for us throughout the period since the Second World War.

Many will have had the opportunity to meet her and their memories will I am sure be precious. Regrettably I was not one of them.

What an extraordinary life lived. The poem "The Dash" uses words to describe the dash which is put on memorials between the date of birth and date of death. The poem includes these words:

What matters is how we live and love.
And how we spend our dash.

The Queen spent her dash in the most extraordinary service and humility. What a long and strong dash hers is. I life filled not with self gratification but service. She was an example to us all. She will be sorely missed.

Opportunities will be given to residents to sign books of remembrance and places will be identified to leave tributes. Details will probably be available on the Council website before you read this.

The Cabinet Member contributions below were written before this news.

God save the King.

Regards

David Hitchiner

**Councillor David Hitchiner
Leader of the Council**

Children and families – Cllr Diana Toynbee

I'm pleased that the transformation activity is gaining pace, and that new systems have been put in place for supporting and monitoring some of our most vulnerable children. We're also working very hard to improve our retention and recruitment of social workers, family support workers



and managers, so that over the coming months we increase the number of permanent members of staff.

Our career progression and learning and development opportunities for our staff are now clearer and stronger, and we need to keep improving this.

I was very pleased to welcome Rachel Gillott (permanent Service Director for Safeguarding and Family Support) and Phil Bullingham (permanent Service Director for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance) to the service. They have brought very helpful experience and energy.

I continue to meet families we are working with, partners in other agencies, and our own safeguarding teams, to hear how they are feeling and what their main challenges are.

As ever, I welcome feedback from, and conversations with, all councillor colleagues, so please email me if you would like a chat.

Finance, Corporate & Planning– Cllr Liz Harvey



Website snippets:



Herefordshire now

The latest copy of Herefordshire now is landing on doorsteps from Sept 12 – and will also be available, we will be signposting to various articles from our corporate social media channels see the online version www.herefordshire.gov.uk/herefordshire-now

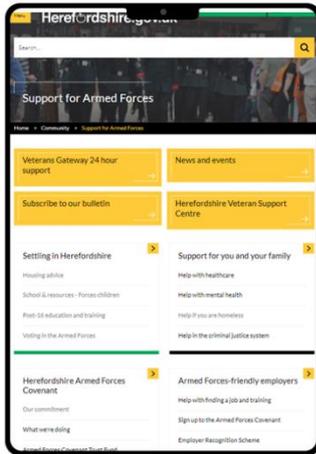


Secondary School admissions

Applications open for Secondary places for the 2023-24 academic year for children who were born between 1 September 2011 and 31 August 2012. Applications deadline October 31st.

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/secondaryschooladmissions

Applications for primary school reception places will open on September 30



New Armed Forces section

All the information for information, advice, support and events have been pulled together into a new homepage making it a lot easier for families and veterans to find the information they need
www.herefordshire.gov.uk/armed-forces



Cost of living

In response to increased prices & the cost of living, Cabinet Office has launched the 'Help for Households' campaign. It explains the different help available onto one Cost of Living Support website www.gov.uk/check-benefits-financial-support We are signposting to this as well as to the [Money on your mind pages on Talk Community](#) for local help and advice from [our newsroom](#) and from our social media channels

Housing, Regulatory Services and Community – Cllr Ange Tyler

Following a successful fundraising campaign, The Herefordshire Hoard is coming home to Herefordshire. With generous donations from the public and funding from national funding bodies, the £776,250 required was raised in just four months. The story of the Hoard can be found at www.herefordshirehoard.co.uk For the latest news see bringing-the-hoard-home-to-herefordshire.raisely.com/blog



New graphics are now appearing on bin lorries as part of The Getting it Right campaign, which aims to reduce recycling contamination by encouraging residents to recycle better. The current focus of the campaign is reducing food waste and contamination to recycling caused by food. The Getting it Right campaign is supported by a dedicated web page www.herefordshire.gov.uk/gettingitright

The latest issue of Herefordshire Now is landing on doorsteps. It is the only publication to be delivered to every household in the county and is an important way for residents, especially those who do not use the internet, to find out the latest information about council services and contact details. This issue has a focus on providing supportive information in light of increase in cost of living. Herefordshire Now is also available online at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/council/herfordshire-now

Locally based boxer and Commonwealth Games gold medal winner Delicious Orié has put his weight behind a new video part funded by the council to support men's suicide prevention. The video 'We're in your corner' is part of the wider 'Now We're Talking' initiative, which supports people experiencing problems with their mental health across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The video is aimed at men of all ages and hopes to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and highlight where to get support. It can be viewed on the Acting Together to Prevent Suicide webpage: [Now Were Talking Together To Prevent Suicide | Healthy Minds \(whct.nhs.uk\)](https://www.whct.nhs.uk/now-were-talking-together-to-prevent-suicide)

There are now 66 Talk Community Hubs with Madley, Garway and Llangarron having recently launched.

Holiday Activity Fund – Here for Holidays programme has had a very successful summer with an increased number of children attending the activities during the summer. Over 30 providers took part during the summer to support children eligible for free school meals and 15% discretionary for vulnerable children.

Regulatory Service:

The revised taxi policy is currently being consulted upon until the end of August. This new policy has been redrafted with the local and national taxi associations to remove many of the red tape burdens previously placed upon them, including the launch of a simplified knowledge test so that more drivers can be encouraged back into the profession. That said, I can assure you that the new policy will not be at the cost of public safety or safeguarding.

I am pleased to be able to report that Hereford's Air Quality Monitoring Station which sits on Victoria street next to the city walls has been enlarged and the equipment all upgraded so that, as well as nitrogen dioxide and the larger particulates, for the first time in Herefordshire we are now able to measure particulates under 2.5 micrograms per metres cubed in size as well. Our upgraded station now equals the standard of Defra's own nationwide monitoring stations, providing data on an hourly basis which will help us better understand real-time the impact of any new transport initiatives and measures. A similar station is underway in Leominster which I will be able to report on at a later date when this is also delivered.

The trading standards team have recently seized an estimated £24,000 worth of illegal imported vaping products from the county's shops and have put out a press release to highlight the dangers of any of these products that may find themselves already on the market. The issue with these new vaping products is their capacity which can equate to between 125 to 1000 cigarettes per product. The impact of these imported products will invariably increase nicotine addiction, particularly within the younger population, which is why they are banned and why our officers moved so swiftly on this. I cannot understate the importance of such work in protecting our future generation's public health.

Environmental Health's out-of-hours noise team has been out since the beginning of June on every Friday and Saturday night until 2am and will continue this initiative until the night of the Sunday before August Bank holiday. Although the team more than recognises that there is a time and place for people to enjoy the summer evenings, it has proved a great success in nipping anti-social behaviour in the bud and ensuring that parties, licensed events and festivals do not get out of hand. I wish to thank them for all their hard work and for giving up their summer evenings to do this for us all.

The additional community protection officer for Hereford City has been embedded in well tackling anti-social behaviour, this post being entirely funded by Hereford City Council although managed by our regulatory teams as one of their many new initiatives.

Looking ahead, our officers from our Markets and Fairs team are stepping up their regular meetings with both Hereford City Council and HBID to ensure that the space in High Town can be used to its optimum, such as October's H'Applefest and to also promote High Town as a Christmas attraction for the region. This will prove invaluable in establishing Hereford as a destination city for the region.

Commissioning, Procurement and Assets – Cllr Gemma Davies



The campaign to acquire the Herefordshire Hoard has been successful thanks to the efforts of Council Officers, Herefordshire Museum Service Support Group, other supporters, volunteers and the people of Herefordshire. The entire amount of £776,000 has been raised through a combination of grant funding and community contributions.

Plans are currently being developed by the museum service to provide access to the Hoard during the period when the current museum closes and work on the redevelopment takes place. We will be looking to include taking replicas of the Hoard items to schools for sessions linking in with Anglo-Saxon and Viking elements of the curriculum, hosting open days and tours at the Museum Resource Learning Centre as well as other events and activities.

Health and Adult Wellbeing – Cllr Pauline Crockett

Public Health



September is 'Recovery Month', as part of this there is an organisation called Recovery Street Film Festival who gather short films about people's journey to recovery and then tour the country showing the ones that are shortlisted. The Courtyard very kindly hosted our own festival in Hereford on Friday 2nd in partnership with Turning Point.

The Recovery Street Film Festival was established eight years ago to give people with lived experience the opportunity to share their story with the general public. The festival's aim is to reduce the stigma surrounding recovery from drug and alcohol use. Since then, over one hundred films have been entered and have been watched by over three thousand people.

Demonstrated through the medium of film the diverse issues that are faced by people during their recovery processes and how those around them can be affected are highlighted. Film entries often show a different side to the story of recovery from drug or alcohol use: one that shows a true picture of the determination, commitment and courage that is required to start life afresh. It can be an uphill struggle – one that is not without its pitfalls and disappointments – and we want the films to explore all of the challenges that people face.

Turning point will also be holding a graduation ceremony for people who've gone on to become peer mentors, the first graduation from the peer mentor programme takes place at the beginning of September.

Recovery film festival, short listed films (3 from Herefordshire): <https://rsff.co.uk/>

Environment and Economy – Cllr Ellie Chowns



Economy

UK Shared Prosperity Investment Plan – On the 1st August we submitted the Herefordshire UK Shared Prosperity Investment Plan to government, following approval of the plan by cabinet in July ([Decision - UK Shared Prosperity Plan Submission to Government - Herefordshire Council](#)). The Investment Plan developed with the Herefordshire Sustainable Growth Strategic Board (HSGSB) provides a high level overview of the counties challenges (evidence base) and priorities for investing the £6.6m of the largely (c90%) revenue allocated to the county for this financial year and the next two (ending in 2024/25). The funds had to be allocated across the three themes identified in the national guidance, community and place, supporting business and supporting skills. We are now awaiting government approval of the Investment Plan, and are starting to develop the areas of activity we will be seeking to fund later in the year.

Levelling Up Fund

On the 2nd August we submitted 3 Levelling Up Fund bids to government via their national portal which had been subject to some technical issues. At the end of June the cabinet approved the submission of £43.6m of bids to the second round of government's Levelling Up Fund ([Decision - Levelling Up Fund Bid Submission to Government - Herefordshire Council](#)). Herefordshire has been identified as a priority 1 area in the latest bidding round, and can make up to three bids. We intend to make a £19.2m bid to support the development of much needed employment land in the south of the county, developing Ross Enterprise Park. A £19.9m bid for Hereford City Transport improvements, including the proposed transport hub at the train station and active travel measure enhancements across the city. A £4.3m bid to support public realm improvements in Leominster and Ledbury, as well as working with Leominster Town Council to support the development of the Priors building to provide a range of local services including visitor accommodation and business space. Following a delay to the opening of governments application portal, the bids will be submitted by the 2nd August and we hope to hear the outcome in the autumn.

Stronger Towns Fund

At the end of June the cabinet also approved the submission of full business cases for the council led projects to the Stronger Towns Fund ([Issue details - Stronger Towns Project Full Business Case Submission - Herefordshire Council](#)). This includes the £18million redevelopment of Hereford Museum and Art Gallery, creating a new world class visitor and cultural attraction in the current grade 2 listed building. The £3.5m redevelopment of Maylord Orchards to create a new modern library and learning resource centre, as well as enhancing the current atrium space and Trinity square to establish an improved environment for people to meet, spend time and attend events. The Hereford Stronger Towns Board approved the submission of the business cases to government at the end of June, and we hope to hear the outcome in September. As part of the cabinet decision in June and then ratified through an approved amendment to the capital programme by full council in July, we committed up to £8m of capital receipt reserves to the Museum project and £0.5m to the Maylord project to ensure that these two flagship developments can be taken forward, realising the ambitions of the Town Investment Plan realised, and securing the overall £22.4m of government funding to the city.

Fastershire progress

94.2% of properties in Herefordshire can access a superfast broadband connection (30Mbps and above), with over **51.56%** able to access a gigabit-capable connection. Fastershire's current contracts with Gigaclear and Airband and grant schemes will increase this further.

Gigaclear's work continues in north Herefordshire, with 78% of subsidised premises "Ready for Service" where residents can order full fibre gigabit-capable broadband. During August, builds are ongoing across Almeley, Eardisley, Staunton on Wye, Ivington, Pembridge and Wigmore. The remaining harder-to-reach premises will be picked up in September, meaning residents will soon start to see more build activity. Ongoing work in Ledbury has resulted in premises in the town going live, with more to follow soon.

Airband's rural networks are still progressing with works in Clehonger and surrounding areas and other clusters following on.

Marketing and Communications

A family who has opened their home to a family of three Ukrainian refugees features in a new Fastershire film. The story illustrates how faster broadband access is helping the family of three to stay connected with friends and family back home in Ukraine and how Alyona is continuing her job teaching Ukrainian students to learn English. The video and the latest stories about how faster broadband makes a difference in personal and working lives can be found [here](#) and seen on Fastershire's social media channels.

Fastershire has also launched a campaign to raise awareness about a new service, run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). With customers' permission, the service allows internet providers to verify whether they receive a relevant benefit and are therefore eligible for broadband Social Tariffs, which can save up to £20 per month on broadband.

Fastershire's free learning sessions continue to be marketed on social media. Between July 21st and August 20th 2022, Fastershire Facebook content reached 30,918 accounts, an increase of 17.4% over the previous month.

Free Beginners Internet Workshops

WhatsApp, Tablets, Smartphones and Social Media

Fastershire's free workshops continue each month at the main Herefordshire Libraries.

Workshops for September:

- WhatsApp for Beginners, 11 am Monday 5th September at Hereford Library
- Get to know your Tablet, 10.30 am Tuesday 6th September at Leominster Library
- Get to know your Smartphone, 10 am Thursday 8th September at Ross-on-Wye Library
- Facebook Basics, 2 pm Tuesday 27th September at Kington Library
- WhatsApp for Beginners, 10 am Friday 30th September at Ledbury Library

Visit the [Fastershire website](#) for full details of the monthly workshops and how to book. Please let members of your community, Parish Councils and groups know about these fun and friendly sessions to help increase confidence in using the internet.

Digital support to Talk Community Hubs and Parish Councils

Fastershire offers free advice and practical help to Talk Community Hubs and Parish Councils on maintaining websites, setting-up and managing social media, sharing information/diaries online, managing email distribution securely, or anything else digital or internet related.

For more information or to arrange a free 'Digital Visit' (in person or via video call) contact jennie.morgan@herefordshire.gov.uk

Fastershire Digital Household Grant

The Digital Household Grant (DHG) is offering financial support for the 2,324 premises affected by the 18th November 2021 Programme Change to Fastershire Delivery [decision](#) which descope properties from the Gigaclear contract and transitioned to the Government's Project Gigabit scheme.

Over 300 properties in the affected wards have applied to the scheme to receive a grant to cover the installation cost of a 4G high-gain antenna broadband solution.

SatWorks, the contracted supplier, has been busy over the past two months, successfully installing 4G broadband and transforming internet connectivity for those properties with less than 30Mbps. One resident from Welsh Newton wrote, 'Everything is fine with our 4G broadband, so far! Indeed I would go so far as to say I am impressed.'

In most cases, properties are benefiting from speeds of between 10 and 80Mbps, with 210Mbps being the fastest speed recorded.

Properties that remain unreached by the Community Grant scheme will also be eligible to apply for the Digital Household Grant.

A low earth orbit satellite solution will be explored for properties where 4G is unavailable.

Fastershire Community Grant

The Fastershire Community Grant Scheme continues to target the final 3 to 4% of properties in Herefordshire that still require access to faster broadband of 30Mbps or more.

Fastershire has launched the Allensmore Community Project tender, and potential suppliers have 28 days to review the *request for quotation* and bid for the contract. The Hope Mansel Community Project tender is due to close shortly.

The Birley Community Project is live, and most residents can access ultrafast broadband via a network built by FullFibre Ltd. The remaining properties are in plan for connection in the coming weeks.

Other community projects in build or starting shortly include Tretire and Three Ashes, Castle Frome, Thornbury and Nash and Knill.

Business Grant

Businesses can now register for a grant to part-fund the installation of fibre or alternative faster broadband connections via the postcode checker at www.fastershire.com. The Business grants allocate up to £20k per eligible premise with a 20% contribution from the business.

[Click here](#) to watch a short film about how Fastershire supported a Herefordshire business.

Solar PV for Schools

- A large new 150kWp solar PV system has recently been installed at Earl Mortimer College and a ~40kWp is planned at Ashfield Park Primary School in October.

MCS Charitable Foundation

- Following a successful expression of interest the Council has been invited to apply for funding to provide skills training for local installers for building retrofit works. If successful this will help to support and develop our local retrofit supply chain and will help to accelerate the adoption of low carbon and renewable energy technologies.

- This project would also support our wider retrofits skills work and is a key priority to help reduce carbon emissions in our building stock which accounts for over 30% of our carbon emissions.

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund

- The Council has successfully secured new grant funding for on-street electric vehicle charge points through the DfT's new Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure pilot scheme.
- This project, which is a partnership with Midlands Connect, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Rutland and Stoke on Trent will help to further increase the charge point provision in the county.