

Goodrich & Welsh Bicknor Parish

- No new matters arising this month from within the Parish
- **Outstanding:** investigating 'whose' responsibility is it to clean up area near the bridge of A40 Highways England); on-going conversations with a local resident re: SEN transport; awaiting legal response to a Private Rights of Way issue in Goodrich; future road/embankment works + Bilbins Bridge in Symonds Yat East; C1257 reopening
- Please also read 'issues across three parishes' (below)
- For residents who want to read my full report, which includes what I am doing in the other Parishes and in Herefordshire Council: please go to: www.wagpc.org.uk and click on the link to 'Ward Councillor'

Walford Parish

- Positive and constructive conversation with the new Co-ordinator of the Walford Community Support Scheme + agreed to be a referee as I am very supportive of the Co-ordinators ideas re: sustainable/nutritious food projects/programme + gave the scheme 8 bottles hand sanitizer for volunteers
- Contacted by residents regarding their (or others) planning applications and (illegal?) structures being built in the Parish, a number of issues on Leys Hill (most are now resolved), closure of footpath and removal of footbridge in Hom Green
- Conversations with Parish Councillors re: Memorial Project and Drains
- **Outstanding:** Increase in dog litter on Howle Hill (awaiting information from Parish Council on costs); HGV sign on Howle Hill; Formal Complaint re: accident on WA39 (awaiting 'what constitutes a safe bridleway surface' from a group of local horse riders and British Horse Society); closure of WA50, Leys Hill junction (waiting receipt of traffic survey); Kerne Bridge Launch site (recycling/ecological responsibilities in contract); Water running down Deepdene: HC & WW

Whitchurch and Ganarew Parish

- Highway England matters: chasing up flooding in heavy rain on slip road at Ganarew/ junction on A40 and another junction opposite Woods of Whitchurch
- Distributed 11 bottles of hand sanitisers in Parish
- Contacted by residents re: poor broadband which I have escalated with Fastershire, contacted the Forestry England re: re-opening of Bilbins Bridge and (illegal) structures being built in the Parish
- Looking into 'Keeping the Community Connected Project' with the Good Neighbours Scheme to enable vulnerable/self-isolating to connect to their immediate local community through the internet re: access to food, essential supplies, health & social care, car share scheme etc.
- **Outstanding:** parents worried about children walking/cycling to Memorial Hall from Ridgeway via Llangrove Road; animal welfare/puppy farming concerns at a property in Whitchurch + Monmouth Recycling facilities being closed to Herefordshire residents

Across the Three Parishes

- Herefordshire Council is being provided with central government funding to promote/enhance cycling and walking in the county. I have asked **20mph zones** be implemented in residential areas of Walford, Goodrich and Whitchurch villages to enable children and vulnerable adults to feel safe walking/cycling/using their mobility scooters/buggies etc within their villages in order to access schools/village halls/pubs etc. BBLP will liaise with each respective Parish Council if my request is successful
- Requesting details on the £10,000 refurbishment grant given to Village Halls

May 2020 - Cllr Yolande Watson: Herefordshire Councillor for Kerne Bridge

- Fielding enquiries re: the re-opening of the recycling centre in Ross-on-Wye
- Assessing post-Covid-19 resilience across the ward including access to food, essential supplies, e-technology and support
- Forwarding updates from Covid-19 Link Worker: Matthew Williams and/or the CEO Summaries on Covid-19 situation in Herefordshire. *To date – no key issues or demands have been brought to my attention re: Covid support*
- Having continued conversations/correspondence with Highways and Transport, and Highways England re: flooding, drains, potholes, road surfacing and footpaths/bridleways across the ward
- Commenting on every planning application in the Parish and investigating those where the Parish Council and/or residents have expressed concerns
- Connectivity – continue to walk and cycle across the three Parishes. Identifying issues and notifying the appropriate Parish Council, Footpaths Officer, BBLP PROW Team Leader and BBLP Locality Steward

Herefordshire Council (HC):

1. See updates from the Leader, individual Cabinet members and the attached report from the CEO on Covid-19 situation in Herefordshire
2. E-Committee and Cabinet meetings are working well and will continue for the foreseeable future.
3. Rethinking Governance Review, smaller working groups and the Alliance have been using video and telephone conferencing successfully
4. Informal conversations are being held by Councillors on post-Covid-19 policies and practices where gaps have been identified within rural wards: food poverty/access; building/ supporting community resilience with local infrastructure; faster and more flexible financial support for businesses to innovate and respond to local need; transport strategies to look at holistic systems that link with planning infrastructure and developments
5. Keep up to date with Covid-19 information on <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus>. The Talk Community Hub Covid-19 Link Workers for the ward is **Yvonne Richards and Matthew Williams** who are employed by the Council to link those who are self-isolating with help, support & services in the Parish. Contact: matthew.williams@herefordshire.gov.uk in the first instance

6. Update from Leader: David Hitchiner

Herefordshire Council focus remains to keep as many people as safe as possible and ensuring that our vital front line services are supported. The gradual release of the lock down is to be welcomed, but the Cabinet and Council remain concerned that this does not result in a worsening position. I urge people to continue to comply with the latest guidelines on social distancing. Apart from this dominating theme there are couple which are receiving particular public attention.

- **Reopening recycling centres:** we are planning further reopening of other sites
- **School reopening:** see Cllr Norman's report below. The Cabinet decided that it was best to rely upon the local knowledge and skills of local decision makers rather than influence one way or the other. We are a diverse county with no one plan fitting all. We are very grateful for the work of the education team in supporting head teachers and others.
- **Recovery:** This is increasingly an area receiving attention. From an economic perspective, the £440,000 from the LEP (see Cllr Chown's report below) is a welcome injection of funds to help with Tourism. We had a very encouraging meeting with local businesses in May to take the Stronger Towns Fund application forward. This is up to £25m. Building work has restarted on the Station Road approach and the Cyber Centre on Rotherwas and NMiTE continue to

progress their projects. There are also further funds coming through the LEP to help with other projects.

7. Update from Cabinet members:

Children and families – Cllr Felicity Norman

Our schools and settings continue to do a wonderful job in staying open for children of key workers where they aren't able to remain at home and vulnerable children, including over holiday periods. On re-opening, they have been assured that we will support whatever decision they make. Many schools have chosen to open for more children from 1 June. Numbers are uncertain as some parents and carers continue to be concerned. It is expected that numbers will rise gradually and schools are staying in touch to encourage and reassure parents. Some schools are delaying for one or two weeks due to staffing issues. Planning for increased numbers has been ongoing for some time with stringent measures to ensure the safety of staff and pupils being put in place. Online education will continue for those who have not returned. Early years settings have also been expected to plan for a wider reopening from 1 June and many are expected to do so for small numbers of children. This is a challenging situation for many early years providers who are small independent businesses.

Schools, social workers and family support workers are in regular contact with vulnerable children, keeping in touch and encouraging them to attend school, although numbers continue to be low. This may improve once the wider school population begins to return.

Some children are disadvantaged by lack of IT equipment, poor connections, crowded and noisy home conditions, lack of home support or stress related to low incomes and unemployment. We are working with schools to find ways of addressing these inequalities, including the provision of individual laptops and have taken part in the national scheme to provide IT equipment for some disadvantaged learners and also for children with care experience. We expect to be receiving c.400. Academy schools will also receive some too.

Social workers continue to make regular visits (including some virtual) to children with care plans or looked after children, and family support services are continuing to provide Early Help, although in some cases visits will be virtual and alternative methods of working with families will be employed. Support for young carers is helping to enable them to continue or return to attending school. We have also altered the short breaks scheme for children with disabilities and their families so that they can make use of funding to provide equipment at home.

Finally it is great to see that some of our children with care experience have had their poems published by Exposure magazine. Here's a link to a couple of them;

<http://exposure.org.uk/2020/05/poem-no-intelligent-life-form-destroys-their-home-and-each-other>

<http://exposure.org.uk/2020/05/poem-about-isolation-in-care-lockdown-language/>

Many thanks to everyone for creative and supportive working, helping to provide as much stability as possible in these difficult times.

Environment, economy and skills – Cllr Ellie Chowns

- **Environment**

The next Cabinet meeting (delayed due to technical problems) is due to approve our new **Council Carbon Management Plan** which sets out our interim target for a 75% reduction on 2008/9 levels by

2025/26, part of our commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030/31. This is the first of two 5-year plans setting out our pathway to achieve this. This builds on excellent progress to date – we have reduced our emissions by 43% over the past 10 years (2008/9 to 2018/19). The Carbon Management Plan includes projects such as the following (more details will follow shortly in the Action Plan):

- Supporting schools and academies with energy efficiency, generating their own renewable energy and behaviour change
- Working closely with our partners and contractors such as Halo and BBLP
- Purchasing 100% renewable energy for our buildings
- Investing in further energy efficiency and renewable energy projects across our estate to reduce our consumption and generate our own electricity
- A continued focus on sustainable and active travel – encouraging more video conferencing, walking, cycling and the 5 new electric pool cars - which arrived this week
- Our 2020 Climate Challenge Team, where staff have committed to both reducing their own carbon emissions and to help identify new projects across the Council.

Work on the **County-wide Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy** continues, with sub-groups looking in-depth at Transport, Agriculture & Land Use, Buildings, Energy, and Community Engagement. We're making sure that this work is closely aligned with existing initiatives in the county, and with emerging plans & initiatives to help build a 'new and better normal' post-coronavirus.

In partnership with Highways England and SWARCO we are currently installing three rapid **electric vehicle charging points** at Broad Street car park, Leominster, Edde Cross car park, Ross on Wye and St Martin car par, Hereford.

These new charge points will enable residents to charge much faster as they typically deliver 80% of a full charge in approximately 30mins.

This week we received our 5 new **electric pool cars**. These will be available for staff to use shortly as we are currently reviewing a safe working procedure during Covid.

Our **Marches Renewable Energy grants** project is progressing well with a number of local businesses and organisations have benefited from 50% grants for renewable energy projects. These include grants for solar PV projects at Wye Valley Engineering in Ross and Frank H Dale in Leominster. More info [here](#).

This week we relaunched our popular **TravelFund grant** scheme as part our Destination Hereford active travel programme. We've reviewed the scheme to help supporting remote access to work during Covid 19 and also cargo bikes for businesses deliveries. More info [here](#).

- **Economic Development**

I'm delighted that the LEP this week approved our business case for spending £444k of Marches Investment Fund money on a **strategic tourism initiative** to support the recovery of the visitor economy. This will be important in attracting new people to #VisitHERE in Herefordshire when

lockdown restrictions are lifted – really important to support our local businesses in the visitor economy which have been severely affected.

Earlier this month, central government announced that each local authority would receive an additional 5% of grant funding for a **discretionary business grant fund**. The guidance asks that we look to prioritise small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces, regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment, Bed & Breakfasts which pay Council Tax instead of business rates, and charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief. We are working towards launching the scheme in early June.

Herefordshire has been awarded £172,188 to help **facilitate the re-opening of high streets** in June. The funds can help plan towns and cities plan for re-opening, engaging and advising businesses, communicating to the general public about how high streets can re-open safely, and any small scale changes required to the public realm.

Work continues to consider other ways to help support local recovery, including through our capital programme.

- **Fastershire**

The **'Keep Connected' small grants scheme** has so far supported 78 community groups to continue to connect virtually through the crisis with over £12k in small grants.

70 Businesses have recently attended online **FasterBusiness Workshops** with more events planned over the coming months

Work is starting on the **Airband** networks to the east/ south east of Hereford in the next fortnight.

Later in June the council will be formally launch the **Fastershire Community Broadband Grant** – this is stage 5 of the Broadband Strategy that aims to address the remaining localities in the county that are not included in current deployment programmes. The new Stage 5 will offer grants on a property basis to individuals and businesses to procure their own Gbps capable broadband solutions from a selected range of suppliers. To read more about the plans in the Fastershire Broadband Strategy [click here](#).

Finance and corporate services – Cllr Liz Harvey

- **Finance**

CV-19 Business Grant Distribution: Business grants have been paid out to more than 4,500 businesses across Herefordshire since the beginning of April. Government has recently announced a discretionary grant scheme for the small and micro-businesses that do not meet the small business and retail, leisure and hospitality schemes. Final details are awaited from Government, but the initial allocation to Herefordshire is just over £3m. Information on how to claim these new payments will be updated on the CV19 business support page of the council's website when it is received.

Professional Project Management: Progress continues to be made in planning for professional project management to take on a much more central role in how the council manages its service delivery and special projects. This work is being led by Marc Cole who has significant experience in running very large scale infrastructure and engineering projects in a number of specialist areas. We fully expect this

focus on delivery to time, cost and value to deliver significant benefits to the council as it is rolled out across the organisation.

CV-19 Funding Gap: Presently there is a significant gap between the costs and lost income to the council as a consequence of CV-19 and the funding support provided and promised by central government. We hope and expect that further government funds will come across to narrow this crevasse but nevertheless we shall need the cleverness and imagination of all our staff, councillors, partners and residents to help us find our way to a 'new normal' as this national emergency continues to run its course.

2019-20 Accounts: The outturn for 2019-20 is an under-spend is £0.569m, which equates to 0.4% on a net revenue budget of £151m. The report on the council's annual accounts and its appendixes are moving through the governance process, and will be reported to cabinet in June. The council will publish its draft annual accounts by the end of June. The forecast position for 20-21 is currently being worked on for the May month end. Clearly there have been a number of organisational surprises in recent months which were not anticipated when the budget was approved in February.

- **Supporting Our Staff through CV-19**

Changing How We Work: The majority of council staff have been working from home since 18 March. At all times the health and safety of staff has been the top priority for the council.

Protecting Our Staff: The supply of PPE (personal protective equipment) for those staff who are not able to work from home has posed significant challenges to the council in its aim to keep staff safe. At all times the council has complied with Public Health England (PHE) guidance and ensured that staff have the correct PPE when they need it.

Being Well: CV-19 has had a relatively small impact on the council workforce as regards sickness/absence and as at 26 May 2020, Herefordshire Council reported the lowest CV-19 related absence rates in the west midlands region with 0.8% of staff either off sick or self-isolating. This is powerful evidence of the effectiveness of the measures we have put in place from the outset to protect our staff at all times, and in all circumstances – some of which have and continue to be high risk.

Working Together: Following publication of the government's guidance 'working safely during coronavirus' a corporate risk assessment is being undertaken with the trade unions to ensure council buildings are 'COVID-19 secure', starting with Plough Lane. Additional health and safety risk assessment templates have also been developed to take account of staff who are deemed to be at greater risk such as black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and those with underlying health conditions.

Staying Well: We do not underestimate the impact that such significant changes and exceptional challenges can have on our staff. New resources been made available to staff and managers detailing how to keep in touch, maintain wellbeing, manage teams remotely and work safely. Staff have also been reminded that they continue to have 24/7 access to free and confidential counselling should they need additional support. The HR team have extended the scope of the service to include immediate family members of staff, at no extra cost, until 31 July 2020.

Looking Ahead: Work is ongoing to develop a staff survey that will help us to obtain a 'temperature check' of staff wellbeing, learn lessons from the current arrangements and identify any ways to maximise the opportunities that working on digital platforms has brought for so many council roles.

Health and adult wellbeing – Cllr Pauline Crockett

Covid-19 Telephone support continues to be provided to Herefordshire residents to help them identify and use local networks of support, having taken over 3,000 calls, supported by significant staff deployment.

The Link Worker role continues to offer support across the county and arrangements are evolving as demand decreases and some council staff return to substantive roles. The official Shield list of people particularly vulnerable to Covid19 now numbers 5,168, with 187 people identified as needing help to register with the programme. Council staff have now contacted directly and offered support to 89% of Shield individuals. Of these, 249 have requested support from a Shield Buddy. 115 volunteer buddies have now been trained and matched with 230 people. Surveys of volunteers and community networks are being prepared to facilitate learning and further development from the management of the Covid19 response.

Multi-agency collaboration on domestic abuse promotes availability of support and new routes for victims seeking help. Demand for support by victim's remains somewhat below usual levels overall, although police activity has increased recently to match previous years and housing requests have risen. Additional accommodation for victims has been arranged, along with a network of community ambassadors.

Statutory and voluntary organisations are working collaboratively to **develop more preventative mental health support including for rural and farming communities and military veterans**, along with implementing the suicide prevention strategy.

In ensuring accommodation and **support for care leavers and other young people**, a new provision is being mobilised for those **with complex needs** and procurement finalised for new flexible services supporting young people with different needs.

Cabinet is considering plans to resettle 125 or more **refugees** over the period to 2025, utilising private rented housing.

Through **Project Brave**, Housing solutions team continues to support rough sleepers and vulnerable homeless people in temporary accommodation, in partnership with the voluntary sector. The numbers accommodated under Covid19 arrangements have increased slightly too more than 70, owing to various factors, including people fleeing domestic abuse. There has been success in finding employment for a number of people supported through Brave. Initiatives to extend the benefits of project Brave beyond the Covid19 emergency include preventative work around high risk individuals and commissioning Venture to help find sustainable solutions for rough sleepers and others. Work continues to ensure that the homes of disabled and vulnerable adults are safe and appropriately adapted to their needs. OT reviews and assessments are continuing, along with essential home adaptations.

Public Health has ensured that implementation of Track and Trace plans are well advanced locally with Tier one in place and the Single Point of Access already operational and moving to 7 days weekly. Environmental health staff are contributing as Herefordshire also supports the regional surveillance programme, which is required over the next few months. Public Health is also working with partners and across the council to support the potential re-opening of services and the outbreak management

May 2020 - Cllr Yolande Watson: Herefordshire Councillor for Kerne Bridge

plan for Herefordshire is in preparation. Public health input to wider joint working with health continues, including the Care Home Support Hub and oversight of local testing.

Operational staff are working as part of the **Care Home Support Hub** to address outbreaks of Covid19 affecting residents and staff. Social work continues daily to meet the statutory duties of assessing, safeguarding and reviewing, building on the achievement of no waiting lists for new assessments and meeting all targets for reviews. Social work staff continue to work tirelessly and with very low sickness absence, showing commitment to putting the needs of Herefordshire residents first.

Infrastructure and transport – Cllr John Harrington

Fownhope Flood Repair Works - Works commenced at Lechmere Lay Fownhope on 18 May 2020 to excavate the landslip caused by Storm Dennis floods in February. Works comprise removal of highway slip and reinstatement/rebuilding of the B4224 highway carriageway and it is anticipated this scheme will be completed by the end of July. Design of the repair works to the damaged retaining wall (and unstable carriageway of nearly 100 metres) at Stone Cottage is progressing. Having considered a number of options for this scheme a process of soiling nail has been selected as the most appropriate measure to complete these repairs. Detailed design of this scheme is progressing including input from specialist designer / suppliers. Decisions with landowners are also taking place to ensure we can access third party land to undertake these works. On current programme it is anticipated these works will commence in early August but we are working hard to improve on this start date and to ensure works are completed as soon as possible. We will also be working with the contractor to establish if one way traffic can be maintained around the works – this will be confirmed when the design is further developed but may allow access to the village from Hereford/Mordiford approaches.

Across the county there are other sites that still work through, such as the fractured carriageway at Whitney on Wye. As you know, despite public assurances from one of our MPs, MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) say they will pay for very little of the damage to the road network (approx. £12 million) caused by the historic flooding and say we need to ask the DfT for the considerable shortfall – so that fight continues.

Challenge & Pothole Funds Grant - An additional allocation of £7.6million for the current financial year was announced by DfT in May (on the back of the chancellor's announcement earlier in the year as already mentioned) to help us address significant network condition backlog. We hope to engage with all the parishes in due course to make best use of local knowledge to ascertain priorities. Improving the drainage network through capital works is a priority for the next few years.

Covid Active Travel Emergency Funds – Support was also announced for councils to encourage more cycling and walking and help reduce the impact of congestion as people try to get back to work and schools over the coming months. Despite the headline promises and a total £250 million fund, very little is coming our way because the weighting is being factored towards authorities that had heavier public transport use.

Trading standards officers continue to advise the public on **rogue traders** exploiting the current situation and summonses have been recently laid for various offences spanning this team's service areas.

The Licensing Team have also remained very busy throughout, as businesses vary their activities to adapt to the current restrictions. This has included the taxi trade and how Perspex sheeting can be used inside cabs to minimise the risk of infection to staff and passengers alike.

Strategic Housing – The council's first residential property purchased in Widemarsh Street, Hereford was due to complete its refurbishment and open in April unfortunately due to Covid 19 it was been delayed and is anticipated completion is 26th June. The contractor has continued to work throughout this period of time albeit with a reduced level of workmen and with social distancing rules in place. The property will be used as transitional accommodation and provides four self-contained apartments and an emergency studio apartment for young adults with complex needs. A 24 hours support service will operate out of the property providing support to the individuals to enable them to become tenancy ready and follow a pathway in to general needs accommodation.

Affordable Housing Target - Nearly all housing association development sites closed down due to Covid 19 but a small number of affordable housing units have been delivered so far this financial year. Now restrictions have been relaxed on moving house households will now be able to move into the properties.

Herefordshire Council's allocation policy. Demand for housing exceeds available supply in the county and therefore the housing allocation scheme endeavours to make best use of the housing stock and to help those who are in most need of affordable rented housing. Following agreement for the new allocations scheme at Cabinet in February a new IT system and policy will launch on the 22nd June.

Hope Scott House - After working very closely with the Charity for a number of years Herefordshire Council awarded grant funding to build an additional wing to the hostel to provide an additional 5 en-suite rooms for the homeless, with a further 2 self-contained pods in the grounds. The wing is in the final stage of snagging and will be available for occupation in the coming week which will greatly assist with the Covid 19 exit plan. The delivery of the pods has been delayed due to Covid but will be in situ within the next 2 months.

Commissioning, procurement and assets – Cllr Gemma Davies

Waste – Both the collection and disposal teams are currently working flat out to try and keep up with the excess demand on their services. Hereford and Leominster recycling centres have been open for a few weeks. The demand is still great at these sites with Hereford having some 58 vehicles per hour, a huge achievement for the staff given the social distancing restrictions. We are looking to open other sites in the future and the decision has been made to open Ross on Wye recycling centre (awaiting date of opening). It will be via a booking system which will allow individuals to book a slot to drop off their waste. The main reason for this is that the ROW site is positioned in such a way that there could be significant traffic management issues should queues form. A booking system will also ensure that only Herefordshire residents will be able to use the site as we are aware that Coleford recycling centre isn't yet open.

Social value – I commissioned a project on social value last year. I am pleased to say that a local organisation won the contract. The project will be identifying what our key social needs are in Herefordshire, and how we can link those needs to our procurement processes. For example, if we know of an area of social deprivation within the County then in our procurement and tendering process we could state that we expect companies who bid to show us what they will do to recruit or support a youth project in that area. It's all brilliant stuff that has been used very successfully by other councils. We have a huge number of SME's in our County and it is important, especially for our County economic recovery post Covid, that we try and keep every pound that we spend local. I will keep you updated but if you want to know anymore then please do let me know.

Cultural services – Many of the teams based within cultural services have been redeployed to other roles to support Covid-19. These have included prescription and food deliveries along with the manning of the telephone service. Usage of the online library has seen a significant increase over the lockdown with new members reaching 100 per day. We have a new 'Life under Lockdown' project in conjunction with the Hereford Times where individuals can submit photos, artwork, web pages etc that signify their role in lockdown. This collection shall then be put into a permanent archive record. If you would like to submit anything:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200250/coronavirus/900/stay_home_stay_safe/11.

At present there are no plans to reopen the libraries but the team are working tirelessly with national colleagues and organisations to try and identify areas of good practice that we could use when they reopen.

Property services – The teams have been working non-stop in preparation for Covid related projects including the Three Counties, temporary morgues, Gardner Hall for key worker accommodation and Hillside. The work that was completed in record time despite significant social distancing regulations and restrictions is nothing short of miraculous.

Public Toilets – I can confirm that the decision has been made to reopen in two stages. In the first stage we will reopen the toilets where social distancing can be adhered to without any extra work required i.e. single set toilets. The second stage will look at those where some work would be required to allow for social distancing. There have been huge calls for the toilets to be reopened in light of the relaxing of lockdown measures and especially for town centres where the hope is that shops can start reopening.

8. Did you know you can subscribe for updates on Council matters by signing up to:
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKHEREF/subscriber/new>