



Winter 2024/5 Update

Goodrich and Welsh Bicknor

Walford

Whitchurch and Ganarew Group
Parish Councils

From

Kerne Bridge Ward County Councillor

Simeon Cole

Dear Residents

In accordance with my allocated duties within the Council I have attended the following committees

- Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee (4)
- Planning Committee (4)
- Scrutiny Management Board (4)
- Full Council (3)

The figures in brackets indicate the number of meetings attended. As you can see, the programme of the current administration has gathered pace with much committee activity.

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December is usually the time to start to plan the year ahead and with local authorities it is the month that Government announces the proposed settlement for the following financial year. Of most concern is the new government's decision already announced to do away with the Rural Services Delivery grant worth over 6 million pounds to Herefordshire Council's revenue budget. The full impact of this is now emerging...more information below.

The Council did receive a grant of £3.2 million from the Transport department to support bus services in the county of which £1.8 million will be used to extend the services that are currently supported by grant funding. The decision on the rest of the spend will be made by the Partnership board between the Council and Bus operators.

Ward Activity

I continue to attend to many emails and telephone calls relating to ward matters and recently, attention to the drains around the Parishes. I have pursued and encouraged a jetting programme which is most important to alleviate the problems of surface water. This is one of the root causes of deterioration of the road surface. The main ward issues in this period have continued to be potholes and falling trees and I have continued to provide the first response to trees on several occasions. I am in active dialogue with Balfour Beatty, constantly pressing for pothole attention. I am actively working on schemes to improve safety on the B4234, especially alongside Kerne Bridge including a pedestrian crossing to make it safer for visitors to cross the road to the Inn on the Wye.

Planning matters have been particularly prominent recently and I have attended many meetings aiming to resolve compliance issues and several controversial applications which I have caused to be redirected.

If you think I can help with any matters relating to Herefordshire Council please do not hesitate to contact me, my email address is simeon.cole@herefordshire.gov.uk

With best wishes

Simeon

Other Council matters

2025/6 Budget and Council Tax

Following a period of public consultation, consideration by the Scrutiny Management Board, and Cabinet agreement, the 2025/26 budget proposals were approved by full council on 7th February.

Like many other councils across the country, Herefordshire Council has seen changes to funding arrangements which have reduced the money it receives from central government. This reduction in core funding comes against a backdrop of increasing demands for statutory services including child and adult care services and an increase in the cost of providing them.

The total revenue budget for 2025/26 will be £231.5 million.

The budget includes a council tax increase of 4.99%.

This increases the band D equivalent charge to £1,969.36, representing an increase of £7.80 per month.

Childrens Services

Herefordshire's SEND Partnership, jointly led by Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB), commissions services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the county.

Following an inspection that took place on 2 to 6 December 2024, the partnership has been given the middle rating of three possible outcomes by inspectors from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately three years.

The report notes many areas of good practice across the partnership. Co-production with children and young people with SEND and their families was recognised as strong with the inspectorate saying, 'The development of Herefordshire Helpers has raised the profile of children and young people at the highest levels.' Parent Carer Voice Herefordshire told inspectors that they feel heard and that their views are acted on by the partnership.

In December the Cabinet endorsed the [Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025-2027](#) which sets out the ambition, actions and outcomes the council needs to achieve for our children and young people as a Corporate Parent.

Public Realm Services

These are the services currently provided by Balfour Beatty.

They are of course vital to local residents, businesses and communities as they include the maintenance of roads, roadsides, green areas and public spaces, street cleaning, highway drainage, street lighting and highway winter safety services. They help ensure the spaces where we live, work and travel are safe and clean.

The council's vision is that all of these essential services are 'fit for the future' – that embrace technology, automation and digital innovation, that support a transition to electric plant, vehicles and new materials for carbon reduction, that continually improve through investment in developments and people, and that maximise opportunities and resources.

To meet this vision, the council has started the process of finding the next provider of public realm services with a view to securing a new contractor from 1 June 2026.

The Council's capital programme

The proposed Capital Programme for 2025/26 presented at the Cabinet meeting on Monday 13 January 2025 outlined an ambitious programme of capital investment aligned to the priorities of the Council Plan. The report outlines proposals for £58.12million of investment

over the next four years. The proposed additional £21million in 2025/26 will fund a range of projects that encourage active lifestyles for children and young people through investment in play areas, deliver new infrastructure to support housing and business development, reduce the impact of flooding and improve the condition of roads and road safety across the county.

Easier Parking

Herefordshire Council has announced that JustPark will become its official parking provider for those who wish to pay online for council-owned parking spaces across the region, as of 7 January 2025.

Parking sessions can be booked via the JustPark app, available on iOS and Android, which is free to download and is rated highly for its simplicity and ease of use*. Payment through the JustPark website and via calling a local rate number - 01432 805339 - will also be available, ensuring residents can pay using their preferred method.

In addition to using JustPark for drive-up parking needs in Herefordshire's on-street spaces and off-street car parks, those using the JustPark app and website also gain access to JustPark's nationwide marketplace of pre-bookable spaces, ideal for attending events or travelling further afield.

The council is making the switch as the previous contract is expiring and JustPark were successful in an open tender process.

Warm Homes Local Grant Scheme

The aim of the scheme, which will launch in April 2025, is to improve as many fuel poor homes as possible, helping to reduce energy bills for the occupants, and deliver carbon savings in upgraded homes.

Grants will be available for properties in Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) bands D, E, F and G across Herefordshire, subject to criteria. The scheme will run until March 2028, and will follow a whole house approach and ensure the building has appropriate windows, doors and insulation before looking at heating systems.

To apply for the fund your gross annual household income must be below £36,000 per year or you must be in receipt of means-tested benefits.

Local Emergency Numbers

Environment Agency: 0800 80 70 60 (24-hours) or visit www.gov.uk/report-an-environmental-incident

Flood alerts: Floodline 0345 988 1188. Sign up online at www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings to get Flood Warnings from the Environment Agency by phone, email or text message. If you live by a river or stream, keep a watch on current and expected water levels.

Power cut: Call 105 or visit www.powercut105.com

BT phone line issues: www.downdetector.co.uk/status/bt-british-telecom

Gas leak: 0800 111 999 or visit www.wutilities.co.uk/services/smell-gas

Welsh Water: [0800 052 0130](tel:08000520130) (Water emergencies) or [0800 085 3968](tel:08000853968) (Sewer emergencies) or visit www.contact.dwrcymru.com/

The Citizens Advice Bureau Online at advice@citizensadviceherefordshire.org.uk for initial contact by email. Please also give a contact phone number in case we need to contact you for more information.

Parish Council Contacts

Goodrich and Welsh Bicknor Parish Council - clerk@goodrichandwelshbicknor-pc.gov.uk

Walford Parish Council - clerk@walfordparishcouncil.gov.uk

Whitchurch and Ganarew Parish Council - clerk@wagpc.org.uk