



February 2025 Ward Report – Old Gore Ward

Parishes of: Brampton Abbots with Sollers Hope and Yatton, Brockhampton with Much Fawley, Foy (East), Foy (West), How Caple, Kings Caple, Much Marcle, Upton Bishop and Woolhope

From your local County Councillor: Barry Durkin

Dear Residents

January always seems to be a long month and the sight of snowdrops and some daffodils emerging certainly is a welcome sign that spring is on its way.

With regard to spending power, urban authorities have over 40% more spending power than predominately rural authorities, where rural households will pay on average 20% higher council tax than their urban counterpart. More details of our Rural Services Network website - www.rsnonline.org.uk



The chairman of the council travelled to a six form college in south London to attend the first main meeting of the Education Secretary of State Bridget Phillipson MP new strategic Working Together Board. The Minister -pictured in centre in white chaired the meeting made up of seven union and seven employer representatives to oversee where we can improve workforce, special educational needs and accountable systems (the amount of reporting and inspections in schools). Issues of pay, declining pupil behaviour, retention of staff and identifying current workload pressures were discussed covering all aspects of education from rising 5 years old to collages. A concern is that the pressures of the rural provision of education was not being identified. There are less young families in rural areas with smaller schools and while cooperative and academy models can help support there are still financial and teaching pressures that need to be properly evaluated.

The Council were notified by Lugg Valley Travel on 21st January that they no longer intend to operate their routes in the County, which included 5 school routes and 11 public routes, with immediate effect. The council's transport team worked tirelessly to ensure all the routes were covered by other local bus operators leaving no gaps in service. The team will continue to liaise with other operators to discuss the opportunities longer term and safeguard the routes.

As ever if I can be of any help please don't hesitate to contact

Stay safe and well

Barry

Budget cabinet setting



The Government has issued its provisional financial settlement to all local authorities just before Christmas and regrettably Herefordshire along with many other rural areas has lost out to urban councils.

The Government has scrapped the Rural Services Delivery Grant worth £7.1 million to us and although it has increased social care grants this struggles to meet the increase in care contracts costs caused by their own increase in National Insurance, lowering of the NI threshold, and

increase in the national living wage.

The Council is proposing a revenue budget for 2025/26 of £231.5 million pounds which will require savings of £6.9 million pounds and of which £146.5 million will come from Council Tax including an estimated £3.1 million from second and holiday homes. This will mean an increase in Council tax of 4.99% including the social care 2% levy and will be subject to scrutiny and discussion within the councils processes. A 1% increase in council tax raises just under £1.4 million. The budget papers continue the freeze on car parking charges and local support for Parish councils on Drainage, [lengthsmen](#) and Rights of way.

In the Capital budget there is more flexibility and this includes an additional 10 million spending on resurfacing and highway infrastructure, also an additional 3 million for road safety schemes and one million for flood risk measures. Work will continue on the Shirehall to ensure the building will reopen in 2026, and the council will prepare for the new highways contract when Balfour`s period ends in June 2026.

The council also wants to tackle its huge transport bill for special education transport currently costing in the region of 4.5 million pounds. This is where children identified with particular needs are taken to school in taxi type services. By purchasing [some](#) vehicles we hope to ensure better value for money.

The big element however is the commitment to begin the Hereford bypass with phase one from the A49 south of Hereford to the A465 Abergavenny highways. This was originally funded by government, planning permission gained and compulsory land purchases made. However under the Green/Independent administration the scheme was dropped and the land sold back and the funding lapsed. The current administration will borrow the 30 million required and seek support from government for the remainder of the highway from the A465 to the A49 to the west of the city.

Rural Services Network – Council Challenge

Herefordshire Council stands firmly alongside the Rural Services Network (RSN) in challenging the recent provisional local government finance settlement, which significantly disadvantages rural communities like ours.

The settlement unfairly favours urban areas, neglecting the unique needs and higher operational costs of rural local authorities. Supported by detailed analysis from the RSN, we

identify a critical funding disparity where Government Funded Spending Power in urban areas is 41 % higher than it is in predominantly rural areas.

[Herefordshire Council highlights critical funding disparity in recent local government finance settlement](#)

Government Housing requirement

As some will be aware the current government has required the country to support their target of 1.5 million new homes built over the next 20 years. For Herefordshire this is a total build of over 27,260 houses in the County over the next 20 years. This equates to an annual demand for us to increase our rate of house building by 60% to 1,363 houses per year before the next general election, assuming the current government remains in power. This against a background of shortage of local construction workers with 40% of the county impacted by the phosphate issue. This shows no understanding of our existing problems; currently Herefordshire has approx. 80,000 residences. The main focus of these will be around Hereford- without investment in infrastructure it is difficult to see how the county can cope.

[Council budgets and spending – Herefordshire Council](#)

Herefordshire Council’s Cabinet has agreed proposals of £58million, with £21million planned for investment in the coming financial year

[Cabinet agrees additional capital investment budget proposals for 2025/26](#)

Warm Local Grants

Herefordshire Council is currently accepting expressions of interest for the new 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.

You can email the Warm Homes Local Grant team for further support at

WarmHomesLocalGrant@herefordshire.gov.uk

Bus Transport removal of service

The Council were notified by Lugg Valley Travel on 21st January that they no longer intended to operate their routes in the County, which included 5 school routes and 11 public routes, with immediate effect. The council's transport team worked tirelessly to ensure all the routes were covered by other local bus operators leaving no gaps in service. The team will continue to liaise with other operators to discuss the opportunities longer term and safeguard the routes.

Green light for plans to renovate Hereford's Shirehall

Approval has been given to transform Hereford's Shirehall into a new community space including an innovative library and learning centre.

The renovation of Hereford's Shirehall into a new community space and modern library and learning centre took another step forward this week, when the proposals received planning permission and listed building consent. The redevelopment is being funded through the council with a £3 million contribution for the library and learning centre element from the Stronger Towns Fund. The design has been carefully considered to complement the Shirehall's heritage while allowing the much-needed restoration. I'm looking forward to seeing this work get underway in the next few months.

[Exciting plans for Hereford's Shirehall – Herefordshire Council](#)

Highways



I am pleased to welcome three new Balfour Stewards, starting this January – this brings the compliment up to 12. The relationship between Parish clerks, myself and our Balfour steward is so important as we try to deal with our large mileage of highways and their problems.

Parish councils employ lengthsmen which Herefordshire council gives additional funding during the year to support more local work being done by parish lengthsmen. The pictures opposite show the ditching work undertaken to help reduce flooding on the highway by parish lengthsmen and I believe that targeting funding at this level helps get local problems better sorted and better value for money. I am pleased to see a continued commitment in next year's budget to this scheme.

I attended a recent briefing with Balfour on highways Annual Plan 25/26 and ward and parish councils were pleased to hear that the Council and Balfour had agreed a better action on pothole repairs to overcome the problem of two potholes filled while three next door are left untouched. Small reactive patching and larger structural patching will be introduced

where there is a weak area to prevent continued return of teams. Using mastic asphalt and a cold lay product for more flexible use in the winter and wet.

All our A and B highways and most of the unclassified highways will be surveyed each year by scanner and video also skid resistance of sensitive sections, this is feed into an AI process which prioritises the highways. The amount of different potholes that are reported by the public and the visual inspections of Balfour Steward are also used to finalise the capital programme.

Registration Services

Booking an appointment with the council's Registration Service to register a birth, give notice of marriage, or to book a registrar for a wedding, is now much quicker and easier thanks to a new online booking system.

The Registration Service is based at 8 St Owen Street in Hereford. Appointments to visit the service must be booked in advance so that all the correct paperwork can be prepared.

[Appointments with the Registration Service can now be booked online](#)

Community Involvement

Nutrient Management Board - appeal

Could you represent the River Wye on the Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board. The Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board has taken the unusual step of creating a place on the Board for someone to represent the interests of the River Wye, and is now looking to recruit to the position. The Nutrient Management Board, which meets quarterly, is a forum where a range of stakeholders come together to influence, advise and challenge proposals, plans, decisions and actions that have an impact on the River, and those that deliver improvements.

[A river runs through it](#)

Domestic Abuse Strategy - appeal

You can add your thoughts on the draft domestic abuse strategy and action plan by taking part in a short online survey.

It is estimated that around 8,000 people each year in Herefordshire experience domestic abuse, which may include controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour usually by a partner or ex-partner. Herefordshire's multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board is a group of organisations that are working together to improve outcomes for people experiencing domestic abuse and hold offenders to account.

[Have your say on Herefordshire's Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)

Free Training Sessions: Tackling Domestic Abuse



Hereford Community Safety Partnership is working with Martin Lakeman (Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding Consultant), Herefordshire Public Health, and the Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College in raising awareness around the devastating impact of

domestic abuse through the #CutItOut initiative.

Free training is being offered to professionals working in any sector, as well as members of the public. The training aims to help people to recognise the signs of domestic abuse, whilst raising awareness of where they can signpost family members, friends, colleagues or clients to get help, and importantly give professionals the confidence to start that difficult conversation.

There are a number of free training sessions being held at Hereford Town Hall throughout February and March. For more information or to book your place, please visit the [Eventbrite page](#).

Fire Authority consultation

All Fire Services regularly review their risks and resources and have a Community Risk Management Plan and HWFRS are currently consulting on their draft Plan.

While continuing to identify dwelling and other building fires, road traffic collisions, water incidents as well as waste and heritage fires, the plan from 2025-2030 also recognises increase risks from Climate change of wildfires and more flooding. There are also aims and activities in prevention, protection, valuing the workforce and maintaining resilience.

There are no proposals to close any local fire stations and of course during the plan period the new Hereford station and Leominster training centre will be built.

The Plan is out for consultation from now till end of March – details can be found on [the website **www.hwfire.org.uk**](#)

Our Local Community Support Officers

Sign up to police alerts, you can choose which areas you want to hear about and what activity is taking place in that area. You'll also hear about positive police action, good news stories and be able to play an active part in helping us with our public appeals.

<https://link.edgepilot.com/s/bb21d405/UARq0VNajkqv1vLf0zKSJQ?u=http://www.neighbourhoodmatters.co.uk/>

Report a crime Police 101 Ext 61216



Barry

Mobile – [07792 882054](tel:07792882054) (not text delivery)

Email – barry.durkin@herefordshire.gov.uk

Local Emergency Numbers

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

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

Report a serious pothole, flooded road or highway obstruction -
Balfour Beatty Living Places: [01432 261800](tel:01432261800)

Footpaths issues –

PROW - PROW@herefordshire.gov.uk

Tel. - [01432 383550](tel:01432383550)

Flooding: emergency contact details – please share with your networks

Report a flooded road or highway obstruction- Balfour Beatty Living Places: [01432 2618000](tel:01432261800)

By letting us know where and what happened, especially if it hasn't been reported, we and our partners can use the information which may help reduce the future impacts of flooding.

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.

Has your property been affected by flooding? – Please share with your networks

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

Severn Trent water: [0800 783 4444](tel:08007834444) www.stwater.co.uk/in-my-area/check-my-area/

Household incidents contact details – please share with your networks

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.wvutilities.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.

Council tax reduction or exemption

You can get money off your Council Tax bill, or even pay nothing, in certain circumstances. A discount or exemption depends on your current situation and circumstances, but does not take account of income or savings. If you are on a low income, you may also be able to get help to pay your bill through Council Tax Reduction. We will need to assess your financial and other circumstances to see what help you qualify for.

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200146/council_tax/39/council_tax_reduction

Ukraine relief - Local teams continues to organise supplies - details can be found on

<https://www.talkcommunitydirectory.org/ukraine>

<https://www.facebook.com/drivingsuppliestoukraine/>

Community needs contact details – please share with your networks

Talk Community

Email: Talkcommunitycovidresponse@herefordshire.gov.uk

Telephone: [01432 260027](tel:01432260027)

Potholes, Defects, and dog poo reporting, blocked gullies, etc. online

If you have a general service request, i.e. if you want to report a pothole etc., please use the link above, or call us, rather than emailing your steward. Using the link or the phone number ensures that the enquiry is dealt with promptly and efficiently. Locality Stewards do not have the resource to be able to deal with service requests via email although of course they are happy to provide general guidance and support to you through email. As always please continue to make use and encourage the use of established reporting methods for any highways defect; online, or using the telephone app – for potholes, dog poo - Telephone customer services on [01432 261 800](tel:01432261800).

Please note that Herefordshire Council strongly encourages Balfour Beatty to promote all service requests and queries should be logged via the HC website at Herefordshire Council website - also download the pothole App to help report potholes as you see them.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/maintenance/potholes>

[https://link.edgepilot.com/s/e3b2b34e/ttjzBlvIfEewR-](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/e3b2b34e/ttjzBlvIfEewR-39NN73dA?u=https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole)

[39NN73dA?u=https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole](https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole)

<https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole> - or

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200196/roads/190/report_problems_on_the_road

Please use the website or call the customer services call handling team. This will help ensure that everything is logged in to the operating system known as CONFIRM where it can be responded to in a timely way.

Report fly tippers

If you spot someone fly-tipping

- ⊗ Make a note of any vehicle used, including model, colour and registration number.

If it is safe to do so without being seen, take a photograph or video of the activity

- ⊗ Note the fly tippers' clothes, and distinguishing features. If you can hear the fly tippers, take note of anything which was said along with the speakers' accents

- ⊗ Make a note of what they dumped, the location, weather conditions and how far away you were at the time;

- ⊗ You may report fly tipping on an app on the website and available for download.

Please send us this information by using the [report fly tipping form](#).

Footpaths and Public Rights of Way

For any PROW (Public Rights of Way) maps or problems, you can report these via the following link on the Herefordshire Council's website: [Report a public right of way problem | Herefordshire](#)

The highways maintenance plan – which sets out the council's system of road inspection, maintenance and repairs, including timescales:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5210/highway_maintenance_plan_october_2016.pdf

Litter picking

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14134/community_litter_pick_toolkit.pdf

For information on current and future planned roadworks by utility companies

www.roadworks.org

Please do follow BBLP on Twitter for up to date information about road closures, ongoing work etc., and [@HfdsStreets](https://twitter.com/HfdsStreets) and if you need help to set that up please let me know.

If you wish to make a claim as a result of damage to your vehicle

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200196/roads/206/highway_claimspleaseuse

Did you know...?

Parishes Councils have their own inbox for emails which are monitored by teams in the office to ensure cover at all times. If you have an emergency to report please use **01432 261800** as this is answered 24/7.

To identify road numbers, or to see if publicly maintained or to view Public Rights of Way:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200136/travel_and_transport/716/highways_and_public_rights_of_way_map

You can follow our Twitter feed [@HfdsStreets](https://twitter.com/HfdsStreets) for 24/7 updates for all things highways; or, log on to <https://roadworks.org> to see any live traffic incidents as well as current and planned road closures, diversions, traffic restrictions and roadworks

Toolkits:

Community commissioning

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18820/community_commissioning_model_toolkit.pdf

Traffic Regulation Orders

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2891/application_toolkit_for_traffic_regulation_orders.pdf

Speed Indicator Devices - SIDs

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1859/speed_indicator_device_toolkit.pdf