

## **Leader's newsletter**

Welcome to my newsletter which will be the last for 2021. What a year it has been for us all.

Covid has been such a dominating feature and most of us know someone, or another family, who has been badly affected. What an awful time it has been. A new variant has been identified and our hope must be that the vaccines which have been developed will give us some protection.

There is a lot of news in the contributions below. Of particular note for me is the pharmacy survey which helps the providers to ensure that the services are provided in our County in an appropriate way. If we wish to retain pharmacies in our communities I encourage you to respond to this survey. There is also information on a new initiative to help improve children's oral health which is very poor in our County.

Paul Walker, Cllr Ellie Chowns and I have had some interesting meetings with business owners, and others, in the market towns. Questions and comments have been supportive of our making these visits and we have picked up some positive feedback as well as concerns. Unsurprisingly the subject of delays in getting planning permissions has been raised at the meetings. You will see from Cllr Harvey's section that we have recruited someone as Director for Economy and Regulatory Services who will create the conditions for all the services under her control to flourish using her experience in other authorities. This will include planning.

A little early I know but may I take this opportunity to offer you all Best Wishes for a peaceful Christmas.

## **Children and families – Cllr Diana Toynbee**

I am extremely pleased to have Darryl Freeman join us as our permanent DCS, having been our interim for several months. The Directorate is feeling more stable, and internal communications continue to improve.

### **DfE and Improvement Plan update:**

- Following an excellent application from Darryl, we have been awarded a further £1.7 million by the DfE for our continuing improvement work.
- Project management support for each work stream in the plan is now in place.
- The Operational Board is now up and running and will meet every month, reporting to the Improvement Board
- Learning and development programmes for frontline workers are continuing, with positive feedback
- CYP Scrutiny are very pro-active with their challenge, which strengthens our processes.
- A reminder to colleagues: the language of Ofsted and the DfE is very specific. Please can we be clear in our communications, especially in public meetings, that Herefordshire's Children's Services have a non-statutory Improvement Notice from the DfE; we are not in 'special measures'. Thank you.

**Partnership work:** It's very important that our local partners engage actively in our Improvement work, that we challenge each other, and are all talking the same language and looking at the same measures and outcomes. Getting this right is one of my priorities, and we made a good start with the recent Children and Young People's Partnership meeting, which all members agreed needs a re-set, and which can take the lead in overseeing our Early Help and Prevention work in Herefordshire.

### **Prevention and Early Help:**

- I am determined that we make the best possible use of Talk Community in our work with children and families. With such diverse provision around the county, it's a challenge to get a clear picture, but we're already making progress, and I'm looking forward to accelerating this.
- Public Health in Herefordshire are rolling out an Oral Health programme, working with the library service, primary schools, and early years settings. Health visitors will be visiting all families with babies, and [a free online training programme has been set up at www.bit.ly/babiesteeth](http://www.bit.ly/babiesteeth)

### **Adults and Communities – Cllr Pauline Crockett**

**Newly qualified Social workers welcomed to the Assessed and Supported year in employment scheme:** This month we welcomed a further cohort of newly qualified Social workers to the Assessed and Supported year in employment (ASYE) scheme. Our apprentice programme and ASYE programme has developed over the last three years from supporting at any one time between 10 and 20 student and ASYE opportunities on a rolling programme.

Our current social work and management teams are a reflection of the Councils investment in our staff with several of our highly skilled Assessment and Enablement officers progressing through SW training to become Registered social workers, Senior social workers, and Social work managers. The success of this programme has now expanded to a similar programme for Occupational Therapists. The Community and Wellbeing directorate strongly believes that investment in the development of the work force is the key to resilience now and with the future legislative changes and our healthy position within the ICS.

**Talk Community:** 29 hubs now live with Walford being the latest to join the growing numbers.

The Holiday activity and Food programme will be running again over Christmas. The programme offers enriching activities and healthy food to children eligible to free schools meals. There are 14 providers on board and have some exciting additions to the programme including theatre trips, circus skills, Santa's grotto and a visit from an Olympic boxer. The booking system is opening from Monday 29th November. We're really pleased to have secured additional funding to enable us to offer extra places to struggling families who don't meet the free school meals criteria but would really benefit from the provision.

**Online webinars available:** If you're supporting adults with mental health concerns in Herefordshire and would like to know more about Qwell, Kooth is running two free webinars to help you discover more about the service.

The webinars are taking place on:

Tuesday 23 November 4pm to 5pm

Thursday 16 December 11am to 12pm

To book a place at one of the webinars, please visit the [Eventbrite website](#)

**All age Commissioning:** Herefordshire has submitted its better care Fund (BCF) plan for 2021/2022, in accordance with the Government's timetable. The current plans for investment in joint health and social care integration will build on the achievements of last year in community health and care services. A continued focus on facilitating discharge from hospital is complemented by new investment in schemes to avoid and reduce admissions. The Plan will be considered by Health and Wellbeing Board in December.

Arrangements are being finalised for welcoming more than 50 Afghan refugees to Herefordshire over the winter. 12 families will arrive during December and January into accommodation offered by local housing providers. The council has commissioned Refugee Action to manage arrivals and the orientation and wider support of refugees. The Ministry of Defence and local armed forces community are working closely with the council to identify and support families transitioning from bridging accommodation in hotels around the country. This is a Government funded opportunity.

## **Public Health**



## **A TIME TO SHINE Herefordshire Children's Oral Health Prevention Programme**

In 2019, the Herefordshire Oral Health Needs Assessment (OHNA) highlighted that the standard of children's oral health in Herefordshire is poor. 1 in 3 children aged 5 years old in Herefordshire have decayed, missing or filled teeth. This ranks Herefordshire's 5yr olds as having the worst dental health in the West Midlands (*ref Oral Health Profile, March 2021*). The pandemic has exacerbated the problem with most dentists not open for routine check-ups during lockdown. This is what Public Health In Herefordshire are doing about it....

### **Childrens oral health prevention programmes being rolled out across Herefordshire are:**

1. The introduction of a 4-6 month old oral health and weaning visit to **all** families in their homes. To be delivered through the public health Nursing Service (health visitors). Each family will receive a Brush, book, Bed pack which includes a toothbrush, toothpaste, book and oral health leaflet. (picture below).
2. A FREE on line training programme in oral health has been set up aimed at professionals working with children and families. It covers all you need to know about caring for teeth, healthy eating and prevention of tooth decay. [www.bit.ly/babiesteeth](http://www.bit.ly/babiesteeth)
3. We are working in partnership with the library service on a project called BRUSH, BOOK, BED which will target all children 4-6 months old (as at prevention programme number 1) and children 3-4 years in nursery settings. Each child will be given a resource pack which includes a toothbrush and toothpaste, book and dental leaflet (as shown below)

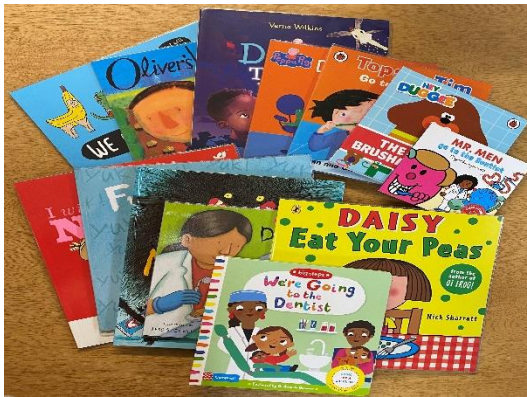


4. We are supporting oral health in primary schools by providing schools with a Time To Shine Artefact Box (see below). This will support schools with promoting and embedding key messages around oral health and healthy eating through a selection of resources which they can use in the class room.

#### **Time to Shine artefact box**

An interactive, fun and informative way of supporting children to understand the importance of keeping teeth clean and healthy eating. Each artefact box will include 15 books and 5 interactive teaching resources to support reception class activities by helping to explain how to look after your health and your teeth including regular tooth brushing and visiting the dentist.

Delivery of the artefact boxes to schools will start late November 2021.



5. We have commissioned a dental survey of 5 year olds to help us get a better picture of the state of our Children's oral health In Herefordshire.
6. We have recruited an oral health educator who is rolling out a supervised tooth brushing scheme across Herefordshire in 10 targeted early years settings and schools. A further 10 more settings/schools will be starting the programme in January 2022 due to additional funding sourced for the scheme from NHSI.



For further information on this children's oral health prevention programme please contact Julia Stephens – Senior Commissioner Public Health Email: [jstephens@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jstephens@herefordshire.gov.uk)

**Pharmacy Survey:** Conducting a pharmaceutical needs assessment is a core duty for public health, and part of this is to run a public survey. You may remember this from a few years ago as it needs updating every 3 years.

Please could I ask that you complete the survey using the following link: <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/PNA2022>

I also attach a flyer which I would be grateful if you could circulate to your parish councils. It is important that we circulate to as many Herefordshire residents as we can.



hereford PNA  
poster.docx

### **Finance and corporate services – Cllr Liz Harvey**

**Planning:** With effect from 29 November, Florence Churchill will be joining the council as Service Director for Economy and Regulatory Services. She will create the conditions for all the services under her control to flourish using her experience in other authorities. Florence will oversee the transformation of the development management service including clearing the case backlog. She will be looking at enforcement generally and planning enforcement specifically to find new ways to deliver a first class public protections service and she will be working to deliver new market interventions aimed at boosting income and increasing productivity. I hope you will all join me in welcoming Florence to Herefordshire and I look forward to working closely with her in the coming months.

**Section 106:** As discussed at Cabinet on 25 November, this administration has inherited a £9m backlog of S106 payments which, along with a recent audit report highlighting areas for improvement in the management of S106, lead us to put plans in place to do things differently in the future. The cabinet report (<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50095901/Section%20106%20Portfolio%20of%20Works%20-%20delivery%20proposals%20main%20report.pdf>) sets out the approach being taken to dealing with the backlog and the investment we shall be making in integrating the management of S106 with our existing planning databases and with the tools we use to track housing delivery. I propose that we run a members' seminar on the end-to-end S106 process in the New Year and follow this up with further guidance to parish councils



on the ways in which they can help to shape and influence how infrastructure investment comes forward in their areas.

### **Infrastructure and transport – Cllr John Harrington**

**Buses:** We submitted our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to government at the end of October. This work runs alongside and greatly supports the work we are doing, agreed in February at Full Council, to put resource into developing improvements to the County's bus service as one of three major tenets of our transport strategy (pedestrian & cycling modal shift and an Eastern City bridge being the other two). The plan sets out a funding request of £18.3m to the DfT for the next three years which would support a significant increase in bus service frequency, coverage and hours of operation as well as improvements in service quality – the return of more frequent, as well as evening, services is vital in encouraging greater use public transport in the County. The plan also includes bids for capital funding to progress bus priority in Hereford and to bring forward a trial electric bus service linking with park and choose sites and the Hereford Enterprise Zone.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plan>

October also saw increased usage of the free weekend bus services with patronage up 13% on usage during September when the scheme started. The two months of operation combined have supported just under 34k free journeys which is helping people get back into Hereford and the market towns at weekends.

In the context of the very positive news around buses we have also been required to respond very quickly to withdrawal of private, commercial services by an operator (Yeomans) in Hereford City (Yeomans's market town and village routes remain unchanged). Despite receiving minimum notification from the operator, the team has responded quickly to tender temporary services to the end of the current financial year and longer term options which should deliver improved City services. We will provide an update on temporary services in December and will be determining longer term improvements early in the New Year.

**Lengthsman:** In early December I will consider a scheduled, formal recommendation from officers to allocate £250,000 from the council's reserves to support the Parish lengthsman scheme for drainage works. Grants will be available on the same basis as the 2020/21 funding (to which a further 60k was added in year due to demand) and will be available for the restoration and improvement of drainage on un-metalled public rights of way routes, U and C roads where works can be carried out locally by the lengthsman. The funding is to aid those parishes who have retained their lengthsman in 2021/22 and it is estimated that approximately 87 parishes with retained lengthsman will be eligible to bid into the £250,000 grant funding pot which will be available in the current year with unspent funds rolling over to next year.

In addition proposals are being drawn up to use reserves to fund a revised return to a lengthsman scheme grant for all parishes. It is anticipated that this will be £250,000 a year for 5 years. This significant investment will need to be considered as part of our budget setting process in February and it is hoped that, if it is approved, the new scheme could be up and running early next financial year. Full details of the scheme will be available in February/March 2022 but it is likely the grants will be issued on a matched funded basis (with a small base allocation based on length of highways within the parish) therefore I urge all PCs interested to register their lengthsman with the Council and also, within their own budget setting process, consider the match funding aspect of the grant.

**PROW and Traffic Management:** The Public Rights of Way and Traffic Management Service (which handles Traffic Regulation Orders –TROs) will be coming in-house in the

New Year. Originally it was hoped this would be done by January 1<sup>st</sup> but that move is now scheduled to be complete by the beginning of the new financial year, April 1<sup>st</sup> 2022. This move is welcome and long overdue, these statutory services should always have remained under direct control of the local authority in my opinion. Bringing PROW in-house will enable us to get more volunteer resource involved in supporting the drive to return our 2000 plus miles of county footpaths to better condition, hopefully creating better maintained routes for walking to encourage wellbeing and tourism.

**Phosphates and Wetlands:** As we are all aware, Herefordshire Council, as the Competent Planning Authority, is unable to approve any new housing developments in the River Lugg Catchment area that would further increase phosphate levels which are already too high, unless we can meet 5 tests set by Natural England in response to the 'Dutch case' on nutrient discharge into water courses. It is frustrating that national agencies, the Environment Agency and Natural England (National Resources Wales across the border) are in charge of the Wye and the Lugg's health but have failed to carry out that responsibility, primarily due to severe cuts inflicted on them by the government (the EA has lost, for example, two thirds of its budget since 2010), contributing to the position we have found ourselves in since late summer 2019.

Whilst we lobby hard and wait desperately for the government to fulfil its obligations, increase revenue funding back to 2010 levels for these national agencies and give everyone 'certainty' that nutrient pollution is being tackled by a robust and funded plan, the Council has adopted a policy of developing wetlands between Welsh Water water Treatment (sewerage) plants and the water courses they discharge into. These wetlands would strip phosphates out of the discharged water at source and allow us to then trade that reduction of phosphates as 'credits' with applicants as a mitigating mechanism to allow some development to restart.

We can calculate the level of water borne phosphate entering the reed bed and how much will be absorbed by the reeds themselves before flowing into the river. We can also calculate the amount of phosphate an average 2.4 person family dwelling is likely to produce. We then take the total phosphate reduction created by the reed bed and divide it by the average household phosphate level to provide the potential number of housing phosphate credits that can be harvested from the reed bed. One phosphate credit equals an allowance to build one new home.

To improve the condition of the Lugg catchment area it is proposed to reserve twenty percent of the phosphate credits that we are able to harvest for "river betterment" which will contribute to reducing present levels of phosphate in the Lugg catchment area. This will also act as a buffer in the event that reed beds reduce phosphate at lower levels than predicted.

To date eight sites have been identified as having the potential for reed bed wetlands. Together they create the potential to generate sufficient phosphate credits for circa 4800 new homes (approx. 1500 are stuck in the planning process). The first site is just outside Luston and is currently going through a planning application process. We hope to be in a position to start 'trading credits' early in the New Year. The policy to decide how to trade these credits is currently being drawn up. Another two sites we believe will go through the planning process before the Spring, the remaining hopefully by the end of next year.

Information on the wetlands, the mechanism by which the credits will be valued and traded and the policy on how they will be apportioned will be on the Council's website before Xmas.

It is important to remember that these wetlands serve as mitigation only and we must all continue to press our MPs to press the government to do the right thing and give their statutory agencies the resources to do their job by encouraging or enforcing action against those within the agricultural and sewerage sector that are failing to consider the health of our

valuable rivers in their activity. I want to thank our officers for their continued hard work on this and Powys Council for their continued cross border collaboration.

### **Housing, regulatory services and community safety – Cllr Ange Tyler**

**Housing:** On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November I was invited to the new transitional accommodation at 107 Whitecross Road, Hereford for those who have been homeless/sleeping rough and are now being supported under Project Brave.

This is a 12-bedroom scheme made up of eight rooms and four self-contained flats providing both a home and support for people who have found themselves homeless or sleeping rough in Herefordshire. The scheme is run by housing association: Citizen, and Herefordshire Council provides the support homeless people may need; such as help with tenancy sustainment. The ambition is that people should live at the scheme for between 6 months and two years whilst being supported to develop the skills and behaviours that will enable them to access long-term sustainable accommodation going forward.

It was a pleasure to be shown around the home and talking to some of the residents who are clearly very grateful for the opportunity to have a safe environment and look after their needs.

The building is also the site of the council's No Second night Out (NSNO) hub that offers a triage service to those who may be roofless or at risk of rough sleeping.

Night Shelter accommodation will be offered to provide overnight accommodation for around 14-15 people at a time. The New Zara House service will link closely with keyworkers and the team Around The Person approach that is used in Project Brave to identify those who are sleeping rough and at risk of sleeping rough and to identify where people's overnight accommodation needs can be met safely through this service. David Wheeler from the Outreach team is the operational lead. For the general homelessness Council Out of Hours number is 01432 260000

The council's website and the Talk Community website have advice and information that will assist:

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/housing-3/housing-herefordshire/7>

<https://www.talkcommunitydirectory.org/housing-and-accommodation/homelessness-prevention-and-housing-advice/>

**Social Value in new development – Strategic Housing:** When Herefordshire Council awarded the contract for the refurbishment of 2 semi-detached houses in Hereford, we did not realise the positive impact this would have on 2 men working on the project. Strategic Housing are managing the project on Blackfriars Street Hereford to convert 2 houses into flats to be used as temporary accommodation as part of Project Brave.

The contract was awarded to a local contractor, Dan Wharton who had a small local team to deliver the project within a tight timescale in time for Christmas. Dan had previously worked on a refurbishment at Hope Scott House, a temporary housing provision for homeless men and he had built a rapport with several of the residents, recognising that many of them just needed a chance to help them move on in life. Two of the residents had previously helped Dan at Hope Scott House on a handyman type arrangement and Dan called on these two men when he was awarded the contract at Blackfriars Street. Dan helped them both to become self-employed and they are now working on the site daily.



Both have been living at Hope Scott House for around 2 years. D is there as he had lost his previous accommodation due to ill health and a lengthy stay in hospital which saw him reliant on benefits and he found it almost impossible to secure accommodation when he was well again. P had lost his previous accommodation as he'd experienced a breakdown in a relationship and through the trauma of this spent time in prison. On his release he had no alternative but to live at Hope Scott House and has lived there successfully since. Both are now ready to move onto independent accommodation, however their history is holding them back. With the support from Dan, both are now self-sufficient and no longer reliant on benefits, both have a support worker at Hope Scott House to help them source long term accommodation.

They have both said that they feel hopeful as they've been given a chance and the help they needed in terms of work. Both are extremely keen to continue working with Dan on other projects and to also source work on their own.

There is still a stigma around homelessness and the reasons people become homeless, we often forget it involves a human who has feelings and for reasons unbeknown to many of us is going through tough times without the resilience or support to help them through. This story shows with just one act of kindness you can change someone's life.

**Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP):** Strategic Housing has successfully secured RSAP capital funding of £423,360 to purchase up to 6 one bed properties and revenue funding of £65,194 for a support worker from the Department of levelling up, housing and communities. The funding will enable the council, as part of the Covid-19 emergency response, to accommodate six people who have a long and/or repeated history of rough sleeping. The six properties will be self-contained accommodation suitable for those with disabilities and /or accessibility issues, subject to the market value.

The revenue grant will enable a Support Worker to be employed to support the individuals in the properties, focusing on developing tenant's skills for independent living, supporting them to manage their accommodation, develop financial management tools, attend appointments and to become tenancy ready.

**Community Safety Partnership:** The Police & Crime Commissioner John Campion and Superintendent Edd Williams responsible for all Policing in Herefordshire, attended General Scrutiny Committee on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November. Details of the Police & Crime Plan was shared with the Committee along with local policing matters for Herefordshire. It was highlighted that there is a website called "Neighbourhood Matters" which is a messaging system to enable residents, businesses and community groups to keep in touch with local policing teams. I must emphasize it is not for reporting crime or incidents, please contact West Mercia Police or 999 in an emergency. Here is the link to the website. [Home Page - Neighbourhood Matters](#)

Herefordshire Council and Hereford City council are working together to tackle environmental crime such as littering, fly tipping and dog fouling. Hereford City council are funding a community protection enforcement officer. We are now able to announce that the community protection team have appointed an officer who will start at the beginning of January. The officer will be patrolling key areas and responding to complaints to reduce environmental crime within the city.

**Regulatory Services:** Members would have attended the Taxi Briefing to provide an update of the Taxi policy review. The consultation has been extended until 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to allow the trade, businesses and voluntary sector to comment upon the Policy. Two meetings are also planned with the trade on the 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> November, to discuss the Policy with James Button, Principal Solicitor, who has been commissioned to review the taxi Policy. If members receive emails relating to this consultation, please forward to:

[taxiconsultation21@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:taxiconsultation21@herefordshire.gov.uk) to ensure all comments are captured for assessment after the consultation closes.

**Communications:** We have a number of corporate campaigns running at present. We are promoting free bus travel on weekends with 'Bus It' and encouraging local shopping with 'Loyal Free'. We also promoted our work to address the Climate and Ecological Emergency during COP 26. We continue to share Public Health messaging as part of our Safe Here campaign and you will soon start to see our Celebrate Safely campaign messages- we will be promoting this extensively to encourage people to continue to take precautions when meeting others during the festive period. Please do share our messages wherever you can- you can follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Linked In.

### **Commissioning, procurement and assets – Cllr Gemma Davies**

**Culture** – the two Stronger Towns bids, Maylord Orchards library and reuse café and the new museum in Broad Street, are coming along well. I have asked that we undertake some consultation events with the public to go through our ambitions. These will not just be online but also in our libraries across the county. We have submitted the formal bid to the Heritage Lottery fund for £5m to go towards the museum project, we are hopeful for a response by the end of February.

We are currently awaiting final estimates for **the Herefordshire Hoard** <https://archaeology.co.uk/articles/features/the-herefordshire-viking-hoard.htm> from the British Museum. For those of you who do not know about the hoard I would urge you to read the article via the link I have provided. It tells of one of the most significant Viking hoards ever found in Western Britain and an incredible story of the thieves who stole the hoard and sold them on. These estimates are expected in the new year. Once we have the estimates a decision shall be coming to full council to determine whether we wish to buy the collection. I will, of course, be arguing strongly that we should. The hoard has such significant historical importance not only for Herefordshire but for the Marches and will be a huge pull for our new museum.

**Ferrous Festival 2022** and a permanent Covid reflective piece – Ferrous festival is finally back and will be in Hereford city from the 25-27th March 2022. I am currently working with the Hereford Business Improvement District and Hereford College of Arts to commission a legacy piece. We are working on a permanent memorial/reflective exhibition to not only remember those we have lost to covid but to also reflect on the incredible work by our key workers and communities during the pandemic. We shall be running a competitive bid process with artists based on a brief set by our panel. I think that this is an especially poignant project as not only does it provide a place to reflect, a place to remember and place for hope but it also celebrates our incredible blacksmiths and Herefordshire's internationally recognised festival.

### **Environment, economy and skills – Cllr Ellie Chowns**

**Environment:** On 12 November the Herefordshire Climate and Nature Partnership Board was launched which will support the council's ambition for Herefordshire to be a thriving zero-carbon and nature rich county by 2030. The development of the Board comes fast on the heels of COP26 and is part of a long term push by the county to lead by example in taking climate action.

After inviting applicants from across the county, the Council has appointed 15 candidates to help drive implementation of a countywide Climate and Nature Action Plan , which has been

co-developed with people and organisations across Herefordshire. It covers the key topics of transport, energy, housing and buildings, waste, land use and farming, and food.

The selected Board members bring a wealth of expertise and knowledge through their roles in conservation, wildlife, architecture, farming, the media, community energy, research, land management, agricultural policy and running businesses. More details about the Action Plan and the Board can be found here: <https://zerocarbon.herefordshire.gov.uk/>

Work continues apace to plan the Herefordshire Citizens Climate Assembly which will take place in January 2022. The Sortition Foundation is recruiting a representative sample of 48 people from across Herefordshire, and Impact Consultancy is working with the Advisory Board to develop the agenda. Three stakeholder events have been held to gather views about the topics the assembly should cover; these generated a lot of interest and engagement. More details can be found here:

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/council/citizens-assembly>. An all-member briefing will be held on Thursday 9th December at 6pm.

**Economy:** Our Covid 19 Recovery Plan projects continue to successfully deliver a wide range of support, including:

- Revive and Thrive Grant Scheme – grants of between £2,500 and £10,000 to bring vacant high street units back into use, or to support micro and SME businesses to occupy a commercial unit. Start up trial grant of between £500 and £2,500. Festivals and Events Discretionary Grants - This is a one off discretionary grant of between £5,000 and £50,000 to support regular festivals and events hosted in Herefordshire. The grant is to assist these festivals and events with their long term sustainability by offering a discretionary grant to support the next event, held before 31 December 2022.
- Shop Local Pre-Paid Card – Our innovative pre-paid card offer to local residents is due to launch on the 29th November. Residents will be able to request a pre-paid credit card (£15 credit) that can only be used in Herefordshire business. It can be used at any business accepting Mastercard payments, excluding online transactions, cash withdrawal, and some specific shops for example betting shops and off licenses. In the run up to Christmas, and the start of the New Year we hope this initiative will provide a real boost to local business recovery.
- Great Places to Visit - £110K has been allocated to each of the market towns for enhancements to improve experience for visitors and residents. We have been working with the Town Councils to identify how they would like to utilise these funds, for example some are introducing shop front grants, others enhancing the local public realm, and/ or supporting local events.
- Getting Out and About – The free weekend buses have been very popular so far, in October over 19,000 trips were made across the county

**Business engagement:** As part of our commitment to improve communication and engagement with businesses, and in starting the conversation regarding the development a new long term vision and Big Plan for the county, we have been holding meetings across Herefordshire. So far we have held an event in Hereford in September, Leominster in October and Bromyard and Ross on Wye in November. Over the next week we are holding meetings in Ledbury and Kington. We would please be grateful if you can help promote these meetings to any of your local business contacts;

- Wednesday 1st December, 6.00 to 7.00 p.m. Ledbury [BOOK HERE](#)
- Tuesday 7th December, 6.00 to 7.00 p.m. Kington [BOOK HERE](#)

**Fastershire: Herefordshire Council Decision for South Herefordshire:** A decision has been made to join a new government scheme to expand gigabit coverage (1000mbps) across the southern half of the county with the government agreeing to commit additional funding to support this.

This follows the news that Gigaclear, one of the suppliers operating in the county, is struggling to deliver to some of the hardest to reach areas. The council decision breaks from Gigaclear delivery in properties in the south of the county whilst in the north of Herefordshire Gigaclear uses additional investment to complete their commitments to see large numbers of businesses and households benefit from gigabit capable full fibre broadband by the end of 2022. Fastershire's rollout with Airband, operating in both north and south of the county will continue.

If one of the properties effected this can be confirmed via the fastershire address checker ([www.fastershire.com](http://www.fastershire.com)).

Herefordshire Council will look to introduce a grant to households affected by the Gigaclear changes to fund an interim solution until the Government's Project Gigabit is operating. The household grant is in development and will be launched in February 2022. The council decision also outlines additional support for community schemes and a new businesses support programme. This is based on the recognition that broadband coverage is an important part of everyday life for work, study and connecting with others.

There are currently 3.26% of properties in the county which have less than 10Mbps – if they are not in any planned for delivery in the next 12 months can qualify for universal service obligation (USO) which exist to provide 'decent' broadband, for more information [click here](#).

**Fastershire Life Stories:** When lockdown paused 25 years of yoga teaching, Suzanne Jevon-Hughston took her classes online. With Fastershire putting an end to frozen screens, Suzanne cast trouble-free Zoom lessons to new and old clients at home and abroad.  
<https://youtu.be/MEeqpMm57bc>