

Annual Town Council Meeting 30 April 2015

Economic Development & Planning Committee – Chairman’s Report – Cllr Jayne Roberts

Firstly may I thank the office staff and fellow Councillors for their support over the last year.

It was decided not to hold a Job Fair this year as the committee felt that this approach was becoming tired. We were also finding it difficult to encourage local employers and fellow Councillors to man the day. Many Councillors go out to work and it’s very difficult to give the time up, however, this may be something that the new Council will re-visit, along with ideas to encourage new businesses to the town.

We have identified potential new development land within the Town and Neighbourhood Plans. Transport remains a problem with a poor bus services to the local cities; rail travel can be variable and expensive, particularly for the young. At the moment, jobs are advertised locally on the Ledbury Noticeboard Facebook page and in shop windows but have limited reach. This is something that the Committee perhaps in next year will be able to look at in greater detail.

Most of the Committee’s work is to do with Planning. Ledbury Town Council’s Planning Committee is a consultee only, with no power to refuse applications. We can support or not support applications, with associated comments, for example:- access and egress, visual and impact on the surrounding neighbourhood. We receive planning applications via email but unfortunately these are often not particularly clear or detailed. There is a facility for members of the public and neighbours to comment on-line on the Herefordshire Council website, or, letters of objection or support can be sent to the Herefordshire Council’s Planning Services Department. Committee members often visit proposed development sites or receive presentations from potential developers. You will find plans and, decisions on the Herefordshire Council website following the county council decisions. One issue which particularly concerns the Town Council’s Planning Committee is the phrase ‘affordable housing’. We realise that we need housing to meet the needs of our community.

There are no council houses in Ledbury; they were taken over by Housing Associations and there is a shortage of these properties in the town. Developers who offer affordable housing are looking at people who may buy through the part rent part buy schemes; often way out of our young people’s reach. We have had several large developments already; the Full Pitcher site, south of the bypass and the contentious development north of the viaduct, where the access now is being suggested via a roundabout on the Bromyard Road. These sites will have an impact on our infrastructure, the increased need for schools, health services, drainage and improved roads. We as a Council listen to your comments and put our objections forward. Until our Town and Neighbourhood Plans are finalised we remain under threat. I would urge all those townspeople with a strong feeling to individually object to Herefordshire Council’s plans for our Market Town.