

Ledbury Town Council meeting Thursday 27th May 2021

Cllr Phillip Howells – Ledbury West Ward Councillor's report

The new Chief Executive, Paul Baker, is now in post. In his members' update of 21st May he:

- Reviewed the election results as they affected Herefordshire; all by-elections – just one city Ward Councillor was involved (two City Council seats for Hereford and one Ross Town Council election were also held)
- Referred to the actions being taken following the High Court Judgment mentioned below
- Advised that seven counts of the new Indian variant of coronavirus had been found in the county during the week, but being isolated in one farm location it is under control and there is no evidence of onward spread outside the household groups that are in isolation as a result
- New coronavirus cases in Herefordshire in the seven day rolling date ending 15th May was 23.9 per 100k people, an increase of 4.5% on the previous week and compared with 21.0 per 100k average in England as a whole
- More than 109,000 Herefordshire residents had now been vaccinated for the first time (70% of eligible adults)

Since the last full LTC Council meeting on 1st April 2021 I have attended a number of Herefordshire Council related meetings – all virtual until last week when we had the first physical meeting on Herefordshire Council business since last year.

One full Herefordshire Council meeting by Zoom has been held to debate a High Court Judgement dated 26th March 2021 against the Council for significant failings in the delivery of its Children's Services. As a result a non-statutory Improvement Notice has been issued to the Council by the Department of Education and an Improvement Advisor has been appointed for 12 months by the DoE to Chair an Improvement Board. A new Interim Director of Children's Services, Cath Knowles, has also been appointed. The Council has got into further trouble by breaking instructions not to disclose names and so may be found to be in Breach of Court and it is also thought likely there will be other cases found of where the Council has not met required care standards during the investigations of the Improvement Board.

I've attended two subsequent meetings of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee of which I am a member:

- 30th April to review the work programme in the light of the High Court Judgment and the role of the committee in the Improvement Plan
- 20th May, the first physical meeting I have attended of any Council meetings for over a year. Held socially distanced and controlled in the Town Hall it was held to review in more detail the role of scrutiny in working with the officers responsible for delivering the Improvement Plan

The Annual General Meeting of the Council to elect a Chairman and committee chairs for the year is to be held this Friday, 28th May as the first physical meeting since early 2020 at the Three Counties Hotel on Belmont Road in Hereford. The complication for the council in organising physical meetings again is that the usual and equipped venue, the Shire Hall, has serious roof defects and may be out of action for some considerable time.

Also attended (by Zoom) the first Full Board Meeting of the new civic year of the LSIDB (Lower Severn Internal Drainage Board) as the Herefordshire Council appointed member.

Balfour Beatty have started to publish a new monthly update on their work for Ward members which can be shared with parish councils. The first one for April included:

- 3,937 potholes were fixed (over 2,000 with a new velocity patcher)
- 6 annual programme drop-in sessions for Ward members have been held including one for Ledbury which was very useful in discussing issues such as the replacement of missing 20mph signs in the town and the Riverside Park steps needing repair by the Little Marcle Road roundabout
- 91 PRow (public right of way) maintenance jobs were completed, but how many relate to Ledbury specifically is not known