

Ward Councillor Report: April-May 2023

Master's House Landscaping

A Herefordshire-based contractor, Owen Pell, has been appointed to undertake the landscaping work at The Master's House. The work is planned to be completed in time for the main summer visitor season in August.

The Town Council has been asked for its input regarding potential future use of this public space. This request is to assist with the development and drafting of an appropriate range of licensing agreements. If councillors have any queries or issues regarding this request, can these be directed in the first instance to me as the ward member.

Viaduct Housing Development

Work has been commenced on site by the developer, Bloor Homes, without the necessary permissions having been granted or necessary planning conditions met. Police have visited the site with respect to concerns from a local resident regarding nesting birds ... the site is a known nesting location for skylarks which lay their eggs on the ground, as well as a range of other protected wildlife species. I am advised by Planning Officers that enforcement action is underway and Enforcement Officers are proceeding with advice and support from Ecology Officers.

Detailed Planning Permission is yet to be granted for the first phase of this controversial development and conditions applied at outline permission stage by the Secretary of State have not all been discharged. It is very disappointing that such an experienced developer is playing fast and loose with the planning system rather than following the rules in a responsible manner. This does not bode well for the future and I would encourage all involved at Bloor to start treating this development and our community with consideration and respect. Everyone is watching.

McCarthy & Stone Development of 'Masefield's Meadow'

The Ledbury Neighbourhood Development Plan has been approved at referendum on 4 May with a 'Yes' vote of 82.7%. One of the consequences of this is that the protection of this green space in planning policy terms has been reacquired.

The planning application (P223248) for a development of Retirement Living apartments with associated access, car parking, landscaping, ancillary facilities, and associated works remains under consideration at the outline stage. As a consequence of the redesignation of the land as protected green space I have notified the case officer that I will be requesting that the application be referred to committee should the application be recommended for approval.

Frith Wood Access

I have received a number of emails from concerned residents following the installation of signage at the entrance to Frith Wood House stating there was no right of way, which appeared to originate from Herefordshire Council. The signage was nothing to do with the Council and the householder has been instructed to remove it with immediate effect.

Advice from Forestry England remains that the public should feel able to continue use their licence access along the forest road, unless and until legal agreement is arrived at to the contrary.

Parking Problems and Traffic Regulation Orders

I am very disappointed that the Town Council is seeking to disrupt the development of highway engineering solutions to parking problems experienced by residents and businesses in certain areas of the town without justification or local support. In my ward, parking problems for residents of Masefield Avenue, Belle Orchard and Belle Orchard Close and Queen's Court have been in evidence for years. As ward member I have been

working since at least 2014 to get the priority of these engineering works bumped up the list in the Public Realm Annual Plan.

It is deeply frustrating to have parish councillors actively working against ward members on this matter, just as soon as the parish is given the opportunity to influence how county council money is spent on TROs – something hard won by the Indy-led council administration. This is especially annoying when councillors are fully aware that highway consultants have been contracted to undertake options analysis and funding already committed to draft improvement schemes.

The Town Council's Standing Orders require that Ward Members are copied in on correspondence with the County Council. This persistently does not happen, and has not happened in this instance either. Please can all ward members be copied in on such correspondence with immediate effect and please may I be copied in on past correspondence on this matter.

As ward member I shall be requesting that the draft designs are completed as contracted, and that these are then provided to the Town Council for comment and consideration. It is at the point where you actually have something concrete in front of you to consider that it is appropriate to decide whether or not to support it, and not before.

Household Support

Grants, advice and assistance continue to be available for households facing hardship. 100% discount on Council Tax continues for qualifying households and £1.7m has been allocated to continue support in a variety of ways during 2023. The Talk Community website has a range of helpful links as a starting point for reference: <https://www.talkcommunity.org/money-on-your-mind/>

Consultations

There are no live consultations. However the outcomes of several earlier consultations are available on the council website:

- Big Economic Plan: <http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/bep>
- Expansion of Autism places in mainstream schools:
<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/25359/mainstream-autism-base-consultation-summary>
- Budget Consultations:
<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50108025/Appendix%20F%20Impact%20Report.pdf> and
<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50108026/Appendix%20G%20Online%20Budget%20Consultation%20Report.pdf>

County Council initiatives

I refer councillors to the Herefordshire Council Leader's monthly newsletter for April, and to the Talk Community newsletters which are also circulated monthly. These provide more information on developments and initiatives many of which are relevant to Ledbury and its residents. If councillors would like further information on any of the above initiatives, please contact me.

My Responsibilities

As the result of Herefordshire Council now being managed by a minority Conservative administration, I am no longer a Cabinet Member. Unlike the outgoing administration of 2019, I shall be providing a full hand-over of my responsibilities both for Finance and Corporate Services and for Planning to the new Cabinet Members – respectively Cllrs Stoddart and Swinglehurst – as shall my fellow outgoing Cabinet Members.

Please find below a full list of the recently announced new (and some old) Cabinet Members and their responsibilities:

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|------------------------|---|
| 1. Jonathan Lester | Leader & Corporate Strategy and Budget |
| 2. Elissa Swinglehurst | Deputy Leader & Environment (inc. Planning) |
| | Cabinet Support - Leader & Deputy Leader |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan Hurcomb • Nick Mason |
| 3. Harry Bramer | Community Services and Assets |
| 4. Ivan Powell | Children's Services |
| 5. Pete Stoddart | Finance and Corporate Services |
| 6. Carole Gandy | Adult, Health & Wellbeing |
| 7. Graham Biggs | Economy and Growth |
| 8. Barry Durkin | Roads and Regulatory Services |
| 9. Phillip Price | Transport and Infrastructure |

In addition to my ward work, I have now been appointed as Chair of the Council's Scrutiny Management Board – whose responsibilities include:

- To undertake the scrutiny role in relation to areas which are cross cutting nature e.g. corporate strategy and finance (budget), people and performance and corporate support.
- Where a matter falls within the remit of one or more scrutiny committees, decide which committee will consider it and whether a spotlight, task and finish or standing panel review is appropriate
- Budget
- Treasury management
- Approve an annual work programme for itself and the other scrutiny committees
- Oversee communications to members and public in relation to scrutiny matters
- The co-ordination of an annual effectiveness review
- Oversight of performance of Council's companies, e.g. Hoople

I have also been appointed as Vice-Chair of the Council's Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee – which includes scrutiny of:

- Children's social care, including safeguarding
- Online teaching and home learning
- Signs of Safety
- Children and families policy framework items
- Statutory education scrutiny powers
- Children's mental and physical health and wellbeing
- Schools investment programme
- Children's Improvement Board and the oversight of the required improvement journey

Councillor Liz Harvey