

Much Birch report – February 2019

Hereford transport package

Improving the way we travel in and around Hereford is important to reduce journey times, cut pollution, create a safer environment for all road users and make the city a better place to live, work, study and visit.

Proposals set out in the Hereford Transport Package include the Hereford bypass and associated improvements to walking, cycling, bus and public spaces, which are designed to make it easier to move about the city and give people more choice about how they travel.

During a public consultation in February and March 2018, 87% of people who responded said they approved of the walking, cycling, bus and public space improvements proposed. Since then, work has been taking place to develop these further.

There is now the opportunity to provide comments on the proposals during a six-week consultation running until Monday 11 March 2019. I would urge you to take part.

Roads

Herefordshire Council are pleased to announce an £5,108M additional funding from central government to run a programme of repairs being carried out to more than 50 B, C and U class roads. There are over 2,000 miles of roads in Herefordshire, and they all need to be maintained and cared for – there were more than 23,000 jobs raised for carriageway repairs in the last financial year alone. The additional investment will enable us to improve the condition of a further 50 B, C and U class roads right across the county. Little Birch road is one local example of how this money is being spent.

Finance

Council tax is rising by 4.9% over the next financial year including a 2% social care levy and we have committed to cutting another £3.9M from our annual budget. The austerity facing local government has to be seen in context – in 2010 we used to get £60.1M from central government, in 2019-20 we will get £0.6M, at the same time social care demand has gone up.

Herefordshire Council has achieved all this through taking tough decisions early for example certain discretionary spending on things like leisure centres and rural buses. During this administration we also took the decision to sell our county farms – we had £50M tied up returning no more than 1.5% per annum and benefiting no more than 50 families, this was unpopular with some but will allow us to invest in other projects with better economic benefits whether that's Enterprise Park, Ross or developments in Hereford.

We have a booming economy in the City with several exciting projects in the pipeline – £9M Cyber centre on Rotherwas, £6M shell store for business incubation, new university, HCA university accommodation near station, city link road land opportunity and first phase of bypass starting within next 8 weeks.