

Much Birch Parish council

Ward member report, February 2017

Planning

The Tump Lane 'Larkrise' application was turned down at committee in January. This was a hot topic in Tump Lane with 20 or so residents in attendance at the site visit. The general feeling was that whilst we are in much need of affordable houses in the countryside, Tump Lane was the wrong location (road too small and no realistic possibility of a decent pavement all the way up and down). We await news as to whether the application will go to appeal.

Much Birch has granted permission for 30 out of 57 new properties required before 2031 and yet the original decision had been in favour of granting permission. This once again illustrates the pressure on parishes, the sooner NDPs are complete the more control residents will have over where the new homes should go.

Hereford Library

Hereford library, museum and art gallery reopened on Tuesday 31 January, following the phase one completion of building work at Broad Street.

The building was closed due to asbestos found on the site, but this has provided the opportunity to modernise the library for the many users. Spaces have been reconfigured to improve the customer experience, a suite of new PCs are available to use for free and the ceiling has been raised with new lighting. The county library will also welcome WISH (Wellbeing Information and Signposting for Herefordshire) which will operate from the main library as a shared facility to make the most of the building.

Hereford museum and art gallery will launch an exhibition celebrating the life and work of Herefordshire artist Brian Hatton, with additional opening hours during the first two weeks.

<https://www.facebook.com/herefordshirelibraries>

Budget

Last Friday full council met to approve the 17/18 budget; public sector money is tight but we are proud of our recent track record – 16/17 will be the 4th successive year that the council has worked within budget whilst carefully building reserves against future needs.

The council has directed its resources at delivering the key services required by its residents whilst reducing overall costs to demonstrate efficiency. In making substantial savings to date the council will have delivered savings of almost £70M by the end of 17/18 in response to an 80% drop in central government funding since 2010.

The budget which is proposing an increase in council tax of 3.9% has been discussed at both Scrutiny committees as well as Cabinet.

Whilst ensuring that the overall budget is balanced. The council has been carefully building reserves to protect itself from financial risk and to support future needs. Over the past three years the council has delivered improvement, achievement and positive change along the way, including:

- Major public realm improvement in Hereford
- 368 miles of road resurfaced in the last 3 years (19% of the highway network)
- Filled in over 200,000 potholes
- Winning 'most improved Council award for public satisfaction with roads' at local government awards
- Rolled out Fastershire broadband to over 80% of our residents
- Core strategy and Local transport plans in place to 2031
- Major progress on Enterprise Zone
- Introduction of first Multi agency safeguarding hub (MASH) in West Mercia
- Increased number of local foster carers by 9% (national backdrop of reducing numbers)

Choose how you move

Herefordshire Council has been awarded a £1.5 million share of the £60 million Sustainable Travel Access Fund awarded by central government.

The funding has been awarded to support the council's 'Destination Hereford' project, which aims to make the city a beacon for walking and cycling in the UK.

It will support a programme of local projects over three years from 2017 to 2020, with the aim to make walking and cycling a part of everyday life.

Keep Herefordshire warm

Organisations from across Herefordshire are coming together to tackle fuel poverty with a special event as part of the national Warm Homes campaign. People will be able to get advice on energy efficiency at the event, as well as information on grants for replacement heating, financial support and other free services such as Home Fire Safety Checks and gas boiler servicing. Energy saving gadgets including LED lightbulbs and energy monitors will also be up for grabs

The event takes place between 10am and 2pm on Wednesday 15 February, in Hereford High Town. For impartial advice and support residents can contact Keep Herefordshire Warm on 0800 677 1432.