

**Director of Economy and Place-** Richard Ball was appointed in December. Richard brings to the role more than 20 years of experience in Herefordshire Council, leading the delivery of the wide range of place based services and also the development and delivery of numerous important projects in Herefordshire including the City Link Road, the Rotherwas Access Road, the Hereford Greenway and Cycle Bridge, flood alleviation schemes for Ross-on-Wye and Hereford, and public realm work in Hereford.

**Election –** Once again, the council provided a team effort to support the General Election in Herefordshire. The total number of votes received was 101,139. Verified voter turnout for Hereford and South Herefordshire was 69.2% and North Herefordshire was 70%.

**LEP Board** approved a further £5.66 million of funding to NMiTE to build a Centre for Timber Technology, Centre for Automated Manufacturing and a Centre for Future Skills on the Hereford Enterprise Zone but require NMiTE to provide an indemnity. Officers and the Cabinet are considering how the Council might be able to help NMiTE, any recommendation will go to the General Scrutiny committee before going to the Cabinet.

The Marches LEP also called for new project applications in November - Growth Deal funds are only currently available until the end of March 2021. The council submitted a range of Expressions of Interest by the LEP's deadline of the 6 December, including further support to develop the Hereford Enterprise Zone, the development of the Ross Enterprise Park, a phosphate reduction plan, a grant programme for businesses, and a Hereford city centre improvements package. The Board will consider projects at the end of January.

Performance and progress against the **Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan 2019 / 2020** is being constantly reviewed. A diagnostic visit by Essex County Council. Essex are a partner in practice, funded by the Department for Education highlighted a number of strengths and some areas for improvement. We will be considering areas that we would like to be reviewed by Essex to drive our improvement journey in 2020.

**The Marches and Gloucestershire Business Broadband Grant (MGBG)** has assisted an additional 48 businesses in Herefordshire to be connected with **fibre broadband** led by Herefordshire Council through the Fastershire programme, fully funded by an EU grant. 31 businesses in Herefordshire have received one to one advice on how to make best use of faster broadband connection and 83 business representatives attended training in a range of digital skills. [Fastershire video](#)

On 2 December the **tourism** portfolio holders for Shropshire, Telford and Herefordshire met to explore opportunities for joint working in the future. The visitor economy is important to Herefordshire's economy, in terms of employment and generating spend across the county - also a critical enabling sector helping promote our county and its outstanding natural assets and quality of life offer as a great place to live, learn, work, invest as well as visit.

Through a £9m joint venture between the council and the University of Wolverhampton, the **Cyber Security Centre** will provide a range of specialist facilities to enable the start-up and growth of businesses in this rapidly growing global market. Construction is progressing very well -the building due to open in summer 2020.

Herefordshire Council has teamed up with a Government scheme called "**Digital Catapult**" to explore innovative ways of using technology to deliver services. As a partnership between the council's Fastershire broadband programme and the Adults and Communities directorate, a tech company called Tendertec was commissioned to see how using technology could help people in residential homes and in their own homes. Sophisticated sensor systems were installed in residents' rooms to detect movement (to be clear, this is not CCTV which is considered intrusive). Some of the results have been significant in understanding future care needs of people, including:

- Detecting a resident is getting up 13 times in the night
- A dementia patient falling twice but not remembering

- Care assistants not using proper lifting technique leading to further training

The Council intends to mark **Holocaust Memorial Day** with a public exhibition at All Saints Church (South Chapel) running from 24-27 January 2020. The exhibition focuses predominantly on images of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as 2020 marks 75 years since the liberation of the camp. The exhibition will be open to the public and local groups and schools will be specifically invited.

Due to extensive flood damage, **The Manor Rest Home** in Bullingham has been unsuccessful in securing appropriate insurance cover and have sadly taken the decision to close permanently. Clients are being monitored closely and needs are being reviewed.

The **2019-2024 Dementia Strategy** sets out a shared vision for a collaborative approach across Herefordshire and Worcestershire; build upon the successes of our local dementia partnerships where local stakeholders are key to supporting people living with dementia, their family, friends and communities. An estimated 12,456 people currently live with dementia in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, including over 592 people with young onset dementia. We must respond to the growing number of people who are developing dementia later in life, whilst still needing to work and many of whom often have another significant chronic condition.

A number of new **Talk Community Hubs** will launch formally in January and February 2020 with 20 planned within the year. A new grant scheme has been approved and will be launched in January to enable seed funding for hubs, with grants of up to £2.5k to support the launch or initial operation of hubs in local communities.

**The Better Care Fund (BCF)** and Integration plan is a national programme spanning the NHS and local government to join-up health and care services, so people can manage their own health and wellbeing, and live independently in their communities for as long as possible. The BCF has been created to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our society, placing them at the centre of their care and support, and providing them with integrated health and social care services, resulting in an improved experience and better quality of life. The BCF encourages integration by requiring Clinical Commissioning Groups and local authorities to enter into pooled budgets arrangements and agree an integrated spending plan. There is a report to approve the council's financial contribution to the 2019/20 Herefordshire BCF Plan, approve a five year agreement and delegate authority to the Director of Adults and Communities.

**Customer engagement standards** are in the process of being updated to reflect increased level of digital contact via email and the website. Suggested key changes and introduction of new standards include:

- 6 week minimum period for public consultations
- Using email as the default response to a query, whilst understanding that phone contact is sometimes appropriate and a statutory requirement for post for some areas.
- Answer machines and email message to include out of office with the date due back in the office if away for more than 2 working days.
- the council will still receive letters if that is someone's preferred method of contact, with a standard 15 working days response to allow time for postage (this is different from the retained response time for email or web contact form of 10 working days).
- The council will give at least 2 weeks' notice of change of opening or contact hours with emergency closures only in exceptional circumstances.

A decision is due on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

**Mental Health Day, 20 January 2020** the council will support the national Mental Health Research UK Campaign, which coincides with Blue Monday. This year's theme is 'Blooming Monday'. Staff and members will be encouraged to wear something bright to raise awareness of mental health issues.

During January, Mind will also be visiting the council to promote staff mental health and wellbeing and recruit staff to train as Mental Health First Aiders. Based on the evaluation of Blooming Monday consideration will be given to supporting this as an annual event. This is just one of many National mental health days supported by the council throughout the year.

**Flooding** has affected many people and businesses in the county, hence an urgent decision to provide hardship schemes to residents and businesses affected. This includes a Community Flood Recovery Grant worth £500 to each affected household where flood water entered the habitable areas of their property, or the residence has been considered unliveable for any period of time due to flooding; and a Business Flood Recovery Grant up to £2,500 per eligible small and medium-sized businesses able to demonstrate that they have been directly impacted or have directly suffered a loss of trade as a result of the flooding that cannot be recovered from insurance. For more information and to apply online, visit [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/floods](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/floods)

The **parking service** has procured a new Recovery Agent Contract for non-payment of penalty charge notices, due to commence in February 2021, and commenced the procurement of a new Cashless Parking Contract for May 2020. A capital project, in respect of car park improvements, is continuing.

The **Lugg catchment phosphate moratorium** on development was considered at a meeting between council officers with Welsh Water and a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) in December. The next Nutrient Management Board meeting is scheduled for 29 January, when the Board will consider proposals scoped by the TAG to strengthen the Nutrient Management Plan.

The level of **congestion** in Hereford in December seemed to be unusually high. It is a priority of this administration to come up with solutions to this issue, whilst having proper regard to the Climate Emergency. Cllr Harrington is working with officers in this area and will report shortly.

The decision by the **Planning Committee to refuse permission** for the development of the Viaduct site in Ledbury whilst democracy in action will put pressure on the County's land supply, and Cabinet and Officers will need to seek solutions to this significant issue.

Cllr Davies has been meeting with Hereford City Council and officers to help scope an '**Applefest**' in Hereford's city centre in October 2020.

Executive decisions taken during December are [available online](#)  
Forthcoming decisions are available on the [forward plan](#)  
Latest press releases are available on the council [news feed](#)