



February 2026
 Birch Ward and parish update
 Cllr Toni Fagan

Highways

- **A plan showing the planned works** – <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/travel-and-transport/roads/herefordshire-road-investment/road-surface-dressing-and-resurfacing/#map>
- **An explanation of surface dressing** - [Road surface dressing and resurfacing - Herefordshire Council](#)
- **Surface dressing** is an important part of our preventative programme of works and helps ensure roads do not fall into such disrepair where they then require costly investment through replacement of the surface and binder courses. The Department for Transport strongly encourages local highway authorities to use preventative treatments such as surface dressing as they offer significantly better value for money and follow the principle that prevention is better than cure. By following this approach, we were able to ensure we received our full funding allocation during this financial year and without any money being held back.

You are invited to two events regarding the Public Realm Contract during February, as set out below (diary invites will be sent separately):

The Public Realm Annual Plan 2026/27

You are invited to attend the Public Realm Annual Plan briefing session on **Thursday 12 February**, at **Thorn Depot between 1pm and 3pm**. This will be a face-to-face meeting with tea, coffee and biscuits provided. **A Teams link will also be available for those unable to attend in person and we will endeavour to record the session for those who cannot make this time.**

The session will cover:

- The quarterly BBLP update, including progress since the previous session, current operational activity, and forthcoming works
- An explanation of how the Annual Plan for 2026/27 will be delivered across Balfour Beatty and Herefordshire Council
- What work plans we expect to deliver in the 2026/27 financial year against the funding that is available to us

Member Engagement Sessions

We will be holding a series of Member engagement sessions over the coming months. These sessions will provide a forum for discussion and feedback as we transition to the new public realm model with more services delivered in-house. They are an opportunity for Members to tell us what works and what could be improved, helping us shape processes and communication routes that support you and our residents and businesses more effectively.

The first session will be held on **Thursday 19 February**, at **Thorn Depot between 1pm and 2pm** and will focus on co-designing a Member Guide to the new service, including clear routes for reporting and resolution.

Further invitations will follow and anticipated topics will include:

- Hands-on testing of an updated online reporting system
- Understanding Member requirements for access to live data and forward plans
- Reviewing changes to the public realm pages on the council website
- Any additional areas Members wish to explore

Attendance at these sessions is optional, but we hope they will provide a valuable opportunity to help shape how we can best support you in your work from June.

Update on Lengthsman, Drainage and PROW grants:

From Cllr Dan Hurcomb: 'I thought it might be helpful to send a quick email to confirm that the draft revenue budget for 26/27 includes funding for the Lengthman Scheme at the base rate (£250K), the Public Rights of Way Grant (£250k) and the Drainage Grant (£445k). Obviously the budget is only a proposal at this stage and still needs to be adopted at our next full council meeting however, if your Parish Councils are anything like mine then I am sure you will have received questions about the future of these schemes.

Whilst the exact details of the grants are still under discussion, should the final budget pass with the £945k for these schemes included, then we intend to publish further details to all Parishes in March and open the schemes for applications in April.'

Budget:

[RSN Voices Serious Concerns Over 'Fairness' Of Settlement - Rural Services Network](#)

- New government funding formula leaves Herefordshire residents short-changed.
- Tough choices ahead to deliver savings and efficiencies while protecting services for residents.
- Despite the challenges, Herefordshire will continue to deliver the services thousands of residents rely on and maintain strong financial stewardship.
- Capital investment plan to support long-term growth across the county.

'As Herefordshire Council presents its draft budget for 2026/27 it is "deeply disappointed" that the government is failing to sufficiently fund the additional costs of delivering services to residents across a rural county. Last September, we warned that the new funding formula for local councils was likely to leave a £27 million shortfall - 11% of our net budget - for the next financial year. That gap is now estimated at up to £30 million.

The government's Fair Funding Review will cut £17.3 million from Herefordshire's central funding by 2028/29, adding to previous losses such as the £7.1 million Rural Services Delivery Grant and the withdrawal of funding for a new SEND school. Limited replacement funding falls far short of meeting residents' needs.

The government's new funding model assumes local authorities will raise council tax by the maximum permitted without a referendum - 4.99% per year for the next three years - placing further strain on households already paying more in rural areas. Yet even this increase cannot close the gap created by a formula that fails to account for remoteness, increased and more complex needs for young people and an ageing population. In short, demand and costs for essential services are rising faster than funding increases.

Meanwhile, analysis shows that by 2028/29, most urban authorities' spending power will allow them to spend around £100 more per resident on services than the most rural councils - further widening the disparity between urban and rural council areas.

To address these challenges Cabinet will consider agreeing the following proposals:

- Deliver £20 million of further savings through service reviews, cost control and efficiency measures - the largest savings target ever required.
- Manage demand for council services in high-cost, demand-led budgets.
- Using Council reserves - funds previously set aside to help provide financial stability enabling the council to manage unexpected costs and funding pressures.
- Increase income through commercial opportunities, making better use of council assets, and exploring new revenue streams.
- Regrettably, the council is left with little choice other than to propose a council tax increase of 4.99% each year of the settlement period (until 2029).'

[Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday 5 February 2026, 3.00 pm - Herefordshire Council](#)

Have your say on Herefordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Thursday 5 February to Sunday 22 March 2026. [Restoring and protecting nature across Herefordshire consultation - Herefordshire Council](#)

Herefordshire's new proposed [Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\)](#) has been developed in partnership by residents, environmental groups, landowners, farmers, charities, Herefordshire Council and others. People emphasised that safeguarding the county's rivers, woodlands, hedgerows and wildlife is a priority.

The LNRS has now been launched for public consultation. It's a major new plan incorporating:

- 15 habitat priorities designed to protect, enhance and reconnect the landscapes, habitats and species that make Herefordshire special
- Almost 100 potential opportunities to boost biodiversity and restore natural assets across Herefordshire's 200,000 hectares
- An interactive online map allows people to zoom in on 42 potential habitat measure and 12 supporting actions, plus 43 potential species measures

The LNRS is not a list of mandatory schemes. Instead it outlines a menu of voluntary ideas and suggestions, alongside existing nature reserves, wildlife sites and unique habitats, that residents, farmers and all types of landowners can choose to pursue with support from the council and partners.

Children Services judgment – further information in Cabinet papers

[Herefordshire Children's Services judged 'Good' by Ofsted – with Leadership rated 'Outstanding' - Herefordshire Council](#)

[Report Template Cabinet](#)