

Report from County Councillor

Russell B. Hamilton

January 2012

PARISH COUNCILS

To be shared with constituents



Well the New Year is well and truly underway. I hope that 2012 will be a happy, healthy, peaceful and prosperous year for you. Although this will be another busy and challenging year we have the Queen's Diamond Jubilee to look forward to.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee – "Herefordshire's Diamond Day"

This is a great opportunity for us to come together to celebrate the 60 years of Her Majesty's reign.

The celebrations will include a major event being organised on King George V Playing Fields in Hereford on 11th July between 09:30 and 16:30. This event will be free for people and organisations throughout the entire County. It will take place under the patronage of the Lord-Lieutenant the Countess of Darnley and is to be known as Herefordshire's Diamond Day or Diamond Day for short.

Whilst some parts of the programme will be arranged by the Steering Committee under the Chairmanship of the Vice-Lord Lieutenant; City, Town and surrounding communities are invited to prepare proposals for the Lord Lieutenant with the aim of providing a picture of all that is best in our communities. This is a substantial opportunity for you to promote your community positively. These proposals should result in presentations, demonstrations and interesting and fun events that could take place in an arena and in marquees on the King George V playing fields.

Activities will include voluntary organisations that contribute to community life. Sports clubs, local business including tourism, farming and agriculture, arts and culture, media, education – schools and youth organisations including uniformed ones and the public sector including the emergency services, the NHS and local authority.

Groups should aim to provide a picture of life and activities in their local area highlighting their successes and plans for the future. Proposals that reflect the theme of sixty years or the sixtieth year of Her Majesty The Queen's reign will be particularly welcomed.

The format for the “Diamond Day” will provide space in a marquee setting. Proposals should identify people of all ages and positions who contribute to community life, who are worthy of recognition and who would like the rest of the County to know about what they do and how they achieve success in their communities.

Although I am aware that many Parishes are already organising events in their own communities over the Jubilee weekend, I hope that you will be able to join in with the event on the King George V playing fields. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity that I hope as many communities as possible throughout Pontrilas Ward will take the opportunity to celebrate this unique occasion.

You can find out more by visiting the “Diamond Day” website at www.herefordshirediamondday.co.uk where you can also register to receive updates. You can also email the organisers at info@herefordshirediamondday.co.uk or telephone 01432 261837.

Please let me know of your plans for “Diamond Day” and don’t forget to register your beacon if you are planning one.

Herefordshire Council Budget 2012/13

Further to earlier updates including details of the principles of budget setting the Council’s Cabinet met on 19th January and agreed proposals to be put to the full Council on 3rd February 2012 regarding the financial strategy for 2012/13 to 2015/16 including the 2012/13 budget.

The proposals are based on a balanced budget and included recommendations to approve:

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including the 2012/13 budget and Treasury Management Strategy and Policy Statement.
- A freeze on Council Tax for 2012/13 at 2011/12 levels.
- The Capital Programme.
- Further assessment of those elements which are perceived as engaging the Council’s duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and to report further on any necessary amendments to the budgetary framework.

The proposed capital programme is targeted at regeneration schemes with the priority being focused on:

- Broadband - Herefordshire is one of four pilot areas that has received government funding. It is now a requirement of this that the Council that it provides match funding to the sum of £6 million.
- Hereford Futures – Hereford has been identified as a regional growth point and planning permission has been granted for a relief road as part of the overall package of infrastructure to facilitate and enable growth to take place. The estimated cost of the overall scheme will be £27 million although it should be noted that the overall funding needed, will be confirmed in 2012 and appropriate contributions will be sought from developers and other funding sources.
- The provision of replacement Archives to enable Herefordshire to continue to hold its own County records. If this is not provided there is a likelihood that the County’s historical records will need to be moved outside of Herefordshire. This scheme would bring together modern records provision with the archive facility. The maximum replacement cost is estimated to be £6 million.

It is important to note that the Council continues to be affected by the reducing level of central government funding and demographic challenges that were highlighted during the Local Development Framework presentations. As a result this and the significant pressures placed upon the wider economy the Council has had to identify over £10 million in savings in 2011/12 and directorates will again have to find savings of over £9 million in the year ahead. This will mean looking at budgets in detail and prioritising services. It is inevitable that there will be continue to be some difficult and challenging decisions to be made as we go forward.

Neighbourhood Planning

To recap as a result of the Localism Act 2011.

Neighbourhood Planning is about:

- Allowing the community to have a genuine opportunity to influence where they live.
- Building neighbourhoods and communities.
- Communities deciding where they want to see new homes and business.
- Communities getting more involved in creating plans and policies.
- Communities granting planning permission for certain types of development.

Neighbourhood Plans can only be exercised by Parish, Town and City Councils in Herefordshire. They can cover whole or part of a Parish or can cover more than one Parish. They become part of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

The benefits of Neighbourhood Plans allow local communities to play a greater role in shaping an area and bringing residents, businesses, local groups, landowners and developers together to build consensus. They will also create partnerships and provide a direct route for including communities own planning priorities in the planning system.

Neighbourhood Planning is not compulsory or a replacement for Parish Plans nor are they about stopping growth or development.

Mike Willmont's is the Head of Neighbourhood Planning and Sam (Samantha) Banks the Neighbourhood Planning Team Leader for Herefordshire Council.

Parish's wishing to develop plans will need to identify the resources needed to support the process. I would be keen to hear from Parish Council's who are interested in developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Warm Homes Healthy People Fund - Get Warm Stay Warm Herefordshire

Every winter there is an average of 27,000 avoidable extra winter deaths in England. The majority of these deaths occur in older people, especially women, and those with underlying health problems. It is estimated that the annual cost to the NHS of treating winter related disease due to cold private sector housing is £850 million. The Department of Health produced the "Cold Weather Plan" in November 2011. As part of this plan funding was made available for local authorities to bid for under the "Warm Homes Healthy People Fund". The Private Sector Housing team at Herefordshire Council in partnership with 10 voluntary and community groups was successful in being awarded £187,000 by the Department of Health to help address this problem.

The project involves a range of interventions to try and reduce the effects of cold weather on vulnerable Herefordshire residents including Cold Weather Packs (Thermal hats, gloves &

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slippers, thermal cards, gel hand warmers etc.) extra heaters, draught excluders and extra grab rails. There are many other benefits too.

I would ask all Parish Councils to help raise awareness of this. Anyone who needs help should telephone the Council's Get Warm Stay Warmer Administrator on 01432 260235 who will direct you to the relevant agency according to your need. This project will end on 31st March 2012 so it is important for any referrals to be made as soon as possible. Please use it as it is an additional FREE service.

Other news

Public Health - The Director of Public Health Annual Report 2011 was published earlier this month.

The report highlighted the fact that the Government is making the biggest changes to the public health system in 40 years in response to Professor Sir Michael Marmot's review. The *Marmot Review: Healthy Lives, Healthy People* drew attention to the difference in not just life expectancy but importantly years of life in good health between people in the most deprived neighbourhoods and those living in the least deprived neighbourhoods in England.

People in Herefordshire live on average longer healthier lives than in many other parts of England, but this average statistic disguises the fact that people in Herefordshire do not all have an equal chance of a long healthy life. The key message in the Director of Public Health's report is the need to reduce these differences.

In tackling this it is known that a child's readiness for school at the age of 5 is strongly predictive of their future health and wellbeing, and the development for 5 year olds in Herefordshire is significantly below average for England.

Circulatory disease is the single largest cause of long term ill-health and disability in Herefordshire. The NHS Checks programme has the potential to reduce the social gradient in circulatory disease in Herefordshire.

The cost of falls-related admissions for older people in Herefordshire is substantial and could be reduced through strength and balance training, assessment of hazards in the home, assessment of vision and medication review.

Planning Committee – Webcasting

As part of its drive to make democracy more transparent and open, Herefordshire Council is to carry out a trail webcast of a planning meeting on Wednesday, 1st February at 10.30am.

The webcast, which will be available by logging onto the council's website at <http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/> will allow residents to watch local democracy at work as the planning committee debates and decides the outcome of a series of planning applications. This will be the first time that such a meeting has been webcast in Herefordshire.

Prime Minister's Visit to Herefordshire

Herefordshire Council Leader, Councillor John Jarvis joined MP Jesse Norman and business leaders in meeting Prime Minister, David Cameron as he visited the Hereford Enterprise Zone at the Rotherwas Business Park in Hereford on 5th January 2012. The Prime Minister was clearly impressed by the partnership between the public and private sectors in the development of the zone as he toured the site.

After the tour he held talks with a small group who briefed him on the Marches LEP, the Herefordshire Business Board and the progress made by the Hereford Enterprise Zone board in just four months.

The Prime Minister also found time in a busy schedule for a short coffee break in Pontrilas Ward when he visited the Pilgrim Hotel at Much Birch.

Community Libraries

The Community Library opened its doors for the first time in Garway on 5th January as anticipated. It was well received and very busy with more people using the library in its first session than were registered with the former mobile service. This echoes the improvement in uptake seen elsewhere in the county and bodes well for the future.

Bus Services

Preparations are well underway for the launch of the Hoarwithy 37 bus as a scenic route in the near future. This is designed to raise the profile of the service with the aim of improving its sustainability for the communities it serves. Ultimately the future of all bus services, rely on people using them. Please do all you can to encourage their use.

This compliments the ongoing work to improve the viability of the Garway 412 bus. Your help in encouraging members of your community to use your local bus services is vital.

Surgeries

My next surgeries will be held at locations throughout the Ward as follows:

Saturday 11th February 2012

The Garway Moon, Garway - 10:30am – 12:00 noon
The Fountain Inn, Orcop - 1:00pm – 2:30pm
The Harewood End Inn – 3:30pm – 5:00pm

Saturday 18th February 2012

The New Harp Inn, Hoarwithy - 10:30am – 12:00 noon
The New Inn, St Owens Cross - 1:00pm – 2:30pm
The Pilgrim Hotel – 3:30pm – 5:00pm

Herefordshire Council Consultations

I am keen to encourage people to contribute to debate so that their views can be taken into account as part of decision making processes.

You can access to past, present and future consultations through this portal and respond to those that are on going. You can also register to participate in electronic consultations.

You can also access the results of closed consultations and find out what Herefordshire Council has done with the information gathered through consultations. By using the 'search' categories, you can search according to specific areas, target groups and dates of consultations.

Live consultations currently include:

Local Priorities – open 14/11/11 to 31/01/12

Options for the Future Management of Cultural Services – open 22/12/11 to 16/03/12

Services for families with Young Children – 09/01/12 to 30/03/12

You can find out about consultations being conducted by Herefordshire Council by visiting <http://consult.herefordshire.gov.uk/inovem/consult.ti>

I also welcome hearing people views directly. Please make your views known as this is your chance to contribute.

Dates for your Diary:

Next meeting of Herefordshire Council, Shire Hall 2nd February

Diamond Jubilee weekend - 2nd – 5th June

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, King George V Playing Fields 11th July

London Olympics 27th July – 12th August

Paralympic Games 29th August – 9th September

Three Choirs Festival, Hereford 21st – 28th July

h.Art – 8th – 16th September

Communications

If you or member of your community would like to receive my newsletters directly please email me at russellbhamilton@herefordshire.gov.uk with you full contact details i.e. name, postal and email address and preferably your telephone number and I will include you on my circulation list. Likewise I would be grateful if those that have them would include my newsletters on your Parish websites.

Thank you for taking the time to read this update and for sharing it with constituents throughout the Ward.

Any feedback regarding the content is welcomed.

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