

Ledbury Town Council: Thursday 3rd October 2013

Herefordshire Councillors' Reports – Elizabeth Harvey

In this report I will concentrate on the service cuts proposed for Herefordshire and their implications here in Ledbury; and provide a brief update on planning matters.

More Cuts and Consultations

Over the summer the council has continued to draw up its plans for service cuts in all areas. During this period the headline requirements have been:

1. Public money is going to be focussed on building a strong economy with good job prospects and services that support vulnerable adults and keep children safe and well educated
2. We need to help communities play a bigger role in providing local services

Toilets: As forecast, the decision has been taken by Herefordshire Council to close one of the town's public toilets under the savings measures. It remains the expectation that the toilets in Bye Street will close with effect from 1st November, unless the Town Council can make progress in arranging an interim solution. The toilets in Church Lane will remain open while the community project to take ownership of a number of heritage buildings remains under investigation.

Herefordshire Council is obtaining a county-wide price for the installation of coin operated locks for the doors of all toilets in the county able to have these mechanisms fitted. Presently I have not obtained any information on these costs, but I continue to chase.

Library and Information Centre: The opening hours of the Ledbury Library will be being reduced following public consultation and analysis of the public's usage of the building throughout the week. The most reduced opening hours are for Friday and Saturday afternoons – which have the library opening for 3hrs less on each day than was previously the case. This matches data showing these opening hours were the least well used by local people. The opening hours of the information centre have also been reduced slightly with staff continuing to share duties between the master's House and the Library.

Consultations remain open for:

- Post-16 SEN Transport:
<http://consult.herefordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/Post16SEN/consultationHome> - on options relating to the reduction in subsidy currently provided for non-statutory Post 16 SEN (Special Educational Needs) transport.
- School Transport Policy:
<http://consult.herefordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/SchoolTransNearest/consultationHome> - outlining proposed changes to the Council's policy on home to school transport such that it meets only the statutory requirements or gives a service on a full cost recovery basis

Cuts across all service areas will continue to be decided upon and implemented during the remainder of the current and into next financial year. **WARNING:** Councillors should be aware there may be significant cuts to come in the parks and open spaces budgets which will impact on the maintenance of green spaces in Ledbury.

I highlight a number of decisions which are likely to affect local people:

- **19th September - Devolved Services** For Cabinet to agree the process of local management of services by town councils / city council (the local councils) through a programme of devolved services, outlining priority areas and related asset transfers.

Decision maker: Cabinet; Decision published: 23/09/2013; Effective from: 27/09/2013

Decision: that the Director for Economy, Communities and Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Assets, Enterprise and Culture and relevant portfolio leads as appropriate, be authorised to conclude negotiations with the town councils and city council on priority areas for the first phase of devolved services within a three month period.

- **16th October: The Master's House Ledbury** - To provide an update on the progress of the Masters House, St Katherine's, Ledbury capital project and to approve an increase in the budget for the scheme.
- **17th October: Halo Prudential Borrowing for Purchase of Air Handling Units for Ledbury Swimming Pool** - To approve in principle the allocation of capital expenditure funded by Prudential borrowing for a capital investment and improvement programme at leisure facilities managed by Halo Leisure at Hereford Leisure Centre, Hereford Leisure Pool, Leominster Leisure Centre, **Ledbury Swimming Pool**, Ross-on-Wye, Swimming Pool and photo-voltaic investment.

Core Strategy

The final consultation on the Core Strategy has not been advertised yet due to slippage in receipt of the Nutrient Management Plan for the county's rivers amongst other things. When this consultation is notified, the town council will need to register its areas of objection regarding aspects of the plan to enable its concerns to be heard at examination in public.

With the very recent resignation of Cllr Russell B Hamilton, the Cabinet member responsible for the Core Strategy, responsibility for the work programme has been assigned to Cllr Philip Price – who also takes responsibility for drainage, floods and toilets.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The final draft charges for Community Infrastructure Levy are likely to be published in early 2014 rather than autumn 2013, due to staffing pressures and ongoing work on the Core Strategy and work still required on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Assuming that the currently proposed rates are implemented, it is worth noting that the work underway to deliver a **new Town Plan** will secure 15% of the levy funds generated by new housing in the area for Town Council projects – this is likely to equate to ~£860k over the next 20 years. The adoption of a **Neighbourhood Plan** will increase the CIL money retained for projects at Town Council level by a further ~£575k, providing a revenue stream of nearly £1.5m funds for local projects over 20 years, an average of £75k p.a..

Unauthorised Traveller Encampments

At the Mayor's request I provide an update on the action being taken by Herefordshire Council regarding the above.

- On 22nd September an unauthorised encampment of 3 traveller caravans was set up on the riverside park adjacent to the Homebase roundabout.
- On 24th September the site was visited by officers from Herefordshire Council and the travellers undertook to move within the fortnight – which is in line with the council's policy on unauthorised encampments.
- On 3rd October a notice to quit was served on the travellers at this site.
- If the travellers are not gone from the site on Sunday 6th October formal proceedings to issue an eviction notice will be commenced.
- If this action is required it may be up to a further 2-3 weeks before a slot is obtained in the magistrate's Court's schedule for these papers to be served.

And separately:

- On 1st October officers were notified of an unauthorised encampment of travellers on the Ledbury bypass by the Hereford Road roundabout comprising horse-drawn wagons, tents, tethered ponies, a yurt and open cooking fire.
- On 3rd October officers undertook an initial inspection of this encampment.
- Further action on this site is yet to be advised.

Councillor Liz Harvey

It's Our County – Ledbury Ward Member
3rd October 2013