

## **Ledbury Town Council: 29<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

### **Herefordshire Councillors' Report - Cllr Elizabeth Harvey & Cllr Andrew Warmington Cllr Warmington**

Last week I attended an update meeting for councillors and the general public given by Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) at the Thorn Centre in Rotherwas. This was in part self-promotional and a fair number of management clichés were parroted ('working hard', 'stronger focus', 'resource delivery', 'action plan', etc.), but they did also have some achievements to report on.

Most notably, the 'completion rate' for potholes and Category 2 defects within the 28-day timeline has increased from 50-60% to now about 92%, something they attribute in part to the adoption of visualisation techniques used in manufacturing industry. This has helped to save about £100,000 in general costs. Apparently, Herefordshire is to get award for Most Improved County in the NHT Survey of Popular Satisfaction, which admittedly may reflect an improvement from a low base...

Preparation for winter is ongoing and BBL now have 6,450 tonnes of grit and 15 gritter vehicles ready. The road surfacing programme for the year has apparently covered 90% of C and U roads – Highways England is responsible for all trunk roads - and work is now in progress to identify roads needing doing next year. About 2/3 of street lights and 5/6 of columns have seen traditional sodium lights replaced with LEDs. The work is currently about 3-4 weeks behind schedule but BBLP expect to complete the programme on time.

There were also updates on major projects, notably the refurbishment of High Town in Hereford, the City Link Road and the Hereford Relief Road, of which the South Wye Transport Package is the first tranche. I won't go into details on these, as they are not directly relevant to Ledbury.

The most complex part of the presentation was on Traffic Regulation Orders, where, for example, yellow lines are painted on the road or traffic enforcement orders are made for a specific reason. This is intrinsically a very slow process, with multiple levels of consultation, review and examination, typically taking nine months, though some particularly slow cases are said to date back to 2010. HC is looking for this to become 'member-led', i.e. by the individual ward councillor, so I can only encourage councillors to pass community requests up to us.

The overriding fact, of course, is budget constraints. BBLP has already had its budget reduced by about £9 million and must spend £6.3 million less next year. So it is looking at various ideas to take out costs and increase efficiency and productivity, such as centralising operational management. All in all, though, it is impossible to imagine us not feeling the pinch of these cuts in some way.

### **Cllr Harvey**

#### **Herefordshire Council Budget Consultation 2016-2019**

I'm pleased to report that Herefordshire Council has now confirmed that it is not intending to close the public loos in Church Lane next year. Feedback from officers indicates that the option remains a possibility for future years but the loos seem safe for now. Good news. The consultation is now closed and results will be published during November. Early indications are that the cuts proposed to libraries are the least popular whilst reducing the subsidy on council tax to benefits claimants appears to be one of the most popular proposals.

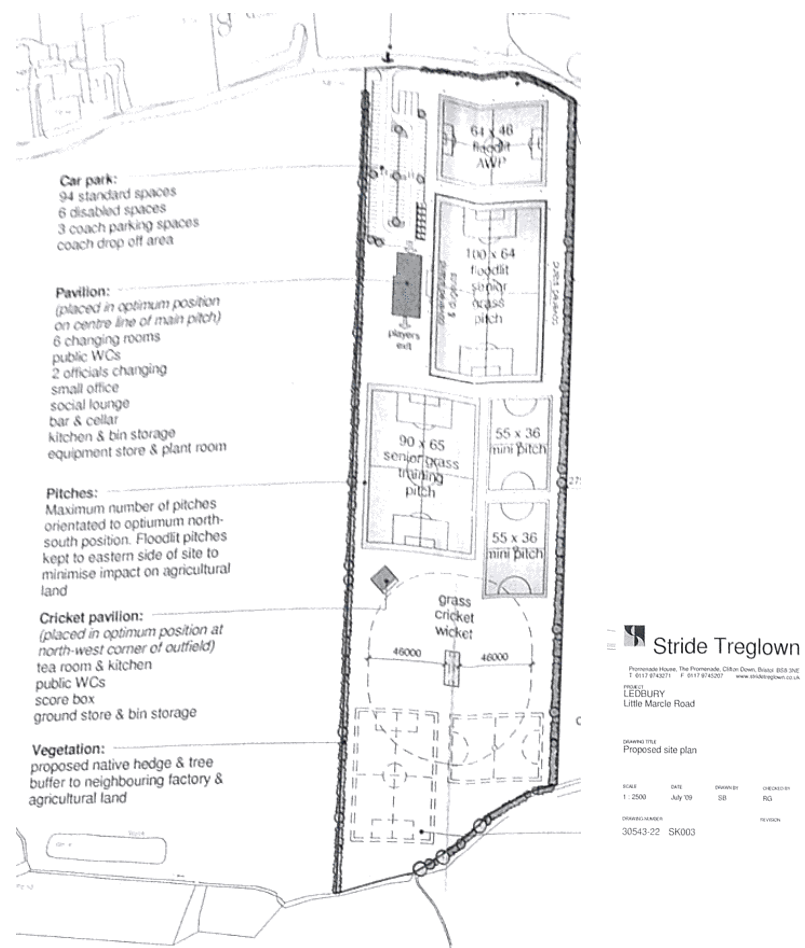
**BBLP – Road Resurfacing and Annual Plan 2016-17:** I am meeting with officers today (29<sup>th</sup> Oct) to discuss road surfacing prioritisation in Herefordshire and will report any points of interest at the council meeting. I have not received any requests for roads in Ledbury North ward of the parish to be included on the resurfacing schedule for 2016-17, as requested last month.

**Council Owned Smallholdings:** At General Overview & Scrutiny on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct Cllr Warmington and I spoke in favour of the retention of the council-owned farms. A significant number of tenant farmers and their families attended the session which reviewed a scrutiny report detailing the issues. The administration is banking on the liquidation of £40-£60m of land assets to reduce their future borrowing requirements to fund the Core Strategy road building programme in Hereford, and the council-owned farms are seen as a significant source of that capital.

The recommendation put forward from the meeting was that the majority of farms be kept and only 1-2 sold off as housing development sites to release the most significantly valuable assets whilst committing to better management of the remaining portfolio. Cabinet will meet on 3<sup>rd</sup> December to consider whether to accept this recommendation.

**Core Strategy:** The Core Strategy was adopted by Herefordshire Council on 16<sup>th</sup> October at a full council meeting in the Shire Hall. The significant level of concern expressed by Ledbury residents at the changes made to the access condition for the 625 dwelling viaduct housing site (representing 400 of the 600 county-wide consultation responses) resulted in a minor change being made to the LB2 policy for the strategic housing site. Suitable access to the site will now be determined at outline/detailed planning stage for the development.

**Sports Masterplan for Ledbury:** As a result of the Core strategy being adopted there is an urgent requirement to identify community infrastructure projects needing to be funded by developers as housing developments come forward.



**Figure 1: Indicative 15 acre sports hub pitch layout, at July 2009 NB: Currently a 20 acre site is proposed**

I have had discussions with county planners and national governing bodies for sports has resulted in the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party being asked to complete a sports masterplan for Ledbury. Support to assist with this work has been secured from the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Sports Partnership. The



**Miscellaneous:** In addition to ward work and the items mentioned above, I have undertaken training on children's and adults safeguarding, and been involved in correspondence regarding the redrafting of the council's whistleblowing policy and its constitution. I have remained involved with the fight to retain the residential teenage respite facility at No1 Ledbury Road. The nuisance trees and undergrowth on Robinson's Meadow have been cleared and the relocation of a litter bin obscuring drivers' view of oncoming traffic at the exit of Woodleigh Road onto Bridge Street has been agreed with BBLP.

Last week I attended a full congress sitting of the Council of Europe held in Strasbourg at which reports were all debated and approved on:

- modernising local government;
- new and emerging models for local democracy;
- encouraging young people's engagement in the democratic process; and
- balancing the mix and diversity of representation on local councils.

This work supports and enables the UK to comply with its obligations under the European Charter for Local Democracy. It is welcome to note that all of these topics are represented in the agenda for tonight's meeting, although it is also worth noting that some items on tonight's agenda run entirely contrary to our obligations under this Charter.

*Councillors Liz Harvey & Andrew Warmington*

It's Our County – Ledbury Ward Members – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015