

Birch Ward Councillor Update – Sept 2021

- Balfour Beatty have been looking at refreshing the Riparian Responsibilities information to further engage riparian owners to take responsibility for their ditches and drains through awareness, support and guidance. Where there is a lack of cooperation and there is a safety risk to highway users, or significant damage to highway, a process is now in place to enable BBLP to take a more formal approach. A 'Process guidance for Members & Parishes' should go to all parishes which outlines this process and details of how you can engage and help BBLP spread the message wider and what to do if you have an issue.
- Budget Consultation starts and will be held on Mon 6 Sep at 7pm for South and West of Herefordshire wards and parishes. We want parish and town councils to give their views about how the council budget is spent to ensure we get the best value for every pound we spend, continue to support all residents and the most vulnerable in our communities and develop services to lead Herefordshire into the future with confidence.

All local authorities have faced significant funding cuts to budgets over recent years. This has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic which has left large budget shortfalls. Last year's budget consultation invited residents to consider which services they prioritised and where they felt savings could be made as the council looked to make around £11million of savings.

While the council budget remains constrained, unlike last year the council is not facing a significant funding gap in 2022/23. Therefore, the focus of this consultation is to look at how the council can support post-Covid recovery and transform the way council services are delivered to ensure they are modern, effective, efficient and environmentally friendly.

The consultation is being run by Claire Carter, Sarah Fishbourne and Max Bassett from Impact Consultancy and Research. If you would like to attend a local consultation session, please book online using the link above, or if you have any queries please email sarah@impactconsultancy.co.uk

- Understanding Herefordshire: <https://youtu.be/VnYEoRtZb-s> link for the Wellbeing Survey which has lots of interesting facts about Herefordshire residents and how they are coping. There is a lot of up to date information about the impact of Covid here <https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/> - a really useful source of information about how Herefordshire is faring.

- **Statement in response to Ofsted's children's services visit**

Ofsted identified three areas for priority action:

- Address inconsistent and variable social work practice to ensure that children are the focus of assessments, planning and interventions.
- The frequency and effectiveness of case supervision and the monitoring of children who are subject to child in need and child protection planning.
- Shortfalls in case-holding capacity for social workers, including newly qualified social workers, to allow them to respond effectively to children in need of help and protection.

Inspectors recognised the significant changes recently made to the senior leadership for children's services and stated the following:

"The new leadership team in place since March 2021 has completed a comprehensive critical evaluation of practice across the service. This team has begun to understand the challenges that need to be resolved in order to improve practice; they have accurately identified the necessary priorities for improvement. An improvement plan has been developed that appropriately addresses the concerns. This has corporate backing, including a financial commitment to support the improvement plan."

- UNISON's charity, There for You, has set up a fund to help members on low incomes struggling with the cost of school uniforms. Grants of £50 per child are available, up to a maximum of £150 per family.

Visit the UNISON website for [further details about the school uniform grant](#).

Finally, police are warning about Courier Fraud gang targeting Herefordshire West Mercia Police asks that people in and around Hereford please remain vigilant after a number of reports that a crime gang is trying to con them. Criminals are pretending to be police officers or bank staff to target people in Herefordshire in a scam known as 'Courier Fraud'. The victims being targeted are elderly and vulnerable people.

Courier Fraud is when someone calls you and pretends they are a police officer in order to get you to hand over large amounts of cash, normally once you have been asked to withdraw it from your bank. People are also being targeted via 'missed delivery' text message.

These organised crime gangs are targeting elderly and vulnerable people around Herefordshire so please have a chat with gran, grandad, your parents and anyone you think may be at risk to this scam.

Remember the police will never:

- Contact you to ask for your PIN or bank details
- Ask you transfer money out of your account for fraud reasons

- Ask you to withdraw cash to hand over to them for “safe keeping”
- Send someone to your home to collect cash, PINs or cards

If you think you have been the victim of a scam, **call 101**.