

Leader's newsletter

Flooding

Please remind your Parish Councils that compensation is available for householders whose property has been flooded.

Coronavirus

The three key messages Karen Wright would like us to take away, and communicate to Parish Councils:

- All necessary actions are being taken to support the national effort
- As leaders we need to provide reassurance and reinforce and basic hand washing and 'catch it, bin it kill it' messages that are the most effective approach in preventing the spread of any infections.
- Refer members of the public to the national websites or through the council website for the latest guidance.

So far as schools are concerned, Herefordshire Council have received a small number of enquiries from schools and colleges in Herefordshire, regarding their staff/pupils returning from Northern Italy.

Other roles

The Herefordshire Cultural Partnership is looking for a new Chair. The role of the HCP is to:

- Champion Herefordshire's cultural strategy and cultural ambition.
- Identify and support initiatives, which attract funding and investment for creative and cultural activity.
- Oversee the development and delivery of the Cultural Strategy 2019-29, producing an annual action plan with specific objectives and targets.
- Support strategic programmes and identify key initiatives to deliver the Cultural Strategy action plan.
- Take collective responsibility for ensuring that cultural funding is allocated properly and against agreed priorities.
- Monitor activity against the Cultural Strategy's Strategic Objectives and Key Actions and publish an annual review.
- Examine and respond to local, regional, national and international environments and policies to ensure that the Cultural Strategy's vision and objectives remain valid.

Do you know anybody who might fit this role?

Staunton Primary School

Staunton-on-Wye Endowed Primary School received a letter earlier this month from Nick Gibbs MP, Minister of State for School Standards, congratulating them on their progress levels. Staunton's results in reading, writing and mathematics from Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2 place them in the top 3% of schools in the country. Congratulations to all the staff and pupils on their hard work and achievement.

Education achievement

Strong performance in Primary education; top quartile performance in majority of measures for all pupils from early years to KS2.

Station Approach Student Accommodation

Working with Hereford College of Arts and a range of private sector partners and investors, the Council has enabled the development of a £19 million 178 bedroom student accommodation development in Hereford. The construction reaches a significant stage in February as modular units, that have been constructed offsite over the winter months, are delivered to site and craned into place.

The development will quickly take shape over the next six weeks, and is due to open in September for the new academic year.

Q3 Outturn

The quarter 3 outturn report was presented to cabinet last week at its meeting in Ewyas Harold. Currently the council is forecasting an over-spend of £51k on a total budget of £386m which equates to +0.01%. A very good position to be in at this point in the year. Congratulations to everyone involved in delivering so closely to the overall budget.

<http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50076452/Quarter%203%20201920%20corporate%20budget%20and%20performance%20report.pdf>

Council Tax Setting

The Council Tax for Herefordshire Council was set at a marathon full council meeting held on 14 February. The council resolved to apply a 3.9% increase to the council tax, which equates to an increase of £4.92 per month for a band D property. This rise comprises 2% dedicated to supporting the increasing cost of adult social care and 1.9% to cover cost increases in all other areas of the council's operation.

Finance

Adults and Communities continue to maintain their strong financial position, reporting an underspend of just under £2m as at December 2019. This is both supporting the overall council financial position during 2019/20 and also enabling the Adults to bring forward savings initiatives and investment programmes to support their own financial position in 2020/21.

Rural Access Grant

We will shortly be launching the Rural Access Grant which is seeking to target funding for schemes which will improve access for rural residents and in particular limited access to private transport. The fund total £275K and will be available for projects and initiatives which can start providing better access during 2020/21. We have listened to our community transport partners and have sought to ensure that they can bid for funding for a broad range of activities noting that we are keen to support great local solutions and respond to the needs of specific communities. This means that the fund can support new vehicles, activities which will encourage more volunteers – particularly drivers, and innovative approaches which might improve access and reduce carbon emissions. We are really keen to see what works well so that we can share best practice between communities and inform how we might target resources in future.

Trading Standards

The trading standards team has just successfully prosecuted a nationally renowned rogue trader from Glasgow, an engineer who was exploiting the elderly in the pricing of TV aerial installations. This rogue company, Aerial Express, is the largest aerial firm in the UK and having been featured on Esther Rantzen's Channel 5 rogue trader programme, Herefordshire Council are the first local authority to take court action relating to the company. This was so serious that it has been passed from the Magistrates to the Crown Court for sentencing. Trading standards have also successfully prosecuted a company from Bournemouth who exploited an 89 year old retiree from Bartestree for unnecessary building repairs.