

Annual Report for Old Gore Ward Parishes – Cllr Barry Durkin

Herefordshire Council is a small rural unitary council over a large geographical area and thus the delivery of services is a challenge. The most significant part of the Council's expenditure and council tax is spent on Adult and Children's care services.

Children' and Adult Care

During the last 12 months the poor performance in Children Care services had reached a point where the Government appointed a commissioner to oversee it, and establish an improvement plan. This remains the biggest challenge to Herefordshire Council; as its statutory responsibility to look after the most vulnerable children has huge live changing consequences for individuals. The improvement of this service will require a more stable supported workforce, larger levels of investment and co-operation from all partners.

Nationally and of course locally the increasing demands of a maturing population are placing pressures on our Adult Care services and as the recent census results showed Herefordshire has a higher percentage of over 60s. Although many of these will be self-funders and care costs will not be picked up the council, nonetheless it puts pressure on the care service capacity. Although additional funding for care was given to local authority budgets by HMG we still await longer term national proposals on the adult care service.

Highways

Herefordshire has over 2,000 miles of public highways and their maintenance continues being a challenge. There remains concerns on the delivery of the Balfour Beatty highway contract. The councils contractors - on timing and quality of pothole repairs needs to be improved. This year, as a management improvement exercised the Council took back in house its Public Rights of Way and Traffic Management services but struggled to deliver an effective service.

Highways is the number one concern on the doorsteps in my ward and indeed other councillors' wards and I will pick up post-election how the extra £2.5 million allocated to Herefordshire in the Chancellor's budget in March is spent. In the meantime the reporting of highway conditions quickly is important.

Highways – to report a flooded road or highway obstruction-

Balfour Beatty Living Places:

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/report-problems-road> - Tel 01432 26180

Footpaths issues:-

PROW@herefordshire.gov.uk – Tel 01432 383550

Fly tipping

Events may be dealt with in a much quicker time frame by either online reporting via the council website or calling the contact centre.

https://link.edgепilot.com/s/f452e836/Hy5YWk_SgEGkleekL2ROFQ?u=https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200226/report_a_problem/98/fly_tipping - Contact Centre on 01432 261800

Housing

It will be four years this summer since any new house planning applications have been granted in the river Lugg catchment area and 40% of the County. After spending over 3 million pound, eventually, a wetland scheme at Luston has been opened and two other sites purchased. A small number of houses will now be able to be built but there is a waiting list of 2,000 homes in the planning pipeline. The condition of our rivers is an issue and needing to have work on and improvement and solutions. While a lot of attention has been given to the Agricultural sectors, contribution, attention must not be removed from Welsh Water and village sewage works where the higher point source of phosphate may be found.

The Go Wild in the Curl project [Go Wild In The Curl | The Wye and Usk Foundation \(wyeuskfoundation.org\)](https://www.wyeuskfoundation.org) ran for six years indicated a reduction in phosphate by 20% but rather than building on the project it was dismissed by too many with other agendas. I am supportive of private applications to reduce phosphate and ring fence for their development and believe we should look more openly at phosphate trading and not just controlled by the council. The Lugg catchment is one of many areas with environmental constraints and we must work; learn with and from these others. The impact on our local construction sector has been significant and there are longer term pressures on local housing market building particular on affordable homes.

Planning

Despite the freeze on house building the planning department has been problematic for many residents and businesses applying for permission. Lack of staff and expert availability has created many delays which are frustrating and in inflationary times very expensive. Improvement in performance is essential. The enforcement team carry out regular checks on referrals but there are concerns on a spreading practice of ignoring planning rules.

Coronation and events

The Jubilee celebrations last June highlighted the strong community character that exists in our parishes. I congratulate and thank the various organisations and individuals in the ward who arrange activities from one off events, some of a considerable scale, to regular events who do so much for residents' wellbeing throughout the year. It was great to see the lengths which our communities went to, to celebrate His Majesty's coronation. The events were spectacular and up to and exceeded expectations – congratulations to all the organisers and enablers; I know I enjoyed my time at these events.

During the year I arranged my joint meetings for our chairs and our Parish clerks looking at planning and the role of the Chief Executive. This year I intend to organise meetings with further organisations, officers and directors of directorates. If you have anything special you would like to see let me know and I will attempt to make it happen.

Attendances

I attend as many Parish Council meetings, I have seven in my ward and various ward events as I can during the year; including a regular monthly ward report. This contributes to parish newsletters and social media. With my monthly update by email and I would urge residents to sign up with me to these which keep you updated regularly on Council and local issues. You can do this by using the email address at the head of this report.

My thanks to all of you who have supported me during the last twelve months with a particular mention of my Parish Clerks, Chairs and Councillors. I believe in working as a team for strengthening our communities, and improving our social, economic and environmental wellbeing.

It remains a pleasure and privilege to represent you all.

Barry

[As ever kind regards, stay safe and well.](#)

BD



Herefordshire.gov.uk

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Ward Member representing! Old Gore Ward - Parishes of Brampton Abbott and Foy, Brockhampton with Much Fawley, How Caple, Kings Caple, Much Marcle, Upton Bishop and Woolhope

Vice Chairman – West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioners Panel

Herefordshire Council - Armed Forces Champion

Chairman – Herefordshire Armed Forces Covenant

Supporting Herefordshire's Armed Forces Community Covenant - visit the website:

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/armedforces