

Report from Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst SEPTEMBER 2024

Happy to serve the parishes of Llangarron, Sellack, Marstow, Peterstow, Bridstow, Welsh Newton and Llanrothal.

Bin Collections

There has been an issue with some bin collections in the area. If you have any problems please get in touch and let me help.

Whilst the change of contract has taken place with the majority of residents not even noticing, there have been some issues with rural collections. This is due to new drivers and/or a change of lorry. Once the problem is understood it will be fixed.

Fibre Broadband

Households are being contacted in Welsh Newton and Llangrove to take up the offer of super fast broadband!! Hurrah.

Meeting with Alan Lovell, Chair of the Environment Agency

I had the pleasure of meeting with Alan Lovell, members of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and friends of Yazor Brook this month. We were looking at the Essex Arms site in Hereford and discussing the potential to create an urban wetland there. I am a big fan of urban wetlands, they create wonderful and surprising natural beauty in contrast to the hustle and bustle of city life. There is a great example in Kings Cross in London where moorhen and coot live alongside high rise offices [Camley Street Natural Park | London Wildlife Trust \(wildlondon.org.uk\)](#).

I also went on a site visit to look at the various potential development areas around the Hereford city link road. This is a really exciting project – or, to be accurate, a series of projects – that will enhance the city and the visitor experience. Can't wait to see the plans progressing.

One Million Megawatt Hours from your rubbish



Earlier this month I visited Envirecover, [Recovery | Severn Waste Services](#), the Energy from Waste plant in Hartlebury to mark the 1,000,000 MWh that have been generated from waste since the plant was opened in 2017. This has saved Herefordshire Council millions and stopped thousands of tonnes of waste going to landfill. We planted a tree to mark the occasion.

This is the facility that turns your 'residual' (black bag) waste into electricity.

Planning

I attended a meeting with other Unitary Authorities and it is clear that the concerns that Herefordshire Council has about the government's proposals to increase housing targets are shared by other councils. In their response to the NPPF consultation the CCN (County Council Network)

have been unequivocal in their objection to the reforms with the Chairman, Cllr Richard Clewer saying *“We don’t have enough infrastructure to cope now, let alone after building quarter of a million extra homes over the course of this Parliament. We also must remember much of this development in county areas will be in the places with limited or no public transport, compared to the benefits of building in or around cities where there is already good infrastructure.*

“Worse still, the government’s proposal to re-introduce a five-year land supply drives a bulldozer through locally-agreed housing decisions in our Local Plans and empowers developers. If implemented alongside these dramatic new housing targets, we will see a developer free for all in many county and rural areas, weakening democracy and leading to development in unsuitable locations, regardless of local views.”

[Housing reforms risk a ‘developer free for all’ in county and rural areas, as councils warn ‘excessive’ targets will pile even more pressure on local roads, schools, and services - County Councils Network](#)

Cabinet [Cabinet - Thursday 26 September 2024 10.30 pm \(youtube.com\)](#)

The Cabinet meeting this month gave us the opportunity to receive an update on the budget and performance for the first quarter. We are on track to make the savings we had identified in the 24/25 budget, however we have increased demand in adult social care, temporary accommodation and SEN (Special Educational Needs) transport which is putting an additional strain on the finances of over 4m. The first quarter figures are more estimate than actual and this is reflected in the ‘at risk’ savings that are just not sufficiently progressed to be certain. It is a better picture than last year when we had to deal with a 13.8m overspend with no planned mitigations in place. The savings targets are looking good and although we do have the additional pressures to deal with we are in as good a place as can be expected.

The Children’s and Young People’s directorate also gave a performance report which is showing an overall improvement in the vast majority of areas. The improvement journey is just that, a journey, and not a destination. The CYP improvement plan was also brought before Cabinet for approval and it is this plan that is the map to guide the way. It is really well put together with a clear set of data and key milestones. For the first time in a long time I am starting to feel that things are really turning round. It’s early days for the new director but so far so good and I wish her all the best.

Party Conference

I include this every year as I feel it is part of my ‘work’ as a councillor – I wouldn’t go otherwise. If you do not want to know about the conference look away now....

As usual it is a bit of a rush to get around all the panels and talks on offer. This year, because I am the Cabinet Member for the Environment (as well as taking a keen interest), I attended multiple panels on the environmental issues of the day. Most were hosted by the Conservative Environment Network (I am a CEN ambassador). Over the conference they hosted 20 panels, topics included: Soil, water quality, clean energy, food security, net zero, private markets, rewilding, trees and hedgerows, land use, solar and the future of Conservative environmentalism (with Jesse Norman MP on the panel along with Rebecca Pow and Michael Gove). I met a man who is a kelp farmer and a dairy farmer who is using bokashi to compost his straw based manures, there was a fantastic talk about rewilding in both an urban and rural setting (see above for Essex Arms as a potential site) and useful contacts were made with Woodland Trust amongst others.

The highpoint was that I got asked to host a round of the quiz and found myself as the follow-on act for Therese Coffey! Blimey.

I also attended various leadership hustings to get an idea about who would make the best choice for the next leader but I won't bore you with my reflections on that.

