

BISHOPSTONE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Bishopstone Group Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 12th November at 7.30pm

**Due to present Government restrictions this meeting was
a 'virtual' meeting held via Zoom.**

PRESENT: Councillor John Macklin (Chairman), Cllr S Hubbard (Vice Chairman); Cllr Lesley Handscomb; Cllr R Morgan; Cllr M Holmes; Cllr N Newton; Cllr C Draper; Cllr S Crump; Cllr Lewis Goldwater; Cllr S Keefe and Cllr S Knights.

PRESENT: Mrs Lesley Hay (Parish Clerk); 2 members of the public

The Chairman welcomed those present to the November Zoom meeting.

Minutes

1. Apologies for absence were received from Ward Cllr David Hitchiner.
2. To receive declarations of interest or written requests for dispensations. A declaration of interest was received from Cllr. S Knights with regard to item (8.2)
3. The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 10th September 2020 - these were subject to a small amendment with regard to a planning application number for White Roses – this was corrected. The minutes were then accepted to be a true record and it was unanimously agreed they be adopted and signed by the Chairman.
4. Chairman's report November 2020

Firstly, I would like to apologise for a mistake in my last report, I put a 3 instead of a 5 in the planning application for White Roses, this has now been corrected.

Last week I spent time liaising with the lengthsman over the ditching work he carried out for the Parish Council as part of a road maintenance

program, the cost will be covered by the grant money we were awarded, he covered all the by-roads within the parishes cleaning out blocked ditches opening up grips etc. (as you can see from the schedule sheet that has been emailed to you all). I think he has carried out an excellent job.

The second part of the grant £3240.00 plus VAT covers the cost of hiring a jetting machine for 3 days, this has been programmed in to take place within the next month, I am hopeful this will cure some of the parishes long outstanding water and flooding problems caused by blocked pipes.

(4.1) The Community Centre closed on 30th September - the community space of the building was handed back to the Church. The Deed of Covenant (lease) expired on 15th May 2020, due to Covid19, lack of support and the complex problems of two parties occupying the same building it was decided by the Trustees not to proceed with a new 10-year Deed of Covenant.

Suggested possible venues for future PC meetings (when allowed)
Stretton Sugwas Hall meeting room or Staunton on Wye village hall.

Community Hub – Cllr Lesley Handscomb reported that she had informed Herefordshire Council that the local Community Hub to be cancelled due to the lack of a local venue.

5. Ward Councillor's report – please see full report attached to the end of these minutes
6. Finance: Accounts sheet/schedule of payment sheet circulated.
 - (6.1) Finance: Accounts sheet/schedule of payment sheet had been circulated.
 - (6.2) It was unanimously agreed to pay of outstanding invoices.

Budget 2021-2022 Financial Year

- (6.3) To consider for approval Budget for 2021-2022 (circulated)

There was some discussion on the budget figures and, in particular, in view of the uncertainty about future meeting venues and associated hire costs, it was agreed to increase the budget to £8,500 for the 2021-2022 financial year.

(6.4) It was unanimously agreed to request a Precept of £8,500 for the forthcoming 2021-2022 financial year. The Clerk will submit the application form before the 31st December 2020.

7. Highways and Environmental Matters:

(7.1) Update on lengthsman Funding Grant

The Clerk confirmed that she had received the first invoice for the work undertaken within the Drainage Grant. This invoice and work sheet had been forwarded to Balfour Beatty – they had inturn acknowledged receipt and confirmed the invoice had been forwarded for payment.

It was agreed that the Clerk would raise the cheque at the end of November for D C Gardening even if reimbursement was still in process.

(7.2.) Footpath Officers' Reports

Damaged footbridge rails reported by Cllr R Morgan on BS2 (Bridge Sollars).

The Chairman visited the area and found the boundary to be around 50 meters from the bridge. This bridge with the loose rails is in Madley parish so it is outside our boundary.

It is a bit confusing the boundary does not follow any hedge line or ditch, it cuts across an open field.

Clerk asked to inform the Madley Clerk.

There was discussion with regard to the BY31 – footpath from the church to Byford Common where there is a very dangerous area of deep water. It was felt that there should be a warning sign erected – ‘Danger Deep water’ – or even a sign saying the ‘footpath has ceased to exist’.

It was suggested a meeting with the Locality Steward should be arranged as soon as possible as this is an urgent Health and Safety matter.

(7.3) Sandbags/Grit bins – it was confirmed that there were sufficient sandbags in storage. With regard to the grit bins – Councillors agreed to check their local grit bin and report back if they had not been filled.

(7.4) Byford Common. There has been a complaint by a resident about the on-going problem of burning rubbish on the common which is causing damage to the common and an unpleasant smell for the neighbours.

After some discussion about erecting Common Rights notices at both ends of the common – it was agreed that the Clerk would speak with Helene Beale – Herefordshire Commons Officer – about the legality surrounding erecting the signs; the appropriate wording and size of each sign. It was agreed that these signs would have to be erected by the lengthsman.

Clerk will report back. Again, this is a matter that needs discussing with the Locality Steward.

8 Planning matters:

(8.1) Planning Consultation 203338 – Magnolia Farm, Madley. It was noted this application was for a neighbouring parish and did not affect Bishopstone Group Parish.

(8.2) Planning Consultation – 203398 Former Lord Nelson Inn – proposed extension and part change of use to dwelling house.

After lengthy discussion during which various serious issues were raised – Cllr S Hubbard very kindly agreed to prepared the Parish Council’s response to this planning application.

Below is a copy of her response which covers all the major issues raised during the discussion.

“Before commenting in detail on the application we would like to point out a major error in the Planning Statement. The description of the site in Section 3 does not refer to the Lord Nelson but to an application for 10 houses at Gorsley near Ross (Herefordshire Council planning application ref. 131275) granted with conditions on 5/8/2013. This carelessness inevitably leads us to question how far we can rely on the accuracy of other parts of the application.

Although we sympathise with the applicants' wish to improve their living accommodation we are unable to support the application as it stands because it conflicts with Bishopstone Group NDP in a number of ways

- The application states that surface water will be disposed of by mains sewer, existing water course or soakaway. There is no mains sewer or watercourse and no details are given about avoidance of pollution if soakaways are used (NDP Policy G2.3)
- The application makes no provision for disposal of foul sewage apart from saying that it will not be by connection to existing drainage. This is a serious lack of clarity and raises the possibility of contamination issues in an area which is not far from the river Wye (NDP Policy G1.3)
- The design is not of high quality nor in keeping with the neighbourhood and simply adds to the piecemeal development of a historic building which is a landmark in the area (NDP Policy G1)
- The plans show that an existing door between showrooms will be blocked off and that there will only be an external access to the dwelling. As there is already a flat in the building we are uncertain whether the new dwelling should therefore be taken as new housing in open countryside outside the Bishopstone settlement boundary which we must oppose (NDP Policies H1 and H3 reflecting Herefordshire Core Strategy) or residential development under Herefordshire Core Strategy Policies RA3 and RA4. If the application is approved we would want a condition to secure occupancy control added to the approval in order to prevent the new dwelling from being separated from the business and sold off.

(8.3) NDP update

Councillors confirmed that they had attended a Planning Meeting via Zoom on Wednesday 11th November and below is a copy of an email from Karla Johnson – Senior Planning Officer – outlining the content of the meeting.

Types of Review

There are three levels of Neighbour Plan review, Minor, Material and Substantial.

Minor does not require a reg 16 consultation, examination or referendum. Changes will be minor in nature i.e typos corrected.

Material modifications- Requires reg 16 consultation, examination the plan will be remade. Changes proposed would not change the overall strategy of plan and will just add detail to existing policies.

Significant- Requires reg 16 consultation, examination and referendum. Changes will be major, change in settlement boundary, new policy-significant policy changes, addition/change of site allocations.

Funding

There are grants available from DCLG up to £10k, this can be applied through the website.

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/grant-funding/>

NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework)

The NPPF highlights that in areas which cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply then the housing policies of the development plan would be deemed as 'out of date', this has included the Herefordshire Core Strategy since April 2016. However, para 14 of the NPPF provides additional protection to NDPs provided that 4 tests can be met:

- The NDP has been adopted for less than 2 years.
- That the NDP contains policies and allocations to meet the identified requirement –This element is currently met (Legal advice given to Herefordshire Council in connection with an appeal in Ledbury has indicated that that an allocation is required even if the plan has met its proportional growth target or indicated how it can be met within a settlement boundary or windfalls.)
- The LPA has a three-year land supply. Herefordshire currently has a 3.69 year housing land supply.
- The LPA has a 45% housing delivery.

If all four elements can't be met, the plan will still form part of the development plan but the material weight attributed to the plan will need to be considered within the planning balance. NDPs will still be given significant weight but the elements of presumption in favour of sustainable development will need to be taken into account.

In terms of the Bishopstone Plan adopted in 2019, has been adopted less than 2 years. There is a site allocation and policies to meet the identified requirement of 25 houses within Bishopstone. Therefore, your housing policies in your plan, currently still have full weight.

White Paper: Planning for the future

This document outline proposed changes to the planning system, at this stage it is still a draft document which recently finished consultation on the 29TH October 2020. The proposals set out in this document will significantly change the planning system if this goes ahead, it will take time to enact. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

It is likely this change of the planning system will take a while to go through, likely to take 2 years plus. The Core Strategy review is also likely to take few years to review. As discussed, please find the Guidance Notes attached to this email.

9. Brief update on ‘Making space for Nature in our parish’

Update report given by Cllr S Keefe:

During October, Rosemary Morgan and myself planted wild flowers in the Kenchester Triangle, in the space between the Oak and Cherry trees and towards the road that runs through the village. Foxgloves, Red Campion, Evening Primrose and Mullein will become tall and compete with the grass. Smaller plants - Speedwell, Ladies bedstraw and Forget-me-not can cope with mowing from the Lengthsman. The taller plants will be roped off when a cut is done.

Also working in Byford with Muriel Holmes who has identified a verge on Ferry Lane which already has Cowslips, Yarrow and Meadow sweet. The plan is to increase biodiversity- Foxgloves were planted in early November and with other species to follow. For public spaces, the next activities focus on Bridge Sollars crossroads and Byford Common.

We invite parishioners who would like nectar-rich plants in their gardens to contact us as we can advise and provide some plants.

10. Amendment to Standing Orders re Zoom/Virtual meetings

- previously circulated.

Standing Orders – There was discussion with regard to an amendment to the current standing orders regarding virtual meetings. It was unanimously agreed to adopt the amendment that had been circulated and this appendix will be filed with the current document.

Date of next meeting will be Thursday 14th January 2021 – 7.30p.m.

This meeting will again be via Zoom – the Clerk will send out the invitation/link nearer the time.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45 p.m.

Signed:

Date:

Leader's newsletter

Welcome to my Newsletter.

It is disappointing that we are now in a new lockdown, especially as the rate of Covid19 in our County has been much lower than most of the Country. However, there is a concern for us that any significant increase in cases has the potential to overwhelm our hospital, which could have severe consequences for our community.

As you go to your Parish Councils could you please reinforce the message that we should continue to be doing what we can to prevent the spread of the virus with the basic messages of washing hands, wearing face coverings and keeping our distance from each other.

For those in businesses negatively affected by this new lockdown, the Council has considerable concerns. The Government is provided further funding some of which will come through the Council – more detail in Cllr Chowns summary below. On the brighter side, Cllr Chowns also refers to an opportunity for everyone in the community to provide ideas and opinions for spending the Stronger Towns Fund money. There are already a lot of interesting projects that have been put forward. Please encourage people to access the Stronger Towns website.

Many of you attended today's briefing on social media. In the briefing, some pointed out that some information on our website is out of date. It's not always easy to take down old information especially if the website administrators are not aware that information is old. It would be very helpful if you could let service providers know that information is out of date or incorrect so that they can provide up to date information to the administrators. Thank you.

In this time of uncertainty and worry for many, there is a lot of good news in the summaries below. Please share what you can.

Children and families – Cllr Felicity Norman

Essex Local Authority Partner in Practice Diagnostic Visit; Essex completed a diagnostic visit of the children's assessment and looked after children and fostering service areas through September. They recognised the improvements that have been made including lower caseloads, changing culture overall, good morale, clear vision and approach by managers, fewer number of children supported by child protection plans. Also set out clear actions to take improvement forward including improving quality of practice, particularly in our assessment work, focusing further on children and SMART actions in assessment and plans. These are incorporated into our overall improvement plan. It was good to hear that they were surprised at how much change had been achieved since they visited last November.

Half Term; The provisional autumn census figure for children eligible for free school meals in Herefordshire primary and secondary schools is c.3200. There appears to be an increase of over 25% from the figure from last year's October census. Figures are being checked.

The council has supported and enabled a range of local food offers for families and this has been promoted over last week and the weekend through social media and also via the WISH website www.wisherefordshire.org/halfterm and the WISH Facebook page (over 100 shares)

<https://www.wisherefordshire.org/halfterm>

There is a range of information on there, organised by area.

In addition we are using the food grant received to support The Living Room for those with free school meals and to contact them directly for this support.

Telephone: 01432381838 Email: team@ethos.uk.com Facebook: @thelivingroomhereford

We have been sharing this message on the council's Facebook and Twitter accounts and have reached over 42,000 people with over 200 shares.

Further offers of support are coming forward, many being directly provided rather than through the council. There is fantastic support being offered locally from communities and businesses and this also makes use of our Talk Community approach.

Some schools have already issued vouchers for free school meals, and the council will reimburse schools the cost of free schools meals that they provide over the October half term for children eligible. This offer is for local authority and academy schools.

We are also setting out what will be done over the Christmas period too, linking directly with the Talk Community work.

Signs of Safety; Throughout November 160 staff within Children & Families will undertake mandatory Signs of Safety training over 5 half day sessions. We have an all staff and partners event on the 12th November to launch and celebrate progress made with our exciting work around Signs of Safety as our single practice approach. It will also highlight our implementation plans including a baseline survey of children and families receiving our services so we can evaluate progress over time.

Tackling Child Exploitation; We have been successful in our bid to get support from the Children's Society for our multi agency approach to Tackle Child Exploitation. We are now on the national programme and were one of six local authorities successful in this round of bidding. We received very positive feedback on our application.

Safeguarding Children and Young People in Herefordshire Partnership; A multi-agency summit was held during September, focusing on understanding risks for children, how these can be viewed and interpreted. There were some excellent speakers and breakout sessions, all held virtually. The

partnership plays an important part in Herefordshire's collective approach to safeguarding children. It was relaunched last September and is in the process of re-establishing a clear programme of work, particularly focused on neglect, child exploitation, promoting the right help at the right time for children and families and providing a clear framework to understand the needs and risks to children.

Adoption Briefing November 24th; All members are invited to attend a briefing on the practice and process leading to adoption, presented by Liz Elgar, Assistant Director Safeguarding and Family Support, and Tess Burgess and Kim Gaffey, Senior Solicitors. This will take place at 2pm via Zoom.

Finance and corporate services – Cllr Liz Harvey

Equality Policy; A new 3-year Equality Policy has now been published. Within it, we list our updated equality objectives, which are:

1. Address social issues that impact on equality
2. Promote our values and acceptable standards of behaviour
3. Make fair and equitable decisions
4. Recruit fairly and support our workforce
5. Make our services accessible
6. Provide tailored support

The policy is designed to demonstrate our compliance with the Equality Act 2010. It makes reference to the inequalities highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and declares our solidarity with people who are protesting against racism.

For the first time, the Equality Policy incorporates a reference to the council's Armed Forces Covenant. Within this document we have committed to identifying the armed forces as a distinct group, paying due regard to their needs in education, housing, and when recruiting, and routinely asking customers whether they are a member of this community.

Accompanying the Equality Policy is an Appendix with background statistics and information, and an Easy Read version of the policy will be on-line very soon.

The policy is reviewed annually, so if there is anything relating to your service area that you would like to add or update, or if you have any ideas for how we can make our organisation a more inclusive one, please contact Harriet Yellin on x0216 (hyellin@herefordshire.gov.uk).

Member development and training; I want to respond proactively to the feedback we have had from a number of fellow members, and also the Member Development and Re-thinking Governance working groups, that members are keen to receive ongoing training and development opportunities. I have asked that democratic services plan a further round of the [mandatory and induction training](#) that members received shortly after their election in May 2019. As members will recall, the full list of training made available to us following the election was quite extensive and I am sure members will wish to specify which training you find helpful for democratic services to prioritise and deliver over the coming months. Also – there have been a number of [member development sessions](#) over the last eighteen months attended by members. If members would like any of these sessions repeated/updated please contact GovernanceSupportTeam@herefordshire.gov.uk to identify which of the training sessions you would like prioritised.

Health and adult wellbeing – Cllr Pauline Crockett

Hillside Care Centre – CQC inspection; Last week Hillside Care Centre opened its doors to the Care Quality Commission inspection team. The inspection went well and it has been confirmed that Hillside meets all required standards to be used as a designated setting to receive residents recovering from Covid-19. This is a very important development for both the service and for the residents of Herefordshire as we enter the winter period and phase 2 of Covid-19 pandemic.

Discharge to Assess (D2A); There has been overall approval by system partners of the Council's application for additional discharge to assess funding. The funding will be utilised to put in place additional resources including an increase in D2A beds and additional staffing for the Home First service alongside additional staff to support the flow of patients through the discharge process to home or to a care setting.

This approval has come at the time that we can see emerging increased discharge pressures related to the impact of a resurgence of Covid-19 alongside the NHS having to reintroduce elective care procedures and manage wider general winter issues. Operational partners are working closely together to ensure we have a safe and resilient discharge plan for Herefordshire patients.

Talk Community support with free school meals; Talk Community has worked in partnership with community organisation The Living Room to fund essential food supplies and lunches to families who receive free school meals during the October half term. The food supplies are available for collection directly from The Living Room or they can be delivered across the county for those not able to collect. Orders can be placed all week with the facility opened Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am-3pm.

WISH is also the central local directory that has all the communities and businesses providing free food during this time. WISH has had over 100 shares and the council social media has received over 200 shares and reached in excess of 42,000 people. A working group will be established to scope the support via Talk Community for Christmas.

Talk Community Hubs; Two new Talk Community hubs have been recently launched offering increased support to local communities. The first is ran by the Ross-on-Wye Community Development Trust via Ross Good Neighbours scheme and ran from the Hinton Community Centre.

The Talk Community team continue to work with communities across the county to develop further hubs. More Hubs will be coming on line in November including:

- Hope Centre – Bromyard
- Challenge Church – Hereford
- Putson Baptist Church – Hereford
- C.A.R.E. – Pontrilas
- Wellington
- Yarpole

Talk Community Hillside Kitchen; The Talk Community outreach kitchen based at Hillside Care Centre was launched on Thursday 15th October. Working with Cllr Paul Rone and local volunteers, the kitchen is now providing nutritious, value for money hot takeaway food for the local community on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. The delicious Sunday roast is proving to be a particular favourite for the Red Hill community.

Talk Community Debt Advice Survey; A debt advice survey has been published for communities and organisations to complete to understand the debt advice and services available across the county, this will identify gaps for us to consider to support those in need during these difficult times. <https://surveys.herefordshire.gov.uk/debt-advice-services-in-herefordshire/>
Closing date 11th November

Wednesday Wave; The Talk Community Wednesday Wave is on track to launch next Wednesday 4th November. Malbrook Primary School and Hillside are set to have a virtual video call where they will be able to wave, and the children will also sing for the residents. This is then set to continue weekly up to Christmas, and our ambition is to roll this out further across schools and care homes in Herefordshire.

Infrastructure and transport – Cllr John Harrington

Fownhope; The design development of the works to repair the failed retaining wall on the B4224 at Fownhope have been completed and Alun Griffiths Contractors Ltd have been appointed through BBLP to deliver the works. The repair includes soil nailing to support the ground behind the retaining

wall and then the reconstruction of the wall itself. The advance works to divert BT cables have been completed and the main repair works will begin on 2nd November. The first activity will be to install propping to adjoining sections of wall, after which the ground will be cut back at the failed section, soil nailing will then be completed. The wall will then be reconstructed and the carriageway reinstated. The programme of works runs into early 2021, with the road to be reopened in February 2021. Access for pedestrians on the B4224 through the works will be limited due to the scale of works and size of machinery operating. Some escorted access in the morning and afternoon will be allowed for the 'school run', the timing of these is based on results of a pedestrian survey undertaken during the advance works. The adjoining public right of way is open, vegetation on this route has been cut back and older stiles replaced with new gates to secure free access for pedestrians around the works throughout the day.

Hereford Transport Strategy Review; Whilst it was planned for the review to be reported to and considered by the General Scrutiny Committee during October more time was allowed for report finalisation and the review will now be considered by Scrutiny in November with papers due to be published 30 October. Cabinet was keen that additional time was taken to enable a critical friend review of the technical report to inform final revisions. Following consideration by Scrutiny the review is now due to be considered by cabinet 3 December.

Riparian responsibilities; HC legal, HC Officers and BBLP are reviewing the process and associated noticing required to solve issues and if necessary serve notice to landowners who are not willing to undertake maintenance on their land they are required to do. This current review is focussed on drainage, and enforcement under the land drainage act, if there is clear need for intervention.

BBLP will work with landowners to advise and assist landowners where possible in the execution of their riparian responsibilities, if necessary intervention will follow to resolve any issue.

BBLP have successfully trialled a rotary ditch machine, which will drive efficiency and productivity in the clearance and maintenance of ditches.

Housing, regulatory services and community safety – Cllr Ange Tyler

October has been another challenging month for Officers and as always I am hugely thankful that they continue to maintain their level of service and dealing with Covid pressures for the County. I do hope Officers took the opportunity to take some well needed annual leave during half term as we lead up to Christmas delivering some key priorities within my portfolio for the County Plan Information has been provided from Regulatory Services and Strategic Housing.

Strategic Housing; As part of the 'Everyone In' initiative, nationally approximately 15,000 people who were sleeping rough, in unsafe communal settings or at imminent risk of rough sleeping have been placed into emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) made available the financial resources needed to support local authorities and their partners to prevent these people from returning to the streets. Herefordshire Council submitted a significant bid for the funding and have been awarded a package of revenue and capital funding. The Housing Solutions team will administer the revenue funding to cover the ongoing cost of temporary accommodation and Bed & Breakfast and provide continuing support for the homelessness. Strategic Housing will administer the capital grant funding to provide permanent housing solutions such as purchasing a number of one bed self-contained properties from the open market.

Environmental Health and Trading Standards; Officers from Environmental Health and Trading Standards (including licensing) continue to undertake joint patrols with the police to ensure public protection and compliance with the new Covid regulations and guidance. Currently, the focus is on the night time economy when unannounced checks are being made on both Friday and Saturday nights. In achieving this, the officers are taking a proportionate yet firm approach in initially advising business on compliance, then revisiting and only issuing fixed penalty notices if they remain non-compliant. This approach gives a balance in providing not just a Covid safe environment but also encouraging the economy within Herefordshire to move forward. The officers have noted that there is good overall compliance and that businesses are acting on the advice being given.

Whilst all this Covid regulation is being carried out, our regulatory officers continue as best as they can to fulfil their residual statutory duties to protect our residents by supporting legitimate business and protecting the environment within Herefordshire. This includes tackling rogue traders, fly tipping, noise, bonfires, housing safety, food safety, animal welfare, anti-social behaviour and unlicensed businesses.

Taxi Licensing; We are not undertaking anything different for taxi licensing, other than we facilitated the police's letter drop to the drivers, asking for them to inform us of any Covid non-compliant gatherings and parties. However, the Telegraph reported on that unfavourably, as some drivers alleged it was too 'Big Brother' of the police to use the council – we checked with Anthony Sawyer beforehand and we were entitled to share this driver contact data with the police.

Commissioning, procurement and assets – Cllr Gemma Davies

Waste; The waste task and finish group have given their final report to scrutiny and I am now working through the recommendations with the team. We are due to start consultation on the two options for waste collection in December and we have a comms team working on making sure it is as inclusive and far reaching as possible. A decision is due in the next few weeks regarding the resources required within the team to deal with the upcoming changes to both the disposal and collection contracts.

The booking systems have been a great success and the team has received a number of compliments from residents across the county. As a result of this preparation we made the decision to keep all sites open as per their current hours with the booking system in place. We are still reinforcing those messages of maintaining social distance from other users and I have asked that the communications recommend that face masks are worn on site. I am, sure all of our residents will be happy that the service will continue during this one month long (fingers crossed) lockdown.

Contracts; You may have read that there was a review into the BBLP contract and specifically how we, as a council, are able to manage this. The report from Price Cooper Waterhouse identified a number of issues that require swift action. As such Andrew Lovegrove, Claire Ward and Richard Ball are working on an action plan to identify key actions and delivery dates for the changes necessary within the contract. I am expecting this within the next few weeks so hopefully I will be able to report back in the next newsletter.

Property; You will all have heard about the work required on the Shirehall and especially about the ceiling collapse in court room 2. In summary progress is as follows:

Current progress.

Stage 1 – temporary emergency works:-

Please refer to site inspection report no 1.

- BBLP have been on site for 2 weeks and progress is good. (A further site inspection report will be produced for the end of this week)
- Conservation continue to assist in providing a watching brief.
- Removal of debris in court room 1 has commenced.
- Subsequent to the attached report scaffolding work to support the lower ceiling from collapsing has been completed.
- A site visit with both conservation and the Structural engineer is planned for Friday 16th October to review the next steps.

Next steps will include for:-

- Review the current structure above as far as practicably possible.
- Devise a safe method of removal of debris / insulation etc. to expose trusses, and reduce load on the upper ceiling.
- Once visible a further site inspection will be undertaken.
- Design work will be required to ensure we have a conservation approved solution to fix any cracked trusses.

Stage 2 - Additional surveys.

A mini tender (off a framework) to be undertaken in November to appoint a further structural engineer, building surveyor and a separate heritage expert. This work has to follow on from the current emergency works to allow full and safe access. Additional surveys are planned to follow on in December. Reports in January.

Procurement; I am excited that a decision is due in the next couple of weeks to introduce a Herefordshire Council social value statement along with key pledges based around our County plan. This will be the first stage of introducing progressive procurement into the council's work. A sneak preview of the social value statement is: *'The positive impact on local people & communities, the local economy, and the environment, that we can create by the way we spend public money to buy goods and services'*. The area of social value and progressive procurement differs from local authority and as such I have asked the team to get a member's briefing together so that we can go through the key pledges and get your feedback about ways in which we can embed this in all of the work that we do. The full report is due back shortly from Social Value Business and I will, of course, send it out to you.

Cultural services; Some good and bad news I'm afraid. The bad news is that, as per Government guidance, both our museums and archives service have to close during lockdown. The good news however is that libraries can remain operating the way that they are currently i.e. click and collect service. A number of you have contacted me to ask if the green bags will still be sold and I can confirm that they will. We are still waiving overdue fines and have taken the restrictions off the amount of loans you can take out during this period. I am working hard to try and find a solution for Bromyard and hope to have an option available for them soon.

Environment, economy and skills – Cllr Ellie Chowns

Covid 19 business grants – this is hot off the press, we have just been notified of the financial allocation for Herefordshire and officers are working their socks off to set up a grant scheme again. My priority is to get this funding out to the businesses who need it as quickly as possible.

Visitor economy marketing and PR campaign – this has been going really well and we've had brilliant coverage in many national media outlets: Sunday Times, the Guardian, many online outlets – and we have been shortlisted in Conde Nast's 10 best places to visit in the UK in 2021! <https://www.cntraveller.com/gallery/places-to-visit-uk>. Work's now starting on establishing a Destination BID to take forward the visitor economy work after the end of the LEP grant.

Kickstart placement scheme for 16-24 years olds – we've submitted an application to this scheme for placements on behalf of the council, Hoople, and a group of local businesses too.

Hereford Stronger Towns Board – is making good progress on developing the Town Investment Plan – consultants have been gathering info and suggestions from many dozens of stakeholders. There is now a website for the project <https://strongerhereford.co.uk/> and a survey for people to have their say: <https://strongerhereford.co.uk/have-your-say/> - please spread the word. Deadline for preparing the Plan is end Jan 2021.

Market Town Economic Development Investment Plans work is also progressing well. Very useful site visits have been done in 3 of the 5 (the other 2 have had to be rescheduled due to lockdown) and the consultants are pulling together some very helpful fine-grained economic data to support the plans. The process is led by the Town Councils, with consultancy support provided by HC, so if you would like to get involved in the process in your local market town please do let your Town Council know. The aim is to get the plans developed by late Spring 2021.

Council carbon reduction - work continues apace. I spoke at a great Herefordshire Schools Zero Carbon conference in mid-Oct and it was really good to see the enthusiasm of the kids (and teachers!) who are making plans for carbon reduction in their own schools. I'm also pleased that as a council we're now developing new minimum energy efficiency standards for council buildings (both existing and new-build) to help us achieve our zero carbon goals. I'm looking forward to the publication of the cross-party Climate Change Task and Finish Group's report at the end of this month, and am keen to work with interested councillors of all political stripes to push forward work to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies.

Green Homes Grants - implementation is starting on the £1m scheme for which we have recently received funding, to support energy efficiency works in homes of people in fuel poverty.

Countywide climate and ecology action plan - Next week will see the first of a series of sector-specific stakeholder meetings on this, starting with buildings. A website and wider public consultation will follow shortly (although, given the upcoming public consultations on waste and on the budget, we will probably aim for early 2021 for the main public consultation on the countywide climate and ecology action plan). The current steering group will come to the end of its term at the end of this year and we are currently consulting on setting up a new representative and accountable 'Stewardship Board' to oversee this work going forward – learning from many examples at other local authorities around the country.

Fastershire – as we enter the second lockdown we're all reminded again of the importance of digital infrastructure. We are now up to 92.1% superfast coverage, and will be at 94% v soon (vs UK 96.5%) and we have much better Full Fibre coverage than the UK average - Herefordshire 27% vs UK 17%. We're now moving on to Stage 5 grants to try to reach the hardest-to-reach areas. I'm also very conscious that even when the infrastructure is available, some households don't or can't use it – so we're actively looking for more ways to address 'digital inclusion'.

I'm also really pleased that Zzoomm (yes, they named themselves that before we all started using the other Zoom!) have announced they will be installing 'blisteringly fast' Full Fibre connections to every household in Hereford city, starting early next year:
<https://www.herefordtimes.com/news/18846992.fastest-broadband-uk-way-28-000-hereford-homes/>.
Meanwhile, the Fastershire team are cracking on with getting people connected in the places where the market won't do it alone. Just as an example - this morning I received an email from someone in the Golden Valley about their connection. It turns out that their 'cabinet' area is physically larger than Hereford, but serves only 414 households vs 28,000 in Hereford! This just highlights the challenges we face with infrastructure development in such a rural county. But on the plus side, it's a beautiful place to live!