

## **Chief Executive's Announcements – 11 October 2019**

- 'Your Voice Matters', our children in care council supported by our staff, held an enjoyable and successful celebration event for children and carers on 7 September 2019; a number of councillors attended too to share in the celebrations.
- Our member of staff, Debbie Barnett has been shortlisted in the category of Individual Mentor Award – Social Work in the 2019 Mentor Awards run by Worcester University. The event is an opportunity to celebrate and recognise the achievements of mentors and Practice Educators for social workers.
- We have two senior managers joining us this month, Ceri Morgan, assistant director education, development and skills; and Maia Whitelegg, joining us as our principal social worker.
- We have just launched a dedicated recruitment internet site to attract permanent children's social workers as part of our drive to recruit permanent staff.
- In September, we welcomed a peer review team to assess the work of the Adults and Communities directorate. The review reported positively on progress and direction of travel, and outlined helpful points for continued progress.
- Officers from Herefordshire Council's Trading Standards' Serious Organised Crime Team, West Mercia Police and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service worked in partnership to carry out a targeted operation at two retail premises in Hereford to seize illegal tobacco. This continued good work on regulating and supporting quality business in Herefordshire is vital as the sale of illegal tobacco from such premises seriously damages honest local businesses.
- Scaffolding that surrounded historic buildings in High Town Hereford, damaged by fire in October 2010 was removed in September 2019. The redeveloped site houses both retail units and luxury apartments and it's great to see the city centre being redeveloped at a time when many town centres are facing significant challenges.
- On 6 September Government announced the 100 towns eligible for support from Town Deals, including up to £25m for Hereford. 'Town Deals will improve connectivity, provide vital social and cultural infrastructure and boost growth – with communities having a say on how the money is spent'. Government will produce a prospectus to guide where the funds can be used and timescales for availability.
- On 14 September Government announced that Leominster had been successful in our application for High Street Heritage Action Zone funding, with £2m. There are over 200 designated heritage assets in the centre of Leominster. Historic England will provide advice on the Programme Design which could include support for renovations, improvements to public realm, enhanced services to attract visitors such as Wi-Fi and electric vehicle charging points.
- The council has secured a further £3m of European Regional Development Fund to deliver for a further three years the Marches Building Investment Grant and a new Marches Small Equipment Grant. The funding will provide capital grants to facilitate construction of new commercial premises and reconfiguration, extension, renovation of existing business premises. It will also provide small grants for equipment, providing critical support to enable business growth.
- The official opening and tour of the new Straight Mile Walking and Cycling route and new flagship Park and Choose site took place at Skylon Park on 3 October as part of a Sustainability Showcase. Attendees were also able to learn about renewable energy and efficiency schemes, the electric vehicle charging network, as well as have a free try-out of Beryl Bikes. It was exciting to be able to showcase to local businesses options for sustainable transport which can help us to meet our ambitions of minimising the council's impact on the environment.
- Scaffolding at Hereford Town Hall was taken down in July 2019 following the completion of remedial works to the façade. It's great to see this iconic building returned to its former glory.

- Hereford Museum and Art Gallery hosts a regularly changing variety of high quality temporary exhibitions and is currently presenting 'Common Ground: A journey into Herefordshire' by local artist Richard Gilbert. This free exhibition was launched as part of Herefordshire Art Week and runs until 23 November 2019.
- Herefordshire Council has signed up to the national digital declaration, which aims to affirm collective ambition between local public services and national government in designing services that best meet the needs of citizens, and which challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need. This will support work to protect citizen's privacy, and deliver better value for money.
- As part of the Modern Slavery Action 2015, the council has published an annual statement on its activities to use its powers, influence and responsibilities to prevent and act against modern slavery. To endorse this statement the cabinet are making the commitments which will be published on-line and promoted to raise awareness of the impacts of modern slavery and how to spot signs and report it if suspected crime is taking place.
- The corporate plan consultation has started with the Parish Summit on the 20<sup>th</sup> September – with around 90 attendees. A series of events in different parts of the county are scheduled, supported by on line service and targeted focus groups. These findings will then feed into more formal budget consultation in November 2018. The intention is to reach a wide range of people with face to face consultation in the first instance to increase interest and engagement.
- Leominster is to benefit from full-fibre broadband as part of grant from the Fastershire project. Wholesale broadband provider, Full Fibre Limited, have built a new Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) network serving businesses on Leominster Enterprise Park. Full Fibre have been funded to do this work by a Fastershire grant with money from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).
- The council's employee opinion survey is currently live and staff have until 18 October to give their views about the direction of the council and what it's like to work here. The results will be published in January.
- The council has been planning for the EU exit since August 2018 and as we move forward we will remain fully engaged with the Local Resilience Forum and government departments. The council is actively signposting Herefordshire residents and businesses to the [www.gov.uk/brexit](http://www.gov.uk/brexit) website where the most up-to-date and accurate information is available.
- As part of its continuing focus on maintaining progress, the council will welcome back in October the review team who carried out last year's Corporate Peer Challenge, for a follow-up visit.