

**Chief Executive's announcements
Full Council 11 February 2022**

As all Plan B restrictions have now been lifted by government, we continue to see high case numbers across the community and support outbreaks within schools. We encourage everyone to wear masks as a matter of personal choice, to help limit the spread of Covid. Despite the national easing of restrictions, we must remember that Covid is still present. There was a stark reminder to me this month when I visited our 'Discharge to Assess' team, who are still working in full PPE on a daily basis and very much on the 'front line'. For the time being, we're asking staff to continue working from home where possible. All council meetings are being held in-person using Covid-secure measures and will be live-streamed to make them as accessible as possible.

Every day across our county, families are in crisis and children need our support. Our focus on improvements to Children's Services remains and we're supporting our staff in a range of ways to help them to do their job. This includes reducing workloads, improving the reporting systems and providing the right management, leadership and support. We're also working hard to attract and recruit new social workers.

We want to ensure Herefordshire is a great place for families to grow and thrive and that our children and young people get a great start in life. To help us achieve this we really need the views of children, young people and families living in our communities. We'll be reaching out to the local community through the Talk Community partnership as part of the 'Let's Talk- Children and Families' campaign. This will help us understand what's working well and what would help make Herefordshire an even better place for families to live. In addition to the survey, we will be running a series of engagement events in February Half Term. More information is available on the [Talk Community](#) website.

Visitors to Hereford will soon notice a range of improvements to enhance the city - thanks to an investment of £6million over the next two years. This will include better facilities for cyclists, measures to improve air quality and replacement paving. The investment, funded jointly by the council and Marches LEP, comes following a difficult period for local traders due to government Covid restrictions. It aims to encourage people to spend more time in the city when they visit, helping to boost the local economy.

It's rewarding to see that Herefordshire's Higher Education offering [NMITE](#) has been recognised for its ingenuity and creativity with the government's Levelling Up paper. Higher Education institutions are vital to local communities for education, economic investment and employment. We look forward to welcoming many more students to Herefordshire and welcome the boost it brings for our county.

Finally, there is a wide programme of work underway to address the complex issue of phosphates in our rivers, the impact this has on our environment and the knock-on effect on economic development. This work is going on at a national, regional and local level and includes both policy and practical actions. The only way we can be effective is if all local and national agencies work together, and if we work together with our neighbouring counties. We know a number of councils have raised concerns about phosphate and nitrate pollution impacting their areas and want to know how best they can work with government. We are leading the way and working with the Local Government Association to help promote the issue and galvanise support.

Thank you for your support.