

Chairman of Council report – Council Meeting

13 October 2023



The 6th September marked the 30th anniversary of the fire at Sun Valley on Grandstand Road, Hereford where tragically two local firefighters lost their lives.

At its height the fire had 130 firefighters in attendance using 23 pumping appliances over a two hectare site. The fire started in the defrosting unit and the insulation panels in the ceiling disguised the spread of flames and smoke which went unnoticed resulting in the collapse of a ceiling.

Firefighters John Davies aged 34, who was a retained firefighter from Leominster but worked in Hereford so was part of the call out, and David Morris aged 35, a full time firefighter for 11 years in Hereford were tragically lost when the ceiling collapsed onto them.

Exactly 30 years on from the original call out the Hereford Fire Station crew held a parade at the St Owen St station. That afternoon I joined with members of their families, friends, former firefighters and the Hereford & Worcester Chief Fire Officer at their memorial in the Cathedral's Lady Arbour gardens for a short commemoration event. The incident remains one of the darkest days in our County since the war.



Last month I was part of the team who organised the Rural Services Network Annual National Rural Conference - online with seven sessions over four days. Issues addressed were rural housing, transport, net zero, health care, finance, economy and connectivity.

We have also published our 'Road map for Rural' aimed at the political parties to provide them with a better understanding of our issues to influence their manifestos. I know several members and officers joined many of sessions.

I was delighted to attend a special concert at the Courtyard Theatre to mark the 25th anniversary of its opening. The success of the Courtyard is a testament to the huge

dedication and work of artistic groups, supporters and volunteers who ensure we retain this cultural jewel in our County.

I shall not be holding a County civic service this year but instead will hold a reception at plough lane which will also mark the 25th anniversary of the creation of Herefordshire Council in 1998.

The vice Chair and myself have attended various events including Citizenship ceremonies, graduation events, Battle of Britain service with the Air cadets, Ledbury civic service, NMITE, and a meeting with the county mayors.