

Chairman of Council report – Council Meeting

7 March 2025

The Crown Court returns to Hereford

I was invited on a tour of the new Crown Court in Hereford which opened last week and will see in the first week of March the first jury trials taking place in Herefordshire for several years since the closure of the Shirehall building.

The new court has been created out of two of the old Magistrates Courts with the installation of a jury box and repositioning of the secure dock, with direct access to the cells, and using the existing bench platform with the second court turned into the jury room.

The Justice Centre which is just off the Commercial Road junction in Bath Street was built and opened in 2001 with originally four Magistrates Courts. Today only two courts remain for Adult, Family and Youth Courts due to the apparent decline in crime and the removal of remand hearings from Herefordshire. Conversions of other spaces at the centre has created two further smaller courts for tribunals and district judges hearings.



While the lay out of the courts remain very traditional the use of modern technology has changed the operational aspects of proceedings. TV Screens can be used to show evidence, CCTV, underage witnesses, and in non-trial cases defendants on remand

The new secure dock and folding screen at the new Crown Court



The judges' bench at the new Crown Court

can appear from their prison rather than be transported to court. In the picture next to the dock you can see a folding screen which is used to prevent the defendant seeing a witness when giving their evidence if deemed appropriate. Adult and Crown Courts are public but there is understandably limited space - Family and Youth Courts are not open to the public.

It was important to see the return of the Crown Court to Hereford to ensure that local justice at that level is re-established and the backlog of cases can be tackled.

Last week I was at the Herefordshire Tourism awards celebrating the best of our County's destination business and next week I will be attending the awarding of the Kings Award for voluntary service to the Hub at St. Peters Peterchurch.

Can I remind members of my reception on the 26th March at Plough Lane, and also to ensure communities are aware of commemorations for 80th anniversary for VE day on 8th May and VE day on 15th August.

Cllr Roger Phillips JP