

July 2025 – Ward report – Sutton Walls

I hope you all surviving the heat and being sensible in this exceptional hot weather we are experiencing.



The last week of June is an opportunity for us all to mark Armed Forces week, our Council Chairman had the honour of speaking at the raising of the flag ceremony in Hereford Hightown together with civic dignitaries. I was delighted to attend.

It is estimated that nearly a quarter of all households in the county have military connections and Herefordshire schools and colleges educate over 10,000

“military children”. We have of course an important active regiment in the county and are home to many thousands of veterans. The Council particularly promotes the Herefordshire Veterans Support centre in Widemarsh Street to support veterans and their families, and promotes Employers, Charities and businesses to become members of the Armed Forces Covenant, again to support veterans in employment.

Above : Herefordshire’s Lord Lieutenant Edward Harley, the High Sheriff and the Chairman at the raising of the flag in Hereford Hightown.



Hereford and Worcester Chambers of Commerce and the Three Counties Show saw

acknowledgement of successful local businesses. The CXCS team – pictured left– who are based at Crump Oak Farm near Lyonshall provide a valuable support service to Farmers and Agri businesses on compliance with regulations; and were runners up in leading Employer of the year.

At the Royal Three Counties Show in Malvern long service ceremony six employees of Corbett Farms received awards for long service totalling over 229 years of employment. Kim Williams- a stalwart of Shobdon Football club - received his award for 48 years !

Congratulations also to Jaques Int Ltd based in Shobdon for receiving three nominations in the RIDBA Awards 2025. The awards celebrate excellent in design and construction in commercial, farm and industrial buildings. Run by brothers Chris and Stephen Jaques the family business has been running for over 40 years and design bespoke non residential buildings and are one of our valued employers in the ward.

Last year with support from the previous government Herefordshire Council purchased the Buttercross building complex in Leominster – which includes the library and the old site of Barclay`s bank. The Council intends to develop part of the building into a business hub and workspaces for small enterprises and the self-employed to have base units and hiring facilities to support business growth. Work will begin in a few months` time and should be completed for March 2026.



Herefordshire`s Call for sites for houses

Despite Herefordshire Council`s objections the Government is persisting with its increased housing target on our County of 27,260 new dwellings in the next 20 years. A rate on average of over 1,350 per year which we have never ever achieved in the County, where we currently have 82,000 homes for our population of 190,000 people. We have made the case of lack of transport and public services infrastructure or capacity, and where the people are coming from with the skills to build all these properties.

However, the Council, as the planning authority, must begin again a new core strategy identifying potential sites and

as a result a call for sites is being issued to landowners in Herefordshire. In the first instant potential for significant increases in our City and Market towns will be examined.

I must however stress that any new sites must reflect the government`s policy of sustainable locations and as such many of our parishes will be classified as open countryside with planning strictly limited. The most obvious potential sites will be around our main village settlements. Landowners will need to assess the sustainability and deliverability of the sites, consider the constraints and how to overcome them.

The problem will not just be building dwellings but dealing with the lack of affordable housing and housing an ageing population. We also need to continue to address the phosphate issue in the Lugg catchment. We will encourage parish councils to start a new round of Neighbourhood plans to influence future local development; however this government indicates it will not financially support this round of Neighbourhood plans.

Lastly – some financial background – a bit dry, but I hope will interest some of you:

The budget that we inherited in May 2023 had a forecast overspend of £13.8M at Q2. Through good governance and tight controls, we reduced that overspend down to £8.7M by the end of the 2023/24 financial year. That was then funded, by using various reserves last year.

In FY24/25 we had planned savings of £19.5M, as highlighted at cabinet last week, with 56% delivered and 44% or £8.6M yet to be delivered this year. We were very transparent throughout the year that we intended to use the budget resilience reserve (that we created by transferring £11m from the Business Rates reserve) to assist those demand led directorates such as Community and wellbeing directorate with unplanned and unexpected demand pressures.

This is exactly what we did, but with other directorates coming under budget, we were able to deliver an overall underspend on last year's budget of £0.5M.

In summary we, acted throughout the year to consider the impact on reserves of overspend and identified a proactive plan, rather than having to react and identify sources at the end of the year. Consequently the Council finances are back on course and it is in a strong financial position.