

## June 2026 – Ward Report – Sutton Walls

We all know our highways are critical to local authorities and are a huge national issue particularly for rural councils. Beginning today – 1<sup>st</sup> June - Herefordshire Council has a new highway contractor M Group, replacing Balfour, and a new contract which more strongly defines a separation between commissioner of work – the council and its contractor who will deliver – M Group.

We have endured record temperatures for May which saw the recent resurfacing work on A44 at Penrhos moved to a night closure from 7 am -5 am as it was too hot to lay tarmac and expect a workforce to work in such temperatures. As we move into summer this month there is a long list of local shows, fetes, community and social events which need our support along with our local businesses. Whether your cheering on England or your friends and family lets ensure whatever else is going on the world on our doorsteps life is safe and enjoyable. Lets value what we have and appreciate that it comes together by people giving of their time.

The Council recently received its report from the Care Quality Commission ( CQC) which identifies Improvement needed on waiting times for Care Act, financial and Occupational Therapy assessments, delays in accessing some services, particularly equipment and adaptations to homes, and consistent support for unpaid carers.

However safeguarding was rated as Good, with strong quality assurance of care provision, including 77% of home care and 79% of residential providers rated as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’.

The CQC were also positive about the dedicated, professional and compassionate staff who understand local communities and support people to maintain independence, strong partnership working across health, care and community and voluntary sectors, and effective prevention and early support. Adults and Children`s care makes up two thirds of Herefordshire Council`s 234 million budget so we need to ensure it is delivering as positively as possible.

Adult Social Care is a statutory service, making a positive difference to people who need extra support and help across Herefordshire, some with life long disabilities. The service supported more than 6,000 adults in 2025, including commissioning care at home or in specialist accommodation for almost 2,900 people. Innovative prevention approaches mean people can live well and as independently as possible, with choice and control over their care. This includes new technology, and physical improvements and adaptations, to more than 4,100 homes annually.

I am pleased to report that Herefordshire Council have delivered a balanced budget for year end of 2025/26, despite significant funding and demand pressures. The final outturn report, presented to Cabinet on 21 May, confirms that the council ended the year with income and expenditure aligned, reflecting strong financial management and the sustained efforts of services to control spending. That included delivery of £13.2 million in savings while actively managing cost pressures, most notably in adult social care, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), home-to-school transport and temporary accommodation. This is great credit to our finance team at the council and the Cabinet Member Cllr Peter Stoddard particularly when you considered we have less population than some of our neighbours.



The current Chief Executive of the Council Paul Walker retires this month after over 40 years in public service arriving in Herefordshire in 2021. He has led the council through various challenges and leaves the council a better place than when he came.

He will be succeeded by Paul Satoor who previously served as Chief Executive of Wirral Council from 2019 to October 2025. A graduate of the University of Wolverhampton, he built his expertise in human resources, organisational development and change through senior roles spanning both the public and private sectors. In June 2013, he joined the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) as Director of Organisational Development and HR (later deputy chief executive).

His salary is £174,000 per annum, which is one of the lowest amongst first tier English councils, and his appointment, which was the second attempt of recruitment, was supported by all the political group leaders and ratified by the full council of elected members.



During the Hay festival all the local authorities of the Wye catchment area signed a joint agreement on the rights of the river wye. The event took place at the Warren at Hay which is a public area adjoining the river and is probably one of the best public accesses to the river from Plynlimon to the Severn.

The agreement by the public authorities which included Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Powys, and Forest of Dean is to protect the environment and water quality of the river. While there is concern about the state of the river it is important to ensure that any campaign seeks to genuinely engage and work with all influential sectors for river betterment.

As the event was taking place many people went by on canoes and there were over 50 adults and children swimming in the river reminding us that the Wye still is a great asset.

Image, Deputy Leader of Herefordshire Council Elissa Swindlehurst signs the Charter for the River Wye.

## **Goodbye Balfour Beatty - Hello M Group**



Following a procurement process Herefordshire has a new contract partner from the 1<sup>st</sup> June . M Group is a large UK infrastructure services company that specialises in maintaining and improving essential services such as highways, transport and utilities. It will act as the council's main delivery partner for the new public realm contract, carrying out practical work residents rely on every day, including road maintenance, drainage, street lighting, street cleansing, grass cutting and winter gritting, while operating under a new model where the council retains day-to-day control and commissions work at pre-agreed, transparent rates.

This contract is important because it marks a major shift away from the previous fully outsourced approach (with Balfour Beatty), giving the council greater control, flexibility and accountability over how services are delivered, improving value for money and ensuring that highly visible, day-to-day services that shape residents' experience of the county are delivered more efficiently, consistently and to a higher standard.

Category one potholes will remain with a 24 hour repair from notification deadline, the new Category 2 potholes have a 28 day repair deadline reduced from six weeks in the previous contract. M Group has also secured the contract to be Welsh Waters contractor in our area which hopefully can improve liaison between the council and Water company.

### **Scrunch and squeeze, more recycling please!**

That's the big message to Herefordshire residents as Herefordshire Council expands its kerbside recycling service to include foil and tubes, making it even easier to recycle at home.

Now, aluminum foil, foil trays, metal or foil-lined tubes (such as tomato purée tubes), and plastic tubes – including toothpaste and cosmetic tubes – can all be placed in household recycling.

The change makes it easier for residents to recycle common household items that may previously have been thrown away.

- Make sure items are clean and dry
- Squeeze out any remaining product from tube
- Leave lids and caps on tubes
- Put recycling loose in the bin, not in plastic bags
- Scrunch smaller pieces of foil into a ball to help processing

### **HEREFORDSHIRE`S MODERN UNIVERSITY**



The graduation ceremony of Herefordshire engineering university NMITE. (New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering) in the Cathedral.

The university championed by Jesse Norman MP recruited its first students in 2021 and has a modern and practical style to degree education. There are no lecture theatres, but it relies on hands-on, team-based problem solving in engineering and technology. Students work from 9am to 5pm in teams with no long holiday breaks completing degrees faster and entering the workforce earlier.

There is strong collaboration with local businesses with graduate positions and supporting product development. This year NMITE and the British Army announced an agreement to launch an undergraduate degree in autonomous systems (Drones). The university is growing with over 100 graduates starting this year and expansion in coming years. Herefordshire Council has supported the university which can help regenerate the local economy, address the UK`s skills gap and encourage more young people to study in Herefordshire.

As the graduates received their diplomas and we hear where they are working across UK companies, we are very proud that we have such a model of 21<sup>st</sup> century education and training in our county.