



Golden Valley North Ward Report – November 25

I met Peterchurch Fire Brigade on Blue lights (Second time this week at the farm entrance) this time because the Church fire alarm had gone off – fortunately no fire!
The first time, our local fire crew came to rescue a beef animal that become stranded in the river. Thank you to them and the boat crew from Hereford station for giving us such a great service.

I called at The Yew Tree pub sunday lunchtime, it was fully booked for lunch and full of local characters, so opportunity to find out what the Local Councillor can tell them about everything. So, straight off the press, we discussed The highway maintenance program, how it is funding and from where, the cost of it, how the roads are chosen for repair and even if last months worst road in the county has just been fixed, how there is always another “Worst road in the County” and even when the next and the next worst road is identified there is always another worst road to fix, and yes Lulham to Bridge sollars bridge is in the program for patching and surface dressing next year. Mustn’t forget Pentre Lane!

Action point to take away, don’t forget Pentre lane – remind myself that it is Dorstone Hill to most locals or the other way around, depends how long you have lived here!

In amongst this reference to the Budget and where do we find the money to fund everything, so a big debate about exactly that, the gist of which follows.

Funding comes from

- a) Government annual settlement to Local authorities – Our money through taxes
- b) Council tax (including Police and Fire precept) share of Business rates – Our money
- c) Various government funding through grants – Our money
- d) Income – from local services Planning, Car parks etc – Our money – your choice

As reported previously the government settlement for the next three years has a shortfall in that Rural authorities such as Herefordshire collects 40% less per resident from the overall pot than urban residents even though services cost more to deliver in rural areas.

The Council tax has a mandatory requirement to be balanced and set in February.

The increasing costs of Adult Wellbeing (To look after you and me, outside of the NHS) had pressure of additional £20 million this current year and another £20 million next year. This makes the current expected deficit for next year of the quoted £27 million before management actions.

Government grants have always been gratefully received if we have a successful bid for them. We nearly always have to match fund a percentage even if it is staff cost for implementation. This last week, as Cabinet member, I have said no to some grant because we can’t afford to receive it (just how ridiculous does that sound!)

And, Income, well we look to raise as much as we can because without it even more services are at risk.

I have no doubt that if you have got this far you will be shouting, cut costs – save money – stop spending.

Just for those of you that are real gluttons for financial punishment The Education budget (Revenue not Capital) for the County has a deficit of around £20million this current year that does not sit on the council balance sheet will inflate by similar amounts to expected figure of £80 million by 2028. This is government debt that we hold for government until they create a plan to fund the crisis in our schools.

Enjoy the newly laid tarmac as it might be the last for a while - action point – don’t forget Pentre lane and Lulham road.

So having got out of the pub, I can start on the stuff that has been happening.

I met with the Herefordshire taxi association this week with officers to discuss the operation of SEND Special Education Needs and Disabilities transport. This was focussed on ensuring the contracts are properly observed and who is allowed to operate within the contract and savings that we must make.

I attended a planning site visit this week for 2 applications in the ward and attended and spoke about them at the Planning committee meeting on Wednesday. The Cote at Dorstone for an extension to a barn conversion passed unanimously against officer recommendation and a farm building at Wellbrook in Peterchurch. This was also passed in line with officer recommendation. Both of these had been contentious and went to planning committee for decision.



I attended the groundbreaking for the new build Peterchurch Primary School last week and how excited the children and staff were to be part of this £10 million project. And yes, it is part of the Capital budget for Herefordshire Council, a project that I have been involved with right from the start even before the Community Hall moved across the road to its current site. This school would have cost £5 m originally – such is the impact of inflation and project blockers. The additional good news is the swimming pool will remain and be upgraded. Good to get good news from somewhere! This will be a great asset to the village and Golden Valley for the future.

Bus services.

This has caused me much angst over the last weeks, not least because of the road diversions caused by resurfacing from Dorstone to Vowchurch turn during October.

Embedding new timings and new contracts and getting permissions to allow busses to travel through the road works even though the road has been closed has not met well with some residents. My apologies to anyone who has been left stranded anywhere. The officers have responded as timely as possible to deal with individual issues.

November will see introduction of those using disabled bus passes to be able to ride busses at any time and not be confined to after 9.30am. This will greatly help disabled who are able to work and need public transport to get there.

Road closures coming up from Bredwardine towards Hay shortly. Pentre lane in November and a bit further afield, the A4112 from Weobley towards Dilwyn at Hurst lane is a major closure for a month because of a failed bridge culvert that involves full road closure for repair.

So many other things will have to wait, until next time.

Regards

Philip

Golden Valley North Ward Councillor

Cabinet member Infrastructure and transport