

## Report of Cllr. Elissa Swinglehurst March 2018

March has brought some serious weather which has tested the council's gritting and road clearing teams. I would like to thank all the contractors and farmers who pulled together to get the snow off the roads so people can get out and about; they have been absolute heroes, working in terrible conditions and at all hours.

This month has also brought a change of role for me at the Council. At the full council meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> March a new leader was appointed, he is Cllr. Jonathan Lester. Previously the cabinet member for Children's Wellbeing, Jonathan is both experienced and full of ideas. Relatively youthful he has worked in public service since he started out as the post boy in Herefordshire Council. I think it is great that someone who began sorting post is now leader of the Council. Anyway, as a result of this change, I have been asked to take on the role of cabinet member for Children's Wellbeing. It will be a very steep learning curve, including a whole new range of exciting acronyms, but I am determined to do my best with it and continue the good work done by Jonathan during his time in the post. Due to the workload and the necessity for separation of Cabinet and scrutiny functions I will be stepping down from the General Scrutiny and Planning Committees.

My final appearance at the Planning committee was the first time I have been quoted in the Hereford Times. The application in question was one for 120 houses in Hereford on an old industrial estate. It had previously been before the committee and had been given outline consent. The controversial element was that the site included part of the Hereford canal – something that the canal trust are trying to restore and which the Council supports – it was judged to be impossible for the 106 affordable housing element to be delivered as well as the restoration of the canal so, in granting the outline consent, the committee decided to support the canal restoration and sacrifice the affordable housing. Alas, when it came back for reserved matters the district valuer had determined that the scheme was not viable and the offer to restore the section of the canal was withdrawn. Not an outcome that anyone wanted but at this point the committee took the view that the site was brownfield, it would deliver needed homes for people and improve the area. The canal section will be given to the Canal Trust and I hope that, in time, they will raise the funds to restore it.

I took a week's leave and went to Andalucia – Granada and Jerez. I can tell you categorically that the rain in Spain does not stay exclusively on the plain. Apart from the dampness it was a great week of looking at the highlights of Moorish architecture and eating a great deal of moreish tapas. I was struck by the number of Spanish school children visiting historic sites and wondered if I would find the same number of English schoolchildren visiting sites of historic interest in the UK. I feel sure that such visits impart a great sense of cultural pride and identity. I know of one trip that was organised to take pupils to Paris from the UK – how marvellous I thought, the Musee D'Orsay, Versailles, Notre Dame, French language and culture – it turned out to be a stay at Euro Disney.....hmmm.