

Council, 22 February 2023

Leader's announcements

The Planning Committee approved the application for flood defences at Beale's Corner on 14 February. While it will now take time for the Environment Agency to implement the plans, this is a major positive step in providing reassurance and protection for a community that has suffered repeated flooding over several years. Colleagues will have been pleased to see the message of thanks to the Council's staff from the Agency's Operations Manager for the West Midlands, which was in Wyred Weekly earlier today. I am sure colleagues would also want to join me in thanking staff from the Strategic Growth team for their work over many months with the Environment Agency, Historic England and other organisations in ensuring that the scheme has reached this point and that the planning application was swiftly dealt with after it was received.

Construction works are, or will shortly be, under way on some important projects including removal of asbestos at premises in Worcester Street prior to demolition and preliminary works at the Castle Road car park, which has been removed from the car parking order and will be the site of a new temporary accommodation facility.

This is the final Council meeting before the elections on 4 May. I would like to thank councillors who will be standing down at the elections for their service and contribution – including any colleagues who may stand but are not successful in their quest for re-election. I have enjoyed serving with you and I think we can all look back with satisfaction on what we have achieved as a Council since the elections in 2019. The period has been dominated by external factors, including significant periods of upheaval at Westminster, the UK's exit from the European Union, the cost of living crisis - and not least the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had such deep and lasting impacts on the economy, society and families alike. The Council has responded to these major challenges well and has continued to deliver services that communities value, yet we have also been able to take important steps to reshape the district and the Council's own operations.

I would also like to extend gratitude to colleagues and staff for their support for me over the last four years, as a Cabinet member and, for almost two years, as Leader of the Council. It is deeply appreciated.