

I have learnt a fair few things since becoming ward councillor for Birch in the May elections, not least of all that it is easier to shout from the side lines than to actually change things – however the world is a crazy place so I am happy to have thrown my hat in the ring.

I am a strong believer in resilient communities and over the summer have been inspired by the commitment of people within the ward to protect and stand up for their communities whilst keeping the social fabric of their community alive and thriving. Whatever our differences there is nothing like calling your community home and sharing the values that we have in common with neighbours. Thank you so much to all the people who work tirelessly in their community to do that – please support them as much as you can.

Given the unsettling times the question of ‘how we live’ is one that often wakes me in the early hours. Climate and environmental breakdown is a threat to us all and we need to all act in whatever way we can if we are to provide our children with a future they can thank us for. Some parish councils in Herefordshire have already declared a Climate Emergency and are taking positive steps like adopting The Tree Charter in their parishes – we definitely should be planting more trees to mitigate climate change; others are looking at how they can make their roadside verges wildlife habitats by cutting less often (obviously road safety is a concern that cannot be ignored) in an attempt to encourage wildflowers back into our verges. This is something that Balfour Beatty are also exploring and there is definitely more to come. Having visited the EnviroSort recycling centre in Worcester over the summer I was truly impressed by what is being recycled but quite shocked at how much recycling is contaminated by dirty recycling and food waste (even half a dead pig!). Waste services in Herefordshire and the whole country are under review but my overwhelming sense was that we need to use less, throw away less and only use recycling as a last resort. It is a challenge for every household – one we constantly face in our own.

I was fortunate to buy an electric bicycle off a friend earlier this year and it has revolutionised my life – I would highly recommend them. I have rediscovered the joys of cycling and a much stronger physical connection to my surroundings. Type ‘cycling’ in the search bar of Herefordshire Council’s website and there is plenty to chew on. There are 17 miles of off road cycle track around the city; you can loan a bike; get personal one-to-one bicycle training from your doorstep; borrow an adaptive bike, and join a led ride, or simply hire a Beryl Bike to cycle around the city. There is a Choose How You Move scheme which enables you to park and cycle or catch a bus – please give it a try. Finally, lifecycleuk.org.uk are offering free bicycle parking racks for Herefordshire which they can install free of charge. It would be great to see more of these outside pubs, churches and village halls, offering some security to those who choose to cycle.

My contact details for anyone who needs them are: toni.fagan@herefordshire.gov.uk;
01981 540721, 07792 882051 and I have a Facebook page: Cllr Toni Fagan – please
feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Kind regards

Cllr Ton Fagan