

Economy, Communities and Corporate

Geoff Hughes - Director

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Our Ref: Council - 18 December 2015

Please ask for: Tim Brown

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10 December 2015

Dear Councillor,

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to attend the meeting of the Herefordshire Council to be held on **Friday 18 December 2015** at the Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX at **10.00 am** at which the business set out in the attached agenda is proposed to be transacted.

Yours sincerely

C Ward

**CLAIRE WARD
DEPUTY SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL PEOPLE AND REGULATORY**

AGENDA

Council

Date: **Friday 18 December 2015**

Time: **10.00 am**

Place: **Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square,
Hereford, HR1 2HX**

Notes: Please note the **time, date** and **venue** of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

Governance Services

Tel: 01432 260239

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Agenda for the Meeting of the Council

Membership

Chairman

Vice-Chairman

Councillor DB Wilcox

Councillor PJ McCaull

Councillor PA Andrews
Councillor JM Bartlett
Councillor TL Bowes
Councillor CR Butler
Councillor MJK Cooper
Councillor PGH Cutter
Councillor PJ Edwards
Councillor DW Greenow
Councillor J Hardwick
Councillor EPJ Harvey
Councillor JA Hyde
Councillor AW Johnson
Councillor JLV Kenyon
Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes
Councillor RI Matthews
Councillor MT McEvelly
Councillor PM Morgan
Councillor FM Norman
Councillor RJ Phillips
Councillor AJW Powers
Councillor P Rone
Councillor A Seldon
Councillor WC Skelton
Councillor D Summers
Councillor LC Tawn
Councillor SD Williams

Councillor BA Baker
Councillor WLS Bowen
Councillor H Bramer
Councillor ACR Chappell
Councillor PE Crockett
Councillor BA Durkin
Councillor CA Gandy
Councillor KS Guthrie
Councillor DG Harlow
Councillor EL Holton
Councillor TM James
Councillor JF Johnson
Councillor JG Lester
Councillor MN Mansell
Councillor RL Mayo
Councillor SM Michael
Councillor PD Newman OBE
Councillor CA North
Councillor GJ Powell
Councillor PD Price
Councillor AR Round
Councillor NE Shaw
Councillor J Stone
Councillor EJ Swinglehurst
Councillor A Warmington

AGENDA

	Pages
<i>(The meeting will be preceded by prayers.)</i>	
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive apologies for absence.	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest by Members in respect of items on the Agenda.	
3. MINUTES To approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2015 and of the extraordinary meeting held on 16 October 2015.	9 - 44
4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS To receive the Chairman's announcements and petitions from members of the public.	45 - 48
5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC To receive questions from members of the public.	49 - 54
6. PETITION FOR DEBATE - ROSS-ON-WYE LIBRARY To consider a petition received bearing more than 7,000 signatures and therefore requiring debate by Council.	55 - 58
7. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS To consider Notices of Motion.	59 - 62
8. PROPOSED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/17 To approve the proposed capital programme for 2016/17 to 2019/20 inclusive, as proposed by Cabinet on 3 December 2015.	63 - 72
9. REVISIONS TO THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME To approve revisions to the council tax reduction scheme as proposed by Cabinet on 3 December 2015.	73 - 154
10. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE GENERAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE To consider the appointment of a vice-chairman of the General Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	155 - 156
11. LEADER'S REPORT To receive the Leader's report, which provides an overview of the Executive's activity since the last Council meeting.	157 - 164
12. FORMAL QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS TO THE CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN UNDER STANDING ORDERS To receive any written questions from Councillors.	

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- Inspect minutes of the Council and all Committees and Sub-Committees and written statements of decisions taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
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HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Council held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Friday 25 September 2015 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor DB Wilcox (Chairman)
Councillor PJ McCaull (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: PA Andrews, BA Baker, JM Bartlett, WLS Bowen, TL Bowes, H Bramer, CR Butler, ACR Chappell, MJK Cooper, PGH Cutter, BA Durkin, PJ Edwards, CA Gandy, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, J Hardwick, DG Harlow, EPJ Harvey, EL Holton, JA Hyde, TM James, AW Johnson, JF Johnson, JLV Kenyon, JG Lester, MD Lloyd-Hayes, MN Mansell, RI Matthews, MT McEvelly, SM Michael, PM Morgan, PD Newman OBE, FM Norman, CA North, RJ Phillips, GJ Powell, AJW Powers, P Rone, AR Round, A Seldon, NE Shaw, WC Skelton, J Stone, D Summers, EJ Swinglehurst, LC Tawn, A Warmington and SD Williams

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors PE Crockett, RL Mayo and PD Price.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda item 8 – Youth Justice Plan

Councillors BA Durkin and RJ Phillips declared non-pecuniary interests as Magistrates.

Agenda item 11 – Leader’s Report

Councillor LC Tawn declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Director of the Old Market.

Agenda item 12 – Annual Report of Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority

Councillors BC Baker, KS Guthrie, RI Matthews, RJ Phillips, and SD Williams declared non-pecuniary interests as Council appointees to the Fire Authority.

21. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council noted the Chairman’s announcements as printed in the agenda papers.

The Chairman provided further information with regard to the walk with the wounded on 1 October.

He formally announced that his Chairman's charity for the year was "The Haven" - a local cancer charity providing treatment and support to cancer victims, particularly breast cancer, as well as supporting their close families.

The Chairman also reported the receipt of four petitions relating to:

- No 1 Ledbury Road
- Leominster Library
- Belmont Library.
- a forthcoming planning application for a new single carriageway (Southern Link Road) and associated works.

23. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A copy of the public questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 1.

24. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS

Notice of Motion 1 – No 1 Ledbury Road, short breaks and respite care

Councillor Lloyd Hayes proposed the motion. She made the following principal points:

- She expressed concern that parents and carers had heard of service changes through rumour. This had created general fear and insecurity. Some parents had recently been refused provision at Ledbury Road.
- She was concerned that Wye Valley Trust, the Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Social Services were closing the facility. One way of closing a service was by running it down. This created a situation where staff were encouraged to seek other jobs. She noted that the chef at Ledbury road had been redeployed and not replaced.
- The Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group had already gathered useful evidence and would bring forward some useful recommendations. She questioned whether it was in accordance with the Constitution for any decisions to be taken on Ledbury Road before the Task and Finish Group had reported.
- There had been a lack of strategic planning and no consultation with regard to changes to the service at Ledbury road and no contingency plan. The Council was not fulfilling its duty of care.
- There were many opportunities to increase use of the facility and generate income, for example offering day care there, that had not been adequately explored.
- The facility was an excellent resource and there was no alternative in the City. She commented on a number of providers that it had been suggested to her could provide an alternative, asserting that they could not provide an adequate replacement for the current provision at Ledbury Road.

Recommendation (a) in the Notice of Motion requested the executive to commit to the retention of the option for families and young people to access professionally staffed respite care in Herefordshire. Councillor Lloyd-Hayes indicated that she was willing to add the words "and beyond" to the end of that request.

Councillor Lester, cabinet member – young people and children’s wellbeing, explained that this amendment would permit use of respite carers just across the county’s border.

Some concern was expressed that the wording of the amendment to read “Herefordshire and beyond” was too wide and did not reflect the qualification offered by the cabinet member.

A motion that recommendation (a) be amended was carried with 43 votes in favour, 3 against and 2 abstentions.

Councillor Harvey seconded the motion. She highlighted the specialist nature of respite care, and its importance to families. She considered that there had been insufficient communication between the partner organisations themselves, and between the partner organisations and the parents, to ensure that respite care remained available at Ledbury Road while a broader range of other options were being developed.

Ledbury Road remained the only option for a number of families. There was an impression that the service was being dismantled. The council needed to bear in mind that if families fell apart as a consequence of the withdrawal of the service at Ledbury Road the council would be responsible for providing them with support.

Councillor Lester commented that he had met Wye Valley Trust and the Clinical Commissioning Group to explore options. No1 Ledbury Road would remain open beyond March 2016 subject to staffing and financial resources. It had never been the intention to remove residential respite care at Ledbury Road. The aim was to increase the range of care options. Core assessments identified the needs and therefore the options that could be considered.

He added that he could support recommendation (a) as amended and recommendation (b). However, he requested that recommendation (c) “that the executive consider the recommendations from the task & finish group before any decision is made on any changes to the respite care service provision in Herefordshire”, be amended, ending it after the word “group”. Whilst he would welcome the recommendations of the task and finish group he would not wish a requirement to await its findings to delay the ongoing work on alternatives to meet needs. In conclusion he noted that the council did not itself provide respite care; it secured it from providers. Wye Valley Trust and others were the providers, commissioned by the Clinical Commissioning Group.

A motion that recommendation (c) be amended was carried (There were 40 votes for the motion, 9 against and no abstentions.)

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- A number of Members praised the benefits offered by No1 Ledbury Road and the support it provided to some of the most vulnerable people.
- The pressures faced by parents and their concerns about the situation were acknowledged.
- There was a concern that the cabinet member had referred to the facility remaining open subject to staffing and resources. It was suggested that a lack of qualified staff might lead to closure at short notice and it was asked what contingencies were in place. The cabinet member commented that options were being considered and council and parents would be advised as soon as possible.

- It was important that note was taken of the roles of the Wye Valley Trust and the Clinical Commissioning Group and that they were held accountable for their decisions.
- The cabinet member acknowledged that consultation on the future of No1 Ledbury Road had not engaged parents as fully as it should have done. The key organisations responsible had made clear that this was regrettable and had apologised to parents. The Children and Young People's Plan which Council was being asked to ratify in a later agenda item sought to ensure that such a situation would not occur again.
- The council could and should have exercised greater leadership.
- It was suggested that it would have been preferable for council to have awaited the findings of the task and finish group before debating the issue. Councillor Stone, as chairman of the group, informed Council that the group had heard evidence from a number of people and was drawing up its recommendations which he did not wish to pre-empt.
- The Leader of the Council commented that the council was doing its best to seek to resolve a situation that was not entirely within its control. The best course was for the council to continue to explore options in parallel with the ongoing work of the task and finish group whose recommendations could be considered when published.

The motion was carried with 45 votes for it none against and 3 abstentions.

RESOLVED: That in view of the vision contained within the children and young people's plan that our children and young people grow up healthy, happy and safe within supportive families and carers, this Council resolves that:

The executive be asked to:

- commit to the retention of the option for families and young people to access professionally staffed respite care in Herefordshire and beyond;**
- honour its obligations to actively involve parents/carers and children at all stages of any change programme; and**
- consider the recommendations from the task & finish group.**

Notice of Motion 2 – Chinese Lanterns

Councillor Baker proposed the motion. He circulated an example of a Chinese lantern and highlighted the risk they posed to animals and the fire risk to property. He noted that the Chief Fire Officer supported the motion.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- The lanterns did present a significant risk.
- Some doubt was expressed about the Council's power to enforce restrictions but it was suggested that a measure of control could be achieved through the licensing regime.

- A publicity campaign to raise awareness of the risks posed by the lanterns could only be beneficial.

Councillor Swinglehurst seconded the motion commenting that this was a matter where the council could act and it should do what it could to address the risk the lanterns presented.

The motion was carried with 48 votes for it, no votes against it and no abstentions.

RESOLVED: That the executive consider imposing restrictions on the use of Chinese lanterns on council owned land or at events licensed by the council, and consider implementing a publicity campaign to inform residents of the risks associated with the use of such lanterns.

25. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

Council was invited to approve the Children and Young People's Plan.

The cabinet member – young people and children's wellbeing presented the report.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- The cabinet member acknowledged that in the light of a government announcement permitting children with birthdays between April and August to start reception at age of five, rather than four, references to early years being 0-5 might need amendment.
- In relation to page 50 of the agenda papers section 3 bullet point 2 it was asked what measures were envisaged to improve professionals' knowledge in relation to mental health. The cabinet member replied that professionals would be made aware of expectations regarding their training and the matter would be considered again when the plan was reviewed.
- It would be essential to monitor and review the Plan's effectiveness.
- It was requested that regard be had to provision for children who suffered bereavement, noting the effect on mental health and wellbeing. The cabinet member acknowledged this point.
- The cabinet member – health and wellbeing commented that the Plan had been considered and approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board and she looked forward to the outcomes.
- In relation to the aim of reducing the educational achievement gap between children in receipt of free school meals and other children to 5% it was noted that the current gap was 25%. It was asked what the implications would be if free school meals were withdrawn following the Government's spending review. The cabinet member commented that a collaborative approach was needed with partners to meet funding challenges. It was still possible to track children who met the specific criteria for free school meals eligibility.
- The ability to fund the strategy given the funding gaps in the County was of key importance.

- Assurance was sought that the Plan was joined up with the public health agenda, The cabinet member – young people and children’s wellbeing confirmed that public health along with other organisations needed to commit to the plan.
- It was asked how the workforce strategy referred to at section 8.7 of the report would be monitored and reported on. The cabinet member acknowledged the importance of securing the appropriate workforce.
- With reference to section 8.8 of the report on community engagement it was suggested that reference should be made to the need to involve Parish Councils and the voluntary sector. The cabinet member acknowledged this point.
- The Plan involved co-ordinating some 20 different stakeholder groups. It was important to ensure that the Plan was achievable.
- There was already a projected overspend on the Children’s Services budget of over £1m.
- In relation to respite care services, the cabinet member commented that short break provision depended on the needs of the child and family. If the core assessment identified the need for respite care that would be provided.
- The cabinet member agreed to make clear that one of the aims of the plan was to identify mental health problems early in life.

RESOLVED: That the children and young people’s plan 2015-2018 be approved.

26. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN

Council was invited to approve the Youth Justice Plan.

The cabinet member – young people and children’s wellbeing presented the report.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- It was observed that 37% of young people receiving outcomes that required youth offending service interventions were children in care. The cabinet support member commented that looked after children were very vulnerable and whereas in a number of households minor infringements would be dealt with within a family, looked after children were more vulnerable to being recorded as offenders.
- It was noted that one of the key actions to improve service provision in 2015/16 was to re-establish the Worcester Junior Attendance Centre (JAC) and develop the programme for the Telford JAC. It was asked whether consideration had been given to providing a dedicated JAC in Hereford. The cabinet member – young people and children’s wellbeing agreed to seek clarification.
- Disappointment was expressed that some of the national figures used in the report were two years old. The cabinet member – economy and corporate services speaking as chairman of the Community Safety Partnership commented that the timeliness and quality of statistical information was to be reviewed and improved.
- It was asked whether there was any information showing offences were seasonal and whether long summer school holidays were a factor in offending. The cabinet member agreed to clarify this point.

RESOLVED: That the Youth justice Plan as appended to the report be approved.

27. CAPITAL SUPPORT FOR THE FEDERATION OF AYLESTONE BUSINESSES AND ENTERPRISE COLLEGE AND BROADLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Council was asked to approve that provision be made in the capital programme for additional capital funding to support the relocation of Broadlands primary school and children's centre onto the Aylestone Business and Enterprise College (ABEC) site.

The cabinet member – young people and children's wellbeing presented the report.

A Member commented that it was to be hoped that lessons about estimating costs could be learned from the project to avoid a similar situation happening in the future. The leader commented that, whilst care would continue to be exercised, increases in the estimates of future projects could not be ruled out.

RESOLVED: That an additional £250k of funding be approved to relocate Broadlands primary school onto the Aylestone Business and Enterprise College site.

28. DESIGNATION OF POST AS STATUTORY OFFICER (MONITORING OFFICER)

(The deputy solicitor to the council – people and regulatory left the room for the duration of this item.)

Council was asked to designate a specific post to discharge the functions of Monitoring Officer.

A Member commented that it had been requested, in relation to all reorganisations undertaken, that as a responsible employer council was assured that redeployed tasks were capable of being delivered by those to whom they had been assigned and would not overburden them. The assistant director, governance had been discharging a number of governance functions as monitoring officer that were important to the Council's operation. Given the burden on the legal team assurance was sought that there was capacity to deliver these important internal functions.

The director – economy, communities and corporate commented that staff had been consulted on the reorganisation proposals and were satisfied with them. Additional resources had been provided to the legal team. The right resources would be deployed to deliver the agreed work programme.

Formal thanks were expressed to Mr B Norman, former assistant director governance, for his work.

RESOLVED: the post of deputy solicitor to the council, people and regulatory, be designated monitoring officer for an interim period of up to nine months from the date of approval whilst a permanent solution is considered and implemented.

29. LEADER'S REPORT

The leader presented his report on the activities of Cabinet since the meeting of Council in July.

The leader informed Council that at a recent meeting of the Local Enterprise Partnership confirmation had been received that a number schemes from Herefordshire could, subject to final business cases, access loan funding. This included feasibility work on the Leominster southern expansion including potential road infrastructure.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- It was asked what the council was doing to respond to the current refugee situation. The leader responded that the council was part of the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership and it was considered that the council would be more likely to help more people via that body. People could make individual offers of support through established charities.
- (Paragraph 4 of the report) It was noted that an extraordinary meeting of Council had been called for 16 October to consider the adoption of the Core Strategy. The timing of this meeting was questioned given that the Inspector's report was expected to be received on 7 October. A question was also asked about the notice of the forthcoming decision by cabinet on the adoption of the core strategy that had been published. Assurance was sought that given that the inspector's report had not yet been published the council was complying with all the relevant access to information requirements to meet expectations of transparency and would do so if there were to be any delay in receiving that report. It was also requested that members of the public should be permitted to submit questions to the extraordinary meeting.

The leader commented that Council would be invited to adopt or reject the adoption of the core strategy. The detailed content would not be subject to discussion and it was not clear what contribution public questions could add to the consultation that had already taken place.

The deputy solicitor to the council agreed to provide a written response in relation to the decision notice. She confirmed that it was not intended to permit public questions at the Council meeting. The Council meeting had been called in accordance with the provisions in the constitution.

Disappointment was expressed that public questions were not to be permitted given that changes had taken place since the examination of the strategy in public.

- (Paragraphs 5-8) It was requested that there should be a wider consultation on any submission to be made in response the Government's invitation to authorities to submit devolution bids. The leader commented on the areas that it had been considered might form part of a detailed submission. A consultant had been engaged to co-ordinate the preparation of a submission before Christmas. He proposed to consult group leaders on that submission.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

30. ANNUAL REPORT OF HEREFORD AND WORCESTER FIRE AUTHORITY

Council was asked to receive the annual report of the Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority.

Councillor RJ Phillips, Vice-Chairman of the Authority, presented the report.

The proposed new fire station in Hereford was welcomed. The chief fire officer outlined the planned timetable for development which envisaged planning permission being sought towards the end of 2016. He agreed to keep the council informed of progress.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

31. FORMAL QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS TO THE CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN UNDER STANDING ORDERS

A copy of the Member questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 2.

The meeting ended at 1.17 pm

CHAIRMAN

Public questions to Council – 25 September 2015

Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

Question 1

Understanding Herefordshire and the awaited Local Transport Plan

The Council's Local Transport Plan expired in March 2015 and its most recent LTP Progress Report covers the years 2012/13. The Travel Choice surveys on travel to primary and secondary schools have been discontinued. However, the most recent edition of 'Understanding Herefordshire, July 2015' reports that only 1 in 4 people in the County own a car. It also states (according to the notes presented to Cabinet on 23/7/15) that Herefordshire needs to ensure a 'system-level perspective on health and transport planning'. Can the Cabinet member responsible for transport planning please confirm that this emphasis on a system level perspective on health and transport planning will inform the new Local Transport Plan and that the Council's Integrated Public Transport Unit has adopted this perspective so that health and transport outcomes are related?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The council's local transport plan has not expired; in July 2014 Council agreed its extension to enable the core strategy to complete its journey to adoption.

The links between health and transport are well understood and have already guided investment in cycling and walking infrastructure and Choose How You Move campaign to encourage healthy travel. The health and wellbeing strategy which has recently been adopted makes clear the links between transport and public health outcomes. These links will also be reflected in the refreshed local transport plan which is being prepared for consideration by the council in early 2016. The integrated public transport unit plans services in the light of the demand for trips to health and social care opportunities and is currently working on a government funded Total Transport fund project to examine further the opportunities to plan transport in greater partnership with the health sector.

Supplementary question

Could Councillor Price confirm that when the next review of the LTP is finally undertaken it will chart how healthy outcome improvements have actually been achieved by the Council's health and wellbeing strategy?

Answer by the Leader of the Council

I will ask Councillor Price to provide a written reply.

Written Answer

The local transport plan (LTP) has and will continue to support a balanced strategy which includes active travel proposals (to support walking and cycling) as well as increasing capacity for vehicular traffic where this is required to address current problems and/or support growth proposals. The council monitors the delivery of both its LTP and health and wellbeing strategy through its corporate performance monitoring and annual progress reports.

Public questions to Council – 25 September 2015

Question from Ms C Protherough, Clehonger

Question 2

Retention of highest grade agricultural land.

In view of the on-going consideration of the future of Herefordshire Council's small holdings estate, due to be decided on 5th November, what measures are likely to be taken to ensure that the highest grade of agricultural land for food production is retained and that young people are encouraged into this important sector of the local economy?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

It would be wrong to pre-judge the outcome of the review. The core strategy, once adopted, will be the key land use document for the council and will inform future land use in the county.

Supplementary question

Will Herefordshire Council be able to ensure the continued integrity of their smallholdings in proximity of the proposed SLR or is it intended to make short term financial gains by selling them off for development?

Answer by Leader of the Council

The council needs to ensure assets are used to the best effect for the majority of the population. No decision has yet been taken on the future of the council's smallholdings estate. The interests of current tenants will be taken into account and everyone will be informed of any decisions in the normal way.

Question from Ms K Sharp, Hereford

Question 3

School travel plans and traffic reduction

On its website under 'School travel plans and sustainability', Herefordshire Council states that, "We're working to cut the number of car journeys to school and improve safety. We want to cut congestion and pollution, as well as allowing more pupils to get regular exercise by walking or cycling to school."

When "school run" traffic makes up over 50% of peak time vehicle movements in the City of Hereford, and when there is an increase in childhood obesity, could the Cabinet member please explain what progress has been made on delivering these excellent aims in the last 4 years?

Answer from Councillor P Rone cabinet member transport and roads

Since 2011 the council has delivered over 8km of new cycling and walking routes in Hereford. Over £115,000 in grants has been awarded to 18 schools to install measures such as cycle shelters,

Public questions to Council – 25 September 2015

scooter shelters and other improvements. All Herefordshire schools have a school travel plan and are encouraged to regularly review it.

Schools have been supported to promote walking buses, Walk to School week, and to provide scooter and cycle skills training to over 1,600 pupils annually. In addition, over 1,000 year 6 pupils across Herefordshire undertake level 2 Bikeability cycle training each year. The council also provides pedestrian training to almost 5,000 Herefordshire pupils each year.

A range of highway improvements have also been delivered at schools across the county to address issues such as speeding and visibility. This has included provision of traffic calming and 20mph zones in the vicinity of schools. A recent example has been the 20 mph zone introduced along Venns Lane in Hereford for the St Francis Xavier's primary school and the Royal National College for the Blind.

Whilst, these measures are supporting these aims, a research project is being carried out by the transportation teams over the next few months to quantify the benefits of these measures to inform the development of the next local transport plan. However, traffic congestion in the city remains a significant concern. This underlines the need to take forward the proposals outlined in the draft core strategy for a further package of sustainable transport improvements alongside new road infrastructure, in the form of both the southern link road and the Hereford relief road.

Supplementary Question

The council's own evidence shows that 85% of traffic is local to Hereford – through traffic is not the problem, school traffic is the problem.

Could Councillor Rone please explain why, in the absence of the benefits outlined in his answer ever being quantified does he seek to promote the SLR as a way of reducing term-time traffic.

Answer by Councillor P Rone cabinet member transport and roads

Parents can choose where they send their children to school. I will provide a written answer.

Written answer

The southern link road (SLR) is being promoted to enable economic growth within Hereford while tackling specific problems in the South Wye area. The scheme is crucial for the long term vision for growth in Herefordshire, is a key part of the infrastructure requirements set out in the council's core strategy and is consistent with the objectives of the council's local transport plan.

It is however, only one element of the overall south wye transport package and will be complemented by a range of active travel measures in the South Wye which will support walking, cycling and public transport.

Highways crossed by the SLR are proposed to remain open for use by pedestrians and cyclists, including Grafton Lane, along which runs National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 46, where an underpass will enable connection to be retained. Connections on the existing PROW network are also retained, with diversions put in place where necessary.

Public questions to Council – 25 September 2015

Question from Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

Question 4

Housing land supply

Herefordshire Council reports in continuing planning applications across the County that it still has no 5 year housing land supply. The Assistant Director – Economic, Environment and Cultural Services reported to the Planning Inspector admitted in March 2015 that a number of planning approvals had been omitted from the calculation of the 5 year housing land supply. In the continued absence of the Annual Monitoring Report for the planning department would the Cabinet member please confirm exactly how many new homes have been granted approval by for development since March 2014?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

Mrs Morawiecka is correct that until the local plan has been adopted the county does not have a five year housing land supply. However the provision of such a supply is addressed in the emerging local plan and the questioner will recall the debates that took place at the February 2015 hearings on this matter.

The point to which the questioner refers in March 2015 is the statement which the council prepared on this matter and at the request of the Inspector. That statement was then subject to its own technical consultation. The statement indicated that the 2014 position had not included those applications with a resolution to grant permission but where the S106 agreement had not been signed prior to April 2014. On this basis those decisions had not been issued.

The annual monitoring report for 2014/15 is scheduled for publication by the end of the calendar year as required. In relation to the specific question raised on numbers there have been permissions for 2068 “gross” dwellings permitted during that period. However, there will need to be a significant element of analysis undertaken to determine the “net” completions total. This includes ensuring there is no double counting (with applications superseding existing permissions, reserved matters on outline sites) and ensuring that planning proposals involving the loss of housing are also taken into account (e.g. any conversions and change of use out of housing or demolitions). This work is on-going. It will not directly affect the Inspector’s report.

Supplementary question

The Council is meeting its 5 year housing land supply. However, if officers are unable to update the 5 year housing land supply calculations until the end of 2015 by continuing to maintain it has no 5 year housing land supply the Planning Department is allowing developers a free for all on many greenfield sites across the County. Why is the Council not taking control of the allocation of new housing? Is it because it is generating large sums in planning fees?

Answer by Leader of the Council

I refute the assertion that we do not take control of housing. The implication made in relation to planning fees is untrue. The local plan contains the detail on housing supply. I will supply a written answer.

Public questions to Council – 25 September 2015

Written answer by Councillor Price

There is no direct relationship between the calculation of the five year land supply and the fees that are generated by the submission of planning applications for new dwellings.

The position on the calculation of the five year housing supply was fully rehearsed at the local plan hearings in February 2015. The position is comprehensively and definitively set out in paragraphs 46 to 51 of the inspector's report. Paragraph 51 in particular sets out that the now current five year supply is 'marginal but realistic' and highlights the need for ongoing monitoring against the agreed trajectory.

There has never been a 'free for all' on housing planning permissions in the county as suggested by the question. A wide range of environmental matters as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework have been assessed in the round both by the council and inspectors on appeal. Plainly however the adoption of the local plan puts the council in a far stronger place to resist inappropriate or unsustainable residential development.

Question from Mr D King, Tillington

Question 5

Government funding reductions

The Leader of the Council said, as recorded by the Council Minutes of 17 July 2015, that there were "financial pressures including an expected reduction in Government Grant, which was currently £35m pa to zero by 2020." As a consequence the Council is preparing service cuts which will impact on the residents of Herefordshire. What is the evidence that Government Grant will be reduced from £35m pa to zero by 2020?

Answer from Councillor A Johnson cabinet member corporate strategy and finance

The anticipated reductions in government funding to local authorities have been well documented. The summer budget confirmed local authorities can expect similar funding cuts in this parliament as experienced in the previous parliamentary term. Central government is planning to reduce its departmental expenditure by £20bn by 2010 whilst protecting the funding of health, defence and aid, and giving cash protection for education. This can only mean there is less funding remaining to other departments and will result in higher funding reductions to local authorities.

Bearing all this information in mind, and as any prudent organisation would do in light of that information, we are planning for a range of scenarios including a reduction in revenue support grant to zero by 2019/20. The position will become clearer following the comprehensive spending review in late November, but we cannot wait until then to consult on the options open to us.

Supplementary question

If the Local Government Association figures were applied to Herefordshire, the £35m per year central government grant would not reduce to zero, it would still be £28m by 2019/20 and I can provide evidence for that.

Public questions to Council – 25 September 2015

So, will the Leader as Cabinet Member Corporate Strategy and Finance please investigate the assumptions which he has been given, replace them with the latest LGA forecasts and issue a public statement correcting this error because it impacts directly and adversely on the services which are provided to the residents of Herefordshire?

Answer by Leader of the Council

I accept that it is unlikely that our central grant will reduce to zero. The government's announced intentions are to ring-fence health, education, defence and foreign aid, but it will not raise VAT, income tax and National Insurance. It has also said that it will reduce the deficit to zero by 2020. Local authorities will be seen as a prime source of savings. I expect existing specific grants will be merged into the block grant and the block grant will be reduced. Total income will therefore reduce by 2020.

Question from Mr J Harrington, Herefordshire

Question 6

Alternatives to road building

In light of the documented offer made by the Highways Agency, to carry out a micro-simulation at no cost to Herefordshire Council (estimated at £30k), to assess whether or not traffic light removal from the Asda/Belmont junction (previously a roundabout) and other Highways Agency controlled junctions would reduce congestion by making maximum use of the existing road capacity (as it has in other UK towns and Cities), can the Cabinet and in particular, Cllr Phillip Price, tell me why in times of austerity this free offer was not accepted or progressed further, in line with DfT guidelines requesting authorities explore all sustainable alternatives to road building first?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The council has not turned down any offer of such work made by Highways England. Indeed we have worked closely with Highways England (formerly the Highways Agency) to develop a robust transport strategy for Hereford. Whilst the studies that Highways England choose to carry out is a matter for that organisation to determine, I am aware that they have assessed the impact of removing the traffic lights at the Asda/Belmont junction and concluded that such a change would not resolve the traffic problems.

Question from Mr R Palgrave, How Caple

Question 7

Southern link road

Council has failed to show that SLR provides best value for money compared to alternative measures for tackling road congestion in South Wye; and their consultant on this development, Parsons Brinkerhoff, has admitted that they wrongly claimed that SLR was necessary for the delivery of the Enterprise Zone.

Public questions to Council – 25 September 2015

Given that Council is looking to make significant budget cuts and is currently paying over £16million in capital repayments and interest on loans, what justification is there to spend a further £600,000 of taxpayer's money with Parsons Brinkerhoff to try to make a case for the SLR?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The assertions made by the questioner are incorrect. The business case for the South Wye transport package (which includes the southern link road) clearly demonstrated that the proposals represent value for money; this has been recognised by the government in awarding £27m from the Growth Fund. In preparing the business case a range of alternative options were considered and it was concluded that the best way to achieve the package objectives of enabling full development of the Hereford Enterprise Zone, reducing congestion and delay, reducing traffic noise and accidents in the South Wye area as well as encouraging physical activity was by providing the southern link road alongside a range of active travel measures.

Members' questions at Council – 25 September 2015

Question from Councillor C Chappell

Staff redundancies

Question 1

Can the cabinet member confirm:

- a) how many council employees have been made redundant in the last six months
- b) what the total financial saving is to the council of these redundancies, and please give a breakdown of financial saving by directorate/service area
- c) how many assistant directors and service heads have been made redundant and what is the total cost of each redundancy package
- d) that these redundancies have not caused a breakdown in service delivery, especially in adult and children's services
- e) how many more redundancies does he envisage during the next six months?

Answer from Councillor G Powell cabinet member economy and corporate services

Answer to question 1

- a) From 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015 there have been a total of 11 people who have left the council as redundant.
- b) The total net savings to the council over three years (i.e. three year savings less redundancy cost) by each directorate are as follows:
 - Adults and wellbeing = £282k
 - Childrens' wellbeing = £249k
 - Economy, communities and corporate = £401k
- c) One assistant director (and no heads of service) has been made redundant in the six months to 30 September. In addition to payment in lieu of notice and the usual termination payments relating to outstanding leave, the redundancy payment was £2,137.
- d) All redundancies have been undertaken in line with the council's managing change policy and procedure and subject to undertaking a full consultation process with staff, trade unions and key stakeholders involved to ensure service changes are fully considered, equality impact assessments are completed, and risks identified and mitigated before the changes are implemented to ensure there is no breakdown in service delivery. That is not to say that overall there will be no impact on service levels and, as is the position across local government as resources reduce, levels of service may need to change accordingly.
- e) Whilst council finances nationally remain under pressure, it is not possible to give a confirmed figure. However, a further reduction of 5-7 managers is currently proposed as part of the economy, communities and corporate directorate senior manager change process, and the directorate leadership team will work with each other to achieve this target. Savings plans will need to be reviewed in line with the budget proposals and any potential workforce impact identified.

Supplementary question

Will the Cabinet Member publish the list of redundancies quarterly for councillors to be kept informed?

Members' questions at Council – 25 September 2015

Answer by Councillor Powell

I will consider whether some information can be included in the quarterly corporate performance report.

Question from Councillor B Matthews

Question 2

Old cattle market development

I understand that the contract between the council and the developers of the old cattle market site granted them an option to purchase the car park adjoining the multi storey building. Can it be confirmed that that is the case, and if so is there any indication as to when they might take up this option?

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, cabinet member contracts and assets

Answer to question 2

The development agreement makes provision for a range of options to be exercised, which vary dependant on whether plans for phase 2 of the development are proposed and agreed within a period of five years from practical completion of the phase 1 site. There is at this time no indication of whether any of those options will be exercised.

Supplementary question

What is the sale price?

Answer by Councillor Bramer

I will provide a written answer

Written Answer

As indicated in my written response, the development agreement makes provision for a range of options to be exercised dependent on circumstances. Whilst the terms of the agreement remain commercially confidential I can confirm that the process by which a price would be determined is set out in the agreement.

Question from Councillor B Matthews

Question 3

Commercial vehicle parking

I believe that it is time that some action was taken to discourage commercial vehicles from frequently parking on the footpaths and highways within the residential areas of the city and market towns. Not only are these vehicles unsightly, but they also cause untold damage to

Members' questions at Council – 25 September 2015

footpath and road surfaces, brought about by oil leaks and excessive weight. Could consideration be given to implementing on-street parking permits for such vehicles, to help discourage this unacceptable and unsafe practice?

Answer from Councillor P Rone, cabinet member transport and roads

Answer to question 3

Parking on footways causing an obstruction is an offence that can be enforced by the police and specific cases can be reported to them direct for action. Restrictions on where commercial vehicles can park can be introduced through appropriate traffic regulation orders for defined streets. I agree that this issue can be of concern to local residents. Balfour Beatty operate a process for considering requests for new traffic regulation orders and I would suggest that Councillor Matthews identify the areas where such restrictions would be beneficial and discuss the matter further with his locality steward.

Supplementary question

Will the cabinet member write to some of the large businesses asking for their co-operation in this matter?

Answer by Councillor Rone

The matter is not straightforward. I will, however, write to the larger businesses asking for greater consideration when parking.

Question from Councillor M Lloyd-Hayes

Question 4

Respite care

On Tuesday 15 September, the Director of Children's Services, in a meeting attended by Councillor Lester, promised parents' representatives that a list existed of alternative overnight respite providers. Has this been given to them?

Answer from Councillor J Lester, cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing

Answer to question 4

The list, together with accompanying information which may be helpful to parents, is available online at:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/8060080/herefordshire_short_breaks_provider_market_2015.pdf

and we have notified those parents who had already expressed an interest.

Members' questions at Council – 25 September 2015

Question from Councillor M Lloyd-Hayes

Question 5

Social care assessment

Councillors might like to be aware that all children attending 1 Ledbury Road are having their needs reassessed at the moment. As the children's services directorate have been reassessing these children for the past 12 months, why do they feel the need to spend more time, and council money, reassessing them again?

Answer from Councillor J Lester, cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing

Answer to question 5

The expectation is that every child subject to a core assessment has that reviewed at least once a year. Not to do so would be not only remiss, but would also compromise our statutory responsibilities to support children in need. I would remind Members of the OFSTED inspection of 2014, which reminded the council to ensure that its obligations for children with disabilities are met.

Supplementary Question

Why do assessments have to be so frequent and involve so many social workers each time?

Answer by Councillor Lester

I note the point about the number of social workers and want this to be addressed. Assessments are necessary to ensure needs are being met.

MINUTES of the extraordinary meeting of Council held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Friday 16 October 2015 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor DB Wilcox (Chairman)
Councillor PJ McCaull (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: BA Baker, JM Bartlett, WLS Bowen, TL Bowes, H Bramer, CR Butler, PE Crockett, BA Durkin, PJ Edwards, CA Gandy, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, J Hardwick, DG Harlow, EPJ Harvey, EL Holton, JA Hyde, AW Johnson, JF Johnson, JLV Kenyon, JG Lester, MD Lloyd-Hayes, MN Mansell, RI Matthews, RL Mayo, MT McEvelly, SM Michael, PM Morgan, PD Newman OBE, FM Norman, CA North, GJ Powell, AJW Powers, PD Price, AR Round, A Seldon, WC Skelton, J Stone, D Summers, EJ Swinglehurst, LC Tawn, A Warmington and SD Williams

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors PA Andrews, ACR Chappell, PGH Cutter, TM James, RJ Phillips, P Rone and NE Shaw.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A copy of the public questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 1.

35. ADOPTION OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN - CORE STRATEGY 2011-2031

Council considered the adoption of the Herefordshire local plan core strategy 2011-2031 ("the core strategy").

The chairman stated that he had attended the cabinet meeting on 15 October which had discussed its recommendation to council on the adoption of the Strategy. A point of order had been raised at that meeting seeking assurance that a proper process had been followed in respect of the documentation produced for that meeting. He considered it appropriate that all members were advised of the response provided by the monitoring officer.

The monitoring officer confirmed that Council was being asked to consider the adoption of the core strategy available online at the link provided as modified by the main and minor modifications set out at appendix 2 and appendix 3 respectively of the report. All three documents had been published as part of the agenda papers within the required timescale. A further consolidated document had subsequently been published for ease of reference but that was not a document that the Council was being asked to adopt. She was satisfied that relevant procedural requirements had been met.

A member commented that the consolidated document that had been produced included several appendices to the Core Strategy. It was asked whether the Council was being asked to adopt those documents too, noting that they had not been published with the agenda papers five clear days in advance of the meeting. It was asked whether the situation left the Council vulnerable to challenge.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that all the documents published in relation to the local plan were available via the link to the Council's website published in the agenda papers and had been published a least five clear days in advance of the meeting. Whilst it was open to anyone to challenge a decision of the Council she did not consider that a challenge made on the procedural grounds identified would be successful.

The Chairman then invited the assistant director, economic, environmental and cultural services to explain the adoption process in order that members were fully informed.

The assistant director outlined the process to date, the point that had now been reached, the outcome if Council approved the recommendation to adopt the Strategy, what would happen next and arrangements for review of the Plan.

Councillor Price, cabinet member – infrastructure proposed the motion. He outlined the process that had been followed since Council had agreed the draft plan in July 2013. Following the examination in public of the Plan the Inspector had required major modifications to be made. These had been produced and consulted on. A number of minor modifications had also been made. The Inspector had concluded that the Plan being recommended to council for adoption was sound.

Councillor AW Johnson – leader of the council seconded the motion.

(The meeting adjourned between 10.42 and 10.55 am to allow for production and circulation of paper copies of the recommendations made by Cabinet on the previous day.)

The recommendations made to Council by Cabinet on 15 October were circulated:

“That

(a) the Herefordshire local plan core strategy 2011-2031 (at <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/core-strategy>), incorporating the recommended main modifications (at appendix 2) and the schedules of minor modifications (at appendix 3) be adopted; and

(b) delegated authority be given to the programme director growth to make any further minor modifications, (e.g. typographical) to ensure consistency with other development plan documentation.”

A Member proposed that the wording of part b of the cabinet recommendation: *“delegated authority be given to the programme director growth to make any further minor modifications, (e.g. typographical)”* be amended to read (“i.e typographical”).

The proposer and seconder of the motion accepted this amendment.

A further amendment was proposed by Councillor Powers and seconded by Councillor Bartlett:

That: recognising government planning guidance and the advice of the Inspector's Report, Council now commits to a full review of the whole Local Plan Core Strategy as soon as all the parts of the plan that were requested to be detached for separate

production – including Nutrient Management Action Plan, Minerals and Waste Strategy and Community Infrastructure Levy schedules – are all completed.

Councillor Powers, in proposing the amendment, stated that in his view it would be prudent to review the plan once all the documentation to which the amendment referred had been produced rather than wait until the end of five years before doing so.

The leader of the council opposed the amendment stating that approving the document as proposed offered the flexibility to review the documentation as the council saw fit.

The cabinet member – infrastructure commented that the plan was open to review at any point in accordance with the adoption process and he therefore did not support the amendment. He reiterated that the Inspector had concluded that the Plan was sound.

The following additional principal points were made on the amendment:

- The additional policies yet to be produced were central to the viability and delivery of the Plan. Council needed to be able to satisfy itself once these documents were complete that the Core Strategy as a whole was coherent. It was also questioned why, if review was acknowledged to be part of the process, there was any reason to oppose the amendment.
- A concern was expressed about the council's capacity to produce the additional documentation following reductions in staffing.
- The report to Council at paragraphs 13 and 14 acknowledged that a number of other documents were to be produced and that as with all strategies the plan would be periodically reviewed.

Councillor Bartlett, seconding the motion, expressed concern that a considerable amount of information relevant to the Plan as a whole was yet to be prepared and the Plan should therefore be reviewed as a whole as soon as the absent material had been produced.

A named vote was held on the amendment. The amendment was lost.

For (14) JM Bartlett, TL Bowes, J Hardwick, EPJ Harvey, MD Lloyd-Hayes, MN Mansell, RI Matthews, SM Michael, FM Norman, AJW Powers, A Seldon, D Summers, LC Tawn and A Warmington.

Against (28) BA Baker, WLS Bowen, H Bramer, CR Butler, BA Durkin, PJ Edwards, CA Gandy, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, DG Harlow, EL Holton, JA Hyde, AW Johnson, JF Johnson, JG Lester, RL Mayo, PJ McCaull, MT McEvelly, PM Morgan, PD Newman, CA North, GJ Powell, PD Price, WC Skelton, J Stone, EJ Swinglehurst, DB Wilcox and SD Williams.

Abstain (3) PE Crockett, JLV Kenyon, and AR Round.

In the course of debating the proposal the following principal points were made:

- The risk management section of the report stated at paragraph 27 that there were no significant risks associated with adoption of the core strategy. It was questioned whether the Plan was affordable and deliverable, citing issues relating to water infrastructure and the potential effect on Special Areas of Conservation, the overreliance on funding from developers and the risk that the envisaged housing

required to support the delivery of the plan would not be forthcoming, the uncertainty that the western relief road would be delivered, the absence of proposals for developing rail transport and the failure to create well paid jobs locally that would enable people to afford housing.

The cabinet member – infrastructure replied that the Plan provided support for business and the local economy. A report on options for rail transport would be available at the end of the year, although the initial indications were not promising.

- Adopting the Plan would strengthen the Planning Committee's powers to manage development and resist speculative applications. The weight the Committee had been required to give to the absence of a five year housing land supply would no longer apply.
- The Plan did not address the needs of Bromyard. It provided no road link between the A44 and the local industrial estate meaning that there would be continuing damage to Bromyard's historic core. Account had not been taken of a plan prepared by Bromyard and Winslow Town Council. It was unclear how the housing allocation for Bromyard would be accommodated.
- It was questioned whether the Plan was affordable in financial terms and whether there was the staffing resource to deliver it.
- Infrastructure was needed to support the proposed housing.
- The road infrastructure proposals were wrong. A western relief road would be four times more costly than an eastern relief road.
- The housing development proposed for Leominster was excessive with insufficient infrastructure and employment opportunities to support it. A relief road was needed. There would be congestion and increased air pollution in the Bargates area if the housing were to be constructed first. Note needed to be taken of the fact that it was proposed that development in Leominster would require no Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions.
- The adoption of the Plan would allow the planning process to give weight to completed Neighbourhood Plans.
- The Plan did not consider health needs and the infrastructure needed to support an increased population with a growing number of elderly people.
- There were a number of weaknesses in what was a vulnerable Plan. The infrastructure was not in place to cope with the proposed housing growth. A number of key documents such as the nutrient management plan were yet to be prepared. A number of policies were high risk and difficult to achieve.
- There were concerns about the affordability and deliverability of the Plan. The Council had not agreed its CIL policies. However, funding from the CIL was significant for the delivery of every development.

- It was cautioned that the 25% of CIL that would be available locally as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process would be allocated for specific purposes under the CIL scheme not for any project a Town or Parish Council wanted.
- Members also needed to be mindful that under the National Planning Policy Framework any site allocated for development could be brought forward for housing. The Plan would allow sustainable growth.
- The cabinet member – infrastructure commented that the adoption of the Plan was not the end of the process. It was recognised that a number of matters remained to be resolved. There was a complex process to secure infrastructure projects. Infrastructure requirements for individual projects would be assessed as part of the relevant planning application(s).
- The Plan gave insufficient weight to sustainability including sustainable transport and environmental considerations such as the effect of climate change.
- The Leader of the It's Our County Group highlighted that the implication of the change in wording in the Plan the Inspector had required, replacing references to indicative housing targets with minimum targets for housing growth, and the scope this afforded developers, remained to be seen. The Plan did not represent his Group's vision and he questioned if it was affordable or deliverable. The Plan represented a missed opportunity. The views of the public had been ignored. Reservations included the lack of weight given to sustainable transport and design standards, the absence of: a strategy for minerals and waste, the Community Infrastructure levy and Nutrient Management Plan and plans for the new university and hospital. He also questioned whether jobs would be created to enable people to afford homes, raising the possibility housing would be bought by elderly and retired people.
- The leader of Council spoke as seconder of the motion. He commented that the Plan ran until 2031 and clearly there would be change along the way. The Plan was affordable. He had received strong indications that the Government would support transport infrastructure proposals in the Plan. The provision of the right economic conditions would lead to the creation of jobs. A recent meeting with a number of large companies had been positive and further meetings were planned. The county needed to have a larger tax base. The development of the new university and a skilled workforce would also encourage businesses into the county. He noted that the development of a western relief road did not preclude the development of an eastern relief road as well.

In conclusion he thanked the cabinet member – infrastructure and members and officers past and present for their work in producing the Plan for adoption.

- The cabinet member – infrastructure commented that a more positive attitude was required to ensure the delivery of the Plan. Encouraging businesses would generate funding. In relation to environmental concerns he noted that a Nutrient Management Plan Board was in place involving all key organisations and this would ensure a sustainable Nutrient Management Plan was produced. Adopting the Core Strategy ensured that the County had a five year housing land supply. Adding to the thanks

given by the leader of the council he thanked his predecessor as cabinet member, RB Hamilton, for his work on the Plan.

A named vote was held and the proposal was carried.

For (29) BA Baker, WLS Bowen, TL Bowes, H Bramer, CR Butler, BA Durkin, CA Gandy, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, DG Harlow, EL Holton, JA Hyde, AW Johnson, JF Johnson, JLV Kenyon, JG Lester, RL Mayo, PJ McCaull, MT McEvelly, PM Morgan, PD Newman, CA North, GJ Powell, PD Price, WC Skelton, J Stone, EJ Swinglehurst, DB Wilcox and SD Williams.

Against (none)

Abstain (16) JM Bartlett, PE Crockett, PJ Edwards, J Hardwick, EPJ Harvey, MD Lloyd-Hayes, MN Mansell, RI Matthews, SM Michael, FM Norman, AJW Powers, A Round, A Seldon, D Summers, LC Tawn and A Warmington.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- (a) the Herefordshire local plan core strategy 2011-2031 (at <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/core-strategy>), incorporating the recommended main modifications (at appendix 2 to the report) and the schedules of minor modifications (at appendix 3 to the report) be adopted; and**
- (b) delegated authority be given to the programme director growth to make any further minor modifications, (i.e. typographical) to ensure consistency with other development plan documentation**

The meeting ended at 12.31 pm

CHAIRMAN

Public questions to Council – 16 October 2015

Question from Mr S Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

Question 1

Document trail re the main modifications and authorship

Could the cabinet member responsible for the core strategy please describe the process whereby the main modifications were written, passed to the inspector, commented on by members of the public, and responded to by the assistant director economic, environmental and cultural services? In particular, who wrote the first draft of the main modifications and did the inspector send comments to the assistant director economic, environmental and cultural services after she had received his responses?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

As those who were present will recall, at the close of the hearing sessions the inspector requested that a schedule of modifications be prepared to reflect discussions at the hearings. This work was undertaken in the weeks following the close of the hearings. It was then reviewed and amended by the inspector before being published for consultation.

Further modifications were prepared following specific requests from the inspector, largely as a result of changes to national planning policy, and these in turn were also subject to consultation.

The inspector also asked the council to prepare a brief summary of and response to the comments received to the main modification consultations. The inspector did not make any further comment. This correspondence is available on the council's website

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/answer-to-question-1>

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/core-strategy/examination-of-the-herefordshire-local-plan-core-strategy/post-hearing-and-further-consultations/summary-of-modifications/main-modifications/summary-responses>

Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

Question 2

The nutrient management plan (NMP) and the core strategy

Elements within the housing growth strategy are dependent on the NMP action plan (November 2014). This has the aspiration of ensuring that the SAC River Wye achieves favourable condition by 2027. However, as was acknowledged at the hearings in to the core strategy in February 2015, not all sections of the Wye and its tributaries such as the Lugg are currently in favourable condition. For consistency and assurance as to the council's obligations under the current Habitats and Water Framework directives, could the cabinet member responsible for the core strategy please confirm that MM031 (Leominster) also applies to MM017, MM018 and MM019, regarding the three strategic urban extensions in Hereford. The MM031 wording is as follows:

"Sections of the River Wye SAC where the water quality targets are already exceeded will be subject to measures to reduce nutrients in line with the targets. All new development proposals must not compromise the ability of the Nutrient Management Plan to deliver the necessary overall reductions along these stretches.

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

Public questions to Council – 16 October 2015

The modification is clear that it would apply to all new development proposals irrespective of the location. However, water quality targets are exceeded on the River Lugg section of the special area of conservation (SAC). The urban extensions at Hereford are considered unlikely to affect the River Lugg section of the SAC.

Supplementary Question

As Councillor Price has confirmed that the policy modification MM031 refers to any area scheduled for possible development affecting any stretch of the River Wye SAC where nutrient levels are failing to show favourable condition, and as the urban extensions in Hereford will show such failures before 2027 once development starts, could Councillor Price please ensure the overarching nature of MM031 is added to MM017, MM 018 and MM019.

Answer from Councillor Price

The nutrient management plan will address this matter.

Question from Mr R Stow, Rowlestone

Question 3

River Wye special area of conservation (SAC)

The inspectors report (paragraph 52) confirms that one "significant area of risk" to the delivery of the local plan is the effect on the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The Wye and Usk Foundation has considerable expertise in environmental matters and the ecology of the River Wye. In their response dated 21st May 2015 to the main modifications consultation, the Foundation raised a number of major concerns including:

- the implications of the "no deterioration" provisions in the Habitats and Water Framework Directives
- the cumulative impact of the continuing development of intensive poultry units, due to the high volumes and nutrient intensity of poultry manure
- the adequacy of a Nutrient Management Plan with no funding available
- the risk of the European Commission bringing infraction proceedings

Will the council please write to the Wye and Usk Foundation and provide a detailed response to all the serious issues raised in their letter of 21st May 2015, place the council response in the public domain, and issue a news statement to confirm that they have done so?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The letter from the Wye and Usk Foundation of 21 May 2015 was addressed to the inspector (and not Herefordshire Council) as part of the consultation upon the main modifications. The summary statements and response to the consultation comments prepared for the inspector are already in the public domain on the council's website.

The matters set out in the Wye and Usk Foundation letter were considered by the inspector in reaching her conclusions.

Public questions to Council – 16 October 2015

The Wye and Usk Foundation is acknowledged as being a key member of the Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) board established to implement the NMP actions and I look forward to working with all members of the NMP board on this important issue.

Question from Mr D King, Tillington

Question 4

The inspector's report states in paragraph 53 that "The plan identifies a new strategic road, the Hereford Relief Road, to be built to the west of the city to ensure there is capacity and mitigate the effect of transport on the town centre and the A49 trunk road which runs through Hereford, from the three Hereford UEAs (HD3, HD4 and HD5) and the Hereford City centre development (HD1 and HD2)."

Analysis of the most recent Census (2011) shows that there were 1.1 cars and vans per household available for private use in the Parish of Hereford, and 1.7 cars and vans per household available for private use in the surrounding Hereford Rural Housing Market Area. The core strategy will increase the numbers of houses in Hereford by a minimum of 26% (6,500), and will increase the numbers of houses in the surrounding Parishes by a minimum of 18% (1,870). Applying the 2011 Census figures for cars and vans per household, Hereford and its dependent hinterland are therefore likely to have, as a minimum, a further 10,000 cars and vans available for private use by 2031, whose owners will presumably be wanting to drive into Hereford to access its shops, jobs, schools, services and railway station. Could the cabinet member responsible for the core strategy please explain how he expects those vehicles to be driven into Hereford without creating the mother of all traffic jams every day, because the Hereford relief road can, at best, only enable the new residents to drive around it, and not into it?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

As policy HD3 makes clear, the Hereford relief road is only one element of a package of measures which the council will look to deliver in Hereford.

The council's evidence base set out on the website demonstrates that the relief road will provide additional highway capacity. This will accommodate the growth in traffic associated with new development, enabling public transport, walking and cycling improvements on the existing network.

Question from Ms M Burns, Hereford

Question 5

The inspector in para 78 states that "Overarching policy SS6 seeks development to conserve and enhance both the natural and built environment. It lists a wide range of environmental components to be considered in the planning process to achieve the policy aim. This is justified by a comprehensive evidence base, including heritage, townscape, landscape, biodiversity, geo-diversity and green infrastructure studies". However, the council's latest annual monitoring report states at para 11.4 that

"The Herefordshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan was updated in 2007. Herefordshire Council's Biodiversity Strategy 2007- 2010 needs to be rolled forward but there is currently no staff resource to do this...The current strategy can be viewed at: http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/docs/Biodiversity_Strategy_191107.pdf .

Public questions to Council – 16 October 2015

A national biodiversity reporting website is now in place for each County called the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS). This system was updated in 2012. There is currently insufficient staff resource to input to BARS.”

This BAP is no longer available. In addition, the list of local wildlife sites provided in annex 8 of the draft core strategy has not been fully reviewed since selection in 1990, from evidence gathered in 1979, and is now very out of date.

Could the cabinet member please explain how it will provide a comprehensive and up to date evidence base around biodiversity; geodiversity and green infrastructure when there has been no staff resource to do this for a number of years now?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The Herefordshire biodiversity action plan (BAP) was produced by a partnership which included Herefordshire Council. It is not accurate to say that there has been no staff resource ‘for a number of years now’ as a biodiversity partnership co-ordinator was employed by the council from 2006 – 2013. National funding for the BAP process was withdrawn in 2012 and has necessitated a different approach. The BAP is currently being reviewed and updated by a working group led by Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. Herefordshire Council is inputting to this review. The review will include consideration of how partners might utilise the UK’s biodiversity action plan reporting system.

In the event that the local plan is adopted today conservation strategies, including the biodiversity strategy and guidance will be reviewed and updated.

It is recognised that the local wildlife sites require review. To this end, the council and other partners will continue to seek funding opportunities to support this work.

Supplementary Question

The cabinet member acknowledges that the evidence for wildlife sites in and around Herefordshire has not been updated since it was collected in 1979 and that no one has been employed since 2013 to deliver the county’s biodiversity action plan. With the planning department regularly drawing in planning application fees significantly over budget in recent times, could the cabinet member please explain why the council is continuing to seek funding opportunities, rather than use the surplus on planning fees as intended and bring up to date the evidence base around biodiversity, geodiversity and green infrastructure?

Answer from Councillor Price

I will discuss with the Director to see if funding can be found from planning fees to update the records of wildlife sites.

Question from Mrs L Lewis, Hereford

Question 6

At para 89 the planning inspector notes that under the SHLAA (C25a) there is capacity within the existing City boundary to accommodate the balance of the housing growth not being delivered on the strategic urban developments. With so many sites now available in Hereford, such as the First Midland Bus depot; the Bath St Offices; the old Whitecross High School; land at Widemarsh common; as well as the “Urban Village” area in the centre of Hereford, would the cabinet member

Public questions to Council – 16 October 2015

please confirm the level of housing that the council believes can be delivered on SHLAA sites within the existing City boundary, including those mentioned above? For clarity and avoidance of any confusion I would appreciate it if he would please list the number of dwellings by each site, clearly differentiating between “Brownfield” and greenfield sites.”

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The strategic housing land availability assessment (SHLAA) element of the evidence base is regularly updated. The latest published SHLAA (which includes schedules of individual sites) can be seen on the council website.

A revised SHLAA for Hereford is expected to be published in the very near future which will provide the information requested.

Question from Mr A Bridges, Hereford

Question 7

Main modification 08 regarding policy SS4 on movement and transportation has been amended by the inspector to make explicit reference that “Herefordshire Council will work with the Highways Agency, Network Rail, bus and train operators”. The private business park at Moreton-on-Lugg has been able to remove over 178,000 HGV movements off Hereford roads by opening up a freight rail head.

What progress is Herefordshire Council making to deliver either a freight or passenger services by rail into its own employment site at Rotherwas to reduce vehicle movements on Hereford roads?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The council has commissioned technical studies to assess the benefits and costs associated with the re-introduction of passenger and rail freight services into Rotherwas. An initial assessment of this proposal indicated that it would not attract sufficient passengers for a service to operate on a commercial basis and hence would require ongoing subsidy. A further assessment has been commissioned and the outcome of that work is due to be considered later in the year. The Enterprise Zone has agreed to protect land to keep the option of future rail freight access open but it is not aware of any commercial interest in such a scheme.

Question from Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

Question 8

The inspector notes that “it is likely that funding towards the HRR (Hereford Relief Road) would come forward through developer contributions where appropriate” (Para 53). For any developer contributions to be available for the delivery of infrastructure the council needs to have a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging system in place. As CIL cannot be charged on development until a charging system has been adopted when does Herefordshire Council anticipate that it will be in a position to start collecting CIL?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

Public questions to Council – 16 October 2015

At this stage it is anticipated that approval will be sought to consult upon CIL in December 2015. This will include revised and updated CIL levy charges. The outcome of the consultation will inform the council's decision to approve a CIL scheme before it is submitted for independent examination.

Supplementary Question

As the Cabinet member recently informed the Council, in the last 18 months 2,068 dwellings have been approved by Herefordshire Council. At the Examination in Public it was made clear that many more developments are in the process of coming forward for approval before the Levy is in place. How will Herefordshire Council secure funding for the infrastructure identified in the plan, in particular the Western Relief Road, if it is unable to recover Community Infrastructure Levy on the major developments proposed in the Core Strategy, especially as CIL Cannot be backdated?

Answer from Councillor Price

Discussions have taken place with the Highways Agency, Department of Transport and the Local Enterprise Partnership about Road Infrastructure for 2020-2025. Funding for the western bypass is expected to be secured from Government.

Question from Mrs J Morris, Hereford

Question 9

The inspectors report recognises that there is a total affordable housing need across Herefordshire of, 3,457 homes in the period 2012-17 but this is "highly unlikely to be achieved" (para 32). For this reason the core strategy has to build a minimum of 16,500 homes across Herefordshire, well above the recognised objectively assessed need of 15,400 new homes, to try and deliver the affordable housing element.

With Herefordshire Council owning so much land and vacant buildings, including a number of brownfield sites across Hereford, what steps are being taken by the council to provide affordable and social housing on land it owns, in order to deliver much needed affordable homes now, rather than in 10 to 15 years?"

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The inspector recognises that a target of 16,500 homes is an appropriate target that would meet objectively assessed needs, affordability is only one element of determining an appropriate housing target.

The plan sets out a range of policies to deliver affordable housing which will be operated following adoption of the plan. Within this context the council is actively reviewing its portfolio of land to determine which can be brought forward to help meet housing needs.

Supplementary Question

I thought the Core Strategy local plan process over the last five years had been to plan for the future of the County and to identify delivery of new housing, including affordable housing for young families. As Herefordshire Council is a significant landowner, particularly of sites in the City, what steps are being taken by the Council in the next 5 years to address the current need to provide 3,457 affordable homes?

Answer from Councillor Price

Public questions to Council – 16 October 2015

The Council takes delivery of affordable housing seriously and will pursue such development through the Plan. Sites owned by the Council including brownfield sites will be a priority for affordable and other housing.

Question from Mr R Palgrave, How Caple

Question 10

The planning inspector in her report on the core strategy notes that the Hereford relief road

“is not identified in the Council's Local Transport Plan [C46a] as planned infrastructure, the funding is not secure and it is not part of Highways England (HE) Road Investment Strategy for 2015 – 2020... and there is a high degree of uncertainty about whether the HRR is viable and can be achieved within the plan period”, and also that:

“the submission Plan policy HD3 (Hereford Movement Policy) relating to movement failed to emphasise the importance of achieving and promoting sustainable transport to help address demand “.

Will the cabinet member please detail Herefordshire Council's plans for investing in sustainable transport infrastructure to address the demand from their housing growth proposals, giving estimates of funding amounts and timescales.

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The council has made substantial investments in sustainable transport since the introduction of the local transport planning system in 2001. Most recently, it has completed the Hereford Connect 2 Greenway cycle scheme which comprises a new river bridge providing direct access to the Hereford Enterprise Zone.

Our plans for further investment in sustainable transport infrastructure and behavioural change campaigns comprise funding from the local transport plan (LTP) block grant, local revenue contributions towards promotional campaigns, developer contributions and as elements of major schemes which are being delivered as packages. Subject to central government funding streams remaining, over the period of the core strategy it is anticipated some £15m of LTP block grant will be allocated to sustainable transport measures. Additional funds will be secured through S106 contributions, local revenue contributions and specific capital allocations will be identified and delivered as part of major scheme packages.

Supplementary Question

Could the cabinet member explain the plans for sustainable transport infrastructure, scheme costs and their timescale?

Answer from Councillor Price

I will provide a written answer.

Written Answer

The previous answer outlined the overall approach which the council intends to take to the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure to address the demands arising from the housing proposals contained within the core strategy. The delivery of such infrastructure must be coordinated with

Public questions to Council – 16 October 2015

the delivery of housing proposals to meet future local needs. The council's Local Transport Plan sets out the overall strategy for delivering improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. However, the details of individual schemes within the vicinity of new housing developments will be subject to confirmation through the planning process and informed by detailed transport assessments which potential developers will be expected to produce in support of their applications for planning permission. It is therefore not possible at this stage to provide specific scheme costs and delivery timescales.

Question from Mrs P Churchward, Breinton

Question 11

“In April 2015 the leader of Herefordshire Council sent to all parish councils a letter written on behalf of the cabinet.

This letter was to the planning inspector as part of the consultation on the main modifications to the core strategy. The letter asked for changes to be made to the way in which a minimum target of 5,300 houses was to be allocated to rural areas. The allocation changes could result in some villages having to accept at least a 60% growth in new homes. Despite the high profile of this letter, the planning inspector has not taken on board the cabinet's request.

The main modifications were apparently written by Herefordshire Council's own planning department, under the control of the cabinet member with responsibility for forward planning at that time.

If the cabinet letter was a genuine attempt to change the rural areas housing allocation formula (and nothing to do with the then impending elections), what are the reasons for the cabinet to recommend this plan to full Council now, when the changes they requested have not yet been implemented? “

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The reasons for recommending the adoption of the core strategy to Council are set out in the report.

I acknowledge that the rural policies resulted in significant debate; the cabinet response to the main modifications consultation addressed concerns expressed at that time.

It is however erroneous to state that the representations made by cabinet during that consultation have not been acted upon; I would refer Mrs Churchward to the schedule of minor modifications, in particular E.201-E215, which incorporate those amendments suggested by cabinet. Such changes are referred to in paragraph 4 of the inspector's report. I would confirm that modifications were drafted at the request of the inspector and were not under my control.

Supplementary Question

How was it decided that amendments were minor rather than major?

Answer from Councillor Price

I have been assured that the Inspector agreed what amendments would be classed as major amendments and what amendments could be classed as minor amendments.

Chairman's Announcements – 18th December 2015

Forthcoming Events

Presentation of Frozen – in aid of The Haven – Chairman's Charity – Robert Owen Society School - Friday 18th December and Saturday 19th December 2015

Festival of Lessons and Carols, Hereford Cathedral – 23rd December 2015

Citizenship Ceremony – Monday 11th January 2016

The Royal British Legion Annual General Meeting – Saturday 16th January 2016

Service of Evening Prayer (Vespers) Centenary of the Archdiocese of Cardiff – Saturday 6th February 2016

Herefordshire Policing Awards Ceremony – Thursday 25th February 2016

Events Attended since Council on 25th September 2015

Powys: Centenary Parade for The Welsh Guards – Wednesday 30th September

Royal Visit by the Duke of Kent – Thursday 1st October

Walking with the Wounded Dinner – Thursday 1st October 2015

Walking with the Wounded – Friday 2nd October 2015

The Shrievalty Service (High Sheriff of Hereford) - Sunday 4th October 2015

Hereford FC Football match – Saturday 10th October 2015

Citizenship Ceremony – Monday 12th October 2015

Royal Visit by the Countess of Wessex – Tuesday 13th October 2015

Hartpury College Awards Ceremony – Friday 16th October 2015

RNC Celebration of Achievement Ceremony – Thursday 22nd October 2015

Official Opening of the Halo Bromyard Centre – Friday 23rd October

Mayor of Leominster Annual Civic Service – Sunday 25th October 2015

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Sports Awards 2015 – Wednesday 4th November 2015

Grand Opening of the Herefordshire Field of Remembrance – Thursday 5th November 2015

Opening of Skylon Court – Friday 6th November 2015

Remembrance Sunday Service and Parade – Sunday 8th November 2015 Nominated
Councillors attended at all focal points in Herefordshire

Citizenship Ceremony – Monday 9th November 2015

Shropshire Council Dinner for Civic Heads – Friday 13th November

The Annual World Day of Remembrance and Hope Service for Road Traffic Crash Victims and
Survivors – Sunday 15th November 2015

Switching on of the Christmas Lights in High Town – Sunday 15th November 2015

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Award Ceremony 2015 – Friday 20th
November 2015

50th Anniversary of the Bromyard Lights Switch-on – Saturday 21st November 2015

300th Anniversary Concert of Three Choirs Festival, Buckingham Palace – Tuesday 24th
November 2015

Herefordshire Youth Music Autumn Concert of Strings and Beginner Ensembles – Thursday 26th
November

The Children's Commissioner Takeover Challenge: Role of the Chairman of Herefordshire
Council - Friday 27th November 2015

Scouting in Herefordshire Awards – Saturday 28th November 2015

Hereford Cathedral in London, A Service for Advent including paying respect to the SAS
Memorial, Guards Chapel, London – Tuesday 1st December 2015

St Michael's Hospice AGM – Wednesday 2nd December 2015

Ledbury Town Council Mayor's Ball – Saturday 12th December 2015

St Michael's Hospice Light Up a Life Service – Sunday 13th December 2015

Citizenship Ceremony – Monday 14th December 2015

The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School Annual Carol Service – Tuesday 15th December

Royal Mail Festive Delivery Office Visit – Wednesday 16th December



MEETING:	Council
MEETING DATE:	18 December 2015
TITLE OF REPORT:	Questions from members of the public
REPORT BY:	Governance Manager

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To receive any questions from members of the public deposited more than eight clear working days before the meeting of Council.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Members of the public may ask one question of a Cabinet Member or Committee or other Chairmen at any meeting of Council, subject to the exceptions in the paragraph below. Written answers will be circulated to Members, the press and public prior to the start of the Council meeting. Questions subject to a Freedom of Information request will be dealt with under that separate process.
- 2 No questions from the public will be considered at the Annual Meeting of Council which Council has agreed will concentrate on the civic and ceremonial role of the Annual Council meeting. No questions from the public will be considered at the Budget (February) meeting of Council except on those items listed on the agenda.
- 3 Standing Order 4.1.14.4 of the Constitution states that: a question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the Monitoring Officer no later than midday eight clear working days before the day of the meeting (ie the Monday of the week preceding the Council meeting where that meeting is on a Friday). Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and must name the person to whom it is to be put.
- 4 A questioner who has submitted a written question may also put **one** brief supplementary question without notice to the person (if s/he is present at the meeting) who has replied to his or her original question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original request or reply. The Chairman may reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds for rejecting written questions (as set out in paragraph 5 below), or if the question is too lengthy, is in multiple parts or takes the form of a speech. In any event, any person asking a supplementary question will be permitted only **1 minute** to do so.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Governance Services on Tel (01432) 260659

- 5 A question may be rejected if it:
- Is not about a matter for which the Council has a responsibility or which affects the County or a part of it;
 - Is illegal, scurrilous, defamatory, frivolous or offensive or otherwise out of order;
 - Is substantially the same as or similar to a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months or relates to the same subject matter or the answer to the question will be substantially the same as the previous answer;
 - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information;
 - Relates to a planning or licensing application;
 - Relates to an employment matter that should more properly be dealt with through the Council's human resources processes.
- 6 There will be a time limit of a maximum of 30 minutes for public questions and of 30 minutes for Members' questions. There will normally be no extension of time, unless the Chairman decides that there are reasonable grounds to allow such an extension, and questions not dealt with in this time will be dealt with by written response. The Chairman will decide the time allocated to each question.

QUESTIONS

- 7 Eleven questions have been received and accepted by the deadline and they are attached at Appendix 1.

Background Papers

- None

Question from Mr P McKay, Leominster

Question 1

Highways records

A briefing note raised for general overview and scrutiny committee advised that access is to be improved to our highway records but at Local Access Forum, council's Balfour Beatty representative had little information other than that some statutory records would shortly be online. The Deregulation Act 2015 provisions can be expected to come into effect early next year with volunteers researching gaps and anomalies in the records, helping to bring them up to standard, so may I ask if :

1. Viewing the records over historic base maps could be made viewable at Record Office, this known to be available to Herefordshire Council officers but not online?
 2. If viewing the Exponare public rights of way data with its written statement path termination information could be reinstated, this presumably still available, and useful information if researching gaps and anomalies ?
 3. If the list of anomalies and blue triangle location markers could be made viewable, again useful information if researching gaps and anomalies?
 4. If definitive map modification order applications and road protocol applications could be shown on a map layer in addition to being listing in the register, this making them clearer to be seen by all?
-

Question from Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

Question 2

Southern link road

The Southern link road waste report is blank for the management of waste from the construction of this road. As waste spoil has been a significant problem with the Rotherwas Enterprise Zone, ESG development, the flood alleviation works, Asda, etc. would the cabinet member please explain what cost allowance has been made for the waste associated with this major infrastructure project and how this has been calculated, including types of waste, volumes of each waste and location of the appropriate waste handling sites?

Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

Question 3

Hereford 2020

Hereford High Town, Hereford Butter Market, Hereford parking charges, Hereford Southern link road, and Hereford Skylon Park enterprise zone all seem to have been rolled into one masterplan, 'Hereford 2020', with its own website, and video insert 'blogs'. Could the cabinet member responsible for 'Hereford 2020' please explain what, at a time of cuts to public services making Hereford a less attractive place in which to live, is the justification for the allocation of £2.5 million to streetscape improvements in High Town, and describe the remit, terms of reference, budget and funding sources for 'Hereford 2020'.

Public questions to Council – 18 December 2015

Question from Mrs J Morris, Hereford

Question 4

Local transport plan

With reference to the draft local transport plan policy, on page 16 it says in reference to bus services - "Subsidy is allocated to services on the basis of the relative costs of providing the service and rider-ship (cost per passenger). A service qualifies for subsidy if the cost per passenger is at, or below, a standard amount. This standard amount alters in line with budget availability. **At the time of writing (2012)** the rate is £4 per passenger."

Would the cabinet member confirm that the public are actually viewing the 2015 local transport plan and what the update, current 2015/16 standard rate, actually is per passenger?

Question from Dr N Geeson, Hereford

Question 5

Local transport plan

The local transport plan currently under public consultation includes a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) based on a list of objectives to protect the environment. Unfortunately this SEA is not new but is based on previous SEAs, including that for the core strategy, which was criticised for not recognising up-to-date baseline environmental data. Since the proposed Western relief road corridor crosses the River Wye SAC (that is a European designation) and SSSI, why does the council mention only very few environmental assets by the riverbank that might be affected, and consistently fail to recognise the scheduled ancient monument at the National Trust site of Breinton Springs, Breinton Wood ancient woodland, (designated a Local Wildlife Site), extensive landscaped parkland, and a local geological site at Red Rocks? If so much up-to-date environmental evidence is missing, surely this SEA, which is required both by European law and the national planning policy framework, cannot be either reliable or lawful?

Question from Ms K Sharp, Hereford

Question 6

Enterprise zone employment

With the council making significant investment in the Rotherwas enterprise zone to support the creation of 4,000 new jobs, would the cabinet member please confirm how many additional, new jobs have been created on the zone (excluding those that have been transferred from other sites in Herefordshire)?

Question from Ms C Protherough, Clehonger

Question 7

Local transport plan

The LTP4 SEA para 4.6.30, shows that in 2009 the county's carbon footprint per capita was 16.2% higher than the rest of the UK. Since then the rest of the country has reduced its carbon footprint by 13% whilst Herefordshire has only reduced by 10%. With the council's plans for economic and housing growth across the county, including major new road infrastructure which is expected to

Public questions to Council – 18 December 2015

increase car use, what are the forecast carbon emissions between now and 2031 and what amount is anticipated to come from transport within the county?

Question from Mr J Perkins, Hereford

Question 8

Southern link road

With the deadline of April 2016 fast approaching for providing a full business case to the Dept for Transport for the South Wye transport package, and planning permission for the Southern link road still outstanding, would the cabinet member please confirm that Herefordshire Council will be submitting a full business case for the sustainable transport measures that will tackle congestion in South Wye, ahead of any road building?

Question from Ms P Churchward, Breinton

Question 9

Local transport plan

Given that the cabinet member has asked people to take time away from their Christmas preparations, holiday and family in order to meet the December 31st consultation deadline for the local transport plan 2016-2031, it would be helpful if he could provide specific examples of past LTP proposals that have been changed or introduced as a result of public consultation, particularly from the 2010 consultation on LTP3.

Question from Ms D Toynbee, Eaton Bishop

Question 10

Destination Hereford

£11 million was allocated to the council for the Destination Project to April 2015, to develop low carbon transport and support sustainable economic growth in Hereford. Would the cabinet member detail how the final Destination Hereford package has performed against the targets of reduced congestion and increased rural access to public transport?

Question from Ms P Mitchell

Question 11

Local transport plan

The draft LTP4 policy document contains an ambitious and very welcome policy on active travel, aiming for cycling to account for 15% of all journeys in Hereford by 2032 (p 30). This is a very big difference from the share modelled in the 2014 Hereford transport strategy review which showed that by 2032 cycling would account for less than 5% of trips on Hereford's road network (table 3.8).

What modelling has the council undertaken since the Hereford transport strategy review report to analyse the impact of a 15% mode share for cycling in 2032 on a) the number of cars using the

Public questions to Council – 18 December 2015

Hereford relief road, which the 2014 transport strategy review says will not be needed until 2027, and b) peak hour congestion in Hereford?



Meeting:	Council
Meeting date:	18 December 2015
Title of report:	Petition for debate – Ross-on-Wye library
Report by:	Cabinet member – contracts and assets

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards Affected

The library is located in Ross East ward but is part of the Countywide library service.

Purpose

To consider a petition received bearing more than 7,000 signatures and therefore requiring debate by Council.

Recommendation(s)

THAT: Council determine its response to the petition.

Alternative options

- 1 The council's petitions scheme provides that when a petition is debated by Council, Council may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee. Where, as in this case, the issue is one on which the council executive are required to make the final decision, the council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 The petition contains more than 7,000 signatures (7,639 of which 2,245 are from people not resident in the county) and the council's petitions scheme requires that the petition is therefore debated by Council.

Key considerations

- 3 A petition has been received from the Ross Library Development Group. The petition states: *“We the undersigned strongly request that Herefordshire Council ensure that the library service in Ross-on-Wye is retained to provide the comprehensive and efficient service for the Town that we currently enjoy.”*
- 4 A supporting statement submitted with the petition is appended.

Procedure for debating the petition

- 5 The petitions scheme provides that the petition organiser will be given up to three minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by councillors. A maximum of 30 minutes will be allowed at any meeting to consider up to three petitions, however, this may be extended at the discretion of the chairman.
- 6 The petition will therefore be discussed as follows:
- The chairman will invite the petition organiser to present the petition.
 - The petition organiser will move to the allocated seat and will have up to three minutes to present the petition. The petition organiser will then return to their seat in the public gallery and participate no further in the meeting.
 - The cabinet member – contracts and assets will reply to the petition and propose a response for which a seconder will be sought.
 - Council will then debate the matter. The Council’s normal rules of debate will apply.
 - Council will formulate its resolution and refer the petition to the executive.

Comment

- 7 Council will recall that two petitions relating to the library service were submitted to Council in September 2015. The first, containing 553 signatures, was titled: help save Belmont library: *“we the undersigned protest most strongly and totally oppose any measures to close this invaluable community service”*. The second containing 3,516 signatures was submitted by the Friends of Leominster library: *“Herefordshire Council has proposed the closure of Leominster public Library and Services. We the undersigned, hereby call on Herefordshire Council to allow Leominster Public Library and Services to remain open to the public and managed by a professional librarian”*.
- 8 The Council’s published response to these petitions is: *“The recent budget consultation presented a number of concept saving and income generation ideas to inform Herefordshire Council Cabinet on the difficult decisions to address budget pressure as a result of reduced government grant.”* The response also notes that any further decision regarding the future delivery of the library service will be subject to wider public consultation”.

Community impact

- 9 Correspondence received as part of the budget consultation, previous consultations and national research demonstrate the well-being, health and educational benefits of a library service.

Equality duty

- 10 None in relation to this decision; in determining its response to the petition the executive will need to have regard to the public sector equality duty and any information provided in a relevant equality impact assessment.

Financial implications

- 11 None in relation to this decision; in determining its response to the petition the executive will need to have regard to the resources available to the council. There are no budget reduction proposals in the draft medium term financial strategy which would impact on library service provision in Ross on Wye in 2016/17.

Legal implications

- 12 The issue raised in this petition will be debated at a meeting of Council in accordance with the Constitution.
- 13 The duty to provide a library service is found in Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and provides that 'it shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof.' When fulfilling its duty under section 7, a local authority must have regard to the desirability:
- 'Of securing that facilities are available for the borrowing of or reference to books and other printed matter, pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials'.
 - That these facilities are sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general and special requirements of adults and children.
 - Of encouraging children and adults to make full use of the library service.

Risk management

- 14 There are no implications in relation to this decision. In determining a response to the petition the executive will need to have regard to any relevant risks and opportunities.

Consultees

- 15 None.

Appendices

Save Ross Library Petition – (supporting statement)

Background papers

- None identified

Save Ross Library Petition (supporting statement)

“In Herefordshire Council’s Budget Income & Savings proposals they are proposing to withdraw customer services and libraries along with access to public computers in the Market Towns including Ross-on-Wye.

Ross-on-Wye has a very modern purpose built award winning library building that serves the Town and the whole of South Herefordshire with a wide variety of library based services. It is the only Herefordshire Council Library in HR9.

In addition to standard books and reference books to help students, talking books for the blind and large print books for those with poor eyesight, the library service in Ross offers many events to encourage children of all ages to value reading and develop an enquiring mind. It is also part of “Books on Prescription.”

But really LIBRARIES are so much more than Books!

The access to computers is a well-used and highly valued service for those members of the community who do not otherwise have IT access, this is calculated at 25% of the community (Office of National Statistics 2015).

Our Ross library is also a hugely valued facility that provides a safe tranquil meeting place for young and old where they can study, explore local history, catch up with papers and journals or view the many exhibitions that are held in the Dennis potter room, which is also a bookable meeting space and is used all year round. Meeting rooms and affordable gallery spaces are **very scarce** in Ross.

Ross has had a free library/reading room since 1873 when Thomas Blake gifted the Free Library at 20 Broad Street to the people of Ross in perpetuity. Herefordshire Council decided to sell that building, but the people of Ross were compensated with a new purpose built building to house our current Library.

Taking into account the above facts, we the undersigned strongly request that the Herefordshire Council ensure that the Library Service in Ross-on-Wye is retained to provide the comprehensive and efficient service for the town that we currently enjoy.”



MEETING:	Council
MEETING DATE:	18 December 2015
TITLE OF REPORT:	Notices of motion under standing orders
REPORT BY:	Governance manager

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To consider Notices of Motion.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Constitution provides that Members of Council can submit written notice of motions for debate at Council. A motion must be signed by at least one Member and submitted not later than midday on the seventh working day before the date of the Meeting.
- 2 Motions must be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility or which affect the area.
- 3 Motions for which notice has been given will be listed on the agenda in the order in which notice was received, to a maximum of three, unless the Member giving notice states, in writing, that they propose to move it to a later meeting or withdraw it. Motions exceeding three are not listed on the Agenda and will be held over for listing on the Agenda for the next meeting in the order they were received.
- 4 A maximum of 1 ½ hours will be allocated for dealing with notices of motion but that time may be extended at the discretion of the Chairman.
- 5 Where a critical local situation arises a motion signed by two Members may be permitted in addition to the maximum of three if accepted by the Chairman in consultation with the Monitoring Officer.
- 6 Three notices of motion have been received. These are set out below.

MOTION ONE – Road markings

(Proposed by Councillor NE Shaw)

Balfour Beatty, the Council's highways maintenance partner, operate under a blanket instruction in respect of road markings and currently have little contractual opportunity to be flexible in attending to safety related warning and

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Governance Services on Tel (01432) 260239

information marks if they are not most severely worn. In the Bromyard vicinity, and presumably in other areas, markings outside schools and zebra crossings have become abraded to an extent that it is questionable if they continue to adequately convey the information to the motorist that they are designed to provide, and public concern is evident from communications received by the Ward Councillors affected.

This Council moves that the executive cabinet member responsible should reconsider the blanket approach in respect of road markings and special road treatments outside schools; fire, police and ambulance stations; pedestrian crossings and any other locations historically associated with serious or fatal accidents. That in such circumstances a request by a Parish Council, Headmaster or emergency services officer through the Ward Councillor be prioritised by our highways maintenance partner and delivery of an agreed scheme on the ground be effected within 3 calendar months unless delayed for reasons justified by the Cabinet Member responsible e.g. adverse weather, re-surfacing being scheduled within the next 12 months, closure or consolidation of a location, other traffic scheme (TRO or otherwise) being imminent.

MOTION TWO – Additional 2% precept in respect of Adult Social Care.

(Proposed by Councillor J Stone and seconded by Councillor PA Andrews)

Following the Chancellor’s announcement last week, and considering local demographics and the current pressure on our local health economy this Council should strongly consider accepting the additional 2% precept in respect of Adult Social Care. In making its recommendations to Council the executive is requested to consider how this money can be best used to protect services, continue to further transform our local health and social care system, reduce demand and ensure improved services for some of our most vulnerable citizens now and in the future.

MOTION THREE – Supplementary planning document: intensive livestock units

(Proposed by Councillor AJW Powers, seconded by Councillor FM Norman)

That as the Local Planning Authority, in view of the absence of any specific policy in the Local Plan Core Strategy to replace the expired Policy E16 (Intensive Livestock Units) in the Unitary Development Plan; and to provide clear and robust policy guidance to all involved, including applicants, parish councils, officers and Planning Committee

This Council resolves that:

- (a) The Executive be asked to develop - with officers, members and key stakeholders - a Supplementary Planning Document for intensive livestock units (and related forms of development) that will, as a minimum requirement, address matters of:

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Governance Services on Tel (01432) 260239

- public and residential amenity
 - waste and manure management
 - impacts on surface and ground waters
 - landscape and visual impacts
 - traffic movements, volumes and highway safety; and
- (b) this Supplementary Planning Document goes through the appropriate consultation and decision-making channels before being adopted.

Background Papers

- None



MEETING:	Council
MEETING DATE:	18 December 2015
TITLE OF REPORT:	Proposed capital programme 2016/17
REPORT BY:	Director of resources

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

To approve the proposed capital programme for 2016/17 to 2019/20 inclusive, as proposed by Cabinet on 3 December 2015.

Recommendation(s)

THAT: the 2016/17 to 2019/20 capital programme as set out at appendix 2 to the report be approved.

Alternative Options

1. The capital schemes detailed below will either enable the delivery of savings targeted in the medium term financial strategy, are self-funded, grant funded or address critical service needs.
2. Additional capital spend could be approved, this has not been recommended due to affordability, lack of clarity on need and the opportunity for alternative solutions.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Josie Rushgrove, head of corporate finance on tel (01432) 261867

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The council's budget and policy framework rules require that Council approve the capital programme.

Key Considerations

4. The capital programme plays a key role in delivering the council's broader ambitions to drive economic growth in the county and the delivery of more jobs and homes. It builds on the foundations provided by the recently adopted core strategy and is aligned with both the Marches strategic economic plan and the council's corporate plan.
5. Capital proposals are invited and ranked by the capital strategy group, a senior officer group chaired by the director of resources. Expressions of interest were submitted in August and if the request aligned with corporate priorities business cases were completed and reviewed in October.
6. The current capital programme approved by Council in December 2014 with updated spend profiles is provided in appendix 1.
7. The capital programme was updated in the year to include the Marches and Worcestershire redundant building grant programme of £1.5m. Herefordshire is the accountable body of this Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) grant funded fund providing capital grant support of between £3k and £50k to small job-creating businesses to refurbish underused and redundant buildings, bringing them back into commercial use.
8. Since the last update the Leominster junior and infant school amalgamation has been completed on time and within budget.
9. If the proposals in this report are approved the capital programme will total £174m in future years, as shown in appendix 1. This will be funded by grants, capital receipts, borrowing and revenue savings.

Proposed additions to the capital programme

10. The proposed programme focuses capital spend on key infrastructure issues such as broadband, roads and schools all of which will deliver the conditions required to enable the provision of new housing and for businesses to thrive, to help them create new and better paid jobs for the county's residents.
11. Proposed additions to the capital programme to be spent 2016/17 – 2019/20 are summarised below and detailed in appendix 2. This follows the review of submissions by the capital strategy group. Rejected submissions were received for additional investment in the property estate, flood remedial works and fleet renewals. These were rejected due to affordability, uncertainties, lack of clarity on need and the opportunity for alternative solutions.
12. The bulk of the proposed £37.6m programme is funded by capital grants, service charges, capital receipts or revenue savings. This leaves a balance of £13.4m to be financed by prudential borrowing. The revenue implications are detailed in the financial implications section of this report and will be reflected as pressures in future years' budget proposals. Spending will support the corporate plan priorities by improving infrastructure, support the local economy, housing development and the

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creation of job opportunities.

Scheme	Total Cost £000	Total Funding £000	Net Cost £000
Infrastructure			
Hereford city centre transport package	13,600	(13,600)	-
Fastershire broadband	8,000	(7,000)	1,000
Schools			
Brookfield school improvements	1,370	-	1,370
Westfield school improvements	710	(500)	210
Peterchurch primary school improvements	4,500	(1,000)	3,500
Service delivery improvements			
Purchase of green waste bins to meet recycling targets	150	(150)	-
Property estate			
Emergency property estate enhancement works	2,000	-	2,000
Corporate accommodation	1,700	(300)	1,400
1A St Owen street, adjacent to Shire Hall	70	-	70
Edgar street works	100	-	100
Smallholding health and safety improvements	100	-	100
Hereford library accommodation works	1,000	-	1,000
Highway depot improvements	800	(800)	-
Office and car park lighting replacement	300	(300)	-
ICT			
Data centre consolidation	1,170	-	1,170
IT network upgrade	500	-	500
PC replacement	740	-	740
Software to enable remote access to desktops and automate upgrades	500	(500)	-
1% contingency	290	-	290
Total	37,600	(24,150)	13,450
Estimated annual revenue borrowing cost upon completion			807

13. Of the £13.4m funding needed, £5m relates to the schools capital investment strategy. This is currently in development and the proposals are within the overall strategic approach. It is anticipated that a significant number of schemes will come forward over the next five years to deliver sustainable, high quality education facilities in Herefordshire. Funding for such schemes will be explored with partners such as the education funding agency, schools, the diocese of Hereford, archdiocese of Cardiff, and local communities as well as opportunities for releasing sites and reinvesting in education.
14. A further investment of £8m is recommended to expand broadband coverage throughout the county as outlined in the fastershire broadband strategy 2014-2018. The council is committed to reach rural premises in the county with broadband of 30Mbps by 2016. Additional investment is required to provide further coverage to properties predominantly in more rural areas which are more expensive to reach. Of

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 Josie Rushgrove, head of corporate finance on tel (01432) 261867

the £8m total cost external funding of £7m has been secured with the balance of £1m proposed to be funded from council resources.

15. In addition to this the council has secured grant funding of £2m from broadband UK, a government agency which would enable the programme to continue beyond 2018/19. However this funding will require match funding. Prudential borrowing of £2m would cost approximately £120k pa over 25 years to repay. The council is seeking external funding as an alternative, minimising any contribution from its own resources.

Overall borrowing implications

16. The additional borrowing requirement of £13.4m will be included in the treasury management strategy to February Council which will be updated following approval of this report. Actual borrowing will be secured as cash funding is required at the optimal interest rate available at that time.
17. Total gross outstanding debt was £165m as at 31 March 2015. This is being repaid at approximately £10m per annum.
18. Assuming the proposals are approved and including the capital programme approved to date, there would be a net increase in the debt requirement from £165m as at 31 March 2015 to approximately £195m as at 31 March 2020. This additional borrowing includes spend on the waste plant and Halo leisure centres, the cost of which will be financed from payments received.
19. Herefordshire has a long term debt to asset ratio of approximately 25% which means a quarter of Herefordshire's assets are financed by long term debt, which is in line with the average position when compared to all unitary authorities. Herefordshire is in the lower (better) half of the comparative authority debt positions when comparing the cost of borrowing to net revenue budget.

Community Impact

20. The capital programme proposed supports the overall corporate plan and service delivery strategies in place. The overall aim of capital expenditure is to benefit the community through improved facilities and by promoting economic growth.

Equality and Human Rights

21. A full community impact assessment will be carried out prior to any scheme commencing.

Financial Implications

22. The majority of proposals are funded as detailed in appendix 2. A separate Cabinet report on the business case for new individual projects will be approved before spend begins.
23. It is estimated that the phasing and cost of the £13.4m new prudential borrowing requirement will be as follows:

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Josie Rushgrove, head of corporate finance on tel (01432) 261867

	Capital cost £m	Cost of borrowing per annum £m
2016/17	5.6	0.3
2017/18	6.3	0.4
2018/19	1.0	0.1
2019/20	0.5	0.0
	<u>13.4</u>	<u>0.8</u>

24. The additional borrowing costs will continue for approximately 25 future years and comprise both interest and debt repayment. These will be included in the revenue budget proposals for future years.

Legal Implications

25. The council is under a legal duty to sensibly manage their own capital finance. The council is able to borrow subject to limits set by the council and any nationally imposed limits and it must do so in accordance with the prudential code on borrowing.
26. The Local Government Act 2003 allows the council to borrow for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment and for the purposes of the prudent management of its financial affairs. Before approval of any individual scheme it will be necessary to ensure that the need for the scheme arises out of a legal obligation on the council for its provision.
27. Further any scheme will need to be procured in accordance with the procurement regulations and the council's own contract procedure rules and appropriate contractual documentation put in place to protect the council's interests.

Risk Management

28. Monthly budget control meetings are chaired by the director of resources and give assurance on the robustness of budget control and monitoring, to highlight key risks and to identify any mitigation to reduce the impact of pressures on the council's overall position.

Consultees

29. Cabinet considered the proposals on 3 December following a general overview and scrutiny committee review on 17 November. The general overview and scrutiny committee noted the proposals and made a number of comments summarised in the table below.

General overview and scrutiny committee comment	Response
The 'Hereford city centre transport package' brought together the Hereford city link road and the range of complementary transport and public realm measures within one line. A committee member asked for consistency in how schemes were described and	The description in appendix two has been updated to reflect this feedback.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Josie Rushgrove, head of corporate finance on tel (01432) 261867

accounted for.	
The Chairman suggested that future reports would benefit from expanded explanatory notes.	Future reports will be enhanced.
Numerous schemes had been identified as 'invest to save' initiatives and it was suggested that the committee would benefit from visibility of those elements of the capital programme which had been delivered and to be assured that savings and returns on investments were being achieved. The Chairman requested that a briefing note be prepared and circulated on this matter annually.	A briefing note will be shared.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Total capital programme

Appendix 2 - Proposed schemes

Background Papers

None identified.

Total Capital Programme

Scheme	Spend in prior years £000	15/16 £000	16/17 £000	17/18 £000	Future years £000	Total £000
Existing Schemes						
Road infrastructure	14,613	5,387	-	-	-	20,000
Hereford city link road	10,658	9,513	3,324	3,505	-	27,000
Fastershire broadband	8,395	6,200	5,605	-	-	20,200
Energy from waste plant	6,009	16,000	17,991	-	-	40,000
Leisure centres	4,013	3,187	1,800	-	-	9,000
Electronic document and management system	400	400	-	-	-	800
Highways Maintenance	-	11,523	10,564	10,244	27,816	60,147
Hereford enterprise zone	-	2,500	7,100	6,400	-	16,000
South wye transport package	-	1,000	1,000	12,300	12,700	27,000
Integrated transport plan	-	1,069	1,069	1,069	3,207	6,414
LED street lighting	766	4,889	-	-	-	5,655
Three elms trading estate	-	2,100	400	350	-	2,850
Solar photovoltaic panels	35	1,599	500	-	-	2,134
Marches and Worcestershire redundant building grant	-	1,500	-	-	-	1,500
Better care fund	-	1,356	-	-	-	1,356
Schools capital maintenance grant	-	1,215	-	-	-	1,215
Relocation of Broadlands school	-	1,137	120	-	-	1,257
Schools basic need	-	634	666	-	-	1,300
Brookfield improvements	-	200	300	-	-	500
Colwall primary school	-	-	4,800	1,700	-	6,500
Peterchurch primary school	-	-	1,000	-	-	1,000
Purchase of gritters	-	-	375	125	-	500
Sub total	44,889	71,409	56,614	35,693	43,723	252,328
Proposed Additions						
Hereford city centre transport package	-	-	6,800	3,300	3,500	13,600
Fastershire broadband	-	-	1,000	4,155	2,845	8,000
Brookfield school improvements	-	-	-	970	400	1,370
Westfield school improvements	-	-	-	710	-	710
Peterchurch primary school improvements	-	-	-	4,500	-	4,500
Purchase of green waste bins	-	-	150	-	-	150
Emergency property estate enhancement works	-	-	500	500	1,000	2,000
Corporate accommodation	-	-	1,100	600	-	1,700
1A St Owen St adjacent to Shire Hall	-	-	70	-	-	70
Edgar Street works	-	-	100	-	-	100
Smallholding health and safety improvements	-	-	100	-	-	100

Scheme	Spend in prior years £000	15/16 £000	16/17 £000	17/18 £000	Future years £000	Total £000
Hereford library accommodation works	-	-	1,000	-	-	1,000
Highway depot improvements	-	-	800	-	-	800
Office and car park lighting replacement	-	-	300	-	-	300
Data centre consolidation	-	-	1,170	-	-	1,170
IT network upgrade	-	-	500	-	-	500
PC replacement	-	-	380	230	130	740
Software to enable remote access to desktops and automate upgrades	-	-	500	-	-	500
1% contingency	-	-	140	100	50	290
Sub total	-	-	14,610	15,065	7,925	37,600
TOTAL	44,889	71,409	71,224	50,758	51,648	289,928

Proposed additions to the Capital Programme								
Scheme Summary	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	Total Cost	Total Funding	Net Cost	Description
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
Create and maintain a successful economy through investment in infrastructure								
<i>Hereford city centre transport package</i> - investment in transport links and public realm regeneration of the city	6,800	3,300	3,500		13,600	(13,600)	-	Together with the Hereford City Link Road scheme, already identified in the capital programme, this overall city centre transport package will deliver the road and a series of complementary public realm and transport measures, funded by the LEP Growth Fund.
<i>Fastershire broadband</i> - to enable the continued delivery of high speed broadband into the most rural areas	1,000	4,155	2,845		8,000	(7,000)	1,000	Corporate funding is required to leverage grant funding towards the BDUK Superfast Extension Programme (SEP) for the continued delivery of high speed broadband to tackle what is termed 'the final 10%' in line with the Fastershire Broadband Strategy 2014-18
Improve outcomes for children and young people through investment in schools								
<i>Brookfield school improvements</i> - replace temporary building		970	400		1,370	-	1,370	Business case under review in tandem with the schools capital investment strategy
<i>Westfield school improvements</i> - build specialist provision		710			710	(500)	210	Business case under review in tandem with the schools capital investment strategy
<i>Peterchurch primary school improvements</i> - refurbishment scheme		4,500			4,500	(1,000)	3,500	Business case under review in tandem with the schools capital investment strategy
Delivering excellence and value to our communities through service delivery improvements								
<i>Purchase of brown waste bins</i> to collect green waste and meet recycling targets	150				150	(150)	-	To introduce a new chargeable garden waste collection service to increase the recycling rate, reduce waste going to landfill and reduce disposal costs
Making the best use of the resources available by investing in the property estate								
<i>Emergency property estate enhancement works</i> as required following approval from the Capital Strategy Group	500	500	500	500	2,000	-	2,000	To enable prompt response to high value reactive property improvement works required to reduce costs, avoid extended disruption and maintain Council services
<i>Corporate accommodation</i> to purchase, adapt and refurbish new premises and enable the sale of existing premises	1,100	600			1,700	(300)	1,400	To continue the corporate accommodation investment programme maximising the use of resources, enhancing better ways of working and providing suitable accommodation whilst reducing the overall accommodation estate

Scheme Summary	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	Total Cost	Total Funding	Net Cost	Description
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
1A St Owen St adjacent to Shire Hall emergency works to scaffold, rebuild the chimney and re-roof the building	70				70	-	70	To mitigate risk of collapse
Edgar Street works demolish vacant structure	100				100	-	100	To remedy health and safety issues with the vacant structure
Smallholding health and safety improvements	100				100	-	100	To alleviate damp and mould issues supporting the maximisation of capital receipt values
Hereford library accommodation works	1,000				1,000	-	1,000	To provide funding for the accommodation of a Hereford library and museum subject to separate business case
Highway depots	800				800	(800)	-	Improvements to enable improved working practices and the generation of savings
Office and car park lighting replacement	300				300	(300)	-	Salix interest free loan funded energy efficiency schemes
Creating an agile, responsive and flexible workforce through investment in ICT								
Data centre consolidation	1,170				1,170	-	1,170	Replace existing dual data centre strategy with a single data centre at Plough Lane and a disaster recovery capability at the HARC building
IT network upgrade	500				500	-	500	Replace ICT hardware obsolete switches
PC replacement	380	230	130		740	-	740	Replace obsolete ICT devices over 3 years
Software to enable remote access to desktops and automate upgrades	500				500	(500)	-	Investment to optimise device and processes reducing operational costs
1% contingency	140	100	50		290	-	290	1% for unforeseens, as per capital strategy
TOTAL SPEND	14,610	15,065	7,425	500	37,600	(24,150)	13,450	
TOTAL CORPORATE FUNDING	5,560	6,310	1,080	500			13,450	
Indicative borrowing revenue cost per annum	334	379	65	30			807	



Meeting:	Council
Meeting date:	18 December 2015
Title of report:	Revisions to the council tax reduction scheme
Report by:	Director of resources

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

To approve revisions to the current council tax reduction (CTR) scheme as proposed by Cabinet on 3 December.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- a) the following revisions to the CTR scheme be approved:**
 - i. reduce the maximum level of CTR subsidy from 84% to 80% for certain claimants;**
 - ii. protect CTR at 84% where the claimant is in receipt of either severe disability premium or carers allowance, or households with a child under the age of five;**
 - iii. a claimant who lives in a property above band C would have their CTR capped at 80% of a band C equivalent property in their parish;**
 - iv. the amount of capital, excluding property, above which claimants cannot claim CTR be reduced from £16k to £6k and**
- b) the revised CTR scheme is implemented for the financial years 2016/17 and 2017/18.**

Alternative options

- 1 To reject the proposed changes to the current CTR scheme; this is possible but would require alternative compensatory savings to be identified.
- 2 To reduce the level of CTR from 84% to 80% with no other scheme changes. This would deliver the required savings, however, this would not protect the most vulnerable citizens in receipt of CTR therefore this is not recommended.

Reasons for recommendations

- 3 To recommend the proposed reductions to the current level of council tax subsidy provided through the CTR scheme to secure the delivery of the required budget savings.

Key considerations

Background

- 4 The national council tax benefit system was abolished with effect from 1 April 2013. It was replaced with a localised council tax reduction (CTR) system. The council received a 10% reduction in its previous central government funding towards CTR. This funding is contained within the revenue support grant which has been reducing every year and is expected to continue to reduce in 2016/17.
- 5 National CTR support continues to protect pensioner discounts. The council has discretion on CTR for working age claimants only. In 2013/14, following one-off funding support from government, Herefordshire's CTR subsidy for working age claimants was capped at 91.5%.
- 6 The CTR scheme for 2014/15 reduced working age claimants CTR subsidy to 84% of the applicant's council tax charge. This meant that at least 16% of the council tax bill due was payable by the CTR claimant. In addition subsidy was restricted to a band D property which meant that any working age CTR claimant who lived in a property banded above band D had their CTR subsidy capped at 84% of a band D equivalent property.
- 7 The CTR scheme for 2015/16 remained the same as 2014/15, with the council giving £4.9m in council tax subsidy to working age claimants.
- 8 Public consultation on the proposed changes for 2016/17 has taken place, the results are summarised in the consultees section of this report and detailed in appendix 3. The views of the general overview and scrutiny committee were sought on 30 September who commented that individuals with either severe disability premium or carers allowance, or households with a child under the age of five are protected and the proposed changes should remain in place for both 2016/17 and 2017/18.
- 9 This report proposes changes to the CTR scheme that would become effective from 1 April 2016 and continue until 31 March 2018, years four and five of the local scheme.

Profile of CTR working age claimants

- 10 Working age claimants of CTR include single parents, single people and couples who could be unemployed, have limited capability for work on the grounds of ill health including disability, or are working but on a low income. The current CTR caseload profile is:

• Pensioners	6,594
• Working age claimants*	6,738
• Total CTR caseload	13,332

**4,500 (approximately) working age claimants are in receipt of CTR at full subsidy of 84%, and therefore, have to pay 16% of their council tax liability. These claimants have an income which is at a level that entitles them to the maximum subsidy. The remaining claimants qualify for partial subsidy.*

- 11 The collection rates for council tax for the last three years are shown below:

- a) 2012/13 – 98.63% (prior to scheme)
- b) 2013/14 – 98.40% (based on CTR support of 91.5%)
- c) 2014/15 – 98.10% (based on CTR support of 84%)

In 2014/15 a collection rate of 82.5% was achieved for claimants in receipt of CTR.

- 12 The council tax liability for working age claimants is £6.8m, of which £4.9m of CTR subsidy was awarded in 2014/15. This left a total council tax charge of £1.9m.

- 13 A total of 8,672 summonses were issued in 2014/15. A sample of 500 shows that 38% (190) have been issued to tax payers who are in receipt of CTR. Assuming the sample is representative of the total then of the 8,672 summons issued, 3,300 were issued to people who receive CTR, 49% of working age claimants receiving a summons. This would also suggest that for council tax payers not in receipt of CTR approximately 7% receive a summons. Following the issuing of a summons the usual debt collection process is followed which includes debt collection via deductions from benefits and/or earnings, or the referral to debt recovery enforcement agencies.

- 14 Where debt enforcement is required the cost of chasing the debt, staff, postage and issuing the summonses (£85) is added to the claimants' debt. In advance of this assistance is provided to those who fall behind in making payments by signposting to agencies, an online personal budget planning tool and repayment options. A breakdown of the circumstances of the 190 sample CTR cases receiving a summons is detailed in the table below:

Circumstances	Sample Number	%
In receipt of Employment & Support Allowance*	100	53
In receipt of Income Support – with no other details known	32	17
In receipt of Jobseekers Allowance	25	13
Families with children (lone parents or couples) with low earnings and receiving tax credits	21	11
Single claimants working, with low earnings	8	4
Others	4	2
Total	190	100%

**Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) replaced Incapacity Benefit and is for claimants who, through illness or disability, are unable to play a full part in the labour market which prevents them from claiming Jobseekers Allowance. 39% of our working age caseload are made up of claimants in receipt of ESA, based on the sample 66% of these claimants are at risk of receiving a summons.*

Hardship relief

- 15 Financial assistance is available under Herefordshire's discretionary hardship policy. Assistance is subject to meeting the following criteria:
- The taxpayer is facing exceptional and temporary hardship and they do not have access to other funds or assets that could be used to meet their council tax liability.
 - Any reduction made in accordance with this policy is short term assistance.
 - The applicant's eligibility to council tax reduction and all other statutory reductions has been determined.
 - There are unusual and unforeseen circumstances which prevent the property from being occupied and this situation cannot be rectified within a reasonable period of time, for example because of flooding.
 - The applicant has taken reasonable steps to resolve their situation prior to making their application.
 - The applicant can demonstrate that their current circumstances are unlikely to improve in the following six months.
- 16 A meeting with representatives from the Children's Society discussed the effects of enforcement on the family unit, especially those with children. It was agreed that Herefordshire would consider the issues raised both in the review of the recovery policy and in future decisions relating to the CTR scheme, including the review of the discretionary hardship policy to include consideration for persons with disability, families with children and children leaving care.

- 17 National statistics released for 2015/16 CTR schemes in the table below demonstrate the number of hardship schemes currently in place nationally, across unitary authorities and neighbouring authorities including Worcestershire and Gloucestershire.

Hardship schemes	National	Unitary	Local
Total LA's	326	56	12
Number with hardship schemes	123	28	4
%	38%	50%	33%

- 18 In recognition of the review of the discretionary hardship policy being likely to assist more tax payers, this has been reflected in the approximate net savings from the proposed CTR changes.

Proposed CTR for 2016/17 and 2017/18 - reducing the level of CTR from 84% to 80% but also increase restrictions to CTR and protect CTR at 84% for certain claimants.

- 19 Overall this proposal is expected to deliver a net saving of approximately £240k per annum (£199k retained by Herefordshire Council).
- 20 This proposal would see CTR reduced to 80%. There would be increased restrictions to CTR depending on the claimants property banding and savings. In addition certain claimants would continue to receive CTR of 84%. This is expected to deliver a net saving of approximately £144k per annum. CTR would be protected at 84% where the claimant is either in receipt of severe disability premium, carers allowance or families with a child under the age of five.
- 21 National statistics released for 2015/16 CTR schemes shown in the table below demonstrate the level of discount being applied nationally, across unitary authorities and neighbouring authorities including Worcestershire and Gloucestershire:

Minimum CTR subsidy	Neighbouring authorities	All unitary authorities	All councils
70%	0	3	9
Between 70% and 80%	0	16	44
80%	3	19	76
Between 80% and 91.5%	1	7	66
91.50%	1	2	46
Between 91.5% and 100%	0	0	9
100%	7	9	76
Total	12	56	326

- 22 **Band C restriction.** The proposal would amend CTR from a band D restriction to a band C property restriction. Any claimant who lives in a property above a band C would have their CTR capped at 80% of a band C equivalent property in their parish. This would generate a net saving of approximately £48k per annum. This would impact 8% of working age claimants who reside in a property band D and above.

- 23 The table below details the percentage of working age CTR claimants by property band.

Property band	Working age claimants in receipt of CTR	%
Band A	2,683	40%
Band B	2,486	37%
Band C	1,017	15%
Band D	327	5%
Band E	155	2%
Band F	57	1%
Band G	13	0
Band H	0	0
Total	6,738	100%

- 24 The 327 band D claimants, if entitled to the maximum CTR discount, would see their council tax charge increase by £204 a year from the current charge of £254 in 2015/16 to £458 per annum. Appendix 1 provides a table to show an estimate of CTR claimants' amounts payable with a 20% liability and a band C restriction.
- 25 Property band restrictions applied nationally, across unitary authorities and neighbouring authorities including Worcestershire and Gloucestershire are shown in the table below.

Property band restrictions	Neighbouring authorities	Unitary authorities	All authorities
Total local authorities (LA's)	12	56	326
Number - Restricted	3	15	75
% LA's using restriction	25%	27%	23%
Breakdown of band restricted			
Band A	0	1	5
Band B	0	2	4
Band C	0	2	6
Band D	2	8	52
Band E	1	2	8

- 26 **Reduce the capital limit to £6k.** Currently the CTR capital limit is £16k, this is recommended to be reduced to £6k. This would mean that claimants with capital above the limit would not receive CTR regardless of any other circumstances. Capital is defined as savings or property the claimant owns but does not include the property they live in or any personal possessions.
- 27 Reducing this limit to £6k would mean that approximately 110 claimants currently receiving CTR would cease to receive CTR. This would provide net savings of £48k per annum. 110 claimants currently receiving CTR for 2015/16 will become liable for full council tax charge in 2016/17.

- 28 The take up of reducing the capital limit applied nationally, across unitary authorities and neighbouring authorities including Worcestershire and Gloucestershire is shown below.

Capital limit restriction	Neighbouring authorities	Unitary authorities	All authorities
Total LA's	12	56	326
Number reduced £16k capital limit	3	20	72
% LA's using this reduction	25%	36%	22%
Breakdown of restriction			
Limit £12k	0	0	1
Limit £10k	0	5	12
Limit £9k	0	0	1
Limit £8k	0	1	9
Limit £6k	3	14	49
Total	3	20	72

Community impact

- 29 The corporate plan, agreed by Council in November 2012, has two broad priorities: supporting the development of a successful economy and improving quality of life for the people of Herefordshire. The council remains committed to ensuring public services are prioritised to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. However, the proposals in this report will have an impact on some residents, but there continues to be regard to support the elderly and vulnerable, with access to support such as council tax discretionary reduction funding.
- 30 The lowest earners in Herefordshire, approximately 4,500 individuals, currently pay 16% of their total council tax bill. This report supports a reduction in the discount awarded for some council tax payers in receipt of welfare benefits. Pensioners will continue to receive additional discounts and the vulnerable will continue to have access to welfare support to mitigate these changes.
- 31 The decisions in this report link to key elements of the council's corporate plan and demonstrate the effective management of resources to help secure a balanced budget. The proposed changes could result in increasing individuals financial difficulties, this is being mitigated by providing options and support as detailed in this report.

Equality duty

- 32 A full equality impact assessment (EIA) was carried out on the initial and subsequent revisions to the scheme and has been reviewed in the light of the revised proposals. The latest version is attached at Appendix 2.
- 33 The proposals set out in this report will have a consistent impact on working age benefit claimants. In addition, there is likely to be an increase in the level of non-payment and requests for debt advice.
- 34 In making their recommendation to Council, Cabinet paid particular regard to the equality impact assessment and noted the mitigation in place, including assistance in

meeting payments and the hardship scheme.

Financial implications

- 35 Approving the proposed changes will secure the delivery of the savings target of £200k in 2016/17. The proposed changes, if adopted, are not considered to result in a significant change to the cost of administering the scheme.
- 36 The table below shows the potential net savings from the CTR changes proposed. The net savings includes assumptions from the implementation of a revised hardship scheme and claimants' changes expected from the summer budget welfare reforms.

Detail	CTR 80% with protections and restrictions £000 per annum
CTR subsidy reduced to 80%	144
CTR capped at property band C	48
CTR removed if capital limit £6k or above	48
Total net saving per annum	240
Herefordshire's share of net saving pa (83%)	199
Savings target 2016/17	200

- 37 Savings will also benefit preceptors; parish and town councils, West Mercia Police and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. Approximately 83% of the council tax bill paid is retained by Herefordshire Council.

Legal implications

- 38 The CTR scheme is locally determined by each billing authority under section 13A and Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 39 For each financial year, each billing authority must consider whether to revise its scheme or to replace it with another scheme and this must take place no later than 31 January in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect. If any revision has the effect of reducing or removing a reduction to which any class of persons is entitled, the revision or replacement must include such transitional provision relating to that reduction or removal as the authority thinks fit.
- 40 A statutory procedure is provided for under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 1A which a billing authority must follow when revising its scheme:

"3(1) Before making a scheme, the authority must (in the following order) –

- (a) consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
- (b) publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
- (c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme

- 41 As well as complying with the statutory consultation scheme the process must also be fair. There are four basic requirements namely –

- (i) be undertaken when proposals are at a formative stage;

- (ii) include sufficient reasons for particular proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response;
- (iii) give consultees sufficient time to make a response; and
- (iv) be conscientiously taken into account when the ultimate decision is taken.

Risk management

- 42 Approximately 40% of our current summons relate to CTR claimants. There is a risk that the claimants may not pay their council tax and move further into debt because of summons charges. This may eventually affect the collection statistics and place the households concerned into further financial hardship. This is to be mitigated through revisions to the hardship scheme. 2015/16 has seen a reduction in the number of CTR claimants due to increases in earnings from employment.
- 43 Welfare reform announced in the summer budget will impact the current CTR scheme. Working age applicants in receipt of CTR will be subject to a reduction in working tax credits due to the earnings threshold being reduced. This is expected to increase CTR claimants from 1 April 2016. Estimates suggest that the effect of the changes to the working tax credit calculation will mean approximately £200 additional CTR payments per customer per year. In Herefordshire there are approximately 1,000 working age citizens in receipt of working tax credit therefore this could result in additional CTR payments of £200k. This impact has been reflected in the approximate net savings detailed in this report.

Consultees

- 44 Consultation with Herefordshire residents on the proposals for the CTR scheme commenced on 6 July 2015 for a period of six weeks and concluded on 16 August 2015, which resulted in 68 responses. Prior to our consultation we met with the Children's Society and incorporated their views and recommendations into our proposals. The consultation document was published online on Herefordshire Council's website and included an online calculator to give an instance indicator of how the changes would affect the individual depending on their circumstances. In addition approximately 6,500 letters were issued to the current recipients of CTR who are most likely to be affected. During this period a meeting with welfare rights groups and third sector organisations took place in order to capture the views of their service users. Consultation responses are attached as Appendix 3. A summary of responses is provided below:

	Strongly Agree / Agree	Strongly Disagree / Disagree
Proposal 1		
Financial support reduced to 80% with protections	51%	42%
CTR capped at property band C	45%	47%
Capital limit reduced to £6k	48%	47%
Total %	48%	45%
Proposal 2		
CTR reduced to 80% with no other changes	48%	45%

The results show no preference for either proposal.

- 45 The results of the public budget consultation are attached at appendix 4. Consultation on the budget proposals included the proposed changes to the CTR scheme. Consultation commenced on 23 July and completed on 9 October, 1,979 responses were received. 30 per cent of respondents ranked reductions to the current CTR scheme as their first, second or third preference.
- 46 Cabinet reviewed the proposals on 3 December and the general overview and scrutiny committee considered the proposed scheme changes at their meeting on 30 September. Following the general overview and scrutiny committee meeting retaining the discount for protected individuals is proposed and the proposed changes are recommended to be in place for both 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Financial impact of 80% CTR and band C restriction

Appendix 2 - Equality impact assessment

Appendix 3 – CTR proposals consultation results

Appendix 4 – Budget consultation responses

Background papers

None identified.

Appendix 1

Financial impact of 80% CTR and band C restriction

The table below details the weekly impact of the increase in council tax due from claimants if CTR support is reduced from 84% to 80% in conjunction with a band C restriction. The table is based on 2015/16 council tax charges for Hereford city.

Band	Annual CT charge 100% (£)	% of CTR claimants in each band	CTR payable 16% band D restriction (£)	CTR payable 20% with band C restriction (£)	Weekly increase in payments (£)
A	1,057	40%	169	211	0.80
B	1,233	37%	197	247	0.90
C	1,409	15%	225	282	1.09
D	1,585	5%	254	458	3.92
E	1,937	2%	606	810	3.92
F	2,290	1%	959	1,163	3.92
G	2,642	0.2%	1,311	1,515	3.92
H	3,170	0%	1,839	2,043	3.92

Subsidy is currently restricted to band D properties; this is proposed to be reduced to band C. This means that claimants living in a band D to H property will have their CTR restricted to band C from 2016/17. CTR subsidy at 80% of band C gives a chargeable amount of £282. The amount payable by claimants in properties above band C will be increased by the difference between the annual charge for the property they reside in and the annual charge of a band C property, please refer to the examples below.

Example 1: 327 CTR claimants live in a band D property. Currently, if they are entitled to full CTR, with the restriction at band D they would be liable to pay £254. Restricting CTR to band C would see an increase in the amount payable to £458.

Example 2: 57 CTR claimants live in a band F property. Currently, if they are entitled to full CTR, with the restriction at band D they would be liable to pay £959. Restricting CTR to band C would see an increase in the amount payable to £1,163.

	Example 1 £	Example 2 £
CTR payable at 20% of a band C charge	282	282
Plus the difference between property band and the band C	176	881
Total payable	458	1,163

The examples above show the minimum payment due ignoring other reliefs that may be applicable and claimants in receipt of higher income will be required to pay more than stated

Equality Impact Assessment Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)

Service Area	Revenues & Benefits Service
Policy/Service being assessed	Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Is this is a new or existing policy/service?	Existing Policy
If existing policy/service please state date of last assessment	17 October 2014
EIA Review team – List of members	Council Tax Reduction Project Group
Date of this assessment	21 August 2015
Signature of completing officer (to be signed after the EIA has been completed)	Anne Bradbury
Name and signature of Head of Service (to be signed after the EIA has been completed)	Peter Robinson

Form A1

INITIAL SCREENING FOR STRATEGIES/POLICIES/FUNCTIONS FOR EQUALITIES RELEVANCE TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AND PROMOTE EQUALITY



High relevance/priority



Medium relevance/priority



Low or no relevance/ priority

Note:

1. Tick coloured boxes appropriately, and depending on degree of relevance to each of the equality strands
2. Summaries of the legislation/guidance should be used to assist this screening process

87

Policy - CTRS	Relevance/Risk to Equalities																							
	Gender			Race			Disability			Sexual Orientation			Religion/Belief			Age			Socio-economic			Priority status For EIA		
State the Function/Policy /Service/Strategy being assessed:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CTRS – Reduce the maximum level of council tax reduction so that unprotected taxpayers have to pay at least 20% of the council tax charge.			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓	✓			✓			✓		
CTRS – Protected discount of the current 84% for those in receipt of severe disability premium, carers allowance and families with a child under the age of five.			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓
CTRS – Reduce the current Band D restriction to a Band C restriction so that taxpayers living in properties above a Band C would have CTR calculated on the Band C liability			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓	✓			✓			✓		

Policy - CTRS	Relevance/Risk to Equalities																							
	Gender			Race			Disability			Sexual Orientation			Religion/Belief			Age			Socio-economic			Priority status For EIA		
State the Function/Policy /Service/Strategy being assessed:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CTRS – Reduce the capital limit for CTR entitlement from £16k to £6k so that taxpayers who have capital of £6k and above would not be entitled to CTR (capital is defined as savings or property owned but not the property the taxpayer lives in or personal possessions)			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓

<p>Stage 1 – Scoping and Defining</p> <p>(1) What are the aims and objectives of policy/service?</p>	<p>The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) has been in place since 01 April 2013 and replaced the National Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme. CTRS is a locally determined system of council tax support. The aim of the CTRS scheme is to provide financial assistance to council taxpayers who have low incomes.</p> <p>Persons who are of state pension age (persons who have reached the qualifying age of State Pension Credit) are protected under the scheme in that the calculation of the reduction they are to receive has been set by Central Government. For working age applicants however the reduction they receive is to be determined by the local authority.</p> <p>This equality impact assessment looks at the potential for not only protecting pensioners (as required under the legislation) but also retaining a large amount of the protections already present for working age within the existing CTRS scheme carried forward from the CTB scheme.</p>
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	<p>Where a working age claimant applies or continues to receive Council Tax Reduction, it is proposed that the reduction will be calculated on the same rules as the current CTRS scheme except for the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the current maximum level of council tax reduction so that taxpayers have to pay at least 16% of the council tax charge • Reduce the maximum level of council tax reduction so that unprotected taxpayers have to pay at least 20% of the council tax charge • Protected discount of the current 84% for those in receipt of severe disability premium, carers allowance and families with a child under the age of 5 • Reduce the current Band D restriction to a Band C restriction • Reduce the capital limit for CTR entitlement from £16k to £6k <p>These changes will apply from 01 April 2016</p> <p>Central Government has not been prescriptive in how an authority should protect vulnerable groups, but points to the Council's existing responsibilities including the Child Poverty Act 2010, the Disabled Person Act 1986 and the Housing Act 1996 as well as the public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>The current level of assistance (<i>6,594 claimants and average amount per week of £18.50 per claimant</i>) is provided for pension age claimants, details for working age claimants are given at the end of this assessment.</p>
<p>(2) How does the policy/service fit with the council's wider objectives?</p>	<p>All persons within the Council's area who have a low income may apply for support and assistance with their Council Tax.</p> <p>By making an application, providing evidence of their income and household circumstances, their potential entitlement for support will be calculated in line with Central Government prescribed requirements for the Council Tax</p>

	<p>Reduction scheme.</p> <p>The maintenance of a full reduction scheme, with few changes from the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme fits with the Corporate objectives in that it meets, as far as possible, equality and sustainability.</p> <p>The reduction scheme assists the local economy and also ensures, as far as possible within the constraints on a reduced budget, that persons on a low income will be able to meet their Council Tax liability.</p> <p>Pension age claimants will not see a reduction in their support however working age cases will see a reduction in the support they currently receive.</p>
<p>(3) What are the expected outcomes of the policy/service? Who is intended to benefit from the policy/service and in what way?</p>	<p>The desired outcomes are as follows;</p> <p>Pension Age Claimants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That all pensioners receive the level of support required by regulations set by Central Government (Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2012); • That all pensioner claimants or existing working age claimants who rise to pension age are able to receive Council Tax Reduction in line with the regulations; and • That all pensioner claimants continue to receive the correct level of council tax reduction at all times. <p>Working Age Claimants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That all working age claimants are still able to receive Council Tax Reduction but the level of reduction payable will reduce ; and • That all working age claimants continue to receive the correct level of council tax reduction at all times.

<p>(4) Does this policy/service have the potential to directly or indirectly discriminate against any particular group?</p> <p>Please identify all groups that are affected and briefly explain why</p>	<p>RACE NO</p> <p>The reduction support scheme does not take race into account when calculating the level of support</p>	<p>AGE YES</p> <p>The reduction support scheme takes into account age when calculating the level of support available. Pensioners will not see any reduction in the support paid (as they are protected under regulations set by central government). Working age claimants will be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of the maximum level of council tax reduction so that unprotected taxpayers have to pay at least 20% of the council tax charge • Reducing the current Band D restriction to a Band C restriction • Reduce the capital limit for CTR entitlement from £16k to £6k 	<p>GENDER NO</p> <p>The reduction support scheme does not take gender into account when calculating the level of support</p>
	<p>RELIGION/BELIEF NO</p> <p>The reduction support scheme does not take religion or belief into account when calculating the level of support</p>	<p>DISABILITY NO</p> <p>The reduction support scheme continues to have in-built protections for disability in the form of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the award of additional premiums for disablement; • disregarding higher levels of income where a claimant is in remunerative work and is disabled; and • there is no requirement to have non dependant deductions where a claimant is disabled 	<p>SEXUAL ORIENTATION NO</p> <p>The reduction support scheme does not take sexual orientation into account when calculating the level of support</p>

<p>(5) Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service?</p>	<p>No – customers will continue to access the reduction scheme in an identical fashion to the existing Council Tax Reduction scheme. The approach of the Council has been to provide a range of options for claiming and customers are encouraged to make a claim at any time.</p>
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<p>(6) How does the policy/service contribute to promotion of equality?</p>	<p>The Council Tax Reduction scheme provides essential help towards the Council Tax liability for all claimants on a low income. By continuing to assess entitlement on a mean tested basis, similar to the national approach to means tested benefits, the scheme is equitable albeit that the level of support overall may be reduced to working age claimants.</p>
<p>(7) Does the policy/service have the potential to promote good relations between groups?</p>	<p>Due to the nature of the cuts required in the level of council tax reduction, all working age claimants will see a reduction to their current entitlement, however the way that the Council is introducing the changes by maintaining the means test, allows the most vulnerable to receive a relatively higher level of support</p>

<u>Stage 2 - Information Gathering</u>	
(1) What type and range of evidence or information have you used to help you make a judgement about the policy or service?	<p>Extensive modelling from existing data. The modelling has been based on changes to the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme administered by the Council.</p> <p>Modelling information has included number of working age claimants and amount of council tax benefit paid (<i>6,738 claimants and average amount per week of £14.37 per claimant</i>), claim numbers and benefit paid across council tax bands, range of income types and household make-up.</p>

**(2) What consultation/ information has been used?
What new consultation, if any, do you need to undertake?**

A full consultation with the public has been undertaken as required by the legislation (Local Government Finance Act 2012). Whilst pension age claimants are protected, the authority will still, as part of the consultation process, envisage pension age claimants and pensioners generally to respond to the consultation itself.

The consultation process is comprehensive and encourages a full response to the changes to the current reduction scheme, (notwithstanding the fact that the authority is obliged to implement the scheme determined by Central Government for pension age claimants).

Interest groups have been directly consulted as part of the process.

The Public consultation took place during the period 06.07.15 until 16.08.15

The results on the proposals are as follows:-

Proposal 1	Strongly Agree / Agree	Strongly Disagree / Disagree
Financial support 20% and	51%	42%
CTR cap to Band C	45%	47%
Capital Limit £6000	48%	47%
Average %	48%	45%
Proposal 2		
Financial support 20%	48%	45%

<u>Stage 3 – Making a Judgement</u>	
<p>(1) From your data and consultations is there any adverse or negative impact identified for any particular group?</p> <p>Is there any evidence of needs not being met? e.g. language or physical access barriers; lack of appropriate resources or facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No the impact on the working age group is consistent • Comments from the consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Financial - Inability to meet the increased charge
<p>(2) If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
<p>(3) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance in meeting payments – 12 monthly instalments / payment arrangements to prevent recovery process • Advice of the Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Scheme for customers experiencing exceptional hardship
<p>(4) Is there any positive impact? Does it promote equality of opportunity between different groups and actively address discrimination?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No

<u>Stage 4 – Action Planning, Review & Monitoring</u>	
<p>If No Further Action is required then go to – Review & Monitoring</p> <p>(1) Action Planning – Specify any changes or improvements which can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications.</p>	<p>Following the consultation, the changes proposed are to be reviewed. The scheme will be reviewed annually thereafter.</p> <p>The Council has established a full project plan to ensure that changes are introduced correctly, accurately and on time</p>
<p>(2) Review and Monitoring State how and when you will monitor policy and EIA Action Plan</p>	<p>Full monitoring of scheme implementation will be undertaken on a monthly basis in line with the accepted project plan.</p> <p>The Revenues and Benefits Service will undertake monthly and quarterly collection of data.</p> <p>The Council will review the policy annually. It is expected that due to changes in legislation and funding, that the level of Council Tax Support available will change annually.</p>

'An Equality Impact Assessment on this policy was undertaken on 21 August 2015

Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation report

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Results.....	
Proposal 1: tax payers liable to pay 20% of their council tax unless protected.....	4
1a) CTR capped at band C.....	5
1b) Capital limit of £6000.....	5/6
Proposal 2: all tax payers liable to pay 20% of their council tax.....	6
Groups affected.....	7
About you.....	8
Do you currently pay council tax to Herefordshire Council.....	8
Are you currently receiving council tax reduction in Herefordshire.....	9
If you do not currently receive council tax reduction have you ever received it.....	9
Are you currently receiving housing benefit in Herefordshire.....	9
Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present.....	10
What is your age group.....	10
What is your gender.....	11
Do you have parenting responsibilities.....	11
How would you describe your ethnic group.....	11
Appendix A: List of comments in respect of Proposal A.....	12/13
Appendix A: List of comments in respect of 1a.....	14/15
Appendix A: List of comments in respect of 1b.....	16/17
Appendix A: List of comments in respect of Proposal B.....	18/19
Appendix A: List of comments in respect of the Council financing the existing scheme...20/21	
Appendix A: List of comments in respect of affected groups.....	22/23
Appendix B: Letters.....	24/26

Introduction

The national council tax benefit system was abolished with effect from 1 April 2013. It was replaced with a localised council tax reduction (CTR) system alongside a 10% reduction in central Government funding for any local scheme when compared with the previous national council tax benefit scheme.

The Government continues to protect pensioners. This means that local schemes have identical council tax reduction rules for pensioners which remain in place under the previous council tax benefit system. The council does have discretion on CTR for working age claimants. In 2013/14, following one-off funding support from Government, working age claimants CTR subsidy was paid up to a maximum level of 91.5%.

The CTR scheme for 2014/15 reduced working age claimants CTR subsidy to 84% of the applicant's council tax charge, meaning that at least 16% of the council tax bill was payable by the claimant. In addition subsidy was restricted to a Band D property meaning any working age CTR claimant who lives in a property banded above band D has their CTR subsidy based on 84% of a Band D equivalent property.

The CTR scheme for 2015/16 remained the same as in 2014/15.

The MTFS approved by Council in February 2015 included savings of £150k from CTR for 2016/17. The options for achieving this saving target have been consulted on.

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme consultation was launched to seek the views of residents and interested organisations on proposed changes Herefordshire Council are considering making to their local scheme for working age applicants for 2016/17. The consultation questionnaire was published online on Herefordshire Council's website together with the consultation documents. In addition approximately 6500 letters were sent to current applicants who are likely to be most affected by any changes to the scheme informing them of the consultation, directing them to the website and giving them a contact number to ring if they would prefer a paper version of the consultation documents to be sent to them. A meeting took place with stakeholders such as social landlord, voluntary and charitable organisations where the consultation was discussed attendees were invited to contribute to the consultation on behalf of their service users.

The consultation period ran from 6th July to 16th August 2015.

This report details the results of the consultation questionnaire. In the tables in this report, all percentages are calculated as a proportion of the total number of responses to each question unless otherwise stated. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Note that if respondents could select more than one answer to a particular question, the percentages may add up to more than 100%

Answers to questions requiring a free text answer are listed in appendix A. Every effort has been made to anonymise references to named or identifiable persons without losing the gist of the comments. There were also 2 letters/emails received in response to the consultation, the contents of which are included in appendix B.

Results

A total of 68 responses were received by the end of the consultation period, of these were 56 submitted online (This does not include the letters/emails that are included in appendix B)

1) Proposal 1 - would see working age council taxpayers liable to pay at least 20% of their council tax bill subject to other support changes.

Currently those working age council taxpayers eligible for CTR pay at least 16% of their council tax charge, receiving a discount of up to 84%.

This option proposes a lower level of financial support (80%) from April 2016; therefore claimants would become liable for the payment of a higher percentage of their council tax charge (20%) unless their discount is protected.

Individuals with protected discount would be those in receipt of severe disability premium, carers allowance or families with a child under the age of 5. These claimants will continue to receive their current levels of support.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	15	24
Agree	17	27
Neither agree nor disagree	4	6
Disagree	12	19
Strongly Disagree	14	23
Total respondents	62	
Not answered	6	

In addition to these answers there were 20 additional comments relating to Proposal 1. Please see appendix A for the full list.

1a) The first additional restriction under Proposal 1 would see working age council taxpayers living in a property that is rated band D or above have their CTR capped at a maximum of 80% of the council tax charge on a band C equivalent property.

The current CTR is restricted to 84% of the council tax charge on a band D equivalent property and claimants have to pay the difference between their higher band council tax liability and a band D council tax liability.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	12	19
Agree	16	26
Neither agree nor disagree	5	8
Disagree	8	13
Strongly Disagree	21	34
Total respondents	62	
Not answered	6	

In addition to these answers there were 20 additional comments relating to Proposal 1a. Please see appendix A for the full list.

1b) The second additional restriction under Proposal 1 would mean that, working age council taxpayers would not be entitled to receive any CTR if they exceed a capital limit of £6,000; the current level is £16,000. (Capital is defined as savings or property the claimant owns but does NOT include the property they live in or their personal possessions)

The current savings limit for entitlement to CTR is £16,000. We are proposing to reduce this to £6,000. This would mean that claimants with savings of £6,000 and above will not receive CTR regardless of any other circumstances.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	20	32
Agree	10	16
Neither agree nor disagree	3	5
Disagree	14	23
Strongly Disagree	15	24
Total respondents	62	
Not answered	6	

In addition to these answers there were 25 additional comments relating Proposal 1b. Please see appendix A for the full list.

2) Proposal 2 -would see working age council taxpayers become liable to pay at least 20% of their council tax bill, an increase of 4%, with no other changes to the current scheme.

Currently those working age council taxpayers eligible for CTR pay at least 16% of their council tax charge, receiving support of up to 84%. This proposal would mean that these taxpayers would have a lower level of financial support (80%) through the scheme from April 2016, therefore becoming liable for the payment of a higher percentage of their council tax charge (20%).

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	11	18
Agree	16	27
Neither agree nor disagree	10	17
Disagree	8	13
Strongly Disagree	15	25
Total respondents	60	
Not answered	8	

In addition to these answers there were 24 additional comments relating Proposal 2. Please see appendix for the full list.

If you think the council should make an additional contribution from its own finances to continue with the current CTRS, how do you think this should be funded?

There were 23 additional comments relating to this question. Please see appendix A for the full list.

We want to ensure that any changes made are fair to everyone. To help us do this, please tell us if you think any of the principles above will particularly affect any specific groups of people. For example, due to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation

	No.	%
Yes	30	53
No	27	47
Don't know	0	0
Total respondents	57	
Not answered	11	

If yes, please explain which groups and the reasons they might be affected.

There were 27 comments made, please see appendix A for the full list

About you

Note: This section only applied to respondents who replied in an individual capacity.

Do you currently pay council tax to Herefordshire Council?

	No.	%
Yes	56	92
No	5	8
Total respondents	61	
Not answered	7	

If yes, please tell us which council tax band (A-H) the property you pay council tax on is in? (If unsure leave blank)

	No.	%
Band A	5	15
Band B	8	24
Band C	5	15
Band D	10	29
Band E	3	9
Band F	1	2
Band G	2	6
Band H	0	0
Total respondents	34	
Not answered	34	

Are you currently receiving council tax reduction in Herefordshire?

	No.	%
Yes	33	54
No	28	46
Total respondents	61	
Not answered	7	

If you are not currently receiving council tax reduction in Herefordshire have you ever received it?

	No.	%
Yes	5	17
No	24	83
Total respondents	29	
Not answered	39	

Are you receiving housing benefit in Herefordshire?

	No.	%
Yes	24	42
No	33	58
Total respondents	57	
Not answered	11	

Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present?

	No.	%
Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)	19	32
Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week)	7	12
Self-employed full or part-time	4	7
On a government supported training programme	1	2
Unemployed and available for work	0	0
Full-time education at school, college or university	0	0
Retired whether receiving a pension or not	6	10
Looking after the home or family	9	15
Long term sick / disabled	23	38
Total respondents	68	
Not answered	0	

What is your age group?

	No.	%
Under 18	0	0
18 – 24 years	1	2
25 – 44 years	19	32
45 – 64 years	36	60
65 – 74 years	4	7
75+ years	0	0
Total respondents	60	
Not answered	8	

What is your gender?

	No.	%
Male	32	54
Female	27	46
Total respondents	59	
Not answered	9	

Do you parenting responsibilities?

	No.	%
Yes	21	37
No	36	63
Total respondents	57	
Not answered	11	

How would you describe your ethnic group?

	No.	%
White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish	57	98
Other White (please specify below)	0	0
Any other ethnic group (please specify below)	1	2
Total respondents	58	
Not answered	10	

Appendix A

Proposal 1: tax payers liable to pay 20% of their council tax unless in a protected group

<p>Whilst I understand the constraints of budgets and the necessity to provide critical services, many people who currently receive reductions are already on or below the poverty line. Forcing them to pay an additional amount has a severe impact on their quality of life; in many circumstances when finances are critically stretched it is the necessities that are cut, things like heating and nutritional food, not disposable luxuries.</p>
<p>The government gave council's £21 million, what percentage did you give to vulnerable people like us when it was council tax benefit? because you gave us no help when it switched.</p>
<p>It is certainly not fair to force the poorest in the community to pay for the Council's problems. The cost to them (as against their contribution to HC funds) would be heavily disproportionate compared to those who pay council tax at normal rates.</p>
<p>I am weary of the attacks on the poor. When this Government has chosen to give its MPs a 10% rise the rest of us have to endure cuts. Any such pressures on those with little income will in the long run cost the taxpayer more in homelessness and all the other attendant results of poverty.</p>
<p>Why once again are single parents penalised as I will be looking for work soon as my daughter will be 5 years old in October 2015. I will be doing part time work and I will have pay more on council tax as well as housing benefit. How do you expect single parents be able to afford this as well as everything else? Just because our children will be over 5 years old. I'm strongly against this for single parents it's not fair!!!! Yeah</p>
<p>We are asked if this is fair but fair to whom? A decision such as this has to be viewed in the context of other welfare cuts, below inflation wage increases and the record, so far, of the impact of provisions reductions in support. If the National Debt line has raised concerns about the level of CT debt in the county then we need an analysis of how much this is due to previous cuts in benefit levels. Herefordshire has one of the highest rates of fuel poverty in England and is one of the poorest counties in terms of average incomes. There is no evidence that the Council has taken any of these factors into account.</p>
<p>While I don't accept the continued burden put on to those who CAN'T WORK. I accept that everyone paying 20% would at least be fair, but the further changes listed are unreasonable. Anyone who is disabled and can't work has a very low income, it is unacceptable to then distinguish the most disabled as needing more help, they already receive more benefits. Those who can't find work are also on a low income and hitting them harder seems counterproductive.</p>
<p>No change should be made but in Herefordshire this would be better than Proposal 2 because those with a disability and young children need to be spared any further cuts.</p>
<p>Although any increase in Council Tax is likely to cause further financial hardship for low income families, the fact that the most vulnerable will be protected is fairer than option 2, where no such protection is proposed.</p>
<p>This will affect those on maximum CTR, who fall into the lowest income bands, in particular the unemployed, disabled people and single parents. These people are already suffering from a range of other cuts and from benefit freezes, and having to find even a small amount a week will impact on their ability to buy food and fuel.</p>
<p>Households in the circumstances described are already suffering from cutbacks in other benefits and it seems especially cruel to inflict further expenses on them, especially when council tax is spent on such ridiculous schemes as the "Herefordshire you can" road signs.</p>
<p>What are we getting for paying Council Tax. No grass cutting, overgrown flower beds, not even a black bin liner, rubbish left - Nothing!</p>
<p>I feel protecting those in receipt of carers allowance is definitely more fair than previous schemes</p>

and therefore not discriminating against those in need of care/providing care
This is a reasonable increase. I am not sure what a severe disability premium involves. Is this people receiving Personal Independence Allowance for their disability?
THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME HAD THE AIM -TO REDUCE THE COST OF THE SCHEME BY 10% IN LINE WITH LOSS OF GOVERNMENT GRANT -COMPARED TO 2012/2013. THE COUNCIL CHANGES HAD ALREADY REDUCED SCHEME COSTS IN 2014/15 BY 13.6%. NOW PLUS WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF THE CHANGES IN 2015/16? THIS SCHEME SHOULD STILL BE AIMED AT HELPING THOSE ON LOW INCOMES TO PAY COUNCIL TAX NOT GENERATE EXTRA FUNDS TOWARDS OTHER COUNCIL SPENDING
first the bedroom tax and then this , completely unfair to people on low income
Fair proposal but it should apply to all claimants. As I understand it pensioners will be exempt. Why? Their pension is higher than most benefits
acknowledge the fact that a rise is inevitable and as we would appear to have our payment protected under this option this would appear to be a fair rise
The reality is everyone on CTR has some form vulnerability or financial hardship to some degree or another. Indeed up until 3 years ago the successive Governments took the view that majority of people who stand to be affected by these proposals were sufficiently 'poor' that they would not be required to pay any ctax. Whilst you propose to protect certain groups there will be an additional cost to that in terms of data gathering and maintaining in addition to adding a further degree of complexity to an already complex system. You should also not lose sight of the fact that CTR is simply one benefit of several that claimants are in receipt of and given the changes to the other benefits announced at the recent budget disposal household income will be dropping significantly so there is even less chance of collecting the monies now outstanding
All poorer people should not be expected to pay more.

CTR capped at band C

<p>Whilst I understand the constraints of budgets and the necessity to provide critical services, many people who currently receive reductions are already on or below the poverty line. Forcing them to pay an additional amount has a severe impact on their quality of life; in many circumstances when finances are critically stretched it is the necessities that are cut, things like heating and nutritional food, not disposable luxuries.</p>
<p>We are in a disabled adapted terraced bungalow, how come it's banded a C</p>
<p>This would seem to be just another attempt at imposing the so-called bedroom tax.</p>
<p>Sorry as indicated above any cuts are wrong.</p>
<p>Why have all bands pay the same as one band? All bands should be separated and pay their own amount as that's why bands were put into place years ago</p>
<p>This assumes that the 327 households affected have the option to move into lower Band properties. Again what evidence is there that this option is available particularly given the shortage of cheaper properties? This is designed to punish people for something which may be beyond their power to resolve. That cannot be fair.</p>
<p>I live in a Band D property and receive full CTR; I have ME/CFS and can't work. I live in this property at no charge to the tax payer as my family own it. If I have to pay higher levels of Council Tax I won't be able to afford to live in this property and will have to move in to rented accommodation which will lower my Council Tax payments but also see the tax payer liable to pay my rent. This clearly is not a good situation for anyone. I already pay more council tax as I live in a Band D property, I would refuse to pay a higher percentage than someone in the same situation but living in a Band C or lower property.</p>
<p>Do not really think it is fair but it is better than Proposal 2.</p>
<p>This penalises two groups of people - firstly those with large families who need several bedrooms for children or other family members, and secondly people who live in larger properties but have had a change of circumstances so that their income is significantly reduced (i.e. probably people who have become disabled and unable to work). Capping their CTR amount will inevitably cause severe hardship to people on low incomes who do not have 'surplus' income to pay the extra amount.</p>
<p>It's not very fair in anyway or form.</p>
<p>What are we getting for paying Council tax? No grass cutting, overgrown flower beds, not even a black bin liner, rubbish left - Nothing! Cutbacks everywhere no matter what you put up or increase.</p>
<p>Our property is a band E so we are already capped at D. Our property rental is very competitive compared with the current rental market so what we would save by moving to a cheaper council tax band we would more than make up for in excess rent. Neither option we could afford</p>
<p>AN INCREASE OF £200+WILL FURTHER INCREASE COLLECTION PROBLEMS FOR THE COUNCIL AND TAXPAYERS ALSO SEE ABOVE</p>
<p>it needs to be simpler</p>
<p>The banding of properties is in place for a reason. Making people in Band D pay for a Band C is not right and effectively dismisses the banding of properties, effectively becoming a farce.</p>
<p>Band D owners may have inherited their property but not necessarily have the means to pay bills.</p>
<p>On balance I think it is reasonable for the Council to take the view that it's not its priority to fund people to live in properties larger than they can afford.</p>
<p>Cannot believe there are no band H properties in Herefordshire. Maybe they all belong to councillors.</p>
<p>It would be reasonable to assume that any benefit designated for public need would be both appropriately applied and fair. The council's proposal to restrict its tax benefit or CTR by the banding of the property could only be seen as unfair. Why would this be? The benefit, if rightly implied</p>

above, should appropriately find those people who are in need of it. Those who are in need may live in properties of varying values, as tenants, outright owners, mortgagors or by any other circumstance, but the criteria on which their need is judged is on their means to pay (be that income, savings and disposable assets). CTR should not be moderated by the banding of the property they live in, which itself is not a reliable guide to relative property value (as, for instance, many properties are still classified under the original and unreliable second gear, drive-by valuations decades ago), but more so, should not be based on the value of the property anyway, as this cannot clearly define the council services needed or used by a household (most of the services are provided on an equal level to everyone anyway, such as policing and rubbish collection); those people who find themselves in need of the benefit should be considered on the fluidity of their financial circumstances and not on the house they live in. Even owners in higher banded properties may still not have the advantage of fully owning their house, and, lumbered with a mortgage, should not have to be disproportionately punished for their situation. As a response, it would be too easy to flippantly suggest that a person should just move house; but consider how much of an upheaval and financial burden the cost of moving house is, it certainly could not help the circumstance of anyone who is need of the benefit. Furthermore the disabled, infirm and vulnerable would be more susceptible to such a situation, and outright homeowners would be expected to sell up their home to downgrade their banding, that means putting on the market and possibly waiting a year or so before any sale takes place before going through the upheaval of moving, perhaps away from family, friends, and settled situations such as school, with relatively huge costs involved which would defeat the purpose. So can this scenario be considered fair in light of a person's need relative to anyone else's, based on an arbitrary classification of the value of the property they live in and that they may have no financial asset from? Does this proposal promote impropriety and unfairness in its implementation? It already exists on a Band D restriction and has the advantage of only affecting a small percentage of people so the voice against it is possibly relatively small, unheard and maybe ignored. It is employed across hundreds of councils, so may be seen as acceptable, but this does not make it just in the same respect that the poll tax was universal but still considered unjust. It is discriminatory, has already increased the council tax liability for those on CTR below Band D by several hundred pounds over those above Band D and cannot claim to proportionately reduce the benefits of those who have the greater means; those of greater means are people who don't qualify for the benefit in the first instance. In a similar vein, the services that council tax pays for is disproportionate between town and rural Herefordshire.

All poorer people should not be expected to pay more.

Capital limit of £6000

<p>Whilst I understand the constraints of budgets and the necessity to provide critical services, many people who currently receive reductions are already on or below the poverty line. Forcing them to pay an additional amount has a severe impact on their quality of life; in many circumstances when finances are critically stretched it is the necessities that are cut, things like heating and nutritional food, not disposable luxuries.</p>
<p>Disgusting!! You must realise people are getting early pension payments, and the one chance they have to save or at least use the money for retirement plans or ISAS instead of having rip off life insurance plans, and you want to limit it to £6000. That's not going to help people saving for retirement is it?</p>
<p>The benefit of this would appear to be tiny - less than the annual cost of the mid-scale employee to administer this.</p>
<p>Now you are also penalising those with savings which may have been accrued over a lifetime of honest work and may be needed when they come off benefits. Short term thinking again.</p>
<p>This is not fair on people who already have enough problems but manage perhaps to be a bit frugal - even on a basic income. In this day and age £16,000 is low enough.</p>
<p>I think maximum saving should be for a household of £10,000...</p>
<p>As a homeowner it is essential I have sufficient savings to pay for necessary maintenance/repairs to my property. On the very low income I have I cannot save very much at all so could end up in debt with all the attendant problems. I don't think £16,000 is an unreasonable limit. £6000 would vanish if, say, a new roof was needed.</p>
<p>Again what evidence is there that provides the justification for this change. Is the suggested £6,000 an arbitrary sum or is it based on analysis? Also, unlike other Options no figure is given of the numbers likely to be affected.</p>
<p>At the worst allowed saving should be the same as for other benefits which sees them gradually reduced between £6,000 to £16,000. Lowering the limit to £6,000 further discourages people from saving, and therefore providing for themselves, which will make them more dependent on the State and Council.</p>
<p>Penalising people who wish to be careful with money, save and better themselves is no way to get them off benefits!</p>
<p>This is a drastic difference in savings allowed which I think is grossly unfair. It would be fairer to fix it at a figure which is mid-way, such as £10,000.</p>
<p>No it's not fair.</p>
<p>What are we getting for paying Council Tax. No grass cutting, overgrown flower beds, not even a black bin liner, rubbish left - Nothing! Cutbacks everywhere no matter what you put up or increase.</p>
<p>Very unfair, especially senior citizens that have a little savings especially if you pay for care.</p>
<p>how does this allow anyone to save for new washing machines, essential car bills etc</p>
<p>These 110 residents should definitely not have all their reduction taken away for saving their money up to £16,000. This is not in line with other benefit requirements which are at the £16,000 threshold which is a reasonable one. This may be the only security these people have and should not be discouraged or penalised for this. These people are likely not to own property or a private pension. This would be taking away these people's ability to do something to improve their circumstances. It would be discouraging and counterproductive in the long term.</p>
<p>Saving needs to be encouraged (in the past 8 years savings have not grown due to paltry interest rates) otherwise everyone will be encouraged to spend their savings and not fall into the trap of receiving no help at all if you are prudent. £16000 down to £6000 is too big a drop. If it has to fall then settle for £10000 savings.</p>

THIS PROPOSAL REMOVES SUPPORT AND WILL ENCOURAGE SPENDING BY BORDER LINE CLAIMANTS TO ACHIEVE REDUCED SAVINGS TO A DANGEROUSLY LOW LEVEL AND PENALISES THOSE WITH RELATIVELY MODERATE LEVELS OF CAPITAL RESOURCES WHEN THE TAPER ARRANGEMENTS ALREADY REMOVE SUPPORT IN A GRADUAL WAY

if you are capable of earning and have £16000 in savings you should be able to pay in full/

People who have savings should not be persecuted for saving. In my case they have to last my entire life and be a funeral fund.

Band D owners have worked all their lives so must have saved for their old age now will be penalised for savings

The additional restriction is too drastic on a group who are already being screwed. £10,000 would be a more reasonable cap

Whilst there is clearly a disincentive to save again in the currently financial climate it is difficult to justify reducing Council Tax for those with sufficient money in the bank to pay.

I spent all my savings on council tax when I could get no help and then it is squeezed out of you again to keep paying and paying until you have no money, cannot get help and they have to jail you.

All poorer people should not be expected to pay more.

Proposal 2: all tax payers liable to pay 20% of their council tax

<p>Whilst I understand the constraints of budgets and the necessity to provide critical services, many people who currently receive reductions are already on or below the poverty line. Forcing them to pay an additional amount has a severe impact on their quality of life; in many circumstances when finances are critically stretched it is the necessities that are cut, things like heating and nutritional food, not disposable luxuries.</p>
<p>Option B is the best of two evils</p>
<p>Same argument as under proposal 1 above.</p>
<p>The worst of all the proposals. I know let us CUT the salary of all MPs and councillors and those at the top tier of the Council and see how much that saves. Just a cut of 4% which would not make any major difference to them. Cut 4% from those with little feels like a cut of 40% and more</p>
<p>I believe, although always difficult to find extra money, that this would be the fairest and most even handed solution. It should also be more cost effective for the Council to calculate and maintain.</p>
<p>As I said on my first comment yeah with families or working people with no children, but not single parents. I think it should change for us when our child leaves high school</p>
<p>It is assumed that this option means that there would be no disregard for protected groups as in Proposal 1. If that is correct then it would be helpful to clearly state this. Again there is no estimate her of how any households would be affected.</p>
<p>life is hard enough and proposal 2 seem to be the fairest across the board</p>
<p>While I don't accept the continued burden put on to those who CAN'T WORK. I accept that everyone in society has a part to play and would accept my equal share of the cost.</p>
<p>People who have more than £6,000 in the bank can afford the 4% rise, so this is why Proposal 1 is fair and this one is not. Because choosing to do a 4% rise on everyone actually hits the people with no money at all the hardest and they will already be squeezed by the tax credit cuts coming in April. You will have people defaulting on rent much more often which will lead to more money being spent by Herefordshire government on courts, bailiffs, etc. Proposal 1 while more complicated protects the poorest.</p>
<p>This proposal does not take account of vulnerable families who are in receipt of carers allowance or severe disability premium, who are already struggling with their low income.</p>
<p>This will affect those on maximum CTR, who fall into the lowest income bands, in particular the unemployed, disabled people and single parents. These people are already suffering from a range of other cuts and from benefit freezes, and having to find even a small amount a week will impact on their ability to buy food and fuel.</p>
<p>What are we getting for paying Council Tax. No grass cutting, overgrown flower beds, not even a black bin liner, rubbish left - Nothing! Cutbacks everywhere no matter what you put up or increase.</p>
<p>SEE ABOVE SCHEME ALREADY PRODUCING LOWER SCHEME COST TO THE COUNCIL THAN NEEDED TO RECOVER CUT IN GRANT</p>
<p>I believe the whole banding system is unfair. I also believe that rural residents do not get the same benefits or need the same resources from the council tax income that people living in the towns and cities do.</p>
<p>I think this is the best way forward at present. Although for the first time in my life I am dependant on benefits I am willing to pay more towards my services</p>
<p>This on the face of it seems to be a more sensible approach, being the scheme closest to the present CTR scheme. Therefore actually saving the council time and finances trying to enforce new schemes and causing in some cases extreme financial distress leading to poverty and homelessness</p>
<p>simpler</p>
<p>This seems to be fair as rise is below £1 per week meaning around £48 per annum on bill</p>

The reality is everyone on CTR has some form vulnerability or financial hardship to some degree or another. Indeed up until 3 years ago successive Governments took the view that majority of people who stand to be affected by these proposals were sufficiently 'poor' that they would not be required to pay any council tax. You should also not lose sight of the fact that CTR is simply one benefit of several that claimants are in receipt of and given the changes to the other benefits announced at the recent budget disposal household income will be dropping significantly so there is even less chance of collecting the monies now outstanding

I strongly agree that the cap should be reduced from 84% to 80%. I strongly agree that there should be no additional relief above 80% of Band C I strongly agree that the savings limit should be reduced to £6,000 The truly vulnerable should continue to be protected - but maybe the criteria should be looked at more stringently.

Does it go down if we all put more in the pot? This should be means tested for pensioners too.

This is a blanket approach without considering some of the more vulnerable people in society as is the case in proposal 1

All poorer people should not be expected to pay more.

If you think the council should make an additional contribution from its own finances to continue with the current CTRS, how do you think this should be funded?

<p>Stop paying your chief executives obscene wages. No council exec should earn more than the prime minister of this country. Make better choices when demolishing council buildings when they haven't been up that long....how much did that cost the taxpayer i.e. council building that was on the end of the new development.</p>
<p>Increase charges for car parking in the city by say, 100%. Not only would this increase income, it would free up the city's road network (as it may encourage people to walk or car share etc) and in turn that would reduce council spending on related health issues such as obesity and all connected expenditure.</p>
<p>Perhaps cease to employ the officers who are unable to answer this question for themselves?</p>
<p>By bringing a charge for vehicles being sold on the side of road, you should charge a sales fee for all vehicles being sold as this is advertising and can cause people to slow down or park dangerously. Give a permit to register the keeper only so they could avoid this charge. But what it would do is stop all these people making money on the side by selling vehicles and not paying their taxes and help genuine businesses compete fairly.</p>
<p>I know, let us CUT the salary of all MPs and councillors and those at the top tier of the Council and see how much that saves. Just a cut of 4% which would not make any major difference to them. Cut 4% from those on little feels like a cut of 40% and more</p>
<p>Maybe by taking some people away higher up or areas that aren't really used or useful. The community shouldn't be penalised that's what Herefordshire council was all about I thought the community... Making Hereford better, and you're not doing this</p>
<p>I saw in the paper that 3 counsellors cost the council 400,000.</p>
<p>A start would be to show the cost of collection of unpaid CT as a result of previous cuts. Increasing the financial pressures on already poor households will have an effect in other policy areas. Could it be that the reported significant rises in full poverty, domestic abuse, and child abuse are in some way connected? The recent Understanding Herefordshire report studiously avoids addressing poverty (unlike previous reports!) but there are enough indicators to suggest that this is a growing problem in the County which the proposals will only add to.</p>
<p>The council do need to make sure that the CTR doesn't change further beyond 20% and the only acceptable way to do so is to reduce the cost of its highest earning employees. It is stunningly unacceptable that in a poor and underfunded county like Herefordshire that anyone in the council is earning over £100,000. Again I would refuse to pay higher rates than 20% unless the council stops wasting money on salaries it can't afford.</p>
<p>This could be funded by reducing grants to things such as Arts, Culture, Heritage, Sports, Leisure and many other projects. These are thing I for one feel should be self-sufficient. If they cannot manage without grants then there are not enough people interested in them so why keep them going.</p>
<p>Take the money from other programs that the council supports. Council money that supports needless employees - as long as the money does not get cut directly from the people. Cut staff in education and children's departments because most parents think the system is a mess and children are not learning anything anyway. The council is constantly throwing money at staff that do not do their jobs and then get replaced by new staff that do not do their jobs. It is the biggest waste of spending in the council, the educational and children's programs. No parents are satisfied with the council so that is where the staff needs to be cut or abolished.</p>
<p>I think the council needs to sort out its priorities, it's very nice to enable people to go out and have fun/hobbies, but you need to focus on basic care needs first. I say this as someone disabled, who can get help to go out partying if I want (which I can't do anyway!) but find it hard to get help to</p>

clean/cook etc. Would be very happy to see the council getting more of our money if they actually appeared to do anything useful with it, and stopped cutting services we desperately need, like the CAB.
Increase council tax across the board, in particular in higher bands.
Dropping all but the most essential capital expenditure and carrying out ongoing maintenance only.
Do not pay such huge salaries especially those over £40000
FROM THE ELEMENT INCLUDED IN THE FORMULA GRANT FOR THIS PURPOSE
cut the disgraceful wages paid to council executives
To be honest I think the council are struggling but doing their best. We all need to dig a little deeper, but I also think the reduction should be means tested in some way.
stop building roads that will not help traffic flow on Edgar Street and look at officers wages
Through discretionary housing payment scheme
I take issue with the fact that these proposals will actually save the council money. Clearly there is more council tax available to be collected but how easy it is to collect this money? The cost of postage for bills, reminders, summonses etc. The staff resource needs to administer these things. What about the indirect impact of causing financial hardship to individuals and families and the costs to the council of having to pick up the pieces at a later date.
The upper and middle management of the council could take a cut or reduction in their fat-cat salaries (2014 salaries for top 13 senior management were between £78,000 and £145,000 pa)! Another way don't spend £60,000, as the council were prepared to do earlier in the year, to pay for recruitment of various senior posts. Maybe by increasing the competency of the original incumbents or replacing departed staff with offers of internal promotion to competent individuals who have worked the area and understand the requirements, the council could save on those unwarranted reductions in CTR. How much does the council staff spend on non-essential activities, such as wining and dining, unnecessary hotel stays, taxis, first class tickets and consultant fees?
Simple, government funds to help poorer people/

Explain which groups and the reasons they might be affected.

Disabled, I am in the ESA support group
I think it will be unfairly affecting single, lone *working* parents who don't receive any maintenance from the absent parent. If the council looks at how these cuts will affect this group of people, they may understand how they might feel discriminated against.
This affects the poorest people in the community, many of who are also dealing with other issues, such as health.
In my situation I am struggling to pay and this will just put more pressure on me.
Anyone on low wages or benefits. This is not rocket science
I believe lowering the savings limit from £16,000 to £6,000 is very unfair to people that have managed to save and be frugal. After all having savings up to £16,000 is not much in this day and age. After all, transport is essential in Herefordshire so to replace a car or to keep money in an account to pay for a funeral (as a lot of people try to do now) etc etc soon reduces savings.
Single parents with children over the age of 5 years of age
I am 58 and employers have no interest in employing me in any serious capacity so I am stuck in a low paying part time job. Re-training is hardly an option at my age.
Particularly those who are disabled and their carers, young people and pregnant or new mothers on maternity leave.
Clearly all disabled people who can't work, like myself, will be unfairly hit by increasing the council tax payment, but proposal 1a is stunningly unfair on those who have previously done well and earned a good home, Band D or above, only then to have become ill and have to live off benefits.
The disabled are already affected by the so called bedroom tax, which does not allow for a spare room for carers or the need of an extra room for special equipment or when a couple just cannot sleep in the same room due to one of them having a disability.
It affects everyone because prices are going up and relief is going down. This will lead to high crime, robberies, etc. which will put additional strains on monies for police. This is the nature of poverty, it just gets worse.
Disabled people will be affected if Proposal 2 is implemented because their Council Tax liability will increase even though their benefits have not increased significantly.
These proposals will affect those on low incomes, which will mean there is a disproportionate effect on disabled people and parents (especially single parents). The changes only affect people of working age, so there is age discrimination.
Single mothers who should be able to concentrate on raising their children properly without having to seek work at all costs.
The state of paths and walkway. Overgrown hedges etc. Dangerous. Nothing done to help anymore.
discrimination against long term disabled
I think it is very important that people from any disadvantage must be enabled to make improvements to their own circumstances by being encouraged to save. The idea of only allowing their life savings to be £6,000 is unfair. Many of these people will be simply saving for old age or serious illness as they have little other security in their lives.
I think the proposals should apply to everyone equally especially not to be exempt due to age.
For a person who depends on benefits living alone for long term sickness. If Council Tax were to be increased it would be hard to manage financially.
Long term disabled - pensioners - lower income families. Any large increase will have a severe effect on those on a fixed income e.g. long term disabled, pensioners and families on low earnings never achieving monetary security if they are forced to pay ever increasing council tax for an ever more decreasing level of council services vital for such families.

People with learning difficulties and vulnerable adults who cannot get a job and live on low income
People with a disability
Everyone is affected. Maybe shared through larger households who use more facilities could be an option.
Proposal 1 would take account of those who are more vulnerable, i.e. disability, elderly and young families whose income is potentially more restricted.
Those of disability, old age, infirmity, single parent families and anyone who is already in a position that may cause them to struggle significantly more than the average and will feel the effects greater of additional benefit cuts. This may be the straw that breaks the camel's backs for some!
It should help all people.

Appendix B

Dear Sir or madam

I will not be able to pay more
Council Tax at all with having to pay
all other bills it is a job to make ends
MEET as I only get Job Seekers

Allowance payed every 2 weeks

at £146-00 out of this money

I have to pay

£19-80P TOP UP RENT per week

£20- every 2 weeks electric

£19-68P water every month

£20-00 BT every 2 weeks

£38-00 council tax monthly

as you will see I don't have
very little money for food

or cloths I am very worried about

things at the moment

Your Faithfully

please not

I have a disability and illness. I have my own home to keep. I pay council tax and house benefit all so on long term sick. Now it is time to say about the council tax number 1, one ticket for the tip a month is not right when you take a trailer which is 6" by 3 you have to have tickets when I take 20 bags in it and car does not have to have a tickets they have the same as I have. I think it is not right. you send money in the wrong way. shut the tickets that is not right. Town is going to the dogs. you get less for your council tax but you take more of use those on long term sick on low money. we have not got it. The one that hold their own name. I think it is not right. It is time for you to get it of those on pension credit. make them pay some council tax and houseing benefit they have more money than I get I will not pay more for council tax

PTo

I go to mind in
heritor you give use less
money to keep it going
it is not right it keep them
out of hosp going to
mind and lot of them say
the same as I do OK

I have my own home to
mainten get the gas boiler
gone and a year pay of
boiler gas which is less than
most have to pay for I am
not happy what you are doing
to me putting it up

Priorities and Budget Consultation 2016-2020

Version 1.1
Strategic intelligence team

December 2015



Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	4
Methodology	4
Results	5
The council's priorities	5
The council's budget	9
Town and parish councils, community groups and voluntary organisations	13
How can we generate income?	15
About the respondents	19
Appendix A-Q1: Detailed analysis of responses to question 1	20
Appendix A-Q3: Detailed analysis of responses to question 3	21
Appendix B: Analysis of free text comments	23
Appendix C: The questionnaire	26

Version history:

Version	Date	Organiser	Description
V1.0	30.10.2015	Strategic intelligence team	Final report
V1.1	02.12.2015	Strategic intelligence team	Final report with qualitative analysis

If you need help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call the Research Team on 01432 261944 or e-mail researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk.

Executive summary

- The consultation on Herefordshire Council's priorities and budget for 2016 to 2020 ran from late July to early October 2015. A questionnaire was available online and hard copies were distributed at promotion events in the city and market towns.
- There were 1,979 responses to the questionnaire; 60 per cent of which were completed on paper.
- Of the three council priorities that respondents were asked to rank (question 1), the general pattern of responses suggested that 'enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives' was most important, followed by 'keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life' then 'support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work'.
- However, almost three quarters of respondents thought that the council should identify other priority areas (Q2). Most popular among these were keeping the libraries and customer services open; public transport and infrastructure were other highly preferred areas of priority.
- With regard to income and savings proposals (Q3), there was a general preference for those that would generate income and less preference for the savings options. In particular 'sell our smallholdings estate of 4,500 acres, including 45 farms, to reduce our debt repayments' was the most preferred option of almost a third of respondents. By far the least preferred proposal was the savings that would be generated by 'reducing customer services and libraries across the county' (least preferred option of more than half of respondents).
- Almost two thirds (63 per cent) of respondents thought that the council should continue to fund town and parish councils (Q4).
- Over half (58 per cent) of respondents thought that town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations could do more to help deliver services if Herefordshire Council reduces or stops delivering a particular service (Q5). Suggestions for which services included grass cutting and the general maintenance of public spaces such as parks, streets, roads and footpaths; community transport services; and libraries and museums.
- The majority (61 per cent) of respondents would support an increase in council tax above two per cent to support services and defer savings for a year (Q6). Of these, half supported a three per cent increase and the other half supported a five per cent increase in council tax.
- An even larger majority (71 per cent) of respondents thought that the council should increase service charges to protect other services across the county (Q7).
- Just over half (52 per cent) of respondents would support an increase in council tax above two per cent and also thought the council should increase service charges.

Introduction

The consultation on Herefordshire Council's priorities and budget for 2016-2020 began on Friday 24 July 2015 and ended on Friday 9 October 2015. This report presents the key points from the analysis of responses received by 14 October. The consultation was publicised on the council's website with the following background documents:

- [Income and savings proposals](#)
- [Council's budget report 6 February 2015](#)

Methodology

The consultation questionnaire was published on the Herefordshire Council website and people were invited to complete it online. A printable version of the questionnaire was made available for the people who would like to download, print and complete. Paper questionnaires were also distributed at the events organised in all market towns to promote the consultation. The consultation was also promoted on social media via the council's Twitter and Facebook.

This report presents the results of the combined online and paper responses to the questionnaire. The sample base is the number of respondents to the question and is the base from which percentages are calculated. The sample base used is specified for each question. Percentages are presented rounded to the nearest whole number in the tables; however the charts are based on unrounded percentages.

Note that if respondents could select more than one answer to a particular question, the percentages may add up to more than 100 per cent.

Where comments have been provided these are listed in full but have been anonymised and corrected for spelling where appropriate.

There were a total of 1,979 responses to the questionnaire, of which 784 were submitted online and 1,195 were completed paper copies.

The consultation also received 30 other responses in the form of 16 letters and 14 emails. Because they didn't answer the standard questions it is not possible to include them in the analysis presented here.

Results

The council's priorities

Q1. How would you choose to rate these priorities in terms of most important and least important? (1 = most important and 3 = least important)

The three priorities that this question asked respondents to rank in order of importance were:

- Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives
- Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life
- Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work

In the final version of the online survey it was only possible for respondents to assign each rank to one option only, but in an earlier version and for people who responded on paper it was possible to assign ranks more than once. 615 respondents – 32 per cent of the total number who responded to this question – assigned at least one rank to more than one option. These responses have an impact on the overall result, because there was a tendency amongst them to say that all three priorities were equally (most) important. Details of how these responses varied from the rest, are given in Appendix A-Q1, but for simplicity and to ensure that all responses are taken into account the analysis below includes all responses to the question.

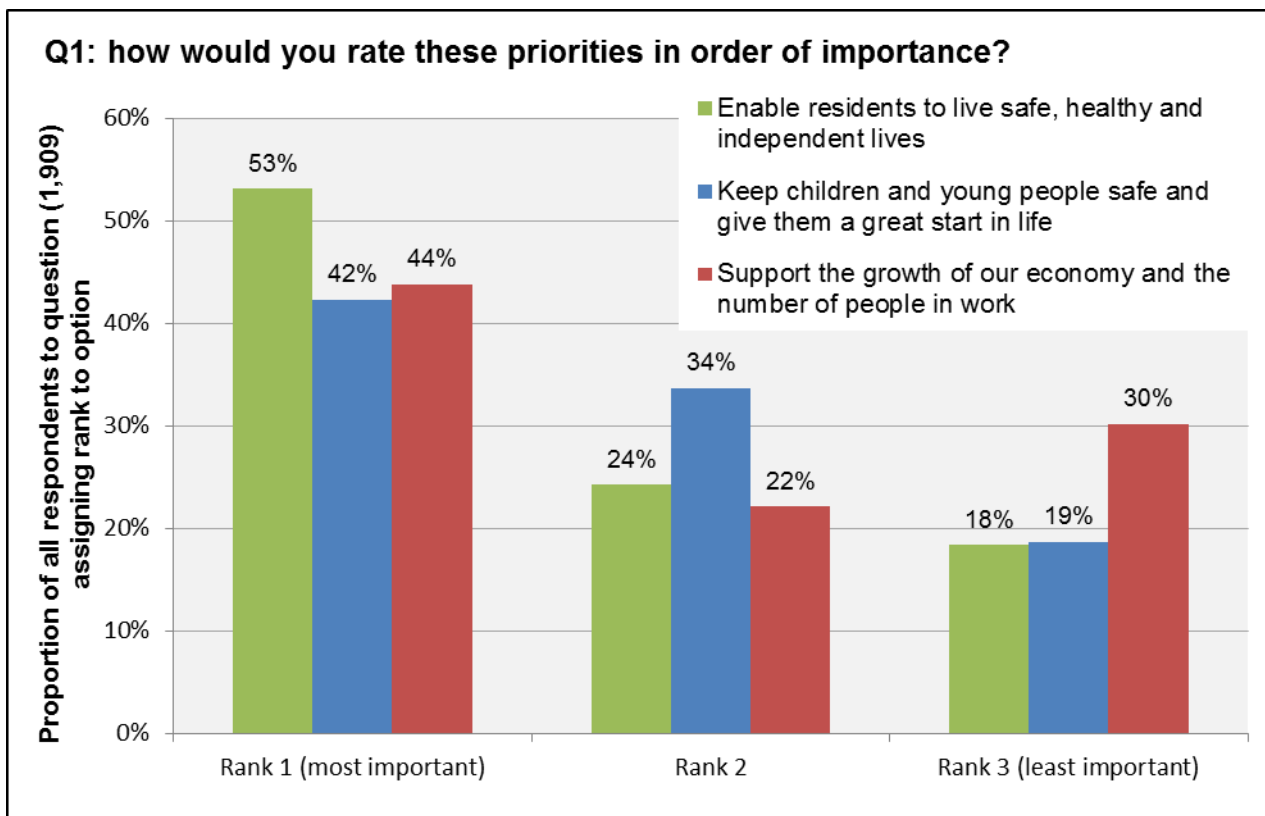
Because of the number of people who said that all priorities were equally important, when combining all 1,909 responses to the question the most common response for each option was 'most important' (see chart 1). However, it is possible to identify a general pattern of order of importance:

- **'Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives' was most important** to more people than either of the other priorities (53 per cent of respondents compared to 44 per cent for the economic priority and 42 for children and young people)
- **'Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life' was second most important** to a higher proportion of people than any other (34 per cent), and was given first or second by a similar proportion to enabling residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives (76 per cent compared to 77 per cent)
- **'Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work' was least important** to more respondents than either of the other priorities (30 per cent compared to 19 per cent for children and young people and 18 per cent for safe, healthy and independent lives)

Table 1: responses to question 1

Priority	Rank	All responses combined (1,909)		
		1	2	3
Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives		53%	24%	18%
Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life		42%	34%	19%
Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work		44%	22%	30%

Chart 1: proportion of respondents to question 1 who assigned each rank to each priority



Q2. Are there any other areas which you think the council should identify as a priority?

If yes, please specify the priorities you believe we should focus on.

Just under three quarters of respondents (72 per cent) thought that there were other areas that the council should identify as a priority, and 1,300 people made a suggestion as to what the other priorities should be. Please note that some respondents who answered 'No' to this question and people who did not answer Q2 also made suggestions.

The word cloud in figure 1 identifies the words that featured in the 1,300 suggestions. From a more detailed analysis of the comments made to this question, the most frequently quoted priorities were:

1. Libraries, customer services and public toilets

“ *Public library services, which under the 1964 Public Libraries Act are a statutory requirement, and provide education, entertainment & improve health, particularly for the young & disadvantaged.* ”

2. Public transport including transport subsidies/grants, sustainable transport

“ *Retaining public transport - if we don't want more problems associated with isolation in the rural communities in which we live then access to services is key.* ”

3. Infrastructure including roads and broadband

“ *Maintain the infrastructure of the county such as existing roads, bus travel and public rights of way. They have been neglected by the council yet all provide the services that support the above 3 objectives.* ”

The next most common other priorities suggested were:

- support elderly to live an independent & healthy lives including adult social care
- children's wellbeing including education, provision of local school places, school transport
- cutting down council's internal costs e.g. high paid staff; interim consultants; short term funded projects
- focus on climate change / green energy / protect the environment

Please see Appendix B-Q2 for further analysis of the comments made to question 2.

The council's budget

Q3. How would you choose to prioritise the following areas (see table 3 for full list) in terms of which you would implement first compared to last in order to reduce spending?

This question asked respondents to rank eleven options in order of preference (1 = first and 11 = last). Three of the options related to ways in which the council could generate income and the other eight related to areas of potential savings.

In the final version of the online survey it was only possible to assign each rank to one option only, but in an earlier version and for people who responded on paper it was possible to assign ranks more than once. 664 respondents – 34 per cent of the total number who responded to this question – assigned at least one rank to more than one option. These responses had the potential to skew the overall result, so they were looked at separately to the 'correct' responses. Respondents who used ranks more than once tended to favour either rank 11, i.e. to say that two or more options were their least preferred, or rank 1, i.e. to have joint favourite options: rank 11 was the most popular rank for all options except 'introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford' and 'sell our smallholdings estate' amongst these 664 respondents. For the latter, rank 1 was the most popular.

Details of how these 664 responses varied from the rest are given in Appendix A-Q3, but they did not significantly affect the overall findings. So for simplicity and to ensure that all responses are taken into account the analysis below includes all responses to the question.

To give an overall indication of relative preference between the options, the ranks assigned to each option by each respondent were given a weight (from -5 for least preferred to +5 for most preferred) which were then converted into an overall score out of 100 for each option – see chart 3 on the next page.

There were some clear messages from these scores and the distribution of the ranks (see table 3):

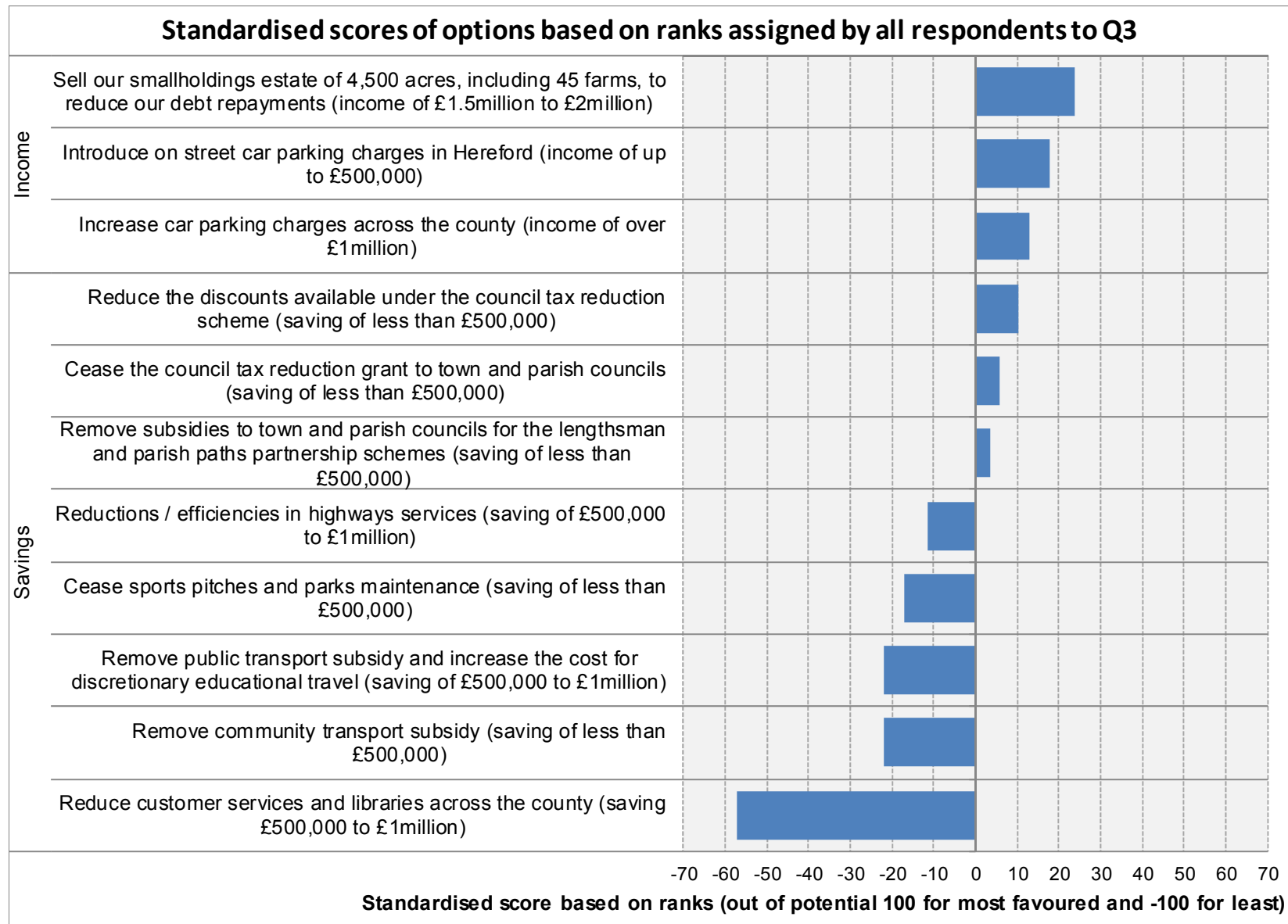
- There was a general preference for those that would generate income:
 - 37 per cent of respondents ranked 'selling our smallholdings estate' as their first or second preference
 - 'Increase car parking charges across the county' received the next highest number of first choices (22 per cent) and was the second choice of a further 10 per cent; but 'introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford' received more first and second choices combined (35 per cent)

- Altogether, these three options were ranked as most preferred by 70 per cent of respondents - and no other option received more first choices than any of them individually.
- There was less preference for the savings options, although a few were preferred over others:
 - 30 per cent of respondents ranked 'reduce the discounts available under the council tax reduction scheme' as either first, second or third preference
 - 'Cease the council tax reduction grant to town and parish councils' was first, second or third preference for 26 per cent; as was 'remove subsidies to town and parish councils for the lengthsman and parish paths partnership scheme' for 23 per cent.
- At the other end of the scale,
 - 'Reductions / efficiencies in highways services' and 'cease sports pitches and parks maintenance' were both the least preferred option of 13 per cent of respondents. In total, just under a third of respondents indicated that each of these options were amongst their three least preferred (ranks 9, 10 or 11).
 - 'Remove public transport subsidy and increase the cost for discretionary educational travel' was the least preferred option for 21 per cent of respondents and was amongst the bottom three options for almost 40 per cent. 'Remove community transport subsidy' was the least preferred for 16 per cent and was amongst the bottom three choices for 36 per cent.
- 'Reduce customer services and libraries across the county' was by far the least preferred option, being ranked as least preferred by over half (52 per cent) of respondents – and second least by a further 10 per cent.

Table 3: percentages of all respondents to question 3 that assigned each rank to each option
(most common ranks for each option highlighted and notably large proportions in bold)

Proposal		Rank (1=first and 11=last)										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Income	Sell our smallholdings estate of 4,500 acres, including 45 farms, to reduce our debt repayments (income of £1.5million to £2million)	31%	7%	10%	5%	6%	6%	4%	4%	5%	4%	13%
	Introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford (income of up to £500,000)	17%	18%	9%	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	11%
	Increase car parking charges across the county (income of over £1million)	22%	10%	7%	6%	7%	7%	4%	6%	5%	7%	13%
Savings	Reduce the discounts available under the council tax reduction scheme (saving of less than £500,000)	11%	8%	12%	9%	11%	9%	7%	6%	6%	4%	9%
	Cease the council tax reduction grant to town and parish councils (saving of less than £500,000)	8%	8%	10%	10%	11%	11%	7%	7%	6%	6%	9%
	Remove subsidies to town and parish councils for the lengthsman and parish paths partnership schemes (saving of less than £500,000)	9%	7%	8%	10%	11%	11%	8%	8%	7%	5%	9%
	Reductions / efficiencies in highways services (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	5%	5%	7%	9%	9%	11%	8%	9%	10%	7%	13%
	Cease sports pitches and parks maintenance (saving of less than £500,000)	4%	3%	5%	8%	10%	10%	10%	10%	9%	10%	13%
	Remove public transport subsidy and increase the cost for discretionary educational travel (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	5%	5%	6%	8%	8%	8%	6%	9%	9%	10%	21%
	Remove community transport subsidy (saving of less than £500,000)	4%	3%	5%	7%	10%	9%	8%	10%	10%	10%	16%
	Reduce customer services and libraries across the county (saving £500,000 to £1million)	4%	2%	2%	3%	4%	5%	4%	4%	7%	10%	52%

Chart 3: scores of options based on ranks assigned by all respondents to Q3



Town and parish councils, community groups and voluntary organisations

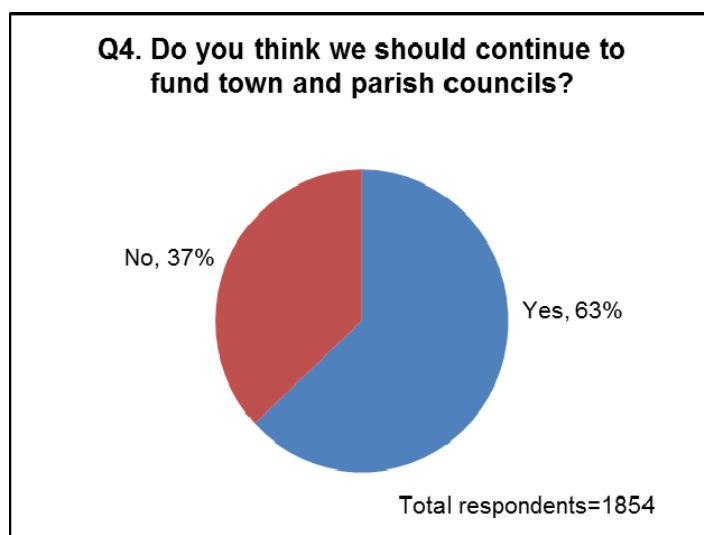
Q4. Do you think we should continue to fund town and parish councils?

Nearly two thirds of respondents (63 per cent) thought that the town and parish councils should continue to be funded by Herefordshire Council.

Table 4: responses to whether council should continue to fund town and parish councils

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes	1,171	63%
No	683	37%
Total respondents	1,854	100%
Not answered	125	

Chart 4: should the council continue to fund town and parish councils?



Q5. If Herefordshire Council reduces or stops delivering a particular service, do you think that town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations can do more to help deliver services in your local community? If yes, please specify what services (this could include cutting the grass, maintaining parks or running a community bus service)

Nearly three fifths of respondents (58 per cent) thought that town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations could do more to help deliver services in their local community if Herefordshire Council reduces or stops delivering a particular service.

The initial analysis indicated that the most common suggestions were:

- grass cutting
- maintaining parks and open spaces / communal areas / sport pitches,
- running a community bus service / car sharing
- helping in the community libraries and museums
- litter collection/street cleaning
- maintaining minor roads and footpaths

Some respondents expressed concerns about delegating the services to parish or town councils, community groups or voluntary organisations:

“ Possibly, but they would need support, which may negate any savings. Many services are already supported by an ageing group of voluntary workers and there is a limit to what local organisations and voluntary groups can do with very little funding. ”

“ There is a safety issue to consider but I believe all rural roads need to be adopted by the parish. I also feel that we could do a better job of filling in potholes! This would save one person marking the pothole and a second gang filling. The marked potholes often do not get filled and 'the marker' has to repeat the process. Otherwise summed up above - grass cutting, maintaining parks, sports grounds, community bus, litter picking, cleaning road signs. ”

Please see Appendix B-Q5 for further analysis of the comments made to question 5.

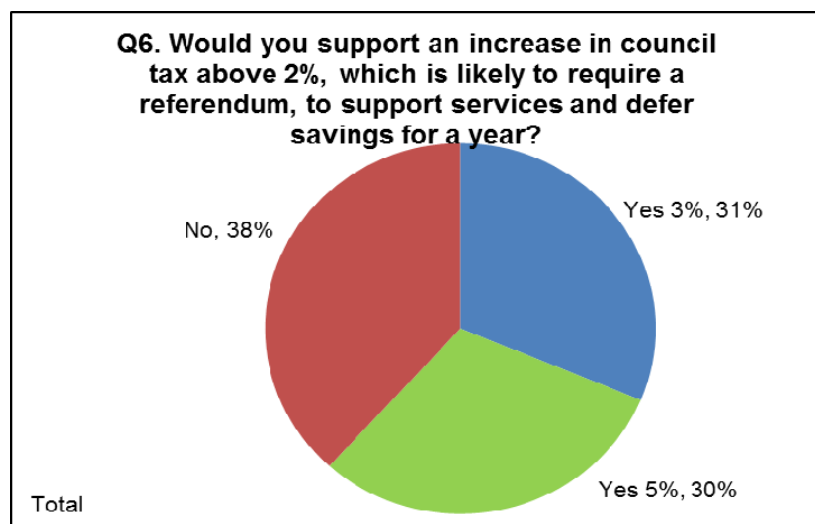
Q6. Would you support an increase in council tax above 2 per cent, which is likely to require a referendum, to support services and defer savings for a year?

Just over three fifths of respondents (62 per cent) would support an increase in council tax above 2 per cent (31 per cent by 3 per cent and 30 per cent by 5 per cent).

Table 6: responses to whether council tax should be increased by more than 2 per cent

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes, by 5%	574	30%
Yes, by 3%	591	31%
No	723	38%
Total respondents	1888	100%
Not answered	91	

Chart 6: would you support an increase in council tax?



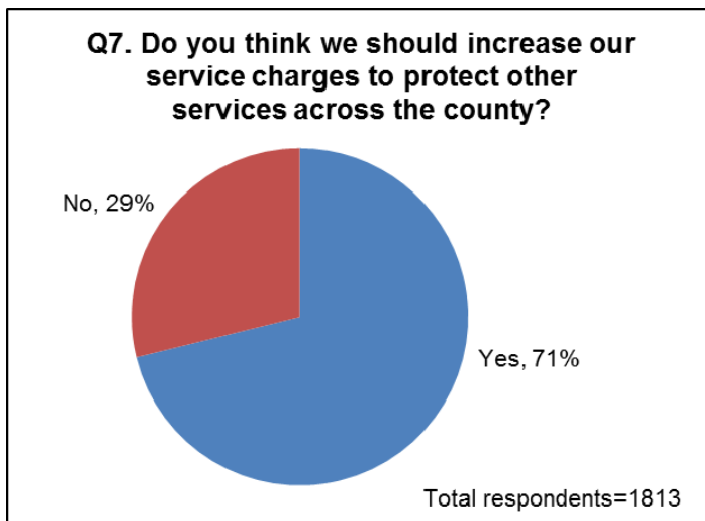
Q7. Do you think we should increase our service charges to protect other services across the county?

Just over seven in ten respondents (71 per cent) thought that Herefordshire Council should increase service charges to protect other services across the county.

Table 7: responses to whether service charges should be increased to protect other services

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes	1,290	71%
No	523	29%
Total respondents	1,813	100%
Not answered	166	

Chart 7: increase service charges to protect other services?



Council tax and service charges (Q6 and Q7)

Of the 1,787 respondents who answered both questions (Q6 and Q7), nearly a fifth (19 per cent) would not support an increase in either council tax or service charges.

Just over half of these respondents (52 per cent) would support both an increase in council tax (either by 3 per cent or 5 per cent) and increases in service charges.

Ten per cent of respondents would support an increase in council tax either by 3 per cent or 5 per cent but did not think the council should increase service charges. Twice as many (19 per cent) would not support an increase in council tax but did think the council should increase service charges.

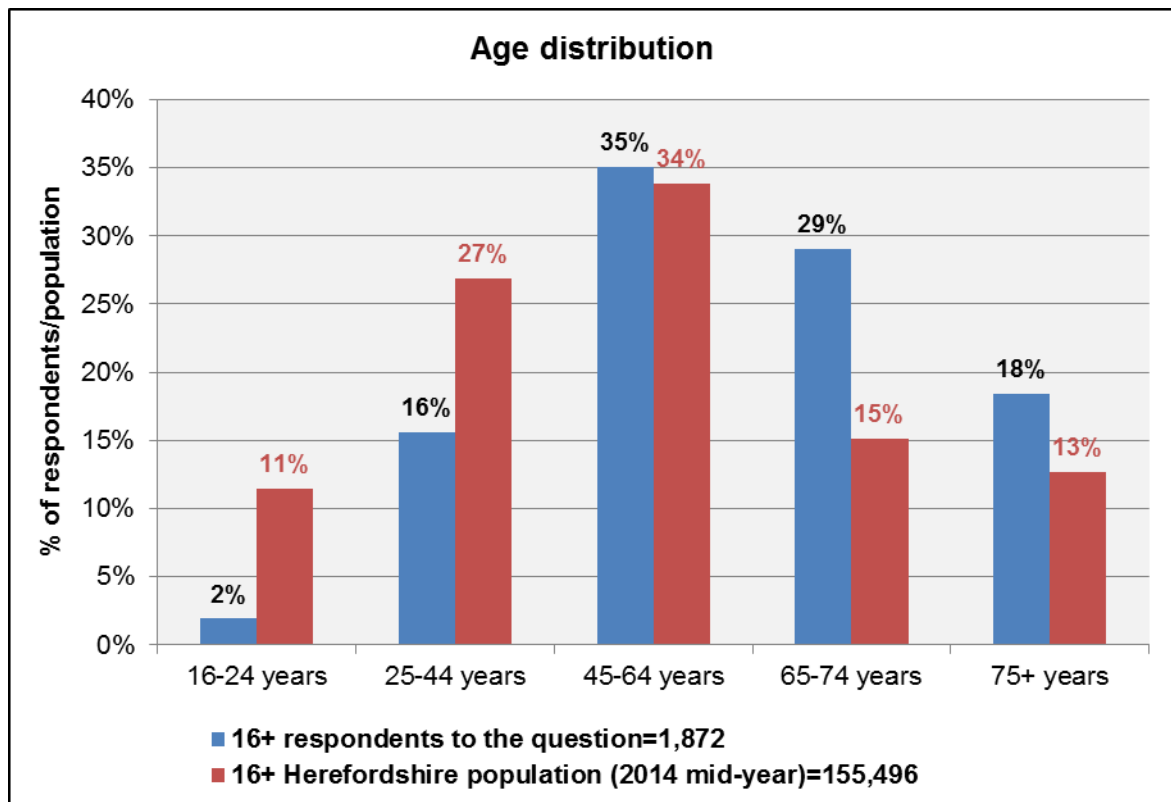
Table 8: comparison of responses to questions 6 and 7

		Q6. Would you support an increase in council tax above 2%, which is likely to require a referendum, to support services and defer savings for a year?		
Total respondents	1,787	No	Yes, by 3%	Yes, by 5%
Q7. Do you think we should increase our service charges to protect other services across the county?	No	334 (19%)	108 (6%)	74 (4%)
	Yes	345 (19%)	460 (26%)	466 (26%)

About the respondents

- One per cent of respondents represented an organisation or a group while 99 per cent were individuals.
- 54 per cent of respondents to the survey were males and 46 per cent were females.
- 47 per cent were aged 65 years or over, 35 per cent were aged 45-64 years and 18 per cent were 24 years or younger. It is clear from chart 8 that people aged 45 years and over are over represented in the consultation.

Chart 8: age distribution of survey respondents and Herefordshire population



- Nearly a fifth of respondents' day-to-day activities were limited a little or limited a lot because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months.
- The large majority (97 per cent) of respondents identified themselves as English, Scottish, Welsh or British; three per cent identified themselves as Irish or another national identity.
- All of the 93 per cent of respondents who answered the question about their ethnicity identified themselves as 'White' (97 per cent) or 'other White' (three per cent). This is quite different to the adult population of the county according to the 2011 Census: five per cent were 'other white' and two per cent were 'non-white'.
- One in ten respondents felt that they had been treated differently (positively or negatively) because of who they are.

Appendix A-Q1: Detailed analysis of responses to question 1

This section compares the responses of those who assigned ranks to more than one priority in question 1 to those who didn't. It is necessary to do this because different versions of the questionnaire allowed for different interpretations of the question. As mentioned on page 5, amongst the 615 **respondents who assigned tied ranks**, there was a tendency to say that all three options were equally (most) important: 80 per cent of respondents assigned rank 1 to the first option (enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives); 73 did to the second (keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life) and a further 73 to the third option (support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work). Only five to seven per cent of these respondents assigned rank 3 (least important) to any of the options.

There was a clearer order of priorities from the 1,295 **respondents who assigned only one option to each rank**:

- 40 per cent felt that 'enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives' was most important
- 41 per cent felt that 'keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life' was second most important
- 42 per cent felt that 'support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work' was least important

Table 9: responses to question 1 as a proportion of the 615 respondents who assigned at least one rank to more than one option and as a proportion of the 1,295 respondents who assigned one rank for each option

Priority	Rank	Respondents who assigned tied ranks (615)			Respondents who assigned one option to one rank (1,295)		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives		80%	14%	5%	40%	29%	25%
Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life		73%	18%	7%	28%	41%	24%
Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work		73%	21%	5%	30%	22%	42%

Appendix A-Q3: Detailed analysis of responses to question 3

This section compares the responses of those who assigned ranks to more than one proposal in question 3 to those who didn't. It is necessary to do this because different versions of the questionnaire allowed for different interpretations of the question. As described on page 10, a third of respondents to question 3 assigned at least one rank to more than one option. These respondents tended to favour either rank 11, i.e. to say that two or more options were their least preferred, or rank 1, i.e. to have joint favourite options. As the highlighted cells in table 9 show, rank 11 was the most popular for all options except 'introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford' and 'sell our smallholdings estate' amongst these 664 respondents. For the latter, rank 1 was the most popular by a small minority.

Table 10: responses to question 3 as a proportion of the 664 respondents who assigned at least one rank to more than one option
(most common ranks for each option highlighted and notable proportion in bold)

Per cent of respondents assigning each rank to each proposal		Rank (1=first and 11=last)										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Income	Sell our smallholdings estate of 4,500 acres, including 45 farms, to reduce our debt repayments	28%	5%	7%	6%	6%	5%	2%	3%	6%	3%	27%
	Increase car parking charges across the county	24%	4%	4%	5%	10%	7%	3%	6%	4%	3%	26%
	Introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford	25%	6%	7%	4%	9%	8%	3%	4%	3%	3%	24%
Savings	Reduce the discounts available under the council tax reduction scheme	18%	4%	9%	5%	9%	10%	4%	3%	5%	5%	21%
	Cease the council tax reduction grant to town and parish councils	14%	4%	6%	8%	10%	11%	5%	5%	5%	5%	20%
	Remove subsidies to town and parish councils for the lengthsman and parish paths partnership schemes	16%	4%	7%	6%	9%	10%	6%	7%	6%	5%	22%
	Reductions / efficiencies in highways services	9%	4%	5%	7%	12%	11%	6%	6%	6%	5%	23%
	Cease sports pitches and parks maintenance	9%	4%	5%	7%	9%	9%	5%	6%	7%	8%	29%
	Remove public transport subsidy and increase the cost for discretionary educational travel	9%	3%	5%	5%	9%	8%	3%	6%	7%	6%	36%
	Remove community transport subsidy	8%	3%	3%	6%	9%	8%	4%	6%	6%	7%	36%
	Reduce customer services and libraries across the county	6%	2%	1%	2%	5%	3%	1%	2%	5%	5%	66%

There were 1,204 respondents who assigned one rank for each option. According to them, there was a clear order of preference for ‘selling our smallholdings estates’, ‘introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford’ and ‘increase car parking charges across the county’ as rank 1, 2 and 3 respectively. ‘Reduce customer services and libraries across the county’ was the least preferred choice (rank 11) for a large majority.

Table 11: responses to question 3 as a proportion of the 1204 respondents who assigned one rank for each option
(most common ranks for each option highlighted and notable proportion in bold)

Per cent of respondents assigning tied ranks to each proposal		Rank (1=first and 11=last)										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Income	Sell our smallholdings estate of 4,500 acres, including 45 farms, to reduce our debt repayments (income of £1.5million to £2million)	32%	8%	12%	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%	4%	4%	6%
	Introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford (income of up to £500,000)	12%	24%	9%	7%	5%	4%	7%	6%	8%	7%	3%
	Increase car parking charges across the county (income of over £1million)	21%	13%	8%	6%	6%	7%	5%	5%	5%	10%	6%
Savings	Reduce the discounts available under the council tax reduction scheme (saving of less than £500,000)	7%	10%	13%	12%	12%	8%	9%	7%	7%	4%	2%
	Cease the council tax reduction grant to town and parish councils (saving of less than £500,000)	5%	10%	12%	12%	11%	11%	8%	8%	7%	6%	2%
	Remove subsidies to town and parish councils for the lengthsman and parish paths partnership schemes (saving of less than £500,000)	5%	8%	9%	12%	13%	12%	10%	9%	8%	4%	1%
	Reductions / efficiencies in highways services (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	3%	5%	8%	10%	7%	10%	9%	10%	12%	8%	8%
	Cease sports pitches and parks maintenance (saving of less than £500,000)	1%	3%	5%	9%	11%	11%	13%	12%	10%	11%	4%
	Remove community transport subsidy (saving of less than £500,000)	1%	3%	6%	7%	12%	10%	11%	12%	12%	12%	5%
	Remove public transport subsidy and increase the cost for discretionary educational travel (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	2%	5%	7%	9%	7%	8%	7%	11%	10%	12%	12%
	Reduce customer services and libraries across the county (saving £500,000 to £1million)	4%	2%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	5%	8%	13%	44%

Appendix B: Analysis of free text comments

The following analysis presents the key priorities/themes/suggestions emerged from the comments made to questions 2, 5 and 8.

Note: because there were more than one priority/theme/suggestion mentioned in some comments, the percentages are added up to more than 100 per cent.

Q2. Are there any other areas which you think the council should identify as a priority? If yes, please specify the priorities you believe we should focus on.

Key priorities	Proportion of frequency of the priority
Keep local libraries, museums, customer services, and public toilets open	23%
Public transport including transport grants, sustainable transport, reduce congestion	13%
Infrastructure (roads, communication, broadband etc.) and access to services	12%
Support elderly/vulnerable people to live independent and healthy lives, adult social care	7%
Children's wellbeing including education, provision of local school places, school transport, school library service	6%
Cut down Council internal costs e.g. high paid staff/interim consultants/short term funded projects and review contracts and projects	6%
Promote tourism and cultural services	4%
Focus on climate change, green energy and protect environment	4%
Health and wellbeing including mental health, integrate health & social care	4%
Cut grass & clean streets, roads, footpaths, countryside	3%
Housing development/Affordable housing	3%
Community safety/more policing, community cohesion, reduce anti-social behaviour	2%
Promote rural economy including the market towns	2%
Economic growth and more employment opportunities	2%
Opportunities for youth	2%
Cannot separate these priorities	2%
Good place to work/live happily, and a cleaner place to live	2%
Support voluntary organisations, third sector organisations, Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) and decentralise services	2%
Review council tax, generate revenue and consider cost efficiencies	1%
Road safety	1%
Review car parking charges including disable parking	1%
Integrate council services	1%

Key priorities	Proportion of frequency of the priority
Other priorities such as: development of city centre and high town, maintenance of city centre, provide back office function, retain services in-house/do not sub contract, commission out adults wellbeing and children's wellbeing services, parks and gardens to local companies, affordable recreational/leisure facilities, cut street lighting, provide sports facilities, tackle corruption, learning opportunities, collect the millions of pounds not paid by residents	2%
Other comments*	5%

*All other comments regarding individual topical areas which cannot aggregate in a meaningful way are included in 'other comments'.

Q5. If Herefordshire Council reduces or stops delivering a particular service, do you think that town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations can do more to help deliver services in your local community? If yes, please specify what services (this could include cutting the grass, maintaining parks or running a community bus service)

Key suggestions/ themes	Proportion of frequency of the suggestion
Cutting grass and hedge trimming	32%
Maintain communal areas(parks, play grounds, sport pitches, ...)	29%
Community bus service/car sharing	24%
Other suggestions e.g. parish councils should be consulted for the services, people on benefit or probation should do the work, reduce councillors and their expenses, make a website to advertise/look out for services etc.	13%
Provide libraries, museums and leisure facilities	12%
Litter enforcement	12%
Concerns about health and safety, equipment, training, expenses and liaison/coordinating function	8%
Maintaining roads, footpaths and repair pot holes	4%
Parish councils/ voluntary groups are already delivering these services	4%
Neighbour visiting services, respite and day service, good neighbour service and assisting vulnerable people e.g. with shopping etc.	2%
Lengthsman scheme	2%
Parish council should not take these activities, its county council's responsibility	2%
Volunteers are a limited resource	2%
Delivering a customer contact centre, tourist information/advice hub, signposting services, children centres and Citizens Advice Bureau	1%
More funds should be available or increase the parish council precept in order to deliver these services	1%
Providing winter services and act on emergencies	1%
Other comments*	7%

*All other comments regarding individual topical areas which cannot aggregate in a meaningful way are included in 'other comments'.

Q8. Do you have any other comments you would like to make on our priorities, budget or income and savings proposals?

Key themes	Proportion of frequency of the theme
Reduce high executive salaries, reduce number of managers and councillors to release more money, cut councillor allowances/expenses, grow a more efficient qualified workforce, e.g. stop employing interims and agency staff, make redundancies, share top positions with other councils, reducing agency and unnecessary staff and reduce the wage bill.	24%
Do not close local libraries	17%
Review car parking and car parking charges	7%
Collect outstanding council tax/re- evaluate council tax bands.	5%
Review contracts and service charges, generate income, reduce council reserves	5%
Increase council tax/business rates and implement both income and savings proposals	5%
Utilise current assets efficiently, generate income and reduce waste	5%
Provide public transport especially in rural areas	4%
Provide funding for Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) and other voluntary organisations	2%
Demand/press more funding for central government	2%
Do not cut public transport/transport subsidies and transport funds	2%
Share service with other councils/reduce spending/increase efficiencies	2%
Promote public health/quality of life for everyone	2%
Turn off unnecessary street lighting	2%
Proposed cuts/savings are not efficient enough and things will be worse off	2%
Do not increase burial or cremations costs	2%
Maintain roads, footpaths and improve cycle tracks	2%
Support for small businesses, small market traders and small farms	2%
Increase library fines and implement a small charge for internet use in libraries	1%
Use more volunteers, self-service or outsource services	1%
Do not cut school transport	1%
Cut bureaucracy & admin costs	1%
Means test pensioners for free bus passes (rather than automatic eligibility at retirement age)	1%
No need for new roads or southern link	1%
Do not cut down Parish precept	1%
Referendum is a waste of money	1%
Other comments*	17%

*All other comments regarding individual topical areas which cannot aggregate in a meaningful way are included in 'other comments'.

Appendix C: The questionnaire

Priorities and budget consultation 2016-2020

Consultation questions

The council's priorities

The council, as with any other organisation, works towards an agreed set of priorities which have been identified through in depth research, including public consultation, to ensure we are providing the services required to the residents who need them.

Despite the financial challenges we face, we remain committed to efficiently maximising the use of scarce resources in order to secure better services, quality of life and value for money whilst complying with our legal duties and corporate priorities.

The council needs to refresh its priorities for 2016 - 2020, to form the basis for our corporate plan, and after listening to what you've told us and analysing the available research in the 2014 [Understanding Herefordshire report \(https://factsandfigures.herefordshire.gov.uk/Understanding-Herefordshire\)](https://factsandfigures.herefordshire.gov.uk/Understanding-Herefordshire), we propose to focus our resources so we enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives; keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life and support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work.

1. How would you choose to rate these priorities in terms of most important and least important? (1 = most important and 3 = least important)

	1	2	3
Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Are there any other areas which you think the council should identify as a priority?

Yes No

If yes, please specify the priorities you believe we should focus on:

The council's budget

In order to meet our priorities, we allocate our annual budget accordingly and consult on it every year.

The council's budget for 2015/16 is just under £142million and we have had to take challenging decisions to make savings of £10million to remain within budget. For 2016/17 our budget will be £138million and a combination of reduced funding from central government (£7million) and increased demand on priority services (£4million), means that after taking into account any increased income from council tax and business rates, we will need to find further savings of £11million. From now until 2020, the council will need to have saved a total of £42million.

Increasing efficiency

The majority of our planned savings will be made from improving the efficiency of the organisation, including reducing management and staffing numbers and the reliance on agency staff; reducing our spend on external contracts; implementing better IT systems and reducing the number of buildings we occupy. We will also be investing in preventative strategies and working with public health to improve people's health and wellbeing, which in turn will reduce the demand for services and save money.

The efficiencies alone will not deliver all of the savings required, so we will need to consider increasing income or reducing service levels.

Where can we increase income or make savings?

We have identified a range of areas where we may be able to increase income or make savings. These proposals are needed in order to balance our budget and allow more funding to be available to spend on priority areas, especially those which are experiencing a significant increase in demand from residents such as adult social care.

3. How would you choose to prioritise the following areas* in terms of which you would implement first compared to last in order to reduce spending? (1 = first and 11 = last)

* Please note that there is additional information available for each area; simply read our [income and savings proposals \(www.herefordshire.gov.uk/budgetconsultation2016\)](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/budgetconsultation2016) for further details.

Income and savings

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Increase car parking charges across the county (income of over £1million)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford (income of up to £500,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sell our smallholdings estate of 4,500 acres, including 45 farms, to reduce our debt repayments (income of £1.5million to £2million)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Remove public transport subsidy and increase the cost for discretionary educational travel (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Remove community transport subsidy (saving of less than £500,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reductions / efficiencies in highways services (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cease sports pitches and parks maintenance (saving of less than £500,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Remove subsidies to town and parish councils for the lengthsman and parish paths partnership schemes (saving of less than £500,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduce the discounts available under the council tax reduction scheme (saving of less than £500,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cease the council tax reduction grant to town and parish councils (saving of less than £500,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduce customer services and libraries across the county (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Town and parish councils, community groups and voluntary organisations

Herefordshire Council is looking to town and parish councils, community groups and voluntary organisations to, where possible, help deliver services in their local communities.

We currently provide funding to the 133 town and parish councils across Herefordshire through the council tax reduction grant. If we removed this funding, we'd save £289,000 a year.

4. Do you think we should continue to fund town and parish councils?

Yes

No

5. If Herefordshire Council reduces or stops delivering a particular service, do you think that town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations can do more to help deliver services in your local community?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify what services (this could include cutting the grass, maintaining parks or running a community bus service):

How can we generate income?

The council could generate income from a number of areas to help balance the budget and protect services. It is therefore incredibly important that you give us your views on this section, so we can best decide how to proceed in future years.

Council tax

We could generate additional funding, which could be used to protect services, if we raised council tax above the current level. In 2016/17, it is proposed to raise council tax by 1.9%, however if we wanted to raise it above the 2% level, it is likely that we would be required to hold a countywide referendum (which would cost approximately £300,000), where we ask residents to say if they're for or against the proposal.

What this would mean for you

If the proposed 1.9% council tax increase is agreed by full Council in February 2016, this would mean an average increase to each household of 50p a week, which would generate additional income of approximately £1.5million.

Alternatively, we could raise council tax by 3% or 5%, which would mean...

	Additional weekly increase	Additional income generated
3%	25p	£1million*
5%	70p	£2.5 million

*This would provide sufficient funding to allow us to defer the savings proposals identified in question three for a year.

6. **Would you support an increase in council tax above 2%, which is likely to require a referendum, to support services and defer savings for a year?**

Yes 3%

Yes 5%

No

Increase charges

There are a number of council services which are chargeable and provide an income, such as car parking, planning, licensing and burial services, which could be increased to protect other services. For example, if we increased charges it could help to protect transport or library services.

7. **Do you think we should increase our service charges to protect other services across the county?**

Yes

No

8. **Do you have any other comments you would like to make on our priorities, budget or income and savings proposals? Please state below:**

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or group, or as an individual?

Organisation or group

Individual

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or group please tell us the name of the organisation/group:

If you are responding as an individual please answer the following questions about yourself. This will help us to better understand how views may differ between different people across the county.

About you

This information helps us to ensure that our services are accessible to all. It will only be used for the purpose of statistical monitoring, treated as confidential and not used to identify you.

What is your gender?

Male

Female

What is your age band:

0-15 years

25-44 years

65-74 years

16-24 years

45-64 years

75+ years

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

Yes - limited a little

Yes - limited a lot

No

If yes, please specify any particular requirements when using this service:

How would you describe your national identity? (Tick as many as apply)

English

Welsh

Other (please specify)

Scottish

Northern Irish

British

Irish

Other (please specify):

How would you describe your ethnic group? (Please tick one box only)

White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish

Other White (please specify)

Any other ethnic group (please specify)

Other White (please specify)

Any other ethnic group (please specify)

Do you feel that you were treated differently (positively or negatively) because of who you are? (e.g. your age, gender, disability or ethnicity)

Yes

No

If yes, please specify:

Thank you for completing the questionnaire

Please send your completed questionnaire to:
Herefordshire Council Research Team, Freepost SWC4816, PO Box 4,
Hereford, HR4 0BR



Meeting:	Council
Meeting date:	18 December 2015
Title of report:	Appointment of vice-chairman of the general overview and scrutiny committee
Report by:	Monitoring officer

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

To consider the appointment of a vice-chairman of the General Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation(s)

THAT: Council considers nominations for the appointment of vice-chairman of the General Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Alternative options

- 1 The Council could decide not to appoint a vice-chairman of the scrutiny committee. However, this would be a departure from current practice and is not recommended.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 To fill a vacancy in the appointments made by Council in May 2015. The appointment of chairmen and vice-chairmen of committees is reserved to Council under the council's Constitution.

Key considerations

- 3 In May 2015 council considered appointments to committees. It also elected chairmen and vice-chairmen of those committees. The position of vice-chairman of

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Claire Ward, Monitoring Officer, on Tel (01432) 260657

the general overview and scrutiny committee has now been vacated and a replacement appointment is sought.

Community impact

4 There are no implications.

Equality duty

5 There are no implications.

Financial implications

6 Budgets are in place to cover allowances for any appointment made.

Legal implications

7 Under the council's constitution the appointment of vice chairmen of committees is reserved to Council.

Risk management

8 Council has agreed that the overview and scrutiny committees should have both a chairman and a vice-chairman. Appointing a replacement vice-chairman will ensure that business can be conducted effectively should the chairman be indisposed.

Consultees

9 None

Appendices

None

Background papers

- None identified.



MEETING:	Council
MEETING DATE:	18 December 2015
TITLE OF REPORT:	Leader's report
REPORT BY:	Deputy leader of the council

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To receive a report from the leader on the activities of cabinet since the meeting of Council in September.

Recommendations

THAT:

- (a) the report be noted.

Alternative options

- 1 There are no alternative options; it is a requirement of the council's constitution.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 To ensure members are aware of the activities of cabinet.

Key considerations

- 3 A list of the decisions taken by the executive since the last report to Council (covering

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Councillor P Morgan, Deputy leader of the council on Tel (01432) 260494

the period between 1 September and 1 December) is provided at appendix A; three were taken under the general exception provision (less than twenty-eight but more than five days' notice) and the relevant overview and scrutiny committee chairman was notified. None were taken under the urgency provision (less than five days' notice). No decisions were subject to call-in.

- 4 The Chancellor's autumn statement confirmed the budget reductions we expected, and we were pleased to hear of investment in the county in the form of a new university focused on engineering. Pressures on social care costs have been recognised, currently at £76m annually for Herefordshire. Local authorities will be given an additional 2% flexibility on their current council tax referendum threshold to be used entirely for adult social care, potentially £1.7m for Herefordshire. If charged this would be used to protect existing services. The government will introduce the first ever national funding formula for schools, high needs and early years. A detailed consultation will be launched in 2016 and the new formulae will be implemented from 2017/18.
- 5 Detail of how the proposals included in the autumn statement are to be implemented are gradually emerging and will be considered as we refine our own budget proposals and draft medium term financial strategy, which is due to be approved by Council in February 2016.
- 6 I welcome the launch of the Marches growth hub, which brings together local and national products and services available to support businesses whatever their sector, size or stage of growth, in one place for the first time. The virtual hub, www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk offers advice, guidance and a directory of support services for businesses. It is supported by three hub sites; the Herefordshire hub is based in the Wolverhampton University business centre at the enterprise zone and provides hot-desking, incubation space, and networking facilities. A member of the economic development team is based at the hub Monday through to Thursday, to meet with businesses and answer queries on various subjects including, training, access to finance, and business start-ups.
- 7 Whilst there are significant budget challenges ahead, there will be plenty of opportunity for Herefordshire to continue to establish itself as a prosperous county.

Community impact

- 8 The community impact of any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Equality duty

- 9 Cabinet and cabinet members have paid due regard to the public sector equality duty in their decision-making, as set out in the relevant decision reports.

Financial implications

- 10 The financial implications of any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Councillor P Morgan, Deputy leader of the council on Tel (01432) 260494

Legal implications

- 11 The legal implications of any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Risk management

- 12 The risks associated with any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Consultees

- 13 None.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Executive decisions taken

Background Papers

- None identified.

Executive decisions taken between 1 September 2015 and 1 December 2015

Decision	Decision Date	Taken By
<p>High need students aged 16-25 contracting arrangements</p> <p>To approve the contracting arrangements for post-16 high need students to ensure contracts are in place for September 2015.</p>	11/09/15	Cabinet member young people & children's wellbeing (General exception)
<p>Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) transitional monies</p> <p>To implement amendment 3 of the budget and medium term financial strategy, carried by Council on 6 February 2015 'That reserves be reduced by £50k and used instead to provide one-off transition funding of up to £50k to Herefordshire Citizens Advice Bureau', plus, to award an additional £20k to CAB from local welfare provision budget to deliver a report on the future collaborative welfare referral pathway for Herefordshire</p>	14/09/15	Cabinet member health & wellbeing
<p>Contract award for integrated community-based sexual health services</p> <p>To secure approval for the contract award for integrated sexual health services.</p>	14/09/15	Cabinet member health & wellbeing
<p>Youth justice plan (budget and policy framework)</p> <p>To recommend the youth justice plan for approval by Council.</p>	11/09/15	Cabinet
<p>Children and young people's plan (budget and policy framework)</p> <p>To recommend the children and young people's partnership plan 2015-2018 for approval by Council</p>	11/09/15	Cabinet
<p>Aylestone and Broadlands</p> <p>For cabinet to recommend to Council that provision be made in the capital programme for additional capital funding to support the relocation of Broadlands primary school and children's centre onto the Aylestone Business</p>	11/09/15	Cabinet

161

Decision	Decision Date	Taken By
and Enterprise College (ABEC) site and to provide cabinet with an update on the business case approved by cabinet in November 2014.		
<p>Health and safety policy</p> <p>To approve the council's updated health and safety (H&S) policy and strategy.</p>	11/09/15	Cabinet
<p>Amendment to change control for broadband delivery</p> <p>To seek agreement to revise an element of two cabinet member decisions dated 19 March and 6 May 2015 which had recommended the approval to extend various milestone area completion dates of the Borders Broadband (Fastershire) contract "Exclusive of any structures in milestone area 5 which have been identified as lot 1 eligible premises".</p>	25/09/15	Cabinet member economy & corporate services
<p>Mediation arrangements in relation to legal disputes with a former contractor</p> <p>To put in place arrangements for settlement via mediation in relation to contractual disputes with the council's former street scene contractor.</p>	23/09/15	Cabinet member contracts & assets
<p>B42134 Copse Cross Street, Ross On Wye - Review of Priority Give Way</p> <p>To review the existing unofficial priority give way system along Copse Cross Street, Ross-on-Wye and consider the appropriate way forward to address the highway issues at this location.</p>	02/10/2015	Cabinet member transport & roads
<p>To formalise current situation with residential scheme Livability provider (Wall Street) (not in contract)</p> <p>To approve a nine month extension to the existing block contract for the ten unit residential scheme for people with complex and profound physical disability/learning disabilities in Wall Street, Hereford, until 31 March 2016; thus allowing for a full review and re-procurement exercise for the preferred option and continuation of the scheme.</p>	07/10/15	Cabinet member health & wellbeing
<p>Commissioning of day activities</p>	07/10/15	Cabinet member health &

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To formalise arrangements for the commissioning of day activities by developing a day services commissioning strategy and undertake a procurement process to establish an approved framework of providers that links with, and complements, the adults wellbeing eMarketplace currently being mobilised.		wellbeing
Adoption of the Herefordshire local plan core strategy 2011-2031 (B & PF) To recommend to Council that the Herefordshire local plan core strategy 2011-2031 (“the core strategy”) be adopted.	15/10/15	Cabinet (General exception)
Local account To approve publication of the local account of adult social care and support 2014/15	15/10/15	Cabinet
Adult community learning plan 2015/18 To approve the adult and community learning plan 2015/18	15/10/15	Cabinet
Planned capital programme for schools 2015/16 To approve the proposed expenditure of capital grants for school building and maintenance work allocated to the council for the year 2015/16	15/10/15	Cabinet
Future delivery arrangements for West Mercia Youth Offending Service (WMYOS) To secure approval for proposed new delivery arrangements for West Mercia Youth Offending Service (WMYOS).	15/10/15	Cabinet
Disposal of land forming part of the former Whitecross School site, Baggally Street, Hereford. To seek the approval of the cabinet member to the disposal of land forming part of the old Whitecross School site.	20/10/15	Cabinet member contracts & assets
Disposal of Spring Grove Farmhouse, Almeley, Herefordshire, HR3 6PX To approve the disposal of Spring Grove Farmhouse and land equating to 3.32 acres.	27/10/15	Cabinet member contracts & assets

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<p>Cremation charges 2016</p> <p>To approve the proposed cremation charges</p>	02/11/15	Cabinet member economy & corporate services
<p>Disposal of former records office, Harold Street, Hereford to Hereford Cathedral School</p> <p>To approve the sale of the former records office, Harold Street, Hereford to Hereford Cathedral School</p>	02/11/15	Cabinet member contracts & assets (General exception)
<p>U80322 Kingsway and C1127 College Road, Hereford – prohibition of waiting at any time</p> <p>To consider the introduction of a traffic regulation order in Hereford City the effect of which will be to prohibit waiting at any time, (double yellow lines), on both sides of the road in Kingsway and on one side of College Road in the vicinity of the Co-op Store. The aim of this proposal is to reduce on street parking congestion and hence improve safety at the junction of Kingsway with College Road.</p>	03/11/15	Cabinet member transport & roads
<p>Data centre consolidation</p> <p>To seek approval of the consolidation of data centres into a single main data centre and a small disaster recovery facility at another location.</p>	10/11/15	Cabinet member economy & corporate services
<p>High Town Refurbishment Scheme</p> <p>To approve scheme for consultation</p>	17/11/15	Cabinet member transport & roads
<p>Rotherwas Rail</p> <p>To consider the findings of the Rotherwas new station high level demand and business case study of the potential for reinstating a rail line and new passenger rail station at Rotherwas and to determine the appropriate course of action.</p>	26/11/15	Cabinet member infrastructure