

AGENDA

Cabinet

Date: **Thursday 19 January 2017**

Time: **2.00 pm**

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:

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Agenda for the meeting of Cabinet

Membership

Chairman **Councillor AW Johnson**
Vice-Chairman **Councillor PM Morgan**

Councillor H Bramer
Councillor DG Harlow
Councillor JG Lester
Councillor PD Price
Councillor P Rone

AGENDA

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any 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 1 December 2016.	7 - 12
4. 2017/18 REVENUE BUDGET, MTFs AND TMS To agree the draft 2017/18 budget and medium term financial strategy (MTFS) for recommendation to Council on 3 February. <i>Please note a revised version of Appendix 2 was issued as a supplementary paper.</i>	13 - 154
5. EQUALITY POLICY 2017-2019 To approve the draft Equality Policy 2017-2019, including the proposed equality objectives.	155 - 176

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HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Thursday 1 December 2016 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor AW Johnson (Chairman)
Councillor PM Morgan (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors H Bramer, DG Harlow, JG Lester, PD Price and P Rone

Cabinet support members in attendance Councillors BA Durkin, JA Hyde, NE Shaw and EJ Swinglehurst

Group leaders in attendance Councillors RI Matthews and AJW Powers

Scrutiny chairmen in attendance Councillors WLS Bowen

Other councillors in attendance: Councillors PE Crockett, J Hardwick, D Summers and EPJ Harvey

Officers in attendance: Alistair Neill, Geoff Hughes, Jo Davidson, Martin Samuels, Claire Ward and Josie Rushgrove

60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

62. MINUTES

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

63. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2016/17

The cabinet member for young people and children’s wellbeing introduced the report. He noted that very few children in Herefordshire were involved in youth offending and that the general picture was encouraging. The levels of both offending and reoffending in Herefordshire had decreased.

The head of west mercia youth offending service outlined the purpose of the youth justice plan and the information it contained.

The cabinet member for health and wellbeing noted that the clinical commission groups (CCGs) across the west mercia area were not represented on the youth justice service management board and had not signed the plan. She asked whether the youth offending service was receiving the necessary support and commitment from health bodies. The

head of west mercia youth offending service responded that the west mercia area covered 7 CCGs and that they all made a resource contribution. In Herefordshire for example a post was seconded from CAMHS to provide mental health support. He reported that a representative from Shropshire CCG had recently agreed to join the board and would act as a conduit for the other CCGs in the west mercia area.

A group leader noted that the second highest number of offences in Herefordshire had been for drug related offences and asked what was being done to address this. The head of the youth offending service stated that drug offences were generally the second or third most common offence in all the areas the service worked across and that specialist support was in place.

A group leader asked how many of the young offenders in the report were looked after children. The head of the youth offending service reported that 12 of the 65 young people recorded were looked after by Herefordshire Council and that a further 13 were looked after by other authorities.

A cabinet support member noted the potential for work with parish councils on reparation projects and asked how the service was reaching out to parish councils. The head of the youth offending service responded that the example set out in the youth justice plan had been circulated through the parish council network. He asked that councillors raise awareness of such projects with their parishes.

A scrutiny chair asked if the youth offending service had known about the looked after children in Herefordshire placed by other authorities. The head of the youth offending service confirmed that they had known as the home authority of the young person would have had to refer them to the service in Herefordshire. He also stated that children's homes were required to notify the authority in which the young person was resident as well as the authority providing care when dealing with young offenders.

Resolved that:

- a) the Youth Justice Plan be recommended to Council for approval.**

64. ADOPTION REPORT AND ADOPTION SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The cabinet member for young people and children's wellbeing introduced the report. He noted that the adoption service was performing well and had been judged as good at its most recent inspection by Ofsted. A total of 29 children were adopted in 2015/16 which was an unprecedented number. The cabinet member stated that the council should be proud of the reputation of its adoption service but that it should not be complacent. He noted that the work of the service supported objectives in the children and young people's plan and reduced costs to the council.

The adoption service manager outlined the adoption process. She explained the stages each child would go through and noted that adoption would only proceed if it was demonstrably in the best interests of the child. Court proceedings were sometimes lengthy and it could take time to find suitable adopters, especially when the child had complex needs. As a result the manager noted that the figures in the report represented a snapshot of the point children had reached in the process. Some of the children who had adoption orders granted in 2015/16 would have first been considered for adoption in previous years.

The adoption service manager reported that overall there had been a national downturn in the number of children approved for adoption by the courts but that Herefordshire had

seen an increase over the same period. The number of people coming forward as potential adopters had decreased both nationally and locally.

The cabinet member for health and wellbeing welcomed the report and congratulated the service on their performance. She noted the positive benefits for the children concerned and for the council in terms of lower draw on resources. She encouraged officers to continue working towards an outstanding rating in future inspections.

A group leader asked which agencies were responsible for cases failing to meet the target for stage 1 of the process and what the reasons were. The adoption service manager explained that at stage 1 the council would request information on potential adopters which included criminal records checks from relevant police forces, medical reports and references from a range of different sources. She stated that as stage 1 was adopted led the onus was on the potential adopter to provide the information requested. She reported that in general checks with the local police force were completed promptly but that where a potential adopter had lived outside the area or abroad this could take much longer.

A group leader asked how many cases that reached court were refused. The head of looked after children replied that although precise details were not at hand the numbers were very small as it was usual to reach that stage in the process without having explored all other avenues.

The cabinet member for infrastructure asked if cases of siblings needing adoption presented a particular problem and what the impact could be if placements broke down. The head of looked after children responded that it was sometimes difficult to find families willing to adopt multiple children at the same time. Where the sibling group was more than 2 children it was especially difficult. The adoption service would always consider the impact of separation of siblings and whether it would be appropriate to maintain contact between siblings adopted separately. If it was judged important to maintain family links then children could remain looked after.

The cabinet member for young people and children's wellbeing stated that children came into the adoption system for a wide variety of reasons.

A cabinet support member asked if the adoption service reviewed social media when considering the suitability of prospective adopters. The adoption service manager stated that this was not currently a formal part of the process although information would sometimes be brought to their attention. The reviewing of social media content was being discussed by adoption agencies nationally but there were many issues that would need to be considered in any policy change. The manager noted that adopters were given advice in training about the use of social media after the adoption to protect both children and their birth families from inappropriate or unwanted contact.

The leader asked what the current average length of time to achieve adoption was. The adoption service manager referred to the figures given in the report namely that the overall average was 21 months but that this included some extreme outliers which skewed the figures.

The leader asked if the progress of adopted children was tracked and compared to other children. The adoption service manager explained that once the adoption was complete the child was treated as though they were born into that family and no specific tracking of this nature was in place. Adoptive families were encouraged to contact the service if they needed help and support after the adoption. National research showed that adoption was the best outcome for children in most cases.

A cabinet support member noted that Herefordshire had excellent foster carers so that where there were delays in the adoption process this did not mean that children were not receiving care and support.

The leader thanked the adoption team for their work and recognised the service as a source of pride for the council.

Resolved that:

- a) the performance of the adoption service as outlined at appendix A to the report be reviewed, risks to achievement of objectives were noted and relevant mitigating actions approved; and**
- b) the statement of purpose attached at appendix B to the report be approved.**

65. 2017 / 18 CAPITAL BUDGET

The leader expressed his thanks to all those who had contributed to the formation of the capital budget report. The contents of the report being self-explanatory he asked for feedback from the meeting.

A group leader noted that Herefordshire Council had higher debt as a percentage of net revenue budget than all other unitary authorities. He asked if this was being carefully monitored. The head of corporate finance responded that the borrowing included investment in schemes such as the energy from waste plant which were expected to generate returns for the council in the future. Total borrowing was below the council's threshold and officers were comfortable that the borrowing was affordable.

A group leader asked if a final cost package for the city link road could be provided when the scheme was complete and whether the recommendations made by the external auditor in relation to accounting had been noted. The head of corporate finance responded that monthly updates on the city centre transport package were provided to the Local Enterprise Partnership and that this information could be shared. She confirmed that the recommendations of the external auditor had been noted.

A group leader asked that in future the spend on packages be separated out into the constituent elements and profiled separately. The wording and bundling of the packages needed to be consistent to allow comparison. The head of corporate finance replied that the next capital budget monitoring report would include the requested level of detail.

Resolved that:

- a) the schemes detailed in Appendix 2 be recommended to Council for inclusion in the capital budget.**

66. HEREFORDSHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The cabinet member for economy and corporate services introduced the report. He thanked all who had contributed and given feedback on the strategy. He reported that consultation had taken place in all the market towns apart from Kington and with key local partners. The general overview and scrutiny committee had commented on the strategy and a summary of its recommendations was included as an appendix to the report. The cabinet member stressed that engagement with partners would continue after the adoption of the strategy.

The cabinet member explained that the strategy was composed of two parts, the economic vision and the pitchbook. He stated that the strategy was deliberately aspirational and recognised the need to attract private sector investment.

The chief executive reported that he had regular meetings with major employers in the county. He stated that during a recent meeting with one such company the desire for a clear vision for Herefordshire had been clearly expressed. Companies wanted to see opportunities for investment identified and schemes promoted to attract people to live and work in Herefordshire.

The cabinet member for economy and corporate services highlighted a number of projects that the council had already supported and the impact they had had. He stated that the list of projects in the strategy would change and develop over time. The strategy was aspirational and it had to be recognised that some projects might not ultimately be delivered.

The economic development manager explained that the proposed strategy had built on the previous iteration covering the period 2011 to 2016, with a shift to looking at opportunities for private sector investment. The new strategy would help the council to share and promote its priorities to key partners. There would be ongoing engagement with investors and the community. The economic development manager stated that all specific council funding referred to in the strategy had previously been before cabinet or full council.

A scrutiny chair commented that the council appeared to have largely withdrawn from the tourism sector in the county, leaving other agencies to take the lead. The economic development manager stated that the council continued to work with partners on developing the tourism sector, particularly on securing investment to deliver new elements.

A scrutiny chair asked what options were being considered for development of rail travel in the county, highlighting the level of service at Leominster station. The economic development manager stated that the council was working with partner agencies to deliver improvements to rail services such as investment in the car parking provision at Leominster station.

A scrutiny chair asked what would happen if the government did not deliver the required funding for the university project. The economic development manager responded that contingencies were being put in place. The chief executive added that he expected the position on the university to become clear in the near future and remained optimistic that the government funding would be secured.

A group leader stated that the council should give support to start-ups and small businesses as these were a critical element of the local economy. He also stated that the council should support businesses to make use of emerging technologies. The economic development manager confirmed that the council would be seeking to bring higher paid jobs to the area and that technology would be a key aspect of this.

The leader noted that publishing the strategy would not in of itself deliver any projects but that being able to demonstrate the council's ambitions was important. The strategy would draw together the different strands of investment into a coherent way forward.

A cabinet support member asked why there had been less input and aspiration from some of the market towns. The economic development manager responded that it had been a difficult process to find suitable projects to include in the strategy. They needed to be of a scale and type to be attractive to outside investors. The council would continue

to work with communities in and around the market towns to develop projects which could be added to the strategy in future.

A group leader commented that the strategy was focussed on Hereford City but that there had been a lack of involvement from Hereford City Council. He argued that some of the projects could be located in the market towns to spread development and that consultation with the market towns should have been started earlier in the process.

The cabinet member for economy and corporate services responded that the strategy had been widely supported and that engagement was continuing with communities in the market towns to develop suitable projects. He stated that some projects might not meet the criteria for inclusion in the economic developments strategy but would still be pursued.

A group leader asked what the main reasons were for companies not moving to Herefordshire. The economic development manager stated that Herefordshire had a good offer but needed to market this more. He noted that the main obstacle to relocation was the cost of new development. The leader commented that he was not aware of any one specific reason which deterred businesses from coming to the county but that Herefordshire had a reputation as a beautiful area to visit but not perhaps a place to do business.

Resolved that:

- a) the Herefordshire Economic Vision attached at appendix 1 be recommended to full Council for adoption as the county's economic development strategy;**
- b) delegated authority be sought from Council to make technical amendments to the strategy during the period 2017 to 2021 on factual matters such as: updating of statistics, replacing images, and reflection of projects approved by cabinet within each aim of the strategy.**
- c) the investment pitch book contained at appendix 2 be approved; and**
- d) authority be delegated to the economic development manager to make technical amendments to the investment pitch book on matters such as: typographical errors, replacement of images, statistical information, project information and programme timetable.**

The meeting ended at 11.30 am

CHAIRMAN



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	19 January 2017
Title of report:	To propose council tax for 2017/18 and approve the 2017/18 revenue budget
Report by:	Cabinet member corporate strategy and finance

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates.

And

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county.

NOTICE has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

County-wide

Purpose

To agree the draft 2017/18 budget and medium term financial strategy (MTFS) for recommendation to Council on 3 February.

Recommendations

THAT the following be recommended to full Council on 3 February 2017:

- (a) the council tax base of 67,937.91 band D equivalents;**
- (b) an increase in council tax in 2017/18 of 1.9%;**
- (c) an additional precept in respect of adult social care costs of 2.0% applied to council tax in 2017/18.**

Cabinet notes that the impact of the above recommendations will result in a total council tax increase of 3.9%; increasing the band D charge from £1,324.83 to £1,376.50 for Herefordshire Council in 2017/18; and

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Mark Taylor, interim director of resources on Tel (01432) 383519

- (d) **the balanced 2017/18 revenue budget proposal of £145,025 (appendix 1 to this report) subject to any amendments approved at the meeting, and specifically.**
- i. **the net spending limits for each directorate as at 3.4.1**
 - ii. **the gross revenue budget of £350,438**
 - iii. **delegates to the section 151 officer the power to make necessary changes to the budget arising from any variations in central government funding allocations via general reserves.**

THAT cabinet recommend Council adopts the following:

- (a) **the treasury management policy statement, appendix 3;**
- (b) **the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) which incorporates:**
 - i. **the capital programme approved by Council on 16 December 2016;**
 - ii. **the treasury management strategy (TMS);**
 - iii. **the reserves policy, as determined by the section 151 officer as a prudent level of reserves.**

Alternative options

- 1 Cabinet can recommend alternative spending proposals or strategies within the constraint of setting a balanced budget for 2017/18. Any alternative proposals must identify sufficient compensatory funding to support additional spending proposals.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 The council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and Council is responsible for approving a budget, based on cabinet's recommendations, in line with the budget and policy framework rules within the constitution.

Key considerations

- 3 The impact of continuing reductions in central government funding to local authorities means that Herefordshire Council is required to make further savings to balance its budget for 2107/18 and in the years to come.
- 4 During the summer of 2016 the council submitted its efficiency plan to government in support of a four year settlement which was accepted and allows the council to more effectively plan for the future as central government grants continue to fall.
- 5 The council has directed its resources to deliver the key services required by residents while reducing overall costs to demonstrate efficiency and ensure good use of resources. In making substantial savings to date, the council will have delivered savings of almost £70m by the end of 2017/18 in response to an 80% reduction in central government funding since 2010.
- 6 A balanced, deliverable budget is proposed which, subject to any approved amendments, is recommended to full Council for approval.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Mark Taylor, interim director of resources on Tel (01432) 383519

- 7 The section 151 officer is satisfied that the budget represents a balanced, deliverable budget for 2017/18 and that it includes adequate provision for planned expenditure.

Community Impact

- 8 The MTFs and budget demonstrate how the council is using its financial resources to deliver its priorities as stated within the corporate plan.

Equality duty

- 9 The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying “due regard” in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
- 10 A number of service specific equality impact assessments have been completed for the service specific budget proposals to assess the impact on the protected characteristic as set out in the Equality Act 2010. Individual equality impact assessments will be prepared prior to consultation and delivery of each specific saving initiative.
- 11 The duty means that the potential impact of a decision on people with different protected characteristics is always taken into account when these assessments have been completed then we will consider mitigating against any adverse impact identified. A cumulative equality impact assessment is shown in appendix 5

Financial implications

- 12 The financial implications arising from the council’s revenue budget are fully set out in the report.

Legal implications

- 13 Council is required by statute to set a balanced budget that considers expenditure and funding. Councillors are required to act prudently when approving the budget and council tax so that they act in a way that considers local taxpayers. Councillors in making this decision must give careful and considered regard to:
- a) the report from the chief finance officer concerning the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the reserves within the budget proposal;
 - b) the aims of the equality duty and the cumulative impact of the budget proposal as set out in appendix 4 to this report;
 - c) the results of the consultation as set out in appendix 6 to this report, including any alternative options proposed by consultees.
- 14 Cabinet should note that some of the savings proposals may require further development, assessment and consultation

- 15 Cabinet should note that the 3.9% council tax increase is in line with the revised flexibility set of in the 2016 Autumn Statement.

Risk management

- 16 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the chief finance officer to report to Council on the robustness of the estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of reserves when it is setting the budget and council tax.
- 17 The budget has been prepared using relevant, available information, current spending, anticipated pressures and the Government's financial settlement.
- 18 The key risks identified are set out in the MTFs at appendix 4. Risks will continue to be monitored through the year and reported to cabinet as part of the budget monitoring process

Consultees

- 19 Consultation on the budget proposals commenced on 29 July 2016 and ended on 7 October 2016. The consultation sought views on priorities, savings and income proposals and included how we could do things differently. The outcome of the consultation, attached in appendix 6 has informed and guided decisions within the proposed budget.
- 20 There were a total of 280 standard responses to the consultation, of which 241 submitted online and 39 completed paper copies. 171 responses supported an increase in charges for council services above the level of inflation. 148 responses supported Herefordshire Council in making a further increase in council tax above 3.9%.
- 21 The need to improve infrastructure and access to funding and business support were highlighted as what the council could do to improve the attractiveness of Herefordshire to businesses.
- 22 Initial proposals have been reviewed and re-phased following the consultation feedback, particularly areas seen as a higher priority by the public, libraries, community and public transport. The updated savings proposals are reflected in appendix 2.
- 23 The budget proposals have been subject to review and challenge by both of the Council's scrutiny committees and their comments and recommendations reflected in the final proposals.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Revenue budget summary 2017/18;
- Appendix 2 2017/18 savings plans by directorate;
- Appendix 3 Treasury Management Strategy Statement;

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Mark Taylor, interim director of resources on Tel (01432) 383519

Appendix 4 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2017/18 – 2019/20
Including:

- Capital Budget, as approved by Council on 16 December 2106
- 2017/18 Treasury Management Strategy (TMS)
- Reserves Policy
- Risk Management

Appendix 5 Cumulative equality impact assessment;

Appendix 6 Summary of budget consultation

Background papers

- The 2016 Autumn Statement and subsequent funding settlements
- Report of the Office of Budget Responsibility 23/11/16
- Reports and Recommendations of HSOSC and GOSC

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Mark Taylor, interim director of resources on Tel (01432) 383519

Appendix 1 Revenue budget summary 2017/18

Directorate	Current net budget £000s	Net changes £000s	Draft net budget £000s
	2016/17		2017/18
Adults and wellbeing	51,243	(85)	51,158
Children's wellbeing	20,875	278	21,153
Economies, communities and corporate (ECC)	46,540	(1,800)	44,740
Total directorate net budget	118,658	(1,607)	117,051
Centralised corporate costs			6,458
Capital financing - debt repayments			11,074
Capital financing—interest			6,785
Other central budgets			1,057
One off funding			2,600
Total net spend (budget requirement)			145,025
Financed by			
Council tax			93,049
Locally retained business rates			22,419
Revenue support grant			10,090
Business rates top grant & S31 grant			10,197
New homes bonus			3,585
Rural services delivery grant (including transitional grant) RSDG			4,669
Adult Social Care support grant			885
Reserves			135
Total Funding			145,025

Appendix 2

Detailed savings plans by directorate

Adults and Wellbeing Directorate		
Savings Proposal	Impact	2017-18 £000
Review, recommissioning and decommissioning of block contracts - including full year impact of 2016/17 savings	Reduction in some council funded services and supported housing by utilising alternative funding streams to increase community capacity, raising expectations and performance of existing information and advice services and enabling access to universal services. Individual EIA's will be undertaken as each contract is reviewed and recommissioned / decommissioned.	550
Reducing the need for formal care services by utilising strengths based reviews and incorporating informal community based support in care plans	Reduction in demand for formal care services and holding demographic pressures to 80% of expected. Access to support for those with eligible needs will be unaffected. Focus on developing community social support.	350
Managing contract inflation and securing contract efficiencies	No impact to service users and analysis of market sustainability undertaken to minimise impact on providers. The equalities impact of this proposal will be low/negligible as integral to their contract with the council, each contractor has an expectation to meet the Equalities Act 2010 criteria and this forms part of the contract monitoring arrangements to ensure that any impact is understood and addressed.	200
Review of high cost packages to ensure value for money placements through better use of supported living accommodation, community based options and workforce culture change programme resulting in more effective working practices with better outcomes for service users	Reducing costs of learning disability cohort leading to more equitable service provision that meets eligible needs at a reduced average cost in line with comparator authorities. The equalities impact of this proposal on service users will be low/negligible as they will be assessed correctly and against the criteria of new services available, and which are required to meet eligible needs.	700
Maximise income generation through increased telecare sales and client contributions for domiciliary care	The impact of the changes will be affordable as all services will only be charged for following individual financial assessments in accordance with Care Act (2014)	150
Reduction in staffing through partnership working and mobile working	No direct impact on service users due to increased productivity	200
Early delivery of public health savings		200
Sale of beds to self-funders		50
Total		2,400
Children's Wellbeing Directorate		
Savings Proposal	Impact	2017-18 £000
Manage contract inflation and secure contract efficiencies	The equalities impact of this proposal will be low/negligible. Integral to their contract with the Authority, each contractor has a scheduled expectation to meet the Equalities Act 2010 criteria and is part of the contract monitoring arrangements to ensure that any impact is understood and addressed.	250
Reduction in the number of looked after children	Will provide better long term outcomes for children who are in care and promote families staying together. The equality impact of this proposal will be low and fits in with the government proposal to ensure as many children as possible are cared for safely at home.	566
Accessing government grant to focus early help on the most vulnerable families to reduce the need for higher cost services	Improved school attendance, educational achievement, reduced anti-social behaviour, youth offending and increased employment. This targeted programme provides supportive interventions to specific families whatever their background. Under the Equality Act 2010 this work, undertaken by the council and its partners, pays 'due regard' to the need to: - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment - Promote equality with regard to the protective characteristics; although due to the targeted approach not specifically using the Protective characteristics. - Promote good relations.	100
Organisational restructure to reflect the service requirements	Ensuring families benefit from a consistent and established service through a stable and capable social worker workforce.	243
Total		1,159

Economy, Communities & Corporate		2017-18 £000
Savings Proposal	Impact	
Efficiency savings Initiatives include: Management savings, staff restructures, saving on printing cost, reduction in storage costs at the Modern Records Unit.	No impact - efficiency savings	270
Back Office Services and Corporate Accommodation efficiencies	No impact - efficiency saving	500
Car Parking charges increase	Increase in fees to support the Council's sustainable transport policies and manage available spaces to support local economy. Potential adverse impact on trade if charges deter visitors. Structure of charges will aim to address local circumstances and encourage visitors and shoppers to visit Hereford and the market towns. Income will be targeted to support transport services in accordance with the Council's Local Transport Plan. Concessions for 'blue badge' holders are not affected by the recommendations, this includes staff parking in council car parks. Any increase in charges will have an impact on all users of the car parks. The impact will naturally vary according to the necessity and frequency of use and what alternative transport arrangements are practicable. Whilst this impact is non-discriminatory in the sense that it applies to all, it is inevitably an impact that is less easily 'absorbed' by those with lower levels of household income. The balance between the impact on individual users and the wider public interest of the council has been considered, and in this context the proposal is considered to be justified.	225
On-Street Car parking Project	Introduction of on street charges in central Hereford and potential extension of residents parking in surrounding areas which will provide ongoing revenue to support transport services. Proposals will improve traffic circulation, increase turnover and availability of short term parking for shoppers, ensure provision for loading and unloading and improve parking for residents living close to the city centre. The only protected group relevant to this proposal would be disabled people who have a 'blue badge' concession for parking. The introduction of a charge for on street parking cannot be applied to 'blue badge holders' and hence they would not be negatively affected by the proposal. The proposal will be subject to further consultation and any details around location of identified disabled parking bays will be considered in the light of consultation responses.	172
Reduced cost of Public and School / College Transport and moving public transport information to online only	Reduction in public transport services, increased income from parental contributions and post 16 SEN transport users. Further savings from contract efficiencies. A transport funding review is underway which will explore a range of opportunities to reduce costs across all local passenger transport services and alternative sources of funding to support such service. Savings are likely to be achievable through the integration of passenger transport contracts, service efficiencies, moving more users onto commercial and supported bus services and review of eligibility for services. If this approach does not achieve the full savings target, it may be necessary to further reduce public transport subsidy. Public consultation carried out in autumn 2016 will inform decisions for 2017/18. Decisions have already been taken to withdraw transport services and these were subject to a full consultation and EIA. As future proposals are developed consultation and EIA will be undertaken and will form elements of future reporting and consideration by members.	275
Phased removal of subsidy for Community Transport organisations	The phased reduction in the support to Community Transport (CT) providers commenced in 2015/16 and the exploration of alternative funding sources to support such services. To continue this to full reduction by 2019/20 will have provided a five year transition period for providers to seek opportunities to increase their independent financial viability. Support has been made available for providers to take on more contracted work and also to assist them to increase their capacity. Grants have been available for new fleet and could be made available in future subject to funding being available. CT reductions were considered within the consultation for the transport and travel review 2014 but at that stage there was no proposal to completely withdraw direct council support. If the council wishes to progress full withdrawal of support from 2018/19 then a further consultation and EIA would be required before confirming this decision. Whilst CT provides services for people who are 'disadvantaged' it is noted that this is not in itself a specifically defined protected characteristic within the EIA duty we are aware that the majority of CT users are elderly and/or have a disability which reduces transport options. Consultation in relation to public transport savings will be used to inform this proposal.	
Change the Highway Maintenance Plan to allow higher quality planned repairs to be undertaken for significant safety related pothole defects rather than the current temporary fixes required to meet reactive timescales. This will reduce the overall cost and reduce the need for repeat treatments.	Remaining full-year impact of measures implemented during 2016/17. There are approximately 50 potholes a month that were previously filled temporarily in this way and this change has allowed them to form part of a programme of works on the basis of a risk assessment based on location, road type and traffic flow, as occurs with other defects. The new method will be more cost effective.	150
Phased removal of subsidies to parish councils for the Lengthsman and Parish Paths .	Decision taken to phase funding out over the MTFS period. The condition of minor roads in Parish areas will be dependent upon whether Parish Councils choose to replace the subsidy with their own resources. Those communities that do not contribute to the funding or provide support to the scheme will see a reduction in the level of service for lower level activities currently carried out on the network by Parish and town councils. With P3 schemes, users of the ROW network could be affected by the reduced level of maintenance if parishes are unable/ unwilling to increase the level of activity from volunteers.	100
Community asset transfer of parks and open spaces	Sports pitch and parks maintenance cost saving through a programme to transfer responsibility for assets to community groups, town and parish councils and others. Impact of this proposal could see communities taking greater care and ownership of their local environment. Positive outcome on communities taking on responsibility for open spaces. If community or interest groups cannot be found and we are unable to continue the current level of maintenance, some users of open spaces may be affected in the reduction of amenity use.	100
Increased income and efficiency within Public Realm Services	Increase income from increased enforcement in relation to works carried out by utility companies on the highway (NRSWA) - reduction in highway defects. Investment in fleet and plant to reduce ongoing revenue cost and maintenance. No adverse impact upon service. Environmental service redesign Review of service to streamline and reduce cost of cleansing and monitoring of waste/litter related issues. Improved environment through better coordination.	230
Waste & Sustainability Increased income from commercial waste collections.	No further impact. Service changes relating to commercial waste collections and waste treatment savings do not impact on residents but on organisations.	30

Income from Solar Panels and Street Lighting Energy Efficiency Savings Capital investment in solar panels to reduce energy costs and attract Government renewable energy subsidies Expiry of repayments for energy	No impact - energy efficiency saving The solar PV procurement process included a mandatory section on Equality and Human Rights, which was developed in conjunction with the Council's Corporate Diversity team.	145
Facilities Management Service	Shire Hall and Town Hall to become appointment based centres e.g. custodians not permanently onsite. Increased income from charging for council civic buildings.	30
Withdrawal of Museum and Heritage Services subsidy	Income generation through charging at the Old House from April 2017, remodel of the learning offer to schools, volunteers to support the opening of the Museum at Broad Street in Hereford. Limited impact on protected characteristics. Though charging may have an impact across all ages, special free open days will take place to support local people able to visit the Old House without cost. Education events to take place at the Old House as part of a schools programme.	100
Savings in Customer and Library Services	Retained library service across the county, and remodelled customer services following an appointment based approach, a comprehensive digital offer, phone service, and face to face service in Hereford. A full needs and impact assessment completed for October 2016 cabinet. A retained county library services was the key finding of the consultation to mitigate negative impact, along with a delivered service for people who are housebound. For customer services any change to the offer to be delayed until 2018 to understand the impact on people requiring face to face support for benefits.	380
Organisational redesign savings	Efficiency savings	93
Sub Total		2,800
Revisions to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme - as approved by Council on 18 December 2015 the level of subsidy to non protected claimants has been reduced from 84% to 80%, this represents the continued savings expected	The lowest earners in Herefordshire previously paid 16% of their total Council tax bill, for non protected claimants this increased to 20% from April 2016. There is a risk that some claimants may not be able to pay the increased charge this risk has been mitigated via a revised hardship scheme. Pensioners will continue to receive additional discounts and the vulnerable will continue to have access to welfare support to mitigate these changes.	0
Removal of the Council Tax Reduction subsidy to parishes - as approved by Cabinet on 3 December 2015 this is the removal of the remaining grant funding to parishes	This saving has no impact on parish percept requirements, the removal of the grant has been phased to limit the potential effect on tax payers	42
Interest savings from reduced short term borrowings, due to the capital receipt arising from the disposal of the rural estate, pending reinvestment in capital and regeneration projects	This may effect some tenants of council owned property The programme of asset disposals are largely based upon realising the value of surplus property or land assets which take account of the property rationalisation proposals set out in the Council's Accommodation Strategy. The Asset Review disposals to date are not considered to be carrying any adverse impacts on any of the groups or classifications considered within the Equalities framework.	250
Organisational redesign savings	Efficiency savings	49
Sub Total		491

Appendix 3

Treasury Management Strategy Statement

1. Statement of Purpose

- 1.1 Herefordshire council adopts the recommendations made in CIPFA's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice*, which was revised in 2011. In particular, the council adopts the following key principles and clauses.

2. Key Principles

- 2.1 Herefordshire council adopts the following three key principles (identified in Section 4 of the Code):
- The council will put in place formal and comprehensive objectives, policies and practices, strategies and reporting arrangements for the effective management and control of its treasury management activities.
 - The council will ensure that its policies and practices make clear that the effective management and control of risk are prime objectives of its treasury management activities and that responsibility for these lies clearly with the council. In addition, the council's appetite for risk will form part of its annual strategy and will ensure that priority is given to security and liquidity when investing funds.
 - The council acknowledges that the pursuit of best value in treasury management, and the use of suitable performance measures, are valid and important tools to employ in support of business and service objectives, whilst recognising that in balancing risk against return, the council is more concerned to avoid risks than to maximise returns.

3. Adopted Clauses

- 3.1 Herefordshire council formally adopts the following clauses (identified in Section 5 of the code):
- The council will create and maintain, as the cornerstones for effective treasury management:
 - A treasury management policy statement, stating the policies, objectives and approach to risk management of its treasury management activities;
 - Suitable treasury management practices (TMPs), setting out the manner in which the organisation will seek to achieve those policies and objectives, and prescribing how it will manage and control those activities.

The content of the policy statement and TMPs will follow the recommendations contained in Sections 6 and 7 of the Code, subject only to amendment where necessary to reflect the particular circumstances of the council. Such amendments will not result in the organisation materially deviating from the Code's key principles.

- Full council will receive reports on treasury management policies, practices and activities, including, as a minimum, an annual strategy and plan in advance of the year, a mid-year review and an annual report after its close.
- The responsibility for the implementation and regular monitoring of treasury management policies and practices is delegated to Cabinet and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the Chief Finance Officer, who will act in accordance with the organisation's policy statement and TMPs and, if he or she is a CIPFA member, CIPFA's Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management.

- Audit and Governance Committee to be responsible for ensuring effective review of the treasury management strategy and policies.

4. Definition of Treasury Management

4.1 Herefordshire council defines its treasury management activities as: -

'The management of the organisation's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.'

5. Policy Objectives

5.1 Herefordshire council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the council, and any financial instruments entered into to manage these risks.

5.2 Herefordshire council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.

**Medium Term
Financial Strategy
2017/18 – 2019/20**

Introduction to Herefordshire's Medium Term Financial Strategy

Herefordshire is a rural county with an older demographic, facing an increasing demand for services which makes savings difficult. Despite this the council has set a medium term financial strategy which demonstrates how savings will be achieved by increasing efficiencies from changing the way services are delivered.

2016/17 saw further significant budget reductions and the requirement for £10m savings in addition to those achieved in previous years but the council is on target to deliver these savings and balance its budget in the current financial year. Further savings will be required in the coming years, £17.5m between now and 2019/20 to offset the impact of reducing central government contributions to council funding.

The MTFs demonstrates the robust financial planning that Herefordshire has and assurance in its ability to deliver the medium term financial strategy; to be approved by Council in February 2017.

The MTFs summarises the financial position of the council and includes the expected impact on revenue spending, capital investment, borrowings and reserves in the coming years. The management of our financial resources is necessary to ensure the council is able to continue to deliver services to our residents today and also to deliver benefits across the region in future years.

As funding from central government has reduced, the council has become almost totally reliant on council tax and business rates to fund its services. That is why the cabinet is recommending an increase of almost 4% in the rate of council tax for 2017/18.

The opportunity to ask the residents of Herefordshire to contribute above the level set by government has been given serious consideration, however, it is clear that households have many other pressures on their budgets. The proposed increase of 3.9% is the minimum that it is prudent to set in order that the council can continue to deliver the quality and range of services to the most disadvantaged in the county.

The MTFs contains a great deal of information which will allow you to:

- Understand the overarching financial position of the council in the coming years;
- Have confidence that the public money with which the council has been entrusted will be used to support the needs of all our residents;
- Be assured that the financial position of the council is sound and secure.

The council has an excellent track record in delivering its plans and the report sets out some of the many achievements of the last few years including the following:

- 368 miles of road resurfaced in the last 3 years and over 200,000 pot-holes
- rollout of "Fastershire" broadband to over 80% of residents and businesses
- Enterprise zone established and developed
- Key Stage 5 results 6% above national average in our schools
- Re-establishing the council as a commissioner of adult social care from NHS

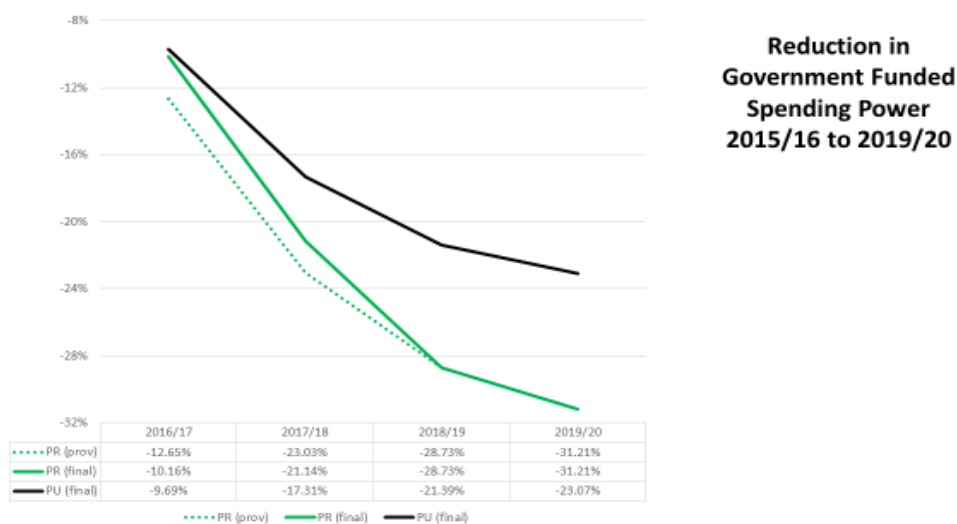
This MTFs underlines the council's aspiration to support its new Economic Vision, to develop further the business rates income and job opportunities which will ensure that this council can fund its statutory duties in the years to come. The cabinet is confident that the plans it is asking Council to approve in February will ensure Herefordshire continues to be great place to live and work.



Councillor Tony Johnson
Leader of the Council

1. Background to the Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 1.1. Herefordshire is the most sparsely populated county in England, with residents dispersed across its 842 square miles. Areas of poverty and deprivation exist in Herefordshire and there are crucial economic, geographic and demographic factors, relating to distance, population sparsity, ageing, social inclusion and market structure. However, as a rural area, it receives on average, 50% less central government assistance than an urban rural area placing Herefordshire at a disadvantage compared to our urban counterparts.
- 1.2. In addition, social isolation is a growing concern, not least because of the disproportionately increasing number of older people living in Herefordshire, but also due to poverty and deprivation. The cost of living in rural areas, for example transport and domestic fuel costs, can be higher than in urban areas. There is also recognition that it is often the most vulnerable members of the community, such as frail elderly people and deprived families who suffer most from the loss of local services and the high cost of living.
- 1.3. 54% of Herefordshire's population live in rural areas of which 42% in the most rural locations. Providing services to a dispersed population across a large geographic area is a challenge and additional resources are required to ensure council services are maintained for all residents in the county
- 1.4. The four year funding settlement has partially recognised these additional pressures by increasing support for the most sparsely populated rural areas by increasing the rural services delivery grant (RSDG), £4.1m in 2017/18 for Herefordshire. Despite this rural councils are worse off than urban ones. (Green (bottom) line rural councils/ Black (top) line urban councils)



- 1.5. Herefordshire's economic base is focused on agriculture and as such its business rates base is low compared to other areas. As such a 1% growth in the business base generates an extra £63.50 per person in Westminster but just £2.20 for Herefordshire. While Government grant systems attempt to make allowance for the additional cost and complexity of delivering services in sparsely populated areas it is not enough for councils like Herefordshire where its sparse population is more evenly distributed throughout the county. To redress this imbalance, the council works with the Rural Services Network (known as SPARSE) and its MP's to improve this position.
- 1.6. Despite these constraints the council has made necessary, difficult decisions to enable it to continue to deliver important services to our residents whilst assessing the challenge of delivering savings of £87m between 2010 and 2020.
- 1.7. Without delivering the challenging changes required, Herefordshire Council would have been unable to meet its financial obligations. The council is committed to work within budget and 2016/17 is expected be the 4th successive year that we have done so.
- 1.8. Whilst ensuring that the overall budget is balanced, the council has been carefully building reserves to a prudent level to manage financial risk and to support future needs. Over the past three years the council has delivered improvement, achievement, positive change and outcomes along the way to deliver our key priorities, including:

Supporting the growth of our economy

- Delivered major public realm improvements to Hereford's centre.
- Opening of the Hereford Greenway and new cycle bridge over the River Wye completing another key link in the city cycle network.
- 368 miles of road resurfaced in the last 3 years - 19% of the entire highway network.
- Filled over 200,000 pot-holes.
- Continued rolled out of "Fasterhire" broadband to over 80% of residents and businesses in the county.
- Enterprise zone established and developed.

Keeping children and young people safe and giving them a great start in life

- Developed New Horizons to enable young adults with learning disabilities to stay in build their independence in Herefordshire rather than out of county.
- Increased the number of local foster carers by 9%, against a national backdrop of reducing numbers.
- Introduction of first Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub in West Mercia.
- Development of new approach to provide housing for vulnerable young adults.
- Development of family based short breaks for children with a disability to give parents more choice.

Enabling residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives

- Restructuring social work teams to provide a clearer service pathway, ensuring rapid assessment for routine cases, along with expert capacity for complex cases, dramatically increasing the proportion of clients reviewed each year,
- Reviewing all contracts and securing cost reductions of 30%-50%, while still maintaining quality and impact in key areas,
- Securing approval of a new housing strategy and housing allocations policy, in a context of major national system change

All of which have contributed to our objective to secure better service, quality of life and value for money.

1.9. The next three years are expected to be equally challenging but the MTFS is designed to provide a robust financial framework through which even more can be delivered to the residents of Herefordshire.

2. Medium Term Financial Strategy

2.1. This Medium Term Financial Strategy (**MTFS**) covers the financial years 2017/18 to 2019/20 and demonstrates how the council will maintain financial stability, deliver efficiencies and support investment in priority services, whilst demonstrating value for money and maintaining service quality.

2.2. The MTFS is a key part of the council's integrated corporate, service and financial planning cycle. This process is designed to ensure that corporate and service plans are developed in the context of available resources and that those resources are allocated in line with the corporate priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. Herefordshire's key priority areas are:

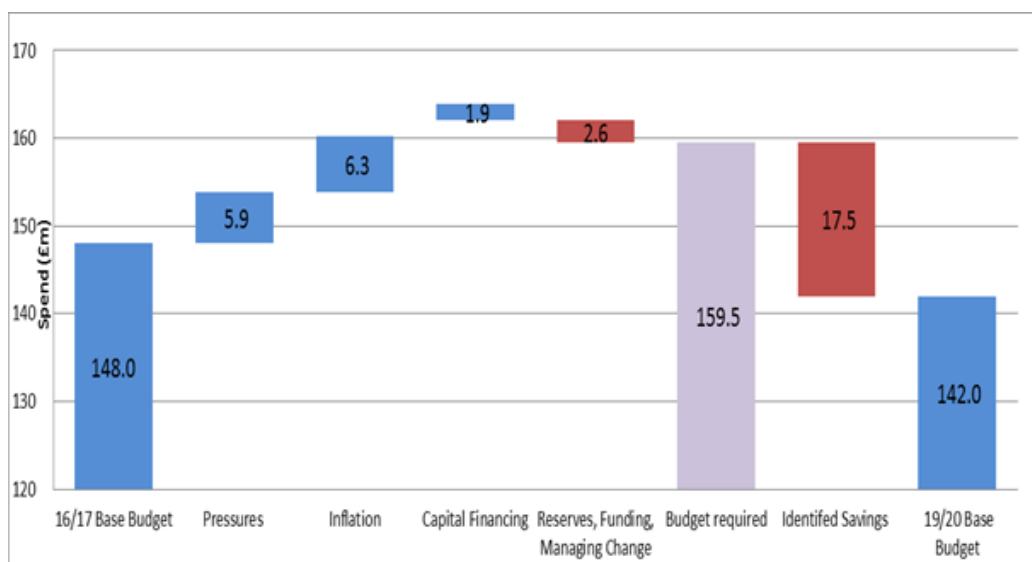
- **enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives**
- **keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life**
- **support the growth of our economy**
- **secure better service, quality of life and value for money.**

2.3. All local authorities are reducing services as the government continues to significantly reduce the funding it provides to local government across England. We are seeing a significant change in the way councils are funded, back in 2010 80% of council spend was funded by grant but by 2020 almost all council expenditure will be funded locally through council tax and business rates. We remain in an austerity period in which the council has identified savings totaling £87m between 2010 and 2020. The council is on schedule to meet this challenge, delivering £69.5m of these savings by the end of 2016/17.

2.4. The demand for services continues to grow with the council providing care for more people, particularly in essential areas such as children's safeguarding and adult social care. Cost pressures have been reflected in this MTFS and residual risks will be constantly monitored. Demand management will be key to ensure future financial resilience alongside increased integrated working with the health sector.

2.5. Balancing the MTFS

2.5.1. The MTFS has been set with regard to known funding reductions, additional cost pressures and identified savings of £17.5m for the period 2017/18 to 2019/20. The following graph demonstrates how the council's budget base is expected to move over the period of the MTFS. It starts with the current budget, reflects the specific spending pressures to show what the budget might be and then the savings required to ensure our expenditure matches our income.



2.6. Value for money

2.6.1. In managing the financial pressures, the council's strategic and corporate plans set out its vision for the county to support a strong, diverse and enterprising business base, operating in an exceptional and connected environment where the transfer of technology and skills foster innovation, investment and economic growth.

2.6.2. These ambitious plans will accelerate growth and provide opportunities for all who live and work in Herefordshire through strong stewardship and strong partnerships with the private sector. Over the last five years the council's performance has improved across a wide range of services building the foundations for a successful economy and this remains a key priority.

2.6.3. The council has enabled major improvements including the delivery of flood relief schemes, a new livestock market, a privately funded retail and leisure development on the site of the old livestock market, access to superfast broadband, an Enterprise Zone in Rotherwas, improved leisure facilities across the county and improvements to the highway network. A core strategy has been adopted that will provide a blueprint for developing the county over the period to 2031, including the delivery of the Hereford by-pass.

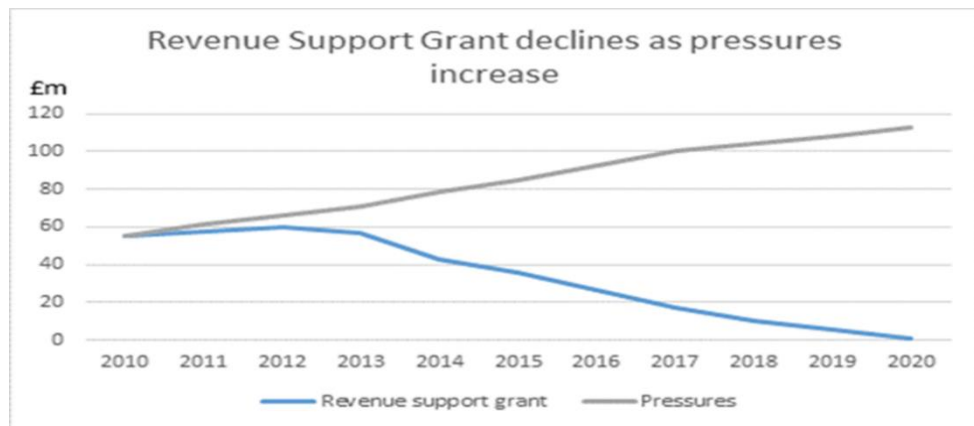
2.6.4. Using cost benchmarking data, the council is able to focus on areas where spend varies from other authorities with similar characteristics and challenges, such as providing adult social care services to a sparsely dispersed aging population. National benchmarking data is currently available to 2015/16 and showed that overall Herefordshire Council is ranked second against its thirteen statistical comparator neighbours on the basis of their cost of service (per revenue outturn).

2.6.5. These improvements have been recognized by our external auditors, Grant Thornton who annually review the value for money and statement of accounts of the council. They do this by looking at key indicators of financial

performance, its approach to strategic financial planning, its approach to financial governance and its approach to financial control. In respect of the last financial year (2015/16) they were satisfied that, in all significant respects, the council had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

2.7. National context

2.7.1. The local government finance system has undergone a significant change from a highly-centralised system of funding, with central government grants allocated on the basis of councils' relative spending need, to a system where councils as a group are self-funding and individual councils bear far more spending and revenue risk.



2.7.2. The impact of these changes has meant that Councils are less reliant on central government grant and more responsible for their financial management, resulting in an increasing funding gap to be met by savings.

2.7.3. Pressures on social care costs have been recognised through the introduction of an additional 2% levy on council tax referendum thresholds to be used entirely for adult social care; this will generate £1.8m each year for Herefordshire. The Autumn Statement provided some additional flexibility to the timing and size of this precept, provided that it does not exceed 6% over the three year period. Consideration will be given to this option in future years.

2.7.4. The Autumn Statement reduced the level of New Homes Bonus, with a 0.4% threshold and introduced a specific, one year, Adult Social Care Grant. The net impact of this was a £0.2m reduction which in 2017/18 has been mitigated by a higher tax base.

2.7.5. The government will introduce the first ever national funding formula for schools, high needs and early years, a detailed consultation was launched in 2016 and the new formulae will be implemented from April 2018.

2.7.6. In addition, discussions continue on the national system of business rates with the proposal for councils to retain 100% of business rates (rather than

50% at present) but potentially without the protections for councils with lower numbers of businesses. This additional funding is likely to be accompanied with additional responsibilities, and therefore may require additional savings with an expectation for “national fiscal neutrality”. The council is continuing with its current, sound practices to manage these pressures.

2.7.7. The 2016 Autumn Statement reflected the latest forecasts from the Office of Budget Responsibility which indicated increasing inflationary pressures and falling government revenues well into 2020 and beyond. This is likely to result in increasing the government’s borrowing requirement and introducing greater uncertainty in the growth and resilience of the UK economy.

2.7.8. These national factors create further risk to the council’s core income streams and the increased need to hold reserves at a level sufficient to protect the council from unplanned events.

2.7.9. This MTFS period will be extremely challenging for councils and many face difficult decisions about which services are scaled back or stopped altogether. It is against this background that Herefordshire council’s MTFS has been prepared.

3. The Revenue Budget

3.1. The MTFS summarises the council’s financial plans for the next three years, is updated annually, and reflects the current year’s performance and the next year’s budget; it covers the period from 2017/18 to 2019/20,

3.2. It is prepared using the Financial Resource Model (**FRM**) which takes into account the corporate financial objectives and plans. The FRM provides an assessment of the overall resource available over the medium term linking the revenue account with the capital investment plan, treasury management strategy and reserves policy to provide a complete overview of the council’s financial position over time. It sets the financial context for corporate and service planning so that the two planning processes are fully integrated.

3.3. Funding Assumptions

3.3.1. The FRM includes a number of key assumptions in respect of funding on which the financial strategy is based. The council’s revenue funding assumes:

- Council Tax - a 1.9% increase for 2017/18 and in future years in council tax plus a further 2% in respect of the Adult Social Care precept, making an overall increase of 3.9% per annum;
- Revenue Support Grant is expected to fall in line with the four year settlement agreed between the government and council;
- Increases in business rate reliefs as set in the Autumn Statement.

3.3.2. These will be reviewed each year against further changes in government funding as part of the annual budget process to ensure all relevant and up to date information is reflected in the budget process. Increasingly the council is becoming more dependent on income from Council Tax and Business

Rates than funding from central government and this will continue throughout the years covered by the MTFs. It is worth noting the system of business rates is likely to change in 2020/21 and may reduce the level of business rates retained by the council for future years.

Funding Assumptions	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
	£000's	£000's	£000's
Council Tax (assuming 3.9% increase p.a.)	93,049	97,466	101,894
Locally retained business rates *	32,612	33,116	33,654
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	10,090	5,370	620
New Homes Bonus (NHB)	3,585	2,540	1,760
Rural Services Delivery Grant (including transitional grant) RSDG	4,669	3,149	4,093
ASC Support Grant	885	-	-
Reserves - one offs	135	-	-
Base Budget	145,025	141,641	142,021

*Business rates includes top up and Section 31 grants

3.4. Budget Pressure Assumptions

3.4.1. Current planning assumptions include the following:

- inflation - 2%- 2.4% uplift per annum on income and costs, contract inflation indices on non-pay expenditure;
- pay – increased at 1% per annum;
- introduction of the apprenticeship levy in 2017/18 and Living Wage impact;
- interest rates – investment income and borrowing costs in line with the Treasury Management Strategy.

3.4.2. The total of directorate pressures included in the FRM are set out in the following table and also reflect the service demand pressures identified within each directorate. These do not reflect the potential inflationary increases indicated in the Office of Budget Responsibility's report published on 23 November 2106 but are reviewed annually as part of the budget process.

3.4.3. The potential impact arising from the decision of the UK to leave the European Union is likely to influence future government financing and some indications of this have been provided. These changes will be reflected in future planning as they become clearer.

Budget Pressures	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Legislative changes (living wage)	618	492	540	1,650
Adult's demographic pressures	850	926	945	2,721
Adults preventative measures	(600)	-	-	(600)
Contract and pay inflation and other pressures	1,891	2,154	2,277	6,322
Apprenticeship levy	200	-	-	200
Unaccompanied asylum seeking children	100	-	-	100
Children's services pressures	425	-	-	425
Adults contractual inflation	356	508	529	1,393
Base Budget	3,840	4,080	4,291	12,211

3.4.4. Following the approval of the budget, directorates will be expected to manage any new or additional budget pressures within their own net spending limits.

3.5. Savings Assumptions

3.5.1. The council delivered almost £70m of savings in the financial years 2010/11 to 2016/17 and will be required to generate an additional £17.5m of savings in the financial period 2017/18 to 2019/20 in order to balance its planned expenditure against its income.

3.5.2. Directorate savings have been identified, or revised, as part of the budget process and these are summarised in the table below:

Directorate Savings	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Adults and Wellbeing	2,400	1,950	1,500	5,850
Children's Wellbeing	1,159	1,572	1,050	3,781
Economy, Communities and Corporate	2,800	1,800	1,060	5,660
Corporate Savings	491	500	1200	2,191
Total Savings	6,850	5,822	4,810	17,482

3.5.3. Adults and Wellbeing:

Key savings targets are directed toward the following areas to improve service delivery and reduce costs while protecting the most vulnerable members of the community.

Adults and Wellbeing Savings Proposals	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Decommissioning block contracts/re-design	550	400	-	950
Reducing package costs and diverting demand	350	350	300	1,000
Price banding in 3yr settlement	200	200	200	600
Reducing costs of high cost packages in LD	700	700	300	1,700
Workforce re-design	200	200	600	1000
Early delivery of Public health savings	200	-	-	200
Income Generation Proposals				
Sale of beds to self-funders	50	-	-	50
Income generation- zero cost of telecare	150	100	100	350
Total Savings	2,400	1,950	1,500	5,850

3.5.4. Children's Wellbeing

Savings proposals have been directed to the following areas to minimize the impact on service delivery

Children's Wellbeing Savings Proposals	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Manage contract inflation and secure contract efficiencies.	250	250	250	750
Reduction in the number of looked after children	566	822	450	1,838
Organisational structure to reflect the service requirements	243	350	200	793
Income Generation Proposals				
Accessing government grant to focus early help offer on the most vulnerable families, to reduce the need for higher cost services.	100	150	150	400
Total Savings	1,159	1,572	1,050	3,781

3.5.5. Economy, Community and Corporate Savings Proposal

Directorate savings plans are focused on improving the efficient operation of core services through service re-design, operational efficiency and increased parking income:

Economy, Community and Corporate Savings Proposal	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000	Total £000
Restructure/Organisational re-design to generate staff savings	363	100	180	643
Reduced costs of ICT and accommodation costs through building rationalisation	530	450	250	1230
Restructure service delivery in Libraries, Customer Service centres, Museums and Archives	480	470		950
Removal of subsidies to Parish councils	100	100	100	300
Reductions in public and community Transport	275	240	225	740
Public realm and energy savings	525	25	25	575
Museums and Heritage savings	100	150	250	500
Income Generation Proposals				
Increased income form commercial waste	30	30	30	90
Increased car parking income	397	235		632
Total Savings	2,800	1,800	1,060	5,660

3.5.6. Corporate Savings Proposals

In addition to directorate savings, this MTFS targets savings related to corporately controlled assets and income to generate the following savings:

Corporate Savings Proposal	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000	Total £000
Savings arising from asset disposals and changes to Council Tax Reductions Scheme (CTRS) (agreed in 2016)	442	400	1,000	1,842
Organisational re-design to generate staff savings	49	100	200	349
Total Savings	491	500	1,200	2,191

3.6. Summary

The overall impact on the proposed revenue budget is shown below and demonstrates a balanced MTFS in each of the plan years in line with the governments four year funding settlement:

Revenue Budget	2017/18 £000's	2018/19 £000's	2019/20 £000's
Base Budget	147,979	145,025	141,641
Pressures	3,840	4,080	4,291
Savings	(6,850)	(5,822)	(4,810)
	144,969	143,283	141,122
Corporate adjustments*	56	(1,642)	899
Revised Base Budget	145,025	141,641	142,021
Funding Available	145,025	141,641	142,021

*Corporate adjustments include agreed virements, capital costs, funding adjustments and reserves

3.7. Directorate Net Spending Limits

The proposed revenue budget will be allocated to directorates as set out below:

Directorate Budgets	Adults	Children	ECC	Corporate	Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
2016/17 base budget	51,243	20,875	46,540	29,321	147,979
Pressures	2,171	384	1,174	111	3,840
Savings	(2,400)	(1,159)	(2,800)	(491)	(6,850)
Corporate adjustments*	144	1,053	(174)	(967)	56
2017/18 budget proposal	51,158	21,153	44,740	27,974	145,025
Pressures	2,383	511	1,083	103	4,080
Savings	(1,950)	(1,572)	(1,800)	(500)	(5,822)
Corporate adjustments				(1,642)	(1,642)
2018/19 draft budget	51,591	20,092	44,023	25,935	141,641
Pressures	2,539	533	1,111	108	4,291
Savings	(1,500)	(1,050)	(1,060)	(1,200)	(4,810)
Corporate adjustments				899	899
2019/20 draft budget	52,630	19,575	44,074	25,742	142,021

*Corporate adjustments include agreed virements, capital costs, funding adjustments and reserves

4. The Capital Budget

4.1. The capital investment set out in the capital programme will support the corporate plan priorities by:

- **Improving schools**
- **Enhancing infrastructure**
- **Housing delivery and**
- **Creating job opportunities**

4.2. The Capital Programme 2017/18 was approved by council on 16 December 2016 (commitments from previous years are shown in the appendix). The council's Capital Programme is funded by grants, borrowing and capital receipts. The revenue impact of funding schemes by borrowings are included in the budget in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Borrowing Indicators. The following table summarises the fully funded capital investment programme and the detailed investment plan is set out in appendix 2.

4.3.

Capital Investment Programme and Financing	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000	Total £000
Total Expenditure	73,272	65,938	36,911	176,121
Prudential Borrowing	24,456	22,731	14,547	61,734
Grants and contributions	39,071	41,082	22,214	102,367
Capital Receipts	9,745	2,125	150	12,020
Total Funding	73,272	65,938	36,911	176,121

4.4. As the table demonstrates, capital expenditure can be funded from capital receipts, borrowing, grants and revenue contributions. The council has a policy that ensures capital cash resources are used effectively in support of corporate priorities. As a result, all capital receipts are a corporate resource and not 'owned' or earmarked for directorates unless

allocated for a specific purpose. The capital receipts reserve is available to support spending on the creation or enhancement of assets.

- 4.5. Government support for capital investment is through the allocation of grants, known grant funding allocations for 2017/18 are listed in the appendix but a number, including disabled facilities grant and schools maintenance, are yet to be announced.
- 4.6. The challenges given to retaining assets will be based on value for money, the delivery of strategic priorities and key service delivery. Surplus properties will either be recycled or disposed of and proceeds will be reinvested. The disposal of land will be allowed after the consideration of sacrificing a capital receipt for transfer of the land for use as social housing, or as a community asset transfer.

5. Treasury Management Strategy

- 5.1. The council is required to adopt an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement (**TMSS**) each year as part of the budget setting process in order to fully recognise the financial implications arising from its revenue and capital budgets through the capital financing requirement to ensure the impact of capital investment is fully reflected in the revenue budget; this is provided through the minimum revenue provision (**MRP**).
- 5.2. The TMSS is a summary of the Treasury Management Strategy (**TMS**) which provides a more detailed analysis of the council's loans and investments and the future outlook for interest rates and financing, supported by the council's external treasury management advisors.
- 5.3. The TMS for 2017/18 sets out the council's strategy for making borrowing and investment decisions during the year to meet the capital and revenue spending plans approved by council and considers the impact of future interest rate movements. The full TMS is set out in detail in Appendix 3 and is summarized below.

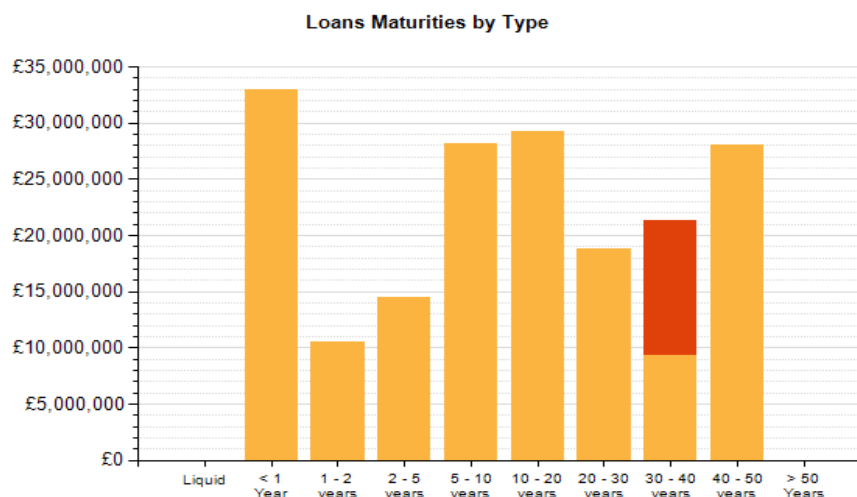
5.4. Borrowing

5.4.1. The estimated year end borrowing levels for the period of the MTFS are set out below:

Estimated Year End Borrowings	31.03.17 £000	31.03.18 £000	31.03.19 £000	31.03.20 £000
CFR excluding other long-term liabilities and MRP provision and grants	245,669	258,152	236,174	243,760
Less: Existing Profile of Longer Term Borrowing – PWLB and bank loans	(149,950)	(148,489)	(143,011)	(137,517)
Cumulative Maximum External Borrowing Requirement	95,719	109,663	93,162	106,243
Internal borrowing	(17,000)	(15,000)	(12,000)	(10,000)
Anticipated Capital receipts	0	(33,600)	0	0
Cumulative Net Borrowing Requirement	78,719	61,063	81,162	96,243
Total Council Borrowing	228,669	209,552	224,174	233,760

5.4.2. Total gross outstanding debt at 30 November 2016 was £183.6m of which £32.5m were short term loans and £151.1m fixed rate, long term loans, which are being repaid via the minimum revenue provision as explained above. Included in total borrowings is £23.4m which is supported by a long term, commercial loan arrangement with our Waste Disposal provider.

5.4.3. The council's debt is repayable over the following maturity profile and reflects the level of short term debt held by the council to ensure sufficient flexibility to meet the planned requirements of the investment programme and capital receipts. The portion of the graph in red relates to LOBO (lender option, borrower option) loan repayments.



5.4.4. The need for new borrowing is based on the Capital Programme, which indicates an additional borrowing requirement of £25.9m over the MTFS period. The report of the Office of Budget Responsibility issued on 23 November 2016 does indicate that interest rates may have to rise in response to inflationary pressures arising from falls in sterling. However the MTFS and budget for 2017/18 have been set on the assumption that interest rates will climb steadily. This position will be kept under review so that the council is able to respond quickly should interest rates begin to rise. This impact will apply equally to both investments and borrowings (Appendix 3 in TMS).

5.5. Investments

5.5.1. During 2016/17 interest rates have remained low and in the year to date, the average daily rate achieved on the council's investments has averaged at 0.3%. A further decrease in the bank base rate, reducing it from 0.5% to 0.25%, was introduced from August 2016 and is not expected to rise in the short term but will be closely monitored in 2017.

5.5.2. The council's primary objective in relation to the investment of public funds remains the security of capital and minimisation of risk, which leads to lower returns. The council's Treasury Advisors, Capita, provide regular market intelligence to support the protection of the investment portfolio and cash balances are minimised to reduce the need to borrow.

6. Reserves

6.1. The Council's useable reserves are split between General Reserves and Earmarked reserves and are held for certain purposes is described below:

6.2. General Reserve

6.2.1. Part of the council's General Reserve is held as a Strategic Reserve to cover emergency events such as unforeseen financial liabilities or natural disasters. This reserve is maintained at a minimum level of between 3% and 5% of the Council's net revenue budget.

6.2.2. The remainder of the Council's General Reserve is to support one-off and limited on-going revenue spending and, in line with the four year settlement, for smoothing the impact of the late delivery of savings plans.

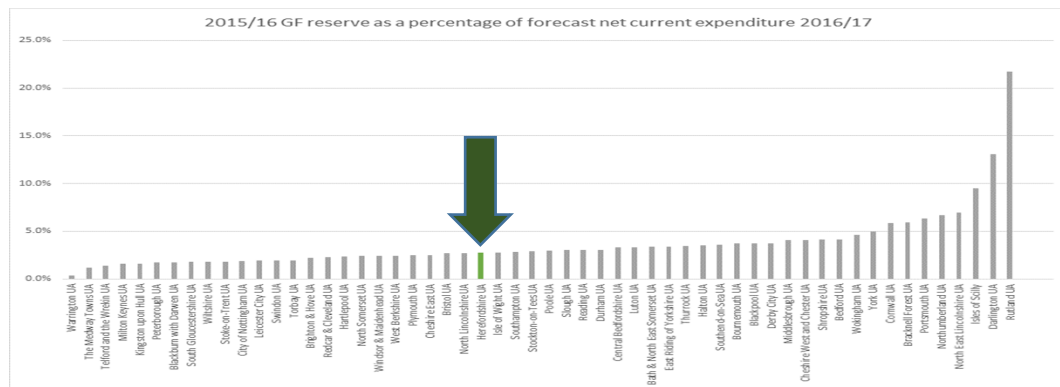
6.3. Earmarked Reserves

The council's earmarked reserves are held to meet identified spending commitments. These reserves will only be used for the purpose for which they were created and will be reviewed annually. If they are no longer required they will be transferred to the general reserve. The use of earmarked reserves requires the approval of the Chief Finance Officer.

Balance as at	Strategic Reserve	General Reserve	School Balances	Earmarked Reserves	Total Reserves
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
31 March 2016	7.2	0.1	9.4	19.1	35.8
31 March 2017	7.3	3.6	7.2	18.0	36.1
31 March 2018	7.1	4.0	7.2	16.0	34.3
31 March 2019	6.8	4.0	7.2	14.0	32.0
31 March 2020	6.8	4.0	7.2	14.0	32.0

Certain Earmarked reserves fall outside the control of the council, specifically School balances.

6.4. The level of reserves is reasonable when compared to other unitary councils and will be kept under review. (based on RO return data – not audited Financial Statements)



6.5. The Council's reserves policy is set out in Appendix 4 and reflects best practice in respect of the appropriate level of strategic reserves.

7. Budget Risks

7.1. The most substantial risks have been assessed in the budget process and, where possible, reasonable mitigation has been made. Risks will be monitored through the year and reported to cabinet as part of the budget monitoring process. The proposed budget includes contingency and reserves that, if required, can be used to manage risks.

7.2. Demand management in social care continues to be a key issue, against a backdrop of a demographic of older people that is rising faster than the national average, and some specific areas of inequalities amongst families and young people. Focusing public health commissioning and strategy on demand management through disease prevention and behavioral change is critical for medium term change. In addition re-setting our relationship with communities, focusing services on areas of greatest professional need, will support the MTFs.

7.3. There are on-going risks in achieving reductions in children's safeguarding costs, Herefordshire is high spending compared to statistical neighbours and methods of reducing this cost are progressing however some delays have been experienced.

7.4. Key areas of focus include, sustaining the current focus on a new relationship with citizens and communities, changing the models of care to more family based provision, managing the price paid where the council is the commissioner and/or where this is taking place with partners with a specific reference to health, improvements in commercial interface including contract management, using technology to enable new ways of working including significant channel shift around self-service and automated business process improvement and a subsequent headcount reduction. A full risk and mitigation summary is provided in Appendix 5.

8. Conclusion

8.1. The council's Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out a challenging but robust financial framework through which planned services and investment can be delivered. It is a fully balanced framework so that:

- revenue expenditure is fully covered by income,
- capital expenditure is fully funded and the associated capital financing cost reflected in revenue budgets,
- effective treasury management ensures financial resources are available as required within a prudent framework
- useable reserves are sufficient to meet specific need and protect against unforeseen events.

9. Recommendation

9.1. That Council adopts the three year Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in the report.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1	Net Revenue budget
Appendix 2	Approved Capital Investment Programme
Appendix 3	Treasury Management Strategy
Appendix 4	Reserves Policy
Appendix 5	Risk Assessment

10.1.

Appendix 1 Net Revenue budget and Directorate Spending Limits 2017/18

Directorate	Current net budget £000s	Net changes £000s	Draft net budget £000s
	2016/17		2017/18
Adults and wellbeing	51,243	(85)	51,158
Children's wellbeing	20,875	278	21,153
Economies, communities and corporate (ECC)	46,540	(1,800)	44,740
Total directorate net budget	118,658	(1,607)	117,051
Centralised corporate costs			6,458
Capital financing - debt repayments			11,074
Capital financing—interest			6,785
Other central budgets			1,057
One off funding			2,600
Total net spend (budget requirement)			145,025
Financed by			
Council tax			93,049
Locally retained business rates			22,419
Revenue support grant			10,090
Business rates top grant & S31 grant			10,197
New homes bonus			3,585
Rural services delivery grant (including transitional grant)			4,669
Adult Social Care support grant			885
Reserves			135
Total Funding			145,025

Appendix 2

Approved capital programme

Scheme Name	Prior years £000	2016/17 budget £000	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000	Total £000
Economy, Communities and Corporate						
Energy from Waste Plant	23,412	16,588				40,000
Hereford City Centre Transport Package (includes Hereford city link road)*	17,575	12,124	5,682	4,000	1,270	40,651
Local Transport Plan (LTP)	annual plan	11,633	11,313	10,341	10,341	
Fastershire Broadband (excludes Gloucester spend in prior years of £9.7m)	9,003	6,605	9,747	7,248		32,603
Hereford Enterprise Zone	5,071	3,150	7,779			16,000
Leisure Centres	7,268	2,784				10,052
Solar Photovoltaic Panels	463	1,671				2,134
Data Centre Consolidation	-	1,170				1,170
Corporate Accommodation	18	1,082	1,771			2,871
South Wye Transport Package (total budget of £35m includes £8m funded by LTP, scheme extends into 20/21)*	1,983	1,000	3,500	14,000	6,200	26,683
Hereford Library Accommodation Works	91	909				1,000
Marches business improvement grants	-	833	833	834		2,500
Highway Depot Improvements	-	800				800
IT Network Upgrade	-	500				500
Software to Enable Remote Access to Desktops and Automate Upgrades	-	500				500
Property Estate Enhancement Works	-	500	500	500	500	2,000
LED street lighting	4,750	905				5,655
Childrens wellbeing						
Colwall Primary School	33	4,800	1,667			6,500
Schools Capital Maintenance Grant	annual plan	1,205				
Peterchurch Primary School	6	1,000	4,494			5,500
Preliminary works to inform key investment need throughout the county			300	1,774		2,074
Expansion for Marlbrook school			2,000	726		2,726
SEN & DDA school improvements			710			710
Schools Basic Need	annual plan	666				
Adults and wellbeing						
Disabled facilities grant	annual plan	1,734	tbc			
Private sector housing improvements			800	800	800	2,400
Subject to funding confirmation						
Herefordshire Enterprise Zone			2,500	3,200	500	6,200
Development Partnership project			600	10,000	10,000	20,600
Highway asset management & major infrastructure investment			14,543	7,735	7,000	29,278
Model Farm, Ross on Wye			2,520	4,250	300	7,070
<i>Other schemes less than £500k</i>		4,877	2,013	530		
Total		77,036	73,272	65,938	36,911	
Financed by						
Prudential borrowing		39,582	24,456	22,731	14,547	
Grant and funding contributions		32,188	39,071	41,082	22,214	
Capital receipts allocated to capital schemes		5,266	9,745	2,125	150	
Total		77,036	73,272	65,938	36,911	

* both of these schemes are supported by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the funding allocations are based on the details contained within the scheme business cases, however as schemes develop and work completes, the individual scheme costs may vary but remain within the overall funding envelope as shown below

Scheme		LEP Grant £m	Locally funded £m	Total scheme budget £m
Hereford city centre transport package		16	25	41
South wye transport package		27	8	35
Total		43	33	76

Appendix 3

Treasury Management Strategy

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Summary of Strategy for 2017/18**
- 3. Economic Background and Interest Rate Forecast**
- 4. Capital Financing Requirement**
- 5. Borrowing**
- 6. Investment Strategy**
- 7. Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2017/18**

Appendices

- a Existing Borrowing and Investments**
- b Borrowing Levels in Future Years**
- c Prudential Indicators**
- d Outlook for Interest Rates**
- e Treasury Management Policy Statement**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 *The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2011 Edition (the CIPFA Code) requires the council to approve a Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMS) before the start of each financial year. The TMS also includes the Annual Investment Strategy as required under Investment Guidance provided by Communities and Local Government (CLG).*
- 1.2 The council borrows and invests substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk are therefore central to the council's treasury management strategy.
- 1.3 The purpose of this TMS is to approve:
- Treasury Management Strategy for 2017/18
 - Borrowing – Section 5
 - Investments – Section 6
 - Minimum Revenue Payment (MRP) Statement – Section 7
 - Prudential Indicators - Appendix c

2. Summary of Strategy for 2017/18

Borrowing

- 2.1 In 2017/18 council borrowing is estimated to decrease by £19.1m from £228.7m to £209.6m. This decrease can be analysed as follows.

	£m
Estimated council borrowing as at 31st March 2017	228.7
Capital investment funded by borrowing	24.5
Less: Provision for Repayment of Principal (MRP)	(11.1)
Grants and contributions	(34.5)
Reduction in usable reserves balances	2.0
Estimated council borrowing as at 31st March 2018	209.6

- 2.2 The reduction in debt will be largely financed by the capital receipt from the sale of small holdings. Any borrowing requirements will be financed by short term borrowing. Short-term rates are currently significantly lower than longer-term rates and long-term analysis, comparing short-term finance with a long-term loan, has shown this to be the most cost effective approach with savings in the early years outweighing additional amounts payable that may fall due in later years.
- 2.3 The borrowing budget for 2017/18 includes provision to pay short-term interest rates of up to 1.5% (including brokers commission), we currently secure short term loans at an interest rate of 0.8%. The budget also includes the interest cost on existing fixed term borrowing.

- 2.4 Compared to a 20 year EIP loan (currently at 2.44%) using short-term finance (at 1.5%) interest cost incurred would be at least £0.5m lower in 2017/18 (being the estimated average amount of short-term debt outstanding during 2017/18 of £61.1m).
- 2.5 If no longer term PWLB loans are taken out, by 31 March 2018 variable rate short-term loans may total £61.1m (29%) compared to fixed rate longer-term borrowing of £148.5m. This strategy approves a total variable loan stock holding of up to 50% of total loans to minimise the risk of interest rate increases.
- 2.6 The council's exposure to variable rate debt has been discussed with the council's treasury adviser, Capita Asset Services, who agree with the council's borrowing policy and the consideration of our interest rate forecasting.

Investments

- 2.7 As a result of current banking regulations which, in the absence of government support, put the council's deposits at risk when banks get into difficulty, the council will:
- Maintain lower investment balances during the year;
 - Keep low but liquid cash balances and invest these mainly in Money Market Funds;
 - Maintain counterparty limits with the banks at prudent levels;
 - Consider other creditworthy investments to increase diversification.

3. Economic Background and Interest Rate Forecast

Economic background

- 3.1 **UK. GDP growth rates** in 2013, 2014 and 2015 of 2.2%, 2.9% and 1.8% were some of the strongest rates among the G7 countries. Growth is expected to have strengthened in 2016 with the first three quarters coming in respectively at +0.4%, +0.7% and +0.5%. The latest Bank of England forecast for growth in 2016 as a whole is +2.2%. The figure for quarter 3 was a pleasant surprise which confounded the downbeat forecast by the Bank of England in August of only +0.1%, (subsequently revised up in September, but only to +0.2%). During most of 2015 and the first half of 2016, the economy had faced headwinds for exporters from the appreciation of sterling against the Euro, and weak growth in the EU, China and emerging markets, and from the dampening effect of the Government's continuing austerity programme.
- 3.2 The **referendum vote for Brexit** in June 2016 delivered an immediate shock fall in confidence indicators and business surveys at the beginning of August, which were interpreted by the Bank of England in its August Inflation Report as pointing to an impending sharp slowdown in the economy. However, the following monthly surveys in September showed an equally sharp recovery in confidence and business surveys so that it is generally expected that the economy will post reasonably strong growth numbers through the second half of 2016 and also in 2017, albeit at a slower pace than in the first half of 2016.
- 3.3 The **Monetary Policy Committee, (MPC), meeting of 4th August** was therefore dominated by countering this expected sharp slowdown and resulted in a package of measures that included a cut in Bank Rate from 0.50% to 0.25%, a renewal of quantitative easing, with £70bn made available for purchases of gilts and corporate bonds, and a £100bn tranche of cheap borrowing being made available for banks to use to lend to businesses and individuals.
- 3.4 The **MPC meeting of 3rd November** left Bank Rate unchanged at 0.25% and other monetary policy measures also remained unchanged. This was in line with market expectations, but a major change from the previous quarterly Inflation Report MPC meeting of 4 August, which had given a strong steer, in its forward guidance, that it was likely to cut Bank Rate again, probably by the end

of the year if economic data turned out as forecast by the Bank.

- 3.5 The latest MPC decision included a forward view that **Bank Rate** could go either up or down depending on how economic data evolves in the coming months. Our central view remains that Bank Rate will remain unchanged at 0.25% until the first increase to 0.50% in quarter 2 2019 (unchanged from our previous forecast). However, we would not, as yet, discount the risk of a cut in Bank Rate if economic growth were to take a significant dip downwards, though we think this is unlikely. We would also point out that forecasting as far ahead as mid 2019 is highly fraught as there are many potential economic headwinds which could blow the UK economy one way or the other as well as political developments in the UK, (especially over the terms of Brexit), EU, US and beyond, which could have a major impact on our forecasts.
- 3.6 The August quarterly Inflation Report was based on a pessimistic forecast of near to zero GDP growth in quarter 3 i.e. a sharp slowdown in growth from +0.7% in quarter 2, in reaction to the shock of the result of the referendum in June. However, **consumers** have very much stayed in a 'business as usual' mode and there has been no sharp downturn in spending; it is consumer expenditure that underpins the services sector which comprises about 75% of UK GDP. After a fairly flat three months leading up to October, retail sales in October surged at the strongest rate since September 2015. In addition, the GfK consumer confidence index has recovered quite strongly to -3 in October after an initial sharp plunge in July to -12 in reaction to the referendum result.
- 3.7 **Bank of England GDP forecasts** in the November quarterly Inflation Report were as follows, (August forecasts in brackets) - 2016 +2.2%, (+2.0%); 2017 1.4%, (+0.8%); 2018 +1.5%, (+1.8%). There has, therefore, been a sharp increase in the forecast for 2017, a marginal increase in 2016 and a small decline in growth, now being delayed until 2018, as a result of the impact of Brexit.
- 3.8 **Capital Economics' GDP forecasts** are as follows: 2016 +2.0%; 2017 +1.5%; 2018 +2.5%. They feel that pessimism is still being overdone by the Bank and Brexit will not have as big an effect as initially feared by some commentators.
- 3.9 **The Chancellor** has said he will do 'whatever is needed' i.e. to **promote growth**; there are two main options he can follow – fiscal policy e.g. cut taxes, increase investment allowances for businesses, and/or increase government expenditure on infrastructure, housing etc. This will mean that the PSBR deficit elimination timetable will need to slip further into the future as promoting growth, (and ultimately boosting tax revenues in the longer term), will be a more urgent priority. The Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, had warned that a vote for Brexit would be likely to cause a slowing in growth, particularly from a reduction in business investment, due to the uncertainty of whether the UK would have continuing full access, (i.e. without tariffs), to the EU single market. He also warned that the Bank could not do all the heavy lifting to boost economic growth and suggested that the Government would need to help growth e.g. by increasing investment expenditure and by using fiscal policy tools. The newly appointed Chancellor, Phillip Hammond, announced, in the aftermath of the referendum result and the formation of a new Conservative cabinet, that the target of achieving a budget surplus in 2020 would be eased in the Autumn Statement on 23 November.
- 3.10 The other key factor in forecasts for Bank Rate is **inflation** where the MPC aims for a target for CPI of 2.0%. The November Inflation Report included an increase in the peak forecast for inflation from 2.3% to 2.7% during 2017; (Capital Economics are forecasting a peak of 3.2% in 2018). This increase was largely due to the effect of the sharp fall in the value of sterling since the referendum, (16% down against the US dollar and 11% down against the Euro); this will feed through into a sharp increase in the cost of imports and materials used in production in the UK. However, the MPC is expected to look through the acceleration in inflation caused by external, (outside of the UK), influences, although it has given a clear warning that if wage inflation were to rise significantly as a result of these cost pressures on consumers, then they would take action to raise Bank Rate.
- 3.11 What is clear is that **consumer disposable income** will come under pressure, as the latest employers' survey is forecasting median pay rises for the year ahead of only 1.1% at a time when inflation will be rising significantly higher than this. The CPI figure for October surprised by under

shooting forecasts at 0.9%. However, producer output prices rose at 2.1% and core inflation was up at 1.4%, confirming the likely future upwards path.

- 3.12 **Gilt yields, and consequently PWLB rates**, have risen sharply since hitting a low point in mid-August. There has also been huge volatility during 2016 as a whole. The year started with 10 year gilt yields at 1.88%, fell to a low point of 0.53% on 12 August, and have hit a peak on the way up again of 1.46% on 14 November. The rebound since August reflects the initial combination of the yield-depressing effect of the MPC's new round of quantitative easing on 4 August, together with expectations of a sharp downturn in expectations for growth and inflation as per the pessimistic Bank of England Inflation Report forecast, followed by a sharp rise in growth expectations since August when subsequent business surveys, and GDP growth in quarter 3 at +0.5% q/q, confounded the pessimism. Inflation expectations also rose sharply as a result of the continuing fall in the value of sterling.
- 3.13 **Employment** has been growing steadily during 2016, despite initial expectations that the referendum would cause a fall in employment. However, the latest employment data in November, (for October), showed a distinct slowdown in the rate of employment growth and an increase in the rate of growth of the unemployment claimant count. **House prices** have been rising during 2016 at a modest pace but the pace of increase has been slowing since the referendum; a downturn in prices could dampen consumer confidence and expenditure.
- 3.14 **USA**. The American economy had a patchy 2015 with sharp swings in the quarterly growth rate leaving the overall growth for the year at 2.4%. Quarter 1 of 2016 at +0.8%, (on an annualised basis), and quarter 2 at 1.4% left average growth for the first half at a weak 1.1%. However, the first estimate for quarter 3 at 2.9% signalled a rebound to strong growth. The Fed. embarked on its long anticipated first increase in rates at its December 2015 meeting. At that point, confidence was high that there would then be four more increases to come in 2016. Since then, more downbeat news on the international scene and then the Brexit vote, have caused a delay in the timing of the second increase which is now strongly expected in December 2016. Overall, despite some data setbacks, the US is still, probably, the best positioned of the major world economies to make solid progress towards a combination of strong growth, full employment and rising inflation: this is going to require the central bank to take action to raise rates so as to make progress towards normalisation of monetary policy, albeit at lower central rates than prevailed before the 2008 crisis.
- 3.15 The result of the **presidential election** in November is expected to lead to a strengthening of US growth if Trump's election promise of a major increase in expenditure on infrastructure is implemented. This policy is also likely to strengthen inflation pressures as the economy is already working at near full capacity. In addition, the unemployment rate is at a low point verging on what is normally classified as being full employment. However, the US does have a substantial amount of hidden unemployment in terms of an unusually large, (for a developed economy), percentage of the working population not actively seeking employment.
- 3.16 Trump's election has had a profound effect on the **bond market and bond yields** have risen sharply in the week since his election. Time will tell if this is a temporary over reaction, or a reasonable assessment of his election promises to cut taxes at the same time as boosting expenditure. This could lead to a sharp rise in total debt issuance from the current level of around 72% of GDP towards 100% during his term in office. However, although the Republicans now have a monopoly of power for the first time since the 1920s, in having a President and a majority in both Congress and the Senate, there is by no means any certainty that the politicians and advisers he has been appointing to his team, and both houses, will implement the more extreme policies that Trump outlined during his election campaign. Indeed, Trump may even rein back on some of those policies himself.

- 3.17 The election does not appear likely to have much impact on the Fed. in terms of holding back further on increasing **the Fed. Rate**. Accordingly, the next rate rise is still widely expected to occur in December 2016, followed by sharper increases thereafter, which may also cause Treasury yields to rise further. If the Trump package of policies is fully implemented, there is likely to be a significant increase in inflationary pressures which could, in turn, mean that the pace of further Fed. Rate increases will be quicker and stronger than had been previously expected.
- 3.18 In the first week since the US election, there has been a major shift in **investor sentiment** away from bonds to equities, especially in the US. However, gilt yields in the UK and bond yields in the EU have also been dragged higher. Some commentators are saying that this rise has been an overreaction to the US election result which is likely to be reversed. Other commentators take the view that this could well be the start of the long expected eventual unwinding of bond prices propelled upwards to unrealistically high levels, (and conversely bond yields pushed down), by the artificial and temporary power of quantitative easing.
- 3.19 **EZ**. In the Eurozone, **the ECB** commenced, in March 2015, its massive €1.1 trillion programme of quantitative easing to buy high credit quality government and other debt of selected EZ countries at a rate of €60bn per month. This was intended to run initially to September 2016 but was extended to March 2017 at its December 2015 meeting. At its December and March 2016 meetings it progressively cut its deposit facility rate to reach -0.4% and its main refinancing rate from 0.05% to zero. At its March meeting, it also increased its monthly asset purchases to €80bn. These measures have struggled to make a significant impact in boosting economic growth and in helping inflation to rise significantly from low levels towards the target of 2%.
- 3.20 **EZ GDP growth** in the first three quarters of 2016 has been 0.5%, +0.3% and +0.3%, (+1.6% y/y). Forward indications are that economic growth in the EU is likely to continue at moderate levels. This has added to comments from many forecasters that those central banks in countries around the world which are currently struggling to combat low growth, are running out of ammunition to stimulate growth and to boost inflation. Central banks have also been stressing that national governments will need to do more by way of structural reforms, fiscal measures and direct investment expenditure to support demand and economic growth in their economies.

Interest rate forecast

- 3.8 Investment returns are likely to remain low during 2017/18 and beyond.
- 3.9 Borrowing interest rates have been on a generally downward trend during most of 2016 up to mid-August; they fell sharply to historically phenomenally low levels after the referendum and then even further after the MPC meeting of 4 August when a new package of quantitative easing purchasing of gilts was announced. Gilt yields have since risen sharply due to a rise in concerns around a 'hard Brexit', the fall in the value of sterling, and an increase in inflation expectations. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances, has served well over the last few years. However, this needs to be carefully reviewed to avoid incurring higher borrowing costs in later times when authorities will not be able to avoid new borrowing to finance capital expenditure and/or to refinance maturing debt;
- 3.10 There will remain a cost of carry to any new long-term borrowing that causes a temporary increase in cash balances as this position will, most likely, incur a revenue cost – the difference between borrowing costs and investment returns.

3.10 A more detailed interest rate forecast provided by the Capita Asset Services is attached at **Appendix d.**

4 Capital Financing Requirement

- 4.1 Capital expenditure can be financed in a number of ways including the application of usable capital receipts, a direct charge to revenue, capital grant or by securing an up-front contribution towards the cost of a project.
- 4.2 Capital expenditure not financed by one of the above methods will increase the capital financing requirement (CFR) of the council.
- 4.3 The CFR reflects the council's underlying need to finance capital expenditure by borrowing or by other long-term liability arrangements, for example through lease arrangements.
- 4.4 The use of the term "borrowing" in this context does not necessarily imply external debt since, in accordance with best practice, the council has an integrated treasury management strategy. Borrowing is not associated with specific capital expenditure. The council will, at any point in time, have a number of cash flows both positive and negative and will be managing its position in terms of its borrowings and investments in accordance with its treasury management strategy.
- 4.5 The forecast movement in the CFR over future years is one of the Prudential Indicators which can be found in Appendix c. The movement in actual external debt and usable reserves (which have a direct bearing on when any internal borrowing may need to be externalised) combine to identify the council's borrowing requirement and potential investment strategy in the current and future years.

	31.03.17 Estimate £000	31.03.18 Estimate £000	31.03.19 Estimate £000	31.03.20 Estimate £000
CFR excluding other long-term liabilities and MRP provision and grants	245,669	258,152	236,174	243,760
Less: Existing Profile of Longer Term Borrowing – PWLB and bank loans	(149,950)	(148,489)	(143,011)	(137,517)
Cumulative Maximum External Borrowing Requirement	95,719	109,663	93,162	106,243
Internal borrowing	(17,000)	(15,000)	(12,000)	(10,000)
Anticipated Capital receipts	0	(33,600)	0	0
Cumulative Net Borrowing Requirement	78,719	61,063	81,162	96,243
Total Council Borrowing	228,669	209,552	224,174	233,760

- 4.6 The above table shows the council's net borrowing requirement over and above its existing long-term loan finance. Part of this requirement relates to the refinancing of principal repaid on long-term EIP and annuity loans with the balance relating to additions to the capital programme financed by borrowing.

- 4.7 Increased borrowing increases both interest payable and the amount to be set aside from revenue each year for the repayment of loan principal (called Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)). Annual MRP is estimated to be between £10m and £12.3m as set out in the MTFS. Therefore if, after the large capital schemes scheduled for the next few years are completed, the new capital spend financed by borrowing can be reduced to below the annual MRP the council's total borrowing will fall, as shown in Appendix b.

5 Borrowing Strategy

- 5.1 At 30 November 2016 the council held £183.6m of loans, comprising long-term fixed rate loans totalling £151.1m plus short-term loans from local authorities of £32.5m. The balance sheet forecast in table 1 shows that the council's borrowing may need to increase to £228.7m by 31 March 2017 and to £209.6m by 31 March 2018, assuming the timing and levels of capital expenditure are as budgeted.

Objective

- 5.2 The council's chief objective when borrowing money is to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required. The flexibility to renegotiate loans should the council's long-term plans change is a secondary objective.

Strategy

- 5.3 Given the significant cuts to public expenditure and in particular to local government funding, the council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. With short-term interest rates currently much lower than long-term rates, it is more cost effective in the short-term to use internal resources and borrow using short-term loans.
- 5.4 This enables the council to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall credit risk by tailoring the timing of borrowing so as to minimise balances held. The benefits of internal borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long-term borrowing rates are forecast to rise. The council's treasury advisors will assist the council with 'cost of carry' and breakeven analysis. Its output will determine whether the council borrows additional sums at long-term fixed rates in 2017/18 with a view to keeping future interest costs low, even if this causes additional cost in the short-term.
- 5.5 Short-term loans leave the council exposed to the risk of short-term interest rate rises; they are therefore subject to the limit on the net exposure to variable interest rates in the treasury management indicators below.

Sources

- 5.6 The approved sources of long-term and short-term borrowing are:
- Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)
 - UK local authorities
 - any institution approved for investments (see below)
 - any other bank or building society authorised to operate in the UK
 - UK public and private sector pension funds
 - capital market bond investors
 - Local Capital Finance Company and other special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues.

5.7 In addition, capital finance may be raised by the following methods that are not borrowing, but may be classed as other debt liabilities:

- operating and finance leases
- hire purchase
- Private Finance Initiative
- sale and leaseback

LOBO loans

5.8 The council has two LOBO loans (Lender's Option Borrower's Option) of £6m each on which the council pays interest at 4.5%. Every six months, when the interest charges become due, the lenders have the option to increase the interest rate being charged at which point the council can accept the revised terms or reject them and repay the loan. LOBO loans present a potential refinancing risk to the council since the decision to amend the terms is entirely at the lender's discretion.

Debt rescheduling

5.9 The PWLB allows the repayment of loans before maturity by either paying a premium or receiving a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. Due to the prevailing low interest rate regime, opportunities for debt rescheduling are likely to be very limited. However, this option will be kept under review and will be considered where this is expected to lead to an overall saving or reduction in risk.

6 Investment Strategy

6.1 The council needs to hold adequate funds to meet day to day liquidity needs, for example salary and creditor payments. The council hold balances of around £15m to cover all contingencies. A cash flow forecast is maintained that includes all known receipts and payments so that the council can take action to ensure that it can meet all its liabilities when they fall due.

Objective

6.2 Both the CIPFA Code and the CLG Guidance require the Authority to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and receiving unsuitably low investment income.

Strategy

6.3 Given the increasing risk and continued low returns from short-term unsecured bank deposits, the council will aim to keep its invested funds as low as possible and reduce the amounts invested with banks and building societies. For 2017/18 the council will continue to rely on Money Market Funds which are highly diversified and carry reduced credit risk.

Risk Assessment and Credit Ratings

6.4 The council applies the credit worthiness service provided by Capita Asset Services. This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach utilising credit rating from three main credit rating agencies (Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's). This modelling approach combines credit ratings, credit watches and credit outlooks in a weighted scoring system to

which Capita Asset Services allocate a series of colour coded bands with suggested maximum durations for investments (as shown in table 2 below).

- 6.5 Typically the minimum credit ratings criteria the council use will be short term rating (Fitch or equivalents) of F1 and a long term rating of A-. There may be occasions when the counterparty ratings from one agency are marginally lower than these ratings but still may be used. In these instances consideration will be given to the whole range of ratings available, or other topical market information, to support their use.
- 6.6 The council has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from countries with a minimum sovereign credit rating of AA- (Fitch or equivalents). Currently these countries are:
- Australia (AAA)
 - Canada (AAA)
 - Denmark (AAA)
 - Germany (AAA)
 - Luxembourg (AAA)
 - Netherlands (AAA)
 - Norway (AAA)
 - Singapore (AAA)
 - Sweden (AAA)
 - Switzerland (AAA)
 - Finland (AA+)
 - Hong Kong (AA+)
 - U.S.A. (AA+)
 - Abu Dhabi (AA)
 - France (AA)
 - Qatar (AA)
 - UK (AA)
 - Belgium (AA-)

Approved Counterparties

6.7 The council will invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparty types in table 2 below, subject to the cash limits (per counterparty) and the time limits shown.

Table 2: Approved Investment Counterparties and Limits				
		Colour coding or long term rating	£ limit	Time limit
Banks and Building Societies	Term deposits, CDs or corporate bonds	Yellow Purple Orange Blue Red Green No colour	£5m £5m £5m £5m £5m £5m nil	5 years 2 years 1 year 1 year 6 months 100 days Not to be used
Council's Banker (NatWest)			£5m	Liquid
DMADF	DMADF account	AAA	Unlimited	6 months
UK Government	UK Gilts	UK sovereign rating	Unlimited	1 year
UK Government	Treasury Bills	UK sovereign rating	Unlimited	1 year
Multilateral development banks	Bonds	AAA	£5m	6 months
Local Authorities	Term deposits		£5m	1 year
Money Market Funds	MMFs	AAA	£5m	Liquid
Enhanced Money Market Funds with a credit score of 1.25	MMFs	Dark pink / AAA	£5m	Liquid
Enhanced Money Market Funds with a credit score of 1.5	MMFs	Light pink / AAA	£5m	Liquid
Other investments:				
Pooled funds		£5m per fund		
Mercia Waste Management (providing finance for Energy from Waste Plant)		£40m over the course of the contract		

Specified Investments

6.8 The CLG Guidance defines specified investments as those:

- denominated in pound sterling,
- due to be repaid within 12 months of arrangement,
- not defined as capital expenditure by legislation, and
- invested with one of:
 - the UK Government,
 - a UK local authority, parish council or community council, or
 - a body or investment scheme of "high credit quality".

- 6.10 The Authority defines “high credit quality” organisations and securities as those having a credit rating of A- or higher that are domiciled in the UK or a foreign country with a sovereign rating of AA- or higher.

Non-specified Investments

- 6.11 Any investment not meeting the definition of a specified investment is classed as non-specified. The Authority does not intend to make any investments denominated in foreign currencies, nor any that are defined as capital expenditure by legislation, such as company shares. Non-specified investments will therefore be limited to long-term investments, i.e. those that are due to mature 12 months or longer from the date of arrangement, and investments with bodies and schemes not meeting the definition on high credit quality. Limits on non-specified investments are shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Non-Specified Investment Limits	
	Cash limit
Total long-term investments	£5m
Total investments with unrecognised credit ratings	£2.5m
Total non-specified investments	£7.5m

7. Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2017/18

- 7.1 The council is required to adopt an annual Treasury Management Strategy (**TMS**) each year as part of the budget setting process in order to fully recognise the financial implications arising from its revenue and capital budgets through the capital financing requirement to ensure the impact of capital investment is fully reflected in the revenue budget; this is provided through the minimum revenue provision (MRP). The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Authority to have regard to the Department for Communities and Local Government’s *Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision* (the CLG Guidance) most recently issued in 2012.
- 7.2 The broad aim of the CLG Guidance is to ensure that debt is repaid over a period that is either reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits. The policy for the 2017/18 calculation of MRP is in line with the CLG Guidance and is based on the council’s latest estimate of its capital budget. MRP has been set as follows:

	2017/18 Estimated MRP £000
Pre 31/03/11 Supported borrowing (A)	4,279
Prudential borrowing (B)	6,426
Finance leases and Private Finance Initiative (C and D)	369
Total	11,074

- A For supported capital expenditure before 31 March 2004 MRP has been determined at an appropriate % of the relevant Capital Financing Requirement in respect of that expenditure.

- B For unsupported capital expenditure incurred after 31 March 2011, MRP will be determined by charging the expenditure over the expected useful life of the relevant assets in equal instalments starting in the year after the asset becomes operational. Therefore capital expenditure incurred during 2017/18 will not be subject to a MRP charge until 2018/19 at the earliest.
- C For assets acquired by finance leases or Private Finance Initiatives, MRP will be determined as being equal to the element of the rent or charge that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.
- D For loans and grants towards capital expenditure by third parties, prudential borrowing will be repaid over the life of the asset in relation to which the third party expenditure is incurred.

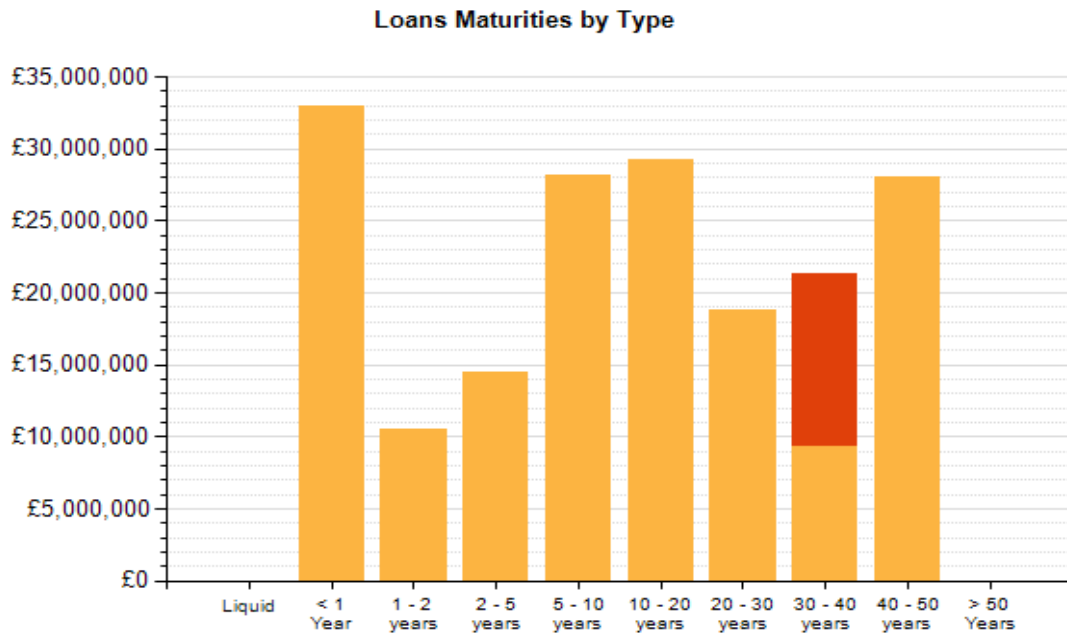
APPENDIX 3a

EXISTING BORROWING & INVESTMENTS AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2016

External Borrowing:	Actual Portfolio £m	Average Rate %
<u>Long-term loans (all fixed rate)</u>		
Public Works Loan Board	139.1	3.79%
LOBO Loans	12.0	4.50%
<u>Short-term loans</u>		
Local Authorities	32.5	0.73%
Total External Borrowing	183.6	3.30%

Investments:	Actual Portfolio £m	Average Rate %
NatWest Liquidity Account (Instant Access)	0.4	0.01%
Money Market Funds (Instant Access)	17.0	0.30%
Total Investments	17.4	0.29%

APPENDIX 3b



APPENDIX 3c PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

1. Background

There is a requirement under the Local Government Act 2003 for local authorities to have regard to CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code) when determining how much money it can afford to borrow. The objectives of the Prudential Code are to ensure that the capital investment plans of local authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable, and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice. To demonstrate that the Authority has fulfilled these objectives, the Prudential Code sets out the following indicators that must be set and monitored each year.

2. Estimates of Capital Expenditure

- 2.1 This indicator is set to ensure that the level of proposed capital expenditure remains within sustainable limits and, in particular, to consider the impact on Council Tax levels.

Capital Programme	2016/17 £000	2017/18 Estimate £000	2018/19 Estimate £000	2019/20 Estimate £000
Expenditure	77,036	73,272	65,938	36,911
Funding				
Capital receipt	5,266	9,745	2,125	150
Capital Grants	32,188	39,071	41,082	22,214
Prudential Borrowing	39,582	24,456	22,731	14,547
Total	77,036	73,272	65,938	36,911

3. Capital Financing Requirement

- 3.1 The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) measures the council's underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose. The calculation of the CFR is taken from the amounts held in the Balance Sheet relating to capital expenditure and financing. The table below includes PFI contracts:

Capital Financing Requirement	2017/18 Estimate £000	2018/19 Estimate £000	2019/20 Estimate £000
Total CFR	290,123	303,675	312,120

Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement

- 4.1 In order to ensure that over the medium term debt will only be for a capital purpose, the local authority should ensure that debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the

capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years.

- 4.2 The Section 151 Officer reports that the council currently has no difficulty meeting this requirement nor are there any difficulties envisaged for future years. This view takes into account current commitments, existing plans and the proposals in the approved budget.

5. Operational Boundary for External Debt

- 5.1 The operational boundary is based on the Authority's estimate of the most likely (i.e. prudent but not worst case) level for external debt. It links directly to the Authority's estimates of capital expenditure, the capital financing requirement and cash flow requirements, and is a key management tool for in-year monitoring. Other long-term liabilities comprise finance lease, Private Finance Initiative and other liabilities that are not borrowing but form part of the council's debt.

Operational Boundary	2017/18 Estimate £m	2018/19 Estimate £m	2019/20 Estimate £m
Operational Boundary for Borrowing	310	290	300
Operational Boundary for other Long-Term Liabilities	30	30	25
Operational Boundary for External Debt	340	320	325

6. Authorised Limit for External Debt

- 6.1 The authorised limit is the affordable borrowing limit determined in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003. It is the maximum amount of debt that the Authority can legally owe. The authorised limit provides headroom over and above the operational boundary for unusual cash movements.

Authorised Limit	2017/18 Estimate £m	2018/19 Estimate £m	2019/20 Estimate £m
Authorised Limit for Borrowing	320	300	310
Authorised Limit for other Long-Term Liabilities	40	40	40
Authorised Limit for External Debt	360	340	350

7. Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

- 7.1 This is an indicator of affordability and highlights the revenue implications of existing and proposed capital expenditure by identifying the proportion of the revenue budget required to meet financing costs. The definition of financing costs is set out in the Prudential Code and includes both interest payable and provision for repayment of loan principal.

7.2 The ratio is based on costs net of investment income.

Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	2017/18 Estimate £000	2018/19 Estimate £000	2019/20 Estimate £000
Net Revenue Stream	145,025	141,641	142,021
Financing Costs	17,859	17,750	18,568
Percentage	12.3%	12.5%	13.0%

7.3 The above table shows budgeted financing costs within the council's medium term financial strategy.

8. Incremental Impact of Capital Investment Decisions

8.1 This is an indicator of affordability that shows the impact of capital investment decisions on council tax levels. The incremental impact is calculated by comparing the total revenue budget requirement of treasury management to the estimated tax base.

	2017/18 Estimate £000	2018/19 Estimate £000	2019/20 Estimate £000
Addition / (reduction) in total treasury budget	663	(109)	818
Estimated tax base (number)	67,598	68,149	68,571
Estimated impact per Band D council tax charge, per annum	£9.81	(£1.60)	£11.93

9. Adoption of the CIPFA Treasury Management Code

9.1 This indicator demonstrates that the council has adopted the principles of best practice.

9.2 The council has incorporated the changes from the revised CIPFA Code of Practice into its treasury policies, procedures and practices. The council's Treasury Management Policy Statement is attached at Appendix e.

10. Upper Limits for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure and Variable Interest Rate Exposure

10.1 These indicators allow the council to manage the extent to which it is exposed to changes in interest rates.

10.2 Due to the large difference between short-term and longer-term interest rates, the limit has been increased to accommodate the council financing the capital programme by short-term variable rate borrowing. Interest rates are forecast to remain low for the next few years and analysis (comparing a twenty year loan with short-term borrowing over the same period) indicates that short-term savings in the next few years will exceed any increased amounts payable in five to ten years time. In pursuing this policy the council recognises that it is more exposed to an unexpected hike in interest rates but the benefits of affordability and flexibility (enabling the council to reduce its short-term borrowing either to reduce cash investments at

times of heightened credit risk or when the borrowing can be replaced by the proceeds from fixed asset sales) outweigh the increased interest rate risk.

	2016/17 Approved	2016/17 Revised	2017/18 Estimate	2018/19 Estimate	2019/20 Estimate
Upper Limit for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Upper Limit for Variable Interest Rate Exposure	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%

11. Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

- 11.1 The council will also limit and monitor large concentrations of fixed rate debt needing to be replaced. Limits in the following table are intended to control excessive exposures to volatility in interest rates when refinancing maturing debt.
- 11.2 The maturity of borrowing is determined by reference to the date on which the loans could be repaid. The council's two LOBO loans could become repayable within 12 months although, if the lenders do not increase the interest rates being charged, which is the current assumption, then the loans could remain outstanding until 2054.

Maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing	Estimated level at 31/03/17	Lower Limit for 2017/18	Upper Limit for 2017/18
Under 12 months	20.7%	0%	35%
12 months and within 24 months	0.7%	0%	30%
24 months and within 5 years	6.1%	0%	25%
5 years and within 10 years	12.5%	0%	25%
10 years and within 20 years	22.7%	0%	40%
20 years and within 30 years	13.3%	0%	40%
30 years and within 40 years	13.3%	0%	40%
40 years and within 50 years	10.7%	0%	40%
Total	100.00%		

12. Upper Limit for total principal sums invested over 364 days:

- 12.1 The purpose of this limit is to contain exposure to the possibility of loss that may arise as a result of the council having to seek early repayment of the sums invested.

Upper Limit for total principal sums invested over 364 days	2016/17 Approved £m	2016/17 Revised £m	2017/18 Estimate £m	2018/19 Estimate £m	2019/20 Estimate £m
	5	5	5	5	5

**APPENDIX 3d
 OUTLOOK FOR INTEREST RATES
 (FORECAST & ECONOMIC COMMENT PROVIDED BY TREASURY ADVISORS)**

	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Sep-18	Dec-18	Mar-19	Jun-19	Sep-19	Dec-19	Mar-20
Bank Base Rate (%)	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.27	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75
PWLB Rates (%):													
5 years	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00
10 years	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.60	2.60	2.70
25 years	2.90	2.90	2.90	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.10	3.10	3.20	3.20	3.30	3.30	3.40
50 years	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.90	2.90	3.00	3.00	3.10	3.10	3.20
The above PWLB rates are noted by Capita Asset Services as being their “central” or most likely forecast, however, they also note that there are upside and downside risks to their forecast.													

Forecast:

- The council’s treasury advisors forecast the bank base rate to stay on hold until quarter two of 2019 at which point small stepped increases are anticipated. It is anticipated the bank base rate standing at 0.75% at March 2020. Capital Economics has a similar interest rate forecast profile to the aforementioned.

Council budget:

- As can be seen from the table above, the council’s treasury advisors central forecast is for the Bank Base Rate to remain at 0.25% during 2017/18. The council’s short-term borrowing budget has been based on a rate of up to 1.5% which should incorporate sufficient headroom to accommodate any unexpected changes in the Base Rate.
- The investment budget is based on the majority of funds being held in instant access accounts generating low returns.
- Should the Bank Base Rate increase sooner or more rapidly than forecast the increased yield on investments will partly offset any increase in short-term variable rates.

Appendix 4

Reserves Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Finance Officer (section 151 officer) to report on the adequacy of reserves and provisions, and the robustness of budget estimates, as part of the annual budget setting process.
- 1.2. Best practice guidance does not advise on the actual level of unallocated general reserves, but on the processes that should be in place. There is a broad range within which a council might reasonably operate, depending on its particular circumstances and each council should make its own judgement, based on the advice of its Chief Finance Officer. In making this decision the Chief Finance Officer takes account of strategic, operational and financial risks. The financial risks are assessed in the context of the council's overall approach to risk management.
- 1.3. CIPFA best practice guidance suggests that a Council should hold a strategic reserve to mitigate the financial impact of major events of between 3% and 5% of its net budget. This guidance has been adopted by the Chief finance Officer for the period of the current MTFs.

2. Adequacy of Proposed Financial Reserves and Robustness of Estimates

- 2.1. The Chief Finance Officer must ensure that the budget setting process, and the information provided is sufficient, to allow council to come to an informed view regarding the 2017/18 council tax requirement, revenue budget, capital programme and Treasury Management Strategy.
- 2.2. While the council continues to operate within the financial constraints arising from increasing financial pressures and reductions in central government financial settlements, robust budget monitoring and a thorough financial planning process should determine the required level of reserves. The level of reserves will be reviewed at each quarter end as part of the council's budget monitoring reports.
- 2.3. Financial and operational risks need to be considered within the context of the Council's overall approach to risk manage and account taken of key budget assumptions and existing financial management arrangements.
- 2.4. The council's financial planning process should be sufficient to identify issues with a significant financial impact in order for these to be highlighted to senior officers in a timely manner.
- 2.5. An annual review of the council's reserves and balances is undertaken as part of the annual financial planning exercise and as part of the council's preparation of its annual Statement of Accounts. The level of reserves appears adequate for the forthcoming financial year and financial planning period through the continuing commitment to manage service expenditure within approved budgets
- 2.6. The Council makes appropriate financial provisions for known future liabilities or losses of uncertain timings or amount. These are detailed in the annual Statement of Accounts. The 2015/16 Statement was approved by Audit and Governance Committee on 24 September 2016 and for 2016/17, the draft Statement will be presented to Audit and Governance Committee in July 2017.

3. Review of Reserves

- 3.1. The overall reserves of the council will be subject to detailed review at the end of each

financial year as part of the preparation for the production of the council's statement of accounts, and as part of the council's annual budget setting process to ensure reserves are

3.1.1.Relevant,

3.1.2.Appropriate, and

3.1.3.Prudent.

3.2. The Chief Finance Officer will ensure that the council has in place well established robust and regular budget monitoring processes. These take account of the current level of reserves, the latest budget requirements calling on reserves to meet current commitments and to make contributions to reserves to meet future commitments.

3.3. The Chief Finance Officer must consider strategic, operational and financial risks in assessing the adequacy of the council's reserves position.

4. Use of Reserves

4.1. Approval to use or make contributions to reserves is provided by the Chief Finance Officer, as part of the regular budgetary process, in discussion with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Cabinet

4.2. Movements in reserve will be reported to Council as part of the financial Outturn at the end of the financial year.

5. Conclusion

5.1. The Chief Finance Officer is satisfied that the Council's ongoing approach to its reserves and provisions is robust. The council's strategic reserve is maintained between 3% - 5% of the net budget requirement, at the end of March 2016 the balance was £7.2m (5% of net budget).

5.2. This is sufficient to ensure that the council has adequate resources to fund unforeseen financial liabilities, and that the council's approach to general balances for 2017/18 is deemed appropriate. The level of reserves and expected movement in reserves are set out in the MTFS as part of the annual budget setting process.

5.3.

Appendix 5 Key risk Assessment

	Key Financial Risks	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
1	Unexpected events or emergencies By its nature, the financial risk is uncertain	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council maintains a Strategic Reserve at a level of between 3% and 5% of its revenue budget for emergency purposes Level of reserve is currently £7.3m (5% of budget)
2	Increasing demand for Adult Social Care Demand for services continue to increase as the population gets older	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand led pressures provided for within our spending plans Activity indicators have been developed and will be reported quarterly alongside budget monitoring
3	Potential Overspend and Council does not deliver required level of savings to balance spending plans Challenging savings have been identified within our spending plans.	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High risk budget areas have been identified and financial support is targeted towards these areas Regular progress reports on delivery of savings to Management Board and Cabinet Budget monitoring arrangements for forecasting year end position in place and forecast balanced Plan to review level of cover available from General reserves in place
4	Potential delay in delivery of Capital Receipts	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential new capital receipts may be available from further corporate property sales. Capital receipts received will be monitored quarterly
5	Increase in Pension Liabilities Our contributions are influenced by market investment returns and increasing life expectancy.	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spending plans reflect the level of pension contribution required as identified by the Pension Fund's Actuary in 2016 for the next three years
7	Failure to provide safeguarding and placements for children There is an increasing requirement to provide sufficient school places There is a rising number of children requiring specific support	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision has been made in the capital programme to increase school places Directorate plans in place to manage and mitigate demand Ongoing reviews of children already under care of council
8	Volatility in future funding streams in Government funding streams and Business Rates Retention	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prudent assumptions made in budget Ongoing review of developing business rate changes Business case to support future investment decisions
9	Brexit Impact of EU exit may lead to increased volatility in economic stability and reduced access to funds	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced reliance on grant funding in all directorates Increased local economic and social investment to

Appendix 5

Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment of Budget 2017/18

1. Background

Herefordshire Council has a saving target of £6.8m in the financial year 2017/18. In order to achieve this, budget proposals have been prepared. Those that affected services had an equality impact assessment completed, and these were considered before decisions were taken on the budget.

Over the next four years a total £17.5m of savings are required.

This document summarises the Equality Impact Assessment for the budget proposals for the financial year 2017/18. It highlights:

- The key differential impacts of potential budget decisions for legally protected groups
- Where a single decision or series of decisions might have a greater negative impact on a specific group
- Ways in which negative effects across the council may be minimised or avoided, and where positive impacts can be maximised or created

Budget decisions can have different impacts on different groups of people, either changes to individual services or in the way those changes have an impact cumulatively.

The council has a legal duty (under the Equality Act 2010) to evidence that we have paid due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The budget EIAs demonstrate how we are considering impacts, and action we will take where needed.

2. The Budget Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Process

In Herefordshire we use an EIA process to identify the main potential impacts on groups covered by legislation (the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010¹).

EIAs have been completed by service leads on the budget proposals where the potential change impacts on service provision. These have been reviewed for the proposals 2017 and, where new proposals have been put forward, new impact assessments have been completed.

¹ "Protected characteristics" are; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (also marriage and civil partnership, but only in relation to eliminating discrimination)

The aim of the EIA is to support good decision making; it encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs.

The aims of an EIA become especially important at times of straitened budgets, enabling us to:

- Think about what the council is trying to achieve
- Consider what impact the decision will have on different groups
- Target resources to those who may be most vulnerable
- Fund services which respond to people's diverse needs and save money by getting it right first time

Nationally there have been a number of successful legal challenges to funding decisions because public authorities have failed to show such consideration during the process. In such cases the public authority will almost always be required to start the decision-making process again, with improved consultation and evidence gathering to identify the impact on particular groups.

We have agreed that we must focus our priorities and resources towards:

- 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
- Secure better services, quality of life and value for money

Unfortunately, it is not just severe funding reductions we are facing, but also an increasing population with additional needs, particularly in priority areas such as children and young people and adult social care.

The council can no longer continue to pay for all the services it has traditionally provided therefore services must be prioritised and consideration given as to how they are provided. This means that certain services may need to be radically reduced or stop being provided, especially if they are not within the council's priority areas.

3. The National Context

The budget proposals are being developed within the context of on-going reduced public funding to local government.

Key national issues that may have an equality impact include:

- Final comprehensive spending review
- Specific grant funding allocations
- Increased integration with health
- Devolution of services to local authorities
- Retention of business rates
- The on-going costs of refugees and asylum seekers
- Welfare reform
- Education reform

4. The Local Context

The Council is committed to supporting people to live full and independent lives within their local communities. While assessing the cumulative impact of our proposals on equality

groups, we have identified two additional factors that could compound the impact. These factors are:

- Rural isolation (due to the rural nature of the county)
- Risk of financial exclusion (due to low income)

5. Equality Impact Assessment Findings

The EIA process and consultation have been based on identifying whether or not service delivery impacts are likely to be different for a person because of their protected characteristic (with a focus on where impacts may be worse).

There has been an overall assessment of the Equality Impact Assessments that have been produced and the findings are:

- We acknowledge the importance of services such as transport and the rural bus service in providing access to services for rural communities and, in particular, older and disabled people and those on low income.
- We acknowledge the need to ensure that our services are as accessible as possible, and are looking at alternative models of delivery to support these budget proposals, including the use of technology to reduce our costs.
- We also recognise that these changes will have implications for carers, the majority of whom will be women, and that we need to fulfil our responsibilities to carers.
- Service users who are facing changes to residential or day centre support may face considerable uncertainty, worry and disruption. These impacts could be disproportionately felt by older and disabled service users, and specifically service users with a learning disability.
- We also recognise that the changes and remodelling we do around “early years” and children’s centres will have an impact on this same group.
- We also recognise that imminent changes such as housing benefit cap will impact on some people, particularly large families that are waiting for social housing. It is recognised that some of our proposals might further impact on these individuals.
- There are some fee increases for non-statutory services that we provide, for example car parking, and we understand that these fee increases all add up.
- We have also recently decided to change the support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. 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 means-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.
- Many of the services that are not a statutory requirement for the council to deliver will be delivered at full cost recovery (ie. charged for), or outsourced to an alternative provider. This may not impact on specific protected characteristics, but will impact on those who have a low income.

Budget consultation questionnaire report 2016

Version 1.0
Strategic intelligence team

October 2016



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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 2016 consultation on Herefordshire Council's priorities and budget for 2017/18 ran from late July to early October 2016. The budget questionnaire was available online and hard copies were distributed at promotion events in the city and market towns.
- There were 280 responses to the questionnaire; 86 per cent of which were submitted online and 14 per cent were completed on paper.
- The majority of respondents (61 per cent) were willing to support an increase in charges for council services above the level of inflation.
- Fifty three (53) per cent would support a further increase in council tax above 3.9 per cent which will require a referendum, to raise additional funds; 28 per cent would support an increase of council tax by 6.1 per cent, 10 per cent of respondents would support an increase of 8.3 per cent and 15 per cent of respondents would support an increase of 11.7 per cent.
- More than forty (40) per cent of respondents thought that their parish council should charge extra in order to carry out 'maintaining communal areas (parks, playgrounds, sport pitches)' and 'grass / hedge cutting', while a third of respondents thought 'road / footpath maintenance', 'winter services (e.g. gritting, clearing roads / pathways)' or 'litter / dog fouling enforcement' should be carried out with extra charge by their parish councils
- The most common activities that respondents currently volunteer are 'litter picking', 'helping out in emergencies', the 'good neighbour scheme' and 'supporting libraries / museums / leisure facilities'.
- A large majority of respondents (76 per cent) thought the council could do more to 'improve infrastructure' to improve the attractiveness of Herefordshire to businesses.

Introduction

The consultation on Herefordshire Council's priorities and budget for 2017/18 began on Friday 29 July 2016 and ended on Friday 7 October 2016. This report presents the key points from the analysis of responses received by 12 October. The consultation was published on the council's website with the following background documents:

- [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#)
- [Directorate savings proposals](#)
- [Capital programme 2016/17](#)
- [Corporate plan 2016-2020](#)

Methodology

The budget consultation questionnaire was constructed and quality assured by a project team. The questionnaire was published on the Herefordshire Council website and residents were invited to complete it online. A printable version was made available on the website for residents who preferred to download, print and complete the questionnaire. Pre-printed questionnaires were also made available in libraries and customer service centres in the county. The consultation was promoted on the council's social media sites (Twitter and Facebook) and at events throughout the county.

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 280 responses to the questionnaire, of which 241 were submitted online and 39 were completed paper copies.

Results

The following analysis represents 280 responses received to the consultation questionnaire.

Please see **Appendix A** for all the comments and suggestions received to the questionnaire and **Appendix B** for the responses received as letters and e-mails to the consultation.

Q1. Are you willing to support an increase in charges for council services above the level of inflation?

Sixty one (61) per cent of respondents were willing to support an increase in charges for council services above the level of inflation.

Table 1: responses to question 1

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes	164	61%
No	103	39%
Total respondents	267	100%
Not answered	13	

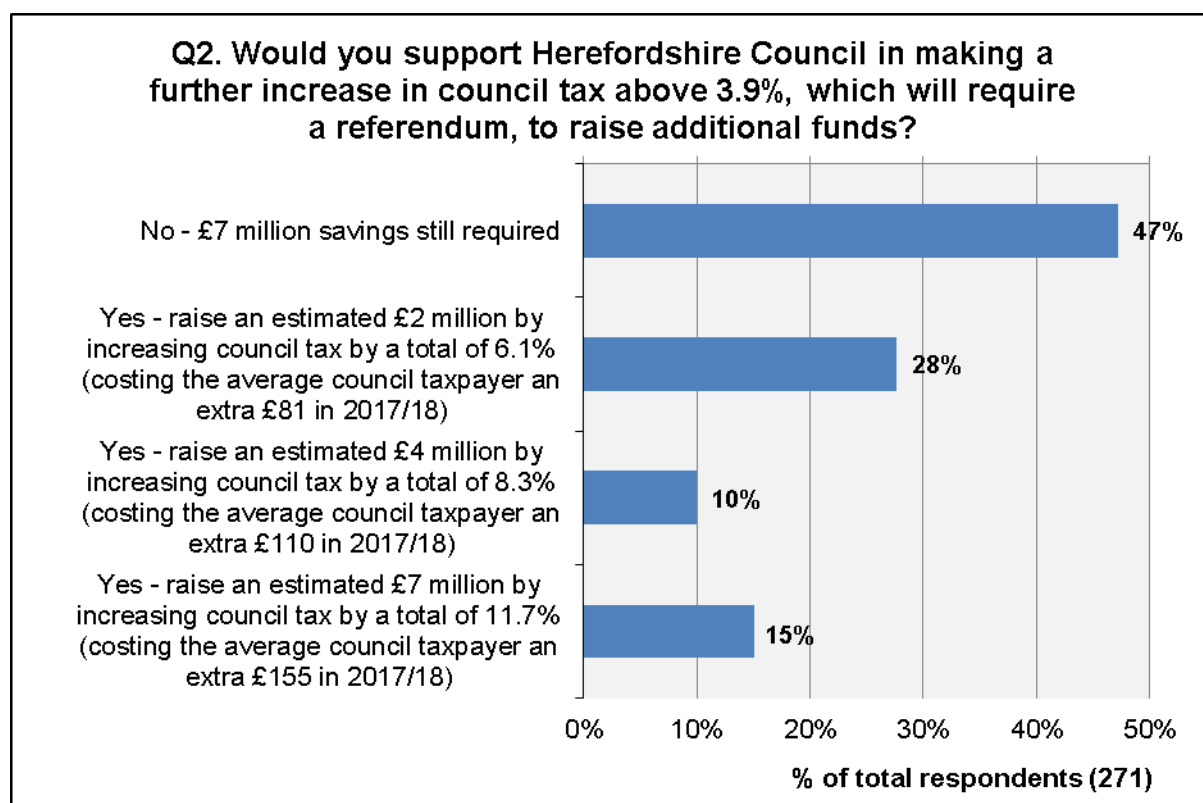
Q2. Would you support Herefordshire Council in making a further increase in council tax above 3.9%, which will require a referendum, to raise additional funds?

Of the 271 respondents to this question, 143 respondents (53 per cent) would support a further increase in council tax above 3.9 per cent, which will require a referendum, to raise additional funds. Forty seven (47) per cent (128 respondents) did not support a further increase in council tax above 3.9 per cent.

Table 2: responses whether supporting for a further increase in council tax above 3.9 per cent

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
No - £7 million savings still required	128	47%
Yes - raise an estimated £2 million by increasing council tax by a total of 6.1% (costing the average council taxpayer an extra £81 in 2017/18)	75	28%
Yes - raise an estimated £4 million by increasing council tax by a total of 8.3% (costing the average council taxpayer an extra £110 in 2017/18)	27	10%
Yes - raise an estimated £7 million by increasing council tax by a total of 11.7% (costing the average council taxpayer an extra £155 in 2017/18)	41	15%
Total respondents	271	100%
Not answered	9	3%

Chart 1: would you support an increase of council tax above 3.9 percent?



Q3. Do you have any suggestions about what other things the council should consider to achieve the required savings?

Analysis of this question indicated that frequently cited suggestions were around five themes:

- **Reduce council expenditures** (e.g. reviewing contracts and contract monitoring).
- **Reduce council in-house spending** (e.g. on salaries, expenses, staffing levels, subsidies, expenses, non-essentials, and improving systems, policies and procedures, and smarter working via technology).
- **Improve council management of assets** (e.g. sale of buildings and farms; reduce accommodation costs; encourage multiple use of buildings).
- **Generate income and increase revenue streams**
- **Merge with other local authorities and/or share design/delivery of front line services and back office functions**

The following word cloud highlights the most common words that featured in the general comments. Please see appendix A-Q3 for full list of comments.

Figure 1: word cloud showing responses to Q3
(size of word relates to the number of times it was mentioned)



Q4. Respondents to last year’s consultation suggested a number of activities that could be undertaken locally. Your parish council has the power to charge an extra amount on top of your council tax. Do you think that they should exercise this power and charge extra in order to carry out any of the following? (please tick all that apply)

Seventy seven (77) per cent of total survey respondents provided answers to question 4. Of these, over 40 per cent of respondents thought that their parish council should charge extra in order to carry out ‘maintaining communal areas (parks, playgrounds, sport pitches)’ and ‘grass / hedge cutting’, while a third of respondents thought ‘road / footpath maintenance’, ‘winter services (e.g. gritting, clearing roads / pathways)’ or ‘litter / dog fouling enforcement’ should be carried out through extra charges by their parish councils.

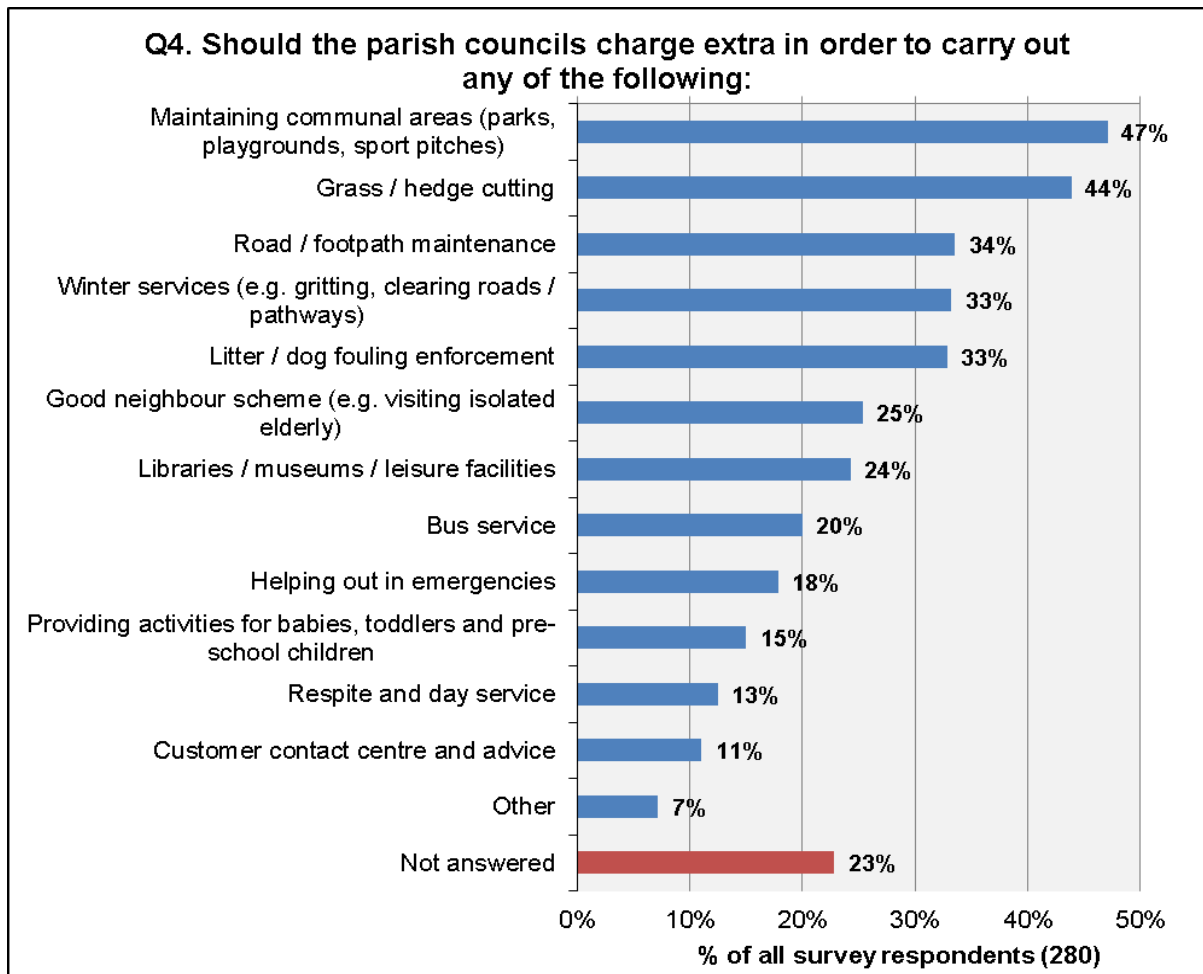
Nearly a quarter of residents (23 per cent) did not answer this question.

Further to question 4, respondents were asked to provide ‘other’ suggestions for activities that could be undertaken locally. There were 57 comments made. Of these, forty eight (48) per cent of respondents suggested that residents should not pay extra amount on top of their council tax because these activities and these are local government responsibilities. Please see appendix A-4a for full list of comments.

Table 3: responses to question 4

	Number of respondents	Per cent of all survey respondents*
Maintaining communal areas (parks, playgrounds, sport pitches)	132	47%
Grass / hedge cutting	123	44%
Road / footpath maintenance	94	34%
Winter services (e.g. gritting, clearing roads / pathways)	93	33%
Litter / dog fouling enforcement	92	33%
Good neighbour scheme (e.g. visiting isolated elderly)	71	25%
Libraries / museums / leisure facilities	68	24%
Bus service	56	20%
Helping out in emergencies	50	18%
Providing activities for babies, toddlers and pre-school children	42	15%
Respite and day service	35	13%
Customer contact centre and advice	31	11%
Other	20	7%
Not answered	64	23%
Total respondents	216	77%
*Total survey respondents	280	

Chart 2: should parish councils charge extra in order to provide some activities



Q5. Do you currently volunteer in Herefordshire?

Approximately fifty (50) per cent of respondents currently volunteer in Herefordshire.

Table 4: responses to volunteering

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes	130	49%
No	134	51%
Total respondents	264	100%
Not answered	16	

Q6. People have previously indicated that they would be willing to help out more in their community. Please indicate whether you currently volunteer or would be interested in volunteering in the following roles. (please tick all that apply)

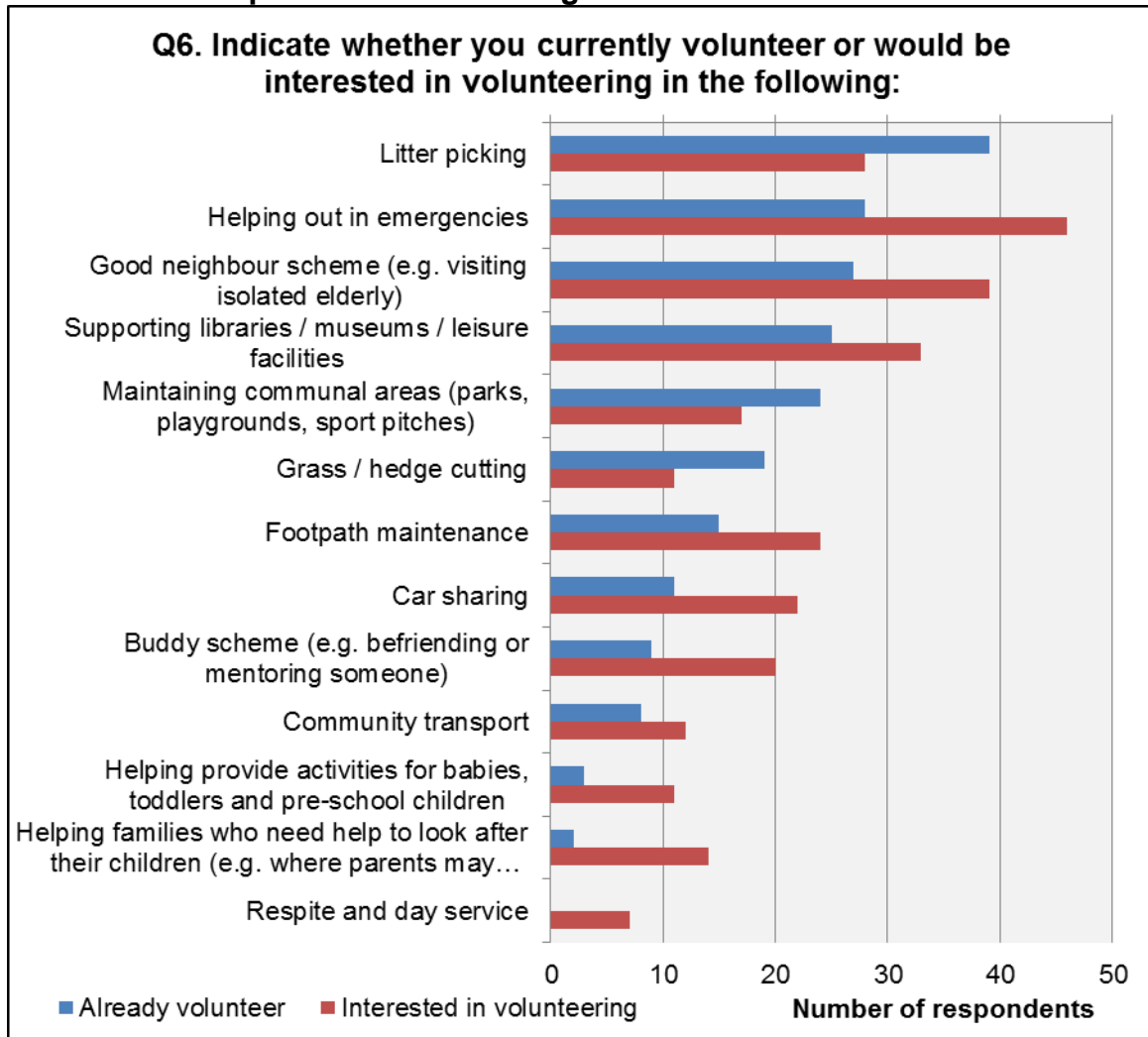
Please note because the numbers of responses are small, percentages have not been provided for this question.

The most common activities that respondents currently volunteer for are 'litter picking', 'helping out in emergencies', 'good neighbour scheme' and 'supporting libraries / museums / leisure facilities'. While there is still a higher demand in volunteering in these activities, people are also interested to volunteer in 'footpath maintenance', 'car sharing' and 'buddy scheme'. According to table 5, 'respite and day service' is lacking in volunteers currently, however, seven respondents showed an interest to volunteering in future.

Table 5: responses to current and potential volunteering activities

	Already volunteer	Interested in volunteering	Not answered	Total respondents
Litter picking	39	28	213	67
Helping out in emergencies	28	46	206	74
Good neighbour scheme (e.g. visiting isolated elderly)	27	39	214	66
Supporting libraries / museums / leisure facilities	25	33	222	58
Maintaining communal areas (parks, playgrounds, sport pitches)	24	17	239	41
Grass / hedge cutting	19	11	250	30
Footpath maintenance	15	24	241	39
Car sharing	11	22	247	33
Buddy scheme (e.g. befriending or mentoring someone)	9	20	251	29
Community transport	8	12	260	20
Helping provide activities for babies, toddlers and pre-school children	3	11	266	14
Helping families who need help to look after their children (e.g. where parents may need a lot of medical treatment)	2	14	264	16
Respite and day service	0	7	273	7
Other	34	0	246	34

Chart 3: current and potential volunteering activities



Other (please specify below):

There were 55 comments made to specify other volunteering activities that respondents currently carry out. Among these helping in a ‘community shop/charity organisation (e.g. Hereford Disability United, food bank)’, ‘village hall and church activities ‘ and ‘parish and town council’ were the most common activities that respondents are currently volunteering in. Four respondents suggested that they would be interested in providing ‘home base back office functions’, ‘vocational training’, ‘emergency road clearance’ and ‘work as a granger’.

Q7. What do you think the council could do to improve the attractiveness of Herefordshire to businesses? (tick all that apply)

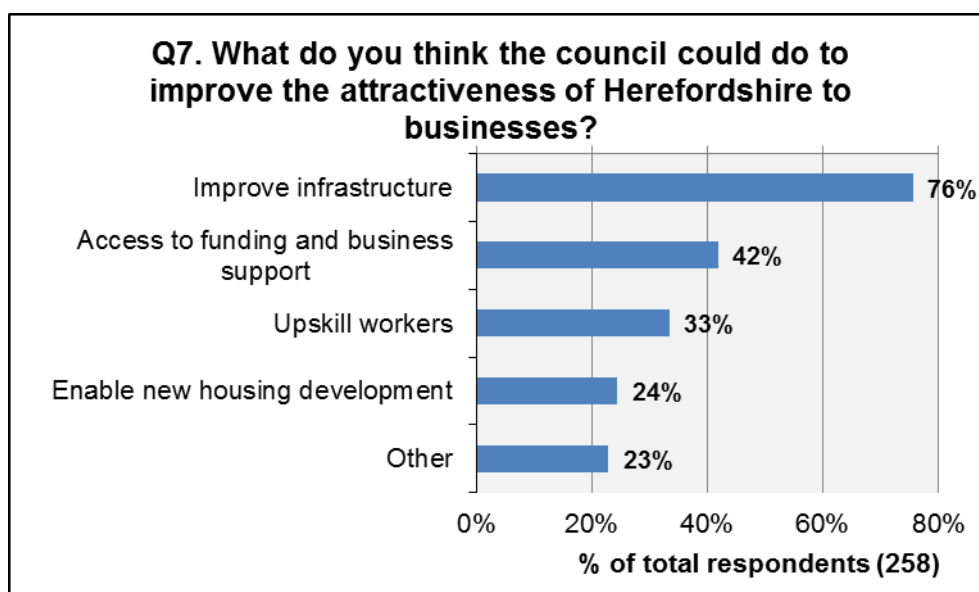
The majority of respondents (76 per cent) thought the council could ‘improve infrastructure’ in order to improve the attractiveness of Herefordshire to businesses. ‘Access to funding and business support’ and ‘upskill workers’ also ranked highly.

There were 105 comments of ‘other’ suggestions. Among these, ‘better broadband and mobile phone coverage’, ‘improved transport network including better roads and Hereford bypass’ and ‘improved public transport’ were most commonly cited. The full list of comments can be found in appendix A-Q7.

Table 6: responses to question 7

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Improve infrastructure	195	76%
Access to funding and business support	108	42%
Upskill workers	86	33%
Enable new housing development	63	24%
Other	59	23%
Total respondents	258	100%
Not answered	22	

Chart 4: things that council could do to attract businesses to Herefordshire



The following word cloud highlights the most common words that featured in the ‘other’ suggestions.

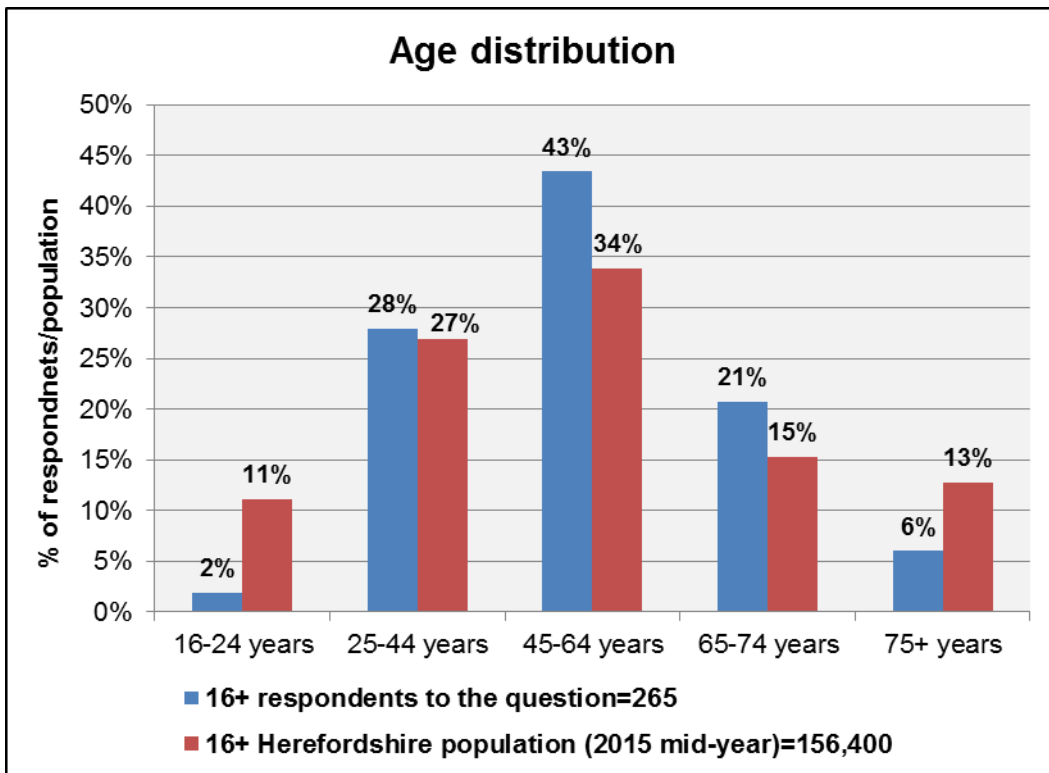
- **Change ways in how services/funding operate to reduce costs but keep services** (e.g. library service; health and social care; use of capital funding not revenue funding).
- **Improve council behaviours** (e.g. transparency of decisions; meaningful consultation with public).

Please see appendix A-Q9 for full list of comments.

Respondent profile

- Two per cent of respondents represented an organisation or a group while 98 per cent were individuals. The organisations that responded to the consultation were:
Humber, Ford and Stoke Prior Group Parish Council
Ledbury Town Council
Orleton Parish Council
Richards Castle PC
Rural business organisation and
'Anonymous organisation'
- 52 per cent of respondents to the survey were males and 48 per cent were females (Herefordshire population profile: 51 percent to 49 percent)¹
- 27 per cent were aged 65 years or over, 43 per cent were aged 45-64 years, 28 per cent were aged 25-44 years and two per cent were 24 years or younger. According to chart 5 it is clear that people aged 45-64 years were over represented in the consultation.

Chart 5: age distribution of survey respondents and Herefordshire population



¹ The Population of Herefordshire 2016 (<https://factsandfigures.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/48832/population-of-herefordshire-2016-v20.pdf>)

- Twelve (12) per cent 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 month.
- Ninety five (95) per cent of respondents identified themselves as English, Scottish, Welsh or British; three per cent identified themselves as another national identity.
- Of the respondents who answered the question about their ethnicity, 98 per cent identified themselves as 'white' and one percent as 'other white'. This composition is slightly different to the adult population ethnicity profile of the county, where five per cent were 'other white' and two per cent were 'non-white' (according to the 2011 Census).
- Six (6) per cent of respondents felt that they had been treated differently (positively or negatively) because of who they are.

End

Appendix A: Full list of comments

Appendix B: Other form of responses to the consultation

Appendix C: The questionnaire

Appendix A-Full list of comments

Introduction

This report shows the comments made by residents to budget consultation 2016 questionnaire. Some of the comments have been edited to preserve anonymity, where this has been done the changes are marked within < >. Any remarks added by data entry personnel are shown in parenthesis, for example [comment illegible].

Note: Some of the comments refer to the statement number in the questionnaire. Where necessary, please refer to the questionnaire in appendix B.

Appendix A-Q3

Q3. Do you have any suggestions about what other things the council should consider to achieve the required savings? There were 140 comments made.

Comments
1. More rigorous and specific requirements when tendering for services and ensuring these are being met. I am amazed at the lack of the above which does not constitute a quality job therefore not cost effective. 2. Reduce expense of county councillors. 3. Stop having a budget for 'entertaining' e.g. complementary food and drink.
A charge made for householders who do not recycle, either at all or correctly. Increase charges for Leisure Centre etc. use. My family and I don't use any of these facilities, and we are fed up with subsidising others. Charge for on road parking in towns such as Ledbury and Leominster. Do we really need the twin town scheme, in the advent of the Brexit vote?
A road sweeper drives up the middle of the white cross terraces, early in the mornings, it does absolutely nothing, cars are parked either side of all the streets and the middle of the road doesn't need sweeping. This is a dreadful waste of resources.
A significant decrease in council staffing levels.
Apply the Spend to Save principal to restore grants to the charity (3rd) sector in particular to Herefordshire Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) which provides a service which by its preventative/advice work saves the council money and brings an extra £3-4 million each year to the benefit of its clients and the general economy of Herefordshire
Be very clear about what can and can't be delivered in council services. Be upfront about the challenges and choices so people really understand why they can't expect to have services previously delivered unless they are comfortable with paying more. Explain which services have had budget cuts and which ones could also contribute more to still enable the council to deliver services considered critical.
Bureaucracy within council departments. Scrap silly schemes like high town improvements
Cancel the Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) contract and bring the work "in house". No private company = no need to make profit. Cut back on services for social care
Capitalise on existing assets, but please don't sell them all off. Farm holdings should not have been sold off. It is not necessary to spend on refurbishing High Town that is a luxury that should not be put ahead of services to Herefordshire residents. Herefordshire is a beautiful county and there are so many tourism opportunities that are being ignored.
Cease work with Hoople, Balfour Beatty.
Change provider Balfour Beatty

Comments
<p>Charge every household some council tax. Single and lower earners and severely disabled could still have the 25% (or more for severely disabled) allowance but not if there is more than one income (to include job seekers etc.) in the household. Charges also to "seasonal workers" on farms where their use of refuse collection etc. and they earning should be taken into account. They are living in accommodation; usually mobile homes rented from the farmer, and should pay something whilst in this country. Otherwise, suggest farmers should be council tax on each mobile home on their land.</p>
<p>Charge more to the owners of stray dogs. £55 plus the cost of kennel isn't even as high as an £80 fixed penalty notice for dropping a cigarette butt and sending people to collect stray dogs takes up a lot more time and effort. Every dog should now be micro-chipped - do the council apply an additional fine if people claim a dog which is also not micro-chipped?</p>
<p>Charge or suggest a charge for people with free bus passes. This could be done by putting a donation box onto each bus and displaying a recommended fair. The money should be used to maintain local bus services.</p>
<p>Check what people quote for and the price. Remember local contractors to the job are a lot cheaper. Check the job is done correct first time and the contractors do not have to go back and repair it a few weeks or months after finished and passed. I saw a job done and I said to the person who I had phoned about the fault, phoned me to ask if finished. I said yes they have finished but it will not pass. It did not pass and I said I hope the council do not have to pay for the second time. That is place money is wasted.</p>
<p>Close final salary pension schemes to further accrual</p>
<p>Consider capital spend more robustly. Be more creative with service provision- e.g. sharing buildings. Support recruit internally- and voluntary cost saving/service redesign could be considered to contribute to savings. Stop subsidies to parish councils. Rationalise the number of councillors. Seek more external third party investment from national scheme.</p>
<p>Consider the asset list and sell any titles (e.g. Lord of the Manor of XXX), works of art, property surplus. Consider reducing the public road network by declassifying roads serving less than (say) three properties and making them unmaintained. Ensure that all businesses especially those registered to residential addresses are considered by valuation office for payment of business rates; initially concentrate on those who are VAT registered.</p>

Comments
<p>Continually making more and more cuts to existing service provision is unsustainable. Continually re-engineering and re-procuring statutory services achieves very little in the long run other than to provide commissioning staff with something to fill their days. The time has come for a step change in the county. It's quite clear that Herefordshire is not large enough to sustain a unitary authority and all the responsibilities that come with that position. The decision to form a unitary authority was taken at a different time when government funding was at a far higher level and the demographic pressures were not as high. The obvious next step is the explore a more regional approach - a re marriage to Worcestershire (or linking up with other neighbouring authorities). Surely that is a no-brainer as it would enable senior management and back office costs to be cut significantly as well as enabling scarce expertise (e.g. social workers) to be shared across the region thereby improving the standard of services and making the available funds go further in terms of supporting essential front line services (social services and waste is about all that's left really...). By reducing the number of councillors and the admin to support them the savings could be re-directed to existing parish councils who could take on responsibility for more local services to improve the quality of life and surroundings. I would be willing to pay more council tax for those sorts of services where I can see and feel the improvement, but I won't pay for lots of service commissioners who are just re-organising the deck chairs on the titanic. Sadly I don't think I could trust Herefordshire Council (HC) to take a leading role in such a change, so I think council tax should be left at the existing level until the council becomes financially unsustainable and central government have no option but to drive through the changes needed.</p>
<p>Continue to fund and support children's health services School Nursing and Health visiting!</p>
<p>Control spending in Adult and Children Directorates.</p>
<p>Cut all expenses to councillor</p>
<p>Cut back on the ridiculous salaries some of the executives are paid.</p>
<p>Cut contracts with lazy 'outsourcer' suppliers (Balfour Beatty?) Seek sponsorship/advertising revenue from major retailers. Cut council executive pay further. Cut council staffing levels and integrate departments. Re-amalgamate with Worcestershire. Stop spending on 'vanity' projects.</p>
<p>Cut down on councillors expenses</p>
<p>cut librarians and have volunteers in all libraries</p>
<p>Cut salaries at the top. Is <name removed> really worth the money he is being paid?</p>
<p>Cut some of the office jobs and top salaries. They are way over paid.</p>
<p>Cut the pension provision for staff</p>
<p>Defer the renovation and decoration of council buildings until an easier financial time. Combine services into the same venues, where reasonably possible, freeing buildings for rent.</p>
<p>Don't spend money on traveller's sites- they don't pay tax. Don't know enough detailed info on what the council does spend money on to inform this. Only generic areas in the reported accounts.</p>

Comments
<p>Drastically reduce public libraries with a few supervisors and volunteers and no librarians as they cost nearly £250,000, charges for internet access. A reduction in middle management to preserve the essential services that are a life line to so many.</p>
<p>Encourage communities to take on some services or pool resources with the voluntary sector. This could for instance cover Libraries and Advice centres run as part of village halls and their volunteers. Teenagers and young adults, if able, to be asked to run youth services as part of any benefits receivable; that'd enable useful work experience. Lobby to have the Libraries Act 1964 changed to a less prescriptive model more suited to the Web-age for enabling Libraries to be locally run by volunteers.</p>
<p>Ensure all staff retire at 65 or similar levels as in the private sector. to include, police, and fire services. The council pension scheme for all employees to be reduced to a similar level as the average in the private sector. This should be a long term plan to reduce expenditure.</p>
<p>Enter a merger, or strategic partnership, with Shropshire Council on all back office functions. Two councils with one media team, commissioning team, business rates team etc. Both authorities could then have access to an appropriately resourced and sized staff whilst also realising substantial savings.</p>
<p>Further efficiency savings in large service area e.g. adult social care. Whilst appreciate that these services are statutory there should be opportunity to make some efficiency savings.</p>
<p>Generate means to increase revenue on a macro level. Primarily this means encourage business and businesses into the county and look after the ones that are there. There is virtually no support for new businesses / growth businesses available and there is in other areas - how can this be possible?</p>
<p>Get rid of unnecessary staff. Consolidate services, which would improve performance and reduce the need for so many offices. I have seen many council workers doing little to nothing but being paid for the privilege. Start cutting the deadwood by looking at management level employees. Sell off buildings that are no longer needed for offices or turn them into student accommodation for the new university. This way you'd make money for years to come. Also, get a move on with the sale of the Tennant farms. If you are going to sell them, do so. Stop fanning around. Set an achievable value, get the letters sent out and put these poor sods out of their misery. By setting an achievable price, you'll sell them quickly, make your money and not be stuck with land you can't sell or lease. Hanging on for one buyer for the lot is folly. Unless, of course, Prince Charles is waiting in the wings.</p>
<p>Get some better advice on external contracts, e.g. Balfour Beatty. Study your management costs - do you have a regular high-level management review?</p>
<p>Greater delegation to town and parish councils to deliver the most vital services (bus service, libraries, road/footpath maintenance)</p>
<p>Has the council considered sharing the learning from areas of the service that have seen a reduction in budget while service has improved?</p>

Comments
<p>Heating, air conditioning and lighting in the buildings, this is not effective as it can be, some buildings have heating on when some of the rooms are empty and when it is warm outside. Buildings used more effectively outside of normal working hours make them easier to access to allow private organizations to hire. Merge library services and children's centre services and make them community hubs, involve the public in having ownership of the buildings. Revamp the council website and WISH Wellbeing Information and Signposting for Herefordshire) service, WISH to run their 'Shop' from a council building instead of paying for a shop.</p>
<p>Herefordshire council tax rates are the highest among the west of England councils, look to neighbouring councils to see if lessons can be learnt. Consider sharing services with other councils e.g. help desks services.</p>
<p>I am unsure what the financial running costs are of the council, however I am sure that there are cuts that can be made internally.</p>
<p>I don't know enough about how the council spends its money to offer a sensible opinion.</p>
<p>I note the proposals to introduce on street parking charges in central Hereford and to increase parking charges at other public car parks - which I approve of. Does the county have powers:</p> <p>(a) to require supermarkets such as Sainsbury's to levy parking charges (removing the 2/3 hour free parking "privilege" that shoppers currently enjoy), and</p> <p>(b) to benefit from some or all of the resulting revenues, after deduction of costs of collection?</p>
<p>I think it is really important that the council, together with other councils, should lobby central government more effectively to make the point that they are bearing the brunt of the government's austerity measures. We have already lost services that I regard as essential for a civilised, caring society. The voluntary sector is being expected to fill gaps that really should be funded by taxation. The tone of the leaders of government has changed; will this be reflected in a change of strategy?</p>
<p>I think the council should encourage local parish councils to make use of the skills of local residents in running morning coffee or afternoon tea clubs with a theme such as gardening, crafts, photography etc. This would help combat isolation and keep residents more healthy and build up friendships and working relationships with the local population and assist the good neighbour schemes. Encourage those who use sports fields etc. to form a rota to cut the grass and provide help with maintenance of machines.</p>
<p>I work in the private sector and always think there is too much red tape associated with anything the council does. It must be possible to make decisions without loads of consultations etc. etc. taking time and money.</p>

Comments

I would have agreed to increases in council tax if it was a fair tax which quite clearly it is not. The rich in large houses pay little more than the poor in small houses. I would agree to an increase in local taxation if it was progressive e.g. local income tax rather than regressive as it is now. The questions above are pointless because if you think the present council tax system is unfair you have no alternative but to oppose increases that will hurt the poor most while the wealthy won't be affected. I would like to pay more for social services etc. but can't agree to an increase in tax that is regressive where the poor suffer most. The problem is with central government who won't effectively tax large corporations and the wealthy.

In the long-term, I think it makes sense to take a broad look at service delivery, and to think 'outside the box' in terms of how we achieve our aims. In particular, to: - encourage an environment of close co-working between departments, to find 'win-win' situations, and prioritise effectively:

- look at possibilities for the council to be income-generating in its activities (not charging for basic services provided, but for added value - e.g. energy from waste)

- look at council assets, how these can be maintained in partnership with the community, and where the use of these could be maximised either for income generating, or for achieving council aims (assets to be retained where possible, and if transferred, then only with careful prioritisation)

- build up a reputation as a leader in sustainability and the arts - engage with people, and encourage participation in decision-making and community life. In the short term it seems inevitable that there will be cuts to service delivery.

I don't want to be idealistic, but I do think it should be done carefully, particularly bearing in mind how each decision affects the most vulnerable. Services which can be delivered in partnerships with other organisations or communities can and should be explored, but only if done well (i.e. not 'dumped on' people, but with a period of 'hand-holding': sharing visions, communicating well, showing leadership, building capacity... ultimately empowering others).

Instead of cutting, look to expand and grow, providing more services that a fee can be charged for.

Introduce a tax for all vehicles using Hereford city centre. Especially HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicles). Ban HGV traffic from A roads (damage to surface and hedgerows).

Introduce a tax for all vehicles using Hereford city centre. Especially HGV. Ban HGV traffic from A Roads (damage to surface and hedgerows).

It's hard to be involved in the local government. If you had put the council tax up year on year maybe you won't be in such a mess. Work with the government and let's get this sorted!!

Keep parking charges to a minimum. Lack of public transport requires people to drive in to the city. Please remember we live in a rural area.

Ledbury town council suggests that Herefordshire Council re-negotiates the BBLP contract.

Less capital spending which has recurrent spending implications

Comments
Less money spent on constant internal changes dreamt up by people without real jobs serving the residents
Less top level council staff - or take pay cuts like the rest of us. Considerably less independent advisers. Use the surveys you've already got. They seem to have covered everything over the years - just multiply the numbers by some percentage.
Lobby central government for a demographic driven grant, Herefordshire has a very high proportion of over 65's and this puts and disproportionate and unfair burden on council funds.
Lobby government for the cuts from central government not to be made.
Lobby government hard to obtain a higher level of rate support and removal of arbitrary restrictions.
Lobby the conservative government to give more money as we are an agricultural county without the residents to support these increases and cuts. Our rural economy would not support this proposal for increase in council tax.
Look at cutting in-house spending i.e. the need for higher management positions and high salaries for such a small county. The need to keep moving offices every couple of decades. Fill the many empty shops by offering a reduced rent level and encourage people to shop locally by free 2 hour parking. People are reluctant to pay money to spend money i.e. why would I drive past the many DIYs offering free parking to queue and pay to use Phillip Morris for example. Local shops are disadvantaged by being located in town centres.
Look at the salaries that are paid out for higher council executives and managers. They are very high compared to the average wage earned in Herefordshire.
Make all market town car parks free which would increase business takings and increase business tax to a level in excess of the lost income.
Make management cuts and reduce management salaries and create a cap on salaries.
Make parish councils pay more for things that benefit them I.e. local tourism to their area.
Make the website simpler to use for signing up for direct debits. It would not work consequently you had to foot the cost of producing and sending me a pin number. We have to recycle at home, but at the tip in Ross the plastic is mixed in landfill which will cost you money in landfill taxes.
Manage contractors more professionally - noted to be very slack during repairs to council owned buildings. Reduce travel by use of video-conferencing and Skype etc. Review and reduce burdensome paperwork when delivering services. Check eligibility for welfare very carefully (but fairly).
Maybe consider management officials savings?!
More effective working relationships with third sector providers

Comments
<p>More promotion in hiring rooms in council buildings. Stop thinking 'banking hours' and think 24/7. More road shows promoting what we do.</p>
<p>Not at this time. It would help though that devices to repair the atrocious 3rd world state of the roads is addressed or residents might not want to stay here into retirement and beyond.</p>
<p>Only do enough tree cutting, grass cutting, etc. that is really needed for public safety and the safety of road users. A lot of areas can remain uncut - this also assists nature - bees in particular, which Herefordshire relies on for its apples and other pollinator crops. Do not change light bulbs in street lighting - but keep enough changed to ensure safety. A lot of other council actually switch off street lighting during certain hours of the night e.g. from midnight to 5.00 a.m. All of these small amounts of savings add up.</p>
<p>Pay cut for staff</p>
<p>Paying for library requests</p>
<p>Perhaps you could protect essential care services by including a voluntary buy-in for non-essential (premium) services. In effect, you would have a two or three tiered buy-in and run membership systems for libraries, museums, theatres and transport options. Rather like the way supermarkets have three tiers of quality (Basics, everyday and taste the difference). You would still give free or subsidized access for anyone on benefits or below/above a specific age group. You need to phase in digitizing services for elderly people. We are nearly at a point where those becoming pensioners will have the technical knowhow and personal computers to be able to access information online (library services, timetables, tourist information) we're not quite there, but we are only a decade away. You could also include a section on your council tax bill for a voluntary one-off or monthly overpayment for those who feel they can give to the council's charitable and voluntary areas, such as food banks, in bloom etc.</p>
<p>Powys council has had to find a lot more than you. Look at efficiencies in house. Cut number of big wigs earning a lot of money. Look a buying fuel with other councils same for school books etc. Forming buying groups for lorries, fuel cars, stationary, and postage. When highways contract is up for renewal look to a 5 day week but Wednesday - Sunday and Monday - Friday so that all vehicles have no days stood still so less vehicles required</p>
<p>Prevention is key; reduce adult social care expenditure by keeping people living independently for as long as possible. Keep the population healthy, physically active, healthy eating, simple measures we can all achieve but produce massive savings. Preventing the younger population becoming older and dependent, working together across agencies and partners to achieve the same outcomes.</p>

Comments
<p>Prioritise statutory services (libraries, social care) over non-statutory services (tourism). Prioritise transport (roads and busses). Cut back on office accommodation costs (acres of unused space in Plough Lane for example). More home working and hot-desking for officers. Re-locate more functions to cheaper accommodation in the market towns. Use technology more - conference calls, skype meetings etc. Review all private sector contracts, and re-negotiate at lower rates - take it or leave it, most businesses will take it! Use more interns as office assistants - a great training opportunity at minimum wage. Cut the pay of the CEO (Chief executive Officer) and all senior officers by 10%, and ring-fence the savings for top priorities. Launch public fund-raising appeals for key priority areas. Design a structured giving programme to enable the better off to donate on voluntary basis to the priorities of their choice. Challenge the whole bankrupt philosophy of austerity - badger the Chancellor. It hasn't worked, and we have had enough. Talk to local communities more - hear what they are saying and act on it.</p>
<p>Publicly lobby central government for an end to austerity and reduced levels of local government funding, working with other local authorities. Use all of the council's cash reserves before passing on reduced central government funding burden to local residents.</p>
<p>Q2- Use extra to pay down debt. Re-join Worcestershire. High level of elderly & others in need in Herefordshire, but low level of good manners to pay for many on benefits. Tax needs to come from somewhere. Or combine council admin (higher-paid levels) in West Mercia Councils. Too many bosses.</p>
<p>Raise the charges of bus fares but only by 10p or something small but try to put services that have been cut and would be used back into place. Keep the libraries open please</p>
<p>Re evaluate the red tape around some of the council's regulations. A part time employee of the council could be allocated to each parish council whose role it would be to develop a neighbourhood plan and to be constantly identifying areas of financial savings, taking local recommendations for savings back to the council for approval. This way each part of the county could initiate good practice, which is tailor made to the local residents and environment, meanwhile making savings.</p>
<p>Re negotiates or cancels your contract with Balfour Beatty which appears to give them the right to withdraw a service and arbitrarily dump it onto parish councils or local communities. When they test the market to replace BBLP they find local suppliers are less than half the cost of your supposedly competitive contract prices.</p>
<p>Reduce adult care budget and concentrate on getting business rates up.</p>
<p>Reduce cost of adult social care</p>
<p>Reduce costly office moves, sell off old property instead of putting it all in the skip and reduce salary scale for all directors or reduce the number of directors across the council</p>
<p>Reduce costs by reducing HR (Human Resources) costs, appraisals for staff and other staff time wasting measures, get on with delivering services to the public.</p>
<p>Reduce costs by reducing HR costs, appraisals for staff and other staff time wasting measures, get on with delivering services to the public , libraries and bus services etc.</p>

Comments
Reduce executive officers pay scales by 8.3%
Reduce job creation schemes such as appraisals x 4 a year and other wasteful in house corporate nonsense. Staff can then focus on providing services to the public!
Reduce members allowances and IT (Information Technology) allowances. Reduce frequency of refuse and recycling collections
Reduce spending on cycle paths which very few use
Reduce spending on grass cutting by offering inducements to residents to maintain areas outside their properties-such as free swimming or parking vouchers.
Reduce the number of senior managers you employ. Use a different company instead of Hoople who charge a fortune. Merge with Worcestershire council
Reduce the pay of most highly paid executives until it much closer to that of ordinary staff. Rigorously check that private contracting is more cost effective than working in house. If you are being forced to contract out by central government policy, let us know.
Reduce the wages for executives, stop running silly business courses where 'consultants' teach the obvious. Do away with contracts with oversized and out of county organisations take profit on minimum wage jobs.
Reduce unnecessary red tape and process to allow the council to transfer more assets or services to the community or voluntary sector.
Reduce your own offices and wages to higher members!
Remember the smaller towns, for example Ross-on-Wye. The county council seems more concerned with the city of Hereford then what is happening in the smaller towns. We are the only town that has taken on a number of assets so we are saving you thousands. Also planning notices should be advertised with the local paper, the Ross Gazette. This will save you money as Hereford Times is expensive and no one in Ross reads it!
Remuneration of senior staff. Better medium to long term planning. Fund raising amongst wealthier to provide particularly for one off/capital projects. Education/use of PR (Public Relations) and social media to educate people on implications of wastage/misuse of public services esp. in NHS, police services, etc.
Review higher salaries of senior members of council staff and cost of consultants/project managers
Review if all staff is actually required. Reducing staff numbers will generate savings. Review the quality of work by contractors. Too many poor substandard jobs being done which require early repair.
Review salaries, pension provision etc. for council employees.
Sack all cabinet members and let the elected members make the decisions.

Comments
Sell all the farms presently owned by the council. These are not in the interests of the vast majority of Herefordshire's population. The days of smallholding farms have gone and we should not have to subsidise those that farm them.
Share services with other authorities. E.g. Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire Service.
Shared services with other neighbouring authorities, including Wales.
Shelve optional capital schemes.
Spend less on outsourcing/consultancies and private companies - reinvest in local people working for the council not private companies working for themselves.
Stop BBLP wasting our money and do the job that they are being paid for. If they are not going to do what they are being paid for then don't give them the money. That should save quite a bit.
Stop carrying out costly retendering and procurement exercises where existing providers can be re-contracted.
Stop employing 'interims' consultants by any other name. These people are paid high salaries come up with ideas then disappear and leave other staff to deal with the consequences of their schemes.
Stop moving offices. Stop paying for projects that don't work - i.e. IT at Plough Lane.
Stop paying staff, which are suspended, full pay. Reduce the amount paid in sickness to staff - the rest of us get paid nothing when we are ill, and we resent paying people what we do not get ourselves.
Stop spending on a Hereford University - we have sufficiently good further education system, this is an ego-trip. Stop spending on the arts, e.g. Courtyard, they should be self-sufficient Stop spending on unnecessary 'what-ifs' like the westerly by-pass, over the past decade so much money has been mis-spent.
Stop spending on vanity projects in Hereford
Stop trying to increase the size of Hereford, the congestion is through traffic not visitors. Town has nothing to offer as most shops are the same thing (coffee). Ripping up town centre will do nothing for shops unless the rates come down. Bypass should of been done years ago will not get done on time or budget, but should of sorted a bridge crossing first (40 years ago). Trying to draw new businesses into Hereford will not come from all this due to poor connections to motorways, it will still take as long to get through town than Belmont to Aber!
Stop vanity projects like the relief road. Ensure value for money from things like resurfacing high town. Probity of councillors is a major issue - some of the planning decisions recently have looked very like cronyism. Fewer councillors required. Council should be protecting public toilets, libraries, rather than expensive projects / feathering the nests of councillors.

Comments
<p>Stop wasteful spending on new roads i.e. inner 'relief road' and from Ross road to Abergavenny road. Stop wasting money on office moves. Improve general efficiency. Council is very poor value for money. Sell Rotherwas estate to raise capital. Raise rent of new cattle market to yield margin of 3%.</p>
<p>Stop wasting money on re-branding. Stop paying BB too much money for cutting grass, which they never do.</p>
<p>Stop wasting money on silly ideas</p>
<p>Stop wasting public funds on ridiculous schemes that only benefit a few /or are a complete waste. The High Town refurb was a waste. The Inner Link Road is a road to no-where - another waste and already over budget!! The planned SLR (Southern Link Road) is another waste as it won't relieve congestion. You lot can't be trusted to spend our money wisely so why should we give you any more to fritter away on vanity projects?</p>
<p>Support energy efficiency serves, low carbon transportation options etc.</p>
<p>The council should fight their (our corner harder with the government). It is unacceptable that councils like Birmingham, Liverpool, and Tower Hamlets have money thrown at them in the billions, and we are starved of cash to subsidise them.</p>
<p>The council should look at the process it uses to deliver the vital services. Loads of money is wasting not looking at the services it provides to those who actually need adjustments, correspondence out to people who are no longer living at the address and they are aware of this as new info has been given to put on database, they do not send out correct format letters to those who need alternative formats. The money spent on chasing fly tippers should be spent on opening tip hours longer and making one day a day that business can take a small amount of waste for a charge to the tip such as £10 for a small trailer of items of waste. There should be greater integration of service information so that five systems are not being used for services which all use the same information taken by one. The council is then paying five licence fees for the service uses when only one will suffice. Spend less money on the frivolous cafe and perks for the staff at plough lane; spend equal amounts of money giving all staff workable conditions, not palace style facilities making the working conditions too comfy that staff don't work to full potential. Look at the processes used and instead of starting the process for each department from a high level. Why not look at it from a ground level from a resident /user place and build it around them, rather than some fancy expensive system that cost loads of money doesn't meet half the needs required and is then out of date and near useless in 18 months. Bring staff up through the departments encourage growth in staff teams already in council rather than pay stupid money to bring in people only interested in money not the council and area they have been born and bred in and care for. The involvement of young students out of university is good idea but make sure they work with experienced people who know the area and not ready to destroy it by bringing in ideas not relevant to the council surroundings. Basically look at the services that are run from the ground level not from the ivory tower where no one is actually impacted by them. Work from bottom up, experience the services as an individual for a week without being a Cllr or manager, ride the bus first thing in morning or at school home time or workers home time. Talk to the people who use all on daily basis and then look at cuts not from those who have no real use of it and just use occasionally. Speak to people in person on surprise visit on buses do not advertise.</p>

Comments
The council should look to its own processes, costs and inefficiencies before penalising residents.
The council should stop making Voluntary Redundancies and then employing the same staff as 'consultants'. There are staffs that have taken redundancy but are then re-employed. The practice should stop. Stop paying so much 'sick pay'. Six months on full pay then six months half pay based on service is unsustainable. Times are hard and most people under pressure but how many other organisations offer this? Lets look at Franklin House. How often and how much for the several refits? Now all wasted as the council will now spend way too much extending and refitting Blueschool House. Then there is the bad deal with Elgar House, Why after signing a lease is Herefordshire Council now footing the bill for asbestos removal? Another total waste of council tax payer's money. These saving could be made with better judgement and actually paying due diligence.
The infrastructural maintenance in the county is disproportionate to the total population and a one-size-fits all allocation of spend does not treat all people fairly across the country. To address London/southeast cantered bias it is essential the council prevail on the central government to fund Herefordshire take into account the sparseness of the county's population and the undue costs of upkeep to maintain services in such a widely spread community.
The link to budget consultation page does not work so I cannot give an informed opinion.
The parish council is concerned that whilst deep and harmful cuts are being made to all services, there are still numerous examples of wasteful inefficiencies which we see in operations, for example the poor standard of verge-cutting, inefficiencies in how potholes are repaired and to what standard. At this time of crisis, there should also be reductions in the salaries of the very highest-paid staff of the Council, to help contribute to savings and lead by example.
This survey is poorly designed and ultimately will produce results that are little, if any real value. If you want to identify meaningful views from council tax payers you should ask questions about willingness to pay more money for council tax services only once relevant information about implications of different budget choices have been provided. For example, if you are in favour of no current increase in budget above 3.9% then the implications of the likely £7 million of cuts should be explained. What services would be cut? What actions are being taken to examine where administrative savings can be made? If respondents are provided with this information then more realistic responses will be provided. Similarly I might be inclined to register a positive response to increasing the budget above 3.9% if I was given an idea of where this extra money was to be spent. By not providing this information (or at least an indication of where you expect to spend this money) the question is of little value.
Use capital funding wherever possible to fund (e.g.) planned highway maintenance, and scrap controversial vanity projects such as the Hereford bypass
Use of less agency staff by improving conditions for permanent staff
Work closer with the voluntary sector, seeing if positions can be of a voluntary capacity, and pay contracts to not for profit organisations and see if those organisations can get funding support from funding bodies to make them more efficient?

Comments

Yes, put the car park prices down, it's driving people away and for people that work in town it's a tax on the high street worker. In wales where ever they did this car park revenues went up because more people came rather than empty car parks and shops. We are a rural town bike lanes won't help the traffic at all get on and build the link roads bypass as soon as possible creating jobs etc. Stop wasting money redoing high town to match new market, any one I speak to can't believe this huge amount of money as wasted!!

Yes. When observing a pothole that has been advised and needing filling. I understand from Balfour Beatty that if its not of the correct size (depth + width) not considered by someone to meet the criteria then it isn't filled, but is reported and noted. I can't imagine how much this procedure must cost! Why not fill it while someone is there looking at it! The roads are in a dreadful state in Herefordshire and more funding from the budget needs to go towards repairs.

Appendix A-Q4

Q4a. Do you think that they should exercise this power and charge extra in order to carry out any of the following? Other, please specify: There were 57 comments made

Comments
All of the above should be taken care of from our council tax.
All the above are desirable, but it is stopping Herefordshire Council doing its jobs properly. I am a chairman of a parish council, and we should not be doing Herefordshire's job. We already do some of the above.
All the above are the responsibility of government NOT the citizens collection of taxes due from big business should sort out the shortfall here
Although the parishes may have powers they would in most cases not have the available resources to operate what are in most cases county council responsibilities. If a parish does take on these works the county council should restore the parish council tax support scheme.
Citizens advice / advice on council services
Create safe options for cycling
Homeless services
I agree parish councils could do more, but am concerned it could contribute to a 'postcode lottery' in living standards... What parish councils can offer might vary hugely between different areas.
I assume any additional funds raised would be enough to hire somebody to undertake these tasks in the community.
I don't think 'Road / footpath maintenance' and 'Winter services (e.g. gritting, clearing roads / pathways)' should be on the list at all. It would fragment services. The town/parish councils could then cross their fingers and hope! And would they hire the machines? And what about the stockpile of material for gritting - who would decide the amount to get (buy)? The Kington Centre already provides a council advice centre and activities for small children - isn't this still part of the library service?
I think these are essentials that should come out of council tax revenue.
If some of the above are going to be charged extra for - why pay council tax?!!
Introduce a local fair taxation system and I would agree to increases
Invest in more bicycle lanes
It will cost each parish more to buy individually as they have no buying power
Keeping drains, ditches etc. clear to reduce risk of flooding and providing activities for older residents like coffee/tea clubs etc.
Keeping the town clean and tidy is important for tourism as well as residents. Many parts of Hereford are disgraceful at the moment and will deter people from returning. Hotspots - Union Walk and Drybridge underpass!!
Local councils do not have the finances to take on these extra services unless more finance is released to make it possible
Make dog fouling charges huge £500 per poo. Ask the community to cut the local grass; we would happily do so close to our house.
No - they should be given the money to deliver these by HC from savings made through the suggestions in my previous comment. Otherwise this is just double taxation HC will put up its council tax and parishes will do so as well.
No - why should we pay for services twice!

Comments
No additional parish council tax. In Ledbury this has been extremely high in increases over the last 3 years. The reason given, less money received from county budget. I would not mind at 1% increase in line/above inflation. Enough is enough.
No I don't. I pay enough now. Start charging them that pay nothing. 10 flats by me pay nothing, not even one off them.
No I don't. I pay enough now. Start charging them that pay nothing. 10 flats by me pay nothing, not even one off them.
no more than many town and parish councils already do
No- some of these thing should be co ordinated, but on a voluntary basis.
No they shouldn't charge more and should manage their budget more efficiently
No, that would be paying twice effectively for the same services. We are already paying enough, to get nothing out of it.
No, that's just another way of putting council tax up.
No. This is a sparsely populated parish with limited resources. It should not have to pay, for example, for highways which have substantial use by heavy traffic (e.g. quarry, farm, commercial lorries) as it is transacted by the A4110 and fringed by the B4362.
No. this is purely passing the buck and is the responsibility of county council.
Not capable of running bus services
Not really, because the Council is being forced to abandon their responsibilities.
Odd question. There is no space to indicate you don't want further taxation at county or local level. My earnings have steadily declined over the years to the point I earn less now than I did 30 years ago. I have to pay more to take care of myself. There is no NHS (National Health Service) dentistry where I live, prescription charges are high, I have to spend more support on my children's education because of cuts and give more to people in need through charitable donations, because the state can't or won't support people in need. I pay more and more to local/county government each year for fewer and fewer, poorer quality services. This points to government cuts and inefficient local management as the problem.
Only applicable in largely populated councils. Small parish councils that are predominantly elderly could not do this
Parish council shouldn't charge extra, all these are local government's responsibilities. Get on with that, deliver the services!
Parish Councillors are volunteers. Most already work hard, so no organisation of these tasks cannot be added to their work load. It is much better and cost-effective to organise these tasks centrally
Parish Councils are not qualified to manage additional activities. They can barely manage the ones they do already.
Parish councils generally do not have the resources, staffing or economies of scale to do these things efficiently. We do some of them (e.g. organising and underwriting a minibus service) purely to replace things when they are cut and we face a crisis as a result.
Please Keep all existing libraries open.
Please remind me what we pay council tax for
Pressing Herefordshire Council to fulfil its responsibilities fully without question.
Provision of community based demand responsive transport schemes to replace bus subsidies.
rest should be delivered by the council (except 'Grass / hedge cutting' and 'Litter / dog fouling enforcement')
Roads in parts of Ledbury are shameful
Save money by allowing locals to be in charge of communal areas

Comments
Some of these tasks could be done as community service by petty offenders
There is not a 'NO' option! We cannot afford to pay more for services we already pay for unless we just pay-as-we-use for all services.
These should all be funded centrally to ensure fair distribution. If parishes wish to do more, that should be voluntary.
This is a simple attempt to push services away from Herefordshire Council as is an attempt to push the burden of the tax rise on to Parish Councils.
This sort of 'saving' is fraudulent - tax-payers pay the same or more - to another recipient!
Those items I have not ticked are the responsibility of the county council!
Try talking to the parishes rather than dumping your unwanted costs onto them using phoney stats from a biased survey
Very few people actively volunteer to provide these services, whatever response they give in a survey.
We already have volunteers to do all of these - and more - at Weobley.
We already pay more as taken on the assets
We pay for all of the above through council tax now

Appendix A-Q6

Q6a. Please indicate whether you currently volunteer or would be interested in volunteering in the following roles. Other, please specify: There were 54 comments made

Already volunteer
Active Charity Trustee
Already do some gardening by Victoria Bridge
Arts and culture event management of free community events; free talking newspaper for visually impaired/blind people
Church
Cooking breakfast for low income and homeless people, looking after clubbers on Saturday nights
Donating my handmade craft items to charities
Driving for outings - old people
Generally being a responsible citizen/good neighbour
Heartstart
Helping families who need help to get their children to school. We are members of a volunteer group that tidies up & plants wild flowers at the top of Tump Lane in Much Birch & keeps footpath clear for the school children & their parents.
I am a town councillor
I am one of the volunteers who run Weobley library. I am treasurer of our local community magazine.

I volunteered at my local Children's Centre from 2011-14, when I had a baby. I worked as a breastfeeding peer supporter, a parent representative on the Advisory Board, and on the Wye Valley NHS Trust's Baby Friendly Initiative strategy group. I have stopped as my child is now in school. I have just joined the school's PTFA, and 'Transition Leominster', and am interested in joining the 'Grangers' too. I think there is a lot of 'volunteering' that we participate in that goes un-noticed, e.g. visiting elderly neighbours, childminding, helping in emergencies, providing emotional support, and participating in community events.. It's very hard to quantify.
Involvement in voluntary organisations - W.E.A. (Workers educational Association), UA3, etc
Junior Bulls, conservation volunteers
Local Council - NDP Steering - other national charity work
Member of the Parish Council
Parish council
Q5) I work more than full time and have a family. I work all the time, have few opportunities for leisure activity and the little spare time I have I spend with my family. I help out an elderly neighbour when I can and have helped out in schools in the past. I would like to help more but I have no spare time.
Riding for the Disabled, Youth Drama Group
School
School events
Sports coaching
Sports coaching
Stewarding in church
Town Councillor
Trustee for a carers' charity
Trustee of charity and also volunteer at HFC (Hereford Football Club)
Village fundraising for the community centre, church, elderly. I also run the library Friends group, and the amateur dramatic society
Village Hall Trustee
Volunteer and Trustee at Riding for Disabled, Volunteer Hereford Disability United & Director despite using wheelchair
Wildlife, footpaths
Work in community shop
Youth club
Interested in volunteering
All such services require public liability insurance and DRB (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks
Already working full time cannot do any more than I currently do
Charity work. Local information (church Magazine)
Currently help with fund raising for charities, running village hall; happy to help in a library or emergency road clearance work.
Helping the youth group
Helping with the community Lander and the 'spin off' breakfast club.
Homeless, addictions, mental health
I cannot volunteer more widely without a better public transport system (not community transport)
I don't live in an area where these things are needed. If I lived in a town I would consider them or I would volunteer for home-based, back office support.
I litter pick every day as people can or won't put litter in the bins. Try fining them for dropping litter - raise money that way
I volunteer on my neighbourhood plan steering group

I'm the Treasurer to the Village Hall and Community Centre
Information and advice, filling in forms which many older people find daunting.
It might be great the people are happy to do free work but if no one volunteers nothing gets sorted
parish councillor isn't on the list; I'm re-joining the evening
Providing skills improvement and class workshops
Provision of local food bank
Shifting the burden of responsibility to the citizenry does not absolve government of its responsibility for citizens' welfare
These are all council tax jobs
Volunteering is fine for people who have time, but for many people, including myself, opportunities are restricted because of work and family commitments. Also, of course, some people are too infirm to be able to volunteer.

Appendix A-Q7a

Q7a. What do you think the council could do to improve the attractiveness of Herefordshire to businesses? Other, please specify: There were 104 comments made

Comments
Accelerate high speed broadband rollout - this is a huge imperative and everything else pales in comparison
Assign petty offenders to litter picking - community service could also include grass cutting, hedge trimming, clearing drains
Be pragmatic and finally build a city centre bypass; build new direct roads to connect Hereford to regional motorways in Ross on Wye and Worcester
Better broadband
Better internet access
Better public transport
Bold and visionary thinking on a strategic communications strategy to attract global interest in Herefordshire
Broadband!
Build another river crossing, reduce congestion as many people avoid it altogether
Build new housing in larger estates, not small garden grabs and field infills. Leominster in particular this applies to.

Comments
Build on Herefordshire's strengths, in order to install a pride of place in Herefordians as well as attract more people here. We could build up a capacity and reputation as being leaders in certain fields if we build on what the county offers, and assess what it could offer to future generations. I think its natural environment is an obvious asset, which should be protected and enhanced; otherwise Herefordshire's special qualities would be destroyed. We can forge our own development path - a sustainable one - that creates a more resilient, vibrant place & culture. This would attract people and businesses (sustainable ones!) in itself.
Build some houses please, big shortage, young people moving away.
Bypass in Leominster and Hereford required. Establish proposed STEM University. Better road links to rest of UK, including motorways. Improve train services to London and Birmingham. Fast broadband and better mobile coverage. Housing only if new businesses are coming into the county. Important to encourage a mix of businesses.
Clear litter from edge of roads, put up clear signs (many are very dirty or hidden behind hedges) and make the approaches to our county a lot smarter.
Continue expansion at Rotherwas/Skylon Enterprise Zone
Continue to support bus services
Council needs new people to bring new life to a dying county
Deliver high speed broadband is the main priority
Develop further education facilities
Do not know word "upskill"
Don't make everything town-centric. Allow rural development to flourish. Including development.
Enable social housing development
Encourage businesses to develop worthwhile apprenticeships & schools to develop the skills based education we need.
Encourage more skilled folk to settle in Herefordshire with new skills
Get staff back and keep local services open. Why close local services when you have not got money to spend.
Get superfast broadband connection throughout the county
Get the traffic flowing so that visitors and deliveries can drive into Hereford

Comments
Go out and sell it - workforce availability etc.
Help advertise Herefordshire businesses, including shops and tourist attractions.
Housing for rent
Housing should be linked to infrastructure. E.g. developing Hereford as an employment centre
Ignore it, or move county to south east England. Its geographical position means that agriculture and tourism should be its biggest industries. Location means that, beyond agricultural output, only producers of high value, near-nil-volume goods are likely to be attracted to Herefordshire. Grandiose plans for industry and infrastructure should be abandoned and small/shared/incubator business units developed.
Improve accessibility to public transport
Improve broadband - faster.
Improve broadband connectivity
Improve broadband in the county
Improve bus services to reduce congestion and help local economies
Improve city centre and access to city centre
improve environment more sustainable transport
Improve internet access and connections.
Improve passenger transport
Improve public transport access
Improve public transport network, attracts more spend in localities
Improve public transport so that potential employees can travel to and from work easily.
improve roads and get better broadband and mobile phone connections
Improve roads and public transport, increase wages and create affordable housing. Herefordshire is a very expensive area in which to live and work.
Improve sporting facilities
Improve the conditions of existing infrastructure.

Comments
Improve the public realm in our town centres and villages and maintain public services such as buses. Boost the idea of the county being high tech, green and cut down air and other pollution in Hereford.
Improve the road surfaces - there are huge potholes on many roads
Improve the road system by building roads that will have maximum not minimum impact. Despite Fastershire broadband is still very poor around the county
Improve transport hub facilities
Improve transport links, especially public transport
Improve, not cut bus services
Improved broadband is most important as it would allow more people to work from home or rural offices. Please do not build all over the superb landscape and heritage assets of Herefordshire.
Improvement of infrastructure should not be Hereford focussed as it currently is. Housing development appears to only serve to encourage more people to retire to the county.
Improving public transport (buses/rail/trams) and the timing links between all categories.
Improving public transport is key
Improving the road surfaces and filling potholes that need to be filled. Monitoring speeding traffic through villages
Increase spending & enforcement on litter collection and street cleansing.
Inducements for relocation
Insist government meets its responsibilities ... what is the council actually doing in this regard?
Lobby for better road links into and around Hereford
Lower business rates
Lower the rates. Fix the roads.
Make first impression of town's better, need to look attractive and not send visitors around the backstreets as in Ross before they can find their way to the town centre.
Make the river attractive to walkers, cyclists etc. Definitely get rid of litter.
More leisure facilities and visitor attractions needed in the county. Improve the leisure pool as it needs updating. We need to attract more visitors to spend in the county.

Comments
No more houses!!
Not sure
Pressure the utility companies for better supplies especially IT services. Do the rental charges for properties in town really need to be that high?
Promote business opportunity in Herefordshire as below.
Provide excellent industrial units for rent - energy efficient, good transport networks
Provide free workshops on setting up own business
Provide more and support current entertainment opportunities as outlined in the March 2007 report 'How to retain and attract 18 - 35 year olds to the county'
Provide park and ride as city centre car parking is now too expensive
Provide some sort of support in setting up new business, making it easy rather than difficult
Put more public sector jobs into villages.
rail / roads and public transport to key employment areas
Recognise Ross on Wye as the gateway to the county with the best road links, many industrial opportunities have been lost by focussing on Hereford city when the motorway network begins at Ross.
Reduce car parking charges. Herefordshire Council has done its best to destroy the city. Too much ill-judged 'development' for 'prestige'.
Reduce rates for shops in town. Encourage renewable energy.
Reduction in rates and parking = more business and people visiting the city
Reliable mobile phone and internet throughout the county.
Repair the roads properly (not bodge them up) and get proper fibre broadband to rural areas
Restore some funding to The Courtyard
Rising scale of Tax. i.e. 0% 1st year, 40% 2nd year, 75% 3rd year, 100% 4th year. Give the business time to grow.
Sort out the traffic and parking problems
Sort out traffic congestion

Comments
speed up fibre broadband installation
Stop trying to make bigger it only brings more cost to everything around and does not bring more money in. If it did we would not struggle.
Stop wasting public funds and start offering business incentives to come here.
Superfast broadband needs to be a priority across the whole county
Support business via planning for & building live/work units in local communities. Build flexible, clean, and small to medium industrial units that can be used in for lots of different businesses at reasonable rents.
The new university
The road system is appalling and off putting - as well as high car parking charges.
Transport
Transport, transport, transport, and parking. Traffic in Hereford is bad and parking very excessive. I work from home 3 miles from Hereford but now don't go into town unless I really have too. £5 to park on some rough gravel at Edgar Street is a rip off.
Try some real support for tourism, the biggest part of the county economy rather than your infatuation with small numbers of hi tech jobs
try to make the old town centre a little more appealing to businesses aka a clean-up
University/Higher education.
We need good roads and 1st class broadband to attract businesses and keep young people and those with young families in the county
What does upskill workers mean?
Whatever is done needs to be clearly communicated to residents so we all understand what the councils plans are

Appendix A-Q8

Q8. Is there any other capital investment you think the council should make?

There were 111 comments made

Comments
A bypass. Tidy up grotty footpaths. Jet washes high town and Eign gate and the subways.

Comments
A city centre bypass. Build new direct roads to connect Hereford to regional motorways in Ross on Wye and Worcester.
A joined up network of tourist information hubs
A new Library, essential for a beneficial knowledge climate: see Worcester
A proper cycle path scheme instead of pretending to promote cycling, build a Hereford ring road, promote free parking schemes in the market towns
Achieve the above projects and many problems will be solved.
Additional support for families with young children through Home Start etc.
Advice Services - Citizens Advice/Partnership
Become more involved with improving Hereford library (Broad Street). A centre to improve the lives of those in the community.
Better public transport in Hereford - you don't need more roads, just to discourage (by providing a good alternative) the plethora of local cross-city trips that clog the place up, e.g. the school run. Better broadband connectivity helps, too. And finding ways to keep high-value office jobs in the city centre, not shifting them all to Rotherwas will pay massive dividends in city centre regeneration, which begins a virtuous circle of growth and recovery. Sending jobs to Rotherwas so the city becomes an employment wasteland, apart from retail is extremely short sighted. Hereford is your main and only real prospect of securing jobs growth. Everywhere else the costs of making them appealing are simply not worth it.
Better road surfaces
Better roads
Boost existing businesses by ensuring and advertising bus routes to them, e.g. provide bus services from Hereford city centre and Ross to Ross Labels and various tourist attractions within Herefordshire. The Wye Valley is a hotspot for tourism, but more people from within Herefordshire could day trip there with better advertising and transport services. This would encourage people to spend money locally on buses and small local businesses rather than hopping on a train to Barry Island (which is easier than getting to the Wye Valley from Hereford city) and spending their money where we won't benefit.
Build a by-pass round Hereford. Upgrade all A roads Improve bus services. Support village infrastructure - e.g. village hub buildings such as village halls
Build a new library / museum.
Build at least one bridge across the wye in Hereford near the centre - not a by-pass. Traffic wishes to get in and out of Hereford. Park and Ride. Improved cycle lanes and cycle routes - and actually carry these projects through. The St Owen street contraflow has been cancelled at least twice already - will it be 3rd time lucky?
Build council houses. That's it. Build houses for people to live in.
By pass around Ross from Walford to Hildersly!!
By-pass and new river crossing on the west of the city
Bypass in Leominster and Hereford required. Establish proposed STEM University. Better road links to rest of UK, including motorways. Improve train services to London and Birmingham. Fast broadband and better mobile coverage. Vital to invest in tourism. Ideal industry as it will both promote the best assets and retains the values and ethos of the county. Establish a 'Golden Valley' National Park or AONB (Areas of Outstanding natural Beauty) and build appropriate facilities (cycling, footpaths etc.) to make it accessible and enjoyable to visitors.
Children services as it saves money in the long run
Complete Ledbury by-pass, to include access to strategic housing site, North of the Viaduct, from the A438 Hereford Rd, underneath the Viaduct.
Create a by pass for Hereford

Comments
Create a sports park which is state-of-the-art - encouraging a diverse range of activities and sports for all abilities.
Creation of improved public transport facilities in Hereford and market towns.
Cycle paths and bus improvements to help people to travel
deliver high speed broadband is the main priority
Develop further education facilities
Ensure that social care is appropriately funded particularly in rural areas
Ensure that the council considers the artistic, creative and cultural needs of the people both young and old.
Fund and support H.V.O.S.S. (Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service) because if you are needing more volunteers to support the services you are responsible for you will need their experience in co-coordinating efforts to maximum efficiency.
Get moving on the western relief road
Get rid of it's most inefficient buildings and build / buy / refurbish buildings so that it owns and occupies an estate of efficient buildings that cost far less to run, as per the new HARC (Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre)
Hereford bypass
Herefordshire pays some of the lowest wages in the UK, yet it is a very expensive county to live in. A high percentage of workers only earn minimum wage or the National Living Wage. Perhaps the council could spend some money to educate employers to pay better wages. After all, if you pay peanuts - you get monkeys!
How about supporting public transport and not trashing it? Increased investment in sports and fitness - I have never seen so many fat 20-somethings as there are in this county: a long-term cost to the NHS. A water sports centre (sailing/rowing etc.) on the old gravel pits at Marden is a no-brainer. Promotion of cycling is also a no-brainer - a 'tour de Herefordshire'? Our country roads are perfect.
Ignore it, or move county to south east England. Its geographical position means that agriculture and tourism should be its biggest industries. Location means that, beyond agricultural output, only producers of high value, near-nil-volume goods are likely to be attracted to Herefordshire. Grandiose plans for industry and infrastructure should be abandoned and small/shared/incubator business units developed.
Improve Broadband connectivity
Improve city centre and access to city centre
Improve provision of cycle paths-perhaps by encouraging farmers to provide space beside roads and giving them favourable publicity when they do so.
Improve public transport
Improve roads
Improve roads and infrastructure
Improve the roads that we already have. Stop building roads over our beautiful countryside. Work out sustainable transport measures instead. Turn the city into a no car zone and make it a cycling mecca. Look at the visionary tram idea.
Improve tourist infrastructure
Improve traffic congestion
Improve transport infrastructure
Improve transport infrastructure for public transport.

Comments
Improve/provide lighting and cameras on footpaths and cycle lanes.
Improved access/road improvements specifically aimed at rural tourism improvements. E.g. cycle/footpath across Backney bridge that connects rural villages to Ross-on-Wye.
Improved Bus/Rail facilities, bus priority schemes, not just cycle paths!
Increase digital resources - libraries, public space, etc. Use increased analytics to deliver core services more effectively. Increased promotion of how people can use services most effectively.
Increase the amount spent on the county's roads - this will help reduce the spend on remedial works
Intensive support and assessment for children who are failing in education and are excluded from school. This group of children are very expensive, frequently go onto commit crimes and are easily led into taking drugs etc. This could be avoided if their needs were properly assessed whilst in school and if necessary treatment provided. Also if their families were supported during this time, their outcomes are much improved, enhancing the lives of each member of the family, whilst reducing the cost to the tax payer. Resources to fund a team of people to do this work would be at a minimal cost and save money in education, law enforcement, health (better mental health, fewer attendances at A and E (Accidents and Emergency) etc.)
Invest in their local small businesses and help them grow.
Invest in training to up skill council employees and then cut down expensive interim consultants who eats public money.
Invest to save in projects that deliver energy savings and income from renewables - especially council buildings and industrial estate properties
Keep the libraries open, they are a huge source of information and books that would be incredibly difficult to get otherwise! It is vital! Thanks.
Library service
Look to development of its property assets as opposed to selling them for others to develop, so that the council sees the full return or is able to control what is developed based on the county needs.
Lower rates for local shops and garages so that they can stay open and support people who work from home.
Make all new housing developments install Gerry waste water & sewage systems that are cheaper than conventional systems, look attractive and clean more effectively.
Make first impression of town's better, need to look attractive and not send visitors around the backstreets as in Ross before they can find their way to the town centre.
Mental health services. Careers advice/support in school and for adults
More capital investments to create long term savings (if the money stacks up correctly) such as placing solar or other technologies on/in buildings. Or stop using buildings where it would cost too much to retrofit these and work out if getting rid of these buildings and building something new which will save in the future would bring longer term savings. I can't see how selling off assets for other businesses to make profit out of them by converting them is going to benefit the council in the long term.
Need to attract quality employers not just in Hereford itself. Barriers are available buildings and the labour force is not skilled for the 21st century.
New bus station
New transport hubs fit for the 21st century or in Hereford's case even the 20th century!
Next phase of link road?
No. They have more than enough on which most of the time they cannot handle
Not given the current financial climate
Offer more leisure facilities for the County, new cycle track

Comments
Park and ride
Please ensure that the current plans are carried out. Housing is expensive, roads are atrociously maintained. Some council buildings are unfit for purpose - lack of appropriate toilet facilities Tec.
Provide subsidised flats to attract teachers, police, and nurses. Give them priority over non-workers. Build more 1 bedroom flats in 3 storey buildings for young and elderly. Build 2 and 3 bedroom terrace houses (more efficient use of land). Good to build on brown field sites.
Provision of county-wide community transport mini-buses, together with computer facilities to enable sharing of assets/drivers.
Quasi fixed capital investment in human resources to increase skill base.
Repair roads properly and stop wasting money of pointless short term pot hole filling that last no more than weeks and hold infrastructure providers (notably Open reach) to account for their failure to deliver reliable fibre broadband to rural areas
Repairing roads.
Ring road and another bridge over the river to ease traffic traveling into and through town. Stop artic lorry's needing to drive through the centre of Hereford
Ring road needs finishing! Car parking in Hereford needs extending and Kilpeck station would make a good park & ride or parkway. 1) Sustain key local services 2) Create jobs and get local people into work 3) Attract and secure inward investment 4) Improve connectivity through road improvements - ring road needs finishing. Provide better broadband connectivity - not all of us have computers. Enable new housing development - where?
Road and transport improvements to keep the city moving.
Roads, especially ring road to the east
Roads.
Rural cycle paths. I live along the A4110 and you would be mad to cycle along it (though people do), given the heavy lorries and farm machinery that uses the road. There's no pavement either. A cycle path into Leominster from Mortimers Cross would be marvellous - I'd use it for shopping and recreation, as would my husband and children.
Schools need investment - many of them are very shabby. It sets a bad example to our aspirational youngsters.
Small projects that create multiple values for people and the environment (along the principles mentioned in Q.3) decided by a process of shared problem-solving and co-design (elaborated on in Q.9)
Sort out the traffic problems in the city centre
Specific to Ledbury - Connect road underneath viaduct for strategic housing. Improve broadband connectivity
Spend less/much less on wasteful items e.g. most of what is currently being done now and in the past
Stop trying to make bigger it only brings more cost to everything around and does not bring more money in. If it did we would not struggle.
Support for home-workers using the improved broadband connection to make effective use of online workforce and reduce employment related transport difficulties.
Supporting long term unemployed people to get jobs. This would also have the benefit of reducing the financial support the council has to provide to them e.g. Housing benefits etc.
Sustainable transport. investing in tourism focusing on the river Wye
Target attractiveness of market towns for inward investment. Really need a market towns project. Infrastructure investment should consider surgeries etc. in areas of high housing growth

Comments
Target one or two high tech industries that could set-up significant businesses in the area without concern for our relative isolation.
The area is known for a lot of negative things, such as the transport being poor, the roads full of potholes , the buses not running on time, the council has a lot of things that could be promoted and used to its advantage: the blind college produces a lot of talented students, why not try to develop these skills further, promote that as bigger thing create a unique skill set that shows the council is disability aware and promoting it. Which would help to develop staff here and residents to increase knowledge would benefit all the area could be promoted by using its quietness to bring in larger office based business from places like London to have their office here. Need to increase the internet speed but push the business advantage of working here and bringing in new skill to the area is the first to develop a big business here. Bring in someone like Thorne EMI again bring in JCB type business frame to develop a trade framework, investment in the roads and transport links could be vital. Repair them quickly, look at areas such as Sweden where they develop road repair systems which repair stretches by digging up whole patches and then relaying it behind so no patch work roads. Be the first in country to do this. Increase the councils presence with a trade, promote it so brings in more business as there is nothing really that stands out business wise as Bulmer's has been sold off the other companies that used to be a icon of. Herefordshire no longer stand out even the Hereford cattle is no longer unique and stand out for our area. We need to stand out stand up and be proud shout about how good we are as a county as we can be better than the low position we have dropped to in amazing places in the UK.
The bypass is a priority.
The Hereford Enterprise Zone is not as successful as an enterprise zone should be because Hereford is remote, nowhere near the motorway network so not attractive. Time is a big factor. It takes too long to get to Hereford from anywhere. Time is money. New housing is only selling very slowly, so plans to build 1000s more seem misplaced. Much better to invest in tourism, culture and agricultural/horticultural/food/drink excellence to put Herefordshire on the map.
There needs to be some provision for youth, this could reduce damage caused in parks etc.
Trade, Tourism and International Awareness promotion to elevate Herefordshire's visibility in Europe, the United States and other global regions
Traffic calming
Transport Interchange at the Railway Station.
Transport projects such as providing bus real time info, smart ticketing , and transport interchange fit for purpose.
What is Herefordshire's unique selling proposition? Why would businesses want to come any further west than Worcester, Gloucester or Bristol.
Whatever is done needs to be clearly communicated to residents so we all understand what the councils plans are
Widen Belmont road or do something to reduce the traffic, similarly the Newtown road stretch at the end of Edgar street.
Work with the MP and central government. Go approve funding for all things.
Yes, as above. The new university.
You've identified the important areas but Hereford needs a bypass NOW

Appendix A-Q9

Q9. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions how we could deliver services in a different way? There were 119 comments made.

Comments
A clear vision of what Herefordshire Council can actually do - in numbers, not vague aspirational vocabulary - would make an enormous difference.
Access to centralised enquiry team via live video pods in supermarkets/petrol stations/pubs (in rural areas) or by web portal. Production of apps to assist in reporting potholes, blocked gullies etc. via android / apple phones.
As I noted above - scrap BBLP and bring in house. Stop moving offices around the city - don't spend money on a building for offices and then move in a few years It is like deckchairs on the titanic
As stated before, another local government restructure to re-join Worcestershire or link up with Shropshire / Gloucestershire. The traditional 'county' services like social services can be delivered from that regional organisation and parishes do the more local services. But that doesn't mean parishes raising their council tax precept, they should simply get a cut of the massive savings to be made by economies of scale from joining up, so the whole thing is cost neutral and council tax payers see their money go further.
As well as the possible tiring of service buy-in and voluntary charitable giving on the council tax bill, you could consider the idea of rationalizing your benefits/fraud service and switching to a countywide universal living payment. Most research into universal payment schemes show them to be progressive and beneficial with lower running costs. You could merge all your services into one building in each town, so that a library would also contain the TI, CAB, careers advice and other walk-in support services. In Leominster, for instance, you could move the fire station onto the enterprise area and sell off the riverside site. Or sell off (or stop renting) the library, TI and CAB buildings, relocate the fire station and use the riverside site to build this larger central council facility which could include gallery and presentation space, but only if it might give a net capital gain. You could use this investment to build something of real national/international architectural merit and interest to encourage businesses and tourists as well as increase patronage.
Be more efficient - improve council employee's efficiency
Being more creative and valuing staff.
Better access to online services and info via email/web/social media
Better support for carers and young carers
Bring back in house external work such as Highways and Hoople, why pay someone else to earn a profit from the council? Of course we all know the consultation will be ignored as last year with cutting of bus services.
Build flats or house or garages on spare ground in Vicarage St, to stop parking and dumping scrap car. Up to 7 at a time. We who live there have had to get moved. Q1) Paid for my bus pass, paying taxes for 48 years at work
Build flats or house or garages on spare ground in Vicarage St, to stop parking and dumping scrap car. Up to 7 at a time. We who live there have had to get moved. Q1) Paid for my bus pass, paying taxes for 48 years at work
Build the bypass at Hereford and E-W bypass at Leominster.
Build your own care homes for the elderly so that you don't have to pay the huge fees charged by profit making private enterprise care homes.
Bulk buying of everything with other local authorities. Monday - Friday working and Wednesday - Sunday working with Monday/Tuesday off so less Lorries less cost. When recycling contract due do the above so less capital and less cost for company. Cut rights of way budget. Look at in house efficiency and ways to be more effective.

Comments
Challenge the idea that Herefordshire can only survive if it builds a new large-scale business economy. The location is against that, while money is being wasted trying to promote it. Stop wasting money and focus on natural assets.
Communication needs to be better - most people don't know how decisions are made of that we could in fact have a voice - it just seems that decisions are made from top down. Give your people a voice and make it more accessible for them to do so!
Contact with public officers to reduce wasting time trying to source correct department.
Continue to roll out energy saving initiatives and renewable energy options and initiatives around the County.
Customer contact and advice, emergency support and others could benefit, cost wise, from sharing services with other county councils.
Cut Adult care. Sorry but it takes far too much of the budget and frankly we have had it good we baby boomers. It's time to give the youngsters a chance. As for devolving services to parishes What a joke. The councillors are volunteers and the clerks are part time. We have neither the time or expertise to take on these sort of projects. Didn't we get rid of District Councils who did these jobs?
Delegate as much local services to Parish and Town Councils with the funding to deliver it. Taken on as many central government roles as possible that relate to Herefordshire if the funding is available to help deliver them. Don't rely on volunteers delivering services but encourage and support them as much as possible where they do want to take on services.
Delivering services using volunteers is NOT a cost free exercise, especially if delivering services in people's homes. To protect vulnerable children and adults and to deliver a quality service that meets legal requirements and follows good practice guidelines, means forward planning, understanding what is to be delivered and employing a robust volunteer coordinator. Volunteers need to be recruited, trained, and supervised regularly. There needs to be a clear system off discipline and grievance management to support good volunteers and weed out unsuitable ones.
Demand businesses in the new market development and the enterprise zone to pay business rates.
Distribute some funds to Parish Councils to establish Community projects to maintain rural environment and facilities.
Efficient managerial staff - good training for your staff - stops relying on internet for everything as it is too time consuming and causes problems for people which could be solved with the correct face to face contact.
Either commission services on a needs basis, or commission on an economy of scale basis in partnership with Shropshire. Trying to commission on an economy of scale basis for Herefordshire alone does not make good business due to the population size.
Ensuring close continuity between county health & social services so that funding is used as effectively as possible. Consider libraries as an educational & community asset, often the only such asset in small communities, therefore justifying adequate funding.
Explore more business type opportunities. I think much has already been achieved and budget cuts have already been really difficult. Duplication has been reduced, it already seems like the bare minimum / statutory function is delivered.
Filling potholes when first seen buy Balfour Beaty.
Focus on finishing tasks that are started before starting new ones and failing to complete any well.
Funding market town improvements will encourage tourism.
Genuinely work in partnership with parish councils instead of the disdain you have exhibited for years.
Have a more proactive communication with residents. The Cabinet system is extremely undemocratic.

Comments
<p>Have greater consultations with the Market Towns, to demonstrate fairness and equality, services are too City centric. Parish Council's should receive a percentage of Council Tax collected, i.e. 20%, for the local delivery of services that are being devolved by the County to satisfy the short term savings, e.g. grass cutting, toilets, libraries/local services, litter collection, etc. The Parish Councils could probably do it more efficiently and cheaper, but need the funding, we cannot keep raising the precept's, that's double taxation. If you do it for CIL, it can be done for Council Tax.</p>
<p>Having today visiting Ross on Wye customer council services today I was so impressed by the excellent service I received, in every way. I can only say, Ross office should go to the top of the class.</p>
<p>Herefordshire Council has over the last few years completely abdicated its responsibilities to maintaining the health and well being of its citizenry by buying into a system of austerity promulgated by a right wing government that favours the 'haves' over the 'have nots'. It is shameful that the council has not taken any measures to ensure that the vulnerable and the dispossessed are not increasingly side-lined in the face of such greed and, in fact, has assisted in this subjection of its population.</p>
<p>Herefordshire is a beautiful place to live but not a place to grow old in. The council has no money or ideas to improve services, the hospital is in special measures and the infrastructure is at risk of collapse.</p>
<p>I am recently arrived into Herefordshire and will consider ways to improve service delivery during the coming months.</p>

Comments
<p>I care about Herefordshire, and don't want to see services cut to the bone. Services could in fact be delivered in radically different ways, if we could only dare to think differently... (And I hope this message gets to senior managers, executives, and council members). When there are cutbacks, the first casualties are our ability to be creative, innovate, and freely associate ideas - yet these are the very things we need in order to be resilient to change. (And I mean the resilience of the county, and of the Council itself.) Often, we do things 'the way they have always been done', and find it hard to readjust what we do to be fit for purpose, because we can no longer see the woods for the trees. This is exactly when we need a reality check. Here are a few suggestions: - Designing projects and delivering services together. Delivery-level staff across diverse departments can achieve a lot when given the opportunity to put their heads together often, collectively share problems, and come up with ideas that address more than one issue. Not only does this reduce the instances of working at cross-purposes, or duplicating work, but it also generates increased efficiency in that multiple benefits are reaped - i.e. 'win-win' situations. (e.g. a project based on flood-defence issues could also create habitats contributing to ecological resilience, increase access to the outdoors, generate energy, create opportunities for recreation, tourism, etc., etc...) Co-design can be expanded on to include partner organisations. - Taking a long-term approach, and addressing the 'root causes' of problems. It takes guts to take a proactive approach in reactive times, but it is entirely necessary for our efforts to be sustainable. It represents huge savings in the long term, if not the short (e.g. addressing children's health and wellbeing now means healthier adults in the future; creating a true 'pride of place' reduces littering & antisocial behaviour...) - though some interventions would possibly produce short-term benefits too. - Involving people, the Council could be reaping much added value from involving citizens in decision-making, and in contributing to its aims. If people are engaged properly, then they will not feel coerced, but empowered to participate in improving their own communities. This has to be done carefully (as mentioned before), which communicating clearly - in terms that we all understand, through media we access easily (including digital engagement, e.g. twitter opinion polls - but not abandoning other means, e.g. having paper forms at the library, along with a friendly member of staff!), and most importantly in language that emphasises shared ownership and responsibility, and dissolves the boundary between 'authority' and 'service user'. Overwhelmingly, increasing transparency and openness generates goodwill and trust. More events could be held to engage the public with decisions about the things that matter most to them, and involve them in delivery where appropriate (e.g. Sydonia Park, Leominster - first a community meeting was held to find out what people wanted for their local park, then a volunteering day was held to carry out some of the work - having the added benefit of bringing the community together, building social coherence). Also, the Council could be publishing more Open Data, enabling businesses, education establishments, community-builders and interested citizens to engage with the issues we grapple with as a county, and offer solutions. Additional ideas:- Sharing resources with other public services where it makes sense to do so (this is probably already being done) - Offering contracts to local businesses, using local supply chains wherever possible. Encouraging a circular economy. - Income-generating activities, and maximising use of assets, as mentioned before.</p>
<p>I think the Public Realm budget is seen as an easy option for cuts; Herefordshire roads are in dire need of investment and it is extremely short sighted of the Council to neglect investment now for short term budgetary gain.</p>
<p>I think we need to see more community involvement but not have all volunteers who do not cost anything but still have a "hike" in our council tax to keep the middle management in posts.</p>
<p>Implement a can do policy to replace the current you must not policy - move on, make it happen instead of finding reasons not to.</p>
<p>Important to protect services like CAB, social care</p>
<p>Improve back office functions and processes to reduce waste. Re-tender expensive contracts. Merge with neighbouring authorities. Improve Joint working with partnerships. Put social services out to tender.</p>
<p>Improve efficiency within the council. Reduce internal waste within the council</p>
<p>Improve internal communication- council online presence to stimulate innovation.</p>

Comments
Improve key local services. No further cuts in public transport.
In the 14 years I have lived in the county I have seen so much money wasted. Just stop all the foolish spending. Amalgamate with Worcester or Shrewsbury (yes!!) and save a fortune in duplicated administration and services. Abandon corrupt cabinet system.
Invest in turning local assets into Social enterprises and look to see how council smallholdings could become the hub of local community enterprises etc.
It gets frustrating that you cut so many services but raise the council tax!! I don't care about adult social care!!
It is outrageous that the council has overspent and is coming cap in hand to ask us for more money. Who is in charge of the budget? Where are the priorities? There is still no Hereford Library! Why? Who thought it would be better to have some arty crap in the new shopping centre? Why do you keep building roads that don't go anywhere? Look at Hereford's local needs and respond in a sensible manner. I despair at the level of waste and the pie-in-the-sky schemes. What a waste!
It is very important to take into consideration safeguarding of vulnerable people - all volunteers should be vetted to ensure safety and no abuse - they should also receive adequate training for the roles they wish to volunteer for. Many organisations help in Herefordshire to protect the vulnerable - it is important that Herefordshire Council appreciate the work they do with the meagre funding they get - so should spend wisely on continuing to help these charities to continue in operation.
It is vital in this widespread rural County to keep access to Council services in the Market Towns, especially important in ageing communities. It's likely there will be cuts to transport and people will not be able to travel as easily so there will be an increased risk of isolation. Not everyone has the skills/knowledge/capability to go digital. Not everyone can afford to go digital. Not everyone is able to access free online services. Those living in more isolated areas are likely to have problems with network/phone signals. For those who are able to go digital - have the systems and network speeds to support this. Have robust online application forms etc. Have automated phone systems.
Keep bus services open and add later buses so people can get evening jobs if they don't have access to a car.
Keep Libraries and council offices open in Ross and Leominster market towns
Less bureaucracy means more time for staff to deliver services.
Less job-sharing - it is not efficient to have several people doing parts of a job - customers often have to wait till their contact is in before making any progress with a query.
Look at the systems used and ask why we are using so many systems to store people's details on when one will suffice. Why not use the information given to the various officers to actually look at services needed develop these to meet needs. If more people require the social service than need grass cutting why not look at putting more money in to that then looking at bring in teams from colleges such as Holme lacy to cut the grass and give a qualification for doing it. Use groups that would benefit from doing things as well as the county would. Look at the system Ross town council employed to recycle in previous years to get metal items, then they could collect more items for recycling would bring in skills to the charity users as it was people with additional needs who collected items helps with day groups and interaction skills for users. There are lots of things that could be done if people actually looked at the way they share information and asked for help. Use groups in the community as friends and partners not enemies, promote things that benefit the community not fight them speak to people not just other Cllrs and managers get out and about be more approachable. I work with in the council and this council is near impossible to speak to anyone to deliver any ideas to they are all dismissed and blown out of water for pointless groups of meetings that do nothing but waste time and money. The council needs to re-embrace the resident's views and be approachable to new ideas but also old ones. Look at the comments shared by residents not highly paid workers who don't live in the county and barely work from here either speaks to members of staff on front line in person not just by questionnaires.
Look to amalgamate services with Worcestershire.

Comments
Maintenance of roads in the county is clearly a low priority and significantly underfunded with oversight failure. These matters need addressing urgently before minor roads revert to cart tracks.
Make better use of the Children's Centre building, give access to providers to hire rooms in the evenings and weekends.
Make decisions about supporting local charities that deliver services to the vulnerable and needy in a more timely way. Currently it is impossible to plan services more than a few months ahead.
Maximize cost effectiveness of service delivery, ensuring contractors deliver what is required and tightening contracts
More choice
More cost effectively!
More customer facing staff.
More on line services and self help plus a reduction in management
One large state of the art County Library (out of town -Hereford e.g. Rotherwas) with excellent internet connections, skilled qualified Librarians, reading room for reference/Local History study. Plus a book/information delivery/collection (as in Amazon) throughout the county, delivered either by post/courier or drop in to local store, shop, garage, charity shop etc. with delivery van to take out and return. This would save the cost of expensive libraries at Leominster/Ross/Ledbury etc. while still providing books and information for those who need them and provide a good Professional information service to business user. Resurrect a peripatetic Professional children's Librarian to visit schools and advise on children's reading - expensive but still cheaper and more effective than multi-centre static libraries. Sorry, I did not fill in the Library Questionnaire but I missed the date as I was not aware of it.
Outsource/put out for tender council work/projects to enable more competitive pricing and control on spending.
Performance management of 'poor' staff within the council to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
Please save our library. We have a great team of volunteers who staff the community library but understand we may be closed to save money. This would be a huge loss to the community.
Pleased with service that BBLP provide
Positively encourage and offer contracts to non profit making social enterprises who have the interests of the community at their heart and minimise the use of public and private companies who are driven by profit and the bonuses of Directors and have no interest in the needs of the community
Providing services jointly with neighbouring authorities. The only thing that prevents this sort of thing happening is self-interest of senior managers and politicians.
Pushing services down to parish council budgets is hugely unfair. You need to control your costs and not simply move them to other places just because they do not have the budget constraints that you have. Cut your own unnecessary costs, including the ridiculous administration burden of the council.
Radical redesign of rural transport subsidies, to encourage community transport schemes. Protection of library and cultural services and closer integration with education services, at all (primary, secondary and tertiary levels.
Reduce costs by bringing services back in house, such as Hoople and Balfour Beatty, why pay their profit margin?
Reduce money spent on wasteful projects such as creating tree lined boulevards in South Wye and paying for interim staff.
Reduce the number of parish councils (merge smaller ones with neighbouring parishes), thus enabling them to better support Herefordshire Council
Reduce the senior management headcount

Comments
Reinvest in council services rather than lining the pockets of private companies. Support charities and organisations working with young homeless adults - they are our future and should be given as much help as possible at the start of their lives - without a secure housing base we are nothing and can become nothing. Without support they end up costing society more in the long term.
Repairs to the infrastructure please can they be done at night. Hereford was grid locked during August. Better IT services for the public in libraries. I'm helping when/if Hereford re-opens it will be much faster. More displays in council buildings regarding the various aspects the council covers and when they are being promoted.
Retain the core expertise in-house who know the county and how it functions, and review services fully that are being delivered against robust value for money criteria, to ensure that informed decisions are made based on real costs of delivering the service and the community impact.
Return to using Amey, not Balfour Beatty
Run the council as a business
Seamless services. Public services that talk to each other and work together to provide seamless services for the public needing/using them. Systems that are compatible and do the job properly.
See attached <letter attached is included in the appendix A-Q9a>
See no 8 please
Send district nurses and other health care workers to elderly at home more; allow visits to be longer. Give students career advice at age 14 or 15 so they can consider options while there is still a chance to get required courses in school. Make sure all in county speak, read & write English. Translators are an unnecessary expense. Anyone using them should be charged full price.
Share services with neighbouring authorities. More volunteers in more libraries. Insist that government recognises that Herefordshire has particular challenges (sparse population, wide range of small businesses below the rates threshold, few large businesses) and so needs appropriate funding to make up the shortfall that is inevitable if the county is to rely on business rates alone to make up the shortfall from a reducing government contribution.
Sort out the school buses, public buses are dangerous and currently children are standing up on busy routes which is UNSAFE and is leaving some parents worried about their children's safety.
Stop advertising free activities (e.g. visiting the Black & White House or nature trail walks) and start stimulating the local economy by advertising local activities that need to be paid for. Tourist information should inform people of where best to spend their money across Herefordshire, not how best to save it.
Stop letting contracts to the private sector. Properly managed the Council could deliver services for less cost. The profits currently made by the private sector could be used to deliver more services avoiding such severe cuts.
Stop spending on useless projects. Hire some new people with new, better ideas ... too much of the same old stuff and Herefordshire is going nowhere.
Stop the active village grant, no one wants it, its a low take up and costs loads
Support development of professional arts and crafts in Herefordshire Support further education to provide skilled workforce.
Take back control of the 'contracted out' services, and review them as council run activities. Better accountability and control of spending will follow.
The capital projects list makes a depressing litany of projects focused on Hereford city and on Council Officers obsessions. It, with the exception of schools, fails to reflect tax-payers aspirations. There should be no optional capital spending until finances are stable and sustainable - boring and challenging for officers but what residents would wish.
The fact that Hereford has no proper library is appalling

Comments
The highway bridges and roads are declining in condition rapidly due to under investment, they need further maintenance investment to keep them open
The main thing is to lobby central government to stop the austerity budget which is having such a negative impact on our rural economy
The Parish Council considers that Herefordshire Council should be able to increase Council Tax above 2% to counteract cuts in central government funding. However, the requirement to hold a referendum to do this makes this option unavailable in practice, as it is unlikely that a majority of taxpayers would vote in favour for increased taxes, and the cost of such a referendum would therefore be a waste of scarce resources. Central government should be told that these rules are a restriction on the rights of elected councillors to take local decisions on local matters, and a cynical attempt to avoid responsibility for the catastrophic impacts of central government funding cuts. Central government would not seek a referendum on increasing taxes for exactly the same reasons, so why should they impose this requirement on local government?
There is too much expenditure on road building and maintenance rather than on public realm and basic services. If you compare Hereford, which has aspirations to be a university city, with other medium sized cities it looks very car dominated, dirt and threadbare.
Think ahead and not having to be in a 'catch-up' situation all the time i.e. be proactive and not reactive. If this means employing new forward thinking people so be it.
Thinking still seems to be disjointed and there is no focus on maintaining what makes the county so unique. It seems that the Council is actually hell-bent on destroying the character of the county rather than supporting it. In my mind, this hardly qualifies as a consultation - there is no substance to the questions that properly reflects the complex issues that need to be balanced to achieve the necessary savings.
This survey does not let respondents give a view on the full list of proposals for cutting the budget 2017-2020
Try and share with neighbouring authorities. Do not expect parishes to be able to fill the gaps; they are not skilled enough at present and it is very hard to go from a standing start to do new services responsibly.
Undertake meaningful consultation- listen to feedback received.
Use capital funding for planned highway maintenance, and street lighting, thereby reducing pressure on revenue budget. Replacing broken pedestrian and equestrian bridges, and funding small improvements to the rights of way network.
Use online as much as possible and scale back in person and phone services so that those who can use online find it much more attractive rather than queueing or hanging on the phone. Those unable to use the web will then be an ever decreasing minority needing to use expensive in-person or phone services and they can be scaled back then dropped.
Value the existing voluntary organisation that you already support and please don't reduce their funding without serious discussions as to the longer term impact of such decisions. Reducing funding for one will possibly increase pressure on another.
We don't use communal areas, we don't use leisure services, public transport, nurseries, any type of social care etc. I seriously think that the government in general, not just councils, should only make people pay taxes for the services they use. Means test things like bus passes, OAP rates for services etc., television licences, winter fuel allowances. Stop giving high earners free nursery care etc. If we stopped handing out 'freebies' to the people who can easily afford to pay instead, I'm sure everyone, especially the needy would benefit.
What funds does the council get from the EU? If any, we don't know yet how this might/will change.
Work as one team for the good of the people of Herefordshire. If you want to be the best and have a tidy county you must work with all to maintain roads, litter picking, cut hedging, clean road signs, and maintain bins and so on and so on.

Comments
<p>Yes - get rid of Balfour Beatty & its pathetic random pothole patching. Get rid of Balfour Beatty blokes wandering aimlessly with leaf blowers (what job they are doing heaven knows). Get rid of more useless council employees on inflated salaries (£98000+). Revive Hereford old town - currently plagued with dark doors & charity shops. Provide improved public transport links to and from Hereford city. Day and night. PS lastly!! Please stop doing these 'surveys' in summer when everyone is away and parish councils do not meet.</p>
<p>Yes, bring services in house, do not commission profit making companies at councils expense</p>
<p>Yes, by designing consultations that actually work, where are your budget proposals? This exercise is yet another waste of money. Save money by cancelling the High Town upgrade project. Bring back trees into High town and the centre of Hereford.</p>
<p>Yes, stop giving in to certain groups just because they shout the loudest. They certainly do not speak for the majority of the county, but a very tiny proportion. Stand by your convictions, instead of back tracking.</p>
<p>You have to make a stronger case to central Government about the unique challenges of the rural landscape in which we live. At the moment you actively discriminate against people who don't live in towns, but giving them either much poorer services, or none at all. This is unfair. You should strive harder to use the villages as an asset. They offer cheap accommodation for businesses, and a very can-do attitude among their residents. But they also need support. Poor families struggle to find work when there is so little public transport. There are no customer service centres in villages, to help poorer people access services and benefits. Yet people in similar circumstances that happen to live in towns, get access to a wide range of services and help. This is unfair, and needs to be addressed. Village populations are ageing fast, and while volunteers may be able to help now, in the next 5-10 years they will become too old to do so, and will be in need of services themselves. These short-sighted cuts exercises are leaving threadbare services that will not be able to cope in the future. You need to start take a longer-term approach.</p>

Chief Executive's Office

18 AUG 2016

Issued to:

Knownledged:

KINGTON TOWN COUNCIL



QUALITY
TOWN
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Mr. Alistair Neill
Herefordshire Council
Plough Lane
Hereford
HR4 0LE

Friday 16th January 2015

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL 2017/18 BUDGET CONSULTATION

Dear Mr. Neill,

Kington Town Council wishes to express its concern about the consultation that is being carried out by Herefordshire County Council in relation to its future budget. It will comment specifically on the budget proposals at a later date, but at this point wishes to note some issues in relation to the questionnaire that can be returned both by members of the public and by representatives of organisations.

Whilst the first page of the consultation document does have a side box which gives access to a range of documents, at no point does the main text suggest that people should read the Directorate Savings proposals document nor the other documents before completing the questionnaire. After one brief paragraph, you reach a box which says "Complete the online 2017/18 budget consultation questionnaire". We would suggest that most people are likely to go straight to the questionnaire without reading any of the documentation, which in any case is long and complex. This therefore means that many of the following questions are likely to be answered without due regard for the complex issues which lie behind the questions and the decisions that the council is likely to take in relation to its budget.

We would also like to comment specifically on the questions as asked in the document:

Town Clerk

Gwilym J. Rippon Member ILCM, Cert HE Ceg

Question 1 is about charges for council services – it notes that the council already charges for a number of services, but does not say which ones. The question asks if the respondent is willing to support an increase in charges above the level of inflation – how can you answer this question without more information about what levels of charges are currently levied and which services could see increased charges? To find out this information requires close reading of documentation.

Question 2 asks about increase in council tax – but again, does not say on the form what an increase could fund or protect. Whilst a range of background documents are provided and can be accessed, how many respondents are likely to do this and therefore answer the question in an informed way?

Question 3 is about savings and asks for ideas – a write-in box. It requires the respondent to go back to the first page of the consultation and to know that to see proposed savings, you have to click on Directorate Savings Proposals. You then have to return to the questionnaire to continue. The Directorate Savings Proposals are quite long and complex.

Question 4 is where the problems really start. The question is posed with a lead-in that says that as part of last year’s consultation, over half of respondents thought that town and parish council, community groups or voluntary organisations could do more to help deliver services in their local community if Herefordshire Council reduced or stopped delivering a particular service. As this does not contextualise this with the information that any additional services could have an impact on the uncapped parish precept, nor recognise the services that towns and parishes already provide, this could be very misleading for respondents. Discussions with towns and parishes in advance of this list and this question would have been useful. The list includes many services that could not be undertaken without staffing and funding – such as libraries and leisure facilities, respite and day services, providing activities for babies, toddlers and pre-school children, and bus services. Whilst the question as posed does note that “Your parish council has the power to charge an extra amount on top of your council tax. Do you think that they should exercise this power and charge extra in order to carry out any of the following”, there is not sufficient information provided to enable people to know what kind of additional charge, the costs of providing these types of services or the feasibility of town and parish councils providing these. Some services would also cut across town and parish boundaries and funding for service users outside of the town or parish boundary could be declared an ultra vires payment if challenged (for instance with bus services or libraries,) unless all relevant parishes in a locality were willing to increase their precept and contribute. We consider that it is very irresponsible of Herefordshire Council

Town Clerk
Gwilym J. Rippon Member ILCM, Cert HE Ceg

to ask this question in this way without proper advance consultations and discussions with town and parish councils.

Question 5 is a very leading question, asking respondents if they already volunteer in Herefordshire.. Many people are unable to volunteer, for all kinds of reasons. To ask this kind of question in this consultation is potentially discriminatory and should not form part of this consultation. **Question 6** then goes on to ask people if they would be willing to volunteer in a wide variety of roles – including activities where either health and safety or safeguarding would be issues. In addition, as noted for question 4, most of these activities would require volunteers to be properly recruited, screened and vetted, trained and supported by paid staff. Volunteering is not a cost free activity. This could also raise expectations that all of these activities can be undertaken in this way. This again is a complex issue, which requires significant further discussion with town and parish councils, and with relevant organisations, particularly voluntary organisations that are already seeing their budgets cut and grants from various bodies harder to achieve.

The following questions about capital funding and support for business are not in themselves problematic, but in determining a environment for business development and the attraction of new business, the role of culture and the arts and the green environment have been completely overlooked. There are significantly more issues that create a good business and living environment than just those noted in **Question 7**.

As we have noted, Kington Town Council will comment in more detail on the specific budget proposals. We feel, however, that the consultation exercise will do little other than satisfy the requirement that Herefordshire Council has consulted, but as with other recent consultations, this is a meaningless exercise and we would hope that the Council would in future perhaps consult with town and parish councils as to appropriate ways to achieve more effective engagement of local communities in consultation on what are very specific issues that impact on the well-being of the county.

Yours Faithfully



Gwilym J. Rippon MILCM, Cert HE Ceg
Town Clerk

Town Clerk
Gwilym J.Rippon Member ILCM, Cert HE Ceg



2017-18 Budget Consultation Response

Assumptions

We note that the working assumption is that the cap on general council tax uplift remains at 1.9% for 2017-18. We also note that a further 2% budget uplift is included in the budget to be ring-fenced to support the rising cost of Adult Social Care. However, it is not clear in the consultation documentation where this additional funding is represented in the figures. The supporting paperwork appears to be identical to the paperwork approved at last year's budget – to include all the same savings profiles contained in the MTFS at that time.

Grants and Local Government Act (1972) facilities

We are not able to see where the ~£4m of grants, including the Rural Services Support Grant, awarded immediately after approval of the 2016-17 budget and currently held in reserves, are being proposed to be spent. It is disappointing that with 6 months' notice the interim has not been used to make suggestions on how this grant funding might support service delivery into rural areas in time for such suggestions to be consulted upon here.

A significant proportion of last year's consultation respondents were amenable to paying more through their Council Tax to secure or improve services important to them at a local level: albeit that they had reservations regarding how such services would be agreed and their levels assured. This enthusiasm seems well matched to the facility provided by Section 137 of the 1972 Local Government Act: it is disappointing to be unable to find any assessment in the consultation of the parish funding which could be available under the Section 137 provisions for the support of agreed services.

This facility is a funding source that we have brought to officers' attention in previous years, and we would strongly encourage a serious consideration of this facility and the opportunity it presents to enable and encourage closer co-operative working amongst parishes. While central government continues to reduce the amount of national taxation redistributed through the core grants mechanisms, it is perverse to continue to ignore this source of local funding and the improved local government co-operation it could encourage.

Based on the August 2016 population figures for the county we have around 150,000 electors. At the 2016-17 S137 rate of £7.42 per elector, this gives a maximum of some £1.1m of parish funding which could be available for the support of non-statutory services delivered either cooperatively at parish level or cost effectively at county level, whichever is most appropriate. The opportunity has been missed to use 2016-17 to begin the conversation with parishes on the service mix and spread which may be appropriate for such funding support. We urge the administration to make a commitment now to begin this dialogue immediately, so as to explore the possibilities and acquire the consensus needed to make use of this source of funding in 2018-19.

Additional Savings: context and proposals

A savings programme has already been proposed which omits certain funding sources, mentioned above, and which also is behind in its delivery in some areas and overambitious or untargeted in others. IOC has maintained for a number of years that the budget for Herefordshire is, in reality, not balanced; and that savings targets in departments are sufficiently unclear in their detail to create the concern that they are used merely to give the appearance of a balanced budget.

Far from being motivational for staff, unrealistic or unattributed savings targets give the impression that a budget is never truly something on which delivery is expected. Neither is it encouraging for particular areas of the council's business repeatedly to be required to make additional in-year savings to bail out those parts of the council's business which have been assigned unachievable savings at the start of the year: a culture of perennial overspend, and/or perennial plundering in various parts of the council's business, is corrosive and ultimately undermines the necessity for culture and behaviour change.

Elsewhere these in-year unbudgeted savings risk impacting on investment programmes essential to the enablement of new ways of working when these become delayed and cut to compensate in-year pressures. This also risks preventing or delaying the service re-engineering necessary to deliver savings. Projects like Digital Channels and the improvement of the council's website are critical to the delivery of service and behaviour change. Additional savings and increased income could come from the council focussing on information handling and knowledge management for the county, its partners and the voluntary and third sector organisations seen as core to new service models across all departments and stakeholder webs.

Is the council compliant with its own income and charging guidelines, adopted in 2011/12? What priority is being given to creating the understanding of service delivery costs which would enable charging tariffs to be developed for parishes and individual residents to consider? It's hardly surprising that people/parishes are reluctant to commission works which come with unspecified or open-ended liability: re-painting of road markings, traffic regulation orders, gully sucking and drain clearance, residents' parking zones, replacement local/road signage are a few examples of work which could be funded locally if the costs were properly understood.

Other proposals include:

- Using the council tax collection system to enable individuals and/or larger groups of properties to buy additional services and spread their payments.
- Offering a chargeable green/garden waste collection service in urban areas for re-cycling/composting (rather than going to landfill), particularly in the south of the county close to the green waste facility just over the Gloucestershire border.
- Deploying ubiquitous technology and evolving social business networks to change the way in which services are made available (assuming sufficient all-county broadband coverage), for example:
 - Real time GPS on public transport linked to mobile phone apps, showing the exact location of buses (which could be linked to smart messaging signs at bus stops and the opportunity for income from advertising that reacts to and targets users in its Bluetooth bubbles) would negate the need for published bus route timetables. GPS would enable smaller operators to enter the market and to upload their travel route – or even for them to deliver 'doorstep services' in rural areas.

- UBER offers a new model for urban minicabs/taxis: the technology could also enable people, as part of the 'Choose how you move' programme, to register to provide flexible taxi services in rural areas where reduced bus services are expensive and inflexible. The UBER model would enable local people known in their own communities to be paid for transport services as if they were Community Transport drivers.

Further savings could be made from a more joined-up view of how we use the 'assets' the council already has at its disposal.

- Library and Customer Service centres are the ideal points at which to base signposting and wellbeing hubs for Adults' and Children's Wellbeing, and for our healthcare partners. Significant investment is required in these directorates and partner organisations to deliver preventative programmes and behaviour change. Customer Service & Library staff members are good sources of knowledge and data, and are well networked in their local communities. They already have the skills and knowledge to match well with the CWB/ASC messaging and would also be able to deal with the wide range of issues and problems which might involve other advice areas and partner services.
- Cultural centres (theatres/museums) can act similarly as hubs for such service provision and signposting, with advisors doubling up as front desk for these services.
- Most Town Councils already run a reception desk/enquiry point, the cost of which could be shared with Customer Services and a wellbeing hub, offering the potential for space sharing, savings in operating costs and additional revenue from the repurposing of existing office space.

The implementation of advice and signposting services can be flexibly deployed to match the locality need and best options for the physical access points in each community. These Centres can be hubs for Neighbourhood Networks of Community Champions – providing support and contact services in their immediate localities – from good neighbourliness through to regular shopping, prescription or other care services.

All parishes have been challenged to provide these neighbour volunteers, but such support networks will need to include income-generating services in order to be stable and viable. The council should be looking to provide payment or support to enable some of the services to be provided. It is not realistic to expect that these support activities will be sustainable without some element of funding – although this can come in part from the beneficiary through personal budgets etc.

Treating the provision and marketing of excellent and attractive specialist respite care services should be an important part of the council's investment in prevention and pipeline management. Making those services available for part/full payment for non-qualifying families enables the cost to be spread across the year or shared amongst family members, with collection through the council tax system.

Additional Parish Service Delivery

There needs to be fully co-ordinated effort to enable parish dialogue on this matter. Not all of the options offered in Section 4 of the questionnaire seem suitable for parish level delivery.

Activities suitable for wholesale parish devolution would appear to include:

- Maintaining communal green spaces (parks, playgrounds, sports pitches)
- Grass and hedge cutting
- Litter and dog fouling enforcement

- Good Neighbour schemes

Activities which would involve some level of parish action, but which would also require continued county council involvements would appear to include:

- Road/footpath maintenance
- Libraries, museums and leisure facilities
- Customer contact & advice
- Winter services (gritting, clearing roads/pathways)
- Helping out in emergencies

Herefordshire Council should return the ownership of the city and market town car parks to these parishes to create income-generating assets to contribute to the cost of taking on the above services. This would be appropriate since there is a direct correlation between visitor numbers to these urban centres, use of services, and car park usage. If section 137 monies were not to be utilised to spread service delivery costs amongst locality parishes, then return of the car parks to the urban parishes they serve would ensure that the parish carrying their cost would have income derived from visitors, thus ensuring that the entire costs are not borne solely by the residents of the parish.

Activities for which we believe it would be difficult for most parishes to deliver effective action due to the complicated nature of the services involved:

- Respite and Day Care
- Bus Service
- Providing activities for babies and pre-school children

Volunteering

The gaps that open up in Herefordshire's social structure cannot be expected to be plugged solely with volunteers. The council's own Joint Strategic Needs Assessment shows that ~34% of local residents already volunteer on a regular basis: with the percentage of the elderly, infirm, and children in the county, 34% must be close to saturation point for volunteering.

The council could, and should, be providing more support to voluntary and third sector organisations, and to have a policy to look to place contracts for care and support work with local charity-based businesses so that the funding remains focussed on service delivery and not on shareholder profits. Encouraging local employers to implement volunteering programmes and to support local charities and projects with the time their staff donate would also help to expand the voluntary sector into local business, and to extend and focus social responsibility initiatives within the county.

Attracting New Business

The focus should be on building on the county's strengths, on recognising what's special and different about Herefordshire and aligning all the council's resources to maximise the benefits these differences bring. Herefordshire is an attractive location for people who want to balance quality of life with business.

The visitor economy needs focussed support. Budget hotels for business and pleasure should be provided throughout the county so that people can afford to visit and to stay. Business parks should

be invested in to be brought forward in all the market towns. No large-scale housing development should be allowed to come forward without also providing local employment sites.

Other considerations and proposals

The Economic Master Plan for the county should balance emphasis across the city, the market towns and rural areas. Broadband should be implemented to provide excellent upload and download speed in all areas to enable small businesses to operate in village locations and for the growth of the homeworking economy. The creative industries – including IT, computer programming and gaming - should be encouraged to relocate to the county. However the emphasis should be on helping existing businesses to expand while remaining here in Herefordshire.

Our AONBs and the River Wye SAC should be treated with care and sympathy as regards both development and the growth of industrial forms of agriculture. The rivers should be properly strategized as assets and access to them and care of them should be a priority.

Investment in the maintenance of existing road infrastructure should be the priority with the emphasis being on footpath and cycleway development in the rural areas to safely and sustainably link hamlets to villages and villages to towns. Cycle-tracks and bridleways on former railway routes should be instated and the towpath of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal should be re-instated ahead of the canal sections to create the movement route for people to begin to use this asset and to increase visibility of and commitment to the strategic project.

A light rail/maglev/monorail link from Hereford Station to the Enterprise Zone should be committed to in advance of road projects, and alongside a light tram system in the city. Railtrack and Network Rail should be engaged with and encouraged to re-instate the halts and request stops at villages along the railway lines running through the county, thereby encouraging and enabling development along these transport links from the east, southwest and north.

High Schools in the market towns should be encouraged to provide access to out of hours training facilities in half terms and holidays to businesses and link to the NMITE university project in the city to provide satellite resources and training portals to augment university facilities and to strengthen links to the local business community.

Capital Investments

Priorities should include:

- Bringing forward employment sites in the market towns, and enabling road infrastructure, e.g. at Leominster, Ledbury and Bromyard, to serve these sites.
- Developing light rail and tram systems in the city, along with the extension and connection of the cycle and footpath networks throughout the county.
- Enabling pay car parks at schools to generate revenue in holiday periods.
- Extending the electric car charging point network and supporting new car pool/club schemes in towns and villages.
- Investing in GPS bus services, and a 'bus pass with benefits' scheme to encourage use of buses by under- 65s and to generate revenue from business offers and advertising. Investment in, or franchising of, smart signage/advertising at community message boards, hubs and bus stops.
- Providing free Wi-Fi zones in all the town centres – for council and parish notification or messaging and revenue from local business advertising.

October 2016

Bus Services Review Herefordshire 18 July - 16 Oct 2016.

As Most of the Herefordshire Public know all these Council Questionnaires Accomplish NOTHING They are just to make on the Councilors the Council Staff have some thing to do Have any of the matters raised in the many public meeting ever been enacted.

Have Your Say Budget Consultation July 2016 PO Box 4 HR4 0BR

- 1 The people on high Council Tax bands should pay the increases NOT those on Band A and B The public have had more than enough Consultations they only confirm the party political Solve Nothing
- 2 All English Councils can get ALL The Money they need to spend wisely or waste Ask The Commons for some of their unending Quantitative Easing It seems they can help the rich Financiers the Banks lets see them do something likewise for the English Poorer People.
- 3 These services so far Thank God are not applicable to me have to manage on basic state pension with the single Council Tax Deduction They do not say how many respondents there were 50% of what how many grown ups live in the County they don't know like the total amount in England
- 4 No extra charges for any of these listed activities The present high Council Income Tax Other taxes are enough see the people employed do the work the public see so many one working others standing watching even enjoy radio entertainment to pass the idle time
- 5 Have one foot in the grave enough on looking after myself others should do the same but they are state Council benefit fed
- 6 Have no time for any of these worthy causes as fully committed seven days a week to stay alive
Supporting growth businesses and employment training The commercial rates overheads are too high most shops have accommodation space above which should be used for domestic life These out of town industrial estates are too far for employees to walk to work too generous in their site areas England cannot afford this ongoing ever increasing loss of productive land.
The boulevards around the old cattle market have not solved the delays when they were held an overhead roadway for the traffic was the correct answer now they have cleared site near Morrison / Rail Stn cut down again Old trees this ring road will only produce more and more killer fumes for the children. When the Councils their planners cannot put in place a simple one way system (half of which has now been enacted possibly by the Greens looking for their votes) for 45 minutes huge hold ups in this one horse town Can they put Hereford City traffic problems to right like you can catch lines of queues out of the river Severn
- 7 Everyone who has to travel to these new out of town businesses and accommodations should only be allowed to use public transport or their own sweat This is how all Councils MP PS should be made to function Unskilled workers all out of work shall do all the jobs listed to for their benefits Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall showed everyone how 21st domestic accommodations can be built with roads on three levels as it is in Sweden

They stopped the 492 service Leo to had so all who could made other arrangements The service was brought back as 490 but the people who had to make other arrangements never came back Every decent person knows Once you loose a customer you very rarely get them back was this service stoppage done in order to kill off it few-needed passengers so close that it was a waste of money.

These buses run miles from the main direct road into villages where mostly they never pick up or drop anyone off These few people should walk to the stop on the main road

This Bus Co claim they carry out the Councils plan but it looks like most drivers run it for themselves especially once they have been here for a while The public do not know what it cost to run the services whether the subsidies cover the cost plus a profit or all the fare payers cash is profit. Did the Council claim they carry out The Government policy so OAP Concession pass use only after 0930 yet apparently Moulton Bucks the time is 0900 the OAP Con Pass should be used from earliest service to last in Rural Areas so less confusion on such as 492 1000 hrs ad bus returning to Ross from Hereford could have a few passengers.

How does The Stage Coach £5 all day anywhere shape up on the subsidy per passenger rates from £1 scale to £10

The Media have never shown these empty near-empty buses which are run at public price costs These buses will ALWAYS run as long as the MPS Councillors can milk the tax payers Christian value of efficiency economy don't enter this country's rules life

In previous consultations some people with OAP Concessionary bus passes they would be prepared to pay a fare rather than travel for free (This for free shows how these Authorities Councillors think The Concess OAP Bus Pass is NOT FREE The public pay Council Tax & other taxes for this then will these people Let The TRUTH)

We don't know how many people replied to these reviews 15 out of total population of OAPS in Herefordshire (The Government DO NOT know how many people live in UK) in Q10 of 18 July 16 Oct 2016 subsidy figure £1.00 to £10.00 but they do not say these willing to pay OAP alongside their proposed payment figure how many times per week they are going to use the service. So what true picture can any decent person set from any figures quoted in Q10.

5th Sept 2016 The 490 1242 never came to had Ann Ross Mill St through was there from 1230 Another passenger for Orleton at 1310 said they would have to get a taxi which they did because they had their Mother's lunch part frozen (probably ice cream) We noted (NOT there last week) that some time tables in bus shelters both undated one of these said 490 would leave at 1220 whether this took place of NOT don't know or how many passengers were aboard. The above Orleton passenger said NO new bus times were on display on their bus stop post there There was NO such on the buses I used all the time and NO such New Bus Timetable at Leo Bus Stop or in Hereford Do NOT think I will be on the 490 Leo to had from now Most OAPS pay high Council Taxes to subsidies these empty near empty buses their drivers are mostly Polish Are most OAPS subsidising in Polish State are the Police The Fraud Squad goes to find out if the 490 at 1220 and the 1242 that never reached Mill St had ever ran and if public subsidies were paid for this then more service

Copy To. Budget Consultation July 2016 as per 9

Email response from a resident

“With spending cuts the rural appearance is deteriorating.

There is a wealth of people who, if organised, could help in correcting this situation. A constant excuse is Health and Safety and Insurance. Yet the type of person who would volunteer would sign a waiver form to alleviate this problem.

The Council should employ a coordinator of volunteers. Once a requirement is established volunteers should be requested from a pool of established volunteer.

The council would need to remove any waste following the completion of the task.”

<name removed>

Email from Weobley parish council:

Dear Sirs,

In response to your Budget Consultation we note that there appears to be much emphasis on options for service provision through funding via Parish Precepts or volunteering. We would like to point out that a considerable amount of this already takes place on our Parish.

The Parish Council already provides funds via its precept to support;

The Parish Lengthsman Scheme
The Community Library
Maintenance of the village Play Area

in addition our Community volunteers help with:

Litter Picking
Interim grass cutting between scheduled cuts by the Local Authority
Grass cutting and maintenance at the local Play Area
Footpath maintenance
Community Library and Museum
Pre-school activities
Meals on Wheels
Community Wheels
amongst many other community activities.

It's likely that other Parishes could report similarly. We are very fortunate to have such a supportive community but it is concerning that we and they may be expected to contribute much more as suggested by your survey questions.

Regards
Lorraine Anderson, Chair
Weobley Parish Council

Email from Cusop parish council:

“Cusop Parish Council considered the budget consultation at its last meeting and agreed that it valued the public services provided by Herefordshire Council but did not feel able to give a qualified response given the technical complexities of the breakdown of the budget.”

Best wishes

Ian Jardin
Cusop Parish Clerk

Budget Consultation – July 2016

Each year, Herefordshire Council asks residents to help shape the way its budgets are set. We will need to be even more efficient and effective to protect priority services and continue to support our county's vulnerable residents, whilst ensuring that Herefordshire remains a great place to live, work and learn.

Our priorities for Herefordshire are:

- 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
- secure better services, quality of life and value for money

Herefordshire Council has saved over £59 million over the past six years. We must deliver further savings in order to balance our budget between now and 2019/20. We are working to develop a one Herefordshire approach with the NHS, Police, Fire and other public sector organisations in the county to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

We want to hear what council services you would want to protect and any ways in which you might be able to help us in enabling community services to continue. We also want to hear ideas on how we can improve – perhaps by using new technology, changing the way we do things, or by working with other organisations, community groups, or charities.

It's quick and easy to fill out online or if you have any more ideas, tweet us at #hfdsbudget or send us a facebook message. You can also share your views with your local councillor or parish council.

We are also running a number of consultations that may be of particular interest to those people who are currently receiving council services. More details can be found at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/consultations/current-consultations. Further and more focused consultation may be required with groups directly affected by any anticipated changes.

The budget consultation runs from Friday 29 July 2016 to Friday 7 October 2016.

All responses will be collated, analysed and published. All individual responses will be anonymised, and responses on behalf of an organisation will have comments attributed to them in the final report. The feedback received will inform Cabinet's decision making on the draft budget. This will be proposed to Full Council in February 2017.

Budget consultation 2016

29 July - 7 October

The council already charges for a number of services. The majority (71%) of respondents to last year's consultation thought that the council should increase service charges to protect current services across the county.

1. Are you willing to support an increase in charges for council services above the level of inflation?

- Yes No

Every additional 1% increase in council tax raises around £0.9 million. We have already factored in a 1.9% increase to take account of general inflation, plus the Government is allowing us to increase council tax by an additional 2% to support the rising cost of social care. Given our ageing population and pressures in this area we intend to take them up on this offer. The current band D charge for Herefordshire Council services is £1,325 and so a 3.9% increase will cost the average council taxpayer an extra £52 per year. If these increases are not levied, additional savings will be required.

Next year our budget plans include £7 million of savings. Increasing council tax could help Herefordshire Council to support its services and reduce the amount of savings required. If we wanted to raise council tax above the 3.9% level, we would be required to hold a countywide referendum (which would cost approximately £300,000), where we ask residents to say whether they're for or against the proposal.

2. Would you support Herefordshire Council in making a further increase in council tax above 3.9%, which will require a referendum, to raise additional funds?

- No - £7 million savings still required
- Yes - raise an estimated £2 million by increasing council tax by a total of 6.1% (costing the average council taxpayer an extra £81 in 2017/18)
- Yes - raise an estimated £4 million by increasing council tax by a total of 8.3% (costing the average council taxpayer an extra £110 in 2017/18)
- Yes - raise an estimated £7 million by increasing council tax by a total of 11.7% (costing the average council taxpayer an extra £155 in 2017/18)

Herefordshire Council is considering its future plans, along with budget and council tax levels for next year, and would like your views. We remain committed to delivering services you need in a way that offers both value for money and protects services for those who are most in need. The challenge we have is how we can do this with less funding.

Our current savings proposals total £28.4 million between this year and 2019/20. For more detailed information on the savings proposals, medium term financial strategy and Corporate Plan, see www.herefordshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay.

3. Do you have any suggestions about what other things the council should consider to achieve the required savings?

The council provides a wide variety of services to people in Herefordshire, particularly to those who are vulnerable and have complex needs. As more pressure is placed on the council's budget, and on the budgets of partner organisations, different ways of delivering these services need to be developed.

As part of last year's consultation, over half of respondents (58%) 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.

4. Respondents to last year's consultation suggested a number of activities that could be undertaken locally. Your parish council has the power to charge an extra amount on top of your council tax. Do you think that they should exercise this power and charge extra in order to carry out any of the following?

(please tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Maintaining communal areas (parks, playgrounds, sport pitches)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Good neighbour scheme (e.g. visiting isolated elderly)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Grass / hedge cutting</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Customer contact centre and advice</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Litter / dog fouling enforcement</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Providing activities for babies, toddlers and pre-school children</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Road / footpath maintenance</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Winter services (e.g. gritting, clearing roads / pathways)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Bus service</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Helping out in emergencies</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Libraries / museums / leisure facilities</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other (please specify below)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Respite and day service</i> | |

Volunteering means giving unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations. It includes anything that you take part in, support, or help in any way, either on your own or with others. For example, helping at a youth or day centre, helping to run an event, campaigning or doing administrative work. It does not include giving money or anything that is a requirement of your job.

5. Do you currently volunteer in Herefordshire?

Yes

No

6. People have previously indicated that they would be willing to help out more in their community. Please indicate whether you currently volunteer or would be interested in volunteering in the following roles.

(please tick all that apply)

	<i>Already volunteer</i>	<i>Interested in volunteering</i>
<i>Maintaining communal areas (parks, playgrounds, sport pitches)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Grass / hedge cutting</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Litter picking</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Footpath maintenance</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Community transport</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Car sharing</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Supporting libraries / museums / leisure facilities</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Buddy scheme (e.g. befriending or mentoring someone)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Respite and day service</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Good neighbour scheme (e.g. visiting isolated elderly)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Helping families who need help to look after their children (e.g. where parents may need a lot of medical treatment)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Helping provide activities for babies, toddlers and pre-school children</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Helping out in emergencies</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Other (please specify below)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Supporting the growth of our economy is one of the council's strategic priorities. We want Herefordshire to be a place where businesses want to settle and can flourish. We also want our city and town centres to be vibrant and successful and our neighbourhoods to be attractive and sustainable. The county is already home to a wide range of businesses and we will continue to support and encourage the growth of our high value business sector and our small enterprises.

At the same time, we want to encourage a broad mix of businesses that will offer employment and training to local people. We also want to make sure residents, particularly young people, have the right skills needed for local employers. In doing this we want to achieve a sustainable infrastructure that protects and promotes the natural environment, communities and the county's economy.

7. What do you think the council could do to improve the attractiveness of Herefordshire to businesses? (tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Improve infrastructure</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Enable new housing development</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Upskill workers</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other (please specify below)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Access to funding and business support</i> | |

Herefordshire Council has funding which enables us to invest in and maintain assets across the county, as well as deliver new projects and infrastructure which support the local economy and help maintain public services.

The capital programme has an estimated spend of £51 million for 2017/18.

Projects include targeted capital investment to:

- Attract and secure inward investment;
- Create jobs and get local people into work;
- Improve school buildings to help with educational attainment;
- Improve connectivity through road improvements;
- Provide better broadband connectivity;
- Enable new housing development; and
- Sustain key local services.

More detailed information on the capital programme can be found at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay.

Any additional projects will need to be paid for. For example, through an increase in council tax or business rates, the sale of council buildings / land, or grant funding.

8. Is there any other capital investment you think the council should make?

9. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding how we could deliver services in a different way?

About you

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 information helps us to understand the profile of respondents and whether views vary amongst different groups of people across the county. It will only be used for the purpose of statistical monitoring, treated as confidential and not used to identify you.

What is your postcode?

(not including the last 2 letters, e.g. HR4 0)

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

How would you describe your national identity? (tick all that apply)

- English Scottish Welsh
 Northern Irish British Irish
 Other

If Other please specify:

How would you describe your ethnic group?

- White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish
 Other White (please specify below)
 Any other ethnic group (please specify below)

If Other White please specify:

If Any other ethnic group please specify:

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

- Yes No

If yes, please specify:

Data Protection Act 1998

The data collected in this form will only be used for the purpose of statistical monitoring. This information will only be retained for as long as is considered necessary for monitoring purposes and then it will be destroyed. At all times it will be kept in accordance with the Act.

Thank you for your time

You can complete this questionnaire online at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay, but completed hard copies can be sent to: Herefordshire Council Research Team, Freepost SWC4816, PO Box 4, Hereford, HR4 0BR



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	19 January 2017
Title of report:	Equality Policy 2017-2019
Report by:	Cabinet member, economy and corporate services

Classification

Open.

Key decision

This is not a key decision.

Wards affected

Countywide.

Purpose

To approve the draft Equality Policy 2017-2019, including the proposed equality objectives.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the draft Equality Policy (including the equality objectives) – at appendix 1 - are approved for publication in January 2017**

Alternative options

- 1 It is not a statutory requirement for local authorities to have an equality policy, however it is a statutory requirement of the Equality Act 2010 to publish at least one equality objective. An alternative option would be to publish the objectives in isolation. This is not recommended because a comprehensive document is helpful in demonstrating our values and commitment to equality.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 To comply with the statutory requirement to publish equality objectives for the council and to demonstrate the commitment of senior managers and elected members to supporting the equality policy and objectives.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Carol Trachonitis, Equality, Resilience, Information & Compliance Manager on Tel (01432) 260216

Key considerations

- 3 Whilst it is not a statutory requirement for councils to have an equality policy, publishing such a document demonstrates our commitment to equality for our employees, residents and service users, and is considered good practice. The proposed new policy details six “key equality principles” to which we will adhere. They are:
- Principle 1: Promote our values and acceptable standards of behaviour for members and employees
 - Principle 2: Make fair and equitable decisions
 - Principle 3: Recruit fairly and support our workforce
 - Principle 4: Make our services accessible
 - Principle 5: Understand the needs of the community that we serve
 - Principle 6: Provide tailored support to vulnerable groups
- 4 In previous years, our equality objectives have been published separately in April each year. However we now consider it to be simpler and more streamlined to incorporate our objectives into one policy document. The appendix to the draft Equality Policy details the objectives we published in 2016, along with the progress we have achieved. New objectives for 2017-2019 can be found in section 6 of the draft Equality Policy. In brief, they are:
- Ensure that a further 40 refugees are safely accommodated in the community
 - Ensure that a further 22 unaccompanied asylum seeking children are safely accommodated in the community
 - Establish a comprehensive picture of what constitutes mandatory equality training for staff and managers
 - 100% of our staff and managers complete their mandatory equality training
 - Analyse diversity data of job applicants to highlight any notable anomalies between the protected characteristics of applicants versus successful candidates
 - Capture the diversity data of 95% of all council employees
 - Analyse diversity data of all candidates standing for election for Herefordshire Council, to highlight any notable anomalies between the protected characteristics of successful candidates versus unsuccessful candidates
 - Agree on a location, and develop a transit site/temporary stopping place for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in Herefordshire
 - Produce a Gypsies, Roma and Travellers strategy with associated actions to improve facilities and services for Gypsies, Roma and Traveller communities
 - Publish our employees’ pay by gender

- 5 Our current equality policy is the “Equality & Human Rights Charter 2013-2016”, which was a document signed up to by members of the Herefordshire Partnership and local charities. It is now due to be renewed, and the scope of the document concerns Herefordshire Council alone – although it is open to other service providers to adopt our policy if they choose. This enables the council to own the policy and monitor its implementation more effectively.
- 6 Progress on the equality objectives are monitored by the equality officer on an on-going basis, and an update is published annually. In 2017, a new “Health, Safety & Equality Board” is being established by the chief executive. It is anticipated that progress, issues, challenges, etc. will be discussed in that forum.

Community impact

- 7 An equality policy is a document that some members of the community will expect us to produce, and it will help them to understand what our statutory responsibilities are and how we are achieving them.
- 8 Whilst much of the proposed equality policy is focused on the internal processes within Herefordshire Council, it makes specific reference to certain groups and communities, for example:
- Gypsies, Roma & Travellers
 - victims of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation (FGM), honour-based violence and forced marriage
 - refugees and unaccompanied asylum seeking children
 - members of the armed forces
 - people who live in the most deprived neighbourhoods and experience poor health
- 9 The proposed equality policy makes reference to other documents and strategies which do have a significant community impact, such as Herefordshire’s Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the strategic plan for education for children and young people, and Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT) strategy.
- 10 When our internal processes are fair, equitable and transparent, then this has a positive follow-on impact on our local community. Examples might include:
- recruitment of a more diverse workforce
 - procurement of services from smaller, local organisations
 - better customer service and fewer complaints

Equality duty

- 11 The publication of an equality policy clearly sets out our commitment to the Equality Duty and shows that we take our responsibilities seriously. It constitutes evidence that the organisation understands the requirements of the General and Specific Duties to pay due regard to:
- a. eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under this Act;

- b. advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 12 The publication of equality objectives is a requirement of the Equality Act 2010, and therefore complies directly with legislation.
- 13 It is worth noting that the courts have said that, even in times of limited financial resources, this does not excuse non-compliance with the Duty, and “indeed there is much to be said that in straitened times, the need for clear, well informed decision making when assessing the impacts on less advantaged members of society is as great, if not greater”¹.

Financial implications

- 14 There are no direct financial implications to this policy or its objectives.
- 15 Indirectly, there is likely to be an impact on the time spent by some individuals on equality issues as a result of some of the equality objectives, where we commit to:
- a. Reviewing, monitoring and improving our mandatory training
 - b. Analysing diversity data of job applicants versus successful applicants and those who stand for election

Legal implications

- 16 Herefordshire Council is not legally obliged to publish an equality policy, but it is considered good practice.
- 17 We are required by the Equality Act 2010 to publish at least one equality objective.

Risk management

- 18 If we fail to publish at least one equality objective, then the council is in breach of the Equality Act 2010.
- 19 An equality policy is a useful way of setting out what we understand to be our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, and also how we see our moral obligation to our employees and service users. Without an equality policy, we risk not being seen as a fair and transparent organisation. Without an equality policy, it would be harder for potential or current employees to understand the standards of behaviour that are expected of them. This, in turn, could lead to a greater incidence of bullying or discrimination.
- 20 If we choose not to publish an equality policy, we could instead strengthen existing policies (such as Dignity at Work, or Code of Conduct) to make specific reference to our Equality Duty as they pertain to the protected characteristics.

¹ R. (W) v. Birmingham City Council [2011] EWHC 944, Blake J at para 45.

Consultees

21 Internal only.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Draft Equality Policy 2017-2019.

Background papers

None identified.



Reference number

Approved by: Management Board

Date approved: December 2016

Version: 9

Last revised: June 2013

Review date: January 2020 (after this date, this document may not be up-to-date. Please contact the document owner to check its status)

Category

Owner: Equality, Information, Resilience & Compliance Manager

Target audience: Members of the public and others who contact the council, council managers and employees

DRAFT

Equality Policy 2017-2019



If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call the Equality Team on 01432 260216 or e-mail diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk.

1. The purpose of this document

This policy is designed to evidence our compliance with the Equality Act 2010. It demonstrates our commitment to equality and dignity, and our respect for human rights. This policy document draws together:

- a statement of our commitment to equality
- details of the legal requirements
- a description of Herefordshire's population in terms of its diversity
- the expectations that we have of our staff and elected members in terms of organisational values, culture and behaviour
- details of our six key equality principles
- our equality objectives

2. Our commitment to equality

We have both a moral and a statutory obligation to reflect the needs of our diverse population and workforce, and this is a requirement in everything we do, which includes:

- providing services
- purchasing and procuring services
- employing staff
- working in partnership with other organisations
- engaging with our communities

We recognise that all individuals should have equitable rights in relation to employment and services so that they can participate fully as citizens. We understand that social identity (e.g. a person’s race, nationality, gender, religion, sexual orientation) will impact on their life experiences. And we believe that promoting equality is essential for the creation of a cohesive society and for a strong economy.

We have therefore developed six **key equality principles** which are set out in this document. They are:

Principle 1: Promote our values and acceptable standards of behaviour for members and employees	8
Principle 2: Make fair and equitable decisions.....	9
Principle 3: Recruit fairly and support our workforce.....	10
Principle 4: Make our services accessible	10
Principle 5: Understand the needs of the community that we serve.....	11
Principle 6: Provide tailored support to vulnerable groups.....	12

For the duration of this policy, our three main priorities will be:

1. Accommodating Syrian refugees and unaccompanied asylum seeking children
2. Producing a Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT) strategy
3. Improving our internal diversity monitoring

Detail about what we propose to achieve can be found in Section 6, “Equality Objectives”.

Herefordshire Council takes its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 seriously, and we expect every staff member to bear personal responsibility and take ownership for their actions and decisions.

Cllr A W Johnson
Leader of Herefordshire Council

Alistair Neill
Chief Executive

3. The legal requirement

The Equality Act 2010 (the act) protects people from unlawful discrimination in the provision of services and public functions, employment, premises, education and associations. Its broad purpose is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of public authorities.

The act brought into law the **public sector equality duty** which requires that, when exercising public functions, public service providers must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims of the general equality duty. The act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The equality duty covers the nine **protected characteristics**: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Public authorities also need to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status. This means that the first aim of the duty applies to this characteristic but that the other aims (advancing equality and fostering good relations) do not apply.

The general duty is supported by **specific duties**, set out in regulations which came into force in September 2011. The specific duties require public bodies to:

- publish information to show their compliance with the equality duty, at least annually
- set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years
- publish diversity data of their workforce annually (if more than 250 employees)

All information must be published in a way which makes it easy for people to access it.

Despite the Equal Pay Act 1970, women still earn less than men in Britain today. From April 2018 all organisations with more than 250 staff will have to publish information about **gender pay** (data collection will need to start in April 2017).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is responsible for assessing compliance with the equality duty. It has powers to issue a compliance notice to a public body that it believes has failed to comply, and can apply to the courts for an order requiring compliance.

4. The local context

Below is just a summary of some key characteristics of the county of Herefordshire. Far more comprehensive information is available from several sources, most notably the council's "[Facts & Figures](#)" website.

Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mid-2014 estimate of the county's usual resident population is 187,200. • Projections from 2014 suggest that the total population will increase to 203,500 by 2031 (+9%) if recent demographic trends were to continue.
Gender	<p>There are more females than males in Herefordshire (51% to 49%) and females outnumber males at almost all ages over 40. The difference is more evident in the late seventies – a result of the longer life expectancy of women.</p>
Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the 2011 Census, people of "White: Other" origin (that is, not "British; Irish; Gypsy or Irish Traveller") made up the largest single minority group in the county, at 3.9% of the population. • Gypsy or Irish Travellers made up 0.2% of the county's population. • The Black, Asian and Other Minority Ethnic (BAME) population in Herefordshire was recorded as 6.4% in the 2011 Census (compared to 19.5% across England and Wales as a whole).
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herefordshire has an older age structure than England and Wales, with people aged 65 and over constituting 23% of the county's population, in comparison with 17% nationally. • The number of people aged 85+ in the county has increased by 43% (compared with 29% nationally), from 4,000 in 2001 to 5,900 in 2014. It also has a relatively high proportion of older people compared to its statistical neighbours (except for Shropshire). • By 2031, there are projected to be roughly 50,300 65-84 year-olds (35% more than in 2014), whilst the number aged 85+ will almost double to 11,700. • Hereford city has a much younger age profile, with relatively high proportions of young adults. 'Rural village and dispersed' areas have relatively more people of older working and early retirement age. • The BAME population of Herefordshire has a younger age profile than the county's population as a whole: 77% of the BAME population is under 45 years old, compared to 50% of the total population.
Religion	<p>In the 2011 Census:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As nationally, Christianity remained the largest religion in Herefordshire – although numbers had fallen since 2001 (from 79% of the population to 68%). • Unlike nationally, where Muslims were the second largest group, Buddhists remained the second largest religion in the county. The number of Muslims and Hindus had more than doubled since 2001. • The proportion reporting they have no religion increased from 13% to 23%, just slightly lower than the proportion nationally (25%).

Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the 2011 Census, 37,400 people (19%) said that they had some form of limiting long-term health problem or disability – a similar proportion to 2001 (18%), and similar to the national figure (18%). • Prevalence of long-term limiting conditions increases with age, and because of Herefordshire’s aging population structure, the largest number of people who have such a condition and are in bad/very bad health are aged 50-64 (2,000 people)¹. • An estimated 2,600 people aged 18-64 in Herefordshire have a learning disability. • According to GP records, there were 1,403 children and young people presenting with mental health need (under-18’s in January 2013) and around 6,400 adults with a long-term mental health problem across Herefordshire practices in 12/13².
Sexual orientation	<p>Almost 300 people in Herefordshire are living in a registered same-sex civil partnership – the same proportion as nationally (0.2%)³.</p>
Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After being the main driver of Herefordshire’s population change up to 2004-05, net migration from elsewhere in the UK has been a much smaller component than migration from overseas in recent years. The actual flows (the number of people moving in and out), however, are still much greater between Herefordshire and the rest of the UK than overseas: over 6,000 a year in each direction. • Just over 5,000 residents in 2011 (2.8% of the population) were born in countries that joined the EU during the last decade - over half (3,000) in Poland. • In Herefordshire, Polish is the most commonly spoken language after English. Other common languages include Lithuanian, Slovak, Hungarian and Romanian. • In the 2011 Census, almost 1,700 households (2.1%) didn’t have any residents who spoke English as their main language, and another 160 only had a child (or children) who did – although this doesn’t mean that people in them were unable to speak English, just that it wasn’t their preferred language. • The number of children with a first language other than English (defined as children with “English as an additional language” (EAL)), has increased from 4.8% (1,070) of Herefordshire pupils in 2012, to 7.8% (1,804) in 2016.

¹ Understanding Herefordshire: JSNA 2016 Summary Report

² Herefordshire CCG Mental Health Needs Assessment: December 2014

³ 2011 Census

<p>Poverty and low income</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although poverty is not a protected characteristic within the Equality Act, it can have an impact on the way in which the council delivers services. • The Index of Multiple Deprivation is a combined measure of the individual determinants of health and quality of life that can be viewed at a ward level. The county has affluent areas where residents enjoy good health and wellbeing outcomes, alongside areas which rank amongst the most deprived in England where residents have significantly poorer outcomes. • In 2014 the median weekly earnings for people working in Herefordshire was £405.80 – lower than the West Midlands region (£479.10) and England (£523.30). Annualised earnings in the county were £21,160 (again lower than the West Midlands and England). • In 2015, 59.9% of children not in receipt of free school meals achieved 5+ A*-C GCSEs. This is in comparison to only 36.6% of children who are in receipt of free school meals. • At the end of 2015, 4.5% of Herefordshire 16-18 year olds were recorded as NEET (not in education, employment or training). Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and those eligible to free school meals (FSM) are both over-represented in the NEET cohort. Whereas 17% of the school population were SEN, 28% of the NEET cohort were SEN⁴. Similarly 8.4% of the current school population are eligible to free school meals but FSM pupils made up 30% of the NEET cohort.
<p>Rural geography</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although rurality is not a protected characteristic within the Equality Act, it can have an impact on the way in which the council delivers services. Rurality is seen as a barrier to accessible services as well as resulting in higher costs per head of population than urban areas to provide services. • Herefordshire is the fourth least densely populated area in England (86 persons per square kilometre).

⁴ Jan 2016. 16-18 characteristics taken from pupil Yr 11 record

5. Our key equality principles

Principle 1: Promote our values and acceptable standards of behaviour for members and employees

Herefordshire Council’s PEOPLE values are designed as a set of principles to shape our culture, guide the way we act, what we say and how we think, and aid us in making choices and decisions. They are:

People:	Treating people fairly, with compassion, respect and dignity
Excellence:	Striving for excellence, and the appropriate quality of service, care and life in Herefordshire
Openness:	Being open, transparent and accountable
Partnership:	Working in partnership and with all our diverse communities
Listening:	Actively listening to, understanding and taking into account people’s views and needs
Environment:	Protecting and promoting our outstanding natural environment and heritage for the benefit of all

The values are included in both the constitution of the council, and the council’s corporate plan. They also form part of the employee performance and development process. Councillors and employees are all required to sign up to a code of conduct which specifies that all members of the local community, customers, and other employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity. In addition, a behaviour policy sets out our expected standards of behaviour.

Treating people fairly, and with respect and dignity includes:

- Not making assumptions
- Being patient and helpful
- Communicating clearly
- Being courteous and polite
- Respecting cultures and values different to our own
- Recognising and guarding against our own prejudices
- Using appropriate language
- Identifying and addressing discrimination

People who manage other employees within the organisation have further specific responsibilities. The following is a list of just some of their additional considerations.

<p>Amongst other duties, and at all times, our managers will seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address any discriminatory, intimidating or unfair behaviour within their teams in a timely and constructive manner • challenge stereotypes in the workplace • act as a role model for others • understand how to apply HR policies and processes, and apply them fairly • communicate effectively with their team • manage staff according to individual needs, rather than treating everybody the same • provide all staff, regardless of their social identity or protected characteristics, equitable opportunity for career development and training opportunities
--

Mandatory equality training is provided for employees at all levels of the organisation in order to embed our values and make our expectations clear.

In addition, we have policies in place to support our employees if they experience offensive behaviour, harassment, cyber bullying or assaults by members of the public.

Principle 2: Make fair and equitable decisions

Herefordshire Council manages a substantial budget, and is obligated to those who live and work in the county to make sound, fair and transparent decisions about the services that it delivers.

The council's constitution sets out the principles it will follow when making decisions, and these include the requirement for the decision-maker to consider equality, diversity and respect for human rights; these considerations are usually set out in the report informing the decision-maker.

This information allows the decision-makers to understand the possible impact of each decision on protected groups and, if there is to be a negative impact, look at possible mitigating actions. It also provides a baseline from which a review of the impact can be undertaken after the decision has been implemented to assess whether there have been any unintended negative impacts which could be mitigated.

a) Equality Impact Assessments

As a council, we must have due regard for advancing equality (see "The Legal Requirement").

Producing equality impact assessments (EIAs) is one way that we can demonstrate we are meeting this requirement.

An EIA is a risk assessment focused on fairness, access and inclusion. It is a way of considering a policy, service or process in terms of how it might impact differently on different groups protected in law. We use EIAs to find and remove barriers in services which might stop people knowing about the service, using it, and getting the best from it. EIAs also help us to open services up to new groups and make services better.

Internal procedures require that consideration is given to equality impacts and the equality duty when policies, services or functions are undergoing change, and we provide a copy of any EIA to decision-makers before decisions are made. We will provide access to an EIA for anyone who wants to see it.

b) Procurement and contracting

As a council, we aim to commission the right services, from the right provider, at the right price. We embrace the objectives of the Social Value Act and are working to embed social value in all commissioning and procurement practices, and in the direct delivery of services. We will only award contracts to organisations who can evidence that they are fully compliant with the Equality Act, and our terms and conditions stipulate this.

Principle 3: Recruit fairly and support our workforce

Individual members of staff will be supported throughout their employment by managers who recognise their needs. This might include providing “reasonable adjustments” for a disabled member of staff, or recognising the difficulties experienced by parents of young children, or those with caring responsibilities.

All of our human resources policies have been reviewed to ensure that they take into consideration the protected characteristics, and the diverse nature of families. For example, providing equity for people in same-sex relationships, or people undergoing gender reassignment.

We will continue to monitor [the protected characteristics of our staff](#). This allows us to gauge the extent to which our workforce reflects the diversity of the population we serve, and could help to highlight any anomalies in our recruitment process. We also monitor grievance and disciplinary procedures by protected characteristic of the individual involved for the same reason.

The Council is approved to use the [Disability Confident](#) symbol, which aims to help employers successfully employ and retain disabled people and people with health conditions. We know from our previous workforce analyses that the number of employees identifying as disabled (4.4%) is low compared to the estimated number of disabled people in the working age population (7.8%). We are addressing this gap by a number of measures, such as offering guaranteed interviews to disabled applicants who meet all the key job criteria, and looking creatively at reasonable adjustments in the workplace to eliminate disadvantage.

Principle 4: Make our services accessible

a) Accessibility of buildings and the built environment

We have a continual programme of improvements for our buildings, and are working towards moving out of or disposing of those buildings that are not fit for purpose. When designing infrastructure schemes and redesigning the public realm in our city and town centres we are committed to working with user groups to ensure the design improves access for all. Through careful design and the use of measures such as tactile paving we can help make it easier to move around and access shops and services.

b) Language and alternative formats

All of our external documents carry an “alternative formats statement” which commits us to providing the information in different ways if requested. Alternative formats include Braille, large print, easy read, audio, and other languages.

Herefordshire Council runs its own language agency, the [Herefordshire Language Network](#), which provides swift and easy access to translation and interpreting at significantly lower cost than if we were to use an external company.

c) Use of the internet and digital exclusion

As many council functions as possible are made available via the internet, and our website conforms to web-accessibility standards. However there are always alternative methods of service delivery, as an estimated 17% of Herefordshire’s population have never been on the internet. Herefordshire Council, through [Fasterhire](#), has grants available for community groups to organise training; and with funding from the National Equalities Unit run training for women entrepreneurs called [Fasterwomen](#).

Principle 5: Understand the needs of the community that we serve

a) Community cohesion

Community cohesion refers to the aspect of togetherness and bonding exhibited by members of a community; the “glue” that holds a community together. This might include features such as a sense of common belonging or cultural similarity. The concept is most noticeable when it is absent, for example when racist or homophobic incidents occur, when there is rioting or violent protest. Successful community cohesion initiatives help us to achieve the Public Sector Equality Duty of “fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it”.

In 2015, Herefordshire Council established, and now facilitates, the “[FACE Values](#)” group (“Fairness, Acceptance, Community and Equality”). It comprises of a mixed group of volunteers and professionals working to challenge hate crime through the promotion of positive messages and community events. A “Young FACE Values” group was established in 2016 for people aged 14-19.

In 2015, Herefordshire Council established, and now facilitates, the Herefordshire Interfaith Group. The group promotes joint working between people of any faith and no faith. It coordinates community events such as the Anne Frank memorial service and World Peace Day, and will respond to community issues concerning faith in the county.

b) “New communities”

Community cohesion can be seen to be of particular importance given the changing demographics within the county, and particularly the arrival of “new communities”, such as [Syrian refugees](#), adult asylum seekers, and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Herefordshire Council is working with Refugee Action and local partner organisations to resettle up to 60 Syrian refugees (approximately 12 families) into the county from November 2016 onwards. The refugees will be those currently residing in countries neighbouring Syria, and priority will be given to women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence.

The council has agreed to accommodate 25 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs) in total as part of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). The children are expected to remain in the UK at least until their claim for asylum is resolved. The council will receive funding to support them up to the age of 18, and reduced funding is available if the claim for asylum is not resolved by that time. The council is supporting these children in foster care, supported lodgings, and shared accommodation, depending on their individual needs.

c) Cultural competence

We hold regular training sessions for council employees who work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, in order to improve their understanding of cultural differences. Further sessions will be developed as necessary.

d) “Prevent”

Councils have a statutory responsibility to lead on [Prevent](#), and Herefordshire Council has a Prevent project group which meets 4 times a year. The group also helps other public organisations to comply with their Prevent duty. Herefordshire Council has trained 122 people to deliver “Workshop to Raise Awareness on Prevent” (WRAP) training.

“[Channel](#)” is a partnership approach designed to support individuals vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism or supporting terrorism. Herefordshire’s Channel Panel meets every month.

e) Public health

The Herefordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016 highlights that people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods experience poor health in comparison to those who live in the least deprived neighbourhoods. Herefordshire Council has universal and targeted public health programmes in place to reduce inequalities and improve health. Further information can be found in the [Annual Report of the Director of Public Health](#), the [Adult Social Care Local Account](#), our [market position statement](#), and [Herefordshire's Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#).

f) Armed Forces Covenants

Herefordshire Council has established an [Armed Forces Community Covenant](#) as part of a government initiative to promote greater understanding between the general public and the military and to ensure that they do not suffer any disadvantage as a result of being part of the armed forces community. In addition, Herefordshire Council is one of the few local authorities in the country to have made a commitment to the [Armed Forces Corporate Covenant](#).

Principle 6: Provide tailored support to vulnerable groups

a) Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT) communities

Nationally, it has been identified⁵ that Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities “experience, and are being held back by, some of the worst outcomes of any group, across a wide range of social indicators”. In Herefordshire, some areas, such as educational attainment, are being well managed, and are better than those nationally. However, social inequality and deprivation can be illustrated by the following statistics (from the sample of 248 GRT children known to the council as at December 2015):

- 83 (33.4%) of the children are registered with Families First/Troubled Families (24 families)
- 30 (12%) of the children were the subject of open social care investigation
- 14 (5.85%) were experiencing poor mental health and were being supported by Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

The location and development of Traveller sites is an on-going challenge in Herefordshire, as well as nationally. The county currently has six sites, in varying states of repair despite significant recent investment. There is no transit site (or temporary stopping place) in the county. Whilst this is not a statutory requirement, there is some evidence to show that such provision could ease the difficulties caused by unauthorised encampments.

The Council chairs a Gypsy & Traveller Strategy Group which is attended by representatives of West Mercia Police and the Herefordshire Traveller Support Group, and they are seeking to develop a GRT Strategy.

b) Educational attainment for disadvantaged children

Disadvantage can be defined as:

- In receipt of/eligible for free school meals (indicating a level of poverty)
- Children for whom English is an additional language
- Disabled children or children with special educational needs
- “Looked after” children (i.e. children in the care of the local authority)

“Diminish the Difference” is a national and local initiative to improve the educational attainment of disadvantaged children. In Herefordshire, the [Strategic Plan for Education for Children and Young People \(2014-2017\)](#) sets out our proposed actions. In 2016, the specific priority focus will be on improving the educational attainment of children eligible for free school meals.

⁵ 2012 Minister Working Group

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The educational attainment and welfare of “English as an additional language” (EAL) learners in Herefordshire schools are supported by the [English as an additional language team](#) which sits within the Children’s Wellbeing Directorate. The role of this team is primarily to monitor the progress of EAL learners and to develop schools’ capacity in raising their achievement.

c) Herefordshire Safeguarding Boards

The [Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board](#) is Herefordshire Council’s mechanism for keeping vulnerable adults safe. The Board considers cultural issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and honour based violence (the incidence of which is low in Herefordshire).

The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board continues to identify children at risk of child sexual exploitation and packages are put in place to support victims and potential victims of child sexual exploitation. Perpetrators of sexual exploitation can come from any cultural background. Little is known about the extent of human trafficking and modern slavery that takes place in Herefordshire.

d) Domestic abuse

The number of domestic violence and abuse incidents and crimes continues to increase. The number of people calling the specialist domestic abuse help line and the numbers accessing specialist help from West Mercia Women’s Aid continues to increase markedly. Whilst domestic violence is no more prevalent in different minority ethnic groups, it is clear that victims from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups face more barriers to access specialist support from the violence they experience⁶.

⁶ Understanding domestic violence and abuse within minority communities in Herefordshire (May 2015)

6. Equality objectives 2017-2019

The specific duty of the Equality Act 2010 requires public service providers to publish at least one equality objective to demonstrate how it will meet the general equality duty. We published some equality objectives in April 2016, and our review of those objectives can be found in Appendix A.

Below are the council's new equality objectives.

Service Area	Objective	Who	When
1. Syrian Refugees	<p>Ensure that a further 40 refugees are safely accommodated in the community, and supported to becoming independent.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and managing the agency we have commissioned to resettle refugees into the county Ensure that appropriate ESOL classes are provided Work in close partnership with other agencies to provide support as necessary (e.g. police, job centre, schools) 	Refugee and Asylum Seeker Coordinator	January-December 2017
2. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children	<p>Build numbers during 2017 to ensure that at any one time a total of 25 unaccompanied asylum seeking children are safely accommodated in the community, and supported to become independent.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to identify a range of suitable placements to meet the care and support needs of the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Ensure that appropriate educational support is available Work in close partnership with other agencies to provide support as necessary (e.g. police, schools) 	Refugee and Asylum Seeker Coordinator	January-December 2017
3. Training	<p>Establish a comprehensive picture of what constitutes mandatory training for staff and managers.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing current provision and up-take Reviewing and promoting our training priorities 	Head of HR	March 2017
	<p>100% of our staff and managers complete their mandatory training.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring we maintain our records showing who has completed their mandatory training, and following up with individuals who have not completed it Ensuring that our induction for new staff members fully explains the requirements and process for training 	Head of HR	March 2018
4. Diversity data of workforce	<p>Analyse diversity data of job applicants to highlight any notable anomalies between the protected characteristics of applicants versus successful candidates.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generating quarterly reports for analysis 	HR and Equality Officer	January 2018
	<p>Capture the diversity data of 95% of all council employees.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging new staff members at induction to complete this information Internal promotion to staff about the reasons for collecting the information 	HR and Equality Officer	December 2018

Service Area	Objective	Who	When
	<p>Analyse diversity data of all candidates standing for election for Herefordshire Council, to highlight any notable anomalies between the protected characteristics of successful candidates versus unsuccessful candidates.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capturing and analysing the diversity data of all candidates 	Democratic Services Manager	December 2018
5. Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT) communities	<p>Agree on a location, and develop a transit site/temporary stopping place in Herefordshire.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the Gypsy, Roma & Traveller community and local partners (such as Police) to identify a suitable site • Addressing community cohesion issues in the chosen locality 	Director for Economy Communities and Corporate	December 2019
	<p>Produce a Gypsy, Roma & Traveller strategy with associated actions to improve facilities and services for GRT communities.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on key areas such as education, employment, accommodation and health 	Director for Economy Communities and Corporate	December 2018
6. Gender pay gap	<p>We will publish our employees' pay by gender in accordance with regulations under section 78 of the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating appropriate comparisons and statistics using our human resources database 	Head of HR	April 2018

7. Appendix A: Review of 2016 Equality Objectives

The specific duty of the Equality Act 2010 requires public service providers to publish at least one equality objective to demonstrate how it will meet the general equality duty. Below are the council's equality objectives.

Service Area	Objective for April-December 2016	Progress as at December 2016
1. Syrian Refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safely accommodate up to 60 refugees in the county • Contract an agency to provide a Refugee Support package • Provide all school-age refugee children with a school place • Establish a pool of volunteer interpreters to work with refugees • Provide 1:1 support for any refugee who experiences hate crime or discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 families (20 people) were safely accommodated in November 2016 • Refugee Action has been appointed as Herefordshire's support service to welcome and help refugees settle into our community, and this service will be paid for by the Home Office • A pool of Arabic-speaking volunteers has been identified and trained to work with refugees
2. Training	100% of managers complete the new e-learning by December 2016	This hasn't been achieved as the e-learning module was not made mandatory.
3. Diversity data of workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture the diversity data of all new employees when they start • Reduce number of employees who "prefer not to say" to 20% or lower across each "protected characteristic" (currently 36.3%) • Capture diversity data of all job applicants (who wish to divulge it) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capturing data of new starters is inconsistent, and higher priority will be given to this objective in 2017 • The data for employees who "prefer not to say" will be available on 9 January 2017 • The diversity data of job applicants is captured, but more work needs to be done in 2017 on analysing it to gain meaningful intelligence
4. Herefordshire Language Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have 36 languages active and available within county boundary (currently 35) • Achieve annual income target of £30,257 (by end of March 2017) • Deliver one unaccredited Foundation Training for Interpreters course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 languages are now available within (or just outside) the county boundary. Since April we have lost Taiwanese, but gained Urdu and Romany. • At the end of the third quarter of financial year 2016/17, we have achieved our annual income target, and are on track to achieve the full target by March 2017. • A Foundation Training Course, delivered in October 2016, was tailored specifically to the needs of a group of people who had volunteered as interpreters for Syrian refugees.