

Agenda

Cabinet

Date: **Thursday 27 March 2025**

Time: **2.30 pm**

Place: **Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford,
HR4 0LE**

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

For any further information please contact:

Samantha Gregory, Democratic Services Officer

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Samantha Gregory, Democratic Services Officer on (01432) 260176 or e-mail samantha.gregory@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the meeting of Cabinet

Membership

Chairperson	Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council
	Councillor Graham Biggs
	Councillor Harry Bramer
	Councillor Barry Durkin
	Councillor Carole Gandy
	Councillor Ivan Powell
	Councillor Philip Price
	Councillor Pete Stoddart

Agenda

Pages

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations of interests in respect of Table A, Table B or Other Interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.

3. MINUTES

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March.

The draft minutes are to follow.

HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS

The deadline for submission of questions for this meeting is:

5pm on Friday 21 March 2025

Questions must be submitted to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk. Questions sent to any other address may not be accepted.

Accepted questions and the response to them will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting. Further information and guidance is available at <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved>

4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

To receive questions from members of the public.

5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

To receive questions from councillors.

6. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

To receive reports from the Council's scrutiny committees on any recommendations to the Cabinet arising from recent scrutiny committee meetings.

There are no reports from scrutiny committee.

7. DELIVERY PLAN 2025-26

To approve the council's Delivery Plan 2025-26.

8. OFSTED MONITORING VISIT FEEDBACK

To share the feedback letter from Ofsted following their sixth Monitoring Visit conducted in February 2025

Report and Ofsted letter to follow on 20 March 2025.

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9. SEND INSPECTION UPDATE

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To share the feedback report from Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) following the SEND inspection of Herefordshire Local Area Partnership conducted in December 2024

10. EDUCATION STRATEGY

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To endorse the Education Strategy 2024/29.

The Public's Rights to Information and Attendance at Meetings

Please take time to read the latest guidance on the council website by following the link at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings and support us in promoting a safe environment for everyone. If you have any queries please contact the Governance Support Team on 01432 261699 or at governancesupportteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

You have a right to:

- Attend all Council, Cabinet, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose 'confidential' or 'exempt' information.
- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings
- Inspect minutes of the Council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
- Access to a public register stating the names, addresses and wards of all Councillors with details of the membership of Cabinet and of all Committees and Sub-Committees. Information about councillors is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/councillors
- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the Council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title. Information about councillors is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/councillors
- Copy any of the documents mentioned above to which you have a right of access, subject to a reasonable charge (20p per sheet subject to a maximum of £5.00 per agenda plus a nominal fee of £1.50 for postage).
- Access to this summary of your rights as members of the public to attend meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees and Sub-Committees and to inspect and copy documents.

Recording of meetings

Please note that filming, photography and recording of this meeting is permitted provided that it does not disrupt the business of the meeting.

Members of the public are advised that if you do not wish to be filmed or photographed you should let the governance services team know before the meeting starts so that anyone who intends filming or photographing the meeting can be made aware.

The reporting of meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those doing the reporting to ensure that they comply.

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Public transport links

The Herefordshire Council office at Plough Lane is located off Whitecross Road in Hereford, approximately 1 kilometre from the City Bus Station.

The location of the office and details of city bus services can be viewed at:

<http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/hereford-city-bus-map-local-services->

Guide to Cabinet

The Executive or Cabinet of the Herefordshire Council consists of a Leader and Deputy Leader and seven other Cabinet Members each with their own individual programme area responsibilities. The current Cabinet membership is:

Cllr Jonathan Lester (Leader)	Corporate Strategy and Budget
Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst (Deputy Leader)	Environment
Cllr Ivan Powell	Children and Young People
Cllr Harry Bramer	Community Services and Assets
Cllr Pete Stoddart	Finance and Corporate Services
Cllr Carole Gandy	Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Cllr Graham Biggs	Economy and Growth
Cllr Barry Durkin	Roads and Regulatory Services
Cllr Philip Price	Transport and Infrastructure

The Cabinet's roles are:

- To consider the overall management and direction of the Council. Directed by the Leader of the Council, it will work with senior managers to ensure the policies of Herefordshire are clear and carried through effectively;
- To propose to Council a strategic policy framework and individual strategic policies;
- To identify priorities and recommend them to Council;
- To propose to Council the Council's budget and levels of Council Tax;
- To give guidance in relation to: policy co-ordination; implementation of policy; management of the Council; senior employees in relation to day to day implementation issues;
- To receive reports from Cabinet Members on significant matters requiring consideration and proposals for new or amended policies and initiatives;
- To consider and determine policy issues within the policy framework covering more than one programme area and issues relating to the implementation of the outcomes of monitoring reviews.

Who attends cabinet meetings?

- Members of the cabinet, including the leader of the council and deputy leader – these are the decision makers, only members of the cabinet can vote on recommendations put to the meeting.
- Officers of the council – attend to present reports and give technical advice to cabinet members
- Chairpersons of scrutiny committees – attend to present the views of their committee if it has considered the item under discussion
- Political group leaders attend to present the views of their political group on the item under discussion. Other councillors may also attend as observers but are not entitled to take part in the discussion.

The Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.



Title of report: Delivery Plan 2025-26

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday 27 March 2025
Cabinet member:	Peter Stoddart, Finance and Corporate services
Report by:	Director of Strategy & Corporate Services
Report author:	Director of Strategy & Corporate Services

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

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 concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

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

(All Wards);

Purpose

To approve the council's Delivery Plan 2025-26. Cabinet is required to produce a delivery plan which sets out how the strategic priorities within the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-28 will be delivered and monitored.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) Cabinet approves the Delivery Plan 2025-26 as set out in appendix A;**
- b) Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to make minor amendments to the approved Delivery Plan 2025-26.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options as the Delivery Plan is required to be produced on an annual basis. Cabinet may choose to make amendments to the proposals, and it is open to Cabinet to recommend alternatives to the deliverables and milestones that have been identified in the plan.

Key considerations

2. The agreed Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028, alongside the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, provides the overarching policy framework within which decisions will be taken and resources allocated over the next four years.
3. The Delivery Plan 2025-26, as at Appendix A, identifies the deliverables and milestones that will progress the key objectives within the Herefordshire Council Plan set against the priorities of People, Place, Growth and Transformation. The 2025-26 Delivery Plan builds on the successful implementation of the 2024-25 Delivery Plan to ensure ambition and continual improvement across the key areas of people, place, growth, and transformation. It also includes specific deliverables that enable the council and its partners to respond proactively and strategically to the changing context and complex environment surrounding local government. The programmes of work set out within the delivery plan will ensure that we as a council are delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything that we do.
4. It is a constitutional requirement that the council has a Delivery Plan that sets out what actions the council take to achieve the priorities of the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-28. The Delivery Plan is agreed each year by the Cabinet and progress monitored and reported through:
 - I. Quarterly reporting into Cabinet through the quarterly performance report.
 - II. Routine financial monitoring against the approved revenue budget and capital programme, through the quarterly budget report to Cabinet.
 - III. Quarterly progress reporting to the corporate leadership team.
 - IV. Monitoring through annual service plans outlining service area priorities and key areas of focus to achieve the objectives.
 - V. Annual individual performance and development plans.

Community impact

5. The Delivery Plan 2025-26 has taken into account the key characteristics of Herefordshire, as outlined on Understanding Herefordshire (the council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment). Factors such as rurality, the aging population and social mobility for our young people are key drivers at the heart of the vision, priorities and objectives.
6. As set out in the Delivery Plan 2025-26 within the People theme and wider into Transformation, we are focussed on strengthening relationships with, and interconnectivity between, Herefordshire's communities. The aim of this specific focus is to promote wellbeing for

residents in its widest sense, increase collaboration and partnership between the council and communities, and enable community action.

Environmental Impact

7. The Delivery Plan 2025-26 continues to focus on our responsibility to deliver the council's [environmental policy commitments](#) and the following success measures have been included within the plan:
 - I. Value nature and uphold environmental standards.
 - II. Minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity.
 - III. Reduce waste, increase reuse and increase recycling.
 - IV. Work towards reducing county and council carbon emissions, aiming for net zero carbon by 2030 and communities to make the county more resilient to the effects of climate change.
8. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
9. The development of any projects within the Delivery Plan 2025-26 will seek to minimise any adverse environmental impact and identify opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance.

Equality duty

10. Improving equality of opportunity and access, and reducing inequality underpins the plan as set out in the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028.
 - I. Tackle inequality and improve social mobility through timely intervention and prevention activities which allows residents to live independent and fulfilling lives.
 - II. Support people to feel safe and respected in their communities.
11. Individual projects and delivery within the plan will complete an equality impact assessment as a fundamental element to planning, decision making and implementation.

Resource implications

12. The recommendations of this report have no direct financial implications, however the priorities within the plan set the strategic direction for the council. This delivery plan will be delivered within the budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy as agreed at Council in February 2025.

Legal implications

13. There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report. The legal implications of any decisions to be taken by the executive in implementing the proposals will be set out within the relevant decision report.

Risk management

14. The Delivery Plan 2025-26 is an integral element of the council's performance and risk management framework. Risks associated with objectives and projects are entered onto the relevant project, service or directorate risk register and escalated as appropriate. The corporate risk register is a living document and reviewed regularly by Corporate Leadership Team, Cabinet and Audit and Governance Committee.

15. The financial challenge and capacity to deliver the corporate priorities, whilst delivering the necessary savings, remains a significant risk; this will be mitigated by ensuring that there is regular oversight and monitoring as detailed in the performance and risk framework.

Consultees

16. The development of the Delivery Plan 2025-26 was reviewed by Scrutiny Management Board Working Group on 13 February 2025 and feedback noted to be accommodated within the Delivery Plan.
17. The Delivery Plan 2025-26 was presented at a Political Group Consultation on 6 March 2025.

Appendices

Appendix A - Draft Delivery Plan 2025-26

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 04/03/2025
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 21/02/2025
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 24/02/2025
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 24/02/2025
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 17/02/2025
Procurement	Claire Powell, Procurement Manager	Date 17/02/2025
Risk	Jessica Karia	Date 17/02/2025

Approved by	Rosie Thomas-Easton	Date 06/03/2025
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Delivery Plan 2025 - 26

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Introduction

The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028, was approved in May 2024. Our vision is

Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do.

The four priority areas for the plan are:

- **People** – We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities that support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.
- **Growth** – We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county; attracting inward investment, building business confidence, creating jobs, enabling housing development along with providing the right infrastructure.
- **Place** – We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire remains a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place, and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.
- **Transformation** – We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.

The Delivery Plan 2025-2026 outlines how the council's priorities and objectives will be achieved and what will be delivered in the next 12 months. The Delivery Plan will be reviewed annually and progress will be reported on a regular basis.

People:

We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities that support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Support all children to have the best start in life	Ensure sufficiency of local care placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilise four new Residential Children Home (RCH) beds • Develop an options appraisal for use of capital funds to further increase sufficiency of residential children's home beds in the county and implement agreed recommendations • Undertake market engagement events locally/regionally with independent fostering agencies to promote working relationships and their acceptance of our referrals
	Further develop short break sufficiency with increased capacity and choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communication strategy with Parent Carer Voice (PCV) and the Children with Disabilities (CWD) team to ensure wider take up of the existing short break offer • Develop options to deliver a commissioned framework for daytime community based short breaks in the county • Undertake feasibility scoping of potential to deliver in county residential overnight short breaks alongside Strategic Housing • Review the targeted allowance scheme for short breaks to inform future planning
	Establish a framework of commissioned providers to deliver alternative curriculum provision, for children who are not able to attend school and those needing additional support, increasing choice, quality and value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake procurement to put in place the framework • Establish robust monitoring and impact analysis

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Support all children to have the best start in life	Continue to strengthen the programme of interventions to support children's oral health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop standardised resources and materials provided to parents following the findings of the toothbrushing audit undertaken in 2024-2025 • Identify the number of early years/primary school settings in areas of deprivation participating in the toothbrushing programme and produce an options appraisal for increasing participation and promoting the programme • Undertake an annual survey of parents re barriers, opportunities and impact of the new 4-6 month oral health and healthy weaning check
	Review implementation of the new pre-school health needs assessment which identifies any developmental needs early	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on how the pre-school check aligns to the health check at 2½ years • Develop local baseline measures for 'school readiness'
	Develop new Alternative Provision for children with needs that require additional support to enable them to remain and/or return to mainstream education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of provider • Build/furnishment • Registration of provision
	Progress the development of a new build special free school as part of the DfE (Department for Education) new free school project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with the church commission regarding covenants on the old Whitecross playing field • Work with the DfE to appoint an academy trust
	Continue to deliver the schools capital investment programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence construction at Peterchurch Primary School • Commence construction at Aylestone High School • Commence works at Hampton Dene Primary School • Complete works at Brookfield School
	Implement a targeted recruitment programme for foster carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Special Guardianship Order (SGO) financial support offer and obtain Cabinet agreement for any recommended developments increase • Promotion of the specialist foster carer scheme • Deliver a targeted recruitment programme

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Support all residents to live healthy lives within their communities	Support employers to develop a workplace wellbeing offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate mental wellbeing into the workplace Health Checks pilot project
	Invest in play areas to encourage children to get out and stay active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of £500k investment in play areas across the county and associated asset transfers
	Deliver active travel programmes to encourage more walking and cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support five businesses at the Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ) with employer travel plans • Deliver Level 1 and Level 2 of the Bikeability (cycle training) programme to 1602 pupils
Tackle inequality and facilitate social mobility by focussing on early intervention and prevention activities that enable people to live independent and fulfilling lives	Provide effective Early Help to families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilise and embed new Early Help contracts • Undertake monitoring to understand impact and respond to feedback
	Evaluate five technology pilots within the wider Technology Enabled Living Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the evaluation of the technology pilots delivered in 2024-25
	Deliver schemes to tackle inequality that support our most vulnerable residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) targeted at children in receipt of free school meals • Deliver the Household Support Fund (HSF) to those affected by cost of living
	Review and refresh the action plan to 'Prevent Ill-Health and Reduce Health Inequalities'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with key partners including adult social care and the voluntary and community sector • Produce revised action plan
Enable people to support themselves and each other by providing the right help at the right time	Work with Talk Community to develop and implement the children and family community support provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit lead officers to support the locality model • Co-produce needs-led, locality-based community support with families and third-sector partners • Expand existing multi-agency forums to incorporate a children's focus, enabling stakeholders to coordinate support and address challenges affecting children and families
	Provide a consultation, support and training programme to the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to enable them to build skills and confidence in managing presenting needs and risks in children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training materials and programmes tailored to the needs of the VCSE sector • Deliver the training across VCSE and universal Early Help workforce • Evaluate the impact of the training and identify next steps for ongoing support

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Enable people to support themselves and each other by providing the right help at the right time	Implement against the Children's Social Care reforms and the Department for Education's (DfE) Families First Partnership Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the single vulnerable child assessment and plan combining the Early Help Assessment (EHA) and Social Worker Assessment (SWA) to form one family plan • Develop the support offer, including financial support to families and family networks to reduce the need for protection and care services • Develop the Family Help Lead Practitioner role within the partnership • Develop Family Group Conferencing for vulnerable children in need of early help and support to identify and provide support through family networks
	Explore options to develop a new care facility, aimed at delivering local care and support to adults with a range of complex needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake soft market testing • Develop an options appraisal for future delivery models • Develop business case
	Review all Supported Living services, offering accommodation and support to adults with a range of needs including learning disability, autism and mental health with the aim of ensuring a range of services that are fit for the future and meet changing needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of each supported living scheme • Undertake future demand planning • Develop an options appraisal for future delivery models • Design commissioning plan for future models
	Review and develop a range of community activities to ensure meaningful opportunities for adults with a range of needs including learning disability, autism and mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a communication and engagement plan for service users and their families to review the range of community activities and identify how they can be improved to promote independence • Undertake future demand planning for community activities • Undertake a series of market engagement activities to review the current community activities offer and identify scope for the future • Develop an options appraisal for future models • Design commissioning plan for future models
	Develop a Domestic Abuse Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the Domestic Abuse Strategy and action plan • Implement the Domestic Abuse Strategy action plan

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Enable people to support themselves and each other by providing the right help at the right time	Increase promotion and improve knowledge of mental health support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the information held on the Talk Community Mental Health support service webpage • Delivering for Mental Health campaigns across the year • Mental Wellbeing information to be included in at least four of the 'Spotlight' newsletters to schools • Develop a suite of communications and marketing resources
Work with partners and residents to build connected and resilient communities	Support local providers including foster carers to meet the cultural, religious and social needs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review placement of UASC by type and location • Develop and implement a communication and engagement plan with UASC in relation to commissioned services • Develop options to improve the offer to UASC locally
	Embed partnership working within the Joint Commissioning Forum (JCF), comprising Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board to jointly address health and care needs of children, young people and families with an initial focus on children and young people with Special Educational Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise Joint Commissioning Strategy for Special Education Needs and Disability 2025-28 and commence implementation • Review and refresh S75 arrangements for joint funding across Health, Education and Social Care • Review arrangements for commissioned services across therapy
	Deliver the Community Spaces Capital Grant Scheme to enhance community hubs, infrastructure, and spaces that support local engagement, inclusion, and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate Expressions of Interest (EOIs), shortlist applicants, and invite full applications • Allocate funding to successful projects and initiate delivery • Monitor implementation of funded projects and evaluate outcomes
	Pilot the Herefordshire Connect cross-sector referral platform through organisations that are supporting the household support fund to improve access to cost-of-living support services by enabling direct referrals between organisations, reducing duplication, and ensuring residents receive the help they need quickly and effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise partnerships and complete technical setup, ensuring seamless integration with key partners • Launch the pilot phase with identified service providers and support initial onboarding • Monitor platform performance, user experience, and system efficiency through ongoing evaluation • Produce an evaluation report with data-driven recommendations for full rollout, identifying opportunities for scaling and innovation

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Work with partners and residents to build connected and resilient communities	Enable people to access the housing they need through the strategic housing service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continual engagement with Registered Providers, supporting them with planning comments and grant funding opportunities through Homes England • Continual engagement with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to secure grant funding for additional council properties to be purchased and refurbished to meet the needs of specific client groups • Maintain up to date housing needs data to support the delivery of accommodation
	Invest in a flood risk management programme to reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding for residents and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment of £1m to develop technical business cases, engage with communities, deliver schemes and to provide wider support around flood risk management
Support people to feel safe and respected in their communities	Develop our community safety approach as a partnership to address extra familial risk of harm in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the locality model establish a partnership across the safeguarding network and local community leads in each locality • Develop a Prepare Plan and Protect plan tailored for each locality • Further development of the information sharing processes to identify new and emerging threats and actions to be taken • Update the Herefordshire Partnership Prevent Strategy and action plan for 25-26
	Deliver the safer streets to schools' project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence construction • Complete construction

Place:

We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Develop Herefordshire as a place for growth, prosperity and communities to thrive	Deliver the Local Transport Plan to ensure places can prosper and thrive with the right integrated transport networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence consultation • Seek Cabinet approval to adopt the plan • Commence implementation
	Prepare a new Local Plan in response to the National Planning Policy Framework changes and the government mandatory housing targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a new Local Plan • Regulation 18 consultation
	Develop the Hereford Vision Strategy to set the long-term direction for growth and development in the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft the Hereford Vision Strategy in consultation with partners and stakeholders • Seek Cabinet approval for the strategy • Publish strategy and commence implementation
	Establish a strategic plan for the eastern expansion of Ross-on-Wye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake stakeholder engagement • Draft strategic plan produced • Strategic plan outcomes included in the Regulation 18 consultation
	Establish a strategic plan for the west side of Hereford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake stakeholder engagement • Draft strategic plan produced • Strategic plan outcomes included in the Regulation 18 consultation
	Deliver the Public Realm services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award the new Public Realm contract • Commence demobilisation of current contract and commence mobilisation for new contract
	Continue to deliver Section 106 infrastructure projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce backlog of Section 106 schemes • Commission infrastructure projects in a timely manner to ensure best value for money when income is received
	Deliver a review of all leisure assets and service provision across Herefordshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake visioning and consultation exercise • Develop Herefordshire Council vision for leisure provision • Undertake condition surveys of leisure assets

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Develop Herefordshire as a place for growth, prosperity and communities to thrive	Continue the redevelopment of the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress from design stage (RIBA – Royal Institute of British Architects - Stage 4) to construction (RIBA Stage 5) for the building • Roll out the Museum Activity Plan across Herefordshire
	Support the local Food Alliance to increase partnership, food collaboration and local food consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope a Local Food Strategy • Develop plan to achieve Sustainable Food Places Silver award
Expand and maintain the transport infrastructure network in a sustainable way and improve connectivity across the county	Complete the Transport Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete construction of the Transport Hub
	Progress the delivery of the Holme Lacy safe pedestrian corridor improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence construction
	Complete the necessary work to tender for the design and construction of Phase 1 of the Hereford Western Bypass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of Phase one and Phase two business cases • Award of Design and Construction tender for the Hereford Western Bypass Phase 1
	Complete the design work and start construction on the Aylestone Hill safe pedestrian corridor improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final design completed • Tender the construction contract • Start construction
	Complete the Great Western Way improvement project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence construction • Complete construction
	Deliver Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a Bus Services Summit • Expand/ extend eight bus routes, running across the county • Develop the plan for spending £1.1m of capital funding for bus infrastructure improvements • Commence delivery against the plan

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Expand and maintain the transport infrastructure network in a sustainable way and improve connectivity across the county	Deliver the highways maintenance investment programme across the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver £10m of investment in the resurfacing of the County's highway network through the Resurfacing Herefordshire Highways 1 and 2 programmes • Deliver £3.985m of investment in highway infrastructure assets including £250k on Public Rights of Way through the Highway Infrastructure Investment programme • Deliver £2.5m of investment in the preparation and delivery of surface dressing schemes through the Highway Infrastructure Investment 2 programme
	Deliver the Highway Core Revenue spend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of £5.3m of revenue spend in a year
	Deliver the Highway LTP (Local Transport Plan) Capital Maintenance spend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of £22.9m of revenue spend in year* (*subject to confirmation from Department for Transport)
	Work with City, Town and Parish Councils on locally important maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver grants to the City, Town and Parish Councils to support delivery of the following schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthsman scheme (£500k) • Public Rights of Way (PROW) scheme (£250k) • Drainage scheme (£445k)
	Deliver £1.2m of Public Realm investment in Hereford City and the market towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and delivery of appropriate projects across Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye, working in partnership with the Town Councils of each

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Value nature and uphold environmental standards to minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity	Deliver Phase 2 Strategic Mitigation for Phosphate Credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete construction of second wetland site • Complete construction of first off-mains treatment plant replacement • Commence design for third wetland site • Commence planning application for third wetland site
	Support and facilitate the partnership approach to address river pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish Nutrient Mitigation Plan for the Wye Catchment Area • Deliver the third annual rivers conference • Work with partners to support in bringing forward river restoration projects
	Support the Wye Catchment Partnership Catchment Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to bring forward the delivery of the Catchment Management Plan • Work with both governments to secure funding to support delivery of the plan
	Deliver a regenerative farm mentoring programme to six farmers across the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission provider to deliver mentoring programme • Commence delivery
	Adopt the countywide Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the strategy
Reduce waste, increase reuse and increase recycling	Develop a new food waste collection service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the business case (subject to funding) for a new food waste collection service for introduction in 2026-27
	Develop a new garden waste collection service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise the business case and, subject to approval, commence roll out of the service
	Commence a review of the waste disposal contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a strategic options appraisal and procurement options for the future waste disposal arrangements from 2029

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Work towards reducing county and council carbon emissions, aiming for net zero CO₂ by 2030/31 and work with partners and communities to make the county more resilient to the effects of climate change	Deliver sustainable energy solutions in all council owned accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade all refurbishments to a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C. Consideration dependent on the property for sustainable energy solutions such as solar panels and electric boilers
	Reduce the council's own CO ₂ footprint through implementing our Carbon Management Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver five heat decarbonisation plans for the corporate estate • Achieve a 70% reduction of CO₂ emissions from our 2008-09 baseline by the end of the financial year 2025-26 • Publish a new Carbon Management Plan for the period 2026-27 to 2030-31
	Deliver solar car port canopies in the north car park adjacent to Plough Lane to reduce the council's reliance on grid electricity, exposure to energy markets and improving security of energy supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of surveys on the car park for feasibility of installation (e.g. management of surface water, presence of asbestos, suitability of concrete to support structure) • Planning permission obtained • Commence installation of solar car ports
	Support households and businesses to take action to address climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install energy efficient measures to 40 homes and retrofit assessments completed for 60 households
	Expand the electric vehicles charging network in council owned car parks and additional points through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funded project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 27 new publicly available charge point sockets across the county
	Adopt the Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan and provide residents with different travel choices through integrated networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek Cabinet approval to adopt the plan • Publish the plan and commence implementation
Support our local culture and heritage and make Herefordshire a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit	Finalise the design proposals and start construction of the Shirehall Library and Learning Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procure contractors for the build refurbishment • Commence refurbishment of the Shirehall building

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Support our local culture and heritage and make Herefordshire a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit	Review and update the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-29 in partnership with the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with HCP to produce draft vision and priorities of the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy • Produce final strategy • Endorsement by Cabinet of the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy
	Produce a Herefordshire Library Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft new vision and priorities and test with stakeholders and users • Produce final strategy • Cabinet Member approval of Herefordshire Library Strategy • Develop and commence implementation of the action plan arising from the strategy
	Update Herefordshire Archive Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a new three-year Archive Plan 2025-2028 • Achieve service accreditation for the Herefordshire archive service
	Deliver the Our Place creative arts project in partnership with the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the project in Leominster, Hereford and Golden Valley
	Expand community programming and increase accessibility through targeted outreach for Herefordshire Museum Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Revealing Our Roots project (co-production with communities) funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation • Implement part two of the oral history project Voices of the Wye to preserve cultural stories funded by an external project grant • Establish youth led Fixing Our Broken Planet project funded by the Natural History Museum
	Embed participatory and inclusive practices into decision-making processes in the Herefordshire Museum Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish co-production groups (Access, Equalities, Young People and Veterans & Military Families) • Develop a Curatorial Advisory Panel and Teacher Panel
	Identify additional income streams to support the financial sustainability of the Museum service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore commercial opportunities with a higher education provider to run accredited programmes through the museum • Build on current income generation initiatives to ensure financial resilience of the museum service
	Deliver highway improvement schemes at known collision cluster sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and commence delivery of works at top ranking sites including (i) A465 junction with B4348 Locks Garage, Allensmore, and (ii) B4203 junction with B4204 High House Crossroads, Upper Sapey

Growth:

We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the County; attracting inward investment, building business confidence, creating jobs, enabling housing development along with providing the right infrastructure.

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Develop employment land to unlock new business opportunities for the county and generate local jobs	Commence development works on Ross Enterprise Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procure a contractor • Commence works to create access to the site, and four acres of service development ready plots
	Develop an outline business case for the potential development of business units on the Bromyard Depot site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop outline business case • Develop full business case • Appoint Design team
	Attract new and growing businesses onto the Hereford Enterprise Zone to support the economic growth of the county and provide better paid jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the sale of six plots on Hereford Enterprise Zone to support growing businesses
	Support existing and new businesses on Hereford Enterprise Zone to increase productivity and provide better paid jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a key account management approach for providing targeted support to businesses on Hereford Enterprise Zone • Businesses identified and receiving dedicated contact and support from a named Economic Development Officer every three months
	Develop and implement an Inward Investment and Place Marketing plan for Herefordshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an inward investment programme • Commence delivery of the inward investment programme • Publish an Investment Prospectus setting out both financial and development opportunities

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Support market towns and Hereford City to be vibrant hubs through working with residents, grassroots organisations and businesses	Develop business hubs and managed workspace in the market towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and agree proposals (subject to funding) for business hubs/ co-working space in each of the market towns
	Support projects and priorities identified in the 2021 Market Town Investment Plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Town Councils to identify funding to take forward projects
	Work with partners in the Golden Valley Parkway Task Force to complete a study looking at the viability for a new railway station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study completed • Findings of study evaluated, and next steps agreed
Support residents to access skills development, training and employment opportunities	Support the Herefordshire Skills Board in engaging with local businesses to understand and help address skills gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a range of initiatives to address identified skills gaps and business needs. • Continue to develop our partnership with NMiTE to support their development and growth around shared strategic ambitions for education, skills and economic development
	Attract external funding to help address skills gaps and business needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek Cabinet Member approval to implement the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) for 25-26 • Implement the UKSPF in accordance with the Cabinet Member approval to address identified skills gaps and business needs

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Work with partners to provide high quality and affordable housing to meet all needs	Bring forward council owned sites for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek outline planning approval and dispose of sites such as the former Holme Lacy school to enable development
	Complete the strategic plan for Merton Meadow and Essex Arms sites in Hereford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the strategic plan
	Commence the flood alleviation works on the Merton Meadow and Essex Arms sites in Hereford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek outline planning permission • Commence development of the flood alleviation works
	Finalise the long-term strategic model for the delivery of housing across the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete review of options • Seek Cabinet approval for the preferred option(s) • Develop costed business case for the preferred option(s)
	Utilise the full range of measures to prevent people becoming homeless including through the provision of transitional accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete procurement process and award contract for refurbishment works to a city centre building for transitional accommodation for those who are homeless • Complete refurbishment works to the city centre building • Design work and tender process undertaken to appoint a contractor for refurbishment of the Buttercross, Leominster into affordable units completed • Commence work on the Buttercross building • Finalise specification and arrangements for winter shelter provision • Deliver winter shelter provision
Enhance the rollout of improved broadband across the county to deliver a fully digital Herefordshire	Commence planning for future digital infrastructure across the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a high-level digital infrastructure proposal for Herefordshire

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Work with our partners and businesses to facilitate growth across the county	Support the Herefordshire Business Growth Board to better understand barriers encountered by the private sector and enable opportunities for development and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the Board • Identify priorities and delivery programme
	Maximise the use of the Business Growth Hub to support businesses across the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver regular engagement and support for businesses across the county, including business surgeries, training and workshop referrals
	Support county Business Improvement District (BID)/ Visit Herefordshire to increase the economic impact of tourism across the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the establishment of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership • Support the partnership to develop the Herefordshire Destination Management Plan

Transformation:

We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Change and transform the organisation to be fit for the future and deliver the efficiencies required	Deliver the year one objectives of the council's Transformation Strategy and support implementation of the future council target operating model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Transformation Strategy - year one objectives
	Implement an improved strategic commissioning, procurement and commercial model and strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review our organisational commissioning and procurement model and develop and launch a strategic commissioning and commercial strategy
	Implement an improved approach to contract management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the council's revised Service Level Agreement with Hoople to ensure best value and alignment with the future council target operating model • Refresh and re-launch contract management tools and resources
	Implement policies and processes that ensure that the council maximises service cost recovery and realises value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and embed a consistent approach to reviewing and setting fees and charges across the council • Develop and embed a council-wide approach to debt management
	Complete the review of home to school transport to mitigate increasing costs through a new delivery model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic business case developed and approved for in-house fleet, or a joint venture • Implement a new commissioning strategy and implement a dynamic purchasing system to achieve better value for money
	Continue to invest in the property assets of the council to ensure they are maintained and decrease the burden on revenue repair works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the programme of projects

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Attract and retain an excellent workforce through effective approaches to recruitment and retention	Ensure our recruitment practices reflect best practice and value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify any improvements in the application process for candidates and recruiting managers so that the process is as smooth as possible • Review our approach to temporary and interim appointments to get better value for money • Review and develop the content of the council's recruitment microsite 'the Spirit of Herefordshire' • Incorporate the council's THRIVE values into our recruitment processes • Review the council's approach to recruitment payments and market forces supplements
	Become an employer of choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch the council's scheme to recognise long service and exceptional achievement • Launch a programme of leadership training for managers and aspiring managers • Review the impact of the Workforce Strategy and progress made towards its stated objectives • Deliver the improvements identified in the employee survey
Work collaboratively with our residents, communities and businesses to achieve the best results together	Strengthen our partnerships with communities to enable community action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a long-term commissioning framework for voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations • Develop a council-wide approach to grant management and grant maximisation • Deliver the Talk Community Strategy – year one objectives
	Build an understanding of our resident and communities' requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise current consultation guidance document and implement recommendations • Co-design and establish a young people's council and young people's consultation guidance with children and young people • Develop and embed a volunteering policy to support the council to maximise opportunities to work with volunteer networks • Implement the Customer Services Target Operating Model
	Ensure improved working with Parish, Town and City Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Parish, Town and City Charter

Objectives	Key Deliverable - This Year We Will...	Key Milestones to achieve the Deliverable
Improve the way we use technology across our services	Complete and build on the foundation work to improve our existing IT platforms and infrastructure to transform how we work and deliver services to our residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise the roll out phase one of Microsoft 365 to ensure the workforce have the latest version of Microsoft tools • Upgrade the online and telephone payment function • Complete the transfer to a new CMS (Content Management System) to enable website development • Develop the plan for digital functionality/capability which directly aligns to and supports the Customer Services Target Operating Model • Initiate pilot programmes to test technological applications and evaluate outcomes for residents and council ways of working
	Identify and undertake pilots of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an organisation wide internal pilot and evaluation of Microsoft Co-Pilot to understand areas of opportunity for future implementation of AI • Undertake a pilot project implementing Magic Notes into adults and children's social work practice and evaluate impact on efficiency and practice
Strengthen the council's strategy ensuring alignment for delivering the future vision	Develop a strong evidence base and become an intelligent organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh the Digital, Data and Technology Strategy and develop a plan for improving how we manage data, performance and intelligence across the organisation
	Develop a growth plan for Hoople in line with the future needs of Herefordshire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and launch a council strategic plan for Hoople which aligns to our future council target operating model
Build a data and performance rich culture to inform decisions, improve efficiency and manage demand	Strengthen the performance culture across the council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the new performance management system for Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and delivery plan milestones • Deliver workshops on the use of the new performance management system to all services and directorates
	Strengthen the risk management culture across the council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the organisation's refreshed risk management strategy
	Strengthen data quality and intelligence in social care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a robust and fully compliant data warehouse to meet statutory and operational data needs for children and adults' social care

Title of report: SEND Inspection Update

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday 27 March 2025
Cabinet member:	Cabinet member children and young people
Report by:	Corporate Director, Childrens and Young People
Report author:	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To share the feedback report from Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) following the SEND inspection of Herefordshire Local Area Partnership conducted in December 2024.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **Cabinet to receive and note the feedback from the published Ofsted report (Appendix 1).**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options. The local area partnership's arrangements have been judged by Ofsted and the CQC as leading to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements. The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately three years.

Key considerations

2. Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB) are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND.
3. Herefordshire's local area partnership SEND inspection took place on 2 to 6 December 2024. The Ofsted and CQC findings can be found in full in Appendix 1.
4. The summary of findings is set out below with partner/service response where appropriate.
5. Ofsted and CQC found that, *'Families of children and young people with SEND have varying opinions about their experiences in Herefordshire... Key leaders across the partnership know the variable experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND across Herefordshire.'*

Partnership and Leadership

6. The report notes that leadership of the local area partnership has strengthened, both at strategic and operational level. Investment in workforce development and capacity is identified as a strength. The partnership has been highly responsive to adjusting the capacity of some teams to manage with increase in demand across services, such as in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS), the School's Well-Being and Emotional Support teams (WEST) and the health service therapists' teams.
7. Inspectors notes that investment in additional staffing and training across all partners has been effective in improving the identification, assessment and meeting of children and young people's needs.
8. Staff across the whole partnership are referenced strongly for building positive relationships with children and young people and listening to their views. The report notes *'Professionals know children and young people well.'*
9. A strong feature throughout the report is how well the local area partnership supports children and young people to prepare successfully for their next steps, including adulthood.
10. The report highlights the need for the local area to promote more widely how families can secure the help and support they need, including communicating the *'comprehensive short breaks offer'* more widely and *'...raising awareness of pathways to access assessment and support services.'*

Co Production

11. Co-Production across the local area partnership is described as *'strong.'* Inspectors cited the recent development of the Youth Employment Hub as, *'Already making a significant difference for the young people who access the service.'*
12. Our partnership is proud of its coordinated work with the Parent Carer Voice Herefordshire (PCV) group and our children and young people and our families. Inspectors noted, *'The development of the 'Herefordshire Helpers' has raised the profile of children and young people at the highest levels.'* Parent carer voice Herefordshire told inspectors that *'they feel heard and that their views are acted on by the partnership.'*

Education

13. The full complement of educational settings across Herefordshire are referred to positively throughout the report. Affirmative remarks about early years, schools, specialist settings,

alternative providers and residential special schools, including those located out-of-area, are referenced throughout the report.

14. It is pleasing that vulnerable groups are noted as well supported by our alternative providers, including Herefordshire Pupil Referral Service (HPRS). The report notes, *'For children and young people with SEND who might have faced exclusion, absence, or medical needs, the pupil referral unit (PRU), and other AP, provide timely intervention to reintegrate them into long-term, successful education, training and employment.'* It is important to note that the number of available places at HPRS is insufficient for the current level of demand and the buildings are in a poor state of repair. A business case to relocate the two HPRS centres on to one site in improved facilities, and to increase capacity is well underway.
15. The range of additional activities available to children and young people, beyond school and college was reported as a strength. Inspectors reported that early help services play a key role in directing and supporting families. The report notes, *'Children and young people with SEND spoken to during the inspection valued these opportunities to socialise with other children and young people with similar needs.'* The additional needs service notes that publicising the Local Offer more widely is a helpful next step.
16. Children and young people reported that they felt well supported and listened to by their school and college staff. The report notes that access to high-quality provision, including alternative provision, is preparing children and young people well for the next stage of education. Our specialist settings are praised for being, *'innovative in finding appropriate solutions for meeting the most complex learning and health needs.'*
17. Ofsted found that, *'Across education, health and social care, there is variability in the timeliness of identification and assessment of SEND and issuing of EHC plans in the majority of cases.'* The additional needs service notes that the issuing of EHC plans is within statutory timescales in most cases. Herefordshire's performance against this measure is significantly above that seen nationally.
18. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) network is praised for its joint work between schools, social care and health providers.

Social Care

19. It is pleasing that inspectors found *'children and young people with SEND known to early help services access swift support from education, health and social care teams where appropriate.'* This is in line with ensuring that we understand the needs of children and their families, and that they have the right help at the right time.
20. The report identifies some real strengths in our social care teams including the quality of assessments that lead to appropriate support for children and young people. Inspectors commented, *'Disabled children and young people who receive a service from social care are well supported into adulthood.'*
21. The report recognises the strengths and continued commitment to children in care to ensure they understand their story. *'Some older children and young people with SEND in care are sensitively involved in developing their life stories, which aids their understanding and recollection of events and people that are important to them.'*
22. Inspectors describe effective and appropriate support for disabled young people who are leaving care. This includes receiving, *'Appropriate support to develop their independence skills for when they reach adulthood, and they are involved in preparing their pathway plan.'*

23. The Children with Disabilities Team is referenced as a strength in the partnership. Inspectors comment, *'Workers within the children with disabilities team understand children's needs. They are regularly visited; most disabled children establish strong relationships with their workers. Assessments are detailed and give a clear understanding of the child's world and the family context.'*
24. The inspectors identified that, *'Most disabled children and young people known to social care have plans that fully identify their needs. Plans are reviewed through regular multi-agency meetings, ensuring that most children and young people's plans progress and their needs are met. However, for some children and young people with SEND subject to child protection plans, changes in social workers can lead to them experiencing delays in having their needs met because records are not transferred effectively enough.'* The local authority is conscious and committed to the need for a permanent and stable workforce for children and families, and this is an ever improving picture.
25. The inspectors highlighted the, *'Comprehensive offer for short breaks, and currently, there is no waiting list for specialist short breaks for those children with the most complex learning and health needs. Much work has also been completed recently to increase the range of providers for short breaks. However, this offer is not consistently well communicated to children, young people and their families.'* The partnership is committed to making sure that children and families are informed about the available services and how to access them.

Health

26. Inspectors note, *'There are no extended waits for the core child and adolescent mental health services (CAHMS) team, meaning that children and young people are seen quickly. This is a timely and supportive service in identifying and supporting mental health.'*
27. The inspectorate recognised the positive impact of new ways of working, including drop-in clinics for speech and language therapy and physiotherapy and access to early years 'while you wait' groups.
28. Inspectors reported, *'Variability with access to health services in Herefordshire depending on age and need.'*
29. It was reported that there are comprehensive services for young children with a diagnosis of autism but limited for older children.
30. Health services transformation plans for therapies and neurodevelopment services were shared with inspectors noting these are *'at an early stage'* and have not yet significantly reduced waiting times. The local area partnership is committed to developing these at pace to bring about a stronger service offer to families.

Summary

31. Four areas of improvement are identified focused on:
 - Reducing waiting times across health services
 - Keeping families well informed about support while waiting for assessment and diagnosis of neurodevelopment conditions
 - Ensure sufficient staffing capacity and stability across health services
 - Promoting more widely the Local Offer to families.

32. The report makes four recommendations for improvement. This feedback and the priorities will inform the work of the area partnership to improve the experiences and outcomes for all children and young people with additional needs and disabilities in Herefordshire.
33. The local area partnership will receive its next full inspection within the next three years.

Community impact

35. The Council Plan 2024–2028 includes the ambition to ‘enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and benefit from communities that help people to feel safe and supported’ and more specifically, the council aims to:
- a) We want to support children and young people to thrive, be safe, and for families to be supported.
 - b) We believe that children and young people are best supported in their family networks and within highly effective schools and flourishing communities. Our children are the future. Sometimes children and families need our help.
 - c) We are committed to improving children’s services and providing support to families who need it. Acting on Ofsted inspection reports are part of our drive to improve our services to children and families.
 - d) We will support all children to have the best start in life.

Environmental Impact

36. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.

Equality duty

37. There are no equality issues arising from this report.

Resource implications

38. There are no resource implications as a result of this report.

Legal implications

39. Section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004 requires local authorities to make arrangements that promote cooperation between local area partners to improve the well-being of children in the area. The purpose of the local area SEND inspection is to hold the local authority to account by evaluating how effectively it meets its responsibilities for children and young people aged 0-25 with additional needs and disabilities.
40. The inspection also assesses how local areas are fulfilling their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. It is crucial that the local authority develops and implements an action plan to address any inconsistencies or deficiencies identified during the inspection. This plan must detail specific actions to enhance the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, ensuring they have the opportunity to thrive, reach their potential, and live fulfilling lives.

41. Failure to address the identified issues could result in legal challenges, as the local authority would be at risk of breaching its statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 and other relevant legislation.

Risk management

42. There are no new or additional risks arising from this inspection. Risks associated with SEND are monitored through the SEND Assurance Board.

Consultees

43. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Area SEND Inspection Report.

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 25/02/2025
Finance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Legal	Pooja Nahar	Date 17/02/2025
Communications	Michala Lee	Date 21/02/2025
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Claire Powell	Date 15/02/2025
Risk	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.

Approved by	Tina Russell	Date 26/02/2025
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Area SEND inspection of Herefordshire Local Area Partnership

Inspection dates: 2 to 6 December 2024

Dates of previous inspection: 26 to 30 September 2016

Inspection outcome

The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.

The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately three years.

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) ask that the local area partnership updates and publishes its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in this report.

Information about the local area partnership

Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB) are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND in Herefordshire.

Significant changes have been made to the leadership of SEND services since the previous inspection. There have been some changes to leadership posts, including the appointment of a director of education, learning and skills in 2022 and an interim director of children's services in July 2024. The commissioning of health services changed across England in 2022. On 1 July 2022, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB became responsible for the commissioning of health services in Herefordshire.

The local area partnership commissions a range of alternative provisions (AP). AP, in Herefordshire, provides education for children or young people, including those who cannot attend schools due to social, emotional, mental health, or medical needs or for those who have been or are at risk of being permanently excluded from school.

What is it like to be a child or young person with SEND in this area?

Families of children and young people with SEND have varying opinions about their experiences in Herefordshire. For example, while about half of those parents and carers who responded to the survey reported that their child gets the right help and support in schools or colleges, only some stated that their child gets the right help and support from social care and health teams. Key leaders across the partnership know the variable experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND across Herefordshire. The local area partnership is committed to making further changes to continue its work to reduce waiting times for therapy and diagnostic services and improve capacity in health services.

Across education, health and social care, there is variability in the timeliness of identification and assessment of SEND and issuing of EHC plans in the majority of cases. Within mainstream schools, staff typically spot emerging needs of children and young people quickly and identify whether there is a need for further assessment and provision. Specialist settings are innovative in finding appropriate solutions for meeting the most complex learning and health needs. However, although waiting times for assessment and therapies have recently reduced, some children and young people still wait too long to access assessment and intervention. This limits how quickly these children and young people get the proper support to meet their SEND.

For children and young people with SEND who might have faced exclusion, absence, or medical needs, the pupil referral unit (PRU), and other AP, provide timely intervention to reintegrate them into long-term, successful education, training and employment.

For those children and young people with the most complex health, care and learning needs, there is a broad offer of opportunities to develop hobbies, pastimes and personal interests outside of school or college. These include swimming, local football teams, youth clubs and dance clubs. Children and young people with SEND spoken to during the inspection valued these opportunities to socialise with other children and young people with similar needs. However, some families who responded to the inspection survey, and some young people we spoke to on inspection, were unaware of this offer and how to access it.

Some children and young people with SEND who responded to the survey reported that they only sometimes receive the help that they need in school or college. However, the children and young people that inspectors spoke with during the inspection felt well supported by people who listened to them and acted swiftly when they needed help.

Many families who responded to the survey did not feel that their children get the right support to prepare them for their next steps. However, disabled children and young people who receive a service from social care are well supported into adulthood. For example, the Young Adult Team strongly supports disabled young people as they move

to adulthood. Assessments are detailed, and this helps to ensure that young people are supported in appropriate accommodation with a support package that meets their needs.

Some older children and young people with SEND in care are sensitively involved in developing their life stories, which aids their understanding and recollection of events and people that are important to them.

Children and young people with SEND who attend residential special schools or out-of-area provision typically receive a positive experience. The partnership works well to ensure that the intended provision accurately supports the education, health and care needs of children and young people. Young people told inspectors that professionals listen when they talk about their life ambitions. Consequently, there is a strong focus on preparation for the next steps and adulthood in these provisions.

What is the area partnership doing that is effective?

- ✓ The local area partnership has made improvements in several areas at an operational and strategic level. For example, they have reviewed, refreshed and implemented effective quality assurance measures for AP. This has assured the partnership that those most vulnerable children and young people have access to high-quality provision that prepares them well for their next steps.
- ✓ The local area partnership has invested in appointing additional staff and improved training. For example, they have made youth support worker roles within SENDIASS permanent. Senior practitioners within the school's well-being and emotional support teams (WEST) have been appointed. The partnership has increased the number of health service therapists and invested in the designated clinical officer (DCO) role. These appointments have improved the identification, assessment and meeting of children and young people's needs effectively.
- ✓ Across the partnership, professionals know children and young people well. For example, workers within the children with disabilities team understand children's needs. They are regularly visited; most disabled children establish strong relationships with their workers. Assessments are detailed and give a clear understanding of the child's world and the family context.
- ✓ Children and young people with SEND known to early help services access swift support from education, health and social care teams where appropriate. This includes sometimes means directing and supporting families with courses that might help them at home. Other children and young people, known to early help services, are supported in accessing community opportunities, such as skateboarding or short break opportunities.
- ✓ Most disabled young people leaving care receive appropriate support to develop their independence skills for when they reach adulthood, and they are involved in preparing their pathway plan. These plans strongly reflect the child's voice and give an understanding of their strengths and areas for support as they move towards independence.

- ✓ The Youth Employment Hub (YEH) is an exciting recent development. It has successfully brought together a range of education, health and social care professionals to support young people in employment, education and training. During the inspection, inspectors sampled the current experiences of young people known to the YEH, and it was clear that this is already making a significant difference for the young people who access the service.
- ✓ Over the last two years, the local area partnership has introduced new working models, including drop-in clinics for speech and language therapy and physiotherapy. Children and their families can access this specialist advice and support service without a referral in their early years.
- ✓ Children and young people with SEND and their families can access early years 'while you wait' groups within the area. This helps to meet children's needs while they wait to be seen by a paediatrician for an autism assessment.
- ✓ There are no extended waits for the core child and adolescent mental health services (CAHMS) team, meaning that children and young people are seen quickly. This is a timely and supportive service in identifying and supporting mental health.
- ✓ The health visiting service supports the early identification of needs effectively. Children and young people with SEND are seen at an additional three-year-old developmental review. This means that a child's health and developmental needs can be identified early, and appropriate specialist referrals can be made.
- ✓ Co-production with children and young people with SEND and their families is strong. The development of the 'Herefordshire Helpers' has raised the profile of children and young people at the highest levels. Parent carer voice Herefordshire told inspectors that they feel heard and that their views are acted on by the partnership.
- ✓ The special educational needs coordinator network has brought fresh enthusiasm for partnerships and joint work between schools, social care and health providers. Educational settings value the input from different services into this group, particularly from health colleagues. Education leaders are optimistic about the improvements in the local area partnership.

What does the area partnership need to do better?

- ✓ During the inspection, parents, carers, children, young people and practitioners told inspectors they were unaware of the systems and processes that could help them get the needed support. For example, some parents, carers and practitioners, including those in social care and health services, thought that parenting programmes were a prerequisite to accessing CAMHS services. Leaders say this is not the case. Equally, during the inspection, some parents, carers and practitioners told inspectors that a child must have a diagnosed need before they can have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Partnership leaders are aware of these perceptions and offered

assurance that this is not the case. They are working to raise the profile with parents, carers and practitioners that EHC plans are identified by need and are raising awareness of pathways to access assessment and support services.

- ✓ In some situations where there had been a significant turnover of social care and health services staff, some parents and carers reported that they had to repeat information about their child's needs or prior experiences. This slowed the speed at which their child was provided effective assessment and support.
- ✓ Some parents, schools, colleges and practitioners reported that the local offer is not always well promoted. This limits how well children, young people and parents access the services and opportunities that could make the greatest difference to them. For example, some families told us they are unaware of the offer for children and young people with SEND to complete activities and pastimes in their local community.
- ✓ Access to health services varies for children and young people in Herefordshire, depending on their age and needs. For example, there is a comprehensive service in the early years for the diagnosis of autism. However, there is no commissioned service for speech and language provision in secondary schools unless the child or young person has an identified specific need. Where a child or young person does not have a potential diagnosis of autism, the availability of support is limited due to a lack of services for these children and young people.
- ✓ The local area partnership has developed transformation plans for therapies and diagnostic neurodevelopmental services. However, these are at an early stage of implementation, and have not yet sufficiently reduced waiting times for essential assessment and therapeutic intervention.
- ✓ Video fluoroscopy referrals in Herefordshire have been stopped due to a lack of referral pathways for specialist services. Although health services have effectively mitigated risks for children and young people, the local area recognises the need to re-establish this service. It is developing plans to establish a local service within Herefordshire to assure these children of a locally accessible service.
- ✓ Most disabled children and young people known to social care have plans that fully identify their needs. Plans are reviewed through regular multi-agency meetings, ensuring that most children and young people's plans progress and their needs are met. However, for some children and young people with SEND subject to child protection plans, changes in social workers can lead to them experiencing delays in having their needs met because records are not transferred effectively enough.
- ✓ There is a comprehensive offer for short breaks, and currently, there is no waiting list for specialist short breaks for those children with the most complex learning and health needs. Much work has also been completed recently to increase the range of providers for short breaks. However, this offer is not consistently well communicated to children, young people and their families. Most children and young people who responded to the survey said they do not get help to do things outside of education. Less than a quarter of parents who responded reported that their child gets the right

help and support to join in with clubs, activities to benefit from holidays or make friends.

- ✓ Some health practitioners told inspectors about the challenges that they face regarding workload and capacity. Recently, there has been an increase in referrals across all services, which has led to challenges to the sustainability of the current workforce to meet the growing needs of the partnership. For example, some practitioners within specialist health roles stated that they sometimes do not have the capacity or training to fully meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement
The local area partnership must continue implementing recovery plans to reduce waiting times across health services, including therapeutic and diagnostic services.
The local area partnership needs to ensure that all children, young people with SEND, their families, and practitioners are well-informed about accessing the range of support services available to them while waiting for assessment and diagnosis of neurodevelopmental conditions.
The local area partnership needs to ensure sufficient capacity, stability and improved quality across all health services to improve service consistency, development and delivery.
The local area partnership needs to ensure that high-quality and accurate information regarding the range of services available to children and young people with SEND, their families, and professionals is promoted and communicated in an accessible form.

Local area partnership details

Local authority	Integrated care board
Herefordshire Council	Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS Integrated Care Board
Tina Russell, Interim Director of Children's Services	Simon Trickett, Chief Executive
www.herefordshire.gov.uk	Herefordshireandworcestershire.icb.nhs.uk
Plough Ln, Hereford HR4 0LE	Kirkham House, John Comyn Drive, Perdiswell, Worcester WR3 7NS

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004.

The inspection was led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors, including two HMI from education and social care, a lead Children's Services Inspector from the CQC, and another Children's Services Inspector from the CQC.

Inspection team

Ofsted

Chris Pollitt, Ofsted Lead inspector
Nick Bennison, Ofsted HMI
Gareth Morgan, Ofsted HMI

Care Quality Commission

Deana Fowle, CQC Lead inspector
Harriet Doran, CQC inspector

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Title of report: Education Strategy

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 27 March 2025

Cabinet member: Cabinet member children and young people;

Report by: Corporate Director, Childrens and Young People

Report Author: Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To endorse the Education Strategy 2024/29.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) The Education Strategy 2024/29 is endorsed; and
- b) Delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director for Children and Young People to take all operational decisions, as set out within this report and appendix.

Alternative options

1. Not to have an Education Strategy. This is not recommended as the Council has a general duty under section 13 of the Education Act 1996 to secure that efficient education is available to meet the needs of the population of Herefordshire. The Herefordshire Education Strategy 2024/29 sets out how the Council will do this.

Key considerations

2. The education landscape within Herefordshire is both varied and diverse. The county is host to some 100 schools ranging from those that are maintained, selective, stand-alone academy trust, or those that are part of a multi-academy trust. Accountability for these settings is complex, with our Council retaining the responsibility for maintained schools, and academy trusts accountable to the Department for Education (DfE). Irrespective of the governance structures and accountability, when it comes to the provision of Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), School Admissions and Attendance, Children in Care (CiC) and Early Years the Council has a range of statutory responsibilities and a leading role.
3. Herefordshire is typified by high performing schools and education settings. Most are rated positively by the inspectorate Ofsted. Performance data shows that in the majority of measures Herefordshire performs well against statistical neighbours and national averages.
4. Our role in education has changed significantly over the years, and the Council performs a multitude of different functions within an increasingly complex system. We operate as a key delivery partner, facilitator, and system leader. We seek to secure positive and inclusive outcomes for all children and young people.
5. The draft Herefordshire Education Strategy 2024/29 (Appendix 1) has been in development since 2023/24. Once approved, it will operate as the primary strategic driver for the Council's education team over the next five years, providing a foundation for current and future work. At its heart is an ambitious, collaborative and inclusive approach towards addressing the key challenges.
6. It will focus on the delivery of five key priorities which include:
 - a. Priority One: Ensuring access to and availability of high-quality educational places.
 - b. Priority Two: Preparing our children and young people to thrive.
 - c. Priority Three: Promoting collaborative school improvement to raise standards.
 - d. Priority Four: Embedding a climate of inclusion; and
 - e. Priority Five: Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of all children and young people.
7. The implementation of the Strategy will be supported by a service delivery plan which will be monitored regularly and updated annually. The success of the Strategy will be measured via a range of performance indicators which complement the Council Plan 2024/28.
8. The Herefordshire Education Strategy 2024/29 has been informed, co-produced and developed by wide stakeholder engagement, which has included insight from children, young people, schools, early years settings and Post 16 providers.
9. The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a firm foundation for across the Education Service over the next four years by further strengthening our partnership approach to improvement and firmly placing the Council as a strong, influential leader within the wider Herefordshire Education system.
10. The new Education Strategy replaces the previous version from 2019 and consequently better reflects the current educational landscape and Government Policy so to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

11. The key deliverables from the Strategy are reflected in the Council Delivery Plan. Regular updates will also be provided as requested to the Council's Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The SEND and AP Assurance Board and Roundtable Governance Group will receive regular updates.

Community impact

12. The Council Plan 2024–2028 includes the ambition to support to children and young people to thrive, be safe, and for families to be supported. We believe that children and young people are best supported in their family networks and within highly effective schools and flourishing communities. Our children are the future.

Environmental Impact

13. There is no direct environmental impact as a result of this strategy.

Equality duty

14. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
15. We believe that every learner, regardless of their background, identity, or ability, has the right to an equitable education that fosters personal growth and academic achievement. Our commitment to inclusivity ensures that all students have access to tailored resources, support, and opportunities, enabling them to reach their full potential.
16. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this strategy and it has been found to have low impact for equality.
17. Due to the potential impact of this strategy being low, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. However, the following equality considerations should be taken into account when making a decision about this strategy:
 - a. Inclusive language: Use of language that is respectful and inclusive of all students, regardless of their background, culture, faith, or identity.
 - b. Accessibility: Ensure that the education strategy promotes accessibility for all, including those children with disabilities, and provides equitable opportunity for participation and engagement.
 - c. Cultural sensitivity: Be aware of the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of children and ensure that the education strategy is culturally responsive and sensitive.
 - d. Opportunities for participation: Provide opportunities for all children and young people to be represented in the education strategy, including those who may be marginalised or underrepresented.
 - e. Monitoring and evaluation: Regularly monitor and evaluate the education strategy to ensure that it is effective in promoting equality and addressing any barriers or inequalities that may arise.

Resource implications

18. The Council has several funding sources available to support the implementation of the Education Strategy and the associated Service Delivery Plan. These include the core funding allocated to the Education Service, the commitment in the capital budget to support a programme of capital investment across the school estate, and the strategies outlined in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit management plan which aim to reduce the pressure on the DSG High Needs block. Also, funding allocated from a variety of DFE educational grants including the Special Educational Needs (SEND) and Alternative Provision Change Programme to support the SEND and Inclusion Change Programme.

Legal implications

19. The Education Act 1996 imposes a duty on local authorities to ensure the provision of efficient primary, secondary, and further education to meet the needs of their population. Specifically, the Act mandates local authorities to:
 - Exercise their functions with a view to promoting high standards, ensuring fair access to educational opportunities and training, and fostering the fulfilment of learning potential for children and young people within its local area.
 - Secure sufficient schools to provide appropriate education based on age, ability, and aptitude, while ensuring diversity of provision.
20. Local authorities are also obligated to promote and support the wellbeing and learning of all children in accordance with various statutory duties, including those outlined in the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 2004, and the Childcare Act 2006. These overarching duties apply irrespective of whether schools are maintained by the local authority or operate independently.
21. As the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, the local authority is required under The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Admissions Code 2021 (updated 11 March 2022) to determine the admissions arrangements.
22. The Children and Families Act 2014, along with The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, outlines the requirements for the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including those who require Education, Health, and Care Plan
23. Furthermore, the public sector equality duty, as stipulated in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, applies to the decisions made by the Cabinet Member in this report. This duty requires decision-makers to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity for individuals with protected characteristics, foster good relations between such groups, and eliminate any unlawful discrimination. This duty ensures that the local authority's education strategy is compliant with the local authority's statutory duties but also promotes inclusivity and fairness in its decision-making processes.

Risk management

24. Regular monitoring of impact measures by the Service will give assurance on the effectiveness of actions, highlight any key risks and identify mitigation strategies.
25. Consideration has been given to the risks to the council if the recommendation(s) are agreed and how these will be managed in the table below;

Risk	Mitigation
Insufficient School Places	Forward planning and regular meetings with place planning teaming at the Department for Education includes accountability for future projections and forward planning. The Dedicated Schools Grant includes a growth fund that supports increase in school places where necessary.
Insufficient specialist school places in Herefordshire	Capital investment from Department for Education in new build bid rounds (intermittent and occasional). Support from stakeholders to invest in special school expansion programme in Herefordshire and thus manage the high needs deficit.
Insufficient alternative provision places in Herefordshire	Business cases prepared to mitigate shortfall.
Poor condition to school estate	Government grant for capital maintenance received by local authorities. If insufficient, monitor and prepare business case for additional resource.

26. Working on the assumption that the recommendation(s) will be approved, the relevant risks will be managed at a directorate level and appear in the children's and young people risk register.

Consultees

- During consultation, the Education Strategy was presented to and discussed with the Headteacher Representative Forum, Primary Headteachers Forum and the Herefordshire Association of Secondary Headteachers (HASH). These groups include representatives from early years, primary and secondary schools and Post 16 providers. In capturing the voice of children and young people the service have used Parent Carer Voice Feedback and participation work findings as a guide.
- Headteachers provided useful feedback and agreed unanimously with the key priorities. Comments from our headteacher groups fed into the development of this strategy and were taken on board,

Appendices

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 25/02/2025
Finance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Legal	Pooja Nahar	Date 26/02/2025
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 14/02/2025
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Claire Powell	Date 15/02/2025
Risk	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Approved by	Tina Russell	26/02/2025

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Herefordshire Education Strategy 2024 - 2029

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Foreword by Councillor Ivan Powell

Herefordshire is a large and wonderfully diverse and safe rural county with a rich agricultural history and beautiful countryside. The county has a wide range of opportunities for around 24,000 pupils at 101 publicly funded schools.

Our Herefordshire Council's vision is for children and young people to feel included, valued, happy, healthy and safe in their homes and in their community as they grow up.

Our new Education Strategy sets out how we intend to support our children to achieve our vision.

We have high aspirations for all our children and young people. Access to quality learning from early years through to adulthood enables children and young people to thrive in their physical, emotional, intellectual and social development as they grow up to be young adults.

The Education Strategy for 2024 -2029 sets out our ambition for our children and young people and how we intend to fulfil our responsibilities in providing them with everything they need to develop and progress to enable them to do fantastic things with their lives. We are making it our mission to ensure access to, and availability of high-quality educational places in our county.

We are preparing our children and young people to thrive in an ever-changing world by supporting their emotional health and well-being, promoting collaboration and embedding a climate of inclusion across all of our schools and providers.

We are fully invested in our children and young people as they are at the forefront of Herefordshire's development as a county and as such become the next generation that ensures Herefordshire is the place people want to live, work and visit.



Vision

Our Vision is for children and young people in Herefordshire to feel Included, valued, happy, healthy and safe in their homes and in their community as they grow up. We want them to have access to good quality education, housing, sport and leisure facilities that enable them to thrive in their physical, emotional, intellectual and social development as they grow up to be young adults. Children and young people are at the forefront of Herefordshire's development as a county and as such, become the next generation that keeps Herefordshire the place people want to live and work.

Having access to high quality, local and inclusive education provision is key to achieving this vision.

Herefordshire children and young people deserve the best possible education and to leave school or college with the learning and skills that they need to succeed in further education or the workplace. A strong economy relies on a high performing education system to produce the workforce of the future and young people with the right skills, attitude and ambition to meet the needs of our employers or to start a business of their own.

We will actively listen to parents, carers, children and young people and front line practitioners to understand how the priorities impact them and use this to shape this strategy.

Our aspirations are firmly aligned to the policy aims set out in the following documents:

[Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028](#)

[Herefordshire Council Delivery Plan 2024 - 2025](#)

[Herefordshire Children and Young People's Plan](#)

[Herefordshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2023-26](#)

[Accessibility Strategy](#)

[Herefordshire Council Carbon Management Plan](#)

[Herefordshire Big Economic Plan 2022 - branded version.pdf](#)

Priorities for 2024 to 2029

The vision and aims of the strategy are set out below and include our strategic intentions to be ambitious, collaborative and inclusive.

The refreshed strategy focuses on five priority areas and its implementation and expected progression will be monitored and assessed against them.

Woven through all five priority areas is ensuring the importance of attendance in education in all key stages is understood and valued by parent/carers, professionals and children and young people.

Our key priorities are:

1. Ensuring access to and availability of high-quality educational places
2. Enabling our children and young people to thrive
3. Promoting collaborative school improvement to raise standards
4. Embedding a culture of inclusion
5. Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of all children and young people

Access to and availability of high-quality educational places

We believe that all children and young people should be able to access high-quality education in their school regardless of where they live. Key to children and young people achieving well is the widespread availability of good school places across the county and high quality accessible alternative provision places when children and young people need them.

We will:

- maintain high-quality education across Herefordshire schools and settings
- ensure all children and young people are educated in schools that are ‘fit for purpose’ in terms of condition, suitability and sufficiency
- ensure that there are sufficient educational places for all, including those with SEND and across all phases
- ensure that there is sufficient alternative provision options to meet children and young people’s needs
- improve access to education to ensure equality of opportunity, promote inclusion, and support children and young people with additional needs to reach their educational potential

We will measure how well we are doing by:

- proportion of schools and settings achieving good or outstanding Ofsted judgements*
- proportion of schools improving their Ofsted ratings*
- proportion of school days lost due to maintenance issues
- proportion of school and early years places meets demand including for SEND children and young people
- proportion of schools that are fully accessible

* Please note. This measure has now become redundant in its current form. During a graded inspection, Ofsted now grade schools for each key judgement: Quality of education, Behaviour and attitudes, Personal development and Leadership and management and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade. As a result there is no current benchmarking standard across England. The Department for Education has confirmed plans to introduce School Report Cards from September 2025 which will seek to provide a complete picture of how schools are performing. We will review this measure when details of the new scorecard are published



Enabling our children and young people to thrive

We believe in the importance of every child and young person having the best start in life so they can thrive. Through excellent teachers and teaching, all children and young people will have access to a range of learning opportunities within a high-quality curriculum.

We will:

- provide the best start for all our children and young people by ensuring there is sufficient high-quality nursery, childcare and wrap around provision
- ensure high parental take up of early years government-funded places for eligible children including those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- work with families to support the most vulnerable children into early years provision
- work with the Herefordshire Safeguarding Partnership and partners including Ofsted and the Department for Education to monitor and where appropriate take action to ensure providers keep children and young people safe
- we will promote high standards of education and attendance by working with mainstream, special and alternative education settings
- working with partners, we will support Careers Leads in schools and colleges to strengthen the quality and availability of careers education in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks, to enable young people to make informed decisions
- we will work with the Herefordshire Skills Board and young people to ensure that a wide range of pathways (academic and vocational) are available that will enable young people to progress their learning, give them the skills they need to prosper and secure positive labour market outcomes
- we will work with partners to promote and support regular attendance across all school phases

We will measure how well we are doing by:

- proportion of early years settings that are Ofsted rated as good or outstanding**
- proportion of eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds taking up early years government-funded places, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- making sure there is sufficient wraparound childcare to meet demand
- evaluating responses to the annual S175 safeguarding audit and undertaking quality assurance activity
- proportion of children and young people who regularly attend school, including keeping under regular review patterns and trends of absence, including persistent absence and severe absence.
- the proportion of children and young people who achieve well against national benchmarks
- the proportion of children and young people remaining in education, employment and training post 16 (EET))
- ensuring that all secondary mainstream and specialist schools and secondary Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) achieve all 8 Gatsby benchmarks by 2025

** Please note. This measure has now become redundant in its current form. During a graded inspection, Ofsted now grade schools for each key judgement: Quality of education, Behaviour and attitudes, Personal development and Leadership and management and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade. As a result there is no current benchmarking standard across England. The Department for Education has confirmed plans to introduce School Report Cards from September 2025 which will seek to provide a complete picture of how schools are performing. We will review this measure when details of the new scorecard are published

Collaborative school improvement to raise standards

We believe that every child and young person should receive excellent teaching. High quality continuous professional development for school staff is key to realising this ambition, along with high standards of curriculum provision, attendance and behaviour. The sharing of best practice, resources and expertise through collaborative working between schools and with the local authority will help to drive up standards.

We will:

- continue to develop the 'school to school' model of school improvement, to develop expertise within the school community to drive up standards
- ensure that local authority-maintained schools who are at risk of falling into an Ofsted 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' category are proactively supported to avoid this outcome*
- monitor the standards of children and young people's performance across all phases
- work in partnership with schools to be aspirational for all children and young people; facilitating networking opportunities and offering training
- embed the work of the attendance and social emotional and mental health (SEMH) inclusion service so that all children and young people of all abilities are encouraged to enjoy education
- provide support for school leaders and governors to ensure national and local priorities are addressed, with a focus on promoting an effective safeguarding culture
- develop the traded services offer to ensure support for schools beyond statutory functions

We will measure how well we are doing by:

- proportion of schools and settings achieving good or outstanding Ofsted judgements***
- proportion of schools improving their Ofsted ratings*
- the proportion of children and young people who achieve well against national benchmarks
- proportion of children and young people including vulnerable groups who regularly attend school
- increase the numbers of schools accessing the traded service support package

*** Please note. This measure has now become redundant in its current form. During a graded inspection, Ofsted now grade schools for each key judgement: Quality of education, Behaviour and attitudes, Personal development and Leadership and management and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade. As a result there is no current benchmarking standard across England. The Department for Education has confirmed plans to introduce School Report Cards from September 2025 which will seek to provide a complete picture of how schools are performing. We will review this measure when details of the new scorecard are published

Embedding a culture of inclusion

No child or young person should be left behind, a collaborative education system will ensure the sharing of best practice, resources and expertise to enable all children and young people who need additional support to succeed.

We will:

- share best practice and ensure the effective sharing of information between key partners so that every child or young person's need, or situation is accounted for and supported
- deploy the social inclusion and attendance and engagement teams to assist schools to operate inclusively
- proactively support children and young people at risk of permanent exclusion or suspension
- making sure there is suitable and sufficient alternative or targeted provision to meet individual need so no child or young person is left behind
- work with parents and carers to fulfil their roles and responsibilities to support their children and young people in education
-

- strengthen the role of the social, emotional and mental health inclusion service to support children and young people who are reintegrating to mainstream after exclusion or intervention
- work with schools and to ensure they are at the heart of their communities, and assist families to access tailored child-centred early help through the Local Offer and other programmes (holiday activity fund) to support children and young people's engagement and attendance in learning environments and education

We will measure how well we are doing by:

- rate of permanent exclusions at both primary and secondary level
- proportion of children and young people, including vulnerable groups who regularly attend school
- alternative provision is appropriate and meets the needs of the pupil accessing it
- proportion of children and young people reintegrating back into mainstream education following a permanent exclusion

Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of all children and young people

Children and young people who feel they belong will thrive; a calm, orderly, safe and supportive school encourages positive wellbeing. We value effective school leadership that supports and champions efforts to promote emotional health and wellbeing.

We will:

- ensure early identification and proactive intervention including access to current guidance, advice and national initiatives for school leaders, such as emotionally based school avoidance training
- apply robust processes for children and young people missing in education or unable to access education due to a health issue
- ensure appropriate advice, guidance and assistance to support the wellbeing of teachers and childcare professionals in Herefordshire
- deliver key initiatives such as the Holiday activity fund (HAF) and promote other health-based activities to vulnerable groups of pupils to support emotional health and wellbeing
- work in partnership with wider stakeholders, specifically ICB health partners and Public Health to promote children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing at home and at school – reviewing the development

and delivery of the ICB Mental Health in School programme in Herefordshire

- ensure that schools are able to identify their early help offer and the impact of this when supporting children and young people and their families through S11 audit process (safeguarding partnership)

We will measure how well we are doing by the:

- proportion of schools and providers engaging with training and national initiatives
- children and young people who are severely absent from school are monitored and appropriate interventions sought
- proportion of children absent from education due to Mental Health
- proportion of children and young people who get the right support at the right time and stay in education

Annexe A – Education providers in Herefordshire

Schools as of Summer 2024

Number of schools and academies:	99
LA maintained primary schools	52
Primaries (academies)	25
Primaries (free)	1
LA maintained secondary schools	5
Secondary schools (academies)	9
All through schools (academy)	1
LA maintained special schools	2
Special school (academies)	2
LA maintained PRU	1
Special Free	1
Independent Schools	5
Independent special schools	6

Post 16 providers:

- Hereford Sixth form College
- Herefordshire, Ludlow , North Shropshire college
- Hereford college of Arts
- Hoople Ltd
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Group Training Association
- Riverside Training

Specialist provision

- Royal National College for the Blind
- National star college
- The Beacon College
- School sixth forms 2

Early Years:

- PVI: 59
- Independent school nurseries: 3
- Maintained nursery classes: 13
- Governor run: 19
- Academy nursery classes: 17
- Childminders: 57 of which 4 Suffolk Childminding Agency, 3 Tiney Agency
- Total settings: 168



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