

Agenda

Scrutiny Management Board

Date: **Monday 28 October 2024**

Time: **2.00 pm**

Place: **Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

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

For any further information please contact:

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Danial Webb, Statutory Scrutiny Officer on 01432 260659 or e-mail Danial.Webb@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board

Membership

Chairperson **Councillor Ben Proctor**
Vice-chairperson **Councillor Louis Stark**

Councillor Bruce Baker
Councillor Jenny Bartlett
Councillor Simeon Cole
Councillor Frank Cornthwaite
Councillor Pauline Crockett
Councillor Clare Davies
Councillor Toni Fagan
Councillor Ed O'Driscoll
Councillor Richard Thomas
Councillor Rob Williams

Agenda

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| 1. | <p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>To receive apologies for absence.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>NAMED SUBSTITUTES</p> <p>To receive details of members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the Scrutiny Management Board.</p> | |
| 3. | <p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>To receive declarations of interests from members of the Scrutiny Management Board in respect of items on the agenda.</p> | |
| 4. | <p>MINUTES</p> <p>To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2024.</p> | 9 - 22 |
| <p style="text-align: center;">HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS</p> <p>The deadline for the submission of questions for this meeting is 5pm on Tuesday 22 October 2024.</p> <p>Questions must be submitted to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk. Questions sent to any other address may not be accepted.</p> <p>Accepted questions and the responses will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting. Further information and guidance is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved</p> | | |
| 5. | <p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the public.</p> | |
| 6. | <p>QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS</p> <p>To receive any written questions from councillors.</p> | |
| 7. | <p>THE DELIVERY AND MANAGEMENT OF HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL PROJECTS</p> <p>To provide the Scrutiny Management Board with a report on the delivery and management of Herefordshire Council's capital projects.</p> <p>[Papers to follow]</p> | |
| 8. | <p>DEVOLUTION - OPTIONS FOR HEREFORDSHIRE</p> <p>To provide the Scrutiny Management Board with an update on the latest position on the devolution options being considered by Government.</p> <p>To highlight Herefordshire Council's response to the expression of interest regarding the devolution options being considered by Government.</p> | 23 - 34 |
| 9. | <p>WORK PROGRAMME</p> | 35 - 72 |

To consider the work programme of the Scrutiny Management Board for the municipal year 2024/25.

10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 19 November 2024, 2pm

The public's rights to information and attendance at meetings

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. The council's constitution is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution
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Bus maps are available here: www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/78/bus_maps

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.

Minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny Management Board held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Tuesday 10 September 2024 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor Ben Proctor (chairperson)
Councillor Louis Stark (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Jenny Bartlett, Simeon Cole, Frank Cornthwaite, Pauline Crockett, Clare Davies (virtual), Toni Fagan, Ed O'Driscoll and Richard Thomas

In attendance: Councillors: Ivan Powell (Cabinet Member Children and Young People), Peter Stoddart (Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services)

Officers: Simon Cann (Committee Clerk), Joelle Higgins (Democratic Services Support), Danial Webb (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)

74. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Bruce Baker.

75. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There had been no named substitutes.

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ben Proctor drew attention to his statement of interests, in which he was nominated by the City Council to the Stronger Towns Board. It was accepted that this did not represent a conflict of interest.

No declarations of interest were made.

77. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14 May 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

78. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A document containing a question received from a member of the public and the response given, plus a supplementary question and the response given, is attached at Appendix 1 to the minutes.

79. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No questions were received from councillors.

80. 2023/24 QUARTER 4 BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT

The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services introduced and gave an overview of the 2023/24 Quarter 4 Budget Outturn Report.

A breakdown of how the £8.7 million overspend from the previous year had been funded was provided as detailed below:

- Application of the public health reserve £0.6 million
- Utilisation of the waste reserve £1.5 million.
- Release of corporate provision of £0.2 million
- Direct reserve balances of 5.6 million - a review had identified reserve balances with no future commitments or planned use and these were used.
- Utilisation of the climate change reserve of £0.8 million.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services explained that portfolio holders and corporate directors had met on monthly basis to review budget spending plans for the period and to ensure that they brought expenditure into line with the savings expected of them.

The Chair invited comments from the board members in relation to the report. The principal points of discussion are summarised below:

RESERVES

1. The board enquired as to whether the UK Shared Prosperity Fund had been used to help fund the overspend.
 - The Director of Finance assured the committee that no money from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund had been used in covering the overspend.
2. The board noted that the Economy and Environment directorate appeared to be receiving less and less in terms of allocation of the of the overall revenue budget, with 13.9% of £193.3 million total.
3. The board raised concerns that unused grants funds were being taken from the Economy and Environment directorate - which funded service areas used by many residents on a daily basis - to pay for statutory children's services.
 - The Director of Finance gave an assurance that there had been a detailed review across all directorates of unused grant balances and that there had been consideration and fairness in terms of recognizing that the significant driver for the overspend was in the Children and Young People directorate and therefore it was appropriate that the directorate maximised its contribution to the overspend.
4. The board acknowledged the balances put in place, but reiterated concerns about falling funding for Economy and Environment and the risk of losing sight of where money needed to be spent in terms of service delivery.
 - The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services pointed out that the budget that had been balanced in May of last year was the previous administration's budget and suggested that the budget being implemented imminently would ensure that the Economy and

Environment directorate was not adversely impacted. The council stood for growth in Herefordshire and the growth would predominantly come from the economy. This was something that the administration wanted to build on.

- The Director of Finance pointed out that Economy and Environment was one of the few directorates across the council where there had been significant input in terms of capital expenditure, including the significant investment in economic growth and highways. It was stated that the spend in the revenue budget for Economy and Environment needed to be considered in the context of the capital programme.
 - The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services described having conversations with residents frustrated by the perceived lack of spending on road maintenance and waste services, but explained that there was not only a statutory requirement, but also a moral duty to provide care for those in need.
5. The board requested a detailed list of all the grants that had been used, as people were keen to see what they had lost and what had not been delivered.
- The Director of Finance explained that there had been no future plans or allocations made for the use of certain reserves drawn on, so essentially nothing had been lost.
 - The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services pointed out that restrictions around certain reserves meant that they had to be dovetailed with overspends in specific areas, for example, the application of the public health reserve of £0.6 million could only be used in tackling the public health overspend. With the Climate Change reserve only £0.8 million of a £1.2 million was used, because there was only £0.8 million that could be attributable to climate change.
6. The board requested additional information about grants and where the money for them came from. It was suggested that a visual representation such as a pie chart might help in illustrating where different allocations were made.
7. The board enquired if there was a reserves policy that formed part of the budget that went to full council.
- The Director of Finance explained that the reserves policy formed part of the budget papers that went to full council. The general reserves policy was to make prudent use and provision of reserves to manage council risks. There was an annual review of earmarked reserves that would be going to Cabinet in December 2024, this would include a detailed review of existing balances, their historic build up and their proposed use in terms of adding value.
8. The board enquired about how the interest from reserves was used and how judgements were made about cutting services when there were robust reserves available to fund them.
- The Director of Finance explained that reserve balances were reviewed as part of routine monthly budget monitoring. Although yearly start and finish reserve totals might look similar there was typically movement from transactions drawing down from reserves in-year, with appropriate governance around the application of those eligible to be spent in-year.
 - It was pointed out the reserves were monitored on a regular basis to make sure that funds were being used effectively for the purposes they were awarded for. The reserve balances were subject to review by

- external auditors who would benchmark the council against other local authorities to make sure it was setting aside sufficient monies for managing future risks.
- The Director of Finance explained that in relation to the level of return on the reserve balances, the treasury management strategy was to maximise returns from the cash balances available, whilst making sure that cash balances for immediate service delivery were maintained. The council earned interest on all balances and these were accounted for collectively through the corporate centre in the council budget.
9. A board member acknowledged that the previous administration had reluctantly drawn down from reserves out of necessity and the financial situation had been exacerbated by the reduction in year-on-year funding from the government.
10. A board member expressed disappointment at the use of the public health reserve funds to cover overspend and hoped this could be avoided in future.
- The Director of Finance explained that the decision to use to public health reserve funds had been taken in consultation with OHID (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities) and the Director of Public Health and was used against eligible spend.
11. The board asked for further details in relation to the amendment made during the February 2024 full council budget-setting meeting during which an amendment was made for reserves to be curtailed and used for children services. The board also asked for clarity around how much money had been returned via the requirement of the motion.
12. The board asked if the external auditor had ever raised concerns regarding the council's reserves levels.
- The Director of Finance explained that, regarding the 2024/25 delivery of children and young people directorate savings and the paying back of reserves, the Quarter 1 report was due at Cabinet on 26 September 2024 and that would show the delivery of in-year savings and allow for discussion on the matter.
 - The Director of Finance pointed out that the external auditor had two roles, one was to undertake an audit of the statement of accounts, which was almost at a conclusion and the findings would be reported to Audit and Governance in due course. The second statutory piece of work the auditor undertook was the 'value for money' opinion, which sat across three themes: financial sustainability, governance and the 'three e's' which were economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the council's use of reserves resources.
 - It was explained that under the financial sustainability criteria the external auditor reviewed the council's reserve balances, use of in year reserves, general fund balances and reviewed and benchmarked these against other authorities. In all the recent years since the 'value for money' regime had been in place, the auditor had not raised any improvement recommendations or highlighted significant weaknesses around reserve balances.
 - The auditor had also noted that the council's reverse balances were higher than average for a unitary authority.
13. The board wished for it to be noted that when the current administration came in on 1 April 2023 reserves were at £81.8 million and that on the 31 March 2024 the reserves were at £73.2 million.

14. The board suggested that the executive should look at the policy, structure and use of reserves and satisfy themselves that the best value-for-money outcomes were being achieved for residents from utilising the reserves.

REVENUE BUDGET

15. The board noted that the revenue budget was where council funding for staff came from Referencing Table 1 within the report the board noted and raised concerns that recent overspends in the Children and Young People directorate had coincided with savings being made in the Economy and Environment directorate.
16. The board asked what the plans were, moving forward, to make sure the council had the right amount of appropriately skilled staff in Environment and Economy to ensure that the council could deliver the programme it had agreed.
 - The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services pointed out that child and adult social care were demand-led services in critical areas, which had to be responded to on a mandatory not discretionary basis. The administration did not prioritise one directorate over another and each of the directorates were equally important. The recent funding for road infrastructure was highlighted as an example of capital funding being invested in the Economy and Environment directorate.
17. The board reiterated the question about whether the right funding was in place to ensure that the Economy and Environment directorate was adequately staffed.
 - The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services stated that it was each Corporate Director's responsibility to ensure that they had the requisite people with requisite skills to fulfil what they were required to deliver for their corporate service area. A skills review had recently taken place, to ensure that the council had the individuals in post to meet requirements.
18. The board raised concerns that recent activity around MERS (Mutual Early Resignation Scheme) might have left holes within the council's staffing structure and asked how this might potentially impact the council's ability to deliver services.
 - The cabinet member and chair acknowledged this wasn't directly linked with the current item, but an assurance was given that checks and balances had been in place throughout the MERS process to ensure that the workforce structure was stable and that frontline services and key individuals were secured.
19. The board enquired about how issues such as overspends on SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) transport costs had been addressed and what lessons had been learned going forward.
 - The Director of Finance explained that they had engaged with the children and young people task and finish group and that one of the key challenges identified was how to ensure the 2024/25 budget was sufficient to deliver children and young people services in the county next year.
 - The costs pressures of 2023/24 had been outlined and additional funding was built in for 2024/25 to assure the external auditors that the budget

would be robust. The auditors had taken a deep dive into the children's directorates finances and the robustness of the 2024/25 budget to deliver services in-year and had not identified any improvement recommendations.

20. The board raised concerns about how escalating costs in areas such as SEND transport and additional help would be addressed and whether it would be a case of continuing to throw money at these areas or coming up with innovative ways to address them.
 - The Director of Finance pointed out that a significant amount of the overspend in the children's directorate in 2023/24 had been linked to the non-delivery of savings in that area. This had been built into the 2024/25 budget as part of the children's three-year financial plan, which targeted some of those areas of overspend and escalating cost pressures.
 - The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services pointed out that an additional £11 million had been put in as upfront spending via the children's three-year improvement plan and that over the three years the directorate would draw down on that. At the end of the period the Children and Young People directorate would be working within its normal budget.

21. The board enquired if the council had contributed to any action involving lobbying government to stop potential profiteering in areas such as care services for children.
 - The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services stated they were working with other neighbouring councils to try and strike a balance about what should be paid and were also encouraging commissioning officers to be savvy.
 - The Finance Director noted that the council needed to be creative and continue to investigate all options when dealing with the volatile nature of a demand-led budget.

22. The board noted the revenue budget overspends for staff in corporate services and central involved in the transformation process and special budgets. There were concerns that there wasn't enough investment going into frontline service staffing. The question was asked as to whether the transformation process in pace was costing the council money rather than enabling savings.
 - The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services explained that there was a lag in savings coming through from the transformations, which had been focused primarily on the digitalisation of certain services. Staffing costs incurred while implementing these new systems would be recovered further down the line.

23. The board enquired as to how the Cabinet had gone about assessing the different savings options that it had in front of it when the administration came in.
 - The Director of Finance explained that when an overspend was identified the finance team would work very closely with the corporate directors and the service leads to understand the impact and the drivers for that overspend and what could be done to mitigate it and reduce that overspend over the remainder of the year.
 - In 2023/24 additional expenditure controls had been introduced very early on in the year, which consisted of weekly directorate control panels to review all spends above £500. Three questions were asked during a review: did the money have to be spent now, did the money have to be

spent at all and could the same thing be delivered by spending less? The approach had prompted a tangible change in the culture of the organisation in terms of encouraging people to treat council funds as they would their own income and expenditure. This helped bring the overspend down. The controls had been highly effective and would be used going forward for areas such as recruitment.

- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services noted that officers and directors had been encouraged to think of council funds as they would their own money and to be prudent in what they did with it.

24. The board pointed to an overspend in the Executive's Office and asked if overspend controls were applicable to all levels of the council.

- The Director of Finance gave an assurance that the expenditure control measures were in place across all directorates and that the challenge to spend within budget was the same across all areas.
- Where overspends were identified in the prior year, then these would form part of the risk management and financial management in the current year.

25. The board enquired as to the factors contributing to the overspend in the Chief Executive's Office.

- The Director of Finance explained the main costs were related to staffing and agency costs pressures.
- It was explained that in addition to weekly director expenditure control panels, there were regular reviews of all agency staff to understand the purpose of their engagement, their costs and the exit plan for agency staff where appropriate.

26. The board asked what changes had been brought into the oversight of the Children and Young People directorate to ensure that there wouldn't be an overspend in the coming year of the magnitude of the one from last year.

- The Cabinet Member Children and Young People explained that the financial controls and measure previously discussed were being complemented and supplemented by encouraging the children's services leadership team to take financial management as seriously as other performance related matters across the department.
- The Cabinet Member Children and Young People informed the board that nationally there had been a significant increase in the costs of residential care. The previous government had commissioned a report into social care that was authored by an individual who was now a standing MP. The report had made specific recommendations about exercising control over the market and the cabinet member intended to establish if the report author and current government were intending to tackle the issue of the increasing costs of residential placements.

CAPITAL OUTTURN

27. The board raised concerns that the council didn't have a good track record of managing its own projects in terms of underspend on capital projects and suggested that it was not managing or putting enough resources into grant led opportunities. The question was asked that when it had obtained grant funding was the administration putting enough effort into actually spending the money.

- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services stressed that the administration was very keen to obtain and spend funding, and officer advice regarding timelines for spending certain funds was always noted and acted on.
 - Within the financial team there were people working constantly to find where grants were available and what grants were coming out.
 - It was noted that there was no single point of information regarding availability of government grants and that officers worked to ensure that all individual sources of information around funding and grants were checked regularly.
28. The board asked what was being done to spend funds that appeared to be being rolled over from previous periods.
- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services stated that some funding had been rolled over from the previous administration and that everything was being done to ensure funding lines were being used in a timely and effective manner. It was pointed out that, to ensure there was transparency, appendix B of the report contained a table providing reasons for variance to the current capital budget detailing why certain funding remained unspent.
29. The board enquired about the potential risks of unspent Section 106 funding having to be returned.
- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services explained that the administration was addressing the so called 'bubble' of Section 106 money and was requesting staff to be allocated to push forward related projects in this area. A forthcoming project management office review would provide greater detail on this and the administration had confirmed that it wanted to deliver projects efficiently and in a timely fashion.
30. The board asked what consideration the administration gave to the relationship between revenue and capital in terms of capital projects reducing future revenue expenditure. The board asked if enough was being spent on capital to deliver transformations that would benefit people.
- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services stated that when the administration looked at any capital project the first questions asked were: what was the resource impact of it, how would it be funded and what would be delivered to improve Herefordshire for the people.
31. The board acknowledged the comments about the potential revenue cost of capital investment, but asked about the 'investing to save' side of capital projects.
- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services gave an example of how, under transformation, AI was being used to provide a number of services across the council, which meant that it was no longer necessary to have staff in certain areas manning telephones and answering questions.
32. The board enquired about details around the underspend in relation to the schools capital maintenance grant.
- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services gave an assurance that he would discuss the matter with the relevant officer and provide a written response.

33. A board member stressed the importance of emphasising and focusing on the needs of young people within the county and urged that consideration be given to directing unallocated capital funding to the needs of the younger generations and not just projects like road maintenance.
- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services stressed how the administration had made its budget consultation methods with the public, particularly young people, more interactive and engaging - with multiple visits to the Sixth Form College, NMITE and the Herefordshire College of Arts allowing young people to have their voices heard.
34. The board asked if the council had carried out an assessment of the impact of the capital programme on different sectors within Herefordshire, such as young people and people with disabilities.
- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services explained this kind of information was typically included in full detail business cases, which contained details around the benefits of and support for projects. The cabinet member had not, however, seen a table or document that detailed the impact of every project within the capital programme.
35. The board suggested that a review of the impact of the capital programme on local people might make a good recommendation.
36. The board enquired how the administration was going about ensuring that it was going to deliver 53% of the capital programme in one year with the contracts it had and with staff being reduced.
- The Director of Finance explained that that was a question that needed to be directed at the senior responsible officers and cabinet members in charge.
 - Delivery of the capital programme would be reported as part of the Quarter 1 budget report and the performance report, which would outline delivery against the key performance indicators and strategic projects.
37. The board asked about the status of projects on hold in the capital programme and whether they were waiting to go to the project management office or being delivered in a different way.
- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services stated that the senior responsible officers were best placed to answer the query, but noted that there were a number of projects in the capital management programme that had been there for several years and the administration was looking at each of them and being as open and transparent about them as possible.
 - Projects were being rolled into next year because it was known they couldn't be delivered in the current year.
 - New projects would only be placed into the capital programme if there was confidence they could be delivered. It was, however, important to note that just because something was in the capital programme that did not guarantee it would be given the go ahead and funded, and a full business case had to be approved beforehand.
 - The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services explained to the committee that all projects had a cabinet member who was responsible for them and they would receive updates from senior responsible officers.

Strategic management boards were in place within directorates so that there was oversight of delivery of projects.

38. The board asked if there was a process for making a decision about which budgets would be reprofiled into future financial years, such as the school's capital maintenance grant moving from £5.5 million to just under £3 million.
- The Director of Finance explained that these decisions were made on a case-by-case basis via project boards and delivery boards, which were guided by project managers.
 - There was a governance process in place to ensure there was justification for any reprofiling.
 - The board heard that from the Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services that Talk Community was working diligently to publicise available grants to people, but unfortunately there were instances where people still missed out.

SAVINGS

39. The board asked what distinguished savings from cuts and whether there was a differentiation between the two.
- The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services Councillor suggested that a saving was a gradual reduction whereas a cut was the complete removal.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT

40. The board enquired about a drop of £17 million in investment during March 2024 and the Director of Finance stated they would be able to come back with an explanation of what had driven that.
41. The committee asked if the authority was under-borrowed compared to other authorities.
- The Director of Finance explained that the authority had a low level of borrowing and that this enhanced its financial sustainability and reduced exposure to risk, but each council would have a different appetite for its borrowing/risk circumstances.
 - The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services stated that the authority could borrow more, but was focused on doing everything in a prudent and balanced way.
42. The board suggested that there might be a need to look at the low borrowings strategy in light of the fact that the council was struggling to deliver its capital programme.

At the conclusion of the debate, the committee discussed and unanimously agreed the following recommendations.

Resolved that:

- 1. The executive should look at the policy, structure and use of reserves and satisfy themselves that the best value-for-money outcomes are being achieved for our residents from utilising the reserves.**

2. Following the overspend of £8.7m in 23/4 and the continuing loss of expertise under the Mutual Early Resignation Scheme, the executive should look at how both of these are impacting on service delivery, particularly in the economy and environment directorate, and take corrective action to mitigate their impact.
3. Given the continuing annual underspends on the Capital Programme, the executive should review what other measures can be brought to bear, beyond actions by the Project Management Office, to ensure consistent delivery of what is planned under the capital programme.
4. The executive should undertake a review of the impact of the current programme on local people and look for opportunities to improve the impact of the capital programme on the council's priority outcomes.
5. That the executive should review the current capital programme to ensure that we have sufficient resources, including borrowing, to be able to deliver our agreed capital programme.

81. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2025/26 BUDGET

The committee agreed to discuss this item informally outside of the meeting.

82. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee received a copy of the draft work programme, which had been published in early September 2024 and circulated to members, corporate directors and portfolio holders for consultation.

It was noted that the committee would be looking at the Quarter 1 Outturn alongside the Quarter 2 Outturn in the December 2024 meeting.

Resolved:

That the committee agree the work programme.

83. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Monday 28 October 2024, 2pm

84. APPENDIX 1 - QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions from members of the public – Scrutiny Management Board, 10 September 2024

| Question Number | Questioner | Question | Question to |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| PQ 1 | Ms. Maggie Steel Hereford | 388 children were in the care of Herefordshire Council as of December 2022 according to Eleanor Brazil's initial report to the Children's Minister. This figure was 84% higher than our statistical neighbours. Eleanor Brazil blamed this astonishing anomaly on • <i>"poor decision making"</i> | Scrutiny Management Board |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“drift and delay</i> <p>18 months later, in a report to the Children’s Scrutiny Committee, we find out that there are still 386 children in care in Herefordshire. Only 2 fewer children in care after 18 months and millions invested. Our rate for children in care is still 83% higher than statistical neighbours. Either parents in Herefordshire are persistently failing their children, or poor decision making and drift and delay continue to fail children and the taxpayer.</p> <p>Who is responsible for the failure to make any significant progress in reducing the number of children in care in Herefordshire?</p> | |
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Response by Cabinet Member Children and Young People

To answer the question “why haven’t our looked after children numbers significantly reduced”, we have to understand not only the number of looked after children but also the overall rate per 10,000 of children in care and the number of children entering and leaving care, both in our authority, and compared to the West Midlands region and nationally.

During 23/24, we received 96 new children into care and 121 left care throughout that year. This gave us a rate of 112 per 10,000 children in care at the end of 23/24. During 24/25 at quarter one, we have seen 26 new children enter care, and 24 leave care. As at July 2024, the rate has reduced to 106 children per 10,000.

Whilst we remain above the national statistical neighbour (SN) rate of 64 (23/24 data), we have to appreciate our own journey and that of our region. For those children that are in our care currently, we need to carefully plan for their exit, so that when they do leave care to permanency, they achieve a long-term stable family life. During the full year 23/24, we saw 19 children leave care for permanency. During quarter one of 24/25, we have already seen 11 children leave care for permanency, so an improving trend. This is reflective of success in the complex work required to identify those children who were experiencing drift and delay. Some of this work requires discharging care orders, which needs to go through court process, and some is about working alongside families to ensure a safe plan of rehabilitation is in place. Both need updated assessments and good engagement with children, young people, families and the court.

For those children and young people we work with to prevent entering care, we have to do this whilst managing risks within the family home and community. This requires good partnership working and importantly a partnership approach to managing risk. The Restorative Practice model seeks to ensure that, as a children’s workforce and partnership, we improve the way we work with families, is strength based and together manages the risk. This can cause great professional anxiety in the children’s workforce across the partnership fuelled by local and national media coverage in the style of “who is to blame when something goes wrong”. We are rolling out the Restorative Practice model to our partners now and delivering multi agency practice workshops planned to start November/December 24

Across the region in terms of “new” looked after children, we have a rate of 7 per 10k this quarter. Of the 14 local authorities, eight have lower incoming rates; however, their rates range from 4 to 6 and two share the same rate (Sandwell and Telford), the latter being an “outstanding” local authority in our region. There are three local authorities in our region who have greater “new” care rates and their rates are either 10 or 11 per 10k.

Our overall rate of looked after children at quarter one was 115 per 10k (at quarter 1 June 24 - note this has reduced to 106 at July 24) and our regional statistical neighbour

Shropshire is 126 and Solihull is 111. So whilst our practice for care prevention is not the best it is certainly improving and reflective of the region.

It is also important for us to recognise the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) we have in our care. During 23/24 we went from 11 (April 23) up to 38 (March 24) and increased our care leavers from 30 up to 80. The vast majority of UASC remain in our care always up until the age of 18 and therefore are not children that will leave the care system at an earlier point. The rising number of UASC in every local authority is in response to the mandatory National Transfer Scheme which expects each local authority to accept 0.01% of their under 18 population, and the number of children and young people who self-present in the region. When we compare our unaccompanied figures to our statistical neighbours within the region, Shropshire have 37 and Solihull 38 so we remain low and below our own mandatory national target.

It is well known that Herefordshire Children’s Services is on an improvement journey. The instability that Herefordshire has experienced in social work turnover impacts on our ability to progress children’s plans which is why workforce stability is the primary foundation to our improvement journey. In Quarter 1 we can see good progress in workforce permanency and this continues to be our priority.

All social workers

Q4 March 24: 35% Perm. 56% Agency. 9% Vacant. - **Q1 June 24: 46% Perm. 50% Agency. 4% Vacant.**

Team Managers & Above;

Q4 March 24: 70% Perm. 28% Agency. 3% Vacant. - **Q1 June 24: 82% Perm. 18% Agency. 0% Vacant**

The question posed also refers to the ‘responsibility for failure’. Herefordshire Children’s Services are on an improvement journey, which also relies on the contribution from our partners. It is acknowledged that our children in care numbers need to reduce further to reflect the SN averages that we would expect to see in Herefordshire. However, I hope I have explained why there is no “responsibility for failure” as our improvement journey continues and progress is being made, and why there is a need to consider broader areas than just the “number” of children in our care.

| Question Number | Questioner | Supplementary Question | Question to |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| PQ 1 | Ms. Maggie Steel Hereford | <p>I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for a very full and helpful response to my question. My question drew attention to the lack of progress in reducing the number of children in care and the appalling impact of this failure on children, parents and the taxpayer. To fund the astronomically high number of children in care, we have to cut other services to the bone.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member talks of the difficulties of identifying the children in care subjected to “drift and delay”. Identifying them is really not the problem: if the Cabinet Member would like a list of children affected, the Families Alliance for Change can easily send him a list.</p> <p>It is good that the Cabinet Member acknowledges that not enough progress has</p> | Scrutiny Management Board |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| | | <p>been made. But then he states that there is “no responsibility for failure.” Please could he confirm that no-one in a leadership position is to be held accountable for the lack of progress on reducing the number of children in care?</p> | |
| <p>Response by Cabinet Member Children and Young People</p> <p>Thank you for your supplementary question and your acknowledgement of the full and helpful response provided. My initial response was clear that we are seeing success in the complex work required to identify children who were experiencing drift and delay. I can confirm that, during the full year 23/24, we saw 19 children leave care for permanency. During quarter one of 24/25, we have already seen 11 children leave care for permanency, so an improving trend.</p> <p>In response to your last points regarding not enough progress and responsibility for failure, as a Council and Children Services, we are responsible for the improvements needed and are constantly reviewing our pace of improvement. As a result, our Phase 2 improvement plan which is going to Cabinet for endorsement in September has a renewed focus on the Ofsted recommendations and introduces new measures of success. The plan will continue to be overseen by the multi-agency Improvement Board which is now chaired by the Commissioner appointed by the Department for Education.</p> | | | |

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

Chairperson



Title of report: Devolution update - options for Herefordshire

Meeting: Scrutiny Management Board

Meeting date: Monday 28 October 2024

Report by: The Chief Executive

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To provide the Scrutiny Management Board with an update on the latest position on the devolution options being considered by Government.

To highlight Herefordshire Council's response to the expression of interest regarding the devolution options being considered by Government.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The committee notes this report.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options. It is within the remit of the Scrutiny Management Board to undertake a scrutiny role in relation to areas which are cross cutting in nature. Devolution is likely, in the near future, to have a material impact on Council policy and strategies.

Key considerations

1. In July, the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all Council Leaders and Chief Executives who do not have a devolution deal in place to invite them to partner with the Government to deliver a new programme of devolution in England.
2. Devolution is an evolving flagship policy area for Government. The latest position was set out on 21 September, 2024 where it was announced that it is prioritising four areas for new arrangements and agreements for regional mayors. The stated objectives of Government are to widen and deepen devolution to drive economic growth through devolved powers over transport, skills, housing, planning and employment support and integrated funding settlements.
3. Importantly, devolution is not about forcing Local Authorities to merge or to work together if they do not wish to do so. Councils that do choose to formally work together can form new administrative areas known as combined authorities. Devolution is about transferring of powers and funding from national to local government in those areas. Councils choosing to do this often do so on the basis that shared objectives, for improvements to infrastructure, economic growth, for example, can be more ambitious and mutually beneficial than would otherwise be the case.
4. The three levels set out in the devolution framework are:
 - a. Level 3 – a single institution or County Council with a directly elected mayor (DEM), across a functional economic area (FEA) or whole county area;
 - b. Level 2 – A single institution or County Council without a DEM, across a FEA or whole county area; and
 - c. Level 1 – Local authorities working together across a FEA or whole county area e.g. through a joint committee.
5. An initial expression of interest questionnaire has been sent to all English upper tier authorities seeking their views in two key areas. Herefordshire's position was informed by discussions with group leaders on the proposals from government, limited as they are at the current time, as follows.

Q1: Preferred geography (upper-tier local authorities in the area)

Herefordshire Council's Response: *Our preference is devolution at a single county level. However, we are open to explore what it means for Herefordshire to work with our neighbours, subject to further information and details about a devolution framework that defines the powers and flexibilities available to areas entering into such agreements and future timescales, and*

Q2: Initial preference on mayoral / non-mayoral devolution

Herefordshire Council's Response: *Non-Mayoral Devolution*

What is happening in other areas?

6. There are new agreements will give local leaders the power to make decisions in matters relating to transport, adult education, housing, and economic growth within their devolved

geographies mayoral elections in Greater Lincolnshire and Hull & East Yorkshire from May 2025.

7. For Devon & Torbay and Lancashire, combined county authorities will be established, in an anticipated timeframe of early 2025. Devolved powers will include responsibility for adult education^[1]; however, the Government is encouraging local leaders to deepen their devolution options to also include establishing mayoral arrangements.
8. Each of these devolution deals will be subject to parliamentary approval and local consent. The stated intention being to create devolution deals giving local leaders more powers to roll out local growth plans.
9. The government is also minded to progress with the four non-mayoral 'Level 2' Single Local Authority devolution agreements with Cornwall Council, Buckinghamshire Council, Warwickshire County Council, and Surrey County Council, subject to further statutory tests being met^[2]. The government is also encouraging these areas to continue working to explore the next steps towards deeper and wider devolution.
10. The government will therefore not proceed with the mayoral deals with Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council agreed with the previous government in December 2022 and instead intends to continue discussions over devolution in line with the emerging devolution framework.
11. As a general principle – the Council has adopted a position that devolution has the potential to ensure Herefordshire benefits from any additional Government funding that may be available. We are keen to explore what new powers may be devolved to drive economic growth in the City and the market towns across the County and build more affordable homes.
12. To put this into the context of devolution, we would want to look to those areas that would help Herefordshire achieve our ambitions for the county whilst also looking for opportunities to strengthen the economy and skills, across the whole region. When thinking about any devolution deal opportunity we must act positively and progress all the options to ensure that Herefordshire isn't left behind or is the subject of an arranged fit/deal by the Government.
13. Our starting position is that any devolution deal must strengthen the council's focus on 'Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do' - through our stated Council Plan objectives:
 - **People** - We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and benefit from communities that help people to feel safe and supported
 - **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
 - **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
 - **Transformation** - We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money

^[1] The government will devolve non-apprenticeship adult skills functions and grant funding to eligible institutions. This is subject to the implementation of the trailblazer deals in GMCA and WMCA and the institution satisfying readiness criteria.

^[2] The Secretary of State must be satisfied that the establishment of a combined authority is likely to "improve the exercise of statutory functions" in the area in question. An existing combined authority may be changed into a mayoral combined authority via a further Order made by the Secretary of State.

14. We are well placed to engage with others and set the framework for a devolution deal, as well as having very clear ambitions to deliver the infrastructure needed. For example:

- **Roads** – The New Road Strategy, adopted by our Cabinet earlier this year, sets out the need for a Growth Corridor for the County, that will open up the land needed to deliver essential new housing and employment land.
- **Rail** – With Government funding, we are delivering a new Transport Hub in Hereford, that will become the gateway for everyone visiting the City by rail, with connectivity to Bus and Active Travel measures. In addition, the Council has set aside funding to develop the Business Case for a new station at Pontrilas (The Golden Valley Parkway) which is an essential new station between Hereford and Abergavenny.
- **Rivers** – You will be well aware of the challenges we have faced due to the level of Phosphates in our rivers which has held back essential development in the north of the county. We have worked with partners across the region, and the Council has delivered the ground-breaking Luston Wetlands. This has freed up several hundred new homes through the Phosphates Credit system, whilst improving the quality of the water in our rivers and protecting the natural environment.

15. Any new devolution deals will be subject to parliamentary approval and local consent. The stated intention being to create devolution deals giving local leaders more powers to roll out local growth plans.

16. A White Paper is expected (timetable to be confirmed) setting out a new Devolution framework that defines precisely the powers and flexibilities available to areas entering into an agreement. These will be put into legislation via the English Devolution Bill which is expected to be introduced in the first session of Parliament. The current indicative timeframe is as follows:

- a. Expressions of Interest to be submitted by end of September – **completed**.
- b. Further details on the new devolution framework will be set out in the White Paper - **awaited**
- c. Proposal submitted to Government – Summer 2025
- d. Consultation of proposal – Autumn / Winter 2025
- e. Government approval of Deal – Spring 2026

Community impact

17. The Government is seeking to widen and deepen devolved powers to drive economic growth, address transport infrastructure, skills, housing, planning and employment support through integrated funding settlements.

18. As a Local Authority with a clear focus on delivering the best outcome for our residents, we have recently adopted a new Council Plan, with the overarching vision of '*Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do*'.

19. It is the intention of the Council to adopt a negotiating position with Government which underpinned by the objectives set out in the Council Plan – 2024 to 2028. These are:

- I. **People** - We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities who support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.
- II. **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, we will support access to green spaces and we will do everything we can to recover the health of our rivers.
- III. **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, and
- IV. **Transformation** - We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.

Environmental Impact

20. There are no specific environmental impacts as a result of this briefing paper. Environmental impacts will be given through investigation and consideration as, and when, more details on the devolutions deals becomes clearer .

Equality duty

21. 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.
22. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this activity and it has been found to have low impact for equality.
23. Due to the potential impact of this decision being low, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required

Resource implications

24. There are no direct resource implications resulting from this report. Resource implications will be considered in greater detail as, and when, more details of the devolution options for Herefordshire come forward.

Legal implications

25. There are no legal implications resulting from this briefing paper.

Risk management

26. There are no direct risks to manage resulting from this report. Risk will be considered in greater detail as, and when, more details of the devolution options for Herefordshire come forward.

Consultees

Consultation was undertaken with all of the Council's Political Group Leaders

Appendices

Appendix 1: DISCUSSION PAPER: Devolution update and options for Herefordshire

Background papers

See: [Four devolution agreements signed off and others progressing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

| Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Governance | Click or tap here to enter text. | Date Click or tap to enter a date. |
| Finance | Click or tap here to enter text. | Date Click or tap to enter a date. |
| Legal | Click or tap here to enter text. | Date Click or tap to enter a date. |
| Communications | Click or tap here to enter text. | Date Click or tap to enter a date. |
| Equality Duty | Click or tap here to enter text. | Date Click or tap to enter a date. |
| Procurement | Click or tap here to enter text. | Date Click or tap to enter a date. |
| Risk | Click or tap here to enter text. | Date Click or tap to enter a date. |
| Approved by | Click or tap here to enter text. | Date Click or tap to enter a date. |

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

DISCUSSION PAPER

DEVOLUTION UPDATE AND OPTIONS FOR HEREFORDSHIRE

In July, the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all Council Leaders and Chief Executives who do not have a deal in place to invite them to partner with the Government to deliver a new programme of devolution in England. The previous government had indicated it expected all councils to be in a devolution deal by 2030.

The Government approach is to widen and deepen economic growth through devolved powers over transport, skills, housing, planning, employment support and integrated funding settlements.

1. What we know – so far

From the letter we have received from Ministers, Local Government updates and Officer discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Director General for Devolution and Cities and Local Growth Unit we understand:

- The fiscal position is extremely tight across government. The Autumn budget will take place on 30th October and confirm the outlook for the economy and public finances.
- In England, ministers are currently prioritising supporting areas with a mayor. Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA's) are the preferred structure/size of the institution to take forward delivery of additional services such as a democratic, accountable body and develop local growth plans.
- A new Council of Nations and Regions is expected to be established involving directly elected Mayors of devolved areas, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and First Ministers.
- Devolution agreements will be tailored to sensible economic geographies, taking into account available data such as travel to work and advanced travel to work areas.
- To date, there has been no mention of the inter-relationship with Health and the Darzi review currently being undertaken into the state of the NHS and due to report early in 2025.
- There is no reference to the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) or Fire Authority's which are features of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. York and North Yorkshire and West and South Yorkshire also have PCC powers.
- A White Paper is expected (*timetable to be confirmed*) setting out a new Devolution framework that defines precisely the powers and flexibilities available to areas entering into an agreement. These will be put into legislation via the English Devolution Bill which is expected to be introduced in the first session of Parliament.

2. How Devolution has been working to date – a brief history

In November 2014, the Government announced the first devolution deal with Greater Manchester, followed by a deal with Cornwall in July 2015. At this point, the Government also invited proposals from local areas as part of the 2015 Spending Review. It asked them to submit their proposals by early September 2015. The Government received 34 bids from local areas.

Of these, 12 were brought forward initially for negotiation and 11 areas signed devolution deals. At the time, many of the unsuccessful areas felt they lacked a clear response from Government

as to why their proposals were not taken forward. There was also concern that the criteria for success was not transparent enough or focused too heavily on the need for a directly elected mayor.

In February 2022, the Government published the Levelling Up White Paper. This set out a new devolution framework, extending devolution beyond metropolitan areas for the first time. The framework sets out a flexible, three level approach to devolution recognising that a one-size fits all model would not be suitable, with different powers and functions for each devolution level.

The three levels set out in the devolution framework are:

- Level 3 – a single institution or County Council with a directly elected mayor (DEM), across a functional economic area (FEA) or whole county area;
- Level 2 – A single institution or County Council without a DEM, across a FEA or whole county area; and
- Level 1 – Local authorities working together across a FEA or whole county area e.g. through a joint committee.

3. Devolution deals across England

There are currently 12 areas with Mayoral Devolution in England:

- Greater London,
- West Midlands,
- Greater Manchester,
- Liverpool City Region,
- West Yorkshire,
- South Yorkshire,
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough,
- Tees Valley,
- West of England,
- York and North Yorkshire,
- East Midlands, and
- The North East.

4. New devolution deals being considered - the frontrunners and the emerging picture

The latest position was set out on 21 September, 2024 where the government announced that it is prioritising four areas for new arrangements and agreements for regional mayors. These will be in Greater Lincolnshire and in Hull & East Yorkshire; aiming also to establish combined county authorities in both Devon & Torbay and Lancashire.

- **For Greater Lincolnshire and Hull & East Yorkshire**, new agreements will give local leaders the power to make decisions in matters relating to transport, adult education¹, housing, and economic growth within their devolved geographies. The new arrangements are expected to commence alongside mayoral elections in Greater Lincolnshire and Hull & East Yorkshire from May 2025.
- **For Devon & Torbay and Lancashire**, combined county authorities will be established in an anticipated timeframe of early 2025. Devolved powers will include responsibility for adult education, however, the Government is encouraging local leaders to deepen their devolution options to also include establishing mayoral arrangements.

¹ The government will devolve non-apprenticeship adult skills functions and grant funding to eligible institutions. This is subject to the implementation of the trailblazer deals in GMCA and WMCA and the institution satisfying readiness criteria. Experience and learning based on the operations and activity within WMCA highlighted how further education colleges and employers could be incentivised, using the devolved adult skills budget, to collaborate to deliver locally required skills and training.

- **For Cornwall Council, Buckinghamshire Council, Warwickshire County Council, and Surrey County Council:** Four non-mayoral 'Level 2' Single Local Authority devolution agreements are being considered. These will be subject to further statutory tests being met². The government is also encouraging these areas to continue working to explore the next steps towards deeper and wider devolution.
- **For Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils:** The government will not proceed with the mayoral deals agreed with the previous Conservative government in December 2022. It intends to continue discussions over devolution in Norfolk & Suffolk.
- **Mayoral Combined Authorities not confirmed:** East Riding (with City of Hull), North Yorkshire (with City of York), Durham and Northumberland (with Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland councils).

The change of Government has resulted in a situation where most of those with Devolution deals, those without confirmed deals, will be seeking to either amend or agree new arrangements once the framework is published. These early adopters are expected to be agreed in some form over the next few months³. The government will publish further details in due course.

5. The position adopted by Herefordshire Council to the Government's Expression of Interest.

- **Eol – Q1: Preferred geography (upper-tier local authorities in the area)**
 - o **The Council's Response:** *Our preference is devolution at a single county level. However, we are open to explore what it means for Herefordshire to work with our neighbours, subject to further information and details about a devolution framework that defines the powers and flexibilities available to areas entering into such agreements and future timescales*
- **Eol – Q2: Initial preference on mayoral / non-mayoral devolution**
 - o **The Council's Response:** *Non-Mayoral Devolution*

This position was informed by discussions with group leaders on the proposals from government, limited as they are at the current time.

6. Herefordshire Council – our starting position in regard to devolution options coming forward

As a general principle – the Council has adopted a position that devolution has the potential to ensure Herefordshire benefits from any additional Government funding that may be available. We are keen to explore what new powers may be devolved to drive economic growth in the City and the market towns across the County and build more affordable homes. It could enable much needed and long overdue investment in our transport infrastructure, drive inclusive growth, create new jobs in growing industries across Herefordshire.

As a County we welcome economic growth and our initial estimates of the Government's new Housing Targets will see a need for up to 20,000 new homes. With that comes the need for new infrastructure, additional employment land, and a skilled workforce to bring in new business and investment. As set out below, we have the plans in place to deliver a significant growth corridor for the City and County and we are investing our own resources to bring forward new housing and employment land.

² The Secretary of State must be satisfied that the establishment of a combined authority is likely to "improve the exercise of statutory functions" in the area in question. An existing combined authority may be changed into a mayoral combined authority via a further Order made by the Secretary of State. More information can be found:

³ Each of these devolution deals will be subject to parliamentary approval and local consent.

When thinking about the devolution deal opportunity we must act positively and progress all the options to ensure that Herefordshire isn't left behind or is the subject of an arranged fit/deal by the Government.

Our starting position is that any devolution deal must strengthen the council's focus on 'Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do' - through our stated Council Plan objectives:

- **People** - We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and benefit from communities that help people to feel safe and supported
- **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
- **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
- **Transformation** - We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money

7. Other key considerations

We are well placed to engage with others and set the framework for a devolution deal, as well as having very clear ambitions to deliver the infrastructure needed. For example:

- **Roads** – The New Road Strategy, adopted by our Cabinet earlier this year, sets out the need for a Growth Corridor for the County, that will open up the land needed to deliver essential new housing and employment land.
- **Rail** – With Government funding, we are delivering a new Transport Hub in Hereford, that will become the gateway for everyone visiting the City by rail, with connectivity to Bus and Active Travel measures. In addition, the Council has set aside funding to develop the Business Case for a new station at Pontrilas (The Golden Valley Parkway) which is an essential new station between Hereford and Abergavenny.
- **Rivers** – You will be well aware of the challenges we have faced due to the level of Phosphates in our rivers which has held back essential development in the north of the county. We have worked with partners across the region, and the Council has delivered the ground-breaking Luston Wetlands. This has freed up several hundred new homes through the Phosphates Credit system, whilst improving the quality of the water in our rivers and protecting the natural environment.

8. Herefordshire's Functional Economic Area: potential devolution options going forward

In devolution terms, we also need to consider our functional geographic area; our immediate local partners who share a number of similar challenges, ambitions and opportunities to Herefordshire. Ideally, any devolution deal would allow economic factors with boundaries that ideally reflect the drivers of the local economy and how the local markets operate. For example, businesses operating in Leominster, might look to a skilled workforce that crosses the boundaries into Shropshire and Powys. Similarly, a business operating in Ledbury, might seek its supply chain from into Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. These areas are not defined by administrative boundaries, but follow the natural markets that enable businesses to operate and thrive.

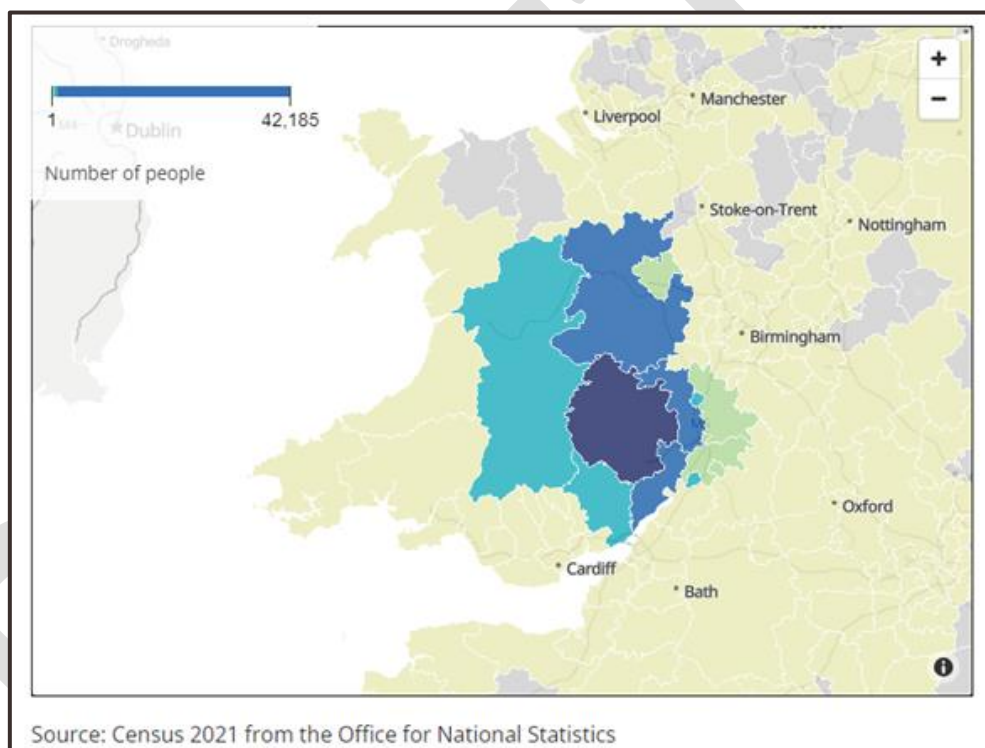
Devolution based upon existing adjacent County inter-dependencies.

The map below highlights inter-dependence of workforce across our geographic area. Those living in one county and working in another - commuting into Herefordshire from neighbouring counties.

This shows that the highest numbers of people commuting into the county for work are from:

- Shropshire (circa 1,500 likely to be south Shropshire area)
- Worcestershire district of Malvern Hills (circa 1,300) and
- Gloucestershire district of the Forest of Dean (circa 1,000).

Map 1: Workforce across our geographic area, living in one county and working in another



What about the Marches Forward Partnership?

The Marches Forward Partnership is a unique collaboration of Shropshire and Herefordshire Councils and Powys and Monmouthshire County Councils and partners. With a clear functional cross-border geography covering over 80% of the border of the English and Welsh border, and a population of 750,000, the four local authorities have come together to identify and address the key challenges and opportunities facing the region to unlock its full potential as a place to live, work and invest.

Leaders and Chief Executives from the four Local Authorities met with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government Director General to secure government support for the Marches Partnership as an alternative model to devolution. Discussions are also taking place

in tandem with the Welsh government officials to build support for a new long-term partnership model for the Marches and the opportunity for an integrated capital and revenue funding programme and the ability to undertake strategy and service delivery collectively.

In response, the Government has been clear that in return for capital funding and additional responsibility for the delivery of services locally, there would need a democratic, accountable body that brings partners together. They are not aware of a legal basis on which this could be based or established on a cross-border geography. In the absence of a legal entity the Government has recommended using the general power of competence to come together and act without financial support from the Government. This is the easiest most immediate route to continuing the work of the Marches Forward Partnership across England and Wales.

MHCLG Officials did suggest that Herefordshire and Shropshire could form a Combined Authority on the English side of the border and explore how to create a non-constituent role for Powys and Monmouthshire Councils with the support of the Welsh Government.

9. Immediate next steps for Herefordshire

Start informal discussions with Council leaders from possible devolution partners and assess the appetite and opportunities for joint working and the potential for developing a deal together. To do this we intend to;

- a) Establish a cross-party Devolution Deal Task Group to develop the Herefordshire strategy and work programme with our devolution partner/s.
- b) Engage with the Herefordshire public sectors (Police, Fire and Health), NMiTE and Herefordshire Colleges, community/voluntary sector and local businesses to broaden and deepen the thinking.
- c) Brief Herefordshire MP's on progress and secure their support
- d) Continue to engage with Government Officials following the EOI the Council submitted at end of September.

Estimated timeframes for the non-frontrunner authorities:

- Expressions of Interest to be submitted by end of September – **complete**
- Further details will be set out in the White Paper – **timings awaited** – but could reasonably be estimated as follows: –
 - o Proposal submitted to Government – Summer 2025
 - o Consultation of proposal – Autumn / Winter 2025
 - o Government approval of Deal – Spring 2026

Paul Walker
Chief Executive



Title of report: Work programme 2024/5

Meeting: Scrutiny Management Board

Meeting date: 28 October 2024

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All Wards

Purpose

To consider the draft work programme for Herefordshire Council's scrutiny committees for the municipal year 2024/25.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The Committee agree the draft work programme for Scrutiny Management Board contained in the work programme report attached as appendix 1,**
- b) **The Committee note the work programme for the other scrutiny committees, and identify any opportunities for collaboration or alignment of work.**

Alternative options

1. The committee could decline to agree a work programme for its future committee meetings. This would likely result in unstructured and purposeless meetings.
2. The committee could also decline to identify areas of potential collaboration or alignment of work with other committees. This could result in duplication or overlap of work.

Key considerations

3. A fundamental part of good scrutiny is planning and agreeing a programme of work for the committee to undertake. A well-considered work programme:
 - a. identifies priorities for the committee's work that align with corporate and partnership priorities, as well as reflecting community concern;
 - b. ensures that each identified topic has clear objectives that focus the committee's work;

- c. creates a timetable for the committee's programme of work so that the committee carry out its work at the optimal time; and
 - d. provides officers and partners with requirements for evidence that will support the committee in providing evidence-based scrutiny
4. To prepare this work programme, the committee chairs have met with officers of the council to identify potential priority areas of work for the committee. These priority areas have been scheduled within the work programme to ensure the committee considers topics when it is most useful to do so. A draft of this work programme has then been circulated to the council's corporate leadership team and other key senior directors, alongside committee chairs, for further comment and refinement.
5. As agreed by Scrutiny Management Board, I have replaced individual work programme reports, updated in time for each committee meeting, with a single combined work programme, published at the beginning of each month. This makes it easier for committees to plan work on topics that straddle the remit of more than one committee. It also facilitates planning for specific items on the work programme from corporate directors. The most recent work programme was published in October 2024 and is attached as Appendix 1.
6. Attached as Appendix 2 to this report is the council's most recently published forward plan of key decisions.

Community impact

7. Effective scrutiny enables the committee to reflect community concern, one of the four purposes of scrutiny as outlined by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Environmental impact

8. This report contains no direct environmental impacts. However, the work that the committee will undertake resulting from agreeing this work programme may have direct impacts. Reports arising from or supporting this work will outline their potential environmental impact.

Equality duty

9. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. This report contains no direct equality impacts. However, the reports and issues that the committee will consider may have direct impacts. Reports arising from or supporting this work will outline the any associated equality impacts for committee consideration.

Resource implications

10. This report constitutes part of the typical function of this committee. Similarly, a programme of work undertaken by committee is an integral part of the council's 'business as usual'. There is no resource implication in setting or agreeing a work programme. However agreed topics in the work programme, in particular any requests for bespoke research or the involvement of outside experts or community groups, may incur resource costs. These will be contained in any reporting or planning of agreed topics within this work programme.

Legal implications

11. The remit of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 3 section 4 of the constitution and the role of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 2 article 6 of the constitution.

12. The Local Government Act 2000 requires the council to deliver the scrutiny function.

Risk management

13. There are no risks identified in the committee agreeing an effective and timely programme of work. However, there is a risk to the council's reputation if committees fail to set a work programme, or set a programme of work that does not address local authority, partnership or community priorities.

Consultees

14. In drafting this work programme, consideration has been given to:

- a. The previous work of scrutiny committees;
- b. Priorities suggested by members of the committee; and
- c. Work with Herefordshire Council officers to develop topics and agree optimum timings to bring items for consideration.

15. This work programme is subject to ongoing review, which may involve additional consultees.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny work programme 2024/25 October 2024

Appendix 2 – Herefordshire Council Forward Plan 04 October 24

Background papers

None

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025

Below are the work programmes of Herefordshire Council’s five scrutiny committees.

Work programmes are subject to change, with revised programmes agreed at the end of formal committee meetings.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Committee Meeting

26 November 2024 **report publication date 18 November 2024** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 15 November 2024**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Including children’s voices in council policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the role of the council’s children’s advocacy team. • Scrutinise the council’s participation and engagement strategy • Scrutinise how the council seeks to understand the priorities of all children and young people with regard to council areas of responsibility, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transport and highways ○ Housing ○ Public Health ○ Planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group with children and young people, both within and outside the service • Children and Young People quality of life survey | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints and Children’s Rights Manager • Head of Service for Corporate Parenting • Hereford City Youth Council • Herefordshire rural media • Head of Transport and Access Services • Other officers to be agreed |

Committee Meeting

21 January 2025 **report publication date 13 January 2025** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 10 January 2025**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Ensuring sufficiency for children and young people with a SEND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the level of need for SEND provision in Herefordshire, and how Herefordshire Council and partners meet that need. • Understand how Herefordshire Council, the Department for Education and other bodies fund the development of capacity to support children with a SEND. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Association peer review of SEND services • Ofsted/CQC inspection of services report (if available) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liz Farr Service Director, Education • Hilary Jones – Service Manager SEND |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinise how the council, schools and health partners work together to support children, with or without a statement of need or education, health and care plan (EHCP). • Measure progress in meeting recommendations following the SEND peer review by the Local Government Association. • Explore how the council and the local parent-carer forum work together to co-produce strategy and practice. • Scrutinise the current neuro-development pathway and its role in supporting children. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jess Brooks – Integrated Care Board Children’s Lead • Helen Gill, Directorate Support Team • Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board • Wye Valley Trust • Parent Carer Forum |
| <p>Supporting children with additional needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the role of short breaks and their commissioning. • Other objectives to be agreed. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hayley Doyle, Service Director All Age Commissioning • Jessica Davies – Service manager Children with Disabilities |

Briefing

NEW 9 January 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Thresholds of Need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Hereford Safeguarding Partnership’s updated thresholds of need. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hereford Safeguarding Partnership’s updated thresholds of need | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Director, Children and Young People |

Briefing

February 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>School attainment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of pupil attainment from Key Stage 1 to A level in Herefordshire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil attainment data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Director, Education |

Committee Meeting

18 March 2025 report publication date **10 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **06 March 2025**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Child exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand different ways children are at risk of exploitation and the factors that contribute to that risk. Scrutinise how the different agencies work together to tackle exploitation. Scrutinise the role of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in tackling exploitation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member briefing on child exploitation Criminal exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults - county lines Childrens-society-Criminal-Exploitation-Stages-of-Recruitment Exploitation Safety Plan Practice Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director, Safeguarding West Mercia Police West Mercia Youth Justice Service Wye Valley NHS Trust Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership exploitation lead |
| <p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

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NEW Committee Meeting

27 May 2025 report publication date **19 May 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **TBC**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Update on Improvement Plan and Quality Assurance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives to be agreed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Improvement Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Service Safeguarding and Review |
| <p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 22 July 2025 report publication date 14 July 2025 pre meeting lines of enquiry planning TBC

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Early help for children and families <ul style="list-style-type: none">Objectives to be agreed | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 16 September 2025 report publication date 8 September 2025 pre meeting lines of enquiry planning TBC

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Youth Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none">Objectives to be agreed | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

*The Corporate Director, Children and Young People and Portfolio Holder, Children and Young People, both have a standing invitation to each committee meeting. It is assumed that the portfolio holder will attend each meeting.

Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee

Working Group Meeting

8 October 2024

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Public Realm Future Operating Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise proposals for a new operating model for the council's contract for public realm works. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of proposed operating model Draft contract | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director Environment and Highways Programme Director – major contracts |

Committee Meeting

15 October 2024 **report publication date 7 October 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 1 October 2024

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local authority housing delivery models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive an update on commissioned research into housing delivery models in other local authorities. Make recommendations to Cabinet on potential operating models in Herefordshire. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on commissioned research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director, Economy and Growth Head of Service, Housing and Wellbeing Head of Housing Development |
| Public Realm Future Operating Model Task and Finish Group recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree recommendation from the committee's task and finish group scrutinising proposals for a new operating model for the council's contract for public realm works. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task and finish group report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director Environment and Highways Programme Director – major contracts |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting**13 November 2024** report publication date **5 November 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **31 October 2024**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enterprise Zones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinise operation of Hereford Enterprise Zone and how learning from the project will be applied to future enterprise zones. • Assess the economic and social benefits of enterprise zones, including the impact of businesses within Herefordshire moving into the Hereford Enterprise Zone. • Scrutinise the learning from forming the governance of the enterprise zone, and how this has been applied to other governance arrangements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed analysis of the economic and social benefits of enterprise zones. • SWOT of enterprise zone proposals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and previous chairs of the Hereford Enterprise zone • Representative from Ross Enterprise Zone |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

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Committee Meeting**15 January 2025** report publication date **7 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **6 January 2025**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local Transport Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinise findings of public consultation on Local Transport Plan proposals. • Review draft plan before Council approval. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Local Transport Plan • Plan consultation findings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Director Environment and Highways • Head of Transport and Access Services • Members of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

12 March 2025 report publication date **4 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **21 February 2025**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Highways Winter Maintenance <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review of winter maintenance of highways following the 2024-25 winter period. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Overview of winter serviceMap of highways and footpaths gritted during the winter period | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Service Director Environment and HighwaysHead of Highways and Traffic |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 13 May 2025 report publication date **TBC** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **TBC**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Topic to be confirmed | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 8 July 2025 report publication date **TBC** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **TBC**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Topic to be confirmed | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 9 September 2025 **report publication date TBC** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning TBC**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Topic to be confirmed | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

*The Corporate Director, Economy and Environment, Cabinet Member, Economy and Growth, Cabinet Member, Community Services and Assets, Cabinet Member, Roads and Regulatory Services, and Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure, all have a standing invitation to the meeting.

Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Committee Meeting

18 November 2024 **report publication date 8 November 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 7 November 2024

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tree, hedgerow and road ditch management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the findings of the recent Defra consultation on hedgerow management. Scrutinise council tree and hedgerow management policy and see whether it is fit for purpose for the county and climate change resistant. To consider the county tree strategy as an enabler for Herefordshire to become a carbon offset trading partner with others. Look at countywide action on ash dieback and replacement. To look at how our approach to the management and oversight of road ditches fits in with tree and hedgerow strategy to mitigate flooding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council policy on tree and hedgerow management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Farmers Union CPRE (formerly Council for the Protection of Rural England) Policy leads on tree and hedgerow management Ed Bradford's team Liz Dubberley |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

20 January 2025 **report publication date 10 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 9 January 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| River Lugg water quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate work to improve the water quality of the River Lugg and the prospect of getting some of the £35 million earmarked for the River Wye improvement diverted to the River Lugg. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five years of analysis of water quality data (from Nutrient Management Board or Environment Agency) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herefordshire Construction Industry Lobby Group Natural England Environment Agency |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the implications of poor water quality on the ability to plan and build new housing. Evaluate the progress on developing new wetland areas on river improvement and their impact on housing development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence from Merry Albright (Home Builders Federation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural Resources Wales Defra River Wye champion |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

24 March 2025 **report publication date 14 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 13 March 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Energy Efficiency and Retrofitting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the outcomes of the Building Retrofit and supply chain development funded by Climate Reserve fund. Evaluate progress on Keep Herefordshire Warm and HUG initiatives. Consider whether new houses and self –build properties are ‘zero carbon ready’. The role of fuel replacement to heat homes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Reserve fund financial reports Stats of surveys undertaken, grants awarded, work completed Future Homes Standard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gareth Ellis – Sustainability & Climate Change Officer Andrew Cooper – LGA, previously Renewable Energy Assoc., Yorkshire Energy Services Jackie Jones – Building Sense |
| Waste contract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six-month review of the operation of the council’s new waste contract | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be confirmed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ben Boswell - Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 12 May 2025 **report publication date 2 May 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning May 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NEW Road Safety and speed limits | To be confirmed | To be confirmed |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 7 July 2025 **report publication date 27 June 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning June/July 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DATE CHANGE Bus services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise the outcome of the £1,064,000 grant allocation to Herefordshire Council by the Department for Transport to improve bus services. Other objectives to be agreed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding allocation and proposed improvements to bus services in Herefordshire. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Transport and Access Services Bus services user groups |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 8 September 2025 **report publication date 29 August 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning August/September 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Topic to be confirmed | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

*The Corporate Director, Economy and Environment and Cabinet Member, Environment, both have a standing invitation to the meeting.

Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Committee Meeting

3 October 2024 **report publication date 25 September 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 23 September 2024

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Supporting care leavers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we identify and meet the housing and support needs of care leavers? How do we ensure that the council's looked-after children leave its care with good life skills? Where needed, how does the council ensure a smooth transition from children's to adult services? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Service, Corporate Parenting Service Director – All Ages Commissioning Head of Service, Living Well Head of Service, Housing |
| Review of Talk Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-decision scrutiny of the review of Talk Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review final report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director, Communities |
| All-age carers' strategy working group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To agree a terms of reference for a working group to scrutinise the council's draft all-age carers' strategy action plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group terms of reference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

25 November 2024 **report publication date 15 November 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 14 November 2024

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | |
| <p>West Mercia Police “Right Care, Right Person” policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinise the impact of the change in West Mercia policy regarding responses to welfare, mental health incidents and missing persons. • Further scrutinise the delivery of the policy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Mercia Police “Most Appropriate Agency” policy • Herefordshire Council policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Mercia Police • Director of Public Health |
| <p>Supported housing for working age adults with additional needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we forecast, commission and meet the housing needs of adults with a learning or with a severe and enduring mental health problem? • How do we work with developers to provide the required housing? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Director – All Ages Commissioning • Head of Housing |
| <p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

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Working Group Meeting

January 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>All-age carers’ strategy action plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny of all-age carers’ strategy action plan • Recommendations to further develop the action plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft action plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning Manager, Community Wellbeing • Chair, Carers’ Partnership Group |

Committee Meeting

27 January 2025 **report publication date 17 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 16 January 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Health and Wellbeing Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">To examine the objectives of the strategy.To scrutinise delivery plans underpinning key objectives of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.To measure progress in developing Herefordshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Health and Wellbeing strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Chair, Health and Wellbeing BoardDirector of Public Health |
| All-age carers' strategy action plan – recommendations of the working group <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discuss and agree recommendations of the proposed working group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Working group report and draft recommendations | <ul style="list-style-type: none">All-age carers' steering group chairSenior commissioning officer |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

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Briefing

NEW 11 February 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Roundtable with home care providers <ul style="list-style-type: none">Objectives to be confirmed. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Home care providers |

Committee Meeting

31 March 2025 report publication date **21 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **20 March 2025**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Topic to be confirmed | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 19 May 2025 report publication date **TBC** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **TBC**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Topic to be confirmed | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 28 July 2025 report publication date **TBC** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **TBC**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Topic to be confirmed | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 29 September 2025 **report publication date TBC** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning TBC**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Topic to be confirmed | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

*The Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing and Cabinet Member Adults, Health and Wellbeing, both have a standing invitation to the meeting.

Scrutiny Management Board

Committee Meeting

28 October 2024 **report publication date 18 October 2024** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 16 October 2024**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The management and delivery of capital projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the council approach the management of capital projects? How does the council prioritise and fund capital projects? How does the council ensure that it has the right capability and capacity to deliver projects at the right quality, within budget and to agreed timescales? How does the council ensure value for money through the delivery of capital projects? How does planned capital investment reduce the council’s revenue costs? How does the council understand its performance with regards to the management and delivery of projects, how does it ensure it constantly improves its performance? | <p>The current capital prioritisation process</p> <p>A review of the current 2024-2025 capital programme (featuring Q1 and Q2) outturn</p> <p>Ensuring an aligned timetable for Cabinet and for Scrutiny for the year ahead</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Director, Economy and Environment |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the council ensure that the interactions between capital projects and the revenue budget are effectively managed? • What impact has the council had through capital project and how can it have greater impact in the future? | | |
| <p>Devolution – options for Herefordshire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess prospective options for a submission to Government for devolution powers to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Options for partnership arrangements with other local authorities. ○ Understanding the path to a devolution settlement ○ The opportunities and benefits for Herefordshire Communities from devolution ○ The risks and challenges to Herefordshire from devolution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member briefing on devolution • HM Government devolution Green Paper | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Director, Economy and Environment |
| <p>Herefordshire Council Plan – Delivery Plan Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree terms of reference for a Council Plan Delivery Plan Working Group, to contribute to the development of the delivery plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft working group terms of reference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer |
| <p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

**Working Group Meeting
November 2024**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Herefordshire Council Plan delivery plan – 1st meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the actions the executive is prioritising in the 2024-25 delivery plan. • Assess delivery of the current delivery plan and the impact of those actions on the 2025-26 delivery plan and the capital programme. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024-28 Herefordshire Council Plan • 2024-25 Herefordshire Council Plan delivery plan • Draft 2025-26 Herefordshire Council Plan delivery plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of the Council • Head of Corporate Performance & Intelligence • Portfolio Manager, Corporate Services |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraise how the executive ensure that the actions in the current and future delivery plans meet the ambitions of the Herefordshire Council Plan. • Ensure that oversight of the delivery plan is reflected in performance reporting, and that performance reporting is helping to drive delivery of the plan. • Scrutinise the alignment between the delivery plan, the capital programme and the medium term financial strategy. • Further scrutinise support for the current delivery plan through the 2024-25 budget, and proposals for the 2025-26 delivery plan and budget. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024-25 medium term financial strategy • 2024-25 capital programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme co-ordinator |
| <p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meetinglate November 2024 (date TBC) **report publication date November 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning November 2024

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Government Budget 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse the potential impact of HM Government’s budget statement of 30 October. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HM Government 2025 budget statement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Executive Director of Finance |

Committee Meeting16 December 2024 **report publication date 6 December 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 4 December 2024

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Financial Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of 2024-2025 Quarters 1 and 2 outturn How effective has the executive been in managing the budget for the first six months of the year Where has the executive failed to achieve planned savings and what mitigating actions have been taken? Where has the executive seen unplanned growth in budgets and what mitigating actions have been taken? What are the key risks to the delivery of the budget over the remainder of the year? What has been the impact of the executive’s work on the communities of Herefordshire? Scrutiny of management action to achieve planned budget outturn. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget 2024 Quarter 1 and 2 outturn | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Finance |
| Herefordshire Council Plan – Delivery Plan Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree findings of the delivery plan working group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final working group report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Working Group Meeting

January

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
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| <p>Herefordshire Council Plan delivery plan – 2nd meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the actions the executive is prioritising in the 2024-25 delivery plan.• Assess delivery of the current delivery plan and the impact of those actions on the 2025-26 delivery plan and the capital programme.• Appraise how the executive ensure that the actions in the current and future delivery plans meet the ambitions of the Herefordshire Council Plan.• Ensure that oversight of the delivery plan is reflected in performance reporting, and that performance reporting is helping to drive delivery of the plan.• Scrutinise the alignment between the delivery plan, the capital programme and the medium term financial strategy.• Further scrutinise support for the current delivery plan through the 2024-25 budget, and proposals for the 2025-26 delivery plan and budget. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2024-28 Herefordshire Council Plan• 2024-25 Herefordshire Council Plan delivery plan• Draft 2025-26 Herefordshire Council Plan delivery plan• 2024-25 medium term financial strategy• 2024-25 capital programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leader of the Council• Head of Corporate Performance & Intelligence• Portfolio Manager, Corporate Services• Programme co-ordinator |

Committee Meeting

14 and 24 January 2025 report publication dates **6 and 16 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **3 or 6 January 2025** (date to be confirmed)

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Budget, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise the proposed 2025-26 budget for Herefordshire Council. Evaluate the alignment between the medium term-financial strategy and the Herefordshire Council Plan and its delivery plan. Ensure that the capital priorities in capital programme align with the priorities of the delivery plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft 2025-26 budget Capital Programme Medium-term financial strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Finance All corporate directors Leader, Council |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

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Committee Meeting

11 March 2025 report publication date **3 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **28 February 2025**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Digital, Data and Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the council’s proposed investments in digital and data technology? How does the council achieve value for money in its investments? What are the gaps in the council’s information technology, and how will address them? What staffing, training and corporate restructuring will be required to deliver the proposed investments? What opportunities exist to digitise council services? How will the council ensure that digitisation does not exclude vulnerable groups? | | |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Financial Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of 2024-2025 quarter 3 outturn. Scrutiny of management action to achieve planned budget outturn. Scrutiny of portfolio holder action to identify risks in delivery of agreed budget. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarter 3 outturn | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Finance |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

20 May 2025 report publication date May 2025 pre meeting lines of enquiry planning May 2025

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hoople <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does our relationship with Hoople deliver value for money for the council? How does our relationship with Hoople deliver value for money for the council? How does Hoople itself deliver value for money? What are Hoople's areas of competence and expertise? How does the council balance the friction caused by having a client/supplier relationship with the benefits of having a Tekkal supplier and a specialist? How does the council capture Hoople's expertise in shaping relevant policies and plans? What has been in the impact of Hoople on the communities of Herefordshire? How does Hoople contribute to the priorities in the Council Plan and its annual delivery plan? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Finance |
| Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 1 July 2025 **report publication date 23 June 2025** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning TBC**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>DATE CHANGE Workforce planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the council determine its workforce requirements? • Where are the gaps in the current council staffing structures and skills, and what work is underway to fill those gaps? • What has been the impact of MERS on the council’s structure, and how will those impacts be addressed? • What programmes are planned and are underway to develop the council’s workforce? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development |
| <p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

Committee Meeting

NEW 30 September 2025 **report publication date 22 September 2025** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning TBC**

| Topic and Objectives | Evidence required | Attendees* |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Topic to be confirmed</p> | | |
| <p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer |

*The Director of Finance and all Cabinet portfolio holders have a standing invitation to each committee meeting. Portfolio holder attendance is dependent on the topic being discussed.

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN



This document, known as the Forward Plan, sets out the decisions which are expected to be taken during the period covered by the Plan by either Cabinet as a whole, or by individual Cabinet Members. The Plan is updated regularly and is available on the Herefordshire Council website (www.herefordshire.gov.uk) and from Council Offices. This edition supersedes all previous editions.

The council must give at least 28 days' notice of key decisions to be taken. A key decision is one which results in the council incurring expenditure or making savings of £500,000 or more, and/or is likely to be significant in terms of the strategic nature of the decision or its impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the council to a significant number of people living or working in the locality affected.

Current cabinet members are listed below. For more information and links papers for Cabinet meetings please visit <https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=251>

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

Documents submitted in relation to each decision will be a formal report, which may include one or more appendices. Reports will usually be made available on the council website at least 5 clear working days before the date of the decision. Occasionally it will be necessary to exempt part or all of a decision report from publication due to the nature of the decision, for example if it relates to the commercial or business affairs of the council. Other documents may be submitted in advance of the decision being taken and will also be published on the website unless exempt.

To request a copy of a decision report or related documents please contact governancesupportteam@herefordshire.gov.uk or telephone 01432 261699.

The following information is provided for each entry in the Forward Plan:

| Heading | Contains |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Report title and purpose | A summary of the proposal |
| Decision Maker and Due date | Who will take the decision and the date the decision is expected to be made |
| Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s) | The cabinet member with responsibility for this decision and the officers producing the decision report. |
| Directorate | The directorate of the council responsible for the decision. |
| Date uploaded onto plan | The date the decision was first uploaded and the notice period started for key decisions. |
| Decision type, exemptions and urgency | Whether the decision is a Key or Non-Key decision, if the report is expected to be fully open, partly exempt or fully exempt and if urgency procedures are being followed. |

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Decisions to be taken by Cabinet at a formal meeting are listed first, ordered by date, and include both Key and Non-Key decisions. Decisions to be taken by individual Cabinet Members are then listed, grouped by portfolio area and sorted by date. These include Key decisions only.

| Report title and purpose | Decision Maker and Due date | Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s) | Directorate | Date uploaded onto plan | Decision Type, exemptions and urgency |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|

Cabinet decisions by date (Key and Non-key listed)

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <p>Corporate Parenting Strategy To approve the corporate parenting strategy</p> | <p>Cabinet 28 November 2024</p> | <p>Cabinet member children and young people Caroline Marshall, Project manager, Julie Mepham <small>caroline.marshall3@herefordshire.gov.uk, Tel: 01432 260249,</small></p> | <p>Children and Young People</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |
| <p>Student Accommodation Update and Recommendations To update Cabinet Member on the progress and budget for the project</p> | <p>Cabinet 28 November 2024</p> | <p>Cabinet member community services and assets Joni Hughes, Head of Chief Executive's Office, Susan White, Programme Manager <small>Joni.Hughes@herefordshire.gov.uk, Susan.White2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260598, T: 01432 260070</small></p> | <p>Economy and Environment</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |

| Report title and purpose | Decision Maker and Due date | Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s) | Directorate | Date uploaded onto plan | Decision Type, exemptions and urgency |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <p>Herefordshire and Worcestershire Group Training Association Ltd (HWGTA) Investment Partnership Model</p> <p>To develop a business case outlining options for a preferred investment model and;</p> <p>to approve the preferred investment model option for the HWGTA Ltd and Herefordshire Council partnership to enable the development of a vocational centre of excellence on Skylon Park.</p> | <p>Cabinet 23 January 2025</p> | <p>Cabinet member community services and assets</p> <p>Joni Hughes, Head of Chief Executive's Office, Gabriela Singh, Project Manager</p> <p><small>Joni.Hughes@herefordshire.gov.uk, Gabriella.Singh@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260598, Tel: 01432 260375</small></p> | <p>Corporate Support Centre</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |
| <p>New care facility</p> <p>To consider and agree the business case to invest in and develop the council's own care facility in Herefordshire to meet future demand</p> | <p>Cabinet 23 January 2025</p> | <p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing</p> <p>Hilary Hall, Corporate Director Community Wellbeing, Hayley Doyle, Service Director - All Age Commissioning</p> <p><small>Hilary.Hall@herefordshire.gov.uk, Hayley.Doyle@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260832</small></p> | <p>Community Wellbeing</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Decisions (Key decisions only)</p> | | | | | |
| <p>Portfolio: adults, health and wellbeing</p> | | | | | |

| Report title and purpose | Decision Maker and Due date | Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s) | Directorate | Date uploaded onto plan | Decision Type, exemptions and urgency |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <p>Community Spaces Capital Grant Scheme To approve the approach for the Community Spaces Capital Grant Scheme</p> | <p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 23 October 2024</p> | <p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Emily Lowe, Talk Community Development Lead Emily.Lowe2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383423</p> | <p>Community Wellbeing</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |
| Portfolio: children and young people | | | | | |
| <p>Recommissioning of Early Help Family Befriending & Mentoring Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of this document is for the Cabinet Member to be made aware of and agree to the recommissioning recommendation proposed – to tender for new contract/s for the same or redesigned service/s. • To delegate future operational decisions to Service Director. | <p>Cabinet member children and young people 13 December 2024</p> | <p>Cabinet member children and young people Richard Watson, Senior Commissioning Manager - All age disability, Sam Westwood, Commissioning Officer, All Age Disability, Community Wellbeing rwatson@herefordshire.gov.uk, Sam.Westwood@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383047, Tel: 01432 383097</p> | <p>Community Wellbeing</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |
| Portfolio: community services and assets | | | | | |

| Report title and purpose | Decision Maker and Due date | Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s) | Directorate | Date uploaded onto plan | Decision Type, exemptions and urgency |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <p>High Needs Capital Grant: Purchase of a building for Herefordshire’s Pupil Referral Unit To approve the spend from the High Needs Grant to purchase a suitable building, to relocate on to one site, Herefordshire’s Pupil Referral Unit</p> | <p>Cabinet member community services and assets 11 October 2024</p> | <p>Cabinet member community services and assets Hilary Jones, Virtual headteacher, Caroline Marshall, Project manager, Quentin Mee, Head of Educational Development hjones@herefordshire.gov.uk, caroline.marshall3@herefordshire.gov.uk, Quentin.Mee@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260579, Tel: 01432 260249,</p> | <p>Children and Young People</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |
| <p>Portfolio: economy and growth</p> | | | | | |

| Report title and purpose | Decision Maker and Due date | Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s) | Directorate | Date uploaded onto plan | Decision Type, exemptions and urgency |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <p>Acquisition Fund For Housing Development To seek approval to spend up to £5m of the Acquisition Fund For Housing Development allocation in the Capital Programme, to enable the council to respond to short term opportunities to acquire and develop key strategic sites to meet critical social and affordable housing need.</p> | <p>Cabinet member economy and growth 17 October 2024</p> | <p>Cabinet member economy and growth Roger Allonby, Service Director Economy and Growth, Hayley Crane, Head of Service Housing, Stephen Holland, Interim Head of Housing Development <small>Roger.Allonby@herefordshire.gov.uk, Hayley.Crane@herefordshire.gov.uk, stephen.holland@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260330, Tel: 01432 261919,</small></p> | <p>Economy and Environment</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |
| <p>Accommodation based support for children in care and care leavers aged 16-21 To seek approval to commission, by means of a competitive tender process in line with the council's contract procedure rules, an accommodation based housing related support service for 16-21 year old children in care and care leavers.</p> | <p>Cabinet member children and young people 1 November 2024</p> | <p>Cabinet member children and young people Wendy Dyer, Commissioning Officer Communities <small>Wendy.Dyer@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 261673</small></p> | <p>Community Wellbeing</p> | <p>NEW ITEM</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |
| <p>Portfolio: environment</p> | | | | | |

| Report title and purpose | Decision Maker and Due date | Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s) | Directorate | Date uploaded onto plan | Decision Type, exemptions and urgency |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Portfolio: finance and corporate services | | | | | |
| <p>Household Support Fund 6 To accept the Household Support Fund allocation from the Department of Work and Pensions. To also approve the local eligibility approach for allocation of the funding for the Household Support Fund.</p> | <p>Cabinet member finance and corporate services 28 October 2024</p> | <p>Cabinet member finance and corporate services</p> <p>Emily Lowe, Talk Community Development Lead, William Merriman, Senior Project Manager, Nikki Stroud, Talk Community Children and Families Lead</p> <p>Emily.Lowe2@herefordshire.gov.uk, William.Merriman2@herefordshire.gov.uk, nikki.stroud@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383423, ,</p> | <p>Corporate Support Centre</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |
| Portfolio: roads and regulatory services | | | | | |

| Report title and purpose | Decision Maker and Due date | Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s) | Directorate | Date uploaded onto plan | Decision Type, exemptions and urgency |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <p>24/25 Winter Service To seek approval for the arrangements being made for the provision of winter service during the period of 2023 through to 2024 season, as set out in the Winter Service Plan.</p> <p>The Winter Service Plan continues to build on existing best practice and the findings of reviews that have taken place both locally and nationally. Herefordshire Council will continue to meet its duties towards the maintenance of the highway network in full and by working in partnership with Herefordshire's communities, wherever practicable, enhance the county's resilience to the impact of prolonged or severe winter weather.</p> | <p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services 23 October 2024</p> | <p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services</p> <p>Bruce Evans, Engineering Manager bje@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 07792880548</p> | <p>Economy and Environment</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |
| <p>2025/26 Capital Investment in Existing Highway Infrastructure To authorise the spend/investment in the public realm assets and infrastructure in 2025/26 following Council's resolution at the Council meeting 10 February 2023, to approve the proposed Capital Programme for 2023/24 through to 2026/27.</p> | <p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services 31 October 2024</p> | <p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services</p> <p>Ed Bradford, Head of Highways and Traffic Edward.Bradford@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260786</p> | <p>Economy and Environment</p> | <p>27 September 2024</p> | <p>KEY Open</p> |
| <p>Portfolio: transport and infrastructure</p> | | | | | |

