

Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Friday 9 October 2026 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor Roger Phillips (chairperson)
Councillor Kevin Tillett (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Polly Andrews, Bruce Baker, Jenny Bartlett, Chris Bartrum, Graham Biggs, Dave Boulter, Harry Bramer, Simeon Cole, Pauline Crockett, Dave Davies, Barry Durkin, Toni Fagan, Elizabeth Foxton, Carole Gandy, Catherine Gennard, Peter Hamblin, Liz Harvey, Helen Heathfield, Robert Highfield, David Hitchiner, Dan Hurcomb, Jonathan Lester, Nick Mason, Ed O'Driscoll, Rob Owens, Justine Peberdy, Dan Powell, Ivan Powell, Philip Price, Ben Proctor, Stef Simmons, Adam Spencer, Louis Stark, Pete Stoddart, John Stone, Elissa Swinglehurst, Richard Thomas, Diana Toynbee, Rebecca Tully and Rob Williams

Officers: Chief Executive, Corporate Director Community Wellbeing*, Corporate Director Economy and Environment*, Director of Governance, Law and Director of Finance and Democratic Services Manager

***denotes virtual attendance**

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carwardine, Clare Davies, Dykes, Engel, Kenyon, Oliver, Taylor and Allan Williams.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor David Hitchiner declared an interest as a local resident to the proposed bypass. Councillor Hitchiner outlined the dispensation he had been granted to speak and take part in all meetings that discuss the matter.

21. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 July be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council noted the Chairman's and Chief Executive's announcements as printed in the agenda papers.

23. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (PAGES 7 - 20)

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

24. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (PAGES 21 - 24)

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

25. CONSTITUTIONAL UPDATES

Council considered a report which proposed amendments to the Council's constitution.

The Chairman of the Council introduced the item and moved the recommendations in the report.

The Chairperson of the Audit and Governance committee seconded the recommendations in the report.

Council debated the report and significant concern was raised regarding the loss of decision making power at the local level resulting from recent Government reforms to the planning system.

The recommendations in the report were put to the vote and were carried by a simple majority.

RESOLVED –

a. That Council notes the requirements to change the terms of the Planning and Regulatory Committee in response to regulations implementing a National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions ('National Scheme of Delegation')

b. That Council approves changes in the Constitution effective on 31 October 2026:

- i. in Appendix 1 to reduce the number of councillors on the Planning and Regulatory Committee from 15 to 13; and**
- ii. in Appendix 2, 3 and 4 to make amendments to comply with the National Scheme of Delegation and Statutory Guidance and to permit pre-committee technical briefings.**

26. LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader presented his report on the activities of Cabinet since the meeting of Council in July 2026. Council questioned the Leader and the following actions were raised:

- In response to a question concerning the delivery of social rented housing, there was a commitment to provide the specific figures for the number of social rent dwellings delivered and the current level of need for social rented properties in the county.
- In response to a question concerning the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme, there was a commitment for group leaders to write jointly to express concerns about the way the scheme had been handled and the impact on the farming sector.
- In response to a question concerning the new adult social care framework, there was a commitment to provide a response regarding how the framework will collect qualitative and quantitative data to predict future demand.
- In response to a question concerning the Independent Advocacy Service procurement, there was a commitment to obtain assurance that strengthened

monitoring arrangements would be included and how the commissioning process would include young people and the wider community.

- In response to a question concerning traffic management arrangements at the Burcott Road railway bridge, there was a commitment to discuss the highway safety concerns raised following the meeting.
- In response to a question concerning the Ledbury Safer Routes to School scheme, there was a commitment to ensure ward members and Ledbury Town Council are updated on the scheme and its timescales as soon as possible.
- In response to a question concerning safety improvements at the Salway Arms junction, there was a commitment to ask the relevant Cabinet Member to press National Highways for a meeting regarding safety measures at the junction.
- In response to a question, a written response would be provided regarding the impacts of the construction of Phase 1 of the bypass on the Bridge Sollars road.
- In response to a question regarding projects in Hereford to address congestion an update would be provided to all members with details of those initiatives contained in the Local Transport Plan.
- In response to a question concerning the Western Bypass Phase 1 project, there was a commitment to circulate to all councillors a link to the Cabinet report and recommendations approved on 24 September.
- In response to a question concerning environmental priorities, there was a commitment to consider the development of a plan (similar to the Big Economic Plan) addressing environmental challenges alongside existing strategic plans.
- In response to a question from concerning the Big Economic Plan, there was a commitment to explore how members could receive updates on progress against the plan's objectives.
- In response to a question concerning the council's asset review, there was a commitment to provide members with an update once the review of assets has been completed.
- In response to a question concerning the cross-party housing working group, there was a commitment to convene a meeting as soon as practicable and provide an update on partnership opportunities to deliver social and affordable housing.
- In response to a question concerning Special Urgency decisions, there was a commitment to provide the specific reasons why the two urgent decisions had been required.
- In response to a question concerning climate change risks, there was a commitment to review the Corporate Risk Register to ensure that environmental risks, including flooding and drought, are appropriately reflected.

There was an adjournment at 11:50 a.m.; the meeting reconvened at 12:02 p.m.

27. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS

Motion – Evening Meetings

Councillor Hitchiner proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Crockett seconded the motion.

Councillor Hurcomb proposed an amendment to the motion as below:

Statutory Council meetings to which the public have access are held during the normal working day. This limits the ability of members of the public who are in full time employment to attend in person. It is also a discouragement for members of the public who may consider standing for election as they must take time off from their work to attend these meetings.

During the previous administration some Cabinet meetings were held outside Hereford (in Leominster and Ewyas Harold) and on one occasion in the evening. This was discontinued because Covid made it so difficult and it does indicate that making such arrangements is practical.

This motion is intended to be one small step towards opening up meetings to more members of the public and enable younger councillors to come forward for election. This notice of motion proposes that:

*The Executive be asked to consider how practical, and review the cost implications, of holding statutory Council meetings (including **Full Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny*** meetings) in the evenings and also in Market Towns and report back to Full Council.*

~~*In broad terms the request is that one or two Full Council meetings each year should be held in the evenings and the times and locations of Cabinet meetings shall ensure that at least one third are held at locations other than Hereford (but in Herefordshire) and at least one third are held in the evening.*~~

~~*The times and locations of all meetings of the Planning and Regulatory Committee, Scrutiny Committees and the Audit and Governance Committee be considered by each Committee.*~~

* text in bold – additional text in the amendment to the original motion

Councillor Rob Williams seconded the amendment.

Council debated the amendment for which there was wide support. The proposer and seconder of the original motion provided consent for its alteration in line with the amendment proposed above. Council signified its consent for the alteration.

The motion, as altered above, was put to the vote and was carried by a simple majority.

RESOLVED – that:

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Motion – Agricultural Water Security in Herefordshire

Councillor O'Driscoll proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Tillett seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion. There was support across the chamber for the motion.

The motion was put to the vote and the motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED – that:

Council notes the significant challenges faced by Herefordshire farmers and growers following the prolonged periods of extreme heat and dry weather this summer, highlighting the importance of reliable access to water for the resilience of our farming sector and the food it produces. Council recognises that increasing on-farm water storage can improve resilience, but that the cost and complexity of planning, regulation and construction can present significant barriers.

Council therefore resolves to request the Executive:

- 1. Convene a Herefordshire Agricultural Water Security Roundtable, bringing together a representative group of local farmers and growers, the NFU, CLA, Herefordshire Rural Hub, the Environment Agency, water companies and relevant Council services, to identify the principal barriers to improving agricultural water resilience and where the Council and its partners can most effectively assist.**
- 2. Review recent agricultural reservoir and water-storage applications in Herefordshire to identify unnecessary costs, delays, uncertainty or complexity and learn from schemes which have successfully progressed through the planning system.**
- 3. Explore the creation of a clearly signposted farm-reservoir planning pathway, providing farmers with greater clarity about planning and environmental requirements at an early stage and helping appropriate schemes navigate the process as efficiently as possible.**
- 4. Explore opportunities to reduce the financial barriers faced by farmers developing water-storage schemes, including identifying available national or external funding, grants and support, and considering whether earlier or better coordinated planning advice and other practical assistance could help reduce the costs associated with bringing appropriate schemes forward.**
- 5. Ensure agricultural water resilience informs the emerging Herefordshire Local Plan, taking account of the evidence and recommendations arising from this work.**
- 6. Report the findings and recommendations of this work to Full Council no later than 5 March 2027, including actions that can reasonably be taken locally and any changes which require representations to Government, regulators or other bodies.**

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr McGirr, Ross-on-Wye	The Section 106 agreement for the Hildersley Farm development, planning reference 150930, was varied on 29 March 2022 to specifically include “the provision of a footpath and cycle link to the town centre trail”. The Council’s S106 records, updated in September 2026, show that £375,409.51 has been received for transport/highway measures, of which £257,538.77 remains available. Why has the promised footpath and cycle link still not been completed, who is now responsible for delivering it, and by what date will the Council ensure that this S106 obligation is fulfilled?	Cabinet member Transport and Infrastructure
Response: Thank you for your question. The Council remains committed to delivering the footpath and cycle link, recognising its importance to the local community in providing access to the Town and Country Trail. The Section 106 contribution for the scheme remains available, and we have actively sought to progress the link, subject to the necessary permissions and approvals. Although the Ministry of Defence has indicated that it intends to cease using the adjoining rifle range, the land remains in its ownership and the Council requires the MOD’s agreement and the necessary legal access before the scheme can proceed. We have written to the MOD recently, and have followed this up with a second letter, to encourage progress on this issue and we will keep the public and members informed of progress.			
Supplementary Question: Thank you for the response. While I welcome the Council’s stated commitment to delivering the footpath and cycle link, the response does not explain what tangible progress has been made or when residents can realistically expect delivery. The Council confirms that the Section 106 contribution remains available and that it has written twice to the MOD. Could the Council therefore confirm when those letters were sent, whether a response has been received, and precisely what agreement or legal access is still required from the MOD? Given the MOD’s stated intention to cease using the adjoining rifle range, what discussions have taken place to secure access as part of that change, and what action will the Council take if the MOD does not agree? Finally, will the Council provide a clear timetable for resolving the access issue and delivering the footpath?			
Response to supplementary question: The Officer now responsible for Section 106 delivery corresponded with the Estates Team of the Ministry of Defence on Wednesday 7th October.			

Through Wednesday's correspondence, we have been advised that the range will remain operational until 2028, but this date is subject to funding and delivery of an alternative provision.

The Estates Team of the Ministry of Defence have agreed to raise the matter of the footpath with the user of the range. They have also noted a solution proposed by the Council to ensure the range remains secure but allows us to deliver the project over their land, which is the main constraint.

We are now waiting for further correspondence from the Estates Team of the Ministry of Defence on the outcome of their discussions with the user of the range.

We will be in a position to provide an update once we have further information from the Estates Team of the Ministry of Defence.

PQ 2	Mr Milln, Hereford	Item 14 of the Leaders' Report on Housing Delivery refers to proposals to 'bring council-owned buildings back into use' and the development of business cases 'to convert vacant council-owned buildings into self-contained temporary accommodation'. As a City Councillor representing Hereford Central I welcome this as I imagine do many other City members who, with their local knowledge, may be able to help and advise. So far as Hereford City is concerned which buildings are being referred to?	Cabinet Member - Economy and Growth
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Response: Bringing vacant buildings back into use, particularly where they can help address housing need and reduce reliance on more costly forms of temporary accommodation, represents an important opportunity for the council.

The programme referred to in the Leader's Report is being developed on a phased basis. At this stage, work is focused on the former John Venn building in Hereford.

As the programme progresses, other council-owned assets may be considered where there is a viable opportunity to support the council's housing objectives. However, no final decisions have yet been taken on any additional buildings and the current focus remains on the John Venn building.

The council would very much welcome the input of all local councillors as this work develops.

Supplementary question:

My substantive question asked which council-owned buildings are being proposed to bring back into use for accommodation and those for which business cases were being developed, at least for Hereford where I am a City Councillor.

We know about The Venn Building in my ward – its acquisition for accommodation was initiated by the last administration four years ago. This is not news.

Thank you for accepting the offer of input from City Councillors but this cannot happen in a vacuum. So, to repeat, which council-owned buildings and assets are being considered for accommodation, and which are being developed with business cases, as referred to in today's Leaders' report?

Mrs Protherough's similar question at PQ9 (which buildings and assets are being considered for sale?) has also not been answered. I am sure we would all appreciate one.

Response to supplementary question: As stated in our earlier response, no final decisions have yet been made.			
PQ 3	Ms Hewitt (on behalf of Dore Citizen Science), Hereford	With prolonged autumn drought leaving long stretches of the River Dore completely dry, the Peterchurch sewage treatment works is effectively discharging effluent directly onto a dry river bed, creating a severe environmental and public health hazard. This ecological crisis exposes a systemic regulatory failure, as standard, permits do not account for climate-driven zero-flow conditions in our watercourses. While Welsh Water and the Environment Agency hold direct regulatory duties, Herefordshire Council has a statutory obligation to safeguard local public health, biodiversity, and the county's environment. Given the scale of catchment-wide drying, how many other sewage treatment works across Herefordshire are currently discharging into dry or non-flowing river beds, and what urgent pressure is this Council applying to regulators to force immediate permit reviews?	Cabinet member Culture and Environment
Response: Herefordshire Council do not hold information on the discharge of sewage treatment works to dry or non flowing river beds. This is the responsibility of Welsh Water. The responsibility for Environmental Permit reviews is with the Environment Agency. As part of the future growth of the county, the council has consulted with all of the statutory undertakers, including Welsh Water and the Environment Agency, to ascertain what infrastructure would be required to accommodate the growth.			
Supplementary question: It is well known that 5-km of the River Dore through Peterchurch dries up during droughts. In 2011, 2017, 2022, 2025 and 2026 the Environment Agency rescued eels, lamprey and brown trout. Herefordshire Council consulted statutory authorities on the 89 house development in Peterchurch; Herefordshire Council, the Environment Agency and Welsh Water all know about the problem.			
Although the Council says it does not 'hold' information on sewage treatment works discharging into dry riverbeds, Dore Citizen Science this week recorded nitrate (NO3-N) at 75 ppm, phosphate at 6.6 ppm, nitrite at 1.5 ppm, and hypoxic dissolved oxygen at 2.9. All recorded on Epicollect. Given such critical data, can Herefordshire Council explain how it will meet its public-health duties under section 260 of the Public Health Act 1936 to protect local children from waterborne biohazards in this toxic pool?			

Response to supplementary question:

Thank you for your supplementary question.

The Council recognises the concerns raised about water quality in the River Dore and the potential implications for public health, particularly during periods of low or no river flow.

Section 260 of the Public Health Act 1936 provides discretionary powers to address certain conditions prejudicial to health. It does not specifically refer to rivers or watercourses, nor does it impose a statutory duty on the Council to intervene in the circumstances described.

While the reported measurements indicate poor water quality, they do not in themselves establish a direct public health risk or statutory nuisance.

The Environment Agency is the statutory regulator responsible for assessing the environmental impact of sewage discharges, reviewing permit conditions and taking enforcement action where necessary. Welsh Water is responsible for operating Peterchurch sewage treatment works and complying with its environmental permit.

It is important to note that raised levels of certain chemicals alone is not definitive proof of a health risk. We will therefore refer the findings to the Environment Agency and Welsh Water, seeking their assessment of the reported conditions, particularly the implications of discharging during periods of no river flow. Once their responses have been received, the Council will consider whether any further action is appropriate within its own statutory responsibilities.

PQ 4	Ms Robertson, Hereford	A petition has today been handed to the Chairman for action and shows the strength of feeling amongst our community for improvements to the C1095 Towtree Lane junction following the death of one of our parishioners. We acknowledge the improvements recommended in a recent traffic study but feel they do not go far enough. With the camber, blind pull-outs and increase in traffic using the road, will the Cabinet Member for Highways give assurance that physical alterations to this junction will also be investigated alongside the traffic study recommendations?	Cabinet member Roads and Regulatory Services
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Response:

Thank you for submitting your petition, which will be formally responded to in due course. I was saddened to learn of the recent fatality at the Towtree Lane junction. Once all investigations have been concluded and the Coroner's report has been issued, we will be able to understand if any mitigation measures are appropriate. These will first consider education measures, then enforcement and finally engineering solutions.

I understand from Officers that the recommendations identified within the road safety review to which you refer are intended to help improve road safety along the C1095 and at the Towtree Lane junction. In particular, the proposed reduction of the national speed limit to 50mph would better align the maximum permitted speed with the character and function of the road. Complementary engineering measures, including enhanced signing and road markings would also improve driver awareness of hazards and junctions along the route, encouraging positive behavioural changes, including more appropriate approach speeds and increased driver awareness.

I thank you again for taking the time to submit your petition.

Supplementary question:

Based on local knowledge and the strength of our petition, would the cabinet member please, therefore, give consideration to a 40 mph speed limit along with alterations to the Towtree lane junction where I believe the land is in the ownership of Herefordshire Council?

Response to supplementary question:

Thank you for submitting your supplementary question. As previously stated, this incident is subject to an investigation and reports from external bodies. Once all investigations have been concluded and a Coroner's report has been issued, we will be able to understand what, if any, mitigation measures are required or appropriate.

PQ 5	Ms Morris, Hereford	The Leaders report is notable for its silence on the Hereford Library and new Museum and Art Gallery projects. According to the last publicly available minutes of the Stronger Hereford PDG, the board were told that key decisions around the new Hereford Library and Museum and Art Gallery projects lie with Herefordshire Council and 2 further meetings were taking place to enable the Board to reach a final view on the deliverability of the projects. As the last of these meetings took place on 2nd October, can the Cabinet member involved in these discussions advise and update fellow councillors what is happening in respect of these two "trailblazing projects transforming the city by 2025" that rely on Herefordshire Council to bring them to fruition?	Leader
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Response: The council remains committed to securing the long-term future of both Shirehall and Hereford Museum & Art Gallery. As work has progressed, further surveys, technical investigations and cost reviews have been undertaken to ensure both projects remain affordable, deliverable and provide lasting benefits for residents and visitors. We are currently reviewing the detailed designs and corresponding cost plans in the context of budget and funding timelines. We will work closely with partners to maximise the benefits delivered through these investments and ensure the best possible value is achieved within the available budget and funding deadlines. Our aim is to provide a further update on this work by the end October.

Supplementary Question:

I am sorry that the Leader is unable to update Herefordshire councillors or the public about the key decisions Herefordshire Council were making to help the Stronger Hereford Board reach a final view on the deliverability of the Library and Museum and Art Gallery projects in the last few days. If the intention was to update councillors and the public about these two "trailblazing projects" at the end of this month, why did the Leader not mention this in his report?

His silence on this matter gives the impression that delivery of these projects vital to the City and residents, is not a priority of this administration, even though the millions of pounds Stronger Towns funding awarded years ago runs out in less than 18 months.

Response to supplementary question:

My report was written and published before the most recent meeting with the Stronger Hereford Board.

PQ 6	Ms Morawiecka, Hereford	With fuel prices continuing to increase, any measures that Herefordshire Council can take to reduce costs, particularly around transport, would help residents across Herefordshire. The Government is helping with schemes to cap bus fares at £2 from January 2027. Another way to reduce costs is to increase transport choice with good Active Travel options for residents. To increase the Active Travel funding Herefordshire can access, improving its Active Travel Capability rating from Level 1 to Level 2 would have a significant impact. What steps are being taken to ensure that since the last Active Travel England assessment, Herefordshire Council will be able to demonstrate strong local leadership and organisational capability, with clear plans that form the basis of an emerging Active Travel network with a few elements already in place?	Cabinet member Transport and Infrastructure
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Response: Herefordshire Council is committed to continually improving travel choices, including active travel provision and has taken a number of practical steps since the previous Active Travel England assessment to strengthen organisational capacity, network planning and delivery. The adoption of the Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan, and its incorporation into the Local Transport Plan 2025–2041, provides a clear, prioritised framework for developing a connected active travel network. The plan was informed by around 1,600 consultation responses and is being used to identify schemes, support bids for external funding and ensure investment is directed towards routes that will make the greatest difference to residents.

This strategic approach is being translated into delivery. Examples include the completed improvements to Great Western Way, providing segregated space for people walking, wheeling and cycling; the Holme Lacy Road active travel scheme, which is being progressed as an important connection between residential areas, the Hereford Enterprise Zone and the wider network; and the Hereford Transport Hub, which will improve links between walking, cycling, bus and rail travel. The council is also progressing its Safer School Streets programme, using vehicle restrictions and supporting measures around school gates to make walking, wheeling and cycling safer and more attractive for children and families. Alongside individual schemes, the council is strengthening the programme management, technical design and governance arrangements needed to maintain a credible pipeline of projects. This includes ensuring proposals reflect Active Travel England design guidance, engaging communities as schemes are developed, and using monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate their impact.

These measures provide clearer evidence of leadership, a planned network and an emerging record of delivery. We will continue to work with Active Travel England to identify any remaining areas for improvement and to place Herefordshire in the strongest possible position at the next capability assessment.

Supplementary question:

It's good that Herefordshire Council is committed to improving travel choices and strengthening Active Travel capacity, planning and delivery. Many capital projects, including those built in 2026, fail to comply with Active Travel England's 2020 design recommendations to create a safe, connected Active Travel Network.

If future proposals will reflect their design guidance it is to be welcomed and it is hoped the Council will work more closely with Active Travel England to "get things right first time".

Twice in recent years the public have given extensive and detailed feedback for both the LCWWIP and the Hereford Masterplan but the consultation responses are still unpublished and appear to have been ignored.

Why have these consultation responses never been published and are not readily available to staff involved in developing a safe, connected Active Travel network across the City and County?

Response to supplementary question:

The LCWWIP was shaped by around 1,600 consultation responses and now guides active travel schemes, funding bids and investment decisions. It is available to officers and incorporated into the Local Transport Plan 2025–2041.

PQ 7	Ms Seekings, Hereford	Rose Regeneration was awarded a new contract in April 2026 by Herefordshire Council for delivery of the final stage of the Towns Investment Programme and to support the Hereford Stronger Board in completion of the fifteen Town Fund projects. It appears that this company is now looking at 'Plan B' options for the reallocation of funds, in the event of a decision not to continue to support the Museum and Library projects being made. The fifteen projects were the result of a mass conversation about what Hereford is and what people want it to, with ideas, opinions and proposals gathered from residents, communities and businesses. What consultation is being undertaken to inform decisions around the new museum, library and the "Plan B"?	Leader
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Response: The council remains committed to securing the long-term future of both Shirehall and Hereford Museum & Art Gallery. As work has progressed, further surveys, technical investigations and cost reviews have been undertaken to ensure both projects remain affordable, deliverable and provide lasting benefits for residents and visitors. We are currently reviewing the detailed designs and corresponding cost plans in the context of budget and funding timelines. We will work closely with partners to maximise the benefits delivered through these investments and ensure the best possible value is achieved within the available budget and funding deadlines. Our aim is to provide a further update on this work by the end October.

Supplementary question:

There seems to be confusion as I received the same answer provided to different public questions and which did not answer my actual question.

I asked about the Library and the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery projects, not about the long term future of the Shirehall. The Shirehall was never part of the Stronger Towns Fund projects, as originally the library was to be relocated in Maylords Orchards and so should have been open by now.

Therefore I repeat my question. The original Library and Museum and Art Gallery proposals were gathered from consultation with residents, communities and businesses. Therefore, **exactly what, when and with whom** is consultation being undertaken to inform the revised decisions around the new museum, library and the "Plan B" involving the reallocation of the various public funds? and

Response to supplementary question:

For clarity, our earlier reference to the Shire Hall project includes the proposal to locate a new library within the building. The response therefore addressed both the library and the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery projects. A range of individuals and groups have been and will be consulted as the revised plans for these projects are developed.

PQ 8	Ms Bowes, Hereford	The Leader's report mentions that Herefordshire Council is in negotiations and engagement with National Highways. The Southern Link Road planning conditions requires HGVs that would previously use the Belmont Road, to divert onto the new Southern Link Road and then onto the A49 (Ross Road) before they can cross Greyfriars Bridge. With this extra traffic, particularly HGVs, on the A49 in Hereford what safe, active travel measures are National Highways looking to implement and fund along the A49, to ensure that the local residents can safely connect with the Rotherwas HEZ and other locations around Hereford safely by Active Travel means?	Cabinet member Transport and Infrastructure
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Response: The original Southern Link Road application formed part of the wider South Wye Transport Package, which included a range of active travel improvements. Although the road scheme was cancelled in 2021, a number of those measures have since been taken forward, including improvements along Holme Lacy Road. The council will continue to work closely with National Highways to identify and implement any measures required as part of phase one of the Bypass to ensure safe active travel provision, including connections to Rotherwas and the Hereford Enterprise Zone. Further active travel schemes are also proposed through the council's Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan and Local Transport Plan. These include improvements along Belmont Road and a network of quieter walking, wheeling and cycling routes across south Hereford, with better crossings, paths, signage, road markings and accessibility measures.

Supplementary question:

The answer states that the Southern Link Road scheme was cancelled in 2021. However, the Council appears to be continuing with the Southern Link Road element and has apparently been seeking to comply with the conditions that applied to the original planning application, one of these conditions

(21) being that “Prior to the first operation of the road hereby approved, a weight restriction on Belmont Road (A465) shall be implemented and effective”, which gave rise to my question.

National Highways were given significant Active Travel funding to reduce urban congestion on its trunk roads and with extra HGVs transferring onto the A49 into Hereford from the South West, what Active Travel measures are National Highways looking to implement and fund along the A49 Ross Road and into Hereford?

Response to supplementary question:

The council will continue to engage with National Highways as proposals for phase one of the bypass are developed. This will include considering the potential effect on the A49, the movement of HGVs and the need for safe walking, wheeling and cycling connections between south Hereford, Rotherwas and the Hereford Enterprise Zone. Where improvements or mitigation are shown to be necessary, we will press for these to be properly considered and funded by the responsible body.

PQ 9	Mrs Protherough, Hereford	The last Cabinet meeting heard from the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure that the “biggie” for revenue cost savings is reducing the cost of the Council’s estate by sales of Council owned buildings and assets. The previous Conservative administration sold off most of the County farms which in other Councils have provided jobs and a regular revenue stream to support Council services. What Council buildings and assets are being considered by the Cabinet for future sale?”	Cabinet member Community Services and Assets
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Response:

Parts of the council’s farming estate were operating at a loss and were not providing residents with value for money. Farms sold by the council continued to operate under new ownership, protecting jobs and productive agricultural use, while the capital receipts were reinvested in county priorities and infrastructure, such as roads and schools. This helped reduced the financial losses associated with the estate and provided greater flexibility to support wider investment.

Council taxpayers would rightly expect the council to retain assets only where they continue to provide demonstrable value. That value should be considered in the broadest sense, including their contribution to service delivery, social value and wider benefits to local communities. Equally, where an asset no longer delivers sufficient value, the council has a responsibility to consider how it can reduce the liabilities, maintenance costs and other ongoing expenditure associated with it.

Officers are reviewing the council’s remaining land, buildings and other assets to assess how they are used, whether they support effective service delivery in line with the Council plan, and whether running costs can be reduced. No decisions have yet been taken on specific future disposals. Any recommendations will be presented to Cabinet in due course and considered through the appropriate decision-making process.

Supplementary Question:

I was disappointed that Herefordshire Council had not invested in the skills and staff to manage its County Farms in the way that many other Councils and the new owners have been able to.

This would have generated a long term revenue stream to support services and provide jobs and training opportunities as well as local, fresh food. It appears that the capital receipts from the farms have been invested into council priorities that do not appear to have generated an income to fund services.

With the Council facing an £83 million medium term funding gap how does the Cabinet plan to utilise the capital receipts to ensure that the money will deliver a long term revenue stream to support current and future service delivery?

Response to supplementary question:

Last year, Herefordshire Council delivered one of its most ambitious capital programmes in recent history, with £86 million being invested in vital infrastructure, from roads to emergency housing, to support long-term local growth and improve residents' daily lives. This year, many of our priority projects are well underway, nearly completed or recently completed, including Merton Meadow flood alleviation works, the Hereford Transport Hub, Holme Lacy Road safer travel improvements, Peterchurch Primary School redevelopment and John Venn building for temporary housing. At the same time, we are keeping our important historical assets, such as the Shire Hall and HMAG maintained for future development, and are about to begin works to increase capacity at Aylestone School, Hereford while seeking public views on proposals to establish a new school for SEN in Ross-on-Wye. Future capital decisions will continue to be assessed through the council's governance and budget monitoring processes, taking account of affordability, deliverability, risk, value for money and the potential benefit to or impact on local services and council tax payers.

PQ 10	Ms Laan, Hereford	In his report the Chief Executive says that "We must also maintain momentum across the council's key projects and programmes, alongside the wider programme of investment to support regeneration, infrastructure and service". The Hereford Museum and Art Gallery was to display the Herefordshire Hoard, amongst many other artefacts and art, important to the County's history and identity, and to support the local economy by increasing footfall in the City, alongside the new City library. With lead officers on the Museum and Art Gallery having left the Council will he confirm whether these projects continue to be affordable and deliverable and that momentum on these 2 key city projects is being maintained?	Leader
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Response:

While there have been changes in personnel, these projects are council priorities and continue to be supported through established governance and project management arrangements. Major projects do not depend on a single individual, and work continues to ensure that the necessary expertise and capacity are in place to support delivery.

The council remains committed to securing the long-term future of both Shirehall and Hereford Museum & Art Gallery. As work has progressed, further surveys, technical investigations and cost reviews have been undertaken to ensure both projects remain affordable, deliverable and provide lasting benefits for residents and visitors. We are currently reviewing the detailed designs and corresponding cost plans in the context of budget and funding

timelines. We will work closely with partners to maximise the benefits delivered through these investments and ensure the best possible value is achieved within the available budget and funding deadlines. Our aim is to provide a further update on this work by the end October.

PQ 11	Ms Albright, Hereford	Significant planning restrictions on new homes were adopted in October 2019 We're entering the 8th year of restrictions in more than 40% of the county. This is causing significant harm to local communities, Herefordshire businesses, individual families - and to council coffers. NE have recently categorised the ecological condition of the Lugg as 'unfavourable declining' which is just above 'destroyed'. EA have recently confirmed that Welsh Water are responsible for just 4-9% of the phosphate load in the Lugg, with agriculture contributing the remaining. Yet neither agency have been able to produce a compliant recovery plan or bring forward actions to release the moratorium or restore the catchment. Does the council agree that the evidence shows that planning restrictions on new homes is unjust, ineffective & disproportionate and that Govt agencies have failed their responsibilities?	Cabinet member Culture and Environment
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Response: We recognise and share the frustration caused by the prolonged restrictions. They have now been in place for several years and have constrained housing delivery, affected businesses, housebuilders and families, and limited the county's ability to meet housing need and support economic growth.

The available evidence indicates that new housing accounts for only a small proportion of phosphate entering the River Lugg, with much of the wider phosphate load arising from other sources. However, the council, Natural England and the Environment Agency each have distinct statutory responsibilities and must operate within the legal framework established by Parliament. The council cannot lawfully set those requirements aside when determining planning applications.

We have sought to steer a responsible course between the urgent need for new homes and our duty to protect and restore the local environment. This includes establishing our phosphate mitigation and credit scheme, which is helping to unlock development that might otherwise remain stalled, while we continue to work with government, its agencies and other partners on longer-term solutions. As stated in the Leader's report, "at the point of drafting, £2,331,168 (up by £140,678 since my last report in July) in phosphate income has been received. To date these actions have released planning permissions for 1,096 dwellings (an increase of 116 dwellings)."

We would support proportionate changes to legislation or regulation that maintain strong environmental safeguards but allow decisions and mitigation measures to progress more quickly. Until the national framework changes, the council must continue to determine applications in accordance with its legal duties, while pressing for practical, evidence-based solutions that protect the River Lugg and enable the housing and sustainable growth Herefordshire needs.

Supplementary question:

We are grateful that the council shares our frustration - more than 7 years of planning restrictions (and obligations to try to secure expensive, slow and elusive mitigation) continues to have a disproportionate and unjust impact upon families, businesses, rural communities and the Country of Herefordshire - with no benefit to catchment ecology.

We understand that the £2,331,168 mentioned in the reports relates to monies received from applicants impacted by the restrictions, via council wetland credit sales. The wetlands are paid for entirely by applicants and local house builders at no cost to the council or residents. Herefordshire Council have confirmed that they are not progressing with further wetlands or credit creation projects, but do have £4.7 million of grants awarded to support those impacted by the restrictions - please can you set out how council intends to spend the grant funds, and how this will help applicants caught in the ongoing moratorium and support Herefordshire's need for housing and investment.

Response to supplementary question:

A paper setting out an update on further wetlands and credit creations projects will be presented to Cabinet in the autumn.

PQ 12	Ms Martin, Hereford	Following the Cabinet meeting of 24th September, it's crystal clear that even after attempts to reduce costs, cuts to services, "selling off the silver" and borrowing to be serviced through Council Tax, the Southern Link Road would be unaffordable. Given the urgent need to address declining footfall affecting city centre businesses and the serious congestion across the local network, when will the Council acknowledge that pursuing this road scheme is perverse and irresponsible and that the time has come to abandon it in favour of a third crossing to the east together with a tried and tested traffic reduction strategy of the sort that is working well all over the Netherlands, Denmark and elsewhere in Europe to deliver less congestion, higher quality of life and a thriving local economy?	Cabinet member Transport and Infrastructure
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Response:

We recognise there are strongly held views about how best to tackle congestion, support the city centre and improve transport in Hereford. However, this administration does not accept that pursuing phase one of the bypass is "perverse" or irresponsible.

We must adopt a strategic approach to reflect the scale of future housing, economic growth and the infrastructure needed to support it. The Government has set a target for 27,000 new homes to be delivered in Herefordshire by 2041. A fully realised western bypass, with phase one providing the essential anchor for a future river crossing and supporting infrastructure, offers the best opportunity to accommodate that growth in a planned and sustainable way. It would support new homes, jobs, skills and investment, create opportunities for younger and working-age residents, and reduce pressure on existing communities and the road network.

The benefits would extend beyond transport. By reducing through-traffic and congestion in Hereford, the scheme would support city-centre regeneration, improve air quality, reduce carbon emissions from queuing traffic and create safer, more attractive places for walking, cycling and public transport. This would contribute to a better quality of life for residents and a stronger environment for businesses and visitors.

Supplementary question:

The response to my principal question rests on the fallacy that removing through traffic would reduce congestion in the city. Where the local network is at or near capacity, it is impossible to reduce urban congestion with peri-urban road building due to the phenomenon of induced demand. This is not a “strongly held view” but an established principle of transport planning science and economics acknowledged by the DfT and reflected in guidance.

Consultants conducting a past strategy review confirmed that traffic in the city would return to pre bypass levels within the typical time frame of five years. In the light of this, and the urgent need to address congestion, traffic blight and declining footfall in the city centre, when will the Council bring forward a Dutch style traffic reduction strategy focused on modal shift for the 88,000 daily vehicle trips that have both origin and destination within the city?

Response to Supplementary Question:

A Dutch-style traffic reduction strategy is unlikely to deliver the infrastructure needed to help build 27,000 new homes in a planned and sustainable way as well as being able to open up employment land that will create thousands of new jobs. Our aim, when fully realised, will.

PQ 13	Mr Sherlock, Hereford	With the planning department running with approximately just 25% of staff needed to maintain its operations over the summer, how will this level of staffing cope with the new responsibilities and delegations under the changes to the Constitution proposed to be approved by Full Council on 9th October?	Cabinet member Culture and Environment
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Response: It is not an accurate reflection of the staffing levels within the service.

In terms of the proposed constitutional changes and the introduction of a national scheme of delegation, these changes are not expected to have a significant impact on the volume of planning applications received by the Council, nor on the number of cases allocated to individual planning officers. Applications will continue to be submitted and processed in broadly the same way as at present.

Agenda item no. 6 - Questions from members of the Council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Cllr O'Driscoll, Ross West	The Section 106 agreement for the Orchards development provides for a footpath and cycle link to the Town and Country Trail. Why, following the MOD's indication that it intends to cease using the adjoining rifle range, has the Council not sought access to deliver this link, and can the Leader assure residents that its delivery is not being delayed to protect the future development value of Council-owned land?	Leader
Response: Thank you for your question. The Council remains committed to delivering the footpath and cycle link, recognising its importance to the local community in providing access to the Town and Country Trail. The Section 106 contribution for the scheme remains available, and we have actively sought to progress the link, subject to the necessary permissions and approvals. Although the Ministry of Defence has indicated that it intends to cease using the adjoining rifle range, the land remains in its ownership and the Council requires the MOD's agreement and the necessary legal access before the scheme can proceed. We have today (7 October) further written to the MOD to encourage progress in this issue. The Council's approach is therefore being driven by deliverability, land ownership and legal access, and not by any intention to protect the future development value of Council-owned land. I have asked that you are kept updated as this matter progresses.			
Supplementary question: It's disappointing it's taken 6 months to finally get a letter sent off to the MOD. I was emailing officers and councillors back in April and May this year and it was front page news on some of the local papers. Why has it taken so long? Why has it taken a member a question from a member of the public and a question from myself for the letter to the MOD to be sent this week, literally two days ago?			
Response to supplementary question: Thank you for the question from the member of the public and from the member. As soon as I heard about the situation I insisted that rather than plan a letter to the MOD that we write one instantly. When these matters are brought to my attention and I'm aware that there's a time lag it is unacceptable so these things need to be grasped. We all know how long we all know how long these projects take and any delay on our part is not going to help the situation. So you have my assurance that the matter will be pursued with more vigour and you've had that assurance heard today from Councillor Price that officers will have that constructive dialogue with the MOD to see if we can get this situation sorted out as much as possible and as soon as possible.			

MQ 2	Cllr Proctor, College	What actions has the council taken since the last council meeting on 24th July to accelerate the spend of the Section 106 backlog?	Cabinet member Culture and Environment
Response: The Council has taken a number of steps to improve the delivery of Section 106 since July including the following: • The integration of the Section 106 function within the Highways and Public Realm Team, enabling greater access to management structures, technical expertise, and delivery resources. • Strengthened collaboration and knowledge sharing with Planning Services to improve coordination and expedite planning and delivery processes. • The proactive pursuit of funding opportunities to supplement Section 106 contributions to enable delivery of larger or more comprehensive projects where costs exceed available s106 funding. • Enhanced stakeholder engagement and project development through attendance at parish and town council meetings and liaison with third parties to ensure priorities are understood and schemes are appropriately scoped at an early stage to expedite delivery. We recognise that there is still more to do and I am confident that the new management arrangements will help deliver more schemes.			
Supplementary question: It's good to see that tangible actions have been taken. Currently, the section 106 backlog increases at roughly half a million pounds a year. Will these actions reverse that trend and how long does the cabinet member estimate it will take to get the backlog down to 7 million pounds?			
Response to supplementary questions: It's hard to know exactly when this is change will be under review but what is known is that at the end of June the spend was £238,000. By the end of September that had gone up to £760,000. So the early indications are positive but clearly we'll be keeping that under review.			
MQ 3	Cllr Mason, Weobley	Not a day seems to go by without acknowledgement of the transformative, rapidly evolving, but existentially risky, nature of Artificial Intelligence. According to the minutes of the audit and governance committee in June 2025, the draft annual governance statement 2024/2025 reported that: "The council has an AI ethics and governance board comprised of membership across different areas of the council who have oversight to ensure ethical use and accountability, to evaluate the	Cabinet member Finance and corporate services

		risks and harms associated with AI. The board will evolve as this technology develops and the council's reliance on it increases or the way it is used changes...." And earlier that year, at the Scrutiny Management Board in March, the minutes suggest that the board's membership and terms of reference could be shared.	
Response: AI technology is developing at a rapid rate, and the council takes its use and any associated risks and harms extremely seriously. The AI Ethics & Governance Board has been incorporated into the work of the existing Information Governance Steering Group which meets bi-monthly. The Board's membership and ToR can be shared and are available through the link below: (Public Pack)SUPPLEMENT - Attachments to Member Question - MQ3 Agenda Supplement for Council, 09/10/2026 10:00			
Supplementary question: Thank you for the clarification as to how management of artificial intelligence within the council has evolved and for acknowledging the strategic importance of how the council uses AI. Of its nature, apparently small decisions about AI can have extremely strategic consequences, often irreversibly letting the genie out of the bottle, and that therefore merits a particularly democratic overview. Can you therefore please confirm as the portfolio holder responsible that you have sight of the minutes and decisions made and are comfortable with the recordkeeping and governance of AI related decisions?			
Response to supplementary question: I am the portfolio holder for AI and I can confirm that I have reviewed the latest minutes of the meeting which was held in June. There was no meeting in August and the last meeting in September and we're waiting the minutes to be typed up and I'll then review them. But I can confirm to you that I'm fully aware of all the issues.			

