

Meeting:	Council
Meeting date:	Friday 9 March 2018
Title of report:	Leader's report to Council
Report by:	Leader of the Council

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To receive a report from the leader on the activities of the executive (cabinet) since the meeting of Council in October 2017 as required by the constitution and to provide transparency about decisions taken by the executive.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) the report be noted.

Alternative options

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

Key considerations

2. A list of the decisions taken by cabinet and cabinet members since the last report to Council (covering the period between 18 September 2017 and 23 February 2018) is provided at appendix 1. Details of all these decisions, and of those taken by officers under delegated authority, are published on the councillors and democracy pages of the

council's website. Four key decisions were taken under the general exception provisions (giving more than five but less than 28 days' notice). One non-key decision was taken under the urgency provisions (less than five days' notice). One executive decision was subject to call in. Following consideration of the recommendations from General Scrutiny Committee the original decision to confirm the new policy regarding waste disposal from Charity Shops was confirmed. However, having regard to the scrutiny committee's views, clarification was provided as to how permits would be issued in the most cost effective way, and that the council would work in partnership with charity shops to promote use of charity shop services by Herefordshire residents and to reduce the amount of waste charity shops produce.

3. When I became leader in 2013 it was obvious that the council would have to make some difficult decisions if it was to continue to provide important services to residents. We assessed then that the full challenge by 2019/20 would be savings of at least £87m.
4. Had we not changed radically, we would not have been able to continue. Many at that time suggested that those changes would devastate our ability to function, let alone improve our services and deliver major projects.
5. But we did, by retaining the ambition to improve and work with much reduced funding.
6. 2016/17 was the fourth consecutive year that we worked within much reduced budgets whilst carefully building up reserves against future needs. So far we have reduced spending by £67m and are on track for 2019/20.
7. That is an extraordinary achievement by the entire council team - every member of staff, managers at every level and every councillor. Whilst many councils have struggled with reduced income, Herefordshire has been agile, operationally focussed, had a clear strategic direction, strengthened its finances, and has delivered.
8. Working with the local government family we continue to lobby central government for resources to support the pressures facing local government and to ensure that any resources available are distributed in the most equitable way possible. On 19 December the Government launched a further consultation regarding the Fairer Funding formula and we will submit a response to that consultation to ensure that Herefordshire's case continues to be made.
9. The new Hereford City link road opened successfully in December on time and within budget. The road marks a significant milestone in the regeneration of Hereford city. As part of further improvements, the road unlocks previously unseen and under-utilised inner city land for development, and plans can now be taken forward for the site to build new homes, a transport hub at the Hereford Railway Station, new public services buildings and university accommodation.
10. Following Cabinet's decision in January to continue developing a scheme for the much-needed bypass for Hereford, the consultation regarding options for the route of the bypass remains live on the council's website until 20 March.
11. The Planning and Regulatory Committee unanimously approved our hybrid planning application for the Model Farm Business Park on Wednesday 21 February 2018. Following the planning approval and Council's inclusion of the project in the approved capital programme, officers are now developing the business case for the scheme.

12. Our Fastershire broadband programme has ensured that 84% of premises in Herefordshire can now access superfast broadband of over 30Mbps and above from a starting point of less than 1% of premises able to access a fibre service in 2012. The second phase of the broadband delivery is now underway with Gigaclear operating in the county to deliver fibre directly to the home.
13. Since my last report to Council, Cabinet's recommendations have informed Council's decision to set the budget for the coming year. Although undeniably challenging we are well on our way to delivering budget savings of some £96m between 2010 and 2021 yet continue every day to help protect around 2,500 vulnerable adults and 1,000 children and young people (including 300 children in our care). I make no apologies for restating here some of our recent achievements many of which are set out in the [position statement](#) written for the recent Local Government Association corporate peer challenge, which include:
- A three year improvement in pupil attainment in all key stages
 - Improving early years' outcomes from amongst the lowest in England to the top quartile of performance
 - Increased the number of foster carers by 9% against a backdrop of nationally reducing numbers
 - Reduced agency staffing in the last year by 50%
 - Significantly improved adult social care client satisfaction to among the best in the country
 - Achieved the highest specific target for reducing delayed transfers of care in 2017 of any county in the country
 - Worked with external partners to produce a business case which secured £23m of government funding to establish a new university in Hereford; we have agreed to become the accountable body for the public funding supporting delivery of the project and funds are already being drawn down by the university team
 - Delivered a new livestock market and a £90m privately funded retail and leisure development on the old livestock market site
 - Provided a combined Job Centre and customer service centre in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions, to provide easier access in a more cost efficient way than running two separate centres
 - Progressed plans for a by-pass for Hereford city and delivered major infrastructure improvements to the city and county road network
 - Completed a member-led review of the council's constitution
 - Built HARC- an energy-efficient purpose-built 'passivhaus' archive and records building with room for service-sharing and modern facilities
 - Successfully delivered the Hereford Enterprise Zone, creating over 600 jobs
 - In partnership with Worcestershire County Council opening a new energy from waste plant
 - Launched a new resident-focused website which achieved a 4 star SOCITM rating and two industry awards.
 - Leisure centres transferred to HALO leading to much improved facilities for the public and saving us the cost of running them
 - Our excellent relationship with the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership has secured some £60m in external funding
 - Resurfaced 19% of the county roads
14. At the time of writing we are awaiting the report from the peer challenge but the initial feedback found that our financial position was sound, that we had achieved much to be proud of, we had strong partnerships regionally and locally, and we had good plans in place going forward. Of course there were areas for improvement, such as building

stronger relationships with parish councils and communities, which we need to address and will consider in more detail once we have the report, but it is assuring to have confirmation that we have a good understanding of our own position. The findings from the peer team will be reported to Cabinet when available.

15. In December 2017 I made a number of changes to cabinet portfolio responsibilities and the revised portfolio details are set out in full at appendix 2. This is my last report to Council as Leader following my decision to step down today from that position; it will be a matter for the new Leader to determine future portfolio allocations. Any changes will of course be published on the council's website and reported to Council for information in due course. I would like to place on record my gratitude for the dedication shown by cabinet colleagues past and present during my time as Leader with particular reference to Cllr. Roger Phillips. I feel that his contribution to this county has never been fully recognised. The work of all cabinet members has been much appreciated.
16. I would like to end by encouraging you all to remain focussed on what matters to the people we serve – ensuring the provision of high quality services that meet their needs, growing our economy, enabling communities and individuals to take responsibility for their own futures, and using what resources we have available to us wisely. Herefordshire as a county, and the council as an organisation, is resilient, creative, and innovative; both are full of people who care greatly about the county and its future. We will, on occasion, have our differences of opinion, but should not allow those differences to adversely affect the way we work together or minimise the huge area of common ground that we all share. It has been an honour and I am immensely proud to have had the opportunity to lead the council through some challenging times and look forward confidently to its continued success.

Community impact

17. The community impact of any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken. Reporting to Council the activities of the executive demonstrates the council's commitment to the code of corporate governance principle of implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Equality duty

18. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
19. 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. As this is a decision on back office functions, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty. However these considerations are set out in each of the relevant reports informing the decisions listed at appendix 1.

Resource implications

20. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The financial implications of any decisions of the executive listed at appendix 1 have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Legal implications

21. There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The legal implications of any decisions of the executive listed at appendix 1 have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Risk management

22. There are no risks arising from the recommendations of this report. The risks of any decisions of the executive listed at appendix 1 have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Consultees

23. None.

Appendices

Appendix 1: executive decisions taken

Appendix 2: Cabinet portfolios

Background papers

None identified.