

Meeting:	Council
Meeting date:	Friday 9 October 2020
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

To provide an update on the work of the Cabinet since the previous meeting of the Council and an annual report on the priorities of the Cabinet and progress made in meeting those priorities. A brief summary of decisions taken by the executive is provided at appendix A and all decision reports and notices are available on the council's website.

The report provides a summary of progress made against the areas of focus identified in the County Plan. More detail about the council's performance and how that is reported is available on the performance management page of the [council's website](#).

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) The report be noted.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options; the constitution requires the Leader to provide Council with reports on the activities of the executive.

Key considerations

2. I am pleased to provide to Council my annual report as Leader of this council on the priorities of the cabinet and progress in meeting priorities covering a period which includes and is understandably dominated by the impact of two major flooding events and the ongoing battle to minimise the continuing threat from Covid 19 This report also covers the period from my last report to the date of this report
3. In the period up to the beginning of the Covid 19 crisis the Cabinet had put in place a new County Plan, considered and approved the budget for 2020/21, as well as progressed many aspects of the last year of the Corporate Plan 2016/2020.
4. The COVID 19 crisis has dominated affairs in the County and Country since March 2020.
5. Councillors continue to receive weekly updates from the Chief Executive, and the Cabinet has continued through this crisis to receive a weekly briefing from the Chief Executive and the Director of Public Health.
6. I wish to thank our Chief Executive, Alistair Neill, for the leadership shown by him during this crisis. While we remain worried and vigilant about the challenges that lie ahead over the coming months, Herefordshire's relatively low numbers of Covid 19 cases can be attributable to the actions Alistair, his senior leadership team and other officers have taken. The scrutiny by the Cabinet, individually and collectively, has also played its part. Of course every death from Covid 19 is a tragedy, and our hearts and thoughts go out to all of those in our community who have experienced the loss of family members or friends.
7. Notwithstanding the crisis the Cabinet has made progress towards delivery of the County Plan. Detail is given in the report below but of particular note is
 - The purchase of the leasehold interest in Maylord Orchard site enabling the County to take control of this strategic asset.
 - Support for education through the commissioning of building projects at Marlbrook Primary School, John Kryle School, Brookfield School and the accommodation block at Station Approach for Hereford College of Arts and, on a more temporary basis, New Model in Technology and Engineering (NMiTE).
 - Progress towards the review of the constitution which was promised by some of the members of the Coalition in their manifestos, the principle of which had cross party support at the Audit and Governance Committee on Friday, 25 September.
 - Progress towards significant improvement in the delivery of the Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) Public Realm Contract.
 - The recommissioning of Hillside has been brought this facility back into use by Herefordshire Council and is now open as a care and rehabilitation facility for health and social care admissions.
 - Our decision to pause and review the South Wye Transport Package (SWTP) and the Hereford Transport Package (HTP), and the detailed review of options. The decisions this council is considering on our local transport measures need to be the right ones for the people of Herefordshire especially in the context of the climate emergency.

- The agreement to a new Carbon Management Plan.
- Greater engagement with stakeholders and communities including the market towns.

Other less visible changes are being made in the Children's and Families, and Adults and Communities Directorates through the introduction of new policies and the Peer on Peer abuse review, and also new ways of working in the Council.

8. Following the Chief Executive's announcement about his retirement, we now move forward to begin the recruitment of a new Chief Executive. We are seeking employment panel views on alternatives and, if appropriate, approval to progress with the recruitment process in the next few weeks and expect the recruitment to be concluded early in the New Year.
9. This report is not merely a constitutional requirement. It is an important route by which all members can be reminded of the many essential decisions taken by this council during a time when our communities have needed our support most. As democratically elected representatives, we all know our communities well and understand their intrinsic local needs. I understand that communities want decisions that enable and support them in their day to day lives. They also – quite rightly - expect that the decisions they entrust to us, maintain our beautiful county of Herefordshire as a great place to live, visit, work, learn and do business.
10. I have been immensely proud of the strength, determination and resilience of our local communities and businesses who have unflinchingly endured throughout this past year of unprecedented weather and health emergencies. We have all in some way been impacted.
11. Of course, some of our planned council business has needed to flex, react and respond to the events around us. But I am very encouraged to see the ambitions we have set out in our County Plan remaining relevant and progressive as we seek to recover from these very difficult times.
12. A list of the decisions taken by cabinet and cabinet members since the last report to Council (covering the period between 10 July to 1 October, 2020) is provided at appendix A. 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.
13. Since my last report, No key decision was taken under the general exception provisions (giving more than five but less than 28 days' notice) as identified in appendix A. None were taken under the urgency provisions (less than five days' notice) and no decisions were subject to call in.
14. To ensure that progress towards achieving our County Plan priorities is reported transparently, we will be publishing a corporate delivery plan later this month. The report will set out our areas of focus for the coming years ahead in greater detail and will be presented to Cabinet at the end of this month.
15. There are a number of significant areas I would like to highlight before I report against our progress against the ambitions we have set out in our county plan in para. 31, below.

Constitutional arrangements:

16. During these challenging times, the instinct of all of us as councillors is to work as closely together as possible and to be able to influence policy development and decision-making. We will be discussing – at our October council meeting – the recommendation that we move as an authority to a hybrid cabinet model of governance to be agreed by full Council with implementation effective from annual council in May 2021. This fulfils a commitment made at the very start of our administration to review our current constitutional arrangements.
17. A hybrid model will provide members with the opportunity to increase their involvement and interests, and gives members from across the political spectrum scope for more influence. This is a hugely important principle to this administration – it is fundamental that the skills, insights and experiences of all elected members are utilised. I look forward to listening to members views on this matter. I also wish to thank the re-thinking governance working group for their time, energy and commitment in considering this issue and for their ongoing commitment should council agree to make this important change to our working practices.

Acquisition of a leasehold of The Maylord Orchard Site

18. In June the council secured control of the Maylord Orchard shopping centre in Hereford, a key strategic site at the heart of the city centre. In recent years the shopping centre had been suffering from neglect and under investment, with increasing numbers of vacant units. The previous long term lease holders were seeking to sell their interest and there was a real risk that an alternative occupier would seek to acquire the site to asset strip the remaining leases, letting the shopping centre further decline.
19. Through acquiring the site the council has already made a significant short term difference, improving the maintenance of the site, seeking pop up independent shops through offering cost covering short term leases, and seeking new uses such as events space/ cultural activities. The first new shop opened on 1st October. Despite the economic challenges there is interest in the other available units. In the longer term, like every town and city across the country, we need to consider how we diversify these areas as we move away from a dependence on retail as a footfall driver.
20. We are reviewing the wide range of new opportunities there are to regenerate the Maylord Orchards site to the benefit of the city as a whole with social value a key consideration, such leisure, tourism, residential, educational, and community uses.

Repairing our county's roads following Storm Dennis

21. Storm Dennis hit Herefordshire during the weekend of 15 and 16 February 2020, resulting in significant damage and flooding, from both runoff and river overspill with many of the rivers reaching their highest levels in 200 years. In total, 728 premises, comprising 524 residential properties and 204 businesses, were affected. Around 80 roads were formally closed due to flooding and damage with many remaining closed in following weeks as water levels remained high restricting access.
22. Following the declaration of this as a major incident, the Bellwin scheme was announced for Herefordshire and this confirmed that all immediate response and damage repairs works that met the Bellwin criteria would be delivered within the spend period up to 28 March 2020 and would be funded by central government.

23. Members will recall, however, that significant flood repair works remained that were not included. Over the course of this year I, the Cabinet member for infrastructure and transport and the Chief Executive have argued strongly that repairs to the B4224 and various other storm damaged road repairs should be allowable as part of our Bellwin claim.
24. Member will recall that in July I reported that if external funding is not forthcoming, we will have to fund these works from the council's capital budgets and that capital programme priorities would need to be reconsidered for this and subsequent financial years. In August the very difficult decision was taken to ask full Council to agree to new prudential borrowing totalling £4.027m, to repair of the B4224 near Fownhope and various other road sites damaged in the floods.
25. I still fervently believe that all of these repairs should have been covered by Central Government and remain disappointed that we have seen no further movement from government on this matter.

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

26. Since May 2019, significant amounts of money have been provided and/or promised by the Marches LEP to Herefordshire. This includes over £10m to NMITE for the development of the Blackfrairs Street campus site, the development of the Centre for Timber Technology and the Centre for Advanced Manufacturing, £5.4m to the Hereford Enterprise Zone to enable the development of the North Magazine, £1m for an integrated wetlands project to reduce phosphates in the river Lugg which will lift the planning moratorium, £3m for a package of public realm improvement works in Hereford City Centre, and £440K for a marketing and PR campaign to support the recovery of the visitor economy from Covid 19 across Herefordshire.
27. Previous funding support from the LEP is also now coming to fruition, including a contribution towards the Shell Store Business Incubation space, and the Midlands Centre for Cyber Security developments both of which will be completed in 2020. I provide this summary for context for the next paragraph to show that the relationship between the Marches LEP and the Council is and remains positive and hugely beneficial for the County.
28. Members will be aware of the claim being made by Shropshire Council as Accountable Body for the Marches LEP for £3.8m. The latest correspondence has been published. This matter is currently in the hands of the s151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer who are working on an appropriate response to Shropshire Council which is due to be provided very shortly after the publication of this report.

Update on Shire Hall

29. You will be aware of damage to the Shire Hall. It is, as you will know a Grade 2 listed building which requires specialist conservation. As such, any works we undertake require appropriate design and building standards to meet listed building requirements.
30. In June, we experienced a further ceiling collapse which has meant that the Shire Hall has been closed for general use since this occurred. Consequently repair works are required – these are explained to me as being undertaken in three main areas:
 - Immediate works to stabilise the structural integrity of court room 2 and clear out court room 1 plus patch ceiling and roof repairs to main hall

- Undertake further detailed structural and fabric of the building surveys to inform all future works, throughout the building.
- Undertake the holistic combined renovation to ceilings, roof and electrical equipment required to the building. This may include additional works based on the surveys above.
- Listed building approval will be required and it is likely that building regulation approval will also be necessary for any structural alterations and or improvements.

Annual reporting against stated ambitions in the County Plan

31. The following table provides a brief summary of the council's 'year 1' progress against the priorities we said we would deliver on in our 4 year County Plan.

<i>Our County Plan says we will...</i>	<i>The steps and decisions we have taken ...</i>
<p>Minimise waste and increase reuse, repair and recycling</p>	<p>Progress has been made towards the strategic review of the Council's Waste Management Strategy.</p> <p>The council's waste disposal contract, a joint contract with Worcestershire County Council, will expire on 10 January 2024. In addition, the government's Resource and Waste Strategy for England 2018 promises the greatest change to waste policy in a generation, including a more consistent approach to waste management with the rest of Europe, Scotland and Wales.</p> <p>In November 2019 the General Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group to consider how we provide the council's waste management service in future. I am hugely grateful for their time and attention on this matter as we approach this significant local decision. I thoroughly commend the task and finish group's report which sets out a comprehensive analysis of the policy context and delivery options for our future waste collection services. A central transition we will need to make as a county is to move away from seeing our waste as a bag to be sent off to landfill, but instead a resource. For example, our waste being used to make energy; creating new local markets and jobs through more refined recycling and maximising the re-use of materials as opposed to throwing them away. There are two very promising new waste management packages being considered as options for the council to pursue. Both of those packages will be carefully consulted on with our communities.</p> <p>Our waste services are our most widely used service and is essential in supporting our communities every day. It supports the economy and business and is a source of jobs and economic opportunity. Recycling, treating and disposing of waste more effectively and tackling waste crime reduces emissions, safeguards resources and protects our natural environment.</p> <p>The impact of these changes will be significant in terms of resourcing, performance and cost. But the benefits of being bold and ambitious with our approach to waste management in the county will be significant.</p>

<p>Improve and extend active travel options throughout the county</p>	<p>Hereford and South Wye Transport packages</p> <p>The cabinet member for infrastructure and transport determined to pause and review the new road elements of the Hereford and South Wye Transport packages in his decision of 22 October 2019 in order to help determine the next steps.</p> <p>In his decision of 24 January 2020 the cabinet member confirmed the scope of the review and that it would have two principal elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the transport strategy for Hereford City (the Hereford Transport Strategy Review – HTSR) including assessment of alternative options to the southern link road and western bypass. This review work would need to include public consultation and stakeholder engagement; and • A peer assessment of the evidence base for the HTP and SWTP and consideration of the road schemes in the context of emerging policy and guidance on climate emergency. <p>Whilst it was agreed that the review would conclude by 31 July 2020, the strategy review programme was affected by the Covid 19 pandemic resulting in the need to redesign and allow more time for stakeholder engagement. In addition, more time was required for briefings to confirm the combination of packages for assessment during the final stage of the review. As a result, the review has taken around 6 weeks longer than originally envisaged and this has impacted the original scrutiny timetable to review the strategy findings. General scrutiny will review the current set of transport package options on 12 October, with the Cabinet looking to discuss these options on 29 October, along with considering any recommendations made by the scrutiny committee.</p>
<p>Identify climate change action in all aspects of council operation</p>	<p>Carbon Management Plan</p> <p>In May of this year, the cabinet approved the council’s new Carbon Management Plan. This plan sets out the council’s approach to delivering carbon neutrality by 2030/31 and sets an interim target of a 75% reduction of the council’s own carbon emissions by 2025/26. This is the Council’s third Carbon Management Plan and builds on strong momentum reducing the council’s organisational carbon emissions. This plan sets out the Council’s aspiration to become carbon neutral by 2030 and is the first of two plans each setting out our approach for the 5-year periods 2020/21 – 2025/26 and then 2025/26 – 2030/31.</p> <p>This plan is underpinned by an extensive evidence, research and analysis into how best to approach the challenging target, and setting an interim target for 2025/26. The associated action is a dynamic plan which needs to constantly evolve as goals are met, new challenges and opportunities arise. Based on the information available; (including previous emissions data and projections of future programmes’ savings), there is a sound basis to expect a range of potential reductions in between 65% and 84% during the period to 2025/26. 75% is realistic, achievable and a substantial move towards the net carbon neutral target by 2030/31. This isn’t just a plan on a piece of paper – this shows that this council is driven and committed to reducing our</p>

	<p>carbon emissions in all aspects of the work we undertake. All of our council reports now explain how and where we are achieving this through our decision reports and our implementation.</p> <p>I also very much look forward to reading the outcomes and recommendations of the Climate Change Task and Finish later this year and the recommendations that the general scrutiny committee may wish to direct toward my executive as a result.</p>
<p>Protect and enhance the county's biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards</p>	<p>The construction and management of Integrated Wetlands as tertiary treatments for waste water treatment works to reduce phosphate levels within the River Lugg catchment area.</p> <p>As many members will know, both the River Wye and River Lugg catchment areas have seen worrying increases in the levels of phosphate in land adjoining the rivers and in our river water. The annual mean has been calculated as 0.071mg/l and is in exceedance of the phosphate conservation target as set by Natural England and the Environment Agency. This in turn has severely curtailed local growth plans within the Lugg catchment areas being prevented until phosphate levels can be safely managed.</p> <p>The council is liaising with all interested parties including; Natural England, The Environment Agency, Welsh Water and the National Farmers Union, through the Nutrient Management Board to reduce phosphate levels within the River Lugg and River Wye SAC.</p> <p>My cabinet and I have sought to take action by allocating £2m from the Council's 2020/21 capital programme from the New Homes Bonus to purchase land, to design, construct and manage integrated wetlands set in strategic locations in order to provide tertiary treatment to waste water treatment works within the River Lugg catchment area. An interim delivery plan, including a phosphate calculator and a suite of recommended mitigation measures appropriate to the River Lugg catchment area is planned. This will enable developers to calculate the phosphate load of their development proposals and therefore agree measures independently with landowners to mitigate or offset the identified phosphate load, although this has to demonstrate with scientific certainty that it will be phosphate neutral or show betterment and any offsetting has to comply with the Habitat Regulations.</p> <p>In addition to improving the water quality of the River Lugg, this proposal will also positively contribute toward the delivery of the environmental and economic priorities within the County Plan 2020-2024; enhancing local biodiversity, enabling sustainable housing growth in the north of the county and reducing carbon emissions through carbon sequestration.</p>
<p>Ensure all children are healthy, safe and inspired to achieve</p>	<p>Executive response to the task and finish group concerning Child Exploitation.</p> <p>The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee established a task and finish group to review child exploitation. The committee agreed that the review would cover the issues of child sexual exploitation (CSE)</p>

	<p>and child criminal exploitation (CCE). The topic was identified by the scrutiny committee as a priority over concerns regarding county lines activity, as a form of child criminal exploitation, in the West Midlands. My Cabinet and I have accepted, or part accepted, all of the recommendations made by the committee.</p> <p>Peer on Peer Abuse.</p> <p>Last Autumn I commissioned, through the Chief Executive, a review of historic cases of peer on peer abuse. This review considered the number and type of cases that were referred to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) during a specific period (between January 2017 and November 2019) to see if the advice given was robust enough, the actions taken by the schools and the council were appropriate and whether or not the council could have done anything differently.</p> <p>The review was completed in September 2020 and was shared with the children’s scrutiny committee, before being submitted back to the executive. The review took far too long to complete and I trust that we will be much quicker in future.</p> <p>The report shed light on incidents of peer on peer abuse in schools and educational settings in Herefordshire. These incidents are potentially life changing, leaving victims and families with lasting physical, emotional and mental scars to endure and recover from. There was evidence to suggest that the council’s historic handling of peer on peer abuse fell short of what we should be delivering. The report contains reassurance that the situation has improved with many recommendations for the future.</p> <p>I and my cabinet members are considering our response to the report’s findings and will make these public in due course. Our response will be framed around ensuring that no child is ever allowed to be placed in an un-safe school setting following a serious peer on peer abuse assault.</p> <p>I believe that the work that has been done in this area, particularly by the Assistant Director for Education Development and Skills will enable us to influence future guidance in this area at a national level.</p>
<p>Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices</p>	<p>I am particularly proud of improvements to the support to the children who are in our care or are moving on from care.</p> <p>Accommodation based support service for care leavers.</p> <p>In September 2019, cabinet approved the commissioning of a service to provide vulnerable care leavers with support to develop their skills, resilience, opportunities for training and employment, engagement with relevant services and integration with their community to enable them to move towards independent living. This service will also help our young people to understand their rights and responsibilities as tenants and what to expect of Landlords. To assist with this the council has purchased a property in Hereford City that is now being converted and refurbished to accommodate care leavers with complex needs.</p>

	<p>Accommodation based support is required to support young people to live more independently and manage their lives safely and confidently.</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020 to 2023.</p> <p>More recently, at our September cabinet meeting this year, we approved and endorsed the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Care Leavers covenant. It also enables Cabinet to receive an annual report on Corporate Parenting to allow progress of the strategy to be monitored. As part of this decision the cabinet also agreed to sign up to the Care Leavers covenant. The Council is a “trailblazer” local authority working with the national organisation responsible for the covenant which seeks to lead the way in improving outcomes for care leavers. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced a duty on councils to have regard to the following corporate parenting principles. To be able to evidence the Council’s commitment and action in relation to this responsibility it is necessary to have a strategy. This council believes that our strategy is very well placed to enable children and young people in our care to succeed as well as their peers. Corporate parenting is a responsibility of all elected members and officers within the Council. This strategy enables the Council and its partners to be clear about priorities, what needs to be done and by who if change is to be achieved.</p> <p>Children’s 16+ champion.</p> <p>I am also delighted to announce that I have appointed a Children’s 16+ champion to assist with this work. Cllr Helen l’Anson will be taking on this incredibly important role and I am sure you will all wish to join me in giving her our full and enthusiastic support in her new role. Cllr l’Anson is working with the cabinet member for children’s and families, the cabinet member for environment, economy and skills and our children’s services teams to determine the areas of advocacy and support our young care leavers need. Areas of high priority will be supporting the council with the covenant for care leavers, advancing the case for more local jobs for our younger people and ensuring our care leavers skills, experiences and ambitions are advocated at local business boards and in local decision making.</p>
<p>Build publicly owned sustainable and affordable houses and bring empty properties back into use</p>	<p>Options for delivering council owned housing</p> <p>In May 2020, the Cabinet member housing, regulatory services, and community safety, authorised The Programme Director Housing and Growth to commence expenditure from the earmarked financial resilience reserve of £150,000, to fund the commissioning of an investigation of different models of delivering council housing.</p> <p>Herefordshire has experienced a housing affordability gap for a number of years and is regularly identified as having one of the worst house price to earnings ratios in the West Midlands. There is also evidence that there is significant unmet housing need in the County with only a limited supply of affordable housing being released through the housing</p>

	<p>waiting list each year. Access to the private rental sector, which might ordinarily represent an alternative route to housing, is similarly limited due to high rental values being out of reach to many households.</p> <p>It is a central concern to me and my cabinet that the people of Herefordshire have access to affordable housing, housing that maintains the highest build standard and is affordable for our county residents.</p>
<p>Support communities to help each other through a network of community hubs</p> <p>And</p> <p>Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people</p>	<p>Talk Community strategic overview.</p> <p>I was delighted that Cabinet and I were able to approve this flagship project and commit £2m towards its development. This vital local initiative has widespread support from all members, our national and local partners and most importantly of all, our local communities.</p> <p>Talk Community is the strategic delivery vehicle for the community ambition of the Herefordshire County Plan 2020-2024 to improve the sustainability, connectivity and wellbeing of our county by strengthening our communities. It is the council's strategic approach to prevention, enabling people to get the assistance they need and managing demand for more specialist services. The key message and vision of Talk Community is "to make independence and wellbeing inevitable" for all of our members of society. Recent events such as the floods and Covid-19 nationally have highlighted the need for new vision, different solutions and new business models to come forward. At its heart, Talk Community is about a focus on prevention, health, wellbeing and independence at all stages of life for all ages. It does this by harnessing specific and locally defined solutions and building upon a core approach across the county;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People; as participants in communities, as volunteers and community leaders, including people who are vulnerable and may need some support. • Place and space; making use of and sharing community places, creating the buildings and open spaces that local people want and will use, co-location of public and community services including the arts and leisure services, ensuring accessibility and connectivity and considering the impact of and upon new communities created through large scale housing developments. • Economy; recognising and developing the role of businesses in communities, promoting the county's buoyant social enterprise sector, developing the wellbeing of the workforce and healthy workplaces, whilst recognising the contribution to the local economy of the health and social care sector.
<p>Use council land to create economic opportunities and bring higher paid jobs to the county</p>	<p>Enterprise Zone Capital Interventions Phase 5</p> <p>In August 2019, the decision was taken by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Strategy and Budget to develop further the Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ), establishing the critical infrastructure or site remediation required to bring remaining plots into economic use. This decision brought forward the next phase of capital expenditure</p>

	<p>(£5.231m) at the HEZ drawing down the remaining finance from within the approved £16m capital programme.</p> <p>The HEZ is critical to the economic success of the City and wider county, enabling businesses to grow and creating new jobs and investment in the economy. The development of a Cyber Security Centre and business incubation space will enable the county to establish a foot hold in new emerging markets, generating longer term, higher value employment opportunities.</p> <p>Previous expenditure has been incurred in demolitions, site clearance, land remediation, ground raising (for flood mitigation) and infrastructure including access roads, cycleways, and all utilities at the right capacity and to enable easy connections at a plot level, including an ultrafast broadband network. To date the HEZ has secured 20 land sales, £48m of investment and a predicted 842 new jobs will be created.</p>
Invest in education and the skills needed by employers	<p>NMITE</p> <p>NMITE continue to make significant progress towards becoming a fully operational Higher Education Institute. The development of Hereford College of Arts and NMITE will have a transformational impact on Hereford and the wider county, potentially playing an even more critical role as we seek to recover from the impacts of Covid 19. Attracting thousands of students to study, live and eventually work in the county, helping to balance our aging demographics, establishing a higher skills base, which will lead to economic growth and investment and higher value employment opportunities.</p> <p>Through partnership working between NMITE, the council and the Marches LEP, in the coming months NMITE will complete the redevelopment of their Blackfriars Street campus site, and commence the construction of their Centre for Advanced Timber Technology and Centre for Automated Manufacturing on the Hereford Enterprise Zone. The completion of Number 1 Station Approach by the end of 2020 will establish the first 178 bespoke student accommodation in the city, supporting the growth of both HCA and NMITE over the next few years.</p> <p>College Road Campus</p> <p>The council acquired College Road Campus from the Royal National College for the Blind in 2019, and was bought during the time of the previous administration as is a strategic site in the city to support the growth of further and higher education in the city. It is currently the home of both the Herefordshire College of Arts and NMITE, and we are continuing to explore how the site can be best utilised as a focal point for education on the edge of the city centre.</p>
Enhance digital connectivity for communities and business	<p>Fastershire Broadband Strategy</p> <p>In November 2019, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Economy and Skills approved the latest iteration of the Fastershire Broadband Strategy. This strategy will direct the approaches available to the</p>

	<p>Fastershire project to drive the deployment of high-speed broadband infrastructure throughout Herefordshire and Gloucestershire through to 2022.</p> <p>The Fastershire project is a partnership between Herefordshire Council, Gloucestershire County Council and national government to provide a fibre broadband network where commercial companies would not use their own investment. This revised strategy aims to continue to increase the coverage through delivery of existing contracts along with a new grant scheme to communities introduced in 2020. Commercial providers will also be operating their own schemes which will add to the superfast and ultrafast coverage.</p>
<p>Protect and promote our heritage, culture and natural beauty to enhance quality of life and support tourism</p>	<p>Covid 19 Support for Recovery of the Visitor Economy</p> <p>In July of this year the Cabinet Member for Environment, Economy and Skills approved expenditure to deliver the Covid 19 Support for Recovery of the Visitor Economy project. On 27 May 2020 the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) approved a £444,220 revenue grant to the council to support the recovery of the visitor economy from Covid 19. The project supports the visitor economy (defined as tourism accommodation attractions, leisure, culture, hospitality and retail businesses) through promoting opportunities for day and overnight ‘staycation’ visits to the county. This is a vital lifeline for these businesses who are so critical to our local and visitor economy during this very challenging Covid 19 operating environment.</p> <p>Heritage Action Zone – Leominster</p> <p>This decision enabled the council to enter into a funding agreement with The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (HBMCE) to deliver the Heritage Action Zone Programme in Leominster as per the Delivery Plan with an anticipated total budget of £3.6m from the capital programme (£1.8 of which is match funded) and £1.8m from HBMCE. The nationwide initiative is designed to secure lasting improvements to historic high streets for communities who use them. Herefordshire Council has worked closely with Leominster Town Council in the development and submission of the Delivery Plan which forms the basis of the High Streets Action Zone for Leominster. The scheme is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and run by Historic England.</p>
<p>Spend public money in the local economy wherever possible</p>	<p>Stronger Market Towns Investment Fund.</p> <p>In autumn 2019 Hereford was included in the first round of the governments £3.6bn “Towns Fund” programme. This brought the potential to access up to £25m of government support through the drafting of an Investment Plan and securing a Town Deal with government. Guided by the governments Stronger Towns Prospectus Herefordshire Council has convened a Stronger Towns Board which will operate as an informal partnership of private and public representatives tasked with producing the Investment Plan and Town Deal for Hereford.</p>

The Board will lead on the development of the Town Investment Plan which will set out investment priorities to support the development of Hereford as a thriving city that delivers sustainable improvements in residents' wellbeing. The submission deadline for the Town Investment Plan is January 2021 with business case development expected to take a further 6 to 12 months. An initial grant offer of £750,000 has been made to Herefordshire Council to fund early projects that can support the foundations of the Town Investment Plan.

Secretary of State Jenrick Visit - 11 September.

In positive recent developments, I was delighted that Robert Jenrick Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government visited Hereford on the 11th September. The SoS met with members from the Towns Fund Board including the local MP, Jessie Norman and Cllr Chowns. The discussions centred around the emerging Town Deal priorities for investment within the city. The Minister was complementary of the progress made to date under the Towns Fund and was aware of the opportunity that exists within the city and wider county, he is looking forward to seeing a full range of proposals when we make our submission in January 2021.

He also visited the Greyfriars NMITE development and met with a number of staff. It is encouraging that he took the time out of a very busy schedule to visit us.

32. As members will be aware, our County Plan 2020 to 2024 is in its first year of operation. A year impacted significantly by natural and health related emergencies. The above summary of our decisions does not present, and should not be considered as, a complete picture of our activities.

33. These are the first steps to delivering and embodying our commitment to the people of Herefordshire. *Respecting our past, shaping our future - we will improve the sustainability, connectivity and wellbeing of our county by strengthening our communities, creating a thriving local economy and protecting and enhancing our environment.*

Community impact

34. The County plan shapes the future of Herefordshire and aims to encourage and strengthen our vibrant communities, create a thriving local economy and protect and enhance our environment to ensure Herefordshire remains a great place to live, visit, work, learn and do business. The plan guides the work of the council and our relationship with individuals, families, communities and partners over the next four years.

35. 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.

Environmental Impact

36. A central underpinning of Herefordshire Council's County Plan is healthy, connected and vibrant ecosystems strongly support the local economy, improve health and wellbeing and make the county an attractive place to live and to visit. It is a commitment of the plan to protect and enhance this environment while stewarding it for future generations.

Equality duty

37. 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.

38. 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. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.

39. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.

Resource implications

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

Legal implications

41. The council and committee, and cabinet rules within the constitution require the Leader to provide a report to Council on the work of the Cabinet since the last meeting of Council and, at the first meeting to follow the annual meeting of Council, on the priorities of the cabinet and (except in a year when there are ordinary elections) progress made in meeting those priorities. Appointment of cabinet members and allocation of portfolio responsibilities are responsibilities of the Leader of the Council, and the constitution requires that any changes are subsequently reported to Council. This report ensures these requirements are met.

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

Risk management

43. 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 and will inform future decision making.

Consultees

44. None.

Appendices

- Appendix A - Executive decisions taken from 10 July to 1 October 2020.
- Appendix B – Cabinet Member Portfolios

Background papers

None