

## **Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 27 June 2024 at 2.30 pm**

**Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting:** Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairperson) Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson), Harry Bramer, Carole Gandy, Ivan Powell, Philip Price and Pete Stoddart

**Cabinet Members in remote attendance**

**None**

*Cabinet members attending the meeting remotely, e.g. through video conferencing facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.*

Cabinet support members in attendance

None

Group leaders / representatives in attendance

Councillors Clare Davies, Liz Harvey, Terry James and Stef Simmons (representative for Cllr Ellie Chowns).

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance

Councillors Pauline Crockett, Toni Fagan, Ben Proctor and Louis Stark.

Other councillors in attendance:

None

Officers in attendance:

M Averill, R Cook, H Crane, A Deans, A Lovegrove, C Porter, H Sandifort, S Woodhouse, P Walker and S Walmsley (clerk)

### **(a) LEADERS OPENING REMARKS**

The Leader opened the meeting to acknowledge the sad passing of Councillor Bob Matthews. The Leader expressed that Cllr Matthews will be missed and said a few words regarding Cllr Matthews, that he was a man of resolve, who showed true grit and determination and fought for what he believed in. He had a great zeal for wanting to get things right, his persistence and fortitude in his role were exemplary. Cllr Matthews was a stalwart character, his devotion and dedication to public service as a long standing councillor for Herefordshire Council were to be commended and stood as an example to us all about how to serve as a councillor. The Leader expressed the Cabinet's collective condolences to Cllr Matthew's family and friends.

Group Leaders all expressed their condolences and each group expressed their thoughts noting that Cllr Matthew's will be sorely missed. He was a larger than life character and a champion of independence in local politics. He was a great leader in his community and served his ward diligently, his passion and challenge in Council and committee meetings will be missed. Cllr Matthew's legacy of tireless service and unshakeable commitment to his principles meant that his impact on Herefordshire will be felt for many years to come.

A minute's silence was observed.

The Leader acknowledged that whilst this is a sad occasion due to Councillor

Matthew's passing it meant that Councillor Davies was now the new group leader for the True Independents.

The Leader also acknowledged that Andrew Lovegrove was leaving the Council and thanked him for diligent hard work and service. The Leader wished him all the best on behalf of Cabinet and the Council.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were apologies from Councillor Biggs, Chowns, Durkin, Hurcomb and Mason.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**4. MINUTES**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson subject to the correction of noting that Councillor Hurcomb was not in attendance on 16 May 2024.

**5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC** (Pages 7 - 10)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

**6. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS** (Pages 11 - 12)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 2 to the minutes.

**7. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

There were three reports from scrutiny committees for consideration at this meeting.

- (a) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - Workforce Challenges in Children's Services Recommendations

The chairperson for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (CYPSC) detailed that at the meeting earlier this month work force issues and the workforce strategy were discussed. This is an area of improvement identified by the Ofsted report. Noted that the recruitment and retention activity in the Council was stabilising but the activity in the improvement plan was still RAG rated as red. On review of this the committee identified six recommendations which are set out in the appendix to the report.

**It was unanimously agreed that the recommendations made on 13 June 2024 by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its meeting be noted, and that an Executive Response to the scrutiny recommendations be prepared for consideration in due course.**

- (b) Scrutiny Management Board - Herefordshire Council Plan and Delivery Plan Recommendations

The chairperson for the Scrutiny management Board (SMB) noted that he was not chairperson at the time the recommendations were drafted and thanked the previous chairperson. It was confirmed that Cabinet had already responded to the recommendations and noted this was published as a supplement to the agenda. The chairperson thanked cabinet for the changes that had been made and noted that the SMB will be interested in the link between the Council Plan and the Delivery Plan.

- (c) Recommendations of the Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee:  
Update on outcomes of Care Quality Commission Inspection of Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

The chairperson for the Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations on the outcomes of the Care Quality Commission Inspection of Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust. It was noted that Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust took over the Mental Health Services in 2020 during the pandemic. It was noted that there were several areas that required improvement but two services were rated as good and these were Stonebow Road and Community Mental Health Services. Highlighted the recommendation for Cabinet is regarding NHS staff parking availability and charges in Ledbury and Leominster. The chairperson also noted a typo and 'Ettenham Street' should refer to Etnam Street'.

**It was unanimously agreed that the recommendations on the outcomes of the Care Quality Commission Inspection of Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust made by the Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 25 March 2024 be noted, and that an Executive Response to the scrutiny recommendations be prepared for consideration in due course.**

#### 8. DELIVERY PLAN 2024-25

The cabinet member for finance and corporate services provided an over view, it was noted that this was the first of the four annual Delivery Plans and is linked with the Council Plan. The Council Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) are the overarching policy frameworks within which decisions will be taken and resources allocated over the next four years. The vision of the Council Plan 'Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do' has fed into the elements of each of the four priorities of the Delivery Plan - People, Place, Growth and Transformation. It was highlighted that the Delivery Plan outlines the Council's priorities and objectives and how these will be achieved in the next 12 months.

It was noted that monitoring of the Delivery Plan will be through quarterly reporting into Cabinet. There will also be routine financial monitoring against the approved revenue and capital program and that monthly progress reports will be provided to the Corporate Leadership Team alongside the quarterly reports to Cabinet. It was also noted that annual service plans will outline the service area priorities and key areas of focus. Lastly, it was noted there will be individual performance and development plans for staff across the Council aligned to service area priorities.

The cabinet member also highlighted that the development of projects within the Delivery Plan will look to minimise any environmental impact and will identify opportunities to improve environmental performance. Noted that equality impact assessments will also be carried out.

Cabinet members discussed the report and it was noted regarding the environmental aspects that a local nature recovery strategy and biodiversity net gain strategy were being developed. As well as a tree and hedgerow strategy to address the preservations of trees and hedgerows but also the replacement of those lost to ash die back. The net zero journey is continuing with the aim of achieving 65% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by the end of year. Noted that benchmarks in the Delivery Plan are helpful as they enable the Council to measure its progress. It was highlighted there is continuing work with the phosphate mitigation scheme, the Luston Wetland Scheme, investment in parish councils and the proposed investment with Ross Enterprise Park.

It was noted that delivery of the new road strategy was progressing according to plan and the Local Transport Plan draft will come later in the year. The Public Real Services is also moving forward as intended and also noted the benefits of the lengthsman scheme to local parishes.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. The level of consultation on the Delivery Plan was welcomed alongside the benefits of having a Delivery Plan to measure progress against. However it was expressed that this Plan is less ambitious than the County Plan it supersedes. Concerns were also raised regarding the Plan being unambitious in terms of young people and the environment. It was noted that climate change was barely referenced and £800k from reserves was removed. This seemed to be in contrast to the Delivery Plan working forwards to achieving the step change needed within Herefordshire to reduce emissions. Also, concerns were raised that the Delivery Plan only referenced statutory requirements in terms of rivers, rather than going beyond the minimum which in turn impacts on the ambitions set out in the Local Development framework.

It was highlighted that the Council should take more of a leadership role in Herefordshire in developing a more strategic plan for the whole County not just on climate change but other areas of development and challenge. Whilst the in year tangible milestones were positively recognised, it was requested that the progress reports set out the timescales for the deliverables alongside a red, amber, green code being utilised. It was also noted that many of the objectives to be achieved were out of the Council's control and subject to central government. It was highlighted that ultimately it will come down to what is actually done.

In response to the queries it was noted ambition for Children and Young people is set out in the Delivery Plan through the link to the Early Help and Prevention Strategy which in turn references the Children and Young People Plan. It was acknowledged that improvement is required to the Early Help system and the Council have commissioned an organisation called 'People too' who will review Early Help and provide a report shortly. The Council have also engaged in a review with Talk Community. It was noted that a conversation is due to take place with an organisation which has good practices and could be a model promoted at County level regarding Early Years Provision, which is separate to Early Help. Also, it was understood by the Children and Young Peoples partnership board that there would be provision for families seeking places for the extended Early Years Provision offer.

In response to the query regarding the environment, notably the climate assembly, it was confirmed those actions will be delivered and the funding was not required because it was sought externally and some projects came in under budget, meaning money was in excess for that reserve. It was acknowledged that the Council has to play its part but some aspects are outside of its control. In terms of the river it was confirmed that partnership working is crucial and reliant on Farm Herefordshire, Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Water.

Lastly, in response to the Council needing to have a strategic role it was noted that the Delivery Plan shows how the Council will work with its partners and how it connects with the other strategies, therefore it is very strategic. Also, the Council Plan approved in May clearly shows how the Delivery Plan links into all the strategic documents.

**It was unanimously resolved that:**

**(a) Cabinet approve the Delivery Plan 2024-25, as set out in appendix A.**

**(b) Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make minor amendments to the approved Delivery Plan 2024-25.**

**9. THE NEW PUBLIC REALM SERVICES**

The cabinet member for community services and assets introduced the report and highlighted that following the April Cabinet report approving the termination of the current public realm services, the termination had now been enacted ending on 31 May 2026. It was confirmed that Balfour Beatty Living Places are committed to supporting the transition and this report requests for Cabinet to (a) adopt the public realm services model set out in appendix 1 for the purposes of market engagement and (b) for the Cabinet to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Economy and Environment to carry out market engagement. Once this has taken place over the summer, the model will be refined and returned to Cabinet in the autumn to approve a final version of the model for procurement to start January 2025.

There were no comments from Cabinet members.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. The change in the Public Realm Services contract was welcomed as well as it going out to tender in due course. The need to closely monitor the timeline was stated to avoid any slippage. Concerns were expressed regarding the proposal that schemes up to £100k may be directly awarded through the contract at the Council's discretion. It was noted that the Council needs to ensure it doesn't end up in the same position as before by using large contractors that cannot manage on a local basis. It was highlighted that the new contract should be outcome focused rather than KPI's and to have proper resources when services are brought back in house.

In response to the queries it was noted that market engagement is to encourage a broad range of providers. The Council has its own framework for small and medium contracts meaning the Council can draw straight from its own framework for contracts. It will be clear at the procurement stage what the Council expects from contractors and will mean the Council will not be in the position where the contractors mark their own homework. It was highlighted that lessons have been learned from the previous contract and the KPI's will be written for the benefit of the Council going forward.

**It was unanimously resolved that:**

- a) Cabinet adopt the Public Realm Services model set out in Appendix 1 for the purposes of market engagement**
- b) Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director Economy and Environment to carry out market engagement on the Public Realm Services model set out in Appendix 1.**

The meeting ended at 15:50

**Chairperson**



**Agenda item no. 4 - Questions from members of the public**

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Gill Jinman	Can the Cabinet provide an update on the plans for the Parkway station at Pontrilas and what progress is being made?	Cllr Phillip Price
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>At its meeting on March 28, 2024, Cabinet approved a budget of £50,000 for developing a new Strategic Outline Business Case for the new station. This work will be driven by a task force headed up by the council that includes key partners from the rail industry. The study will seek to build upon previous feasibility work and address comments from the Department for Transport.</p> <p>We are currently developing a project brief for this work and, once the individual members of the task force are confirmed, we expect consultants to be appointed and the study to start. In recognition of the wider benefits to the community of a new station, the scheme will be known as the Golden Valley Parkway</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary question:</b></p> <p>“I am pleased to learn that £50,000 has been allocated to further the case for the Golden Valley Parkway, and that the planned study will seek to build on the previous feasibility study etc. Given that the 2020 Outline Business Case identified a station design that represents high value for money according to the DfT’s own guidance (BCR 2), AND secured the support of Herefordshire and Monmouthshire MPs, Monmouthshire County Council, the Welsh Government Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales, Midlands Connect and the Hay Festival etc, what will the new SOBC task force seek to achieve, without duplicating previous work, that will progress this case further?”</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary response:</b></p> <p>It is essential that the business case for the station addresses several issues raised by the Department for Transport in 2022 in response to the unsuccessful bid to the “Restoring Your Railway” fund. The new SOBC will therefore need to reflect updated analysis including changes to travel patterns because of the Covid pandemic, passenger demand forecasts and estimated construction costs. The inclusion of rail industry partners in the task force should ensure that the case made by the SOBC is as robust as possible.</p>			

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PQ 2	Charlotte Eynon	<p>In the newly adopted Council Plan 2024 to 2025, it commits the council to <i>providing more homes, reduce congestion and increase employment opportunities. We will work with others to create the transport network that the county needs. This will include active travel, rail connectivity and improved road infrastructure.</i></p> <p>Can the Cabinet confirm that it is committed to fully opening Pontrilas Station and what timescale is envisaged for this to happen? And can Cabinet explain, as part of its plans, how it is seeking to create future career opportunities for the rural communities and also help traffic congestion?</p>	Cllr Phillip Price
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>We are committed to developing proposals for a new Golden Valley Parkway station and have allocated £50,000 towards the development of the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). The plans are at a very early stage and new stations typically take several years to reach the operational stage. Until the SOBC is complete and there is the support of partners in the rail industry to take the scheme forward, it is not possible to commit to a timescale for station opening.</p> <p>The council is currently developing a new Local Transport Plan (LTP) that will be subject to public consultation later in the year. The LTP will comprise a wide range of measures, from the Herford Western Bypass to local projects to encourage more walking and cycling, to improve traffic congestion.</p> <p>In relation to how the Council is seeking to create future career opportunities for the rural communities, this is an ongoing part of the role of the Economy and Regeneration service, which has the objective of more, better paid jobs. Through our Herefordshire Growth Hub, the Council supports any local business to grow and become sustainable, and clearly a key part of this is through increasing and improving the range of job opportunities they offer. Specific examples of how the Council are supporting job creation in rural areas, include through the allocation of UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity funding to support business growth and job creation; working with the Herefordshire Skills Board to encourage businesses to create and take on more apprenticeships; organising the annual Herefordshire Skills Show, which showcases career opportunities to over 1,200 year 10 school pupils, and working with local businesses which are looking to expand.</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary question:</b></p> <p>Whilst I appreciate that the council is looking to support young people in rural areas with apprenticeships etc without a reliable, regular transport service how does the council propose to make this viable for young people who do not drive and are reliant on parents/ friends etc? The opportunities are only effective and successful if people can access them.</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary response:</b></p>			

Thank you for your supplementary question. The council is supporting bus operators to expand their services in rural areas, and between market towns and Hereford using the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP+) grant from the DfT. We work with Bus operators under an enhanced partnership process to identify and support services that are necessary, and that bus operators can deliver. The council itself does not run any bus services. For the first tranche of BSIP+ funding, operators have requested support on the following schemes:

City Centre Services E & F (Sargeants)

E – Hereford City Bus Station (Tesco) to the Whitecross area and Moor Farm

F – Hereford City Bus Station (Tesco) to the Redhill/Saxton Gate Area

476 (DRM)

Introduction of an hourly timetable between 9am and 3pm, 6 days a week. This will include two new stops.

DRM are creating a new timetable for submission to the Traffic Commissioner

78X (Yeomans)

Hereford City Bus Station (Tesco) to Rotherwas.

This route will be extended to the Shell Store and timings changed to benefit the local workforce.

492 Service (Yeomans)

Reinstate hourly 492 and later PM service. Hereford Railway Station to Leominster.

36 Service

Reinstate to 2 hourly and reinstate Sunday Services. Hereford Railway Station to Monmouth.

420 Service

Reinstate Bromyard to Worcester service.

469 Service

Simplified timetable from Bromyard to Hereford.

461 Service

Later journeys between Hereford and Kington.

Sunday Services

Continued support for Sunday services – 420 & 469 amongst others.

We hope to be able to make further service improvements as more funding becomes available.



**Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the Council**

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Cllr Ben Proctor	"In response to a question I asked to Cabinet on 25 <sup>th</sup> April Cllr Gandy informed me that the Housing Solutions phone line should be moved to an improved system within a couple of weeks. Can the Cabinet confirm that this has now been done and advise what information is now collected on call volumes, call patterns, failure demand, rework and latent demand for this service?"	Cllr Carole Gandy
<p><b>Response:</b>                      The response I provided in April was on the basis of information made available at the time that the pilot scheme would be trialled by Housing in about two weeks following the Cabinet meeting. Since then, the Housing Solutions Team has been in dialogue with Hoople to implement the new telephone system. Unfortunately, due to annual leave and other diary commitments, the implementation has been delayed. As originally stated, Housing Solutions is piloting the new system and as a result, a number of teething problems have been identified which have needed to be worked through. For example, one issue was the system struggling to link with mobile phones which the outreach workers use as they are frequently away from the office working with individuals.</p> <p>I am pleased to confirm that all these issues have been resolved and the work has been agreed and signed off by the Housing Solutions Team. It is estimated that the setup will take around two weeks to put in place and I am assured that it will be operational by the end of July. If, for any reason the project is further delayed, I will update Cllr Proctor accordingly.</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary question:</b>                      If the work to move to a new telephone system is completed by the end of July this will be 12 weeks later than anticipated in the response to my question to Cabinet in April and this is in an area that Cabinet apparently have significant concerns about. When people need this support they are facing one of the most stressful situations most of us will ever have to deal with, the loss of a home. I've heard from people in my ward that not knowing when or if they will be able to speak to someone in housing support is an incredibly difficult addition at an incredibly difficult time. My original question in April was actually how can Cabinet assure itself that this service is adequately resourced to meet demand if this fairly trivial technical change actually is implemented at the end of July, when does the Cabinet anticipate being able to assure itself that this service is adequately resourced to meet demand?</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary response:</b></p>			

Thank you Councillor Proctor. Like you I am disappointed that the system has not yet gone live and I recognise that the reasons for the delay should not have stopped the implementation of the system. Therefore I have asked the Chief Executive to take this up with Hoople because like you, I recognise that this is a vital service for some of our most vulnerable people and I will try to keep you updated with the progress.