

*I wish to open my report by welcoming our newest member, Councillor Charlotte (Charlie) Taylor, as the elected member for the Credenhill Ward. I know you will want to join me in offering Cllr Taylor our best wishes and support as she takes up her position.*

*The second Parish Summit is due to take place on 8 October 2024. Building on the last summit in July, updates will be provided on our Children's Services Improvement Plan, Adult Services and exploring Parish Councillors views on a new Parish Charter and Public Rights of Way.*

*An all-staff conference, the first in many years, has taken place. I attended all of the sessions and spoke at each of them. I used this opportunity to thank - on behalf of all councillors-officers for the great work that they do and their commitment to public service. In total, just under 1,200 officers attended. It was an excellent opportunity to meet and speak with staff, many of whom form our frontline teams, in areas such as homelessness and safeguarding. I heard about our initiatives designed to address some of the county's most pressing healthcare needs, such as child dental care; our work on economic development and environmental projects, such as the wetlands and phosphate credit scheme.*

*The work of our children's services teams was particularly inspiring. Officers giving firsthand accounts of what it truly means to be a corporate parent, providing safe and loving homes for the brilliant children in our care. I also heard about the practical support and life skills we offer those who are leaving our care.*

*It was great to see our senior leadership team being so visible and accessible to officers. Paul, Hilary and all directors were in attendance talking with staff about the transformative change and vision we have for the Council. A key theme of the conference was around moving the council confidently into the digital age opening-up before us. We are keen to ensure that we are placing customers experiences at the heart of everything we do and to provide the best possible services, at the right time and in the right place.*

*The breadth of work this authority undertakes is quite incredible and the energy and skill that our officers put in to delivering their roles is considerable. It has been a truly rewarding experience meeting staff and hearing about the work they do for this Council and the County as a whole. They are the embodiment of delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything that they do.*

*Tuesday, September 10th, marked World Suicide Prevention Day, which highlighted the various suicide prevention initiatives across Herefordshire. One such initiative is the Orange Button Community scheme, which serves as a vital lifeline for those struggling with mental health. The scheme encourages individuals to wear an Orange Button as a visible symbol of support and a signal to others that they are approachable and willing to listen. The scheme is simple yet impactful. Anyone can get involved, and in doing so, a life is potentially saved. More information about this scheme and what training is available can be found through the Council's Talk Community Directory.*

*I just wanted to touch upon on a particular milestone that has been reached this year. The Energy generated from the EnviRecover Energy from Waste facility in Worcestershire, recently hit one million megawatts of energy from waste. This is enough to power nearly 40,000 homes per year since opening.*

*The EnviRecover Energy from Waste facility processes around 210,000 tonnes of non-recyclable waste each year. This is the equivalent average weight of over three million full, large wheelie bins and is made up of around 170,000 tonnes of waste picked up from residents and 40,000 tonnes of commercial waste from across Worcestershire and Herefordshire. This waste is then processed to produce energy that is then sold back to the National Grid.*

*Some of our longer serving members will remember that this was quite a contentious decision at the time. However, now we have reached this milestone we can clearly see the virtues of this scheme; that it was strategic in its approach and clearly sighted on the environmental benefits that could be delivered. The energy from waste contract provides an integrated waste management service, leading to more sustainable and effective management of waste across the two counties.*

*Whilst reaching this milestone is an impressive achievement in its own right. It also serves as a reminder to us all that the decisions we take as a council today can deliver so many benefits for our communities, environment and economy for many years to come.*

*Finally, I am really pleased to see the £8m allocated for resurfacing our local road networks is having a hugely positive impact in our communities. There is still work to do, but I know from the feedback of members in my own ward that they are starting to see and feel a real improvement in the road network as a result.*

**Herefordshire Council Plan – 2024 to 2028.** Through the development of the Herefordshire Council Plan, four corporate priorities have been identified. These are:

- I. **People** – We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities who support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.
- II. **Place** – We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place, we will support access to green spaces and we will do everything we can to recover the health of our rivers.
- III. **Growth** – We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county; attracting inward investment, building business confidence, creating jobs, enabling housing development along with providing the right infrastructure, and
- IV. **Transformation** – We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.

The Herefordshire Council Plan, alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy, provides the overarching policy framework within which decisions will be taken and resources allocated over the next 4 years.

### **Delivery Plan 2024 to 2025 – turning the strategic vision in to delivery**

Central to the realisation of this plan is the Delivery Plan 2024-25, which sets out the milestones and progress against our priorities of People, Place, Growth and Transformation. As members of this council you will be able to mark our progress through quarterly reporting into Cabinet and routine financial monitoring against the approved revenue budget and capital programme. Alongside this we are developing annual service plans within each of the directorates which will be reporting progress monthly to the corporate leadership team.

In my report below, I have outlined where the cabinet and cabinet members decisions begin the delivery of those stated objectives.

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**Theme 1 - People:** We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities that support each other.  
We want all children to have the best start in life.

### **1: Children's Services – Improvement Update**

**Stated Delivery Plan Objective:** Support all children to have the best start in life

**This year we will:** Develop a revised Children's Improvement Plan

Cabinet, at our recent September meeting, reviewed the latest position with the Phase 2 Improvement Plan. The updated plan has been developed to bring focus, pace and measures to the ongoing children's services improvement journey. It sets out highlights of what has been achieved in the last 2 years and importantly introduces a Quality Assurance Framework of measures to monitor progress.

The Children's Improvement Board, which is independently chaired by the Department of Education Commissioner Eleanor Brazil, reviewed its terms of reference and membership. It holds meetings on a six-weekly basis. The Council continues to have a strong commitment to improving performance in Children's Services – the transformation of the service is now in its third year of a three-year programme that commenced in October 2021.

This phase 2 covers the period 2024/2025 and will be refreshed in July 2025. The aim of the transformation plan is to seek to strengthen the delivery of improved outcomes for children, young people and their families. It also explains the actions being taken to make working in Herefordshire an attractive and rewarding career choice for those who work in childcare services. Renewed focus is being placed on embedding systemic partnership approaches and exploring alternative models of delivery. All of these are underpinned and driven by improvement across the system of practice, management and leadership.

As noted in my July report, Gladys Rhodes White has stepped back from her role as the Improvement Advisor and we have welcomed Deborah McMillan as her replacement. Our partnership with Leeds City Council is continuing.

### **2: Integrated Community Equipment Services**

**Contributes to Delivery Plan Objective:** Enable people to support themselves and each other by providing the right help at the right time

**This year we will:** Ensure that people who are discharged from hospital receive the right support in the community, including reablement.

The Integrated Community Equipment Services is a joint contract between Herefordshire Council and the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board. We jointly deliver this through a Section 75 agreement; these provisions relate to delivery arrangements between NHS bodies and local authorities.

The Integrated Care Board currently funds 56% of the service, with the council covering the remaining 44%. The council is solely responsible for children's equipment for education

settings with the Integrated Care Board being responsible for equipment provided under NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) funding.

Herefordshire has a predominately older population, with over a quarter of residents (53,000 people) aged over 65. The older population has grown significantly over recent years, and it is predicted that this trend will continue, with a 34% increase in over 65's by 2040. Furthermore, those aged 65 and over are more likely to live in rural areas, and 28% of this age demographic tend to live alone.

This presents a significant challenge when delivering prevention-based activity and demand led services, designed to enable people to live safely and independently at home. The Integrated Community Equipment Service is designed to provide free and appropriate equipment to meet the assessed eligible needs of people of all ages. Done well, this service helps to reduce unnecessary admission to / delayed discharge from hospital; reduce the need for more formal health and social care interventions; improve access to education facilities for disabled children and enable more people to remain living safely and independently in their own homes and communities for longer.

In 2023, Integrate Community Equipment Services provided approximately 25,000 individual items of equipment and supported just over 6,300 individuals. This is an increase of 7.5% since the contract commenced in 2020. The largest age categories accessing the service are between 65yrs to 94yrs; this category has continued to steadily increase since 2020.

The service plays a significant role in supporting families and carers, through the provision of appropriate equipment, offering peace of mind that loved ones are safe and protected in their own homes and communities.

### **3: Schools Accessibility Works**

**Stated Delivery Plan Objective:** Increase capacity of specialist Special Educational Needs (SEN) school places so that children and young people can attend a local provision that meets their needs

During the summer approval was given to commit capital expenditure from the accessibility works budget to assist the adaption of schools to meet the physical and special educational needs of children to attend school. The improvement works will be carried out within the approved budget of £1.5m

The Children and Families Act (2014) requires the council to work with schools to arrange the admission of a disabled child or a child with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to the parents/carer's preferred school. We have a duty to ensure that any child with special needs attending a mainstream school can be reasonably accommodated.

For these children, the Council will continue to work closely with parents and health care professionals to better understand which schools identified do not currently have the appropriate facilities to meet the children's need, and where required reasonable adaptations will be made to accommodate them. The council does not receive any funding from central government to make adaptation to schools. This decision therefore ensures that the 2023-2026 maintenance programme can be adjusted to facilitate works where there is currently no other budget available.

#### **4: Local activity providers offered a wide range of free activities across the county**

**Stated Delivery Plan Objective:** Tackle inequality and facilitate social mobility by focussing on early intervention and prevention activities that enable people to live independent and fulfilling lives.

**This year we will:** Deliver schemes to tackle inequality and support our most vulnerable residents

The Here for Herefordshire holiday programme is funded by the Department for Education and is co-ordinated by the council's Talk Community team in partnership with a wide range of local organisations to offer a rich variety of free indoor and outdoor activities right through the summer break.

More than a thousand children and young people who receive free school meals took part in a range of special summer holiday activities organised by Herefordshire Council's Talk Community Team.

Children and young people were given a huge choice of activity sessions across the county with more than 41 organisations running activities ranging from den building, tennis, dance, arts, crafts, football, drama and farm visits. Children also received a free meal at every session.

***Theme 2: Place: We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place, and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.***

#### **5: Support our local culture and heritage and make Herefordshire a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit.**

**Stated Delivery Plan Objective:** Progress the project to redevelop the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery

**This year we will:** Complete design work

In August, the Cabinet Member for Environment approved the procurement of a contractor to complete the remaining elements of Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 4 (construction design). Subject to the outcome being within the available budget, the construction phase of the project thereafter (up to RIBA stage 7) will commence.

The redevelopment of the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery will establish a high-quality museum and art gallery visitor experience. Key features will be a fully accessible building with rooftop terrace allowing views across the city including Hereford Cathedral. As a retrofit to an existing building, the council will also be aiming wherever possible to meet high energy efficiency – conforming to EnerPhit standards.

The key objectives and outcomes of the project is to establish a high-quality visitor attraction within the city centre which in turn will increase visitor numbers and increase spend (we

estimate an additional 210,000 visitors within the first 3 years). This will be a significant regeneration of the city centre, creating 20 jobs and apprenticeships.

This is a flagship project for the Stronger Town Investment projects who have committed £5 million of funding to the capital works. The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) have also recognised the significant ambitions and important outcomes that this project will deliver. They have provided grant funding of £5.08 million for gallery design, fit out as well as a wrap-around activity plan to engage the community in the development of the museum collections. The Arts Council England (ACE) have recently announced a further commitment of £750,000 to the project to support the capital build works. Further funding bids are also being explored with a number of additional funders.

This October, Herefordshire Museum Service invites visitors to see behind-the-scenes at the Hereford Museum & Library. Guided tours will take place on selected days during October (7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup>). These guided tours offer an opportunity to view inside the building since it closed to the public.

## 6: A new Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy

**Stated Delivery Plan Objective:** Work towards reducing county and council carbon emissions, aiming for net zero CO2 by 2030/31 and work with partners and communities to make the county more resilient to the effects of climate change.

In July, a new Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy was published that sets out how the county will address current issues and support the widespread transition to electric vehicles. Herefordshire has seen a 36% increase in EV ownership from early 2023 to early 2024 but the lack of charging infrastructure is one of the barriers causing some drivers to delay making the switch. As of July 2024, there were 104 public charge points available in Herefordshire, but it is predicted that 1,416 chargers will be required by 2030.

The EV strategy sets out how the council will help meet the need for charge point infrastructure. The Strategy takes into account national and local policy, along with funding prospects, to review both the available opportunities, and the challenges to improving EV charging infrastructure.

The council already has a concession contract with a charge point operator to deliver charge points across our public car parks. It is also taking part in the government funded Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) scheme, working with a consortium of Local Authorities to deliver on a wide variety of infrastructure, including on-street charge points. This strategy will support the progress of these schemes and other associated work, while providing guidance for future projects. The Strategy can be found on the [Herefordshire Council website](#).

## 7: Wetland Development and Phosphate Credit Scheme

**Stated Delivery Plan Objective:** Value nature and uphold environmental standards to minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity.

**This year we will:** Deliver Phase 2 Strategic Mitigation for Phosphate Credits



I have committed to providing updates in each of my Leader's reports to update members of housing delivery numbers since commencing the trading of phosphate credits from Luston in July 2022.

As at the point of drafting, £1,188,374.52 (up by just under £30,000 since July) in phosphate income has been received. To date these actions have released planning permissions for 739 dwellings (an increase of 119 dwellings since July). Also, by way of update, the planning permission granted (P230655/CD3) for the creation of a second integrated constructed wetland in Tarrington has now started trading credits, the first of which is subject to a planning appeal decision for up to 120 dwellings in Bromyard (P190111/0).

## **Budget and Performance reporting**

### **Quarter 1 2024/2025 Budget Report.**

The council's approved net revenue budget for 2024/25 is £212.8 million which includes planned savings of £19.5 million. This comprises £11.6 million of Directorate Savings and £7.9 million of Council wide budget savings. Our Quarter 1 report presents the first revenue forecast outturn position for 2024/25 and highlights emerging budget pressures. These comprise increases in demand across social care budgets, temporary accommodation and Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport services.

In September cabinet agreed to strengthen management actions to reduce the forecast overspend. The 2024/25 outturn shows a forecast overspend of £10.8 million at Quarter 1, before management action (estimated at £4.0 million) to reduce this during 2024/25 to £6.8 million.

Each Directorate will continue to identify further recovery action and options to mitigate at risk savings targets and ensure recurrent spending is sustainable within the resources available. Corporate Directors will continue to develop recovery plans to manage in year delivery of services within the approved budget.

Cabinet will continue to report on progress over the course of this financial year. I am grateful to the senior leadership team for the hard work in maintaining grip and focus toward achieving these savings and managing in-year cost pressures.

### **Q1 Performance Report**

The Q1 performance report was reported to Cabinet in September. This is the first report that has been refreshed to align with the new Council Plan 2024-2028. It provides a summary of the activities undertaken to deliver the key priorities and goals in Q1, and highlights the top ten key performance indicators selected to offer a more accurate view of performance compared to Oflog's outdated data.

Of the Q1 updates on the Delivery Plan milestones that are due to be in progress in Q1. 145 out of 162 milestones (90%) within the new Delivery Plan for 2024/25 were completed or are on track.