

DRAFT

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 5 June 2025 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)**

Councillors Harry Bramer, Barry Durkin, Carole Gandy, Dan Hurcomb, Ivan Powell, Philip Price and Pete Stoddart

Cabinet Members in remote attendance

Councillors

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

Group leaders / representatives in attendance

Councillors Clare Davies (online), Liz Harvey (in person) and Diana Toynbee (in person).

Ben Proctor as substitute for Terry James.

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance

Councillors Toni Fagan (online), Louis Stark (online)

Officers in attendance:

Roger Allonby, Claire Porter, Rosie Thomas Easton (online), Rachael Sanders, Samantha Gregory (clerk) and Donna Thornton (democratic services)

1. OPENING REMARKS

Councillor Dan Hurcomb was welcomed as a cabinet member.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Councillor Biggs.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 May, subject to the amendment below, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

Food Waste Collection Service

Page 12 of the agenda pack - matter of accuracy point, the minutes should read:

It was confirmed that more than 1million mega watt hours of ~~electricity~~ energy had been generated from the total waste stream and not just from the food waste food-waste collected since 2017.

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 11 - 16)

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

6. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS** (Pages 17 - 20)
Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 2 to the minutes.

7. **REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**
There were no reports from scrutiny committees for consideration at this meeting.

8. **Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. It was highlighted that 78% or 146 out of 187 milestones had been completed this year, 9% or 17 were red and would be carried over into the 2025/26 Delivery Plan. It was confirmed that the details for each of these red milestones were set out in Appendix A. It was noted that 12% or 23 milestones were categorised as purple, these would also be carried over to the 2025/26 Delivery Plan, this was due to the time skills changing due to inter dependent activity. There was one milestone which was awaiting an out turn of CO2 emissions to be available for 2024/25 to assess whether the target had been met.

Whilst it was noted to be disappointing that not all 187 milestones were met the council had been transparent with the reasons why they had not been completed.

It was highlighted that beyond the Delivery Plan the council had achieved many other successes in quarter 4 of 2024/25. Notably, it had continued to deliver on its capital investment programme which comprised of over 100 projects. These included Peterchurch Primary School £10.8m new build, planned to commence in September 2025. The expansion of Aylestone School funded by £13.1m of Department for Education money, due to commence construction in September 2025. Two projects under the school's capital maintenance programme and five projects under the estate's capital investment programme were completed in quarter four. Six projects as part of the S106 delivery programme, were completed which included a bus shelter at St Martins Way, Ledbury and the extension to the offices and reception area at Ashfield Park Primary School in Ross. Two projects were completed as part of the school accessibility improved programme which include internal adaptation and remodelling at Sutton St. Nicholas Primary School to improve accessibility for disabled pupils.

It was highlighted that £15m of roads resurfacing was completed across the county. The legal agreements with Network Rail and Transport for Wales were completed and the Hereford Transport Hub contract was selected, with construction work beginning in quarter 1 of 2025/26. Construction was also due to start soon for the Holme Lacy active travel improvements following the design and road safety audits being completed. The detailed design was completed for the Tarrington wetland ahead of its planned construction in quarter 1 of 2025/26. The listed building consent was secured and a two-stage procurement process for construction delivery commenced regarding the Shirehall restoration and Library Learning Centre. In addition, the stage one contractor procurement was concluded for the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery. The Home Upgrade Grant concluded in quarter 4 and delivered thermal and energy upgrades to 220 off means Herefordshire households against a target of 200. Lastly, design consultants were appointed as part of the Western Bypass Phase 1.

The Council Plan theme of People, 55 out of 60 milestones were completed with 3 red which would be rolled forward to next year's Delivery Plan and 2 purple. It was highlighted that within Children and Young People, 300 young people aged 16 to 24 were referred to the youth employment hub exceeding the target of 200 referrals for the year. The capacity of Special Education Needs (SEN) increased with an additional 56 specialist places. A participation strategy was agreed by the Herefordshire Safeguarding Partnership and a participation toolkit was now available online.

It was highlighted in the Community Wellbeing directorate that the Community Safety Partnership Strategy had been implemented focusing on domestic abuse, violence against women and girls' sexual violence, misuse of drugs and neighbourhood crime. It was noted that 3 milestones were being carried over into 2025/26. Firstly, evaluation of technology pilots within the larger technology enabled living programme. Secondly, work was underway to identify 3 new work opportunity providers to extend the services for people with learning disabilities and mental health issues. Thirdly, a full business case on the options for investing in and building the council's own care facility was being worked up, it will be considered by cabinet in Autumn 2025.

Within the Economy and Environment directorate, the Hereford enterprise zone had supported 7 businesses with employer travel plans to encourage more walking and cycling, exceeding the target. Also, the waiting list for Traffic Regulation Orders had been significantly reduced from 130 to 61 schemes.

The Council Plan theme of Place, 45 out of 59 milestones were completed, 4 were red and will be carried forward into the Delivery Plan for 2025/26, 9 were purple and 1 was white as that milestone was awaiting the outturn on the CO2 emissions to be available to assess whether the target has been met. It was confirmed that a parking strategy was being developed as part of the Transport Infrastructure Improvement Plan. The Library Strategy was progressing, and the contractor was due to be appointed to redevelop the Library and Learning Centre in the Shirehall by the end of quarter 2 of 2025/26. The construction work to redevelop the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery was slightly delayed and due to take place during quarter 1 of 2025/26.

It was confirmed that the delay in completing the public consultation on the draft Local Transport Plan was due to Government changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. This consultation would now take place during quarter 1 of 2025/26.

It was noted that Phase 2 of the Strategic Mitigation for Phosphate credits was almost complete and it was hoped to be completed by quarter 1 of 2025/26. The timelines for the publication of the Nature Recovery Strategy have been adjusted in line with the revised timelines provided by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs.

The Council Plan theme of Growth, 24 of the 42 milestones were completed, 6 were red and 12 were purple. It was noted that an inward investment manager had been successfully recruited to support attracting businesses to the county. March 2025 also marked the successful completion of delivering the £7m UK Shared Prosperity and Rural Prosperity Fund. It was noted that challenges regarding section 278 planning matters caused a delay to the finalisation of the design and the procurement of the Ross Enterprise Park. However, this had been resolved, and tenders would go out in quarter 1 of 2025/26. It was confirmed that the development and implementation of an Inward Investment and Place Marketing Plan for Herefordshire was on track to be delivered during 2025/26. It was noted that the allocation of funding for additional employment land, the careers and enterprise programme in local schools and colleges to attract students to study in the county were also in progress. It was also noted that strategies to support improved network coverage would be delivered during 2025/26 following the publication of the results of the 4G5G mobile coverage by the River Severn Partnership.

The Council Plan theme of transformation, 22 out of 26 milestones were completed and 4 were red. It was highlighted that a new set of customer standards had been developed and were set out in the Transformation Strategy. It was also confirmed that the council co-produced Hereford's Council Charter in quarter 4 and this was due to be published shortly.

It was clarified that some of the data from the Office for Local Government should be interpreted with caution and 10 indicators were selected by the council to demonstrate a

more meaningful indication of its latest performance. There were, Performance of service users aged 65 plus, discharge from hospital into home first who were still at home 91 days after discharge. The projection was 80% and at quarter 4 the figure was 79.83%. Percentage of Children and Young People social work assessments completed within the time scale of 45 days. The quarter 4 projection was 85% and the actual result was 67.7%. The percentage of children in care who had an up-to-date review, the target was 95%, however 98.25% was achieved. The percentage of major planning applications dealt with within 13 weeks or 60 weeks, if subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment or with an agreed extension of time, the target was 70% and 94.59% was achieved. The percentage of non-major minor and other planning applications dealt with within 8 weeks or with an agreed extension of time. The target was 80% and 77.71% was achieved. The number of kilogrammes of waste that were not sent to reuse, recycling or composting per household, the target was 360 kilogrammes and 366.4 kilogrammes was achieved. The number of affordable homes delivered, the target was 260, and 276 were delivered. The local count of Herefordshire official homelessness was at 5 and 1 was achieved. The value of grants awarded to businesses to support viability and enable growth through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund, the target was £2.6m and £2.9m was achieved.

It was highlighted that Appendix A set out the detailed status of all 187 milestones.

Comments from cabinet members. Regarding Peterchurch Primary School it was raised who was funding the new zebra school crossing, whether it was from the school budget or by Highways on the basis the school had 210 pupils. It was also noted that when the school was flooded recently, the drainage consultants were looking to ensure the new school was protected. Lastly, that the swimming pool would hopefully continue to be maintained as it was a good asset for the school.

It was positively noted how well the report was presented. The improvement of the roads were commended. Regarding the environment energy efficiency and retrofit, it was positive to see so many had been completed across the two schemes but there was still more to do. Regarding the CO2 reduction, it was noted that whilst the council didn't have the data for this year, it was anticipated that the number would reduce when factoring in the changes to the waste fleet and EV vehicles. It was also noted that the decarbonisation plan would hopefully be through by the end of the month.

It was noted that the evaluation of the tech pilot had been completed and that had informed the tech products being rolled out and were supporting plans for people with care packages. It was noted that whilst the council had hoped to sign up 3 new providers to provide work opportunities for people with Learning Difficulties, no new providers came forward. However, those already on the framework were looking to provide work opportunities as part of the learning disabilities transformation work.

Regarding the Ross Enterprise Park Phase 1, £7.25m had been drawn down to begin the construction phase.

Regarding Children and Young People it was clarified that the indicator which remained red was due to social work staffing vacancies. It was confirmed that the council's recruitment and retention offer had been revised and increased numbers of permanent staff being recruited had been noted. For additional reassurance, the improvement plan, which was monitored every 6 weeks by the improvement board, included 2 measures which focused on the sufficiency and stability of the workforce. Meaning there was a high degree of scrutiny on this indicator within the improvement board.

Regarding the improvement to the roads, positive acknowledgement was given to the team and confirmation that the hard work would continue to next year.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. Catching up on backlogs regarding the s.106 and Traffic Regulation Orders were welcomed. It was queried when the Parking Strategy was completed. Regarding the Local Nature Recovery Strategy it was queried what the role of the council was in progressing this and to avoid duplication what more can be done to ensure it was being run efficiently. Concern was raised regarding public land being sold off at the Herefordshire Enterprise Zone. It was also queried where the full business case was for the Southern Link Road.

The report was also positively welcomed and further improvement was anticipated with the permanent director in place for strategy. The progress on Growth was seen to be disappointing but noted it was dependant on inward investment. It was raised if the deliverables could be tested for alignment and acknowledgement of savings as well as the tangible service delivery items. It was also queried if the scale of some items that were strategic programmes could be highlighted for the future.

It was also raised that the report focused more on the activity but not the outcomes and impact of that activity.

In response to queries, regarding the Parking Strategy it was confirmed that Part 1 had been released and will check it was on the website. It was confirmed that Part 2 was commercially confidential and wouldn't be available in the meantime.

In respect of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, it was confirmed that the Government had asked the council to bring this forward and the council did this with a steering group of stakeholders which included Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trust, representatives from National Landscapes and landowners. It was confirmed this would be out for consultation in the next couple of months. The council was currently writing the strategy, and it was an evolving picture.

Regarding selling land at the Enterprise Zone it was clarified that the council primed the site, which required significant investment by the council and when businesses want to buy the land to develop, that payment is what replenishes the initial investment. It should also be remembered that the goal was not to become landowners or landlord, it was to increase economic growth and business development. It was highlighted that the council retains the Shell store, and the council will continue to invest in the economy.

It was clarified that the Performance report was tied to the Delivery Plan and it is action focused by nature, focusing on what the council has done. It was acknowledged that in the next Delivery Plan the could include a column which looked at the impacts of the Performance report.

Regarding the implication that the business case for the Golden Valley Parkway would be the same as Phase 1 of the Western Bypass, it was clarified that the business cases do mature as they are finalised. It was confirmed that the Golden Valley Parkway had not reached an outline business case due to delays with Network Rail. Regarding Phase 1 of the Western Bypass, it had been ongoing for a long time and the business case was being finalised for delivery. It cannot be compared or seen in the same light as the Golden Valley Parkway.

Councillor Stoddart, proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that:

That Cabinet:

- a) review performance for Q4 2024/25; and**
- b) agree any outstanding key milestones from the Delivery Plan 2024/25 (see Appendix A) are carried forward to the Delivery Plan 2025/26**

9. Q4 2024/25 BUDGET REPORT

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. It was noted that the financial position the current administration had inherited was dire with quarter 1 forecast of £13.8m on a revenue budget of £193.3m. However, today the final outturn position for 2024/25 showed an underspend of £0.5m on a budget of £212.8m. It was also highlighted that the draft statement of accounts had been published, one month earlier than the statutory requirements, which put the council in the top 3% of councils in the country.

It was noted that this year's multi year settlement will not be kind to this council given the Labour Government's removal of the Rural Services Grant and reduction in the central government grant. On that basis, it was confirmed, to place £0.5m underspend in the general reserve fund which increased it to £10.1m.

It was noted that in November 2024 cabinet approved a transfer of £11m from business rates risk reserve to establish a budget resilience reserve to mitigate against in-year cost pressures. At this outturn position it was confirmed that a planned transfer of £4m from the budget resilience reserve would be applied to cost pressures in adult social care and temporary accommodation budgets in the community well-being directorate in 2024/25.

It was confirmed that the earmarked reserves and general balances policy statement for 2025/26 would be carried forward on 31 March 2025 to manage future emerging risks and in-year budgetary pressures over the medium-term period.

It was highlighted that the Children Young People directorate budget delivered an underspend of £2.8m in 2025/26 and the planned savings of £2.3m had been delivered in full. It was confirmed that the additional budget of £2.3m, following the budget amendment in February 2024, was never given to the directorate from reserves in 2024/25. The reserves were not used by the directorate in the year but had been used as part of the year end close down process to manage the whole council position. It was also noted that the £2.3m had always been reported separately and transparently throughout the year in the quarterly reports and was presented as an underspend in Table 1 of the 2024/25 revenue outturn.

It was noted that the Community and Wellbeing directorate had faced some significant challenges this year with increased demand and included a transfer from the budget resilience reserve of £4m, which still left a £1.5m overspend.

It was confirmed that Appendix A showed the details of the outturn position by directorate which totalled a £0.5m underspend.

Regarding deliver of savings, the council approved £19.5m of savings for 2024/25 which comprised of directorate savings of £11.6m and £7.9m of council wide savings. It was noted that £10.9m of savings had been delivered and where savings had not been recurrently delivered in 2024/25 a focused review of the original proposals and planned activity had been undertaken and revised saving plans had been developed where appropriate. The individual savings plans were included in Appendix D of the report at Table D which totalled £8.6m of savings to be delivered. It was highlighted that the council wide savings of £5.7m were a key priority for the cabinet member.

It was confirmed that the cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit was accounted for as an unusable reserve on the council's balance sheet as permitted by statutory instrument (which will remain in place until 31 of March 2026). It was noted that beyond the statutory override period the expectation was that any balance on the DSG unusable reserve would transfer back to the council's total earmarked reserves. It

was noted that on the 1 of April 2024 the cumulative deficit was £6.1m, the out turn position for 2025/26 was an overspend of £13.9m in 2024/25 with the cumulative DSG deficit at £20m on 31 March 2025. It was confirmed that a deficit budget of £20.2m had been approved for 2025/26 and if expenditure was contained within the approved budget the cumulative DSG deficit would total £40.2m on 31 March 2026 at the end of the statutory override.

It was noted that the earmarked reserves and general balances policy statement for 2025/26, reported to cabinet in January 25, highlighted the forecasted earmarked reserve balances, excluding schools' balances, of £45.7m on 31 March 2026. It was confirmed if reserves were required to support the council's financial position in 2025/26 there would be insufficient earmarked reserves to mitigate the cumulative deficit balance on 31 March 2026. It was confirmed that the risk to the council's overall financial position, once the override ends, would be monitored and it was a major concern among local authorities nationally. The council was continuing to work with the Department for Education, the Local Government Association and other local authorities to seek clarification on the position once the statutory instrument expires. Assurance was provided that the cabinet member maintained a close watching briefing on the DSG deficit management plan and will continue to ensure that cabinet remained fully briefed.

Regarding the capital outturn, the 2024/25 approved capital budget of £160m was revised to £97m. The revised capital budget included £15.3m of unspent project budgets brought forward from 2023/24, approved movements of £0.3m, £4.1m additional grants and a reduction of £82.7m which had been re-profiled into future years. This was confirmed in Appendix B in Table B. It was confirmed that the final spend position was £74.1m which represented an underspend of £22.9m against a budget of £97m, with an increase underspend of £5.6m. Appendix B, Table A set out the full details for each project.

It was noted at the Scrutiny Management Board of 26 March 2025 that the cabinet member was asked by Councillor Harvey regarding his confidence in delivering the £79m forecast being reported and the cabinet member confirmed he was to the degree of 5% accuracy. It was noted the forecast was £79,637m and the final spend was £74,087m. The final spend being 7% below target only.

Comments from cabinet members. Thanks were extended to the cabinet member and director of finance for all their hard work. It was noted that long term demand for domiciliary care had increased by 23% over the last year and there had been an increased demand for extra care housing by 10%. Regarding short term service users, home first had increased by 26% and the need for short term residential respite care had increased by 50%. Along with temporary accommodation, these factors had a large impact on the directorate.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. Thanks were extended to the cabinet member and the director for finance for their hard work. Concern was raised regarding the presentation of the budget. It was raised that the £0.5m underspend was due to using reserves otherwise there would have been a larger overspend. It was also raised that the overspend in the Children and Young People's directorate was no longer present due to increasing the directorate's core budget. Acknowledgement was given to directorates that had delivered on their budget savings, and the children's directorate was highlighted with congratulations extended to the cabinet member and director.

It was queried if the underspend on short breaks for Children and Young People was due to lack of capacity. It was asked if the reserve position and movements could be made clearer in respect of the underspend. It was also queried what had happened to the climate reserve and the risks relating to PIP should be noted within Community Wellbeing.

In response to queries, it was positively noted to have achieved a balanced budget, and it was positive to use underspends to bolster the council's financial credibility. It was confirmed that the council had been transparent, and the strategy had been reported for each previous quarter.

It was clarified that the climate reserve was included, it had a balance of £953k at the start of the year, with in-year spending in accordance with the service plan, the closing balance was £726k.

Regarding the issue of short breaks in Children and Young people it was confirmed that clarification would be provided to Councillor Toynbee.

Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that:

That:

Cabinet

- a) review the financial outturn for 2024/25, as set out in the appendices A-E, and identifies any additional actions to be considered to achieve future improvements; and**
- b) agree the transfer of the reported underspend of £0.5 million to increase the General Fund Balance**

10. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. It was highlighted that the Audit and Governance committee had been engaged in the development of this strategy throughout 2024/25 and the draft strategy was reviewed by the committee in March 2025.

The risks and context were set out, strategic delivery included those risks that would prevent the timely delivery of priorities and objectives of the Council Plan 2024 -2028 and supporting annual delivery plans across the themes of people, place, growth and transformation.

Legal and compliance included those risks arising from a defective transaction. Financial risks were ones that arose from not managing risks and finances in accordance with requirements, and financial constraints. Governance risks were those arising from unclear plans, priorities, authorities and accountabilities.

Data and technology risks arose from a failure to produce robust suitable and appropriate data in information. Security risks arose from a failure to prevent unauthorised and/or inappropriate access to the estate and information.

Finally, reputational risks arose from adverse events including ethical violations, lack of sustainability, systematic or repeated failures, or poor quality or lack of innovation leading to damages to the council's reputation and or destruction of trust and relations.

It was noted that the roles and responsibilities section clearly specified what was required for specific roles and highlighted that a strong risk management culture was demonstrated.

The importance of the thrive core values were emphasised as the guiding principles. It was noted that all elected members had a responsibility in respect to risk, and risk

training would be provided. The officers section also specified individuals and all staff indicating their responsibilities regarding risk.

It was highlighted that the risk management framework and processes section broke down the coordinated activities and processes into 5 clear steps. (1) Establish objectives, (2) Identify the risks, (3) Analyse and evaluate the risk, (4) Manage through mitigation or treatment of the risks, (5) Record and report.

It was confirmed that activities would continue in 2025/26 to ensure that this strategy translated to the management of risk across all services and projects and that risk drove decision-making and service delivery.

It was noted there would be 3 levels of risk registers, (1) Corporate risk register would include those of significant strategic and cross cutting importance requiring the attention of senior management and elected members. (2) Directorate risk registers would require the attention of the respective director, directorate leadership team and heads of service or senior managers. (3) Directorate risks would be local versions of those on the corporate risk register e.g. directorate budget or information management and governance. Service risk registers included programmes and projects at an operational nature and would be reported to the respective service management team, programme or project board.

It was noted that the risk and insurance manager was responsible for ensuring consistency in the approach across the three levels of risk register.

It was confirmed that the Risk Management Strategy supported compliance with statutory requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

It was noted that the strategy at Appendix A set out the council's risk appetite levels, as being one of four (1) averse, (2) cautious, (3) open and (4) eager. These were then applied in Appendix B across each of the categories, the amber colour indicated the council's risk appetite for each risk category and the teal colour indicated the council's appetite for identified exceptions. The corporate risk register at Appendix C showed the 8 corporate risks, with details of the risk owner, the risk appetite, control measures and mitigating actions, the inherent risk score and residual risk score.

It was highlighted that the risk register was linked to the Council Plan and its four themes of people, place, growth and transformation providing a golden thread to link everything together.

Lastly, it was noted that the Audit and Governance committee confirmed that this number of corporate risks were an appropriate quantity.

There were no comments from cabinet members.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. The improved approach to risk management was welcomed. It was positively noted that the importance of training for members was emphasised and should be embraced by all members. It was raised that climate change was not mentioned in relation to corporate risk and the risks to the county. Risk culture was important to ensure risks were being accurately identified and managed. It was queried if the risk report would be published quarterly to cabinet. Assurance was also sought if the financial risks appeared on the directorate risk register.

In response to queries it was confirmed that the risk report would be included every quarter.

Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that:

- a) The Risk Management Strategy 2025/26 and Risk Appetite Statement are approved by Cabinet; and**
- b) The risks identified in the revised Corporate Risk Register are agreed as those of significant, strategic and cross-cutting importance to be managed and monitored in 2025/26**

The meeting ended at 4.15 pm

Chairperson

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

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Peter McKay, Leominster	At April Local Access Forum were informed that a Handbook for Parish Footpath Officers had been raised, which was welcomed, but do not recall if was to be made viewable online. Could you kindly confirm that this Handbook will be made viewable online, and if it contains information about, or will be revised to include information about, (a) the Street Works Register contained in reply to my question to Cabinet on 16 May 2024 seeking to avoid needless footpath dmmoa's, and (b) representation Parish ought make if walked line deviates from legal line, and if the deviated line becomes obstructed?	Cllr Hurcomb
Response: Thank you for your question. A guide has been produced for Parish Footpath Officers to assist them in their role when working on behalf of their Parish or Town Council on the Public Rights of Way network. We have made the guide available to Parish/Town Council Clerks and Parish Footpath Officers but as the guide contains links which should only be accessed by Clerks and Parish Footpath Officers, we will not be making it available to the wider public. In terms of content, the guide contains information on the different roles and responsibilities, policies and procedures, and how the help and support of Parish Footpath Officers can assist with the management and maintenance of the Public Rights of Way network in Herefordshire. It also sets out how Herefordshire Council will support Parish Footpath Officers with what they do in their Parish or Town. The guide does not provide information on the Street Works register as this is not in line with our aims of producing the document. As we have previously advised, unadopted Highways Not Maintainable at Public Expense are available on our website via the Street Works Register tab on the Highways and Public Rights of Way map, of which there are only two locations recorded in the county. We are clear in the guide that where concerns exist regarding the line of routes or any obstruction then this should be raised with the Public Rights of Way team directly.			
Supplementary question:			

Supplementary response:			
PQ 2.	Emil Morfett, Breinton	The SEA Strategic Environmental Assessment of the LTP5 assumes no increased flooding from proposed road development west of Hereford to access land for a new 10,000 house settlement. The Scrutiny Committee is aware that this is the catchment that still floods Hereford City, despite millions invested in the Yazor brook SuDS Sustainable Drainage System. It is also the catchment that required extensive remodelling of the proposed flood alleviation scheme, for just 350 houses in phase I of Three Elms development. Why is the risk of flooding from soil sealing west of Hereford, and the increased intensity of flooding from climate change, excluded from any Strategic Environmental Assessment, of LTP5 given the increasing threat to our largest city and the high capital costs of mitigation building and maintaining extensive flood retention tanks, ponds and reservoirs.	Cllr Swinglehurst
Response: The SEA for LTP5 does acknowledge the importance of flood risk and climate resilience as part of its environmental baseline. However, it is important to clarify that the SEA is a high-level strategic document. It does not replace the need for detailed site-specific flood risk assessments, which are required at the planning application stage for any new development or infrastructure. It would be at the submission of a planning request for the housing settlements where the developer will be required to provide the detail you are requesting. Additionally, these planning applications will be subject to scrutiny and the public may object at that time.			
Supplementary question: My initial question was referred to Cabinet and the response suggests it is not a high-level issue and not for the public to question at this stage. Surely the very essence of a high-level SEA strategic environmental assessment is to examine the location and impact of proposed new infrastructure and urban expansions in the LTP5 before any land is allocated for development. With this in mind, will this Council consider commissioning a hydrological survey of the Yazor catchment as a priority to evaluate the risk of 1. major adverse impact on both the commercial aquifer (supplying Avara and Heineken) from road construction over source protection zones (SPZ1 and SPZ2) and			

2. The inevitable increased risk of flooding in Hereford city from run-off and the risk of failure of substantial flood alleviation schemes required for the proposed western urban expansion?

Supplementary response:

Thank you for the supplementary question. The requirements around the SEA and its role to inform the development of the LTP is prescribed in legislation and Herefordshire Council have complied with all requirements. Therefore, the council does not intend to commission any additional surveys over what is legally required at this stage.

As the per the initial response, we will work with developers, and as the council brings forward our own schemes, we will ensure any further required surveys are commissioned.

PQ 3.	Gill Jinman, Ewyas Harold	I am pleased to note that it is a core aim of the LTP 2025-2041 “to support rural mobility and connecting our people and services” However, despite the measure mentioned on p 41 to produce a rural mobility strategy to improve accessibility and inclusivity, there appear to be no plans to address the recognised challenges of improving or providing rural bus services, particularly in the area south west of Herefordshire that includes the Golden Valley South Ward, nor any mention of plans for the Golden Valley Parkway. How will the plan be amended to incorporate these much-needed services to help fulfil the LTP aim?	Cllr Price
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Response:

The LTP is currently out for consultation. Once the consultation is closed, we will review and analyse the responses and amend the LTP to account for the views that residents, businesses and organisations have submitted. We would welcome the comments raised within this question to be submitted as part of the formal consultation process as set out on the council website - [Latest consultations – Herefordshire Consultations](#) - so that these views can be considered alongside all other formal responses. All Local Authorities are required to have an up to date Local Transport Plan (LTP). LTP's provide a framework for the council's vision for transport and enables strategic integration with growth and housing plans; they do not generally reference specific schemes – unless they have already been agreed upon.

There are no published plans as yet, because one of the measures of the LTP is to produce a rural mobility strategy, which will address the recognised challenges of improving rural connectivity. Some of the options for doing so may well be through rural bus services combined with other forms of connectivity. As the LTP is in consultation we would expect there to be amendments based on consultation responses. There is currently a section in the draft LTP covering rail connectivity in the county. Even though the council do not have any statutory powers over rail infrastructure or operations our ambition is to work closely with Network Rail and Train Operating Companies to improve transport connectivity. Depending on the responses to the rail section of the LTP we will aim to dovetail our rail ambitions to work alongside stakeholders with the LTP consultation responses.

Supplementary question:

I am grateful to learn that the comments I raised in my question and which I have submitted as part of the consultation process will be welcomed. As Cllr Price has said (in response to a public question to Cabinet on 5th October 2023) that “the reopening of a station at Pontrilas has long been a priority of Herefordshire Council”, and (in response to my question on 27th March this year) that “the Council continues to support the Golden Valley Parkway station plan as a strategically important proposal for the county and wider region”, please can he explain why it does not count as a specific scheme to be referenced in the LTP?

Supplementary response:

Thank you for your supplementary question. We remain fully supportive of the Golden Valley Parkway Station scheme, but it is still in the early stages of development and does not yet have the detailed business case, or funding commitments from government or Network Rail required for inclusion as a defined project within the draft LTP. The LTP prioritises schemes that are more advanced in terms of deliverability and alignment with current government funding programmes. The LTP is designed to be a flexible, evolving framework which allows for updates to it as projects develop and evolve.

We will also consider all comments received through the consultation in finalising the LTP.

PQ 4.	Sally Webster, Putley	Are Cabinet aware that by approving road closures requested in connection with the Hills Ford Rally, that they would be in breach of their duties as laid out in advice received from Wye Valley and Malvern Hills National Landscapes Team. How does Cabinet propose that Herefordshire Council can demonstrate it has discharged its duty to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes in line with Section 85 of the CRoW Act (2000)?	Cllr Durkin
Response: Thank you for the question. The planned event has led to a number of issues which will need to be reviewed and addressed as part of any application process. Council officers are aware of the concerns raised by the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills National Landscape Team in relation to the planned event and the council's general duty in relation to land as set out in section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000. Additional supporting information and evidence has been requested, once received officers will review and make the final decision. Please note that information on the impact of the event is still being submitted and being reviewed, and so no decision has been made to date.			
Supplementary question: In the light of guidance to authorities on applying the strengthened duty to meet the Countryside & Right of Way (CRoW) Act section 85 in National Landscapes (May 2025 briefing), and impacts of the Hills Ford rally last year on species and habitat, tranquillity and access, as evidenced by Wye Valley and Malvern Hills National Landscapes' consultation response, what further information is required before making a decision on whether the Hills Ford Stages rally takes place on the requested route this year? Additionally, in the event of any change to the requested route, when will this new route be published, how long will the period of consultation be, and how will Herefordshire Council meet its strengthened duty to sensitive areas adjacent to the National Landscapes?			
Supplementary response: Thank you for your supplementary question. All information submitted and guidance provided is currently being collated and considered. The determination will be made by the relevant officers under the council's role as the highway authority. I'm unable to comment further on when that			

decision will be made. The organisers are aware of the views expressed in the engagement response and will need to provide supporting information setting out how they are going to or intending to mitigate any perceived impact. At this stage we have not received any information as to a potential route change. Thank you.

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from councillors

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
Q 1.	Cllr Ben Proctor	In the Statutory homelessness in England: October to December 2024 official statistics released in April 2025, Herefordshire Council data was absent from the tables on: • Initial assessment information • Prevention and relief outcomes • Main duty decisions • Main duty outcomes Why was Herefordshire Council data missing from these tables?	Cllr Gandy
Response: H-CLIC, or the Homelessness Case Level Information Collection, is a mandatory data collection for local authorities in England that collects detailed case-level information on households as they move through the statutory homelessness system. This data is used to monitor the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The data is collected quarterly and is used to produce official statistics, published on a quarterly basis with an annual report. After each quarter the Housing Solutions Team upload our data to H-CLIC a system held by DELTA*. The Oct – Dec quarter was the first quarter where the information was provided through the newly procured IT system Home Connections, previously it has been submitted through Abritas Civica. The information was prepared and we had attempted to bulk upload direct from Home Connections but the information was left hanging on the system. We contacted DELTA and an extension was granted whilst investigations were made by Home Connections and DELTA as to why the information could not be imported. On the advice of DELTA we worked with Home Connections to rerun the report and tried uploading the information into a different format, unfortunately by the time the systems were able to talk to each other DELTA had closed and the information was not published. For clarity DELTA do have the information for the Oct – Dec quarter. Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We are happy to share the information directly with you and circulate with all members. <i>* Delta is the online system provided by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to facilitate the collection of statistical data and the administration of grant applications including:</i> • local government finance statistics • housing and planning statistics • homelessness statistics (e.g. H-CLIC) • other MHCLG data collections			

- *grant administration*

Supplementary question:

Thank you for the answer to my question and I recognise that the missing homelessness statistics are just one of those things. I still don't know what those number are but I know that they are very large because we spent £3.4m on temporary accommodation last year and this seems to me to be an emergency for large parts of the county. I'm aware that some things are happening but they seem to me to be happening at a speed considerably below what you would expect if I was really being treated as an emergency and I'm looking at Councillor Gandy and I recognise that this isn't just Councillor Gandy's problem, in fact reducing homelessness doesn't sit in Councillor Gandy's portfolio, so maybe the Leader could outline what key steps will happen this year that will lead to a significant reduction in the number of people becoming homeless?

Supplementary response:

Councillor Gandy answered –

I was going to raise it later in the debate, I can tell you the number of people that we've got in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of the financial year was 156 households. They would mainly be single people or couples in temporary accommodation and on top of that we have 104 households which could be a lot of families in bed and breakfast accommodation. It's not the sort of bed and breakfast accommodation that you would associate with the norm, where you have your bed and breakfast and then you have to be out. They are properties that we own or commission where people can stay most of the time. That amounts to 260 households who at present are living in temporary accommodation.

I do not have responsibility for strategic housing and that is Councillor Bigg's area and the Leader may be able to enlarge on that, all I can is that we have plans in place for more appropriate temporary accommodation going forward which will be brought to cabinet shortly and that will relieve the situation to a degree. Ultimately, we do not have in Herefordshire enough affordable rented accommodation, and we do not have enough affordable houses to buy on the market. We are doing our utmost to try to get as many houses for rent that we possibly can going forward and to try to bring forward as many properties as possible that are discounted to buy but it's a situation which is the same across the whole country.

The Leader answered –

I would like to add that we are acutely aware of the problem regarding the provision of temporary accommodation which is why we're just finalising the acquisition of a building in the centre of Hereford where we will be able to provide that facility ourselves. That is taking direct action if I can put it that way to address what is a really serious issue and hopefully that facility will be up and running within the next six months, we'll be able to

provide that type of accommodation. We're also in the process of making sure we can utilise a building in Leominster as well to create four flats so that will be use as well for temporary accommodation. I think that's a clear indication that this administration is taking this matter with the utmost seriousness and investing so we can address this really serious issue and also use our resources wisely to reduce costs as well.

Councillor Gandy clarified –

I wanted to clarify that we should have completed the acquisition of the building within the next six months but we will then have to do work on that building so probably talking about a year.

The Leader further stated –

The point is this, in our control and we will be in a much better position to address the issue of temporary accommodation and that is something that I think is a clear indication of our commitment to addressing this very serious issue. Thank you for the question Councillor Proctor and your support in making sure we've got our housing obligations and the housing issue on the top of our agenda.

Q2	Cllr Robert Owens	Cabinet may be aware that almost all of the fast electric vehicle (EV) charge-points in the City of Hereford are currently inoperable because their fixed cables have been stolen. They have yet to be repaired and the lack of this facility is of concern to many residents. There is an increasing demand for reliable EV charging infrastructure across the County and Herefordshire Council has an important role to play in providing this, and a responsibility to its residents to facilitate the greater use of zero emissions vehicles. Fast charge-points with tethered cables are a target for thieves. With more EV charging stations due to be installed, including rapid charge-points, from this Summer what does the Administration intend to do, in collaboration with the Council's Commercial Partner Wenea, the Police and other partners to protect the growing EV charging network from further criminal damage?	Cllr Price
Response: Whilst we are aware that privately owned charge-point location was recently vandalised, we have not experienced any issues of vandalism at any of the Council's EV charge points.			

As part of our ambitious plans to accelerate the roll out of EV charge-points we will continue to work closely with our provider Wenea and we do consider the risk of potential vandalism and the safety of residents using the charge-points as important considerations when assessing the locations of new charge points. If we do experience any instances of vandalism we will work closely with the police and other partners to address this.	
Supplementary question:	
Supplementary response:	