Herefordshire Council

Minutes of the meeting of Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Monday 12 May 2025 at 10.00 am

Present: **Councillor Louis Stark (chairperson)**
Councillor Justine Peberdy (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Helen Heathfield, Robert Highfield and Richard Thomas

In attendance: **Councillors Barry Durkin (Cabinet Member for Roads and Regulatory Service), Councillor Philip Price (Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure).**

Anna Davidson (Assistant Chief Officer: Director of Prevention Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service), Robert Haynes (West Mercia Police - Senior Traffic Management Advisor), Thom Morgan (Group Commander Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service).

Officers: **Ed Bradford (Head of Highways and Traffic), Simon Cann (Democratic Services Officer), Julie Freeman (Road Safety Officer), Simon Hobbs (Highways Accident Investigation and Safety Manager), Dr David Land (Head of Transport and Access Services), Alfie Rees-Glinos (Democratic Services Support), Danial Webb (Statutory Scrutiny Officer).**

132. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor David Davies.

133. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There had been no named substitutes.

134. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

135. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

136. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions had been received from members of the public.

137. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions had been received from members of the Council.

138. ROAD SAFETY

The Head of Highways and Traffic introduced the report. The Chair thanked officers and attending partners for their contributions to the report and explained that the committee had set out several objectives in relation to the topic, the intention was to:

- Understand the impact of speed limits on road user safety and the current council policy.
- Look at best practice on the provision of road architecture.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the School Street Safety initiative.
- Scrutinise the administration of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) across the council.
- Scrutinise the enforcement of road safety measures, including speed limits.

1. The committee enquired as to whether the Council had a road safety strategy, similar to that of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's), with defined priorities and outcomes.

    - The Highways Accident Investigation and Safety Manager explained that weekly collision data was received from the Department for Transport (DfT) via the police. It included severity (killed/seriously injured/slight), weather, speed, and contributing factors. Data was analysed over rolling 5-year periods to identify high-risk sites. Interventions were then prioritised and actioned where possible within budgets.

2. The committee asked if the council and partners were missing incidents, given that many minor collisions were not reported to police, and near-miss/dangerous driving data was excluded.

    - The West Mercia Police Senior Traffic Management Advisor noted that official collision datasets did not include unreported incidents, but the police promoted 'Operation Snap' to capture dangerous driving via public dashcam submissions, of which there were on average 300-600 per month.

    - The Group Commander Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service pointed out that the service drew on broader datasets including: Stats19, highways network road data and public sector geospatial agreement (PSGA) data.

3. The committee discussed public perceptions of road safety and how they potentially affected walking/cycling uptake.

    - The Head of Transport and Access Services pointed out that the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) did reference perceptions of safety. Perception was harder to capture locally, but national industry research was used. Officers agreed that it was an important area of consideration, which needed to feed into planning.

4. In relation to behaviour and enforcement the committee asked whether driver behaviour such as drink/drug driving and speeding was analysed beyond location specific collisions.

- The Highways Accident Investigation and Safety Manager explained that behavioural causes were partly identifiable via contributing factor codes in collision data. However, resource constraints meant that focus remained on sites with proven collision problems. It was suggested that AI-based tools might offer future predictive data.

- The West Mercia Police Senior Traffic Management Advisor added that behaviour was addressed through the 'Fatal Four' (speed, distraction, impairment, seatbelts), seasonal campaigns and community reporting.

- It was stated that 'Operation Snap' submissions were processed and could, in theory, be mapped, but this would require significant resources and currently the data remained at force level.

- In response to a question from the committee the Senior Traffic Management Advisor confirmed that road safety campaigns were ongoing throughout the year. Continuous and seasonal campaigns targeted mobile phone use, speeding, impaired driving and seatbelt compliance. It was noted that joint programmes such as 'Green Light' and 'Head Gear' reached thousands of students annually.

5. The committee asked whether there were regular strategic-level meetings between the Council, Police and Fire services to coordinate road safety.

    - The West Mercia Police Senior Traffic Management Advisor stated that an Operations Forum met quarterly with partners and that work was underway to reinstate a Strategic Partnership Board to consider wider issues at a senior level. The advisor welcomed the chair's offer for the committee to put forward a recommendation that the Strategic Partnership Board be reinstated as a matter of priority.

6. The committee considered whether road designs and junction improvements were making sites safer. It was noted that local opinion had suggested that some sites, such as Lock's Garage, Pengethley and Rose Cottage had become more problematic and dangerous post-change.

    - The Highways Accident Investigation and Safety Manager stated that changes made near Lock's Garage had reduced the severity of accidents, but the area remained problematic due to the layout of the petrol station and driver behaviour (poor indication), however a larger redesign was now being considered.

    - Regarding Pengethley and Rose Cottage the Safety manager pointed out that these were trunk roads managed by National Highways and not the Council.

    - On a general level it was explained that schemes were required to follow the national design manual for roads and bridges (DMRB), but where possible local innovation had been trialled, such as the single-arm signal operation at Old Gore.

7. The committee enquired whether the police and fire services were consulted on design solutions

    - The Highways Accident Investigation and Safety Manager explained that the police were involved in road safety audits once schemes had been

designed and installed. Input from the fire service was less direct, although local crews could provide intelligence when required.

8. The committee invited officers and partners to provide an outline of work being carried out with schools and young drivers.

    - The Road Safety Officer explained that education spanned all ages, from nurseries (via role play and advice on child seats), through to primary/secondary schools to young drivers and refresher courses for older drivers. In addition to this, road safety patrols provided reassurance for parents and reduced the reliance on cars.

    - The Assistant Chief Officer: Director of Prevention Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service highlighted prevention programmes targeting 16-25s and over 60s. Available tools included VR headsets, 'Your Impact' sessions in schools and pilot schemes with Youth Justice.

9. The committee asked if funding for road safety was proactive (strategic) or reactive (responding to incidents).

    - The Road Safety Officer stated that budgets were primarily reactive and prioritised interventions at the highest risk sites, based on collision data. Larger schemes requiring significant funding were typically carried forward into future programmes.

At the conclusion of the debate, the committee discussed potential recommendations, and the following resolutions were agreed.

That Herefordshire Council:

1. **Herefordshire Council develops a road safety strategy that supports the priorities under People, Place and Growth in the Council Plan and complements the policy produced by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner.**

2. **The executive should seek opportunities to improve the road network environs in the five market towns to make them safer and to feel safer for all road users.**

3. **Herefordshire Council to work with West Mercia Police to unlock behavioural, perception of safety, and geographic data about near miss and dangerous driving reporting, to better inform decision-making about engineering, education and speed limit zone solutions.**

4. **For the council to undertake an evidence-based increase of the road safety education budget, or to transfer funding from schemes for children to older adults.**

5. **West Mercia Police to consider the balance of factors that contribute to road danger when undertaking road safety enforcement.**

6. **The Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) eligibility criteria should be made more transparent.**

139. WORK PROGRAMME

1. The Chair introduced the item and outlined proposals for a revised approach to the Committee's work programme. Reference was made to the recent review of scrutiny following governance changes in 2022, which recommended a more flexible working model, including the use of task and finish groups and spotlight reviews, rather than relying solely on six fixed meetings per year.

2. The Chair proposed moving to a quarterly cycle of formal meetings in June, September, December and March, the rationale for choosing these months was to avoid pressure from budget-related activity in January/February and potentially limited availability of officers/members in July/August. It was stressed that the proposed model would be supplemented by informal meetings to oversee and support task and finish work.

3. The Chair recommended Bus Provision as the first subject for a task and finish group, citing its complexity and importance. A draft set of Terms of Reference had been prepared and would be refined with officer/director input and circulated to members.

4. In response to questions and concerns from committee members, the Statutory Scrutiny Officer clarified the distinction between informal working groups and formal task and finish groups, explaining that the latter could draw from members across the council (excluding Cabinet members) and could provide greater flexibility to explore strategic issues.

At the conclusion of the debate the following resolutions were unanimously agreed by the committee.

Resolved:

- **That the ESSC move to a quarterly cycle of formal meetings (September, December, March, June), supplemented by informal sessions as required and that a committee work programme be agreed in an informal meeting.**
- **That Bus Provision be confirmed as the subject of the first task and finish group.**

Actions:

- **That nominations be sought for task and finish group membership, with the Chair to be drawn from ESSC members (excluding the Committee Chair). External co-optees could be appointed to provide independent perspectives.**
- **That the Chair meet with the Corporate Director of Economy and Environment to secure officer support and refine the draft terms of reference.**
- **That the Committee hold an informal meeting in July 2025 to finalise arrangements for the task and finish group.**

140. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed.

The meeting ended at 12:59 **Chairperson**