

### Record of operational decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	Decision to approve the transfer of employment of Herefordshire Coroners Officers from West Mercia Police Service to Herefordshire Council
<b>Date of decision:</b>	9 July 2026
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Director of Governance and Law
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	Scheme of Delegation for Corporate Services section 98. Approval of revised staffing structures This provides for the approval by the authorised signatory to the budget, in consultation with the management accountant.
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	Consultation with the existing staff will be carried out in line with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). This will be led by West Mercia Police as the current employing authority.
<b>Decision made:</b>	Agree the transfer of employment of 2 Full-time equivalent (FTE) (3 headcount) Coroners Officers posts from West Mercia Police to Herefordshire Council.
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<p>This record of officer decision updates the original decision made in October 2025.</p> <p>The transfer of employment has taken longer than expected. At the time of the decision in October 2025 the finances were based on the average costs of an officer as there were vacant hours. The hours have now been filled, and the finance table below shows the actual costs of the staff which have increased slightly.</p> <p>This revised report provides an updated financial statement and confirms the contributions from the West Mercia Police Service and the council.</p> <p>Coroners are independent judicial officers that are appointed and funded by local authorities. They inquire into deaths reported to them which appear to be violent, unnatural or are sudden with unknown causes. Coroners are judicially independent of local authorities and have autonomy as to how they discharge their functions in accordance with the statutory framework.</p> <p>Herefordshire Council as the relevant authority for the Herefordshire Coroner area has statutory duties in respect of the Coroners Service:</p> <p>The Coroners and Justice Act 2009, Section 24 for the Provision of staff and accommodation states that</p> <p>(1)The relevant authority for a coroner area—</p> <p>(a)must secure the provision of whatever officers and other staff are needed by the coroners for that area to carry out their functions;</p> <p>(b)must provide, or secure the provision of, accommodation that is appropriate to the needs of those coroners in carrying out their functions;</p> <p>Coroners Officers carry out tasks set by the Coroner and assist in the</p>

	<p>investigation of reported deaths. By virtue of a historical anomaly, these roles are currently provided and funded by West Mercia Police. However, the role of Coroner’s Officer is not a core policing role and the current division of accountability does not sit well with a modern Coroner’s Service.</p> <p>The Chief Coroner in 2023, HHJ Thomas Teague KC, acknowledged that the employment of Coroner’s Officers by local police forces created a complicated ‘triangle of responsibility’ involving the senior coroner, the local authority and the local police force”.</p> <p>Many other Local Authorities have assumed the employment of Coroners Officers from their local police service to facilitate improved operational working. Worcestershire County Council and Shropshire County Council have already transferred in their allocated staff.</p> <p><b>Proposed Benefits of Transfer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct, onsite direction of Coroners officers by the Coroners who understand the role and responsibilities and can effectively supervise workload.</li> <li>• Greater opportunities to improve the standards of service.</li> <li>• Clearer lines of accountability within the tripartite (Coroner, Police, Local Authority) arrangement. The traditional, tripartite “triangle of responsibility” can lead to confused lines of responsibility and a less effectual service. As HHJ Thomas Teague KC referred in his speech to the Chief Coroner’s Conference for Local Authorities 2023: “clear lines of responsibility when running any public service are important, and when those lines become confused, we can end up with poor outcomes for the bereaved and the public”.</li> <li>• Coroner’s Officers would not be subject to any perceived conflicts of interest, which might otherwise arise in circumstances where they are responsible for investigating deaths which have arisen in circumstances where the police force has had direct or indirect involvement. This is important both for the purposes of public transparency and to uphold the independence of the Coroner’s judicial role.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Equality Considerations</b></p>	<p>An equality impact assessment will be carried out by West Mercia Police as part of the transfer of employment and will be shared with Herefordshire Council to facilitate any requirements once the staff are council employees.</p>
<p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p>	<p>The transfer of employment will be subject to successful consultation and agreement under the TUPE regulations.</p> <p>The costs of employing these staff amount to £101k per annum (at current pay scales). This currently represents a budget pressure for the Council’s Coroners service budget.</p> <p>West Mercia Police will provide transitional funding for the next 3 years to support the transfer of posts; this will be at 75% year 1, 50% year 2 and 25% year 3. A budget bid will be submitted to secure the ongoing recurring revenue funds required to fund these posts. The table below shows the financial contributions from each organisation at current costs.</p>

OFFICIAL

	Yr 1 2026/2027	Yr 2 2027/28	Yr 3 2028/29	Yr 4 2029/30
Police contribution	£84,132	£51,099	£25,550	£0
HC contribution	£16,826	£51,099	£76,648	£102,198
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£100,958</b>	<b>£102,198</b>	<b>£102,198</b>	<b>£102,198</b>
<p>Year 1 assumes a TUPE transfer of 1 August 2026.                      A forecast 3% pay award has been included from 1 September 2026.                      Future pay awards will be fully funded by the council.</p> <p>By year 4 the council will assume 100% funding of the posts.</p>				
<b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b>	<p>The posts could remain with West Mercia Police. However, there is no statutory obligation for West Mercia Police to do this, and it would fall to Herefordshire Council to ensure the Senior Coroner has adequate resources to undertake their duties.</p>			
<b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b>	<p>None declared</p>			

Signed..... Date: 9 July 2026