Herefordshire Council

Title of report: Q1 Performance Report

Meeting:	**Cabinet**
Meeting date:	**Thursday 24 September 2026**
Cabinet member:	**Councillor Stoddart, finance and corporate services**
Report by:	**Director of Finance**
Report Author:	**Head of Corporate Performance and Intelligence**

Classification
Open

Decision type
Non-key

Wards affected
(All Wards);

Purpose
To review performance for Quarter 1 (Q1) 2026/27 and to report the performance position across all Directorates for this period.

Recommendation(s)
That Cabinet:

a) **review performance for Q1 2026/27**

b) **approve the changes to the Delivery Plan 2026/27 (as set out in Appendix A) since Cabinet on 26th March 2026. Once approved, the revised version of the Delivery Plan 2026/27 will be published**

Alternative options
Cabinet may choose to review delivery and operational performance more or less frequently; or request alternative actions to address any identified areas of underperformance, including referral to the relevant scrutiny committee. Increased frequency is not recommended as progress is unlikely to

be substantial on a monthly basis; and less frequency poses risk in underperformance going undetected for a significant period of time.

Key considerations

1. Since approval of the Delivery Plan 2026/27 by Cabinet on 26 March 2026, a number of updates have been made to ensure the plan accurately reflects current delivery priorities and timescales. The changes are stated in Appendix A. 29 additions relate to the carry forward of milestones from the 2025/26 Delivery Plan that remained in progress at year-end and were only confirmed following reporting of the Quarter 4 position. 9 additions are to reflect emerging priorities and areas of work identified since the plan was agreed. The remaining amendments are minor wording or deliverable changes intended to improve clarity and ensure milestones more accurately describe the activity and outcomes being delivered. These updates do not alter the overall strategic priorities set out within the Delivery Plan and ensure it remains current, relevant and aligned to delivery expectations for 2026/27.

2. This report aligns with the Council Plan 2024-2028 and the associated annual Delivery Plan for the 2026/27 financial year. It provides a summary of the activities undertaken to deliver the key priorities and goals in Q1 and highlights the key performance indicators (KPIs). Appendix A provides the full breakdown of the Q1 updates on the Delivery Plan milestones that are due to be in progress by Q1. 104 out of 124 milestones (83.9%) that were due to be in progress by Q1 under the new Delivery Plan for 2026/27 were completed or are on track to be delivered by the end of the financial year. Beyond the Delivery Plan, the council has achieved many successes in Q1 of 2026/27, some of these successes are listed in the table below.

   The council has continued to deliver on its Capital Investment Programme. The following table presents some of the highlights for Quarter 1.

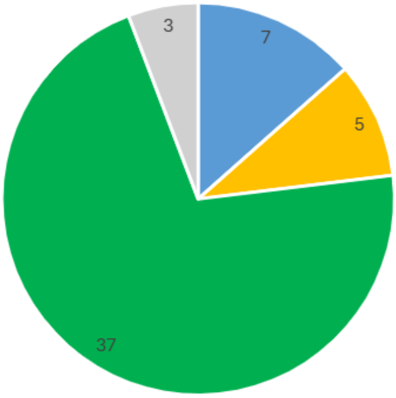
Project	**Investment**	**Where are we…**
Hereford Transport Hub	£11.6m, of which £6.3m is Levelling-Up grant funding and £1.0m is Active Travel Measures	Construction is approximately 83% completed with the bus interchange tarmac laid, Mechanical and Electrical first and second fix underway in the shelter and paving to the public realm commenced. The main site is due to be officially opened in October.
Holme Lacy Road Active Travel Improvements	£7.9m Levelling Up grant funding	Construction is approximately 41% completed with phase 1g and 2i nearing completion with tarmac laid. Weekend closures are due through July/ August to enable resurfacing. Letters have been sent to residents with advanced warning signs on site and messages on the website/ social media.
Great Western Way (GWW) improvements	Total budget £685,360 made up of£311,711 Stronger Town Grant Funding and £373,649 Levelling Up Grant Funding	The scheme to improve GWW has now completed with some snagging left to finish.

Warm home Local grants	Current allocation is £829k	27 homes have been approved by the funder (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero). Two of the 27 properties have had measures installed and all remaining properties are now with installers ready for installations.
Peterchurch Primary School – New School Building	£10.9m	Construction works are progressing ahead of programme with completion of the new school programmed for September 2026 with the demolition of the existing school building and external works due for completion in early 2027.
Aylestone School Expansion	£13.6m DFE Grant	Planning permission approved. Contract is yet to be concluded and therefore a start date is anticipated for September 2026.
Hampton Dene Primary School – Extension to LRC	£2.6m DFE Grant	Construction works were completed in July 2026 with pupils due to start using the new accommodation from September 2026.
Schools Capital Maintenance Programme	£3.6m DFE Grant / Borrowing / Capital receipt Reserves	Tenders completed as programmed for summer 2026 works to commence.
Brookfield School, Hereford – Extensions and Internal Alterations	£5.8m DFE Grant Funding/ capital receipts reserve	Scheme completed in May 2026 with the handover of the new sports hall facility.
Estates Capital Programmes Improvements	£2.5m in 2025-26	4 Projects completed within the reporting period with tenders for further schemes issued.

The achievements outlined below represent some of the key highlights delivered during Quarter 1 and sits alongside a wider programme of activity undertaken across the quarter. Please see Appendix A for further updates against the Delivery Plan.

Performance: People

Q1 RAG status of Delivery Plan Milestones



Milestones Colour Key: Green: On Track; Amber: At risk of not being completed by the end of the financial year; Blue: Completed; Grey: Not due to start yet

Key Highlights

Children and Young People

3. The Families First and Family Hub reforms are national changes designed to improve outcomes for children and families by providing earlier support, strengthening family networks, and creating a more integrated approach between family help and child protection services. The reforms aim to ensure that children and families can access the right support at the right time, with services working together around the needs of the whole family.

   During Q1, significant progress was made in implementing the Families First and Family Hub reforms, improving how children, young people and families access support. The new service model is now fully in place, creating a more joined-up approach that helps families receive the right support at the right time and reduces the need to navigate multiple services. Family Help Teams have been established across local communities, making it easier for families to access support closer to home, while strengthened multi-agency child protection arrangements improve the identification and management of risk for children who need safeguarding.

   A new Family Help Assessment and Plan has also been developed, tested and embedded within the case management system, ready for implementation across the wider system of support in Q2. This will provide families with a more consistent experience, ensuring that children's needs, strengths and aspirations are understood through a single assessment and plan, regardless of which service they access.

   Together, these changes support earlier intervention, strengthen family networks and relationships, and improve coordination between services. This means families will benefit from more timely and effective support, children will be better protected when risks arise, and decision-making will be increasingly centred on the needs, strengths and voices of children and their families.

Community Wellbeing

4. Performance remains on track to improve outcomes for carers of all ages by ensuring they are identified early, receive timely support and are empowered to maintain their own wellbeing whilst continuing in their caring role.

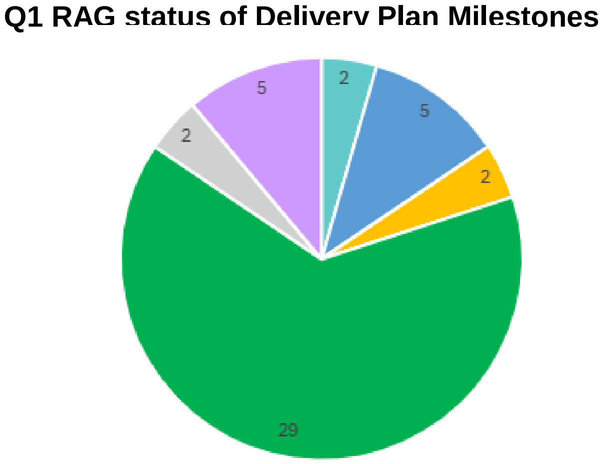
During Q1, work has continued to strengthen the identification of unpaid carers through routine assessments, referrals and close partnership working with health and community services. This is helping more carers to access support at an earlier stage, with carers being offered assessments in line with Care Act duties and provided with information, advice and practical support to help prevent needs from escalating.

Carers' assessments continue to be delivered using a strengths-based and person-centred approach, enabling carers to identify the outcomes that matter most to them. Support planning is focused on promoting wellbeing, maintaining independence and ensuring carers have choice and control over the support they receive. Ongoing workforce development is helping to maintain the quality and consistency of assessments and support plans, ensuring carers receive a positive and personalised experience.

Technology is also being embedded within assessment and support planning processes to improve outcomes for carers and the people they support. Technology Enabled Care solutions are routinely considered where appropriate, helping to promote independence, reduce caring pressures and provide greater reassurance. Work continues to further strengthen the use of technology as part of personalised support planning.

Overall, progress in Q1 demonstrates continued delivery against the planned milestones, supporting carers to access the right support at the right time, sustain their caring role and improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Performance: Place



Milestones Colour Key: Green: On Track; Amber: At risk of not being completed by the end of the financial year; Blue: Completed; Teal: Milestone has been discontinued; Grey: Not due to start yet

Key Highlights

5. The transition to the Council's new Public Realm Services operating model was successfully delivered during Q1. The previous contract with Balfour Beatty Living Places ended as planned at the end of May 2026, and mobilisation of the new contract with M Group was completed ahead of the service commencement date of 1st June 2026.

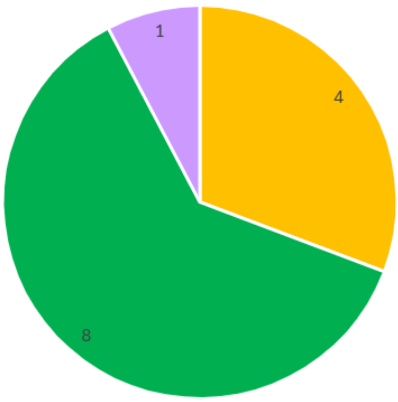
   This milestone ensures continuity of essential public realm services for residents, with no disruption during the transition period. The successful handover provides a strong foundation for delivering cleaner, safer and better maintained streets, parks and public spaces, supporting community wellbeing and local pride. The new operating model is designed to strengthen service delivery, improve responsiveness to resident needs and support the Council's ambitions for high quality public realm services across the borough.

6. Progress on developing a Local Food Strategy and a plan to achieve Sustainable Food Places Silver Award status is dependent on the outcome of a National Lottery funding application. While the funding decision is awaited, the Herefordshire Food Alliance has continued to meet regularly, maintaining partnership relationships and identifying future priorities for delivery.

   The continued engagement of local partners demonstrates a shared commitment to strengthening the local food system and improving access to sustainable, locally produced food. Once funding arrangements are confirmed, the Alliance will be well positioned to progress planned activity that supports healthier communities, strengthens local food networks, promotes local food consumption and contributes to wider social, environmental and economic benefits for residents across the county.

Performance: Growth

Q1 RAG status of Delivery Plan Milestones



Milestones Colour Key: Green: On Track; Amber: At risk of not being completed by the end of the financial year; Purple: Parked as waiting on other interdependent activity

Key Highlights

7. Work is progressing to strengthen the partnership between the Herefordshire Skills Board, local employers and education providers, helping residents access the skills and qualifications needed for good-quality local jobs.

   A new programme of support has been launched in partnership with NMITE for businesses operating in the defence and security sector, helping to develop the specialist skills required by this growing industry. As part of this work, bursaries have also been introduced to support local residents in gaining qualifications, creating new opportunities for people to access higher-skilled employment and progress their careers within the county.

   Alongside this, Metro Dynamics has been commissioned to develop and write a new Herefordshire Employment and Skills Strategy. An inception meeting was held on 25th June 2026, marking the start of work to create a clear, evidence-based strategy that will help align local skills provision with employer needs, support economic growth and ensure residents can access the training and opportunities they need to succeed.

Together, these initiatives are strengthening the understanding of local skills gaps and building a more coordinated approach to ensuring residents and businesses have the skills needed for a prosperous and resilient local economy.

8. The council continues to progress projects that will increase the availability of transitional and affordable accommodation, helping to prevent homelessness and provide residents with stable housing at times of need.

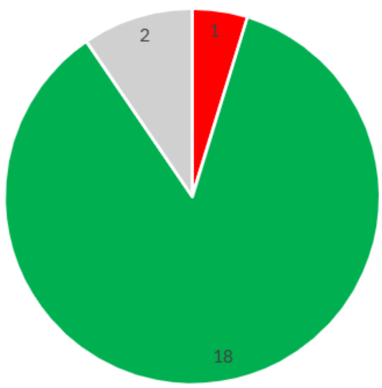
   Refurbishment of the John Venn building experienced delays following challenges in appointing a contractor. A contractor has now been secured and work is due to commence on site on 3rd August 2026, with completion expected in May 2027. Once completed, the scheme will provide additional accommodation options to support residents at risk of homelessness and those requiring temporary housing while longer-term solutions are secured.

   Progress has also been made on proposals to refurbish the Buttercross building in Leominster to create affordable housing. Following a change in procurement approach and the approval of the business case required to draw down funding, key preparatory work has been completed. A pre-development application has been submitted, phosphate credits have been secured, and a design team has been identified, with costs agreed subject to a decision to proceed. The full business plan has also been finalised and reviewed by the Major Projects Board.

   While both projects have experienced some delays, important groundwork has been completed during the quarter. These developments will play a key role in increasing the supply of affordable and transitional accommodation, helping more residents avoid homelessness and access safe and secure housing within their communities.

Performance: Transformation

Q1 RAG status of Delivery Plan Milestones



Milestones Colour Key: Green: On Track; Red: Significant risk of not being completed by the end of the financial year; Grey: Not due to start yet

Key Highlights

9. Progress is being made to strengthen partnerships with communities and support greater community-led action. While the development of a single, council-wide commissioning framework for voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations has been extensively

explored, changes introduced through the new Procurement Act mean this approach is not currently feasible.

In response, the Council is taking a practical and collaborative approach within the Community Wellbeing directorate, working closely with VCSE partners to design and commission support for residents with low-level care and wellbeing needs. This will help people access local, community-based support earlier, promoting independence, reducing isolation, and enabling residents to remain active and connected within their communities.

A pilot programme is scheduled to launch in September 2026. The pilot will provide valuable insight into how the Council and the VCSE sector can work together most effectively to improve outcomes for residents. Learning from this approach will be used to inform future commissioning arrangements and shared across the Council to support wider adoption of successful community-focused models.

10. Improving the Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) appeals process remains a key priority to ensure residents can access support quickly, easily and at a time that suits them. The planned introduction of digital assistant technology will help streamline the appeals process, making it simpler for customers to obtain information, understand requirements and submit appeals with greater confidence.

    During Q1, implementation of the digital assistant technology has not yet taken place. Focused work has been undertaken to address technical and operational barriers to delivery, ensuring that the solution is robust, accessible and capable of meeting residents' needs. This preparatory work will support successful implementation in Q2 and help deliver a more responsive and user-friendly appeals experience for customers.

Local Government Outcomes Framework

11. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced in July 2025 that they are launching a new Local Government Outcomes Framework. The outcomes align with the key national priorities, ranging from preventing homelessness and rough sleeping to community safety and satisfaction. The outcomes are underpinned by metrics to measure progress.

12. This approach is designed to support a move away from hundreds of ringfenced grants to instead focus on a small number of tangible improvements for people and communities.

13. Central government will still take a key interest in outcome delivery and intervene where necessary and MHCLG will work with other government departments to make sure that support and challenge in response to the Framework works.

14. Framework data will also feed into Government's assessment of whether the Best Value Duty is being met.

15. A bespoke Herefordshire Council Outcomes Framework has been developed to align with the priorities set out in the Council Plan. The proposed metrics within the Framework has been reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team and is included in Appendix A. These outcome-focused metrics will be monitored and reported annually, as a significant proportion of the data is only available on an annual basis due to the nature of many of the outcome measures. In the interim, performance reporting will continue to be based on the existing top ten indicators, as set out below.

Key Performance Indicator	**Q4 Actual - YTD**	**Q1* Projection - YTD**	**Q1* Actual - YTD**	**Q1* RAG****
Percentage of service users aged 65+ discharged from hospital into Home First who are still at home 91 days after discharge	72.26%	75%	73.50%	
Percentage of Children and Young People social work assessments completed within timescale (45 days)	85.32%	85.7%	90.08%	
Percentage of children in care who have an up-to-date review	100%	95%	100%	
Percentage of major planning applications dealt with within13 weeks (or 16 weeks if subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment), or with an agreed extension of time *Provisional subject to DLUHC confirmation*	84.09%	70%	100%	
Percentage of non-major (minor and other) planning applications dealt with within 8 weeks, or with an agreed extension of time *Provisional subject to DLUHC confirmation*	84.26%	80%	90.13%	

Number of kg of waste that is not sent to reuse, recycling or composting (per household) *Provisional subject to DEFRA confirmation*	250.51kg (Q2 25/26)	360kg	370.01kg (Q3 25/26)	
Number of affordable homes delivered	310	85	148	
Number of rough sleepers who have been offered and refused support	9	8	8	
Value of grants awarded to businesses to support viability and enable growth through UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund	This indicator is being ceased due to the end of these funds and will be replaced by *Number of grants awarded to businesses from Hereford Enterprise Zone retained Business Rates* and will be reported from Q2.			
Average days sickness per FTE	8.38	9	8.83	

* year to date (April 2026 – June 2026) unless stated otherwise
** RAG (Red Amber Green) Key: Green (target met/ exceeded); Amber (within 10% threshold); Red (away from target by 10%+ in an adverse direction); Grey (not targeted/ monitoring only)

Community impact

16. In accordance with the accepted code of corporate governance, the council must ensure that it has an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. To support effective accountability the council is committed to reporting on actions completed and outcomes achieved, and ensuring stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the council plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner.

    Regularly reviewing performance with a view to identifying actions which will further drive improvement in outcomes or efficiencies helps ensure the council achieves its County Plan priorities.

Environmental impact

17. This report details how progress is being made in achieving the Delivery Plan which details how the council is working to deliver the environmental ambitions set out in the County Plan. Individual projects and deliverables included within the Delivery Plan will all be subject to their own governance arrangements and assessment of environmental and ecological impact.

Equality duty

18. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying ‘due regard’ in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

19. Each project within the Delivery Plan will assess its equality impact individually. Where a decision is likely to result in detrimental impact on any group with a protected characteristic it must be justified objectively. This means that attempts to mitigate the harm will be explored. If the harm cannot be avoided, the decision maker will balance this detrimental impact against the strength of

legitimate public need to pursue the service change.

Resource implications

20. These recommendations have no direct financial implications, however cabinet may wish to consider how money is utilised in order to meet the council's objectives.

Legal implications

21. This Council is a best value authority designated under the Local Government Act 1999. It is required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way it exercises its functions. Measuring performance is a tool to evidence such improvement.

Risk management

22. The risks associated with the council's business are recorded on the relevant service risk register and escalated in accordance with the council's Performance Management Framework and the Risk Strategy.

Consultees

23. None in relation to this report.

Appendices
Appendix A Q1 Council Plan Delivery Plan Updates

Background papers
Council Plan 2024-2028
Delivery Plan 2026-2027