

Draft - Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 30 July 2026 at 1.30 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 Graham Biggs, Barry Durkin, Carole Gandy, Dan Hurcomb, Ivan Powell, Philip Price and Pete Stoddart

Cabinet Members in remote attendance

Councillor Harry Bramer

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 Stef Simmons, David Hitchiner (substitute for Cllr Harvey), Terry James

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance

Councillors Pauline Crockett, Louis Stark, Toni Fagan

Officers in attendance:

Councillors R Allonby, G Dando, H Hall, J Hobbs, C Porter, T Russell, R Sanders and P Satoor
S Gregory and J Preece (democratic Services)

104. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies from members of the cabinet.

105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

106. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

107. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 21 - 44)

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

108. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS (Pages 45 - 48)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 2 to the minutes.

109. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

SMB recommendations regarding Adult Social Care and CQC

Councillor Stark as vice chair to Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) referred to the findings of the SMB and urged Cabinet to take active steps in response to the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan rather than simply noting its contents. It was highlighted that the Board's five recommendations were closely aligned with the improvement plan and reflected a similar improvement approach to that taken within Children's Services.

It was noted that, while the challenges were different in scale, successful delivery of the improvement plan was considered essential to improving service performance and managing rising Adult Social Care costs. The importance of implementing the recommendations at pace was emphasised to support progress and deliver the necessary improvements.

The SMB indicated that it looked forward to receiving Cabinet's response to its recommendations and encouraged Cabinet to take their findings into account during consideration of the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan.

The Leader thanked the SMB for their recommendations.

110. CQC ASSESSMENT REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Councillor Gandy cabinet member for adults, health and wellbeing introduced the report.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care outlined the findings of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment, which reviewed services against four themes: working with people, providing support, ensuring safety and leadership. While the assessment visit took place in September, the report was not published until nine months later, by which time a number of improvements had already been implemented. It was noted that the findings contained no significant surprises and identified areas for improvement including support for unpaid carers, assessment waiting lists, occupational therapy capacity and reablement services.

Following publication of the report, information was shared with staff, Members, partners and voluntary sector organisations through a programme of briefings and webinars. The Cabinet Member acknowledged concerns about the impact of the report on staff morale but praised the workforce for responding positively and using the findings as motivation to drive further improvement.

Work on the Improvement Plan began immediately following the assessment visit and has continued through regular performance and transformation meetings involving department leads and the Cabinet Member. Progress was reported, although it was recognised that further improvement is required. The challenges of managing fluctuating demand in Adult Social Care were highlighted, together with the importance of prevention and early intervention.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the recommendations made by the joint meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board and Health Scrutiny Committee had been accepted and were aligned with the existing improvement plan. The plan includes strengthened delivery, impact and assurance measures to monitor progress and ensure sustainable improvement.

It was emphasised that, while financial sustainability remains important, the council's priority would continue to be protecting and supporting the county's most vulnerable residents, and that budget considerations would not be placed ahead of meeting care needs.

The Leader thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their work in responding to the CQC findings and welcomed the acceptance of all recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that significant improvement activity was already underway and that the recommendations supported and strengthened the existing improvement programme.

Comments from cabinet members:

Members welcomed the positive findings relating to safeguarding within the CQC assessment, noting that the report recognised the strength of Herefordshire's safeguarding arrangements. Drawing on experience from wider regional safeguarding work, the member highlighted the importance of maintaining a strong focus on safeguarding and ensuring robust protections remain in place.

The member emphasised that Adult Social Care services support a wide range of residents, not solely older people, and that many younger adults have significant care and support needs.

Members were reminded of the importance of recognising the diverse needs of all service users when considering Adult Social Care provision and improvement activity.

A member commended the Cabinet Member and Director for their leadership and hard work in driving improvements within Adult Social Care. While supporting the principle that care should not be compromised by financial considerations, it was noted that effective service delivery is not solely dependent on increased spending. Drawing parallels with the improvements achieved in Children's Services, the member highlighted the importance of understanding how services are delivered and ensuring they are provided in a compassionate and efficient manner. It was expressed that the improvement plan should support both positive outcomes for residents and the achievement of the council's financial objectives in the coming year.

A member noted that Adult Social Care manages one of the council's largest budgets and emphasised the importance of ensuring services remain financially sustainable. While recognising the commitment to providing high-quality care, it was highlighted that the service should continue to seek opportunities to improve outcomes while managing costs effectively. Drawing comparisons with the improvements achieved in Children's Services, the member expressed the view that service quality and financial performance should be improved in tandem, with careful budget management remaining an important consideration.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged the importance of monitoring both expenditure and income within Adult Social Care, while reiterating that the council's overriding priority must remain supporting those residents with the greatest care needs. It was noted that the service is pursuing a programme of transformation, including changes to access arrangements, commissioning and contracting processes, to improve efficiency and deliver savings without adversely affecting service users.

Members heard that significant efforts are being made to manage demand and expenditure effectively, including measures aimed at reducing cost pressures through service transformation. However, it was emphasised that financial considerations would not be prioritised over the care and support required by vulnerable residents, and that any financial planning assumptions would continue to reflect the council's commitment to meeting those needs.

The Leader noted that a wide range of initiatives and new technologies were being introduced to support residents to live independently for longer, emphasising the importance of balancing innovation and prevention with careful financial management.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care advised that work was underway to promote assistive technology within community hospitals and with health partners, including Wye Valley NHS Trust. This aimed to demonstrate how technology and support services could help residents maintain their independence, avoid or delay admission to residential care, and improve outcomes for individuals while reducing demand on care services.

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The Green Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

It was noted that both the Adults and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Management Board had been afforded the opportunity to review and examine the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan. The importance of considering and responding to scrutiny recommendations was highlighted, recognising the role of scrutiny in supporting service improvement and accountability.

It was also noted that the council would need to monitor the development of national adult social care reforms and consider any implications these may have for future service delivery and improvement planning.

It was highlighted the challenges faced by individuals and families in navigating transitions between NHS services, local authority provision and private care providers, noting the complexity and associated costs for both individuals and public services. It was recognised that the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan helps focus attention on the role of partner organisations and public health in supporting effective service delivery, and its implementation was welcomed.

The representative for Independents for Herefordshire outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Councillor Crockett spoke for Independents for Herefordshire and as Chair for Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

It was suggested that future versions of the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan could be enhanced through the inclusion of RAG ratings to provide a clearer view of progress against each improvement action. It was also suggested that actions could be presented in chronological order to improve readability and make progress easier to track.

The positive first-quarter Adult Social Care budget position was noted, and thanks were expressed to the Corporate Director for Community Wellbeing for providing an update to the Scrutiny Committee. Members acknowledged that the improvement plan is a live document which will continue to evolve, with feedback and recommendations from scrutiny being incorporated as the programme develops, in a similar manner to the Children's Services Improvement Plan.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

The overall structure of the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan was welcomed, considering it clearer and more accessible than similar plans produced in previous years. However, concern was expressed about the significant and growing financial pressures facing Adult Social Care, with particular reference to the rising cost of specialist placements and care packages.

It was noted that increasing demand and limited provider availability can lead to very high costs for complex care provision, creating substantial financial risks for local authorities. It was highlighted the need for continued attention to these pressures and

suggested that wider changes to the care system and market may be required to support long-term sustainability.

The True Independents Leader outlined the views of their group and argued that:
Did not attend for this item.

In response to the comments made:

The Cabinet Member welcomed the positive recognition received for safeguarding and partnership working within the CQC assessment, noting that these were significant achievements for the service.

In responding to the debate, the Cabinet Member thanked members for their contributions and confirmed that all recommendations from the Scrutiny Management Board would be considered and incorporated into ongoing improvement work. It was acknowledged that revisions to the presentation of the improvement plan, including the ordering of actions and the potential use of RAG ratings, would be explored.

The Cabinet Member provided assurance that efforts to improve financial performance remained a priority, with work continuing to reduce expenditure, achieve savings targets and bring the service closer to budget, while maintaining a focus on delivering effective support for residents who need care and assistance.

A member highlighted the importance of ensuring that partner organisations engage fully and meaningfully in consultations and reviews, noting that the council may have a leadership role in coordinating and encouraging effective partnership involvement.

Reference was made to the forthcoming Casey Review, and it was suggested that the council and its partners should seek opportunities to engage proactively with the process, particularly given the accelerated timetable. Members noted that strong partnership working has been a longstanding feature of the county's approach and could provide a positive foundation for future engagement and improvement activity.

Members noted the opportunity for the council to engage proactively with the forthcoming Casey Review and emphasised the importance of ensuring that partners contribute meaningfully to the process. It was suggested that the council write to Baroness Casey to highlight Herefordshire's experience, including both the challenges faced and the successes achieved through partnership working across the county.

In closing the debate, the Leader reflected on the council's demonstrated ability to deliver significant service improvement, drawing parallels with the progress made in Children's Services. It was noted that, while the challenges facing Adult Social Care differ in scale, there is a clear commitment from both officers and Members to deliver the necessary improvements. Particular recognition was given to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care for her leadership and commitment to improving services and safeguarding vulnerable residents.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Councillor Gandy proposed the recommendations, the Leader seconded the recommendation. The Leader directed that the decision to be put before Cabinet is:

That:

- a) Cabinet notes the outcome of the Herefordshire CQC Assessment;**
- b) Cabinet approves Herefordshire's CQC Assurance improvement plan 2026-2027;**

- c) Cabinet authorises the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing to lead this improvement plan on behalf of the Council and to take all operational decisions, as set out within this report and appendices.**

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

111. CHILDREN'S SERVICES STATUTORY DIRECTION

This agenda item was covered first in the meeting.

Councillor Powell cabinet member for children and young people introduced the report.

The Cabinet Member highlighted key findings from the Children's Commissioner's June 2026 report, noting that the council's improvement plan had been embraced by leaders at all levels and owned by frontline staff. The report recognised the strong engagement of the Chief Executive, Leader and Lead Cabinet Member, and confirmed that children's services remain a high priority for the council.

The Commissioner also noted the council's proactive engagement with national children's social care reforms, including the Families First Partnership programme, with strong partner involvement across the system. Children's voices were reported to be increasingly influencing service design, practice development and strategic priorities through meaningful engagement.

Confidence was expressed in the ongoing leadership and partnership working supporting a well-managed transition, ensuring continued service improvement and avoiding disruption to delivery. Cabinet was assured that, despite significant progress, work would continue to implement national reforms, including Families First and SEND reforms.

The Cabinet Member expressed thanks to the Director of Children's Services, their team and frontline staff, as well as to children and families whose contributions had supported the service's improvement journey and achievements.

Cabinet noted the significant improvements made in Children's Services, as reported by the Children's Commissioner and evidenced through Ofsted inspection outcomes, and noted the formal lifting of the statutory direction previously placed on the service.

Comments from cabinet members:

Members congratulated Councillor Powell and the Children's Services team on the significant progress achieved in improving the service. It was noted that the council had faced considerable challenges, but that strong leadership and sustained commitment had delivered meaningful improvements over a lengthy and demanding improvement journey. Particular thanks were expressed to Councillor Powell for his leadership throughout the process.

Members praised the leadership shown in driving the improvement of Children's Services, noting the significant progress made from a highly challenging position. It was acknowledged that the transformation had been achieved through strong corporate leadership, a focus on addressing issues directly, and sustained effort over time. Thanks were expressed to those involved for their commitment and achievements in delivering the improvements.

Members reflected on the length and challenge of the improvement journey, noting the determination shown in maintaining momentum and driving continuous improvement. Confidence was expressed in the service's future direction, with particular recognition

that improvement work continued beyond meeting statutory requirements, demonstrating a commitment to exceeding expected standards.

Reference was made to the Children's Commissioner's observation of a culture of methodical and systematic improvement, representing a significant shift from the crisis-driven approach of the past. Members praised the calm and consistent leadership that had underpinned the transformation and acknowledged the significance of the achievement while recognising that the focus would remain on further improvement and delivering the best outcomes for children and families.

Councillor Fagan, Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, welcomed the revocation of the statutory direction and described it as a significant achievement following a lengthy and challenging period for the council, children and families. She commended the leadership shown throughout the improvement journey and noted the continued importance of robust oversight of Children's Services.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Committee had monitored progress throughout the period of intervention, providing challenge and support as a critical friend. Reference was made to the ongoing Early Help Task and Finish Review, which had examined the evolving early help offer and the implementation of the Families First programme, alongside wider reforms to children's social care, SEND services and Family Hubs.

Members emphasised the importance of sustaining a relational and strengths-based approach to supporting families, embedding early intervention services, and ensuring long-term resilience as funding pressures continue. The challenges associated with delivering national reforms were acknowledged, together with the need to strengthen support for children and young people throughout adolescence and enhance youth services across the county.

The importance of embedding the principles of a Child Friendly Herefordshire across all council services and strategic priorities was highlighted, ensuring that the voices of children and young people are reflected in decision-making and future planning. Congratulations were extended to all those involved in achieving the improvements in Children's Services.

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The Green Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

The revocation of the statutory direction was welcomed and recognised the significant contribution of the council, partner organisations, families and external stakeholders in achieving this outcome. Particular thanks were expressed to Councillor Powell for his leadership throughout the improvement journey.

It was emphasised that maintaining momentum and striving for excellence across all areas of Children's Services remained essential, with a continued focus on ensuring positive outcomes for all children and young people in Herefordshire.

Members also highlighted the importance of the Child Friendly Herefordshire agenda and raised concerns about the availability of support for young people and youth groups. It was noted that further discussions would take place with relevant Cabinet Members and service leads to explore how support for young people can be strengthened through existing programmes and services.

The representative for Independents for Herefordshire outlined the views of their group and raised that:

The positive outcome was welcomed and congratulated all those involved in the improvement journey. Concerns were raised regarding references in the Commissioner's report to budget alignment with comparable authorities and the need for Children's Services to remain a high-priority risk area, seeking clarification on how these comments aligned with the council's recent financial improvements and reduced overspends.

It was suggested that the reference to maintaining Children's Services as a priority reflected the importance of sustaining progress and ensuring there is no loss of focus in the future, particularly through any changes in administration. Members noted assurances previously provided regarding governance and monitoring arrangements designed to prevent regression and maintain continued improvement. Congratulations were extended to the Leader, Councillor Powell, and all those involved in securing the successful outcome.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

The progress was welcomed but emphasised that there remained further work to do and that future success would be judged on continued improvement rather than past achievements. Particular importance was placed on ensuring that the voices of children and young people continue to be heard and influence service delivery.

Concern was expressed about the continued high number of children in care and the associated human and financial impacts, highlighting the need for sustained focus on early intervention and improved outcomes for families.

The member also commended Councillor Powell for his leadership and practical understanding of the challenges facing Children's Services, recognising his contribution to the improvements achieved to date.

The True Independents Leader outlined the views of their group and argued that:

Did not attend for this item.

In response to the comments made:

The Leader responded to points raised regarding the Children's Commissioner's report, noting that references to financial benchmarking and political commitment should be viewed in the broader context of the expectations placed on local authorities rather than as criticisms of Herefordshire specifically.

It was emphasised that political commitment referred to the ongoing commitment of elected Members to prioritise and support Children's Services, alongside the work of officers responsible for service delivery and improvement. The Leader reflected on the publication of the independent review of family experiences in 2023, noting that the findings had strengthened his determination to secure lasting improvements and the removal of the statutory direction.

Tribute was paid to Councillor Powell for his leadership, commitment and determination throughout the improvement journey, as well as to the Director of Children's Services and the wider workforce for delivering operational improvements. The importance of listening to families and maintaining a systematic, organisation-wide approach to improvement was highlighted.

The Leader also acknowledged the contribution of the former Chief Executive and thanked the Children's Commissioner and the Minister for their support and engagement throughout the process. Cabinet was invited to note the Commissioner's positive report and the formal lifting of the statutory direction.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. The Leader proposed the recommendations, The Leader directed that the decision to be put before Cabinet is:

That:

- a) Cabinet note the improvement made in Children's Services and the positive report completed by the DFE appointed commissioner; and**
- b) Cabinet note the formal lifting of the statutory direction placed on Children's Services.**

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

112. BIG ECONOMIC DELIVERY PLAN

Councillor Swinglehurst chaired the remainder of the meeting

Councillor Biggs cabinet member for economy and growth introduced the report. It noted that the Plan sets out the priorities and actions that partners across the county will focus on over the next three years to support delivery of the Herefordshire Economic Plan 2050. The plan reflects changing national and local circumstances, including the Government's industrial strategies, housing targets, and the council's commitment to progressing the western growth corridor and bypass proposals to support economic growth, reduce congestion, improve access to employment land and facilitate housing delivery.

Members heard that the Delivery Plan had been developed through the Economy and Place Board, bringing together representatives from business, skills, culture, community and environmental sectors. It was noted that the Board was established to strengthen partnership working across the county and ensure greater collaboration between the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The Cabinet Member explained that, while the Economic Plan established the long-term vision for the county, a delivery plan was required to provide a clear focus on short and medium-term actions. The document was described as a partnership plan rather than solely a council plan, with partners collectively committing to deliver their respective actions and contribute to the county's economic growth.

Subject to Cabinet approval, the Delivery Plan would be finalised and published in September, with the Economy and Place Board overseeing implementation and holding partners accountable for delivery.

Thanks were expressed to all those involved in developing the plan, including the members of the Economy and Place Board and the chairs of the Skills Board and Business Growth Board for their leadership and contributions.

Comments from cabinet members:

Members welcomed the progress made in developing and bringing forward the Economic Delivery Plan and recognised the significant contribution of the Cabinet Member in advancing the county's growth and skills agenda. Particular recognition was given to his commitment to tertiary education, including support for initiatives aimed at increasing training opportunities and retaining young people within the county.

It was noted that providing access to education, skills development, well-paid employment and affordable housing is essential to supporting long-term economic

growth and encouraging young people to build their futures in Herefordshire. Members also acknowledged the valuable contribution of partner organisations in supporting these objectives and delivering the wider ambitions of the Economic Plan.

A member welcomed the focus of the Economic Delivery Plan on the needs and ambitions of the county as a whole, rather than solely those of the council. It was noted that Herefordshire has a significant opportunity to create the conditions for long-term economic growth by improving access to education, skills and higher-paid employment opportunities.

Members highlighted the importance of retaining young people within the county by providing pathways into education, training and well-paid careers, reducing the need for them to leave the area to pursue opportunities elsewhere. The role of infrastructure investment in supporting economic growth and enabling delivery of the ambitions set out in the Economic Plan was also recognised.

The Cabinet Member and those involved in developing the plan were commended for their work in bringing the Delivery Plan forward.

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The Green Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

It was noted that the Economic Plan had been refreshed through the new three-year Delivery Plan and reflected on the importance of maintaining focus on delivery and reporting against the plan's objectives. While concerns were expressed about aspects of the previous approach and the extent of engagement with young people, it was acknowledged that the Delivery Plan contains a number of positive measures.

The importance of ensuring that economic development benefits both the economy and the environment was highlighted, together with the need to create high-value, well-paid employment opportunities for residents. The opportunity to build on the Delivery Plan and support its successful implementation was welcomed.

The representative for Independents for Herefordshire outlined the views of their group and raised that:

A member welcomed the Delivery Plan and noted a number of positive aspects, particularly its continued alignment with the long-term vision for Herefordshire as a modern rural county. Members highlighted several encouraging economic indicators, including the county's strong tourism offer, high visitor spend, strong labour market performance and relatively high proportion of high-growth businesses.

It was observed that the plan is a partnership document rather than solely a council initiative, and the importance of collaborative working in delivering economic growth was emphasised. Members noted that key themes within the plan included business growth, infrastructure, housing and skills development.

Concerns were raised regarding the challenges of delivering major housing growth and supporting infrastructure, with recognition that these ambitions would require significant investment and partnership support. The importance of sustainable growth was also highlighted, including retaining businesses and skilled workers within the county and strengthening education and skills opportunities to support future economic prosperity.

The council's role as a facilitator in bringing partners together and enabling growth was recognised, noting that successful delivery of the plan would depend on strong partnership working across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

A member reflected on the role of local authorities in supporting economic development, noting that councils are often most effective when they facilitate and enable growth rather than attempting to lead it directly. It was observed that removing barriers to development and creating the right conditions for businesses to succeed can be a significant contribution in itself.

Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of NMITE and its potential long-term contribution to the county's economy. Members noted that the institution is helping to educate and retain talented young people who may become future entrepreneurs, business leaders and skilled professionals, thereby supporting economic growth within Herefordshire. While acknowledging the challenges faced by the institution since its establishment, it was suggested that its benefits are increasingly becoming evident and may deliver significant opportunities for the county in the years ahead.

The True Independents Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Not present.

In response to the comments made:

The Cabinet Member explained that the governance arrangements underpinning the Economic Delivery Plan had been deliberately designed to bring together key partners while remaining manageable and focused. Representatives on the Economy and Place Board act as conduits for wider stakeholder groups, gathering and feeding in views from across their respective sectors and networks.

Members heard that the Skills Board had developed into a strong collaborative forum, bringing together organisations including education providers, employers and government agencies to identify skills needs and gaps within the county.

Work had been undertaken to better understand pathways from education into employment, align training provision with employer demand and ensure businesses are equipped to support young people entering the workforce. It was acknowledged that there may be further opportunities to strengthen the voice of young people within these arrangements.

The Cabinet Member highlighted a range of achievements already delivered or in progress, including the establishment of the Business Growth Board and Skills Board, progress at Skylon Park, the introduction of apprenticeship awards, development of the county tourism destination programme, business engagement forums, commissioning discussions with local organisations, and the implementation of inward investment initiatives to promote Herefordshire as a destination for business growth and investment.

Particular recognition was given to the contribution of partners, businesses and stakeholders who had helped drive these initiatives forward through collaborative working. Members noted that the Delivery Plan had been developed in response to partner feedback, providing a focused three-year programme of action to support delivery of the longer-term Economic Plan 2050.

It was emphasised that the Delivery Plan provides a clear framework for delivery and accountability over the next three years and will also provide a foundation for future administrations to review progress and develop subsequent delivery plans in support of the county's long-term economic ambitions.

The Deputy Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Cllr Biggs proposed the recommendations, Cllr Swinglehurst seconded. The Deputy Leader directed that the decision to be put before Cabinet is:

That Cabinet:

- a) Consider and approve the Big Economic Delivery Plan**
- b) To delegate to the Director for Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Growth, the ability to make any final minor amendments to the Economic Delivery Plan in finalising for publication**
- c) To delegate to the Director for Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Growth, any operational decisions required to implement the Plan.**

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

113. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE PROGRESS REVIEW

Councillor Stoddart cabinet member for finance and corporate services introduced the report.

The findings of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review, undertaken on 28 May 2026 were presented. Members were reminded that the original review in June 2025 concluded that Herefordshire Council was a good council with a strong commitment to continuous improvement and identified five key areas for further development. In response, Cabinet had approved an action plan comprising 24 actions.

The Progress Review found that all actions within the plan were either complete or on track for completion and reinforced the positive assessment of the council's performance and direction of travel.

Members noted the significant progress made over the preceding year, including the achievement of a Good Ofsted rating for Children's Services, continued strong financial management, progress in delivering the council's transformation programme, improvements in data use and performance management, and strengthened partnership working across the county and wider region.

The review also recognised the council's effective financial management, enhanced transformation arrangements and active role in regional devolution discussions. While identifying areas for further development, particularly relating to data and organisational capacity, the peer team was positive about the progress being made and the council's ongoing improvement journey.

Thanks were expressed to officers, Members and partner organisations for their contribution to delivering the improvement programme and supporting the council's continued development.

Comments from cabinet members:

Members noted that the Leader had engaged fully with the Corporate Peer Challenge process and demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement. The review process was described as a positive and constructive experience for the council.

The findings of the review were welcomed and highlighted the value of embracing external challenge and feedback as a means of driving improvement. The importance of

listening to partners and stakeholders through engagement forums and using their feedback to identify issues and shape solutions was positively noted. Members agreed that open and constructive challenge helps strengthen the council's performance and supports ongoing improvement across the organisation.

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The representative for Independents for Herefordshire outlined the views of their group and raised that:

It was noted that, while the Corporate Peer Challenge review was positive overall, it also contained important areas for improvement that should not be overlooked. Key observations included the need for a clear transformation delivery plan, continued work to strengthen the use of data and performance information, and ensuring the council has sufficient capacity and capability to deliver its ambitions.

Positive findings were highlighted in relation to staff engagement, awareness of the need for transformation, and the council's continued strong financial management. Members welcomed recognition of efforts to engage staff in understanding the council's financial position and acknowledged the positive feedback regarding partnership working and the development of the Business Growth Board.

It was recognised that the purpose of the Peer Challenge process is to identify opportunities for further improvement as well as areas of success. Members therefore emphasised the importance of maintaining focus on the recommendations relating to transformation, data, organisational capacity and future challenges, including those associated with devolution and service delivery. While progress to date was welcomed, it was noted that further work remains to be done to achieve the council's longer-term ambitions.

The Green Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

No Comment

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

No comment

The True Independents Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Not present

In response to the comments made:

A member observed that the Corporate Peer Challenge should be viewed as a constructive check on the council's progress rather than an expectation of perfection. It was noted that the council had actively sought external feedback to assess its direction of travel, identify areas for improvement and ensure continued progress. Members welcomed the willingness to reflect on the findings and take action, recognising that the council remains committed to learning, improving and delivering the best possible services for residents.

It was acknowledged that the Corporate Peer Challenge findings formed part of an ongoing improvement journey rather than a one-off exercise. It was noted that the council reports regularly on its performance and has been open and transparent about the need to further improve its use of data and delivery of the transformation programme.

Members heard that work is underway to address these areas and confidence was expressed that significant progress would be made over the coming months.

The Deputy Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, the Deputy Leader seconded. The Leader directed that the decision to be put before Cabinet is:

That:

- a) Cabinet receives and notes the report arising from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review held on 28 May 2026; and**
- b) Cabinet endorses the continued delivery of the council's action plan in response to the original recommendations.**

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

114. HEREFORDSHIRE PARKING STRATEGY 2026 - 2041

Councillor Durkin cabinet member for roads and regulatory services introduced the report.

The Cabinet Member presented the Herefordshire Parking Strategy 2026-2041, noting that parking plays a vital role in supporting access to town centres, businesses, schools, healthcare services, workplaces and tourist destinations across the county. The strategy was developed to provide a clear long-term framework for parking policy and decision-making, replacing the previous piecemeal approach.

Members heard that extensive public consultation had been undertaken, including online engagement, social media campaigns and stakeholder communications, which generated approximately 500 responses. Feedback highlighted priorities including safer streets, improved provision for disabled users, better parking management around schools and junctions, proportionate enforcement and more user-friendly services. These themes have informed both the strategy and its associated delivery plan.

Particular recognition was given to council officers for developing the strategy in-house. The Cabinet Member noted that the document had been produced by Herefordshire Council staff who understand local communities and had carefully considered feedback from residents, businesses, workers, parish councils, Members and visitors.

The strategy promotes a positive approach to parking, emphasising education, communication and partnership working alongside targeted enforcement where necessary to protect safety, accessibility and fairness. Members were advised that the strategy is intended to support communities, economic growth, accessibility and sustainable transport choices, while ensuring parking continues to contribute positively to life in Herefordshire.

Cabinet was invited to support the strategy as a modern, evidence-led framework to guide future parking decisions across the county.

Comments from cabinet members:

A member welcomed the Parking Strategy and placed on record their appreciation for the work undertaken by council officers in developing the document in-house. Particular thanks were expressed to the lead officer for producing a high-quality strategy, with

members noting that this approach had delivered a significant cost saving by avoiding the need for external consultants. Full support for the strategy was expressed.

A member welcomed the Parking Strategy, noting its balanced approach to parking management. While recognising that enforcement remains an important element of the strategy, it was highlighted that the emphasis is on encouraging safe and responsible parking behaviour through education, communication and engagement, with enforcement used where necessary.

The important role of Civil Enforcement Officers was also acknowledged. Members noted that these officers act not only in an enforcement capacity but are often the public-facing representatives of the council, providing assistance and information to residents and visitors. Concern was expressed regarding incidents of abuse directed towards enforcement staff, and it was emphasised that such behaviour is unacceptable. The importance of supporting staff and ensuring appropriate action is taken where incidents occur was highlighted. Overall, the strategy was warmly welcomed.

A member commended the Parking Strategy, recognising it as a balanced and proportionate document that provides choice while supporting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors. It was noted that the strategy represented an important and much-needed piece of work, and congratulations were extended to the Cabinet Member and the officers involved in its development. Support for the recommendations was expressed.

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The Green Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Welcomed the development of the Parking Strategy but highlighted a number of areas where further improvements could be considered. It was suggested that the strategy should place greater emphasis on influencing travel behaviour and supporting modal shift, rather than primarily responding to parking demand.

Stronger alignment with the objectives of the Local Transport Plan, particularly in relation to carbon reduction and active travel was encouraged.

The potential role of workplace travel planning, park and choose facilities, and park and ride provision in reducing congestion and supporting sustainable travel was emphasised. It was suggested that these initiatives should be developed further and progressed at pace to encourage alternatives to car travel, particularly for journeys into Hereford.

It was highlighted the need for greater clarity regarding the rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including a clear implementation timetable and assurance that rural communities and market towns would benefit alongside Hereford city. It was noted that improved charging infrastructure would be important in supporting residents to transition to electric vehicles.

Further opportunities were identified to integrate renewable energy generation within council car parks, including the use of solar canopies to provide vehicle charging, generate electricity and offer shade for users. It was noted that such measures could contribute to both sustainability and climate adaptation objectives.

The representative for Independents for Herefordshire outlined the views of their group and raised that:

The strategy's strong focus on safety, noting that public consultation responses had highlighted safety and appropriate enforcement as key priorities was welcomed. However, it was observed that there can be tension between calls for stronger

enforcement and concerns about the extent of enforcement measures, and members sought reassurance that the strategy strikes the right balance between education, engagement and enforcement.

The importance of Civil Enforcement Officers as both ambassadors for the council and officers responsible for ensuring compliance with parking restrictions was reiterated. It was noted that the balance between these roles should be clearly understood within the delivery of the strategy.

Support was expressed for the further consideration of park and ride proposals, with a request that this work be progressed as soon as practicable. It was acknowledged that such schemes may not be suitable in all locations but considered that further investigation would be beneficial.

Concerns were also raised regarding future parking provision should existing parking facilities be redeveloped, and it was suggested that reviews of parking capacity and alternative provision should be undertaken in a timely manner to support future planning decisions.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

A member expressed reservations about the practicality of introducing a park and ride scheme in Hereford, noting that successful schemes elsewhere often depend on supporting infrastructure, such as ring roads and high-frequency bus services. Reference was made to experiences in other areas where park and ride schemes have required significant public subsidy and, in some cases, have not proved viable.

It was suggested that Hereford's road network and travel patterns present particular challenges for the operation of a cost-effective park and ride service. However, it was noted that improved transport infrastructure could increase the feasibility of such schemes in the future, although they would likely continue to require substantial investment and ongoing support.

The True Independents Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Not present.

In response to the comments made:

The Cabinet Member responded to points raised during the debate and emphasised that the Parking Strategy provides a strategic framework, with specific proposals and interventions to be considered and developed through future work programmes and consultation.

Members were advised that options such as park and ride would be subject to further assessment and public consultation to ensure they are both practical and financially viable. The importance of working with partners in developing and delivering any future schemes was highlighted.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the contributions made by members and thanked officers for producing a comprehensive and high-quality strategy.

It was noted that the council's approach to parking management would continue to follow the principles of informing, educating and enforcing, with a focus on encouraging compliance and promoting safer parking behaviour. The importance of supporting Civil Enforcement Officers and strengthening working relationships with the police to address incidents of abuse towards staff was also emphasised.

Members were assured that comments received through consultation, scrutiny and the debate would be taken into account as the strategy is implemented. It was confirmed that the strategy aligns with wider transport and planning policies, including the Local Transport Plan, and that further work on matters such as park and ride, parking provision and infrastructure improvements would be brought forward in due course.

The Deputy Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Cllr Durkin proposed the recommendations, the Deputy Leader seconded. The Deputy Leader directed that the decision to be put before Cabinet is:

That:

- a) That the new Parking Strategy for Herefordshire is adopted by cabinet;**
- b) Delegated authority be given to the Chief Operating Officer for Economy and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Roads and Regulatory Services to take all operational decisions to implement the Parking Strategy and its delivery plan.**

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

115. FOOD WASTE COLLECTION IMPLEMENTATION

Councillor Swinglehurst cabinet member for environment and culture introduced the report, noting that the requirement arises from the Environment Act 2021. The aim of the legislation is to reduce the amount of food waste disposed of through residual waste streams and to support more environmentally sustainable treatment methods, including anaerobic digestion.

Members heard that Herefordshire has already significantly reduced landfill disposal through investment in energy-from-waste infrastructure, with less than 1% of waste now sent to landfill. Nevertheless, the legislation requires separate collection and treatment of food waste.

Government funding had been received to cover the majority of the capital costs associated with introducing the service, and the council had originally anticipated receiving additional revenue funding. However, following the final local government finance settlement, no specific new burdens funding was provided, requiring the council to review implementation options to ensure value for money and affordability.

A range of delivery approaches were considered, including phased implementation and alternative start dates. Following discussions with operational partners, the preferred option was identified as a single countywide rollout in September 2027. Members were advised that this approach would provide a clear and consistent message to residents, simplify communications, avoid implementation during peak summer and Christmas periods, and support public confidence in the new service.

It was noted that approximately 6,000 households would require tailored arrangements, and work would be undertaken to ensure suitable collection solutions are provided. The report identified key risks and mitigating actions, including additional preparation time for recruitment, service planning, operational readiness and public engagement.

Members were advised that diverting food waste from residual waste collections would reduce disposal costs, as food waste collected separately would not require treatment through the energy-from-waste facility. The importance of achieving high levels of public participation was emphasised in order to maximise environmental benefits and ensure value for money.

Cabinet was asked to approve the proposed implementation strategy and recommendations for the introduction of the food waste collection service.

Comments from cabinet members:

A member raised a concern regarding the future use and disposal of digestate produced through anaerobic digestion. It was noted that restrictions on spreading digestate within the River Wye catchment could create challenges in the future, particularly if similar approaches are adopted by other authorities.

Members observed that this could affect the availability of suitable outlets for digestate and potentially result in additional costs or the need to consider alternative treatment and disposal methods. The comments were offered as a consideration for future planning and risk management.

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The representative for Independents for Herefordshire outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Expressed support for the implementation of the food waste collection service, recognising that the council is required to introduce the scheme and acknowledging the work undertaken to develop the proposals.

Concerns were raised regarding references to the management of digestate, noting the importance of ensuring that the council does not simply transfer environmental impacts to other areas and that opportunities should be explored to work collaboratively with other authorities and partners to identify sustainable solutions.

Clarification was sought regarding estimated food waste collection tonnages and made observations on the risk management section of the report. It was suggested that risks and mitigation measures could be more clearly articulated to strengthen decision-making and provide greater assurance regarding how identified risks will be managed and addressed.

The Green Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Noted disappointment that the rollout of the food waste collection service had been delayed, while recognising that Herefordshire was not alone in facing challenges arising from the national funding arrangements.

Concerns were raised regarding the requirement for the council to contribute additional capital funding, including borrowing and the use of reserves, alongside the Government grant, and clarification was sought as to whether further capital investment would be required in future years.

The member welcomed the option appraisal undertaken and supported the proposed countywide rollout as the most cost-effective approach.

Questions were also raised regarding the intended use of digestate, including whether it would be used outside the county or outside the River Wye and River Lugg catchments, and whether opportunities existed to generate income from digestate given the increasing cost of fertilisers.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Expressed concern about the practical and environmental implications of the food waste collection service, particularly in a large rural county such as Herefordshire. It was noted

that collection vehicles may be required to travel significant distances along rural roads to collect relatively small quantities of food waste from individual households, raising concerns about the associated financial costs, vehicle movements and overall carbon and energy impacts of the service.

It was highlighted the importance of monitoring these impacts as the scheme is implemented.

The True Independents Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Not present.

In response to the comments made:

Members acknowledged that the introduction of the food waste collection service is a statutory requirement and that the council must implement the scheme. Whilst supporting its introduction, concerns raised during the debate regarding the potential environmental impacts of collection arrangements, particularly in a rural county, were noted and will be kept under consideration as the service is developed and implemented.

The Deputy Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Cllr Swinglehurst proposed the recommendations, Councillor Durkin seconded. The Deputy Leader directed that the decision to be put before Cabinet is:

That Cabinet

- a) Cabinet approves the commencement of a new food waste collection service from September 2027 as a countywide service implementation;**
- b) Cabinet authorises the revenue expenditure detailed in paragraphs 49 and 50 to mobilise the service,**
- c) Cabinet authorises the capital expenditure detailed in paragraphs 43 and 50, to purchase and deliver the new food containers and caddy liners and to undertake the required depot improvements works;**
- d) Cabinet delegate all operational decisions to implement the above recommendations to the Chief Operating Officer - Economy and Environment.**

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

It was confirmed the next meeting of cabinet was 10 September 2026 at 2:30pm.

The meeting ended at 4.10 pm

Chairperson

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

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Paul Newman, Hereford	The Year of Delivery report says that the Holme Lacy Road scheme costing £7.9million “Anticipating to underspend on this project and for the LUF funding to be shifted over to the Commercial Road scheme budget for delivery next year”. With planned improvements to the Great Western Way South of the Wye abandoned and with little to no walking and cycling upgrades on or around the Belmont Road as promised in the original South Wye Transport Package (and mentioned in the Bypass Scheme Information Report as having been progressed and delivered) how and why has it been decided that any remaining LUF funding is to be used for the already heavily overspent Hereford City Centre Transport Package and Commercial Road, rather than for delivering such improvements in the Belmont area?	Councillor Price, cabinet member for transport and infrastructure
Response: The Levelling Up Fund (LUF) programme is a ringfenced package of funding that must be used to deliver the schemes set out within the approved Hereford Transport Package programme. The council cannot redirect LUF funding to unrelated transport projects, even where those projects may be considered desirable or beneficial locally. Any underspend from individual Levelling Up Fund schemes must remain within the approved programme and be used to support delivery of the remaining Levelling Up Fund projects. This includes ongoing and planned major schemes such as Commercial Road, the Hereford transport hub, Aylestone Hill and other approved improvements within the Hereford Transport Package. The council remains committed to improving walking, cycling and sustainable transport opportunities across Hereford. However, any future proposals for schemes outside the approved Levelling Up Fund programme would need to be considered through alternative funding sources and future transport investment programmes.			
Supplementary Question:			

The Hereford Southern Link Road is now being built just for motorised vehicles, at a cost of over £45million, paid by all residents of Herefordshire, whether or not they own a car or live anywhere near this new road scheme.

With the Hereford Southern Link Road forecast to significantly increase car use in South Hereford, if the Active Travel Measures of the South Wye Transport Package are not being funded by the Levelling Up Fund, what planned investment is being made in walking and cycling infrastructure in the Belmont area in order to link these residents with the new jobs in Hereford Enterprise Zone and the city centre, without the need for a car?

Supplementary Response:

A series of Quiet Route schemes have been designed that will connect the Belmont area to the new cycle improvements being constructed on the Holme Lacy Road. Furthermore, Phase One is expected to deliver benefits well beyond private car users. The scheme will provide a more direct and reliable route for freight traffic serving the Hereford Enterprise Zone, reducing the need for HGVs to travel through residential areas such as Walnut Tree Avenue and Holme Lacy Road, improving conditions for local communities while supporting business and logistics activity. Meanwhile, for public transport we expect key benefits, with reduced congestion on key bus corridors including Belmont Road, Ross Road and Holme Lacy Road expected to improve bus journey reliability and punctuality, making bus travel a more attractive option. Together, these benefits support economic growth, improve access to jobs and employment sites, reduce traffic impacts in neighbourhoods and contribute to a more efficient and resilient transport network for all users, not just motorists.

PQ 2.	Huw Sherlock, Hereford	It is noted that in the Year of Delivery Review at item 7 of Connected Communities agenda for 7th July that it is proposed to make £3.5m worth of savings (known as 'value engineering'), nearly 10% of the construction project cost. With the Council looking to detrunk the A49 onto this road when Phase 2 is built, precisely what is proposed not to be done that had previously been included in the design to effect this £3.5m saving on the Southern Link Road (aka 'Bypass Phase 1')?	Councillor Price, cabinet member for transport and infrastructure
--------------	-------------------------------	--	--

Response:

The Full Business Case for the Hereford Bypass Phase One project has now been published on the Council's website. In the Financial Dimension section, page 3 table 1-2 sets out the list of value engineering options.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you but with no revised drawings and with the limited information on page 3, is it not clear to a member of the public the impact the Value Engineering options will have on the final design of Phase 1 of the Bypass. At the Scrutiny meeting it was made clear that the road design is now out of date and did not comply with trunk road standards, but to avoid delay the Council will proceed with the out of date plans. In view of these comments, and along with the proposed value engineering options, what agreement does Herefordshire Council have with Highways England that the Council's preferred road construction will result in the Southern Link road being acceptable to be adopted as part of the new A49 trunk road?

Supplementary Response:

At no time during the Scrutiny meeting were the road designs said to be out of date. A review of the original design found it to be compliant with standards including the DMRB trunk road standards a couple of minor changes were made to drainage designs but nothing that would make it non-compliant. The designs of Phase One are in compliance so that they could potentially be adopted as trunk road in the future.

PQ 3.	Stephen Mason, Madley	Have the proposals put forward by Herefordshire Council regarding the proposed southern link road incorporated evidence about induced travel demand and the use of alternative routes, in particular, the increased traffic that will use the Bridge Sollars road via Madley and Clehonger, in the light of my background paper?	Councillor Price, cabinet member for transport and infrastructure
--------------	------------------------------	---	--

Response:

The Full Business Case (for phase one) is supported by detailed traffic modelling, which indicates some modest increases in traffic in a small number of roads connecting to the new route, including through Bridge Sollars, Madley and Clehonger. It is important to note that these forecasts are for 2043 and therefore sit within a wider picture of population growth and increased vehicle movements over the next two decades. The increases identified are not considered significant in that context and do not currently warrant mitigation measures.

Supplementary Question:

None

Supplementary Response:

PQ 4.	Andrew Barnes, Madley	What mitigation, if any, has been considered by the Council to offset the adverse impact on residents and schools as a result	Councillor Price, cabinet member for transport and infrastructure
--------------	------------------------------	--	--

		of the expected increase in traffic, and in particular commercial traffic, switching from the A438 to/from Hereford to the proposed Southern Link Road (Phase One of the Hereford Western Bypass) via Bridge Sollers, Lulham, Madley and Clehonger?	
Response: The Full Business Case (for phase one) is supported by detailed traffic modelling, which indicates some modest increases in traffic in a small number of roads connecting to the new route, including through Bridge Sollars, Madley and Clehonger. It is important to note that these forecasts are for 2043 and therefore sit within a wider picture of population growth and increased vehicle movements over the next two decades. The increases identified are not considered significant in that context and do not currently warrant mitigation measures.			
Supplementary Question: Thank you for your response. Whilst I acknowledge that the Council has commissioned detailed traffic modelling as part of this project, from the publicly disclosed documents it is not evident that the modelling has considered the scenario referred to in my question. Furthermore, it must be recognised that frequently real life outcomes differ from the prior modelling, however detailed. In the Council's reports many references are made to the difficulties faced by residents and the school along Walnut Tree Avenue, I am concerned that the Council should not inadvertently create a similar or worse situation along the route that I have described in my original question. On the assumption that the Council will exercise its responsibility to proactively measure and monitor the effect on traffic patterns and volumes of the introduction of the new Southern Link Road, if, as is very possible, traffic in practice behaves so as to materially adversely impact the communities referred to in my original question, what assurance can the Council provide that it will take prompt and effective action to ensure that the safety of these communities is not degraded?			
Supplementary Response: The same assurance that is given to all Herefordshire residents. The Council as the highway authority has a duty to manage the highway network to keep it as safe and functioning as possible and will continue to do so into the future.			
PQ 5.	Susie, Laan, HR4 7PR	The Draft Big Economic Delivery Plan on page 9 says that Herefordshire has "strong economic ties to Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and the West Midlands to the West". All three locations referred to are located to the East/Southeast of Herefordshire not the West! It further explains that strong	Councillor Price, cabinet member transport and infrastructure

		economic ties, particularly aligned with defence and security, lie to the East of the County. With massive housing growth on the West of Hereford commuters will be required to travel right across the City to the East side, in order to take up these new, well paid jobs, focussed on defence and security. Would the Cabinet member explain why major transport investment is not focussed on improving the connectivity of the enterprise parks in South East Hereford and Ross-on-Wye with Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and the West Midlands and minimising travel across a congested City?	
Response: Thank you for highlighting the slight mis-phrasing in the document; this will be corrected in future versions. The council's transport ambitions are focused on supporting economic growth across the county and strengthening connections to key employment locations and strategic transport corridors, including the Hereford Enterprise Zone, Ross Enterprise Park, the M50, South Wales and the wider Midlands economy. The Hereford Bypass is a key part of that strategy, with phase one alone improving access to the Hereford Enterprise Zone while reducing traffic on a number of residential routes in South Wye at peak times. It would also allow traffic travelling from South Wales, such as Abergavenny, to access the expanding Enterprise Zone directly, without needing to travel through the heart of Hereford. More broadly, the bypass would help unlock the Growth Corridor, creating up to 300 hectares of employment land, supporting around 10,000 jobs, and enabling new homes, infrastructure and public services needed to support sustainable growth. Alongside the continued development of Ross Enterprise Park and other strategic employment sites, this will improve connectivity, attract investment and help residents access economic opportunities both within Herefordshire and across the wider region.			
Supplementary Question: Sorry, but the answer seems to ignore that a Western Bypass does not build on and develop the strong economic ties that are referenced in the Big Economic Plan, all of which lie on the East of the City and the County. The answer gives no explanation as to what important and vital economic and strategic ties are located on the West of Hereford. In order to minimise the movements of freight across and around the City, what goods and materials has the Big Economic Plan identified and taken into account that will be brought into the County purely from the West to supply the new businesses in the Western growth corridor and where are the major customers for these new large businesses located?			

Supplementary Response

The current Hereford Enterprise Zone is located to the south of the city and is the primary area for current employment in the county. As per the previous answer, this employment land is almost fully developed out. Through the Local Plan process we therefore need to identify new employment land of provision to support the long term growth of the county. Due to flooding and environmental protections to the east of Hereford, future employment land sites are likely to be to the north west of the city in the proposed Growth Corridor.

There continues to be significant demand from local businesses for additional employment land, and the council has established a new Inward Investment service to attract new businesses to the county ([Invest In Herefordshire | Entrepreneurship, Skills And Culture](#)) in seeking to create more better paid jobs.

PQ 6.	Paul Eathorne, Madley	The Western by-pass, which enables North - South traffic to avoid the city, seems likely to deliver the greatest cost benefit. The Southern link road is effectively a short extension of the B4399 (Rotherwas road) and as traffic on the latter is extremely light, it seems reasonable to expect traffic on Phase 1 to be similarly light until the entire by-pass is complete, offering little or no reduction in city centre traffic volumes. Obtaining funds for road projects is a very volatile process and subject to political whim, offering the risk that funds to complete the full by-pass may not be available for many years, if ever. Therefore, should we focus investment on the section offering the greatest cost / benefit by building Phase 2 first, rather than start by building a road to no-where?	Councillor Price, cabinet member for transport and infrastructure
--------------	------------------------------	---	--

Response:

Phase One alone creates a strategically important west-east link on the southern edge of the city, improving access to key employment centres including the Hereford Enterprise Zone. It establishes the southern anchor point from which future phases can continue. Phase two, subject to funding, planning and other statutory approvals west and north of the city, will unlock employment land, jobs and housing.

Although the full value of the bypass will be realised when all phases are completed, the latest modelling indicates that Phase One alone provides a strong case for investment, and for pursuing it first.

Supplementary Question:

None

Supplementary Response:

PQ 7.	Gill Jinman, Golden Valley South	The Big Economic Plan Delivery Plan The Leader of the Council has previously told me and stated publicly that a railway station at Pontrilas - the Golden Valley Parkway station - is a priority of this administration. Other Councillors have promoted the improvement of rail connections, and the Pontrilas station would not only improve but also in many cases enable access for young people to jobs and education, particularly as NMite was founded as not being reliant on car transport. Why is there no mention in the Plan of the Golden Valley Parkway station or improving rail connections across the county, or beyond to Cardiff & Gloucester, rather than just doubling the number of trains to Worcester?	Councillor Biggs, cabinet member Economy and Growth
-------	----------------------------------	--	---

Response:

The Economic Delivery Plan has been developed by the Economy and Place Board, to identify priority actions over the next three years in delivering the overarching long term Herefordshire Economic Plan 2050. The Economic Plan/ Strategy does identify a need for improved connectivity across the whole county. A separate Herefordshire Rail Strategy is also currently being developed which will explore the viability of improved rail connections.

Supplementary Question:

I am grateful to Councillor Biggs for his response to my question, but given that the Leader has publicly described the Golden Valley Parkway station as a priority for this administration, why is that priority absent from the Economic Delivery Plan?

Supplementary Response: The Economic Delivery Plan is focussed on the next three years only, in delivering the next phase of the Economic Plan 2050. The Golden Valley Parkway station can't be delivered in the three year timeframe. The separate Herefordshire Rail Strategy will identify priorities for improved infrastructure and how these will be taken forward.			
PQ 8.	Kate Seekings, HR4 0LQ	The Big Economic Plan (Appendix 2 page 3) says that “within 3 years we will have delivered our redeveloped Hereford Museum & Art Gallery”. Will the Cabinet member please provide an update as to what the plans of the redevelopment of the Hereford Museum & Art Gallery look like if this work is to be completed by the Summer of 2029 and will be opened in the next 3 years, along with the Shirehall library and learning resource facilities?	Councillor Bramer, cabinet member community services and assets
Response: The Hereford Museum and Art Gallery redevelopment project is a priority for the council. Following a period of re-scoping the project to ensure it remains affordable, we are about to commence the final stages of design, which will finalise the programme period. However, we fully anticipate that it will be completed within the 3 years identified in the Economic Plan Delivery Plan.			
Supplementary Question: The Museum and Library building in Broad Street has been closed for several years, and it now seems it will remain closed for at least a further three years. During this time, the four ground floor display windows have been left empty and uncared for. Why have the Council not used this key town centre display area to exhibit for residents the plans and progress of the building, rather than leaving the impression that the building is permanently closed, and when will the Council fill the windows with up to date and ongoing communication about the Museum and Library services for residents?			
Supplementary Response: There are regular works undertaken in the building, such as the investigations required to inform the design of the building. This has identified that there is significant asbestos in the building, which is a health and safety risk so whilst these works are going on it will not be possible access and use of the building is restricted while these works are on-going.			

There are regular monthly updates regarding the project on the council website, and the museum service are proactively and regularly engaging thousands of residents across the county.

PQ 9.	Jim Hardy, Hereford	Under Environmental Impact in the report on The Big Economic Plan it says that “The Climate and Nature Partnership are represented on the Economy and Place Board, and have been consulted during the development of the Delivery Plan.” The Climate and Nature Partnership was replaced in January 2026, by a new Herefordshire Environment Board, due to meet quarterly, but there seem to be no published minutes of this Board or details of its membership. Where can the response of this Board to the consultation on the Big Economic Plan be found?	Councillors Biggs, cabinet member Economy and Growth
--------------	----------------------------	--	---

Response:

The Economic Delivery Plan has been developed through a county-wide partnership approach led by the Economy and Place Board. The Board brings together representatives from Herefordshire Council, the Herefordshire Business Growth Board, Skills Board, Environment Board (formerly the Climate and Nature Partnership), Cultural Partnership and Community Partnership.

Throughout the development process, board members gathered views and feedback from their respective sectors and networks. This feedback, alongside comments from a series of council-facilitated workshops with board members and partners, has been reviewed and incorporated into the final Delivery Plan. The Economy and Place Board has considered and endorsed the final plan on behalf of the wider partnership. The Cabinet decision seeks agreement for Herefordshire Council to formally adopt the Delivery Plan and lead delivery of those actions for which the council is responsible.

The Economic Delivery Plan is a three-year programme focused on delivering the immediate priorities of the Herefordshire Economic Plan 2050. It builds on the extensive engagement and consultation undertaken during the development of the Economic Plan, which involved a broad range of partners, businesses, organisations and stakeholders across the county before its adoption in 2023.

Supplementary Question:

Your response to my original question clearly avoids answering where the response of the Environment Board to the consultation on the Big Economic Plan can be found. This does not accord with the Nolan principle of openness.

The vision of the Big Economic Plan includes that 'In 2050 Herefordshire is a vibrant, healthy, zero carbon place' and 'We have protected our rich natural environment'.

If the Environment Board has in fact met, where can the public access a record of its membership and its response to the consultation?

Supplementary Response:

As per the previous response, a representative from the Herefordshire Environment Board is a member of the Economy and Place Board that has led the development of the delivery plan. They attended and directly fed in views on behalf of the Environment Board into the development of the strategy, including attending a number of workshop sessions. These views have been reflected in the finalised delivery plan, which was approved by all of the Economy and Place Board prior to coming to the cabinet meeting for council adoption.

PQ 10.	Mr Dave James, Hereford	It's clear that the infrastructure in Herefordshire has failed. Will the council put the infrastructure in place to cope with demands put on an already overloaded system. My main concern is the planned development of 27,000 more homes on top of what is still in process. We all know that the existing water, sewage infrastructure is too small to deal with today's demands. So what is planned to ensure to ensure existing and future needs will be in place before another house is built in Herefordshire.	Councillor Swinglehurst, cabinet member culture and environment
--------	-------------------------	--	--

Response:

We understand residents' concerns about pressure on utilities, roads, schools, healthcare and other infrastructure. The requirement to plan for more than 27,000 new homes comes from national housing targets, which the council has a legal duty to address through the Local Plan. This growth would be phased over the next 15 to 20 years, not delivered all at once. The Local Plan is designed to ensure housing growth is supported by the infrastructure communities need, which is why we are working with developers, utility providers, health leaders, education providers, transport authorities and other partners to assess and meet future requirements.

New development is expected to contribute towards the infrastructure it creates demand for, including transport, education, healthcare, drainage, flood mitigation and community facilities.

Infrastructure needs will be assessed alongside housing requirements and the Local Plan will be subject to extensive public consultation before any decisions are made. Our aim is to support sustainable growth that benefits communities, the local economy and Herefordshire's environment.

Supplementary Question:			
None			
Supplementary Response:			
PQ 11.	Mrs E Morawiecka, Hereford	The Cabinet report on the Big Economic Plan says at para 7 “The plan includes the cross-cutting delivery principles of ensuring sustainability, maximising investment and delivering through partnership working, ensuring that we retain a focus on the environment and collaboration”. The plan promotes 14,000 new homes and a massive new “bypass” going through the middle of these new housing estates to the West of Hereford, over some of the County’s highest grade agricultural land and potable aquifers supplying existing businesses. With no mention in the plan for delivering the infrastructure and resources for the necessary increase in water supplies or sewerage whilst protecting the county’s watercourses and environment, how does this plan deliver sustainability?	Councillor Swinglehurst, cabinet member culture and environment
Response: The Economic Delivery Plan does not sit in isolation. It forms part of a connected framework of strategies, including the Council Plan, Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and environmental policies, which together guide how growth is delivered across the county. Decisions about housing, employment, transport, infrastructure and environmental protection are therefore considered as part of a single strategic approach, not in isolation. The proposed Hereford Growth Corridor will be considered through the Local Plan process and will be subject to detailed technical assessment, statutory consultation and public engagement. This includes ongoing engagement with infrastructure providers, utility companies, environmental regulators and other key stakeholders to ensure growth is planned, coordinated and sustainable. Like the first phase, the bypass and growth corridor schemes would also be required to include robust measures to protect communities, landscapes, heritage and wildlife, with environmental assessments, habitat protection, biodiversity net gain, watercourse safeguards and mitigation measures forming part of the design and planning process.			

Our approach is based on strategic, managed growth that supports thriving communities, a strong economy and the protection of Herefordshire's environment, rather than piecemeal or ad hoc development.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you. Sadly, the answer does not address why the Big Economic Delivery plan is silent about water and waste infrastructure, essential for supporting businesses and residents of the County.

The Council is aware the Western Growth Corridor poses a significant risk to polluting the fresh water supplies for two of the County's major employers, risking the loss of over 3,000 jobs.

With the current heatwaves and drought conditions Herefordshire is experiencing, and which are likely to be the new normal under Climate Change, fresh water is being tankered around the City and County. The River Wye is dangerously low and too hot for many of its protected species to survive.

Would the Cabinet member please explain what and where is the strategy and delivery plan for increasing water supplies and sewerage capacity to sustainably underpin the Big Economic Plan?

Supplementary Response:

As per the previous answer, the development of the Local Plan is the statutory strategy for identifying future land use and infrastructure requirements for the county in consultation with the utility providers. Economic priorities are fully considered in the development of the Local Plan. Once adopted, Welsh Water are responsible for ensuring that water supplies and sewerage capacity is then in place to meet this long term growth.

PQ 12.	Deuce McBride, HR2 0NY	The village of Clodock has been flooded twice in November 2024 and November 2025. Herefordshire Council arranged an independent survey of the problem which has been submitted to the Council some months ago, suggesting measures that could be taken to lessen/prevent such a re-occurrence in future; one such proposal was the removal of some of the debris under one of the arches of the bridge over the river Monnow to increase flow of the river. Since that time nothing seems to have been done and yet with the river so low this summer, now would be an ideal time to take such measures.	Councillor Hurcomb, Local Engagement and Community Resilience
---------------	-------------------------------	--	--

		Is the Council intending to act on any of the survey's proposals to support the village or is this survey going to be ignored?	
33	Response: Although commissioned by Herefordshire Council, the Section 19 Flood Investigation Report considered flooding across all relevant authorities. It examined the causes and sources of flooding, clarified the roles and responsibilities of the various Risk Management Authorities, reviewed actions already taken or proposed, and identified potential measures to reduce future flood risk and impacts. In relation to the recommended action to remove rocks from the watercourse, the council has assessed the location and concluded that their removal is not currently necessary. The deposits occupy only a limited proportion of the channel and are not considered likely to have a significant effect on flood risk. The flooding affecting most properties in Clodock occurs where the River Monnow overtops its banks approximately 150 metres upstream of the bridge, meaning it is not influenced by either the bridge or the deposits at this location. As the rocks are not beneath the bridge, responsibility for their removal rests with the adjacent riparian landowner. Given the limited flood risk posed, the council does not consider formal enforcement action to be justified. The council has also reviewed concerns about highway gullies. While gullies drain surface water from the highway network, they are not designed to convey river flood flows and are therefore unlikely to have a significant effect during major flooding events of the scale experienced in recent years. It is important to recognise that Clodock lies within Flood Zone 3 and therefore remains at a high risk of flooding from the River Monnow. With the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, improving community flood resilience is increasingly important. The council can support residents in developing a Community Flood Plan to help the community prepare for, respond to, and recover from future flooding. The Environment Agency is arranging initial Lot 1 surveys for flood-affected residents to assess the suitability of Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures. The implementation of any recommended measures will depend on the availability of funding, with potential funding opportunities currently being explored.		
	Supplementary Question: Many thanks for your reply to my question about the River Monnow flooding in Clodock. I was interested to read that the flooding occurred 150 metres upstream of the bridge. In fact the flooding first occurred at Monnow Cottage which is approximately 20/30 metres from the bridge. Could it possibly be that the sheer quantity of water could not pass through the arches of the bridge because one of them is partially blocked and so backs up and floods further upstream? By taking away the concrete debris it would increase the flow and may well prevent flooding or certainly reduce its impact by allowing more water to flow.		

Our own councillor Matthew Engels has been here when the river was high and has seen the difference in flow between the two arches.

You state that it is the responsibility of the riparian landowner except I understand that any attempt to discover who it is has been unsuccessful. If the owner cannot be traced, should it not be the responsibility of the Council to try to protect its' public. In the light of the above information, would it not be responsible for the Council reconsider their reply or is Clodock too insignificant a community to warrant their attention?

Supplementary Response:

We note your observations regarding the location where flooding was first experienced, together with your comments on the differing flow conditions. We would emphasise that the council's approach is not influenced by the size of the community affected. The available evidence suggests that removing the deposited material from the watercourse is unlikely to materially reduce flood risk. Furthermore, the council does not have a legal responsibility to undertake works at this location. Nevertheless, given the uncertainty regarding ownership and maintenance responsibility for this section of watercourse, together with the relatively low cost of removal, the Flood Risk Management Team will seek to arrange these works. This should not be interpreted as an acknowledgement of liability, nor as evidence that the deposited material is a cause of flooding. Any such intervention would remain subject to environmental, legal and resource considerations.

PQ 13.	Mr and Mrs Haywood, Clodock	I am concerned that following the flooding of Clodock that occurred late last year, and the subsequent survey by the council, that no action or remedial work has been actioned. Please would you inform me what post-flooding action has been taken, in particular the removal of the large stone boulders under the bridge over the river Monnow at Clodock. We are approaching the time of the year when flooding is most likely to be repeated, and action is therefore important to prevent further flooding of Clodock. Please would you inform me details of what flood prevention work will be taking place in the next few months to help prevent a repeat of the situation late last year that resulted in the flooding of most houses in the village of Clodock. I am sure you can understand my concern, and I am more than happy to attend any Council meetings that may assist with the above.	Councillor Hurcomb, Local Engagement and Community Resilience
---------------	--	---	--

Response:

Although commissioned by Herefordshire Council, the Section 19 Flood Investigation Report considered flooding across all relevant authorities. It examined the causes and sources of flooding, clarified the roles and responsibilities of the various Risk Management Authorities, reviewed actions already taken or proposed, and identified potential measures to reduce future flood risk and impacts.

In relation to the recommended action to remove rocks from the watercourse, the council has assessed the location and concluded that their removal is not currently necessary. The deposits occupy only a limited proportion of the channel and are not considered likely to have a significant effect on flood risk. The flooding affecting most properties in Clodock occurs where the River Monnow overtops its banks approximately 150 metres upstream of the bridge, meaning it is not influenced by either the bridge or the deposits at this location. As the rocks are not beneath the bridge, responsibility for their removal rests with the adjacent riparian landowner. Given the limited flood risk posed, the council does not consider formal enforcement action to be justified.

The council has also reviewed concerns about highway gullies. While gullies drain surface water from the highway network, they are not designed to convey river flood flows and are therefore unlikely to have a significant effect during major flooding events of the scale experienced in recent years.

It is important to recognise that Clodock lies within Flood Zone 3 and therefore remains at a high risk of flooding from the River Monnow. With the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, improving community flood resilience is increasingly important. The council can support residents in developing a Community Flood Plan to help the community prepare for, respond to, and recover from future flooding.

The Environment Agency is arranging initial Lot 1 surveys for flood-affected residents to assess the suitability of Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures. The implementation of any recommended measures will depend on the availability of funding, with potential funding opportunities currently being explored.

Supplementary Question:

None

Supplementary Response:

PQ 14.	Olga McBride, HR2 0NY	Two years ago, a road drain just outside of the lytch gate (Clodock Church) and Church House (a private dwelling) was assessed by the council as having collapsed and no longer functioning properly. Since then, Clodock has flooded seriously twice, (45 cm of dirty water inside Church house, and houses of the hamlet, similar). 1). When is the Council going to mend the road drain?	Councillor Hurcomb, Local Engagement and Community Resilience
--------	-----------------------	---	---

Response: The drains were last cleansed in January 2026. Whilst no works have previously been proposed for the gully outside the church, the Flood Risk Management Team has now raised this location for further investigation and will liaise with colleagues in Highways Maintenance to determine whether any remedial action is required. However, it is important to recognise that this gully will not make any meaningful or measurable difference to the flooding caused by the River Monnow. The flooding experienced in this area is driven by elevated river levels, and this individual gully is not a contributing factor to that flooding mechanism.			
Supplementary Question: Thank you for your reply, though it does not answer the question. While the collapsed drain outside of Clodock church lych gate may not prevent the Monnow from flooding, it does help keep the road drained and safe by reducing the amount of water that fills the road with every heavy rainfall. While I welcome that once again there are white arrows pointing out our drains, this specific one was identified by the council services as collapsed and malfunctioning in 2025 if not 2024. Last year the white paint brigade added the word "collapsed" and indicated that it no longer functioned properly. No remedial works has taken place since. So my question remains: when will this drain be mended?			
Supplementary Response: Working with colleagues in Highways Maintenance, the Flood Risk Management Team will seek to have any necessary repair works completed before the end of the year, subject to operational and resource constraints.			
PQ 15.	Sharon Lee, Clodock	SECTION 19 FLOOD INVESTIGATION REPORT – Longtown & Clodock - Flood Incident Date: 24 November 2024 This report was published in November 2025, shortly after another devastating flood on 14 November 2025. It included several recommendations for Herefordshire Council and the Highways Authority. The more minor recommendations for residents, such as registering for flood warnings and inspecting gullies and ditches, were already being carried out. However, residents of Clodock who were severely affected by these floods are unaware of any progress or plans to implement the more significant recommendations.	Councillor Hurcomb, Local Engagement and Community Resilience

		We would like to know what actions Herefordshire Council intends to take, and the expected timescale for delivering them.	
Response: Although commissioned by Herefordshire Council, the Section 19 Flood Investigation Report considered flooding across all relevant authorities. It examined the causes and sources of flooding, clarified the roles and responsibilities of the various Risk Management Authorities, reviewed actions already taken or proposed, and identified potential measures to reduce future flood risk and impacts. In relation to the recommended action to remove rocks from the watercourse, the council has assessed the location and concluded that their removal is not currently necessary. The deposits occupy only a limited proportion of the channel and are not considered likely to have a significant effect on flood risk. The flooding affecting most properties in Clodock occurs where the River Monnow overtops its banks approximately 150 metres upstream of the bridge, meaning it is not influenced by either the bridge or the deposits at this location. As the rocks are not beneath the bridge, responsibility for their removal rests with the adjacent riparian landowner. Given the limited flood risk posed, the council does not consider formal enforcement action to be justified. The council has also reviewed concerns about highway gullies. While gullies drain surface water from the highway network, they are not designed to convey river flood flows and are therefore unlikely to have a significant effect during major flooding events of the scale experienced in recent years. It is important to recognise that Clodock lies within Flood Zone 3 and therefore remains at a high risk of flooding from the River Monnow. With the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, improving community flood resilience is increasingly important. The council can support residents in developing a Community Flood Plan to help the community prepare for, respond to, and recover from future flooding. The Environment Agency is arranging initial Lot 1 surveys for flood-affected residents to assess the suitability of Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures. The implementation of any recommended measures will depend on the availability of funding, with potential funding opportunities currently being explored.			
Supplementary Question: None			
Supplementary Response:			
PQ 16.	Catherine Boardman, Clodock	In Clodock, we have had two major floods in the last two Novembers (2024 and 2025). Since then, the Environment agency, Herefordshire council, independent surveyors and	Councillor Hurcomb, Local Engagement and Community Resilience

		flood defense consultants have been to visit. However, nothing has changed and no progress has been made against any further flooding, which I am sure will happen. There is a need to move large boulders from below the bridge in Clodock, which have been swept down and are now blocking the flow of the river. In addition we have heard that using fields to contain flood waters further upstream might be an idea. Please may you update us asap as to what the plans are to try and avoid further flooding moving forward and also of any grants that are available to help us pay for the damage from flooding and improvements we are making to our homes to help make them better defended against the next flood? Thanks.	
Response: Although commissioned by Herefordshire Council, the Section 19 Flood Investigation Report considered flooding across all relevant authorities. It examined the causes and sources of flooding, clarified the roles and responsibilities of the various Risk Management Authorities, reviewed actions already taken or proposed, and identified potential measures to reduce future flood risk and impacts. In relation to the recommended action to remove rocks from the watercourse, the council has assessed the location and concluded that their removal is not currently necessary. The deposits occupy only a limited proportion of the channel and are not considered likely to have a significant effect on flood risk. The flooding affecting most properties in Clodock occurs where the River Monnow overtops its banks approximately 150 metres upstream of the bridge, meaning it is not influenced by either the bridge or the deposits at this location. As the rocks are not beneath the bridge, responsibility for their removal rests with the adjacent riparian landowner. Given the limited flood risk posed, the council does not consider formal enforcement action to be justified. The council has also reviewed concerns about highway gullies. While gullies drain surface water from the highway network, they are not designed to convey river flood flows and are therefore unlikely to have a significant effect during major flooding events of the scale experienced in recent years. It is important to recognise that Clodock lies within Flood Zone 3 and therefore remains at a high risk of flooding from the River Monnow. With the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, improving community flood resilience is increasingly important. The council can support residents in developing a Community Flood Plan to help the community prepare for, respond to, and recover from future flooding. The Environment Agency is arranging initial Lot 1 surveys for flood-affected residents to assess the suitability of Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures. The implementation of any recommended measures will depend on the availability of funding, with potential funding opportunities currently being explored.			

Supplementary Question:			
None			
Supplementary Response:			
PQ 17.	Mrs J Morris, HR4 OSP	The car parking strategy makes reference to Pay on Exit and how this supports the local economy, particularly the High Street but this does not appear to be mentioned once in the Delivery Plan. Would the Cabinet member please explain why there is mention of pay on exit car parking in the strategy, but apparently no intention of delivering it in the next 15 years?	Councillor Durkin, Cabinet member roads and regulatory services
Response: Pay on Exit remains part of the council's long-term vision for modernising parking services and is referenced within the Parking Strategy. However, the fact that it sits within a 15-year strategy does not mean implementation is expected to take 15 years. The strategy sets the overall direction of travel, while the delivery plan identifies the practical steps needed to enable future improvements. The first phase of delivery includes the introduction and trial of technologies such as Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), alongside wider technology-enabled parking improvements. These are important building blocks for modern parking systems, including potential barrier-free Pay on Exit arrangements. Year 1 of the Parking delivery plan specifically includes the introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology, which is a key enabling technology for the delivery of modern barrier-free Pay on Exit systems. This will help create a more convenient parking experience that supports residents, visitors and town centre businesses.			
Supplementary Question:			
None			

Supplementary Response:

PQ 18.	Jeremey Milln, Hereford	According to recent BBC research Herefordshire Council still allows driving and parking on footways, theoretically only in signed spaces, but in practice ubiquitously; an increasing problem of motonormativity and the 'car-spreading' phenomenon. This damages surfaces creating tripping hazards. Taken with the proliferation of bins left on pavements, blind and partially sighted persons are endangered, with wheel & push-chair users obstructed. Rule 244 of the Highway Code says drivers should not do this. The 2026 Community Empowerment Act promises local authorities greater power to address pavement parking yet the Strategy hints only vaguely at reducing the practice and the Delivery Plan at item 11, appendix 2 says nothing on the subject. So by what percentage does the Council intend to reduce pavement parking, in what timescale and by what means?	Councillor Durkin, Cabinet member roads and regulatory services
---------------	--------------------------------	--	--

Response:

The council does not condone obstructive pavement parking. As both the Highway Authority and parking authority, we recognise the impact that vehicles, bins and other obstructions can have on people with visual impairments, wheelchair users, parents with pushchairs and anyone who relies on clear and accessible pavements.

The Parking Strategy supports the principle that roads and pavements should be safe and accessible for all users, but pavement obstruction is not solely a parking enforcement matter. The council also has responsibilities as the Highway Authority and will investigate concerns and take action where this is reasonable, proportionate and supported by the powers available to us, while working with the police on any criminal matters. While the government is considering further measures in relation to pavement parking, our focus remains on maintaining safe access to the highway network and responding to instances of obstruction where intervention is justified. For that reason, the strategy does not set a specific percentage reduction target, but it is clear that obstructive pavement parking is not behaviour the council supports and we will continue to use the powers available to us to address issues where appropriate.

Supplementary Question:

The response to my question on the Parking Strategy at agenda item 11, makes it clear this Council has no measurable delivery plan to reduce pavement parking, and continues to condone the practice provided it is not '*obstructive*' in spite of the fact driving on pavements (necessary to park on them) is illegal under section 34 of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

One wonders what it considers to be '*obstructive*' pavement parking. How much space would it expect to be left by vehicles parked on the pavement before it considers them obstructive and what action would it take, bearing in mind the DfT's Mobility Guidance recommends a minimum of two metres to allow wheelchair users to pass safely?

Supplementary Response:

The enforcement of obstructive pavement parking is carried out by the Police, the question about the definition of obstruction and the action that would be taken against obstructive pavement parking should be redirected to West Mercia Police. If the council receives reports of obstructive parking we would redirect this to the Police. The Government are proposing to introduce new powers for councils and should this be introduced to tackle pavement parking as outlined in the response above, the council will be able to have a more proactive role in enforcement of pavement parking obstructions.

PQ 19.	Ms Reid, Hereford	The recent letter from the Minister for Children and Families to the Leader includes: "You should be proud of what has been achieved, while remaining focused on sustaining and building on this improvement – in particular I am sure you will share my desire to ensure that more children are supported to remain safely within their family networks, and recognise the importance of bringing service budgets more closely in line with comparable services elsewhere." How will you ensure that these will be actualised?	Councillor Powell, cabinet member children and young people
---------------	--------------------------	---	--

Response:

We welcomed the letter from the Minister which recognised the significant progress that Childrens Services has made delivering Good Services with Outstanding Leadership. We remain committed to building on this improvement. One of our key principles is to ensure children remain with their family where it is safe to do so, with support available throughout a child's and family's journey within our service. Where children cannot remain with their parents or legal guardians, family based, for example kinship care, is considered at the first and all ongoing opportunities

As a Children's Service we have successfully delivered our savings targets over the past two years and remain on track to achieve our savings for 2026/27. At the same time, we have ensured that our current service budget is aligned to meet the needs of children and families while maintaining service delivery.

Supplementary Question:

The minister's letter highlights the "importance of bringing service budgets more closely in line with comparable services elsewhere". I interpret this as meaning to reduce the budget to be in line with Statistical Neighbours (similar areas to Herefordshire). According to LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool) the looked after child rate per 10,000 on 31 March 2025 (latest data) is:

- Herefordshire: 100.0
- Statistical Neighbours: 67.0

The financial cost of children in care is very high. Of course, there are detrimental effects to the children and their families.

How are you going to reduce the rate of children in care to that of Herefordshire's Statistical Neighbours, for example, by reunification at pace of as many children as possible with their families and Family Networks?

Supplementary Response:

The children's services budget is more than just the placement budget for children in care.

Whilst investment has been made to enable improvement of children's services, the budget for the past two years has included savings targets which have been delivered in full and on time, and additional investment reduced so that the services are now working on what is an appropriate budget for children's services.

There is no comparative budget for children's services with regard to Statistical Neighbours and England averages.

Ofsted has previously commented that the budget for children's services in Herefordshire is both appropriate and realistic.

You are correct in your assertion that the rate of looked after children in Herefordshire is higher than in the statistical neighbour group. However, it is important to understand that over the past three years the rate of looked after children have seen a continued reduction.

In March 2023 the rate was 114 per 10,000 population, as at Q1 in this current year the rate has reduced to 94.4 per 10,000.

The reduction is a result of the service working to achieve safe and timely permanence for children in care. Permanency includes rehabilitation to family care where it is safe to do so and also includes Adoption and Special guardianship.

The service has also embraced a model of Relationship Based practice which is a strength-based approach to working with families to first and foremost help them to care where it is safe to do so for their children, and importantly to avoid children having to come into care.

The combination of this work is showing a continued trajectory of reduction towards the level of statistical neighbours, however it is important to state that the statistical neighbour average of children in care is but one of many indicators monitored by the service.

PQ 20	Ruth Sherlock, Hereford	The Big Economic Plan Appendix 2 makes reference to “Support older workers to remain in the workforce through partner working” but has no action to improve access to hospitals, dentists or doctors. The biggest barrier for many older people remaining in the workforce is often related to poor health and delays in accessing medical treatment, including emergency treatments. Would the Cabinet member explain why the plan is silent on addressing the lack of medical infrastructure, particularly hospital capacity & NHS dentistry for existing residents, let alone the residents of 27,000 new homes to be built across the County?	Councillor Biggs, cabinet member Economy and Growth
--------------	--------------------------------	---	--

Response:

The Economic Delivery Plan recognises the important contribution that older workers make to Herefordshire's economy and includes actions to help people remain in, return to and access employment, including those living with health conditions or disabilities. Through the Herefordshire Growth Hub, the council supports programmes such as Connect to Work and works closely with NHS partners through initiatives such as WorkWell to help people overcome barriers to employment.

The Economic Delivery Plan does not sit in isolation. It forms part of a wider framework that includes the Council Plan, Local Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the work of the Integrated Care System. Together, these support a joined-up approach to economic growth, public health and community wellbeing.

The council has a significant role in public health, prevention and health and care partnerships, and we recognise that access to healthcare can affect people's ability to remain active, independent and in work. While NHS organisations are responsible for healthcare provision, the council works closely with health partners to plan for future needs.

Through the Local Plan process, healthcare infrastructure is considered alongside housing, employment, transport and other infrastructure requirements so that future growth is supported by the services communities need.

Strong economic performance and good health outcomes are closely linked. Supporting investment, skills, employment and healthier communities is therefore an important part of delivering long-term prosperity for Herefordshire.

Supplementary Question:

The last Local Plan did not have any focus on investing in healthcare infrastructure. As the local population has grown residents regularly face issues with continued pressure on Hereford's A&E and other hospital departments and trying to access good healthcare.

Expanding NHS dentistry and medical care would provide new, well paid jobs across the County, improve health outcomes, retain more residents in the workforce and make the County an attractive place for investors, all of which aligns with the objectives of the plan.

If the Economic Delivery Plan does not sit in isolation and there is a joined up approach, what investment in health infrastructure does the Delivery plan promote to ensure residents enjoy healthy lives into older age?

Supplementary Response:

As per the previous response, the Economic Delivery Plan is focussed on supporting economic growth over the next three years and not health care infrastructure. The development of the Local Plan has and will continue to have engagement with and input from all health care providers to understand their growth land use needs. Plans to then establish new these facilities lie with the NHS/ Wye Valley Trust and the wider healthcare sector, its not a council lead responsibility.

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from Councillors

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1.	Cllr Toynbee	Item 9 on Cabinet's agenda is entitled Big Economic Plan - To consider and approve the Big Economic Delivery Plan. The Council's website tells us that the Big Economic Plan Delivery Plan was "previously known as the Big Economic Plan". But we are also told in the cabinet papers that the Big Economic Delivery Plan is a route map to achieving the overarching vision in the Economic Plan. So are they two separate things, or one thing that has changed its name? The papers remind us that The Herefordshire Economic Plan published in 2023 sets our long-term 2050 aspiration for Herefordshire, including a vision for the county to be an exemplar 21st century rural economy, and that cabinet's decision is to translate this long-term strategy into prioritised delivery. But the original Big Economic Plan emphasised active travel, equal opportunities, reduced emissions, quality of life and the circular economy. We now see a very different focus. Where can we find details of which elements of the long-term strategy have been removed, and what has been added, and why?	Councillor Biggs - Cabinet member Economy and Growth
Response: The title on the Forward Plan is misleading, when the issue was first raised the title was added as the 'Big Economic Plan' in error, the 'Delivery' word was missed. When the Forward Plan title was corrected, the previous title is shown in brackets as part of the audit trail for the item. The Herefordshire Economic Plan launched in 2023 remains in place, setting a long term over-arching vision for growth of the County. The Big Economic Delivery Plan (being considered at Cabinet on the 30th July) is a three year delivery Plan to deliver implement the over-arching strategy over the next few years. Although the Delivery Plan considers at the start the impact of changes in the intervening period, such as new National Industrial Strategy, the Defence Industrial Strategy, the new mandatory housing targets for Herefordshire, and the revised priorities of the Council Plan 2024 to 2027. The Delivery Plan has been established at the request of the Economy and Place Board, and developed with the Herefordshire Business Growth Board, Skills Board, Environment Board, Cultural Partnership and the Community Partnership.			

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for the clarity that in fact Herefordshire's 2023 Big Economic Plan has not been supplanted, but remains in force, and that the Big Economic Delivery Plan being considered by Cabinet today is to enact this strategy. However, the delivery plan extends well beyond implementation, and implies significant changes in the original plan, notably a shift away from a holistic economic approach, as referenced in my original question.

So I repeat my question – where can we find details of which elements of the long-term strategy have been removed, and what has been added, and why?

Supplementary Response:

None of the existing Herefordshire Economic Plan 2050 has been removed, and there are no plans to change its overarching long term strategy. There's a lot of work completed on that for its adoption in January 2023. The Delivery Plan actions will directly deliver the original vision for 2050 for the county.

The original strategy identified our sectoral strengths and opportunities, the Delivery Plan considers how this is consistent with and can support the delivery of the new National Industrial Strategy and Defence Industrial Strategy. In particular the county's strengths in defence and security and cyber.

The Herefordshire Economic Plan 2050 identifies that infrastructure constraints and the lack availability of employment land are significant issues in terms of growth. The commitment in the Council Plan 2024 to 2028 now seeks to address these issues through the commitment to bringing forward the bypass and the Growth Corridor, these are reflected in the Economic Delivery Plan.

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 2.	Cllr Tully	<i>Herefordshire Parking Strategy</i> On behalf of Bishops Frome and Cradley residents travelling to the County Hospital from the east of the county: residents, including those with mobility issues have told me directly they would shift to a shuttle-based 'last-mile' service if it were reliable. The strategy describes "sustainable onward travel" at future mobility hubs without specifying what that means, where the hubs will be, or what demand assessment underpins the proposals.	Councillor Durkin, Cabinet member roads and regulatory services

		Will the Cabinet Member commit to publishing the locations being considered, specifying what onward travel options (including shuttle or demand-responsive services) are planned for each, and confirming that a demand assessment of east-of-city / rural residents with mobility impairments will be completed before sites are finalised?	
Response: I recognise the importance of ensuring that residents from rural communities, including Bishop's Frome, Cradley and other parts of the east of the county, can continue to access essential destinations such as Hereford County Hospital conveniently and safely, particularly those with mobility impairments. The Parking Strategy does not identify specific mobility hub locations, shuttle services or demand-responsive transport schemes for implementation at this stage. Rather, it establishes a long-term policy framework which supports the integration of parking with wider transport choices and allows future opportunities to be developed and assessed as part of the Local Transport Plan and other transport programmes. The Strategy states that opportunities for Park and Choose sites and mobility hub features will be explored where they can improve travel choices and reduce traffic pressures, but that locations and facilities will be considered on a case-by-case basis and informed by future evidence and business cases. Any future proposals for mobility hubs, Park and Choose sites, shuttle services or demand-responsive transport provision would be subject to further feasibility work, engagement with stakeholders and assessment of local need before implementation. Accessibility and inclusion are central objectives of the Parking Strategy, which specifically seeks to support residents with mobility impairments and improve access to essential services. I am happy to commit to publishing locations that are being considered as they emerge through the engagement and feasibility processes.			
Supplementary Question: Thank you for your answer, and your commitment to sharing sites when they emerge. I'm concerned about where sites that have already emerged exist in the strategy however Planning permission (P201446/RM) for a Park and Choose facility north of Roman Road was approved in 2021. That site isn't a future proposal, it's an agreed piece of infrastructure. Can you reassure my residents on this side of Herefordshire that the strategy can credibly plan for new hubs without accounting for locations that already exist?			
Supplementary Response:			

The strategy commits to improving and setting the standard for park and choose locations – this will apply to existing sites, sites that have already been agreed, and new sites. Some sites may need retrospective work which would need to be built into financial planning, but the intention is for all existing and future park and choose sites to meet the same standards.