

1. Supplement to the agenda for

Cabinet

Thursday 28 November 2024

2.30 pm

**Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4
0LE**

	Pages
3. MINUTES	
Cabinet minutes of 26 September 2024	3 - 18

Herefordshire Council

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 26 September 2024 at 10.30 am

Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting: Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairperson)
Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson)

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

Cabinet Members in remote attendance None

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

Cabinet support members in attendance

Councillors Nick Mason

Group leaders / representatives in attendance

Councillors Clare Davies, Liz Harvey, Terry James and Diana Toynebee

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance

Councillors Toni Fagan, Ben Proctor and Louis Stark

Officers in attendance:

S Amery, R Cook, Luenne Featherstone, H Hall, J Kaira, S O'Connor, T Russell, R Sanders, P Walker and D Webb (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)
S Gregory (Secretary).

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Councillor Biggs, Councillor Hurcomb and Councillor Crockett

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

20. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings held on 27 June and 18 July 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

21. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 13 - 14)

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

22. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS (Pages 15 - 16)

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

23. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no reports from scrutiny committees for consideration at this meeting.

24. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS' IMPROVEMENT PLAN – PROGRESS UPDATE

The cabinet member for children and young people introduced the report, the improvement plan was revised by the corporate director and went to children's improvement board in July and considered by scrutiny committee in September. The plan focuses on 9

recommendations following the Ofsted inspection. The equality assurance framework enables the Council to understand the impact of what it does and the audit activity helps the Council understand the activity work delivered. Noted that the plan on a page is aimed towards staff and this has been received positively.

Councillor Fagan (chair of the Children and Young Person's Scrutiny Committee) discussed the improvement plan on 17 September. The Committee welcomed the focus on the improvement actions and the focus on auditing across the partnership of services for young people. The approach to restorative practice was particularly welcomed and the committee felt this should be implemented across the partners in the County.

The Committee recognised the achievements that had been made within the workforce and the work that continues to drive improvement in this area. The Committee also felt that the consultation with families on the 'right time right place thresholds of need' and managing risk should receive far greater publicity and exposure to ensure that the county families understand and agree with the thresholds.

The initial discussions around child friendly Herefordshire were also welcomed and it was important to ensure the needs of children and young people were clearly identified in developing plans such as the Local Plan and when considering the budget. The points made were as follows:

In Leeds they have done an audit of their child friendly Leeds and it's shown that issues like planning and highways did not take into account the impact on the lives of young people and children.

The new improvement plan was easy to read, the ambitions were very clear, and the actions clearly identified.

Cabinet members discussed the report. The following comments were made:

How positive the strong steer, direction and purpose was in Children's Services. The numbers were increasing for recruitment and retention, but assurance was sought regarding the ASYE (the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) cohort. There was a fluctuation in foster carers and an increase in connected care households. There was a clear line of sight within the plan, and it was helpful that it closely connected with the Ofsted recommendation.

In response Councillor Powell, cabinet member for Children and Young People, confirmed that caseloads are monitored across the department and the AYSE group (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment social workers) have a reduced case load with less complicated work allocated. They are also supported by a supervising social worker.

The cabinet member explained regarding foster carers and connected care households (also known as kinship care), it is natural for the connected care numbers to fluctuate as the restorative practice model is embedded and that reduces the need for some children to go into kinship care. Foster care does present recruitment challenges, particularly foster carers who feel able or confident to support children who have more complex needs. Fostering recruitment is still underway and the Chief Executive and the cabinet member for Children and Young People had recently attended various foster care events and the second annual foster care celebration (Foster Fest) had also taken place. This was briefed to the Corporate Parenting Board separately. It was highlighted that within the recruitment strategy a council tax exemption for foster and kinship care had been implemented. The Council were also reflecting on how recruitment with community and business support in the market towns could be implemented to encourage foster carers.

In response to Councillor Fagan it was noted that this document is used by professionals when considering the set of circumstances and what the appropriate multi agency response would be. It was confirmed that wider advertisement of this document had now taken place.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups.

The plan was welcomed but it was acknowledged there was more work to be done. It was noted that it had been 12 years since a negative Ofsted report was received and 5 years since matters became more serious. Whilst it was acknowledged there was a stronger grasp of the situation and the voices of the families were being listened too, more could still be done in this respect. Concern was also expressed that the feedback received from engaging with the families and children was not the focus of how the Council engage with them day to day. It was positively acknowledged that clear time frames were identified in the plan but there should be greater emphasis on empowering 'all members', not just the corporate parenting board in respect of Ofsted recommendation one. Regarding early help, it was positive that the plan referred to formalising the early help offer in schools and progress had been made highlighting the thresholds. It was also positive that the Council website had created clarity regarding the various services.

In response to the queries, it was acknowledged that the voice of the child wasn't deeply embedded. It was confirmed that an underpinning element within the children's improvement framework is to hear the voice and understand the experience of the children. It was explained that children services engage with families that have received intervention to gather feedback. Recent examples were provided where six out of eight families stated they did understand the reason for being allocated a social worker and they were able to share their views with the social worker. The families confirmed they had received a copy of the child and family assessment and the child's plan, 100% felt the professionals involved worked well together and six families felt the social worker had made a positive experience.

Councillor Powell, cabinet member for children and young people, explained that he had met with families who felt they had a negative experience and noted those experiences have been reflected in the improvement plan. It was highlighted how important it was to continue to receive feedback from families experiencing what was happening now so issues can be picked up on where necessary.

In respect of the corporate parenting board, it was confirmed that all members can work together, and it was highlighted that all members are corporate parenting members and to get in touch if they have suggestions or ideas.

Regarding early help, the great work of schools was recognised, and it was acknowledged if there was more that could be done regarding engagement then the council will do that.

It was unanimously resolved that:

- a) Cabinet endorse the Phase 2 Improvement Plan outlined in Appendix A**
- b) Cabinet authorise the Corporate Director for Children and Young People in consultation with the council's Corporate Leadership Team to lead this improvement plan on behalf of the Council and to send it to Ofsted as part of the ongoing children's services monitoring.**

25. Q1 2024/25 BUDGET REPORT

The cabinet member for finance and corporate services introduced the report and highlighted that the report represents 3 months of actual transactions and 9 months of estimated income and expenditure. It was noted that it highlighted emerging budget pressures due to increasing demand across social care budgets, temporary accommodation and Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport services.

The approved revenue budget of £212.8m included planned savings of £19.5m comprising of £11.6m of directorate savings together with £7.9m of council wide budget savings. This year's Q1 revenue outturn position for 2024/25 showed a variance from budget of £10.8m. Management actions are currently planned to reduce this overspend to £6.8m as shown at table 2 of the report.

This variance represents total cost pressures of £12.1m comprised of: £4.5m in-year net cost pressures for increased demand for adult social care, temporary accommodation and Home to School Transport. £4.8m 2024/25 savings targets currently assessed as at risk. £0.4m 2023/24 savings targets assessed as at risk. £2.4m Council wide savings pending completion of directorate restructuring and vacancy reviews and this represents the balance of the MERS target.

The variance is reduced by £1.3m of delivered Children & Young People 2024/25 savings which were previously removed from the 2024/25 budget by the amendment in February 2024 that was approved.

It was noted that the forecast overspend is expected to reduce to £6.8m through the actions in Table 2 of the report. It was highlighted that each directorate will continue to identify further recovery action and options to mitigate at risk savings targets and ensure recurrent spending is sustainable within the resources available. Directorate recovery plans will also continue to be delivered.

It was noted that the additional expenditure controls implemented during 2023/24 and the associated management recovery actions had a positive impact on the final outturn position. Thereby providing evidence that these actions work and it was confirmed that these controls remain in place to support recovery activity in 2024/25.

Directorate panels will continue to review expenditure on goods and services as well as changes in staffing arrangements to challenge over expenditure for the remainder of the financial year.

It was highlighted that this was a very different position to the one Cabinet found in Q1 last year, where in-year action must be taken to identify the steps to reduce the forecast overspend of £13.5m at Q1. Cabinet Portfolio holders conduct monthly reviews of their financial positions together with their Corporate Directors and this has been further supported by the improved quality of the Cabinet financial report. It was reported that the Finance Team have been shortlisted for the 2024 Public Finance award for Excellence in Governance, Reporting and Assurance.

A review of the delivery and status of the 2024/25 approved savings had been undertaken to determine savings targets at risk of in-year delivery. This confirmed that £8.2m (43%) of the total savings target for the year had been delivered at Quarter 1 with a further £6.5m (33%) assessed as 'on target/in progress' for the year. Savings of £4.8m (24%) are assessed as 'at risk' with work underway to identify mitigations. It was confirmed that at risk is defined as where activity is not progressed enough at this point in the year to evidence that the saving can be realised.

The £1.3m savings in the Children & Young People Directorate budget came from S2 (Reduction in Social Worker establishment) and S3 (Reduction in number of agency

social workers). Activity to deliver saving target S1 (Reduction in High-Cost Placements) £1m is assessed as 'in progress' but not reflected in the outturn position at Quarter 1. However, it was highlighted if this were Q4 then this savings target would be confirmed as being achieved.

It was highlighted that the delivery of savings in full and on time was critical to ensure the 2024/25 revenue outturn position was balanced and to prevent further pressure on future years' budgets. Progress on delivery of savings and mitigations will continue to be monitored and reported in the next budget monitoring report to Cabinet.

Confidence in the Council's position had been emphasised by Grant Thornton (external auditors) in their Audit findings report and Value for money report for 2023/24 Financial Year. Their reports provided valuable external assurance in respect of the Council's financial sustainability and resilience with no significant weaknesses identified. Grant Thornton undertook a review of Children's Services finances comprising "additional work to better understand the drivers of the overspend in Children's services and where expenditure assumptions are realistic". Their findings were positive and noted that the Council recognised financial pressures and had included an additional £11m in the 24/25 budget; was taking steps to reduce costs whilst ensuring placements were safe and appropriate and had set a budget for Children's services which was based on realistic assumptions.

The external audit report also provided valuable external assurance over the controls and processes that were in place, confirming that "arrangements for identifying, developing, monitoring and reporting on savings were appropriate." The auditors noted that "the budget is based on realistic assumptions in key areas."

In respect of the 2024/25 approved capital budget of £160m, this has been revised to £176.1m. The revised capital budget includes £15.3m of unspent project budgets brought forward from 2023/24, approved movements of £0.3m, removal of Maylords Library project £2.6m and £3.1m of additional grants. Table 4 of the report shows the breakdown.

It was noted that the forecast spend position is £110.3m which represented an underspend of £65.8m against a budget of £176.1m. Appendix B, Table A contains the full details. The underspend of £3.2m was from projects that delivered below the project budget and £62.6m in respect of project budgets to be rolled forward for delivery in financial year 2025/26. It was confirmed that these amounts represented budgets that may not be committed in this financial year for projects which are funded by grants or construction that had started late and therefore the budget was retained for delivery in future periods. It was confirmed that the forecast under spend will reduce in Q2 when the budgets are reprofiled to match expected delivery.

It was highlighted that the full capital programme analysed by project for current and future years is at Appendix B, Table B.

It was noted that at the recent Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) the members reported frustration with the slowness of the capital programme. However, significant progress with the delivery of the capital programme was being made. To date in financial year 24/25, £23.1m had been spent with further commitments of £35.1m, totalling £58.2m. This was a significant increase in previous years when at the same point £34.3m (2023/24) and £35.5m (2022/23) had been spent or committed.

It was confirmed to the SMB that a full and detailed review will take place and the Council's reserves strategy will be updated.

It was confirmed that this administration was fully committed to delivering a balanced budget. It was noted that the auditor's report provided assurance over the controls and processes that are in place to support this budget setting. It was further highlighted that the Council's financial position is strong and stable, based on a robust governance framework; the reserves are above average level for unitary council and the Council has low levels of borrowing.

It was highlighted that the Council's accounts for 2023/24 had recently been subject to audit and the Audit Findings Report which will be presented to the Audit & Governance Committee later today. It was raised that the Council will likely be one of the first councils in the country to receive an audit opinion for 2023/24.

There were comments from Cabinet members. The impact of budget amendment line was queried. It was raised that the impact meant the Council were unable to use £2.3m of reserve to cover the overspend last year of £8.7m and instead other areas were considered including £800k which was taken from the climate reserve fund.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. The report was welcomed but concern was raised regarding the length of time it had taken for the report to come to Cabinet. It was requested that the quarterly reports were brought more swiftly.

The accuracy of forecasting the budget was queried. It was also noted that delivery plans were outstanding for all the savings programmes, including the Thrive programme. It was also queried if the city centre masterplan was being used in this work to ensure it is being used holistically.

It was noted there had been upfront investment in the Children's directorate and no overspend was forecast. However, it was raised that the risk elements of children's savings were not clearly represented in Appendix one. Also, assurance was sought that the £800k which was removed from the climate reserve would be repaid to that earmarked reserve.

Concerns were raised regarding the increase in high needs care cases in the Adults Wellbeing directorate, the under delivery of £1.3m in planning and the impact of vacant posts being deleted.

In respect of the capital programme, it was noted that it should be correct to ensure it is delivered in year. Although it was also noted that having variances within the capital programme can be beneficial as it allowed the Council to undertake some of its best projects. It was also highlighted that the Council had never been able to deliver the capital programme within a year due to the nature of capital projects.

In response to the queries, it was confirmed that regarding vacant posts being deleted and the rationale behind that, this would be picked up on separately. It was also highlighted that September was the normal time to report Quarter 1.

The points raised by Councillor Harvey were noted. Whilst transparency and openness were always important in the reports, these points will be considered in the quarterly reports going forward.

In respect of under delivery in the planning target, it was queried if the target amount was correct. It was noted that a transformation programme through the planning improvement board had been completed. This identified that the level of income and staffing capacity were in line with the Council's rural counterparts, which suggested the issue was with the target rather than the directorate. Revisions of the target will be considered. It was highlighted that a new 'pre app' service was being launched and this should result in a positive change in time.

It was unanimously resolved that:

- a) Review the financial forecast for 2024/25, as set out in the appendices A-D, and identifies any additional actions to be considered to achieve future improvements; and**
- b) Note the management action identified to reduce the forecast outturn position for 2024/25; and**
- c) Agree the continuation and strengthening of management actions to reduce the forecast overspend as identified in this report.**

26. Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The cabinet member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. It was highlighted that this was the first report in respect to the new Council Plan 2024-28 and the associated Delivery Plan 2024-25.

It was highlighted that 88% of the 162 milestones had been completed or were on track. Key capital investment programmes were noted; planning permission had been received for the Museum and Art Gallery; the Shirehall, Library and Learning Centre remained on track for an opening in October 2026; five properties had been purchased for the Single Homelessness Accommodation programme; phase 1 of the road resurfacing programme was completed; £1.2m had been spent on maintenance on schools; new gritters were now on site in Rotherwas; the new waste collection vehicles had been purchased.

It was noted that the Hereford City Centre improvement programme had ended which included; the Public Art across the City; Widemarsh street enhancement works; City greening projects; market stall gazebos; High Town improvements; shop front grants scheme and CCTV enhancements. The joint Autism Strategy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire was received positively by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

It was highlighted that 12 grants had been awarded through the Safer Communities Fund, investing over £900,000 in prevention-focused projects for children and families. Additionally, Herefordshire received £736,000 from Arts Council England for a three-year cultural development project.

Regarding the Council Plan themes:

People, it was highlighted that out of the 50 milestones 8 were completed, 37 were on target and 5 were at risk of missing their deadline. In terms of successes, it was noted that the Good Mental Health strategy was updated, £200,000 was secured for a pilot Cardiovascular Disease Workplace Health Check project, 'Street Tag', was launched to increase physical activity among schools. Workshops had also taken place with Primary Care Networks to improve partnership working and increase referrals to the Stop Smoking service and specialist training has been arranged with maternity services to improve support for pregnant women. It was highlighted that 26 providers had been awarded a contract for Supported Living and 13 providers awarded a contract for Community Activities. The Children's Improvement Plan for 2024-2025 was approved by the Improvement Board and a revised action plan was agreed with the Council's Improvement Partner, Leeds. Plans have been set out with partner agencies for implementation of the new Working Together 2023 and the bid to open a new Special Free School was successfully progressed.

Regarding the Council Plan theme of Place, out of the 52 milestones in the Delivery Plan, 4 were completed, 39 were on target and 9 were at risk of missing a deadline. It

was confirmed that as part of the Local Plan, the Regulation 18 consultation across the county had been completed and the responses were being reviewed. However, it was raised that this will be subject to ongoing discussions with central government.

Noted that consultant procurement was progressing for the new road strategy regarding the design review of phase 1 (southern section of western bypass) and scheme review of phase 2 (western bypass). It was highlighted that a land agent had been appointed and a programme agreed in respect of land acquisition for phase 1.

The public realm services operating model for the new contract had been approved by Cabinet and soft market engagement is due to commence in Quarter 2.

It was noted that in Quarter 1 the Luston Wetland project won the LGC Award in the Environmental Services category and the RTPI Award for Best Project. It was also awarded Highly Commended at the MJ Awards for Leadership in responding to the Climate Emergency and for Best Mitigation Project at the CIEEM Awards.

It was highlighted that progress had been made on the Leominster Heritage Action Zone Project following the successful procurement of a contractor. The council had also delivered the Nature Recovery Network mapping and developed guidance for the management of the council's tree and hedgerow stock to enhance our environment.

It was noted that a new waste contract is due to start in the next quarter. In the meantime, improvement in recycling rates had been seen due to increased composting at household recycling centres. Furthermore, significant work had gone into the Carbon County Reduction activities which is a key priority within the new Council Plan.

In respect of the Council's theme of Growth it was highlighted that out of the 39 milestones in the Delivery plan, 1 was completed, 32 were on target, 5 were at risk of missing a deadline and 1 was not on target.

Regarding the council's objective to develop employment land across the county, it was confirmed that a multi-discipline design team had been appointed to develop designs for Ross Enterprise Park. Additional employment land opportunities were being explored and £25k had been allocated to market towns to undertake feasibility studies.

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Group Training Association were unable to secure the necessary financing for the construction and site acquisition to establish a new Centre of Excellence at Skylon Park. Therefore, the council are now evaluating alternative options by developing a Green Book business case to explore different funding models and solutions for this project.

It was confirmed that engagement with housing delivery partners were ongoing with work being undertaken through the Marches Forum to identify barriers and solutions to growth for high quality and affordable housing. The council had tendered for masterplan architects to provide feasibility concepts around Merton Meadow, Essex Arms and Bus Station sites to form a multi-generational urban village.

It was noted that progress had been made in allocating UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Funds. Applications for Community Infrastructure and Community Capacity grants exceeded available funding and were currently being appraised, with all funds expected to be allocated by the end of July (2025). It was confirmed that most of the Rural Enterprise and Rural Tourism funds had already been allocated, with the remaining funds being used for topping up community grant schemes. Herefordshire had also been successful in securing Local Visitor Economy Partnership status.

Lastly, regarding the council theme of Transformation it was confirmed that out of the 21 milestones from the Delivery plan, 1 were completed and 20 were on target.

It was highlighted that significant transformation work was being undertaken in the digital sphere. Key projects were highlighted, notably implementation of OneDrive, data migration to Teams, and simplified login procedures as part of the Windows 11 upgrade, were all on track. Also, improvements to the planning and regulatory, and HomePoint systems were underway.

The new Workforce Strategy had been approved and launched and work was underway to improve and transform the way residents accessed council services. Work was also progressing to procure a new telephony and website platform for the council.

It was confirmed that the Office for Local Government (Oflog) has been established to provide information about the performance of local government to audiences in all levels of government and to the public. Oflog will use the Local Authority Data Explorer to monitor local government performance. It was confirmed that the Explorer covered six areas of performance: waste management, planning, adult social care, roads, adult skills, corporate and finance. However, due to some of the data being historic, the data published should be interpreted with caution. The key performance indicators selected by the council were outlined, along with the council's targets and what was achieved for each.

It was confirmed that Appendix A to the report provides the detailed status of all 162 milestones contained within the Delivery Plan 2024/25 across the four themes of people, place, growth and transformation.

There were comments from Cabinet members.

Regarding the percentage of children and young people's social work assessments completed within 45 days, it was outlined that 3 members of staff were not at work. It was explained that when this occurs factors would be considered such as reallocating the cases or holding the cases open on the basis the staff member will return imminently. It was confirmed that lead social workers have a case load of 25 cases, when three social workers are absent 75 cases need to be reallocated. It was confirmed that management action is in place to improve this going forward.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. The report was welcomed, it was noted that good progress was being made on various fronts and the homeless accommodation purchase was received positively. It was noted that the balance of the targets against the achievability were at the right level.

It was raised that timescales for delivery should be considered and clarification regarding the 'end points' would be helpful. It was also suggested that the council's risk registers should be published with the performance reports to provide assurance that the registers are managed and have cabinet oversight.

Concerns were raised that the council were holding back regarding no confirmation of government funding following the change in administration for the western bypass and southern link road. It was suggested that the project should be paused until a new source of funding was identified and agreed with the Department of Transport. However, it was highlighted that 'phase 1 of the bypass' (also known before as the southern link road) was cancelled at a cost of £22m. It was also raised that consideration of active travel, walking, cycling and buses should be carried out before focusing on roads. It was raised that focusing on roads contradicts policies and plans already in place.

It was queried how the information could be reconciled regarding the thrive programme savings being marked 'at risk of delivery', when the relevant linked performance deliverables were marked as green (on target) in the report.

It was raised that a performance measure for the KPI's should specify the delay in being discharged due to no care package being in place at home, rather than the general delay in discharge to home.

The shop fronts grant was raised, and it was queried if the threshold for the grant could be reviewed.

It was queried why booking slots were still needed at recycling centres.

In response to the queries, it was noted that end points and risk registers would be considered when looking at how the reports could be improved.

In response to 'holding back' (regarding the western bypass phase 1) it was confirmed that the council were determined to deliver the best for Herefordshire and will continue to engage with government regarding the necessity of the right infrastructure.

In response to the query on recycling centre booking slots, it was advised that this query will be responded to specifically.

Regarding the risk register, it was confirmed that this was being discussed at the Audit and Governance meeting (on 26 September in the afternoon). It was further raised that the risk registers were not publicly considered by the administration that sets them. In response it was noted that this would be considered.

That Cabinet

a) review performance for Q1 2024/25

27. TO RE-COMMISSION THE INTEGRATED COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT SERVICE (ICES) IN HEREFORDSHIRE

The cabinet member for adults, health and wellbeing introduced the report. It was highlighted that the report is recommissioning the integrated community service equipment, referred to as ICES. It was noted that this was a joint service between Herefordshire Council and NHS Hereford and Worcester integrated care board (ICB). It was noted that both organisations have a statutory duty to provide community equipment as set out in the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014. It was confirmed that the contract with NRS healthcare ends on the 31st of March 2025.

It was noted that the service provided free and appropriate equipment to meet the assessed eligible needs of people of all ages. It is an important preventative service that enables more people to remain living safely and independently in their own homes and communities for longer. It was highlighted that it specifically helps with reducing unnecessary admissions to hospital and confirmed it helped reduce discharge delays from hospital. It was noted that the service predominantly supported older adults however it also supported a small number of disabled children including providing equipment to education facilities to improve and enhance the child's access and attendance.

There were no comments from Cabinet members.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. The report was welcomed, and it was noted it was a useful service, relied on by many residents in Herefordshire.

It was raised that returning the equipment at the end of the loan could be improved. It was also requested that reuse and recycling of the equipment was made clear in the contract.

Regarding companies applying for the tender, it was raised that Herefordshire has a larger than average proportion of older people in the county and not a predominantly older population.

Reassurance was sought if the KPI's were the correct ones for this contract and it was queried if there were contingency plans should the cost of the contract increase.

In response to the queries, it was confirmed that returning and reusing the equipment was part of the contract.

It was confirmed that the KPI's had been seen by the cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing and they were satisfied with them.

Regarding the need increasing for this equipment, it was advised that this need could not be forecast, and the focus also needed to be on keeping people as healthy as possible to reduce the need for this equipment. It was confirmed that a lot of work was taking place regarding this.

That Cabinet

- a) The joint re-commissioning of a new Integrated Community Equipment Service is approved to commence from 1 April 2025, for a period of two years with the option to extend annually up to a maximum contract term of five years, at a maximum contract value of £9.1million; and**
- b) Delegated authority be granted to the Corporate Director for Community Wellbeing to implement recommendation (a) including the tender process, award of contract and all operational decisions for the duration of the contract**

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm

Chairperson

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Peter McKay, Leominster	Will you acknowledge that not all our Unclassified Roads, UCR's, have a tarmac surface, and label them as Unmetalled Unclassified Roads, uUCR's, as has been done by some other authorities, such as Devon, and show in a different colour on your highway map ?	Cllr Price
<p>Response: Thank you for your question.</p> <p>In response, I can confirm that not all of our unclassified roads have a tarmac surface. Whilst I have noted the suggestion that the surface be referenced on our highway map, this would not be a current priority for the team who are focussed on reopening Public Rights of ways that are currently closed or dealing with the high volume of Definitive Map Modification Order requests.</p> <p>We will bear this in mind when we reconsider our priorities.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>Would you consult with the Local Access Forum concerning this suggestion and your priorities, my thinking that UCR Roads are managed by BBLP and Public Rights of Way managed by yourselves, so not any priority conflict?</p>			
<p>Supplementary response:</p> <p>Thank you for your question. I am more than happy to consult the Local Access Forum on this matter. I attend LAF meetings in my role as Cabinet Member so I will ask that this matter be considered at a future meeting. Whilst I have noted Mr McKay's comment regarding responsibilities, this piece of work would draw on the Council's resources, as well as that of Balfour Beatty, and does need to be considered against other existing commitments.</p>			

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from Councillors

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Cllr Ben Proctor	<p>The Herefordshire Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2022 recommended that the council adopt a negotiated stopping policy for transient Gypsies and Travellers. This involves caravans being sited at a suitable location for an agreed and limited period of time, and if necessary, with the provision of services such as waste disposal and toilets.</p> <p>Has the council adopted such a policy? If so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the effectiveness of the policy monitored? • When will the policy be reviewed? <p>In not: What policy has the Council adopted to ensure there are sufficient, suitable sites for transient Gypsies and Travellers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the effectiveness of <i>that</i> policy monitored? • When will <i>that</i> policy be reviewed? 	Cllr Durkin
<p>Response:</p> <p>The Herefordshire Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2022 recommended that levels of unauthorised encampments be monitored over a 3-year period to determine if transit provision are required and to consider implementing a negotiated stopping policy in the meantime. The number of illegal encampments in Herefordshire has been adequately controlled within the Unauthorised Encampments Procedure (on Council owned or administered land).</p> <p>The government requires all councils to revisit their Local Plan every five years and Strategic Planning are in the process of updating the current Herefordshire Core Strategy. The Draft Local Plan 2024 Strategic Planning policies (pg.51) set out the latest position re Gypsy and Traveller site provision and ‘negotiated stopping’. The next iteration of this Plan will be decided once the Council has been informed of its housing mandatory targets from the Government and there may be a need to revisit the 2022 assessment referred to above. The Government have informed Herefordshire Council that the overall housing targets will be published by the end of this year. The policy will be monitored principally through the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) using the number of new traveller pitch commitments and completions. Records of unauthorised encampments and turnover of pitches on the council managed sites will also be reviewed to help monitor effectiveness of the policy.</p>			

Herefordshire Council continue to work with the Gypsy and Traveller community including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children, young people and their families. Children's Services estimate there are 1000 children of GRT families, and their specialist team provide direct support to approximately 125 at any one time to access to health, education, and support services.

Supplementary question

No question supplementary question.