

AGENDA

General Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Tuesday 8 March 2016**

Time: **10.00 am**

Place: **Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square,
Hereford, HR1 2HX**

Notes: Please note the **time, date** and **venue** of the meeting.

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Agenda for the Meeting of the General Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Chairman
Vice-Chairman

Councillor WLS Bowen

Councillor JM Bartlett
Councillor MJK Cooper
Councillor CA Gandy
Councillor J Hardwick
Councillor DG Harlow
Councillor EPJ Harvey
Councillor JF Johnson
Councillor AJW Powers
Councillor NE Shaw
Councillor EJ Swinglehurst
Councillor A Warmington
Councillor SD Williams

Non Voting

Mr P Burbidge
Mrs A Fisher

Mr RJ Fuller

Mr P Sell

Roman Catholic Church
Parent Governor Representative: Primary
Schools
Parent Governor Representative:
Secondary Schools
Church of England

AGENDA

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive apologies for absence.	
2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES To receive details of members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the committee.	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest by members.	
4. MINUTES To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2016.	7 - 32
5. SUGGESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC To consider suggestions from the public on issues the committee could scrutinise in the future. (There will be no discussion of the issue at the time when the matter is raised. Consideration will be given to whether it should form part of the committee's work programme when compared with other competing priorities.)	33 - 34
6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC To note questions received from the public and the items to which they relate. (Questions are welcomed for consideration at a scrutiny committee meeting subject to the question being directly relevant to an item listed on the agenda below. If you have a question you would like to ask then please submit it no later than 4.00pm on Thursday 3 March 2016 to sam.tweedale@herefordshire.gov.uk)	
7. SCHOOL EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE To review recent School Examination Performance.	35 - 46
8. MARCHES LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP To receive an update on the activity of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership in Herefordshire.	47 - 54
9. WORK PROGRAMME To consider the committee's work programme.	55 - 56
10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING The next scheduled meeting is Tuesday 27 October 2015 at <u>1.00 pm</u> .	

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- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
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HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of General Overview & Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Tuesday 19 January 2016 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor WLS Bowen (Chairman)
Councillor CA Gandy (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: JM Bartlett, Mr P Burbidge, MJK Cooper, Mrs A Fisher, Mr RJ Fuller, J Hardwick, DG Harlow, EPJ Harvey, JF Johnson, JG Lester, AJW Powers, PD Price, NE Shaw, EJ Swinglehurst, A Warmington and SD Williams

In attendance: Councillors J Stone

Officers: Richard Ball, Andrew Blackman, Steve Burgess, Andy Hough, Geoff Hughes, Kevin Singleton and Claire Ward

49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr P Sell

50. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

No substitutions were made.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was explained by the monitoring officer that were a member of the committee a school governor this would not constitute a pecuniary interest in item 7 home to school transport.

There were no declarations of interest

52. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2015 be approved as a correct record.

53. SUGGESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The chairman thanks Mr McKay for his continued interest in the work of scrutiny. It was noted that two briefing notes had already been produced on related matters and as a result the chairman was arranging a meeting between Mr McKay and relevant officers to better address his concerns.

54. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The chairman noted the large number of questions which had been received from members of the public and thanked them for their interest. It was explained that

due to the high volume of questions from the public supplementary questions would not be allowed. The chairman hoped that all members of the public were satisfied with the responses received.

55. UPDATE ON HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT PROVISION

The chairman introduced the item noting that implementation of the policy had been deferred for a year in order to allow schools and families affected to make alternate arrangements. It was also noted that the policy had had a diverse impact with rural areas adversely affected, particularly those in border areas. A comment was made that Herefordshire imports more students than it exports to other local authorities. However it was stated that the exporting of students is a controversial idea.

The head of educational development introduced the report acknowledging that it was a difficult procedure to change and implement a policy such as home to school transport.

It was explained that previous scrutiny decisions had supported changing policy in the interest of financial savings by providing the statutory minimum in service provision. Additionally the general overview and scrutiny committee had in 2014 recommended the delay in implementation of the home to school transport policy in order to allow parents to make alternative arrangements. The impact of the policy was demonstrated by the continued interest from members of the public. However it was for good reasons that the council was providing the statutory minimum service.

It was stated that the main reason for policy change was the necessity of cost saving and that it was right that this policy be periodically reviewed. It was explained that even though the policy had been in place for a short time, only since September 2015, effective modelling had already been completed.

The admissions and transport policy manager summarised key information from the appendix of the report. This included:

- Since the autumn term 2015 there had been a reduction in the number of entitled riders and the number of children entitled to free transport.
- There had not been a reduction in the choice of popular schools which had been a concern for many when the policy was first proposed.
- There had not been a reduction in the number of students going outside of Herefordshire for education.
- Herefordshire remained a net importer of students, people still wanted to send their children to Herefordshire for education.
- Only 45.5% of those parents potentially entitled to free school transport had actually stated a first preference for their nearest school.

The chairman thanked officers for their presentation and asked members of the committee for comment.

A member of the committee queried whether actual savings made so far through the scheme had met with projected figures. The admissions and transport policy manager explained that figures showed that over £70,000 would be saved through the policy, by way of increased parental contributions and that it had also

been identified by a review of transport routes to schools an additional £50,000 could be saved. Consequently, implementation over five years was estimated to lead to savings well in excess of the original estimate of £250,000. Given the successes that had already been achieved in the first year of implementation the financial savings achieved were promising.

A member of the committee queried to what extent the impact of the policy on looked after children had been considered. It was explained that looked after children were a separate issue not affected by the home to school transport policy. It was explained that these children would receive their first choice of school and that efforts would be made to accommodate their choices in regards to transport.

A member of the committee made a number of comments regarding the importance of parental choice and the policy in general:

- It was contended that parental choice was the crucial factor in school admissions rather than whether or not free home to school transport was provided.
- It was noted that many of the schools identified in the report as having been adversely affected by the policy were also high performing schools. This represented that a conscious decision was being made that higher quality education was worth paying for home to school transport.
- It was described that schools with small catchment areas were dependent on providing the best quality education in order to attract students.
- It was described that secondary schools were particularly affected by border area issues where responsibility for student's transport varied between different local authorities.

In response the admissions and transport policy manager acknowledged that parental choice was important in admissions. It was explained that previously pupils in denominational education in Herefordshire had received free transport provided by the local authority. However, this provision of transport was withdrawn some years ago, well before recent policy changes and denominational schools in the authority remained oversubscribed. This suggested that admissions had not been affected by non-free transport. The extent to which catchment areas were influencing border area issues was contended.

A representative of Herefordshire Association of Secondary Head teachers (HASH) provided observations on the home to school transport policy. Key points included:

- Of 8 out of 14 high schools who had responded to a survey conducted by HASH, 1 welcomed the policy as a success, all other respondents had expressed concern.
- Home to school transport had generated a great deal of concern from families of low to middle income in rural areas as well as the children of members of the armed forces who were struggling to meet the resource cost of having to organise their own transport.
- Concern had been raised by schools in areas bordering other local authorities where students were being transported into other local authorities at the expense of Herefordshire council.

- It was noted that no other surrounding local authorities had chosen to implement a home to school transport policy similar to that of Herefordshire.
- Some schools had begun to subsidise transport for students, this was a misappropriation of money that should instead be used to improve the education children receive.
- The policy was having an adverse effect on families in rural areas where the policy was having a significant impact. It was noted that there was a significant emotional impact of the policy with children from the same family being sent to different schools due to the policy.
- As more parents were driving children to school instead of paying for bus services, traffic outside of schools had increased with consequent environmental impacts and a heightened risk of accidents near schools.

The admissions and transport policy manager provided a number of responses

- The claim that Herefordshire was losing students to surrounding local authorities was not supported by the actual numbers.. It was explained that in 2014 19 pupils went outside of Herefordshire for education. This increased to 24 in 2015 and preference estimates, which were unlikely to change by any significant amount showed 23 pupils for 2016. It was argued that these statistics show that there are a very small number of pupils who travel outside of the county for education and that there has been only a small variation in numbers since the introduction of the policy. It was explained that transfer and admissions deadlines for 2016 had passed, as such these figures presented accurate projections for the coming year.
- A further 8 large local authorities have implemented the same home to school transport policies during 2015 with a combined population of 8 million people representing a significant shift in policy at a national level.
- It was reiterated that the example of denominational education demonstrated that parental choice is the most important factor in admissions, not the provision of free transport.
- Cabinet had deferred the implementation of this policy to allow parents to make alternate arrangements for siblings and that provisions had been made to mitigate the effect on families.
- It was contended that the provision of free transport had only a minor impact on the use of private cars for school transport and that parental choice was again a crucial factor. It was argued that Hereford city represented an example where despite alternative transport options being available the use of private cars remained the first choice alternative to free school transport.

The chairman identified that the revision of school travel plans to reduce car use by parents may be a beneficial piece of work. The director of children's wellbeing agreed that work on school travel plans would be of benefit.

The Director of children's wellbeing was invited to comment, key points included:

- It was important to remember the human factor around the issue, however it was also important to consider factual evidence. With the implementation of any policy there will necessarily be a transitional arrangement. It was explained that many of the cases which had been

provided represented issues which could be improved upon throughout transition.

- It was important not to conflate issues with the new home to school transport policy with problems which had existed prior to its implementation. Notably, the issue of providing a service for students travelling outside of the authority was due to legal obligations all local authorities are subject to. Additionally the evidence provided by the head of admissions and transport demonstrated that this was not an issue which had seen significant variation before and after the introduction of the new policy.
- Thanked schools for the work which had been done so far to help reduce the impacts of the new policy.

The cabinet member for young people and children's wellbeing was invited to comment. Key points included:

- At the heart of the policy was the need to implement cost savings into service provision.
- Having met with families affected, it was appreciated that there is resentment of the policy, particularly when there are parents who benefited greatly from the previous policy.
- It was important for the committee to remember what is being achieved and how effective the policy has been in cost saving. It was reiterated that evidence gathered so far suggests that both savings may be higher than expected, and that there does not yet seem to be a verifiable impact of catchment policies or the exporting of students becoming an issue.
- Herefordshire council is currently a net importer of students and this is not a negative. While the idea of exporting students seems counterintuitive and an injustice the council has a legal obligation to provide free transport to another local authority school, where this is the nearest.
- The policy is one which will be looked back on as having met a realistic need to make cost savings.

A committee member asked what provision had been made for parents of low wage children and those in receipt of housing benefit. The admissions and transport policy manager explained that there is a legal policy of extended rights through which low income families, notably those in receipt of free school meals or the maximum level of working families tax credit are entitled to free transport depending on distance from schools and age. It was noted that this could give a number of choices for parents in terms of school, depending on location.

A committee member queried if there had been any measurable impact of the policy on home schooling. In response the head of educational development stated that this was something which was measured very closely and as yet had not demonstrated any significant change.

The vice chair made a number of contributions:

- Noted that this update was taking place very shortly after the implementation of the policy and suggested that it would be good to have an additional briefing later in the year when more views could be taken.
- Noted that having discussed the issue with surrounding local authorities it is important to remember that the importing and exporting of students is bound by law and will continue to be the case indefinitely.

- Questioned how many appeals had been heard in regard to home to school transport and queried whether there could be more work done to encourage people to use this process. In response it was stated that 33 appeals had been held concerning the issue and 2 of which had been upheld.

The admissions and transport policy manager noted that with only a limited period's worth of data to analyse, it was too early for a comprehensive review of the policy. However the item had been added to the scrutiny agenda for January 2016 in accordance with the general overview and scrutiny committee's request for a review at that time.

The director of children's wellbeing explained that the issue of exporting children to other local authorities had been a cause of considerable debate for both General Overview and Scrutiny, as well as the cabinet when the policy had been introduced. It was explained that families on Welsh border areas were subject to different choices than families on local authority borders due to there being different education systems in Wales and England. It was explained that at the time it had been decided to introduce a consistent policy for the whole authority including border areas, but acknowledged that this made for more difficult choices such areas.

The chairman requested for a further update on the policy later in the year at a time convenient with school terms.

The influence of school catchment areas on school choices, particularly in Hereford city was discussed. It was clarified that most schools in Hereford City fall within the statutory walking distance for most children and were therefore not of relevance.

There was discussion of potential further scrutiny work to investigate an apparent divergence between opinions of those affected negatively by the home to school transport and the statistics provided on the issue.

A member of the committee stated that the online only availability of key policy documents explaining costings and the financial implications of the policy for families was not sufficiently accessible.

A member of the committee noted that many of the areas which had experienced negative impacts from the home to school transport policy were identified as 'growth villages' in the core strategy.

A member of the committee noted that the use by schools of grant money to mitigate the impact of the home to school transport policy could have a significant impact on the quality of education these schools were able to provide over time. It was warned that there could be other 'creeping' impacts of the home to school transport policy which might influence demographic trends in Herefordshire.

There was discussion over the need to look at alternate dynamic and sustainable transport methods to provide more cost effective home to school transport. It was explained that work had been done in this area, for example route planning and integration with existing public transport networks had been undertaken for

schools in the Ledbury area and that work in efficiency savings for routes would continue indefinitely.

There was discussion of the adverse effect of the policy on rural and border areas of the county. It was stressed that the policy was consistent for the whole authority, but that there were some scenarios, such as border areas which were impacted more by the policy than others, and that these were areas which would need to be improved on in the policy going forward.

A councillor in attendance asked how many schools were considering providing their own transport at low cost, for example by purchasing their own vehicles. In response it was explained that consultation with schools on this was ongoing and as such a full response could not be provided until this was completed.

A member of the committee explained that while changes in policy would always have difficulties, the significance of parental choice in the debate was a demonstration of market forces which could improve the provision of education. If parents were willing to pay in order to send their children to what was perceived to be a better school then this would create competition obliging other schools to improve their service. That denominational and alternate educational schools had remained over-subscribed despite the previous introduction of paid for transport was evidence of this.

The representative of HASH commended member's acknowledgment that rural communities were being adversely affected. It was reiterated that rural communities in border areas were not the only groups adversely affected, schools in central but rural areas such as Weobley high school were also affected.

There was discussion of the extent to which parents had free choice given the financial costs involved not being affordable for all parents. Members of the committee expressed interest in receiving periodic updates regarding the implementation of the home to school transport policy, particularly were a review of the entire public transport network to be undertaken.

A member of the committee noted how traditional school behaviours had been affected. The member also stated that given the need for innovation in transport planning across Herefordshire, parents may be required to make less obvious and innovative choices regarding transport and schools. In response the director of children's wellbeing explained that extent to which free choice would be affected by change in policy could not be comprehensively assessed at this stage as it would take time for trends to develop and become observable. The cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing agreed that due to the early stage of the policy's implementation, it would be prudent to wait for more information to become available before reviewing the policy further.

The admissions and transport policy manager explained that regardless of the provision of home to school transport, 50% of families made their own transport arrangements for school. There had been examples of innovative transport arrangements. It was agreed that schools should not have to contribute significant proportions of their resources into transport.

Resolved

That:

- A) The relevant officers work to produce a briefing note on home to school transport to present to the General Overview and Scrutiny Committee for July 2016**
- B) The item be returned to the scrutiny committee for another annual review in January 2017**
- C) It be investigated what other scrutiny activity would be of benefit regarding home to school transport**

56. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

The chairman apologised that a report showing feedback from initial responses to the local transport plan consultation had been received at short notice.

The assistant director, commissioning introduced the report explaining that the Local Transport plan (LTP) was subject to an ongoing consultation and that the committee's comments were also sought. It was explained that the report included in a supplement to the agenda summarised initial responses to the LTP consultation for which 150 responses had been received before the report was produced.

The key points of the LTP were explained:

- Having had a number of interim transport plans in recent years, this LTP was to be coterminous with the core strategy by being in place for the period 2016-2031.
- The document was a continuation of current strategies - encouraging growth through provision of new road schemes, sustainable transport, improving road safety, and maintaining an asset based strategy for road and highway maintenance and repair.
- The report identified five key areas:
 - o Economic growth
 - o Maintaining a high quality transport network
 - o Sustainable transport
 - o Safe travel
- The LTP identifies policies for specific areas such as low emission vehicles and other areas of study.
- The aim of the LTP is to develop a strategy with £10 million in capital as well as £8 million revenue for maintenance. There would also be additional capital funding for transport packages which include new road schemes
- Many growth policies within the LTP link with strategies for growth in the core strategy.
- The LTP contains plans for each of the market towns in Herefordshire.
- Provision of a core bus network has been included as it was shown to be a key priority for members of the public and key users.

Results of the initial feedback from the LTP consultation were summarised:

- Responses had so far identified priority areas including rural access.
- Priority areas for spending had been identified in maintenance of highways.

- Maintaining a bus network had also been identified as a priority.
- As consultation was ongoing and a high number of responses were expected by the end of the consultation period analysis on initial responses could only go into so much depth.

It was described that in accordance with department for transport guidance, it was important that the LTP remain a living strategy which could be adapted going forward.

The chairman thanked officers for their presentation and asked members of the committee for comment.

A member of the committee asked officers to elaborate on some answers to questions from members of the public.

- Regarding Question 4, answer point D, it was queried why the cost of major schemes had not been included in the LTP consultation as these would be of significant public interest. In response the assistant director of commissioning explained that major schemes would be subject to separate bidding processes, as such it would be unrealistic to ask for comment until these had been commissioned properly. It was explained that the business case for major schemes would be investigated on a case by case basis as they progressed.
- It was also asked how the LTP could be considered a 'balanced' strategy if the investment in major schemes outweighed the money invested in sustainable transport packages. In response the assistant director, commissioning explained that the term balance had been used not in terms of expenditure but in the effect of particular schemes in meeting the plan's objectives. Additionally, it was explained that in order to implement sustainable transport schemes it was a prerequisite to make improvements to infrastructure to alleviate the demand for unsustainable transport in many cases.
- In regard to question 5 from a member of the public it was queried why an environmental impact assessment for areas north of the river wye had not been included. In response it was stated that the answer provided to question 5 from members of the public provided a sufficient response to this question.

The availability of documentation regarding major spend involved in the LTP for the consultation was discussed. It was agreed that an explanatory note would be added to the survey questionnaire.

The chairman queried how representative the current responses to the LTP consultation were considered to be. It was clarified that as only 154 responses had been received at the time of creating the report, the interim responses were not considered representative of the whole authority. Additionally, as previous consultations on related areas had had high response rates, the LTP consultation was expected to receive a similar level of response by the end of consultation.

It was noted that the LTP had been informed by the responses to a number of other consultations which had taken place previously. For example it was noted that a bus network consultation which had received 1800 responses had been considered.

A member of the committee asked to what extent the LTP had changed from previous iterations. Officers explained that crucial differences included that the new LTP was a longer term strategy for growth and was coterminous with the core strategy. Key items such as sustainable transport had largely remained unchanged since previous iterations of the plan.

There was discussion of park and ride schemes included in the report. It was explained that in response to previous consultations park and ride schemes had been considered very strongly. It was explained by officers that a previous scheme based around three large park and ride sites had been determined, through modelling and other work, to not deliver desired outcomes. As a result, the new LTP proposed a scheme based around 10 small sites as part of a 'micro' park and choose scheme.

A member of the committee queried what level of response would be needed for drastic changes to be made to the LTP. In response officers stated that were substantial numbers of responses received asking for specific changes this would be considered. However it was explained that as much of the LTP had been developed from previous consultations, officers were confident in the plan.

A member of the committee asked if there were elements of the consultation which might cause concern for the developers of the plan. In response officers explained that in previous consultations responses heavily focussed on certain issues instead of providing a comprehensive response. Additionally it was noted that in previous consultations there had been a polarisation of views concerning major developments such as roads. It was noted that often these responses were local in nature.

The vice chair noted that there was currently a low rate of response to the LTP consultation from parish councils. It was proposed that this could be due to much of the LTP being Hereford centric and as such many may feel that it is not directly affect them. A number of members of the committee noted the Hereford centric nature of the report and that this had also been raised with previous iterations of the LTP.

- In response it was acknowledged that much of the LTP and consultation focussed on developments around Hereford. However it was noted that significant proportions of the spending identified in the LTP were for highway maintenance across the whole authority including rural areas.
- It was also highlighted that there were a number of regular consultations of more relevance to rural areas, notably the Balfour Beattie annual report which can be effective in responding to local issues. The assistant director, commissioning clarified that while much of the report focussed on Hereford, the policy guidelines would be used for the whole authority, not only Hereford.

There was discussion of parish councils subsidising transport schemes such as public transport.

- The cabinet member, infrastructure noted that in very rural areas maintaining a sustainable bus network was not realistic, however in rural areas in the hinterland of urban areas this was more practical.
- The example of Fownhope parish council was provided as a case where this had been a success. The chair requested that the monitoring officer provide a briefing note on the legal implications of a parish council subsidising transport in this way for member's information.

A member of the committee commended the extension of the consultation period but noted that the LTP consultation had only been made available online and that this was not inclusive. It was also noted that it was in a difficult format for organisations such as parish councils to respond to. In response this was acknowledged and it was stated that written responses or a request for information in alternate formats by organisations would be welcomed were these forwarded.

A member of the committee expressed disappointment that there was limited discussion of rail networks within the LTP acknowledging that this is complicated due to private management of the rail networks. In response it was noted that while there was discussion of passenger transport in the LTP this was an area which could potentially be improved upon.

A number of members of the committee suggested locations for new railway stations on current lines in Herefordshire.

A member of the committee commended the inclusion of choose how you move schemes in the LTP and hoped that this could be expanded to include the whole authority.

A member of the committee proposed that the maps used in the LTP be extended to include the M50 south of the county boundary. It was expressed that while outside of Herefordshire it is significant to the transport behaviours in Herefordshire. It was agreed that maps used in the report would be adjusted accordingly.

There was discussion of an east west pinch point in Herefordshire road networks. A committee member queried why this had not been discussed in the LTP. In response the assistant director of commissioning explained that the route structure referred to in the LTP reflected that associated with key infrastructure projects identified in the corporate plan. As a result it would be inappropriate to refer to another route structure which had not been reviewed through the same scrutiny process. It was also noted that the consultation included a specific item of relevance to this and responses in this area were welcomed.

There was discussion of the frequency of reviews for the LTP. It was explained that previous LTPs had been reviewed once every five years and that this was in accordance with department for transport guidance. The chairman queried if this was still too long a timeframe. In response it was explained that due to a number of interim local transport plans produced in recent years there was a view that a longer term review schedule would allow for more time to better implement the LTP and would allow for better informed reviews.

A member of the committee suggested that work be done to improve awareness of transport options in Herefordshire using technology. It was noted that engagement with the public is being done through technology noting how the LTP consultation was available online.

A member of the committee noted that there had been an informative briefing on the LTP held by officers in the past year and noted that this had made the issues very easy to understand. However it was explained that the consultation in its current form, and the accompanying documents were at times complex and technical. It was asked if simplified consultations more accessible for members of the public and alternate formats for different organisations be considered.

A member of the committee made a number of comments regarding correspondence which had been received by members concerning the LTP from the Herefordshire Transport Alliance:

- It was reiterated that given poor broadband provision in areas of Herefordshire the online only nature of the consultation was not inclusive. The cabinet member, infrastructure contended that this had been exaggerated, however there were areas of the authority where access to the internet was an issue.
- There were concerns over the technical nature of the language used in the LTP. In response it was explained that in matters such as transport, many of the respondents have special interest in the issues raised. As a result, the consultation has been designed to properly accommodate the nature of these responses.
- Concern was raised over the level of commitment in the LTP to major infrastructure projects which were yet to be fully agreed.

The assistant director, commissioning, explained that much of the LTP consultation had been designed so that all reference documents would be available to members of the public to allow for well-informed responses and so as not to withhold any information.

After discussion of a question from a member of the public the committee proposed a recommendation to cabinet that "LTP4 be amended to include the objective "and reduce congestion and increase accessibility by less polluting and healthier forms of transport than the private car." The recommendation was carried.

The cabinet member for infrastructure noted that due to the geography of the authority private car use would remain high. It was contended that significant reductions in emissions would come from technological improvements in vehicles instead of behavioural changes and transport choices in Herefordshire.

A member of the committee queried the strategic environmental assessment in regard to road developments in Leominster. It was asked that a system of rolling reviews be provided in regard to monitoring these developments. The chairman requested that a written response be provided.

A member of the committee requested that it be recommended to cabinet that the LTP be periodically reviewed in accordance with Department for Transport guidance.

The Cabinet member for infrastructure discussed the need to periodically review the LTP as it was a living document. It was noted that were major projects, such as the creation of a university in Hereford to go ahead there would be a need to review and update the LTP accordingly. It was explained that a five year schedule was recommended by the department for transport and that practically, this allowed for implementation of the LTP on a long term basis.

A subsequent recommendation to cabinet was carried that the Local Transport Plan (LTP) be subject to a review every five years in accordance with Department for Transport guidance

Resolved that:

The following recommendations be put to cabinet regarding the Local Transport Plan:

- A) A recommendation be made that the Local Transport Plan (LTP) be subject to a review every five years in accordance with Department for Transport guidance**

- B) LTP4 Vision to be amended to include the objective “and reduce congestion and increase accessibility by less polluting and healthier forms of transport than the private car.”**

57. WORK PROGRAMME AND TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Due to time constraints this item was deferred to the next meeting of the general overview and scrutiny committee at 19 January 2016, 2pm.

The meeting ended at 1.10 pm

CHAIRMAN

MINUTES of the meeting of General Overview & Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Tuesday 19 January 2016 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor WLS Bowen (Chairman)
Councillor CA Gandy (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: JM Bartlett, MJK Cooper, J Hardwick, DG Harlow, EPJ Harvey, JF Johnson, PM Morgan, GJ Powell, AJW Powers, NE Shaw, EJ Swinglehurst, A Warmington and SD Williams

In attendance: Councillors

Officers:

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

59. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

No substitutions were made.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

61. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions had been received in advance of the meeting in relation to the following items.

62. HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY AND RELATED PERFORMANCE

The cabinet member for Economy and Corporate Services introduced the representatives from West Mercia Police, the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), public health commissioning, and Addaction. It was noted for a full meeting of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) there would be 26 people.

It was explained that the purpose of the CSP is to consider a broad range of issues and to develop strategy. The CSP is not intended to handle the detail of cases but to develop conjoined strategy between multiple organisations.

Funding for the CSP was received from the office of the PCC. There were four priority areas identified by the CSP for funding:

- Reoffending
- Community cohesion and antisocial behaviour
- Domestic Violence
- Substance abuse involving the activity of street pastors

In total £496017 was received from the office of the PCC, additional funding is targeted for specific activities. Additional there is a business unit operated by Herefordshire

Council with a running cost of £75,000 for the adult safeguarding board, the children's safeguarding board, and the Community Safety Partnership.

The Cabinet member for Economy and Corporate Services introduced Superintendent Sue Thomas to discuss items regarding funding and to recount the latest crime statistics for Herefordshire.

Superintendent Thomas explained that there were two sections of relevant funding: the superintendent's fund and the business and rural fund. In response to budget cuts, a focus had been placed on methods of crime prevention which were the most cost effective for reducing crime. A number of examples of cost effective methods were given, including engagement activity in the night time economy as well as household alarms.

It was explained that rural and cyber crime were a focus of the PCC. In Herefordshire this had led to a number of successful initiatives:

- Work had been done with action plans to develop neighbourhood watch, and to improve community and farm watch schemes. Funding for these schemes was limited going forward.
- A mobile contact centre had been secured allowing better provision in rural areas.
- Noise teams had been made available during peak times during the summer. These had previously only been available from Mondays to Fridays.

It was stated that Herefordshire is experiencing a 26% increase in recorded crime year on year. However, it was important to understand the context of this:

- Following an audit process, old records had been backdated. This led to an increased number of recorded crimes even though some of these may not have actually occurred in the current year.
- Procedural changes in the recording of crime had led to an increase. For example, in domestic violence cases, methods of investigation had changed generating a higher number of reported crimes from a single case.
- Reported cases of harassment had increased significantly. Many of these cases involved communication technology which had not existed on the same scale previously.
- There had been a 10% increase in crime with injury, notably linked to the night time economy. While there had been an increase, an award had been received for night time policing in Herefordshire with the work done with street pastors and was considered best practice.
- Reported incidents of rape had increased, it was noted that public awareness of rape and sexual abuse cases had been significant in recent times and that this was believed to have led to an increase in reporting.
- Nuisance and noise complaints had seen an increase, however this trend was expected to reverse due to work done targeting the area.
- Burglary had increased, particularly in the Southern areas of the county and the Ledbury area in autumn 2014. However it was noted that police had launched operation Daring, adopted new tactics in the area and had worked with Ledbury Town Council.

Superintendent Thomas identified a number of key areas of work:

- Assessments were being carried out to identify trends in which crimes posed the greatest threat and to which groups.
- An operation was in place to counter drug dealers entering Herefordshire from the west midlands via rail routes. It was noted that this had led to a large number of arrests and that there was good cooperation with Birmingham Police forces.
- Cross border criminals were being targeted on the Gloucestershire and Welsh border areas. It was described that operation nightingale had been launched with

large numbers of officers involved in night-time operations, for example in the Peterchurch area.

- It was explained that the nature of crimes being faced in Herefordshire had changed significantly in recent times and that this was reflected in the Force's priorities. It was noted that mental health activity, urban regeneration, and digital and cybercrime were now key priority areas while not having had the same levels of prominence previously.

Superintendent Thomas summarised the resource situation of the policing in Herefordshire. Key points included:

- Central government cuts had not adversely affected the structure of police forces. While efficiencies were being made, major changes to organisational structures had not had to be made.
- There were 240 members of staff under the superintendent's jurisdiction with additional support by people from many commands
- Police in Herefordshire had an intelligence capacity and a firearms capacity not directly under the command of the superintendent but which were used to support police operations.
- While there had been a reduction in the number of police stations there was still police coverage for the whole county.
- A new build police station to be a joint premises with the fire service was to be constructed.

The chairman asked if additional information could be provided in regard to cybercrime. Superintendent Thomas explained that cybercrime was a particular interest of the Police and Crime Commissioner and detailed a number of briefings which would serve as a good source of information for members.

The cabinet member for Economy and Corporate Services explained how the CSP operates and how priorities are set.

It was explained that Understanding Herefordshire, a research project providing statistics and analysis of demographics and other information about Herefordshire which was a key source of information. When combined with crime statistics and the statutory requirements of the CSP, priority areas can be developed. It was explained that once priorities have been identified, the CSP works to develop strategies seeing improvement in these areas.

The four priority areas were identified as:

- Reducing re-offending
- Reducing the harm done by alcohol and drugs
- Domestic violence
- Community cohesion

It was explained that using statistics, the effectiveness of the CSP in meeting its priorities in comparison to 2013 and how situations have developed could be measured. It was explained that in February 2016 this information would be analysed in full by the CSP and that the results of this analysis would be published through Understanding Herefordshire.

The Cabinet member for economy and corporate services commented on how the effectiveness of the CSP was reviewed, and how its strategies were updated. It was explained that action plans were reviewed on a regular basis and that funding was important within this process.

- Funding was an important consideration, while core funding had been received for 2016-2017, PCC elections in May, little funding had been confirmed for the longer term.

- Priorities of the CSP were reviewed regularly, notably in response to crime statistics.
- The CSP intended to add child sexual abuse as a fifth priority area for the CSP and that an action plan for this area was being developed.

A representative of the office of the police and crime commissioner outlined the current funding situation for the Herefordshire CSP.

- The current police and crime commissioner has been working on the commissioning framework for CSPs across the West Mercia region.
- Funding for the next financial year would be set according to funding received when the PCC took office.
- In total the PCC controls £4.5 million, £1.5 million of which goes to victims with the rest of the funding going to crime prevention.
- Work with partners on strategic planning would continue until the purdah period ahead of the PCC election on May 5 2016. It was noted that while the current PCC is in place there will be assurances given over funding for the transition period.
- It was to be confirmed by the ministry of justice how much funding will be appropriated for victims. However, the core amount of funding would still be provided but there was no confirmation on how much additional funding can be given for business, rural, and cybercrime.
- It was explained that longer term funding for CSPs would be decided upon in the near future, however strict estimates could not be given over funding until decisions had been made in March.

The learning and development officer presented on the four priority areas of the CSP.

The following key points were made in regard to re-offending:

- When the CSP had previously been reviewed by scrutiny 12 months before the meeting, there had been concern over provision for re-offending support for low risk offenders would be given to private companies.
- It was explained that despite some challenges this had been a relatively smooth process. While there were still challenges which would have affected many individuals involved the transition had proven to be a success.
- It was acknowledged that due to the length of time of re-offending cases, the most recent data on re-offending available was from 2013.
- Youth crime was an issue in Herefordshire. What was becoming clear was that housing and accommodation for individuals concerned as well as mental health support was important in responses.
- Since 2015 re-offending rates had seen a downturn.
- While compared against other authorities in the West Mercia region, Herefordshire was doing well in re-offending rates, Shropshire had a lower rate of re-offending. As a result it had been identified that Shropshire's activities would be examined for best practice.
- The number of first time entrants in re-offending was reducing.

The following key points were made in reaction to reducing the impacts of alcohol and drugs, the second priority of the CSP.

- The impacts of alcohol and drugs were closely related to the night time economy. As such, significant work had been done with licensees and street pastors.
- 40% of domestic violence crimes were related to alcohol.
- Hospital admissions relating to alcohol in Herefordshire were not distinct from average rates in West Mercia. However, many cases involved individuals over the age of 50 indicating long term substance abuse.

- 50% of people in treatment for drug abuse have been previous offenders. One of the biggest challenges for the recently commissioned group Addaction would be to combat this.
- 18% of the younger range of individuals in treatment are using cannabis
- Opiate use is high among individuals of higher age ranges in treatment

Representatives from Addaction made a number of comments specifically in relation to the second priority area for the CSP:

- Previous providers for addiction services had adopted a heavily medical approach. This allowed opiate users to receive a high quality of treatment, however work has subsequently been done to look at recovery and understanding individuals who are in treatment. It was noted that Herefordshire has rates of addiction three times worse than the national average. This highlights a need for work to be done in rehabilitation, it was explained that Addaction have been commissioned to meet this need.
- It was explained that a focus of Addaction's work was to work closely with partner organisations in order to offer a single point of contact. It was described that this makes service use simpler and makes service use effective and visible. Additionally, successfully recovered service users would act as champions for the service helping current service users. It was explained that this format was showing continued success across all of Addaction's 150 services.

The following key points were made in discussion of domestic violence, the third priority area of the CSP

- Domestic violence requires the commitment of significant resources in order to provide housing support and with the use of women and men's aid charities.
- Recorded incidents of domestic violence are increasing in Herefordshire, however it was noted that this was at least in part due to procedural change.
- Herefordshire has seen a year on year increase in referrals as well as increases in calls to a helpline. It was explained that it is difficult to assess if this increase is from new victims or if the crime itself is increasing in frequency. It was noted that this is also believed to be due to more people feeling able to come forward and report the crime which was identified as a positive development.
- It was explained that the charity Women's aid had been secured through a tendering service to be in place for an additional five year.
- There were a small number of domestic homicide cases due to be published which represented serious long term case reviews.
- It was noted that there were a number of proposed voluntary schemes for perpetrators of domestic violence. Pilots for the schemes had been successful showing success rates of 50% in comparison to 5% for non-voluntary schemes. In addition the schemes had also been awarded funding for another 12 months to extend pilots by the PCC and the schemes had also generated interest within the west Mercia region.
- Engagement work was being carried out in schools and other areas to promote health relationships.

The following key points were made in regard to anti-social behaviour and community cohesion, the final priority area of the CSP:

- There had been an increase in the number of antisocial behaviour cases reported.
- There had been an increase of 15% in the number of reported cases of hate crime, however this was considered to be largely positive trends in reporting than in the actual number of incidents.
- It was noted that of reported hate crimes, 30% of the victims had been Asian or Pakistani while these groups represent 4% of the population of Herefordshire.

- Work was being done in the area of community cohesion, noting that there was a monthly task group which looked to address issues in this area from a multi-agency perspective.
- In the last 12 months work had been done according to the Prevent, anti-radicalisation agenda between Herefordshire Council and the CSP to supervise individuals at risk of radicalisation.

There was discussion of areas of the CSP which it might be beneficial to conduct further scrutiny work. The cabinet member for economy and corporate services suggested that the CSP partners as well as representatives from the office of the Chief Constable, and the office of the PCC present to members in greater detail. It was noted that action plans were being developed in February and that funding from the office of the PCC for CSP activity would be subject to the results of the PCC elections on May 5 2016. The chairman agreed that this would be of benefit.

The Director of Children's Wellbeing suggested that work in child sexual exploitation by both the General Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as the health overview and scrutiny committee may be of benefit. In response the chair explained that potential options would be explored in greater detail following the meeting.

The chairman welcomed questions from members of the committee.

A member of the committee asked to what extent violent crime in Herefordshire was related to drugs. Superintendent Thomas explained that it cannot be underestimated that people carrying drugs may also carry weapons and that drug dealing also created conflict between individuals involved.

A member of the committee queried if the view that cannabis had a smaller impact on crime than alcohol was correct in Herefordshire. Superintendent Thomas explained that the impacts of class C drugs were considered comprehensively with numerous options considered. It was noted that there had been a recent increase in drug driving cases involving cannabis over the Christmas period. This was significant as traditionally drink driving was the greater issue over that period.

The vice chair made a number of queries regarding the provision of services for victims of domestic violence. Queries were made regarding the number of women's refuges in Herefordshire and the number of available beds. The vice chair also queried the installation of safe rooms in Herefordshire. It was explained that responses were limited due to security as some detailed information could not be disclosed. However it was explained that there is a single refuge in Herefordshire but that this part of a wider network across the west midlands. It was noted that while it is often beneficial to house victims outside of the county for safety reasons, there are times when Herefordshire has not had sufficient capacity to house victims. It was explained that safe rooms are available subject to a needs assessment, noting that there had been a number of requests in the previous year.

A member of the committee noted that the information on provision for domestic violence victims would make for a beneficial presentation for all members and commended the attention given to the area by the CSP. The director of children's wellbeing explained that the Health Overview and Scrutiny committee had recently done work in this area and noted the need to better communicate activity between committees.

The cabinet member for economy and corporate services explained that CSP action plans for 2015 were only given one year of funding. As such it was important that priority leads were able to show that money has been used wisely in order to ask for continued or additional funding.

A member of the committee queried the CSP's view on the balance between individuals and communities responsibilities

A member of the committee asked what advice could be given to members to better support police and CSP activity. Superintendent Thomas replied that ward member engagement remains important as a link to communities and it varies between communities in which ways this can be effective. The example of cooperation with the relevant ward member during a murder enquiry in Herefordshire was provided as an example of success.

A member of the committee asked how well information was shared between CSP partners. The cabinet member for economy and corporate services acknowledged that there had been issues with the availability of information which had now been resolved. It was explained that by the end of 2016, new tracking tools would be in place allowing greater access to data. It was noted that currently the most recent data available on re-offending was from 2013 and that this would be alleviated with the new systems. The cabinet member for economy and corporate services acknowledged that there had been issues with the availability of information which had now been resolved.

A member of the committee queried if there was a danger associated with the success of the current CSP for gaining additional funding. It was asked, as Herefordshire is a relatively low crime authority and the CSP had delivered on a number of its priorities, was there a danger that a new PCC may reallocate funding to areas which were failing instead of Herefordshire. The cabinet member for economy and corporate services explained that this possibility had been discussed. However there was confidence that a new PCC would want to be associated with success, and as such fund and continue to support areas that were already successful.

Resolved

That:

- a) it be recommend that an all member briefing be arranged on the CSP and related matters including the office and Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief Constable, the Superintendent of Herefordshire and other CSP partners.**
- b) that the chair and vice chair investigate what areas of the CSP it may be of benefit to conduct further scrutiny work.**

63. OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC HOUSING DOCUMENTS

The chairman introduced the item stating that the provision of affordable housing was vital to all communities. It was noted that homelessness is a persistent problem so it was positive to note that bed and breakfast accommodation had not been used in three years. The chairman expressed the importance of allocation policies and commented on the proposals for the SHYPP contract.

The cabinet member for adult's health and wellbeing explained that housing was of significant importance for young people. It was explained that the housing strategies would be received by cabinet in March and the comments of the committee would be welcomed.

The director of adult's wellbeing addressed the issue of the SHYPP contract advising the committee of the process being undertaken.

The director introduced the report explaining that housing has become a central element of national government policy only very recently. While the housing strategy was being developed there were major policy statements by national government which needed to be reflected in the strategy. It was not clear that the changes to national policy had been completed and this meant the housing strategy was in a draft form in order to be adaptive.

The joint commissioning manager summarised a number of key areas of the report identifying the legal status of each of the strategies:-

- The Housing Strategy is no longer a legal requirement but as it identifies key themes, including those requiring joint working with major parties, such as the NHS and Registered Providers (housing associations), its role was to prioritise areas of activity to meet required outcomes.
- The Homelessness Review and Strategy is a statutory document which focuses on measures to prevent and relieve homelessness
- The Allocation Policy is a statutory document which seeks to ensure that social and affordable housing is allocated to those in housing need in a fair and transparent manner.

It was explained that in developing the strategies there had been a considerable amount of joint working with various providers. There had been a number of workshops and a larger consultation event in the autumn which had been popular and very productive with 60-70 attendees at the Housing Strategy event. The Homelessness Strategy and the Allocations Policy had been discussed widely with service providers and partners.

A summary of the key national changes was provided. These included:

- Statutory reduction in social housing rents by 1% per annum for four years from April 2016 limiting the revenue available to social housing providers.
- Reduction in the obligations on housing developers to provide affordable housing on larger schemes
- Reduction in the benefit cap to £20,000, extension of shared accommodation rates for housing benefit applicants to under 35 year olds and loss of automatic right to housing benefit for 18-21 year olds
- Legislation now requires landlords to ensure that tenants have the right to remain in the country. This is predicted to impact negatively on the willingness of private landlords to house some households.
- A central government scheme to build 'one for one' social houses lost under the right to buy was undersubscribed.

It was explained that these changes were likely to reduce the resources available to social housing providers. As a result social housing providers would be less likely to build new social housing in the near future.

It was noted that many of the legal changes simultaneously made the construction of private housing more attractive and social housing less attractive. As a result, social housing providers may instead invest in that sector.

Social housing rents remain affordable for the majority of service users but the withdrawal of housing benefit entitlement was likely to have a consequent impact on those in the 18-21 age group who may face an increased risk of homelessness, particularly in the case of young people leaving care, pregnant mothers and those with children.

It was explained that the documents presented to the committee represented four separate strategies and that of the four, the Housing Strategy took a broader view and contained some broad analysis. A number of key priorities were identified:

- support for housing development particularly where social housing was provided
- Ensuring Travellers' sites had sufficient pitches (in cooperation with planning)
- Considering the implications of the university project and having the ability to provide student accommodation as the project develops.
- Improving housing quality, focusing on affordable warmth due to the significant impact of the quality of housing on the health of older people
- Investigating joint working as a response to reduced resources.

The joint commissioning manager summarized key points of the homelessness review and strategy. It was noted that within the report a number of successes are identified:

- Bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households had not been used by the authority in over three years.
- The provision of temporary accommodation had reduced by 67% representing a significant achievement.
- Work had been done with street based interventions targeting rough sleepers and targeting individuals facing immediate homelessness on discharge from hospital.
- National changes previously identified were presenting new threats to homelessness, notably new groups were becoming at risk of homeless.
- Aimed to prevent homelessness through intervention at critical moments and to provide long term solutions.

The joint commissioning manager summarised key issues in the draft Allocation Policy, which also included the Tenancy Strategy.

It was explained that policy had been revised previously reducing the number of people on the housing register from 5000 to 500. This had subsequently increased to over 900. While the intention had been to reduce the numbers on the register to reflect housing need more adequately it had not been expected to have such a significant effect.

Many of the changes in the draft policy reflected the requirements of the 1996 Housing Act and the technical difficulties involved was stressed.

It was noted that the allocations policy reflected the reduction in direct responsibility and resources of local authorities with regard to affordable rented housing. It was noted that the local authority was limited in some instances to trying to influence the behaviours of social housing providers rather than being able to require specific actions.

A Representative of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) provided a number of observations on the provision of social housing:

- Welfare reform is ongoing at a national level and that it was positive to see practical changes in this regard. However it was explained that this would have consequences for the work of social housing providers.
- The ability of local authorities to influence and direct private social housing providers was decreasing
- There was expected to be a 17% reduction in the income of social housing landlords.
- Welfare reform was expected to increase the demand for social housing, however this was also expected to reduce the supply of social housing available which was a major concern.

- As Housing Associations were facing difficulties in building new social housing, and rents for social housing were being reduced by central government it was argued that social housing providers would retrench and offer a reduced service.
- It was unlikely that housing associations would build new social housing in the near future, and as a result social housing targets would need to be reviewed and an additional increase in homelessness be considered.
- Welfare reform was likely to reduce the amount of money available for families using social housing and the introduction of universal credit was likely to negatively impact on the ability of housing associations to provide social housing.
- It was concluded that due to the extent of these changes and their negative impacts on the housing associations it was likely that housing providers would instead invest into other sectors.

In response to a query from the chairman, the representative of the Marches LEP argued that it was unlikely that there would be additional funding given by central government to support social housing as this did not meet their current priority of generating starter homes for purchase.

Members of the committee noted that average weekly wages were low in Herefordshire, and that the county was low in rankings for the availability of rental homes which could mean that Herefordshire would be adversely affected by changes in social housing.

The Chairman queried how the housing strategies would influence the services provided by the Supported Housing for Young People Project (SHYPP). In response the director of Adults Wellbeing explained that in light of reductions in central government funding, every service commissioned by Herefordshire Council was being scrutinised and reviewed. This included the services provided by SHYPP. It was explained that by investigating the SHYPP contract, it was identified that areas of the service should be funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, not Herefordshire Council and so an administrative change in the way this service was provided was being considered. This would not represent a budget cut for the SHYPP service. Discussions with SHYPP and the organisation of which they were a subsidiary were ongoing.

The chairman queried how the strategies affected asylum seekers and refugees. In response it was explained that Herefordshire council had made a proposal for a small number of individuals under the category of Syrian refugees to be housed in Herefordshire. Refugees would be coming from refugee camps in the middle-east as opposed to those who had travelled to Europe independently.

It was clarified that Syrian refugees would be likely to come in family groups. Work was being done to identify suitable housing in Herefordshire to facilitate this.

It was noted that accepting refugees would be criticised for reducing the amount of housing available for non-refugees.

The chairman queried the work being done to generate student accommodation. In response it was explained that discussions with planning were ongoing.

The chairman thanked contributors and invited members of the committee to ask questions.

A member of the committee noted the extent of technical complexities presented by recent national changes.

The vice chairman queried the inclusion of council owned housing stock in the strategies. In response it was explained that Herefordshire council itself is not a holder of

housing stock. While large social housing providers are worked with closely, Herefordshire council housing strategies do not directly affect them.

There was discussion of the housing of refugees. It was noted that while it had been stated that accommodating refugees was likely to draw criticism this would also receive support from many residents of Herefordshire. In response the joint commissioning manager noted that criticism had also been received for not doing enough in this regard. Members of the committee also noted that a number of groups had offered to support the council in housing refugees.

A number of members queried issues relating to fuel poverty and housing.

- It was queried to what extent were issues of fuel poverty linked to low levels of income in Herefordshire, and in addition how much of this was linked to poor quality housing stock. In response it was explained that as well as housing stock, the rural nature of Herefordshire was also an issue. It was noted that in rural areas, access to mains gas can be limited, leading to increased fuel prices.

A member of the committee queried the extent to which mental health and other related services were working in cooperation with social housing providers. In response it was explained that there were structures in place to facilitate close cooperation, notably joint working had been undertaken with Addaction on drug use and homelessness.

A member of the committee queried the distribution of temporary accommodation over the county. In response it was explained that the majority of temporary accommodation provided was in Hereford, but that there was accommodation in market towns which had been acquired more recently. It was agreed that a written response would be given to additional queries from a member of the committee.

A member of the committee queried the type of starter homes which would be likely to be generated as a result of changes in government policy. It was explained that in large part this would depend on the choices of the developer, there was not likely to be a standardised product offered.

It was agreed that a written response would be provided regarding a member of the committee's query regarding the spread of social housing, and also the projected impact of imposing a community infrastructure levy on housing developments across Herefordshire.

64. WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that this item had been deferred from the previous meeting of the committee held on 19 January 2016 at 10.00 am.

The committee considered and agreed the scoping statement for the community infrastructure levy task and finish group. The membership of the committee was agreed as Cllrs Bartlett, Johnson, and Hardwick. Cllr Harvey was appointed as the chairman of the task and finish group.

The committee received the executive response on the future of the smallholdings estate (county farms).

A member of the committee requested that the forward plan be included in documents for work programme items on future agendas of meetings of the committee.

65. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 8 March 2016 at 10.00 am.

The meeting ended at 5.00 pm

CHAIRMAN

Dear Cllr Bowen

Further to the below, HC has now advised under FOI IAT 11070, copy attached, that even roads such as Rockfield Road and the road to Dinedor Camp are to be registered as 'Private Streets **without** any public highway rights', contrary to DfT 2012 Code of Practice, and contrary to Council practice of self-registration of our urban footways and cycleways.

HC have self-registered the hitherto unregistered urban footways and cycleways that they are aware of, with procedures in place enabling the public to apply for correction of any errors and omissions, but not doing this for our unadopted roads, opting instead to make registration of them all subject of application will surely incur greater workload and costs than self-registering those HC are aware of with applications limited to those seeking correction of errors and omissions as for urban footways and cycleways.

Unlike the Definitive Map the SWR/LSG are not legally conclusive records so registration of public highway dedication does not create any public rights should none exist, but it does protect those rights that do exist from extinguishment in 2026, and does produce a highway record of a standard that the public expect.

My analysis of the envisaged cost savings of asserting authority and self-registration of our unadopted roads with public highway dedication that HC simply must be aware of such as those in regular public use including cul-de-sac's leading to public places and to public paths mentioned on the written statements as road to which path connects are threefold, being :

- 1) Less applications to process and determine.
- 2) Able to self-register as unadopted highway, whereas Parishes are likely to apply for maintainable status.
- 3) In the long term where gaps remain unregistered and public rights of use extinguished in 2026, HC will be faced with costs of Creation Orders reinstating those rights.

I therefore suggest yet again that this issue ought be subject of scrutiny.

Rgds

Peter McKay

Leominster

9 February, 2016

Dear Sir,

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS REQUEST EIR IAT 11070

Further to our previous correspondence, your request has now been considered and the council's response is set out below:

When updating the LSG, work scheduled by Geoplace LLP to be completed by end March, what DTF 8.1 'Table 5.1.2 - Street state code', 'Table 5.7.1 - Highway dedication code' and 'Table 6.1 - Street maintenance responsibility code' are being used for roads presently shown online with road status of 'Neither 1, 2 nor 4', for those in regular public use including cul-de-sac's leading to public places and to public paths mentioned on the written statements as road to which path connects, and if highway dedication code 12 is being used what evidence supports your reasoning that neither codes 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 nor 11 apply ?

A) For roads presently shown on the LSG on our online Highways Maps as “Neither 1, 2 nor 4” I am advised we will use the following codes;- 5.1.2 – Street State Code = 2 – Open 5.7.1 – Highway Dedication Code = 12 - Neither 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 nor 11 6.1 – Street Maintenance Responsibility Code = 3 – Neither 1, 2, 4 nor 5 The evidence upon which the Highway Dedication Code is based will be our existing Definitive Map, List of Streets, and Street Works Register.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, further information regarding our review procedure is available in the 'Internal Review Procedure for EIR and FOI requests' which is published on Herefordshire Council's website via the following link: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/government-citizens-and-rights/data-protection-and-freedom-of-information/data-protection>



MEETING:	General overview and scrutiny committee
MEETING DATE:	8 March 2016
TITLE OF REPORT:	School examination performance
REPORT BY:	Head of learning and achievement

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

To consider school performance for summer 2015 and the effectiveness of the Herefordshire school improvement partnership strategy and framework in improving outcomes for Herefordshire's children and young people.

Recommendation(s)

That the committee:

- (a) considers school performance; and
- (b) makes recommendations to cabinet on how the effectiveness of the school improvement framework and strategy could be enhanced.

Alternative options

1. Alternative options are not listed as it is for the committee to decide what actions it wishes to undertake within its scrutiny role.

Reasons for recommendations

2. To enable the committee to scrutinise pupil and school performance in Herefordshire as assessed in 2015.

Key considerations

3. Effective school improvement is a key factor in school performance, supporting improvement in the developmental and educational outcomes for children.
4. The council acts as a champion for the overall outcomes for children and young people, sufficiency and the quality of education. The council respects the autonomy of schools and recognises that all schools, even those supported by intervention, are responsible for their own improvement. The council continues to be a key organisation in school improvement, in partnership with other organisations including school leaders, governors, staff, the Diocese of Hereford and the Archdiocese of Cardiff, and the regional schools commissioner. It is an increasingly complex world of education accountability and support.
5. The council's education strategy and framework makes clear the council's aim that Herefordshire's educational outcomes are in the top quartile by 2016/17 and rank in the top three of its statistical neighbours.
6. The council's approach to school improvement is subject to Ofsted inspection, which will examine the role of the council in relation to pupil outcomes in maintained schools, academies and free schools.
7. Performance headlines are set out below and further detail is available in the presentation at appendix 1
 - In January 2016 88% of Herefordshire children are taught in primary schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding; 83% of pupils in the secondary phase are in good or outstanding schools; over 92% of early years' group settings have been judged as good or outstanding; 97% of childminders inspected are good or outstanding.
 - The percentage of five year old children reaching a good level of development at the end of early years foundation stage (EYFS) in 2015 was broadly in line with the national average. Girls again outperformed boys. The attainment gap between children eligible for free school meals and their classmates remained fairly static. A good level of development was achieved by 40% of children eligible for free school meals, which is an improvement on the previous two years.
 - In year one phonics testing, the performance of Herefordshire children improved at a faster rate than nationally. However, outcomes remain below that found nationally. In order to address this gap, the council is working in collaboration with Marlbrook teaching school to access best practice from Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council where performance in phonics is traditionally strong.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Lisa Fraser, head of learning and achievement on Tel (01432) 383043

- At key stage (KS) 1 , the proportion of children reaching expected levels of attainment in 2015 (level 2c+) in reading, writing and mathematics at age 7 was broadly in line with the national average. However, not enough pupils are attaining the highest levels (level 2a+). The attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals was low.
 - In a recent communication, the improvement in results achieved by Herefordshire primary schools at the end of year six was recognised by Ofsted. At KS2 pupils' performance improved markedly on previous years. The percentage of children attaining a level 4+ by the end of the primary phase in reading, mathematics and writing is now in line with the national average. Similarly, the percentage of pupils achieving the highest levels (L5+) compares favourably with that found nationally for the first time. The levels of progress made by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics were above national average.
 - Herefordshire secondary schools and academies continued to perform above the national average in 2015. The percentage of pupils achieving five plus GCSE passes at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, was 57.5%. This is a marginal decrease, however, compared to last year's figure. In mathematics the percentage of pupils making the progress expected between KS2 and KS4 was 73.1%; this is well above the national figure of 68.2%. In English 74.9% of pupils made the progress expected; this is also higher than the national figure of 72.5%. A higher percentage of pupils in Herefordshire achieved the English baccalaureate (25%) than in other schools nationally (24%).
 - There were 18 Herefordshire looked after children in the cohort for GCSEs in 2015. Of these young people, 16.7% left school having achieved the equivalent of five GCSE passes at grades A*- C, including English and mathematics; this is higher than last year's national average of 14.2%. All of these young people were in education, training or employment in September 2015.
 - Increased numbers of students in maintained secondary schools and academies progressed to level 3 qualifications in 2015. Overall, the county ranks 19 out of 150 councils for the proportion of students (including those in colleges) gaining three A*-A grades or better at A-level, and 15 for the proportion of students attaining AAB grades. The pass rate (grades A*-E) at key stage five in Herefordshire was 99.4%, exceeding the national average of 98.1%. Not enough students, however, achieve at least two substantial Level 3 qualifications.
 - The number of young people not in education, employment or training has decreased to 4.1% in 2015 which is better than the national average of 4.5%. The reduction in the number of young people recorded as not known (currently 157 young people) continues to be a particular focus. Various initiatives, such as recruiting both a dedicated Not in education, employment or training (NEET) tracking and research officer and a link worker from a local training provider (Hoople), have been particularly successful in referring young people more accurately to the support that may move them into education, employment or training. A focused project on the year 11 cohort of students who left specialist provision has had a positive impact for relatively low cost.
8. Strong leadership and management are essential to ensuring excellent outcomes for learners. The council has worked in partnership with the regional schools commissioner, the Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency to

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
 Lisa Fraser, head of learning and achievement on Tel (01432) 383043

secure good outcomes for students in academies. Over the past year there have been some academies that have not performed well in terms of Ofsted inspections and there have also been some issues in relation to leadership and governance which the council has proactively taken up with the regional schools commissioner's office. It has been important to maintain an interest and insight into the issues that academies face in Herefordshire to promote effective high quality education. Currently the government is considering legislative changes to strengthen the role of the regional schools commissioner and reduce the role of the local authority. Herefordshire will need to take an active part in any national consultation and also determine what would be effective arrangements for the Herefordshire context. This will include the potential push for academies to become part of multi academy trusts and the potential for a lack of local knowledge and expertise in the education system to support schools. In maintained schools the council is responsible for early intervention and swift action when a decline in performance occurs and over the past year has used its powers to issue financial notices of concern and also warning notices to a small number of schools to prompt concerted action to improve financial planning and leadership and management.

9. The council is committed to developing leadership at all levels. Leading headteachers, designated as national leaders in education, work in close collaboration with school improvement officers to improve the quality of leadership in both the primary and secondary phases. Joint training sessions delivered by council officers, sometimes with HMI Ofsted, have enhanced local approaches to particular aspects of school improvement. In Herefordshire there are seven national leaders in education and two national leaders in governance.
10. Developing a self-sufficient infrastructure where school-to-school support is the main driver of school improvement is central to the council's vision for raising standards across the county. In partnership with Wigmore teaching school, the council is involved in accrediting specialist leaders in education. These are leaders who have the knowledge and skills to drive standards in subject areas in their own and other schools. The council has also recently supported the applications of a local primary school and two leading headteachers for teaching school and national leader in education status.
11. Recent projects to improve the quality of leadership at governing body level have been undertaken by the council in collaboration with an external provider and national leaders in governance (NLGs). This partnership working arrangement aims to enable governors across Herefordshire to have the necessary information and training to perform their volunteer role; develop a group of experienced governors based in the county with the skills and training to mentor and support other governors in Herefordshire; create a sustainable model of support that thrives beyond 2016. Governor vacancies are currently running at around 10%; there is a need for an ongoing supply of good governors.
12. There are a number of statutory duties undertaken by the council which include the moderation of outcomes in the early years. This year the moderation of teacher assessment in KS1 and KS22 will be undertaken by Marlbrook teaching school on behalf of the council. Council officers support the delivery of religious education through SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education).

Community impact

13. Pupil performance is important because it enables young people to successfully access employment or higher education and measures progress relative to their starting points.
14. The council's corporate plan has as a priority keeping children safe and giving them a great start in life. Within this plan sits the council's approach to education and its education strategy which considers performance data at both micro and macro level, including vulnerable groups, and looks at performance over time. This informs the work of the strategy and Herefordshire's school improvement partnership and framework, allowing work to be appropriately targeted. Herefordshire's children and young people's plan contains specific work to enhance children's life chances and give them a great start in life and also provides a focus to develop family support which can improve a child's educational development as well.

Equality and human rights

15. The focus on the gaps in achievement between vulnerable groups and their peers has and continues to be a key issue for Herefordshire. A number of activities have taken place within individual schools, between schools and with assistance from the council. There has been some examples of good practice and improvement which has narrowed the gap. However, further work is required and this is taking place as part of Herefordshire's approach to school improvement.
16. Herefordshire has struggled over a number of years to narrow the gap between vulnerable pupils and their peers. The council has an ongoing project examining outcomes of vulnerable groups, including pupils eligible for the pupil premium, and coordinating action. Over the past year schools have taken part in peer to peer support, triad work with the support of Ofsted HMI and the council, and investigative work into what is effective in other council areas. This includes examining performance for pupils with English as an additional language and pupils from a gypsy, roma or traveller heritage. Over the past two years there has been evidence of improvement and some schools have received letters of commendation from the secretary of state. However, overall the gaps remain too wide and this academic year the council has worked with the Herefordshire school improvement partnership to highlight school performance over a three year trend and to focus work with schools where this gap has been particularly prevalent.

Financial implications

17. There are no specific financial implications contained in this report
18. The performance outlined in this report is the result of the dedicated schools grant of £73m. The budget allocated to school improvement officers resource is £139k.

Legal implications

19. Consideration of this report falls within the definition of responsibility delegated to the general overview and scrutiny committee as set out in part 3 paragraph 3.5.2.1.n of the council's constitution.

20. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report, however section 13A of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on the council to promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential in relation to all its education functions and specifically to ensure that all its education functions are (so far as they are capable of being so exercised) exercised by the council with a view to:
- (a) promoting high standards;
 - (b) ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and training; and
 - (c) promoting the fulfilment of learning potential by every person under the age of 20 (and persons aged 20 or over and for whom an education, health and care (EHC) plan is maintained).
21. The duty in section 13A applies to community schools, but not to academies. While the council has no direct responsibility for academies, there is an expectation that there will be a relationship whereby the council is aware of standards and in a position to raise concerns directly with the school, or with Ofsted, if there is not a satisfactory response.

Risk management

22. The risks to the council are that the model does not deliver the strategic objectives of council and school improvement partnership. This is being mitigated through the active Herefordshire school improvement partnership group, continuing to develop the engagement with governors and by creating strong links with the regional school commissioner's office.
23. The effectiveness of the council's arrangements will be reviewed through performance monitoring, through Herefordshire's school improvement partnership and strategic education board. The committee also play an important role in reviewing effectiveness. Ofsted may also inspect the council, given the performance of some vulnerable groups, particularly those eligible for free school meals in relation to overall progress, and progress in relation to their peers.

Consultees

24. None

Appendices

Appendix 1: presentation.

Background papers

None identified.

General overview and scrutiny committee

March 2016

Our vision

The vision of the Herefordshire children and young people's partnership

Our main priority is to keep children and young people safe and to give them the best start in life.

42 Our vision aims to enable:

- children and young people to grow up healthy, happy and safe within supportive families and carers.
- children to have the best health, education and opportunities to enable them to reach their full potential.

By March 2018 we want to have good safeguarding services in all agencies and to have local education and health outcomes within the top 25% nationally.

Learning and achievement in Herefordshire

Key successes in 2015

- **Watchsted figures**
 - 88% of children are taught in good or better primary schools
 - 83% of children are taught in good or better secondary schools
 - 92% of early years' group settings are good or better
 - 97% of childminders are good or better
- **EYFS GLD** (good level of development) – broadly in line with national
- **Y1 Phonics results** – improving at a faster rate than NA
- **KS2 SATS** – improved to in line with national for the first time
- 43 • **KS4 5 A*-C EM** – consistently above NA
- **KS4 progress in English** – above NA
- **KS4 progress in maths** – significantly above NA
- **KS5** – above national in several key indicators, including:-
 - % achieving A* at Level 3
 - % achieving 3 A*-A grades (Herefordshire ranks 19th out of 150 LA's)
- **NEETS** – 4.1% (NA 4.5%)

Areas for improvement

- Year 1 phonics
- Attainment at KS1
- Attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals and those with English as an additional language across most key stages.
- Performance of key providers at post 16
- Attendance

Attendance

Issue

- Authorised absence in Herefordshire primary and secondary phases is higher than national
- Unauthorised absence is low
- Persistent absence is low

Considerations

- Are schools too lenient in authorising absence?
- Are schools too honest in their reporting?
- Are other factors impacting on attendance?

Action

- Raised awareness of attendance data through the strategic board and HSIP
- Communication from the director for children's wellbeing to head teachers emphasising the importance of attendance

Raising standards even further

Creating strong self-sustaining schools through...

- **Developing systems leadership with:**
 - National leaders in education
 - National Leaders of governance
 - Local teaching schools
- **Working in partnership with:**
 - Ofsted HMI
 - Regional schools commissioner's office
 - Other local authorities



Meeting:	General overview and scrutiny committee
Meeting date:	8 March 2016
Title of report:	Marches local enterprise partnership (LEP)
Report by:	Economic development manager

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

To receive an update on activity of the Marches LEP in Herefordshire.

Recommendation

THAT:

- (a) **the committee identify any recommendations to be made to the LEP board and the LEP joint committee to secure improvements in delivery.**

Alternative options

- 1 Not applicable

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 To highlight some of the detailed operational background and activities of the LEP and seek the views of the committee on any additional actions to secure improvement.

Key considerations

Background

- 3 The Marches LEP was in the first tranche of partnerships approved by the government in 2010, there are now 39 LEPs across the UK, each tasked with driving economic growth in their region.
- 4 The LEP is an informal, business sector led private/public sector partnership, tasked with creating the conditions for economic vitality and sustainable employment across this diverse region.
5. The work of the LEP is directed by a board which provides the strategic lead and is responsible for setting the overall strategy for growth including:
 - a. the development of its strategic economic plan priorities; oversight and endorsement of strategic projects;
 - b. and monitoring of expenditure and output performance for the programme of work.
6. The board is chaired by one of the area's business leaders and board members are drawn from the areas' three business boards, the skills sector, business champions from across the LEP area, and the leaders of the three unitary councils. Appendix 1 includes a diagram showing the current structure of the LEP board.
7. As an informal partnership the LEP is not a legal entity. One of the three councils (Shropshire) acts as accountable body for the operation of the LEP and any public funding which the LEP secures for the Marches area. The LEP operates in accordance with an accountability and assurance framework developed in compliance with national guidance, which sets out key practised and standards in managing growth in the Marches and which is available on the LEP website (www.marcheslep.org.uk).

Governance

8. Nationally there is an expectation that the involvement and engagement of the relevant local authorities, and in accordance with their community leadership role, will ensure there remains democratic accountability around decision-making regarding use of public funds.
9. To ensure that this is delivered in the most efficient way possible the LEP established an executive joint committee to which each of the three council executives delegated authority to take decisions regarding strategic economic policy for the LEP area, and

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Nick Webster, Economic Development Manager, on Tel (01432) 260601

use of public funding to support those priorities.

10. To provide some balance to the overall workload across the three authorities, Herefordshire Council act as 'host' for this joint committee and provide relevant governance support to its decision making.
11. Decisions of the joint committee are subject to scrutiny in the usual way and for part of the regular report on executive activity from the leader to Council. The LEP is required to produce an annual report for the three participating councils and it is anticipated the first annual report will be considered by the joint committee at its meeting in April.

Strategic economic plan

12. The LEP's strategic economic plan (SEP) sets out how the partnership intends to make its vision of delivering economic growth, jobs and housing a reality and demonstrates how both central government funding and European Union funding can be targeted to help drive growth.
13. The SEP sets out priorities for addressing areas of business need. These range from infrastructure including transport and broadband, education and skills investment and access to small business finance.
14. In addition the SEP forms the basis of the LEP's deal with central government, as it transfers some of its decision making power to the regions and allows both the private and public sector in this area a bigger say on how government and European money is spent.
15. The LEP are currently involved in a refresh of the SEP and are reviewing the economic and business evidence base, this will ultimately result in a revised and updated SEP.

Growth deal and priority projects

16. Growth deals provide funds from government to LEPs for projects that benefit the local area and economy. Funds from housing, infrastructure and other departmental sources are brought together in a single pot, successful projects were chosen by government from the priorities included within each LEP's SEP.
17. Through the first round of growth deals the LEP managed to secure £75.3m, of this amount Herefordshire was successful in being allocated £43m towards the city centre transport package and the South Wye transport package. In addition, some £355,200 has been allocated, from the skills capital funds within the first round of growth deal, to Herefordshire & Ludlow College and to Herefordshire Group Training Association to deliver improved training in agricultural engineering and manufacturing engineering skills. A further £1.67m was secured in the second round of growth deal towards the Herefordshire broadband programme.
18. A further round of growth deal funding is expected to be announced within the next few months, as a consequence, in order to provide government with quality project submissions, the LEP have asked local partners to confirm their submissions to the LEP project long list.
19. The council is currently engaged with the LEP and other partners in determining the projects which will be put forward for consideration on the LEP's project long list. The

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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list of final submissions will be subject to the council's governance process.

Current projects

20. Hereford Enterprise Zone

- a. In 2011 all LEP's were invited to submit proposals for a new round of enterprise zones. Following an internal selection process the Marches LEP determined that the submission that best met the government's selection criteria was a package of vacant employment land within the Rotherwas industrial estate. This submission was successful and part of an initial round of 24 enterprise zones.
- b. Herefordshire Council deliver the project on behalf of the LEP and provide accountable and employing body facilities for the staffing and financial arrangements. The enterprise zone has a governance structure which includes a local committee overseeing day to day operations, and a Marches wide members board responsible for more strategic decisions such as the setting of the enterprise zone delivery plan.
- c. As of the end of December 2015 the enterprise zone had sold 15.5 acres of land, attracted 9 businesses onto the zone who had built 12,000 sqm of new workspace, leading to 584 job opportunities in investment commitments made on site, of which 254 jobs had been created directly and were working on site.

21. Redundant building grant

- a. The Marches LEP redundant building grant scheme (RBG) was launched in 2012 and has awarded grants in excess of £3m. A further extension of the scheme was awarded by government in 2013 enabling RBG to operate across Worcestershire and increasing the amount of funding available to the Marches.
- b. The grant scheme was established following an award from the government's regional growth fund and was designed to give small businesses and start-ups across the region the opportunity to bid for grants that would bring unused buildings back into productive economic use.
- c. Administered by Herefordshire Council, by the end of the scheme a total of 84 projects have been supported (including 23 start-up businesses) with grants totalling almost £3m and as a result, 513 jobs have, or will be, created and an additional 56 jobs safeguarded. The private sector have matched the RBG finance with £7.425m of their own investment and created or refurbished 36,700 sqm of employment floorspace.
- d. The scheme is now closed for applications but officers are working on an application to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to finance an evolution of the scheme, this would apply across the whole of the Marches.

22. Marches investment fund

- a. The Marches investment fund, is a £8.2m programme aimed at bringing forward development projects across the Marches area by providing capital loan funding for stalled projects that will then be able to quickly start and create economic growth.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Nick Webster, Economic Development Manager, on Tel (01432) 260601

- b. It is also able to provide loan assistance to projects needing to complete their final stage feasibility studies. The fund, which has been made possible via an award from the government's growing places fund, is targeted at creating homes and jobs and has supported schemes that deliver these outputs. As a revolving loan fund, this money provides the area with a locally-controlled, an ongoing opportunity to support investors in the Marches area

23. **Marches growth hub**

- a. In partnership with the three local authorities the LEP have created the Marches growth hub as the single access point for business support across the region. The growth hub provides information on finance and funding, networking and events, advice and support, employment and skills in Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Telford & Wrekin. It has been receiving between 1,200 and 1,900 page views per week with more than 12,000 of its business support pages browsed by users since it launched at the end of October. The virtual Hub is supported by physical hubs in Telford, Shrewsbury and Hereford, the Hereford hub having opened on 17 November 2015 at Skylon Park within the University of Wolverhampton's new Business Solutions Centre.

Community impact

24. Social Inclusion forms one of the five Marches SEP strategic priorities, described in the Plan as follows: "We will support socially excluded and marginalised groups by removing barriers to their participation in activities that will improve their economic well-being." The specific focus for the LEP is in assisting people in moving closer to the job market through accessing employment, training or other related services which assist individuals in improving their ability to contribute to their community. In July 2015, a social inclusion champion from the Voluntary & Community sector was appointed to the LEP to assist in ensuring LEP activity is of benefit to local communities and socially excluded groups.
25. LEP projects and programmes, while tending to be of a strategic nature, are developed by public and private sector partners in the light of the available evidence base for business and local community needs. Local Authority officers of the three Council partners provide essential support in ensuring that projects are aligned with local needs and demands.

Equality duty

26. The Marches LEP operates in accordance with an agreed accountability & assurance framework which sets out its key practises and standards and includes the Marches LEP's Equality and Diversity Policy, which was developed in consultation with the three partner councils' officers with responsibility for equality issues. Financial implications

Financial Implications

27. The Marches LEP receives an annual allocation of core funding from the government, this finance is required to be matched from localised sources. An element of the localised match funding comes from staff "in kind" time spent working on LEP

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Nick Webster, Economic Development Manager, on Tel (01432) 260601

projects, the remainder comes in the form of a cash contribution split on a population pro rata calculation between the three councils. For financial year 2016/17 Herefordshire Council will make a contribution of £28,272 towards the LEP annual budget.

Legal implications

28. There are no legal implications of this report.

Risk management

29. The Marches LEP's performance risk and monitoring committee (PRMC) has responsibility for ongoing monitoring of LEP operational and programme delivery and management risks, reporting to the LEP board on any issues and mitigating actions. The LEP risk register is maintained by the LEP team and considered at each bi-monthly PRMC meeting. A draft scheme of delegation is due to be considered by the joint committee at its meeting on 8 April 2016.
30. This scheme of delegation will enable LEP business to be carried out in a timely manner and enable any issues to be escalated by exception to the LEP board and on to the joint committee where required. Herefordshire Council is able to have input to the management of risks at each 'level', through the PRMC (attended by Herefordshire Council finance officers), the LEP board and at joint committee. In addition to this, senior officers of the council support the day to day running of the LEP through their involvement on the LEP management team.

Consultees

31. Not applicable

Appendices

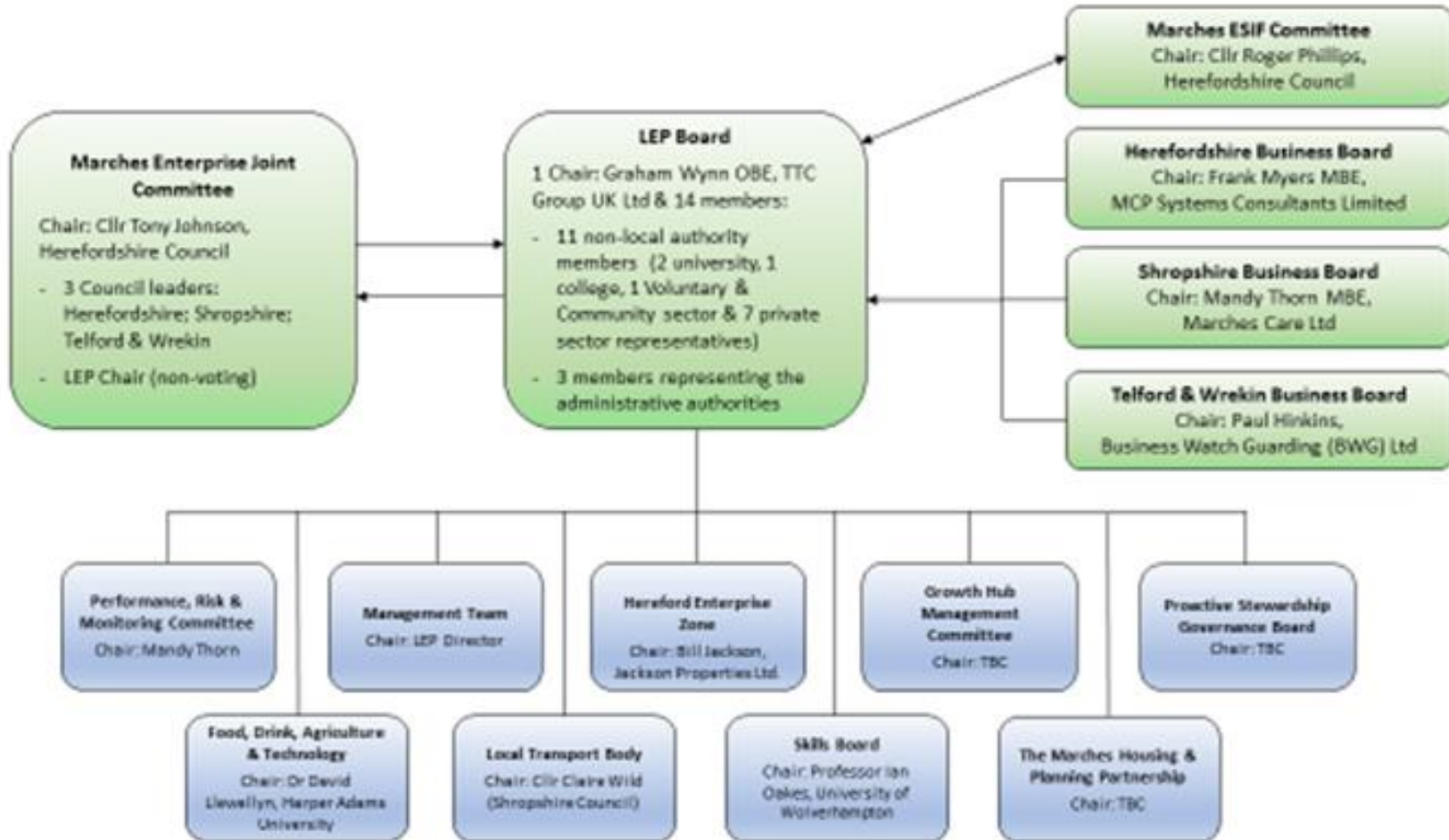
Appendix 1 – LEP board structure

Background papers

- None identified

Appendix 1 – Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Group Structure

Diagram 1: Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Group Structure



General Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Draft Work Programme 2015/16

Agenda items

Tuesday 8 March 2016 at 10.00 am	
Marches Local Enterprise Partnership	To receive an update on the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership.
School examination performance	To consider school performance for summer 2015.

Tuesday 10 May 2016 at 10.00 am	
Community Infrastructure Levy	To receive the task and finish group report on the Community Infrastructure Levy draft charging schedule.
Economic Masterplan	To receive a briefing on the Economic Masterplan.

Issues for possible future scrutiny activity

Topic	Status:
Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision	Having previously requested a briefing note on the maintenance of travellers sites, the chairman undertook a number of site visits with the Director of Economy and Corporate Services. Future scrutiny work was subject to ongoing discussions.
Home to School Transport	Scrutiny activity will be considered following a further update on Home to School Transport later in the year.

Briefing Notes

The following topics shall be dealt with via briefing notes:	Status:
Mental Health Pathways	The chairman has been made aware that there will be a briefing note for scrutiny regarding mental health pathways being produced by the adult's wellbeing directorate.

Task and Finish Groups

Topic	Status:
Community Infrastructure levy	A seminar was held on 26 February 2016. A task and finish group report will be presented at the meeting of GOSC on 10 May 2016.

Committee Member Training

Work by the member development working group is ongoing. It is expected that there will be a number of training sessions for members of the General Overview and Scrutiny Committee ahead of the new municipal year in May 2016.

