

Minutes of the meeting of Council held at The Council Chamber - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Friday 12 October 2018 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor DB Wilcox (Chairman)
Councillor PJ Edwards (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: SP Anderson, PA Andrews, JM Bartlett, WLS Bowen, H Bramer, CR Butler, ACR Chappell, E Chowns, MJK Cooper, PE Crockett, BA Durkin, CA Gandy, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, J Hardwick, DG Harlow, EPJ Harvey, EL Holton, JA Hyde, TM James, PC Jinman, JF Johnson, JLV Kenyon, JG Lester, MD Lloyd-Hayes, PP Marsh, RI Matthews, RL Mayo, MT McEvilly, PD Newman OBE, FM Norman, CA North, RJ Phillips, AJW Powers, PD Price, P Rone, AR Round, A Seldon, NE Shaw, J Stone, D Summers, EJ Swinglehurst, LC Tawn, A Warmington and SD Williams

Officers: C Baird – director for children and families, R Ball – acting director economy and place, A Lovegrove – chief finance officer, A Neill – chief executive, S Vickers – interim director of adults and communities; C Ward – solicitor to the council, A Brookes – head of corporate governance and J Coleman – statutory scrutiny officer/democratic services manager.

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors BC Baker, TL Bowes, PGH Cutter, AW Johnson, SM Michael and WC Skelton.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda item 8 – Youth Justice Plan 2018/19

Councillor RJ Phillips declared an other declarable interest as a magistrate.

Agenda item 12 – Notices of Motion Under Standing Orders

The following declared other declarable interests as recipients of pensions from the Worcestershire Local Government Pension Fund: Councillor MD Lloyd Hayes
Councillor PP Marsh and DB Wilcox.

Councillor RI Matthews declared an other declarable interest as a recipient of a police pension.

Councillor RJ Phillips declared an other declarable interest as a member of the Worcestershire Local Government Pension Fund Committee and as Chairman of the Local Government Pension Scheme Advisory Board.

Councillor NE Shaw declared an other declarable interest as a member of the Worcestershire Local Government Pension Fund Board.

23. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council noted the Chairman's and chief executive's announcements as printed in the agenda papers.

The Chairman provided the following updates:

- He paid tribute to Councillor Powers who had chosen to step down as Group Leader of the It's Our County Group (IOC) after 5 years, thanking him for his contribution to the work of the council.

Councillor Powers thanked the Chairman, commented on the arduous nature of a group leader's role and his decision to step aside, and complimented the ability of his successors.

The Chairman noted that IOC had agreed a co-leadership of Councillors Harvey and Seldon. Because such an arrangement was not provided for in the Constitution, IOC had advised that Councillor Seldon would act as leader for council purposes until the New Year with Councillor Harvey then fulfilling that role from a date to be confirmed.

Councillor Seldon paid tribute to the work of Councillor Powers. He also announced that IOC had appointed Councillor Summers as mental health champion and liaison with the health trusts in the county.

- The Chairman highlighted arrangements associated with remembrance day 2018 marking 100 years since the end of the first world war hostilities, details of which would be notified to members.
- He congratulated Hereford, Leominster, and Ledbury on their success in winning gold awards in the Heart of England Bloom awards praising the extensive efforts of the communities involved.

The chief executive highlighted the following of his published announcements: the refurbishment of High Town; Hereford, the positive report in The Guardian on Herefordshire's welcome to families coming to the county as refugees; the fact that the council had joined a regional approach to recruiting children's social workers; the programme of flu vaccinations for council employees; the completion of the Homefirst service staff consultation enabling a move to 7 day extended hours greatly increasing the capacity of the service; participation in a pilot initiative that had involved producing a series of podcasts addressing key themes in teen health that had been nominated for an Audio and Radio Industry award; and the postponement of the care heroes flash mob event (to be rescheduled before Christmas), part of a piece of work assisting people in entering the adult social care profession.

In response to a question critical of performance in Children's Services over a period of time, during which it was observed it had been under his overall control, the chief executive commented that he would be content to discuss the concerns raised with the questioner. He advised that he was working closely with the director for children and families to improve services and that progress was being made in what were highly challenging services across the country. He highlighted that the recent Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services had not found any instances of any child being unsafe.

25. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 13 - 16)

A copy of the public questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 1.

26. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Pages 17 - 22)

A copy of the Member questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 2.

27. APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

Council was invited to approve the allocation of seats to political groups following changes to group affiliations in the elected membership.

The solicitor to the council introduced the report.

A member expressed disappointment that the two non-aligned members on the council were not being offered the opportunity to take up seats on Committees.

The solicitor to the council confirmed that the law required seats on Committees to be allocated in accordance with the political proportionality of the Council as a whole. The only way that this provision could be disapplied was by Council voting to do so, with no one voting against. She also confirmed that a political group, such as a non-aligned group, could be established if it comprised more than one councillor.

RESOLVED: That the allocation of committee and outside body seats to political groups as set out at paragraphs 7 and 8 of the report be approved.

28. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2018/19

Council was invited to approve the Youth Justice Plan 2018/19.

The cabinet member – young people and children's wellbeing introduced the report.

She highlighted performance in the county against the three national indicators which formed the basis for the action plan for 2018/19:

- there had been a reduction in the number of first time entrants into the youth justice system. The actual numbers were very small, less than 0.5% of young people aged 10-17 in the county. It was nevertheless important to work to continue to reduce this number.
- the use of custody was also reducing and the rate was better than for West Mercia and England;
- proportionately more young people were reoffending than in the West Mercia area as a whole but they were re-offending with less frequency.

She added that the service had been subject to an inspection at the end of 2017/18 and judged as requiring improvement overall. Across the 12 inspection standards seven were rated good, four requiring improvement and one inadequate. The latter was in relation to sharing information and partnership working. This assessment on this standard applied to the whole of West Mercia. Herefordshire social care staff were working with the local youth justice team to enable access to systems to improve joint working.

The following principal comments were made in discussion:

- A question was asked about the issues underlying priority 2.1 of the Plan (p66 of the agenda papers): “improve multi-agency engagement at high risk and decision making meetings”, as this seemed to be an ongoing issue and in particular working with the police. The cabinet member commented that it was a case of seeking continuous improvement in collaborative working. In relation to working with the police there were some specific areas regarding the application of thresholds where improvement needed to be made.
- In response to questions the director for children and families clarified joint working arrangements including the Youth Justice Service, the multiagency service hub and the allocation of an officer to work directly alongside the police in relation to child sexual exploitation issues. He reported that the recent Ofsted inspection had recognised the council’s service for missing children was working well.
- In relation to knowledge of low level youth offending in communities the cabinet member commented that she clearly had to rely on information from the Children’s Safeguarding Board and the Community Safety Partnership and other similar reports. The director undertook to share information in relation to the query raised previously at children and families scrutiny committee regarding the non-criminalisation of children under 18.
- The cabinet member acknowledged the importance of children’s safeguarding observed that the council’s work in this area had been recognised by Ofsted and provided assurance that there was no complacency.
- It was suggested that youth work and groups made a significant contribution to reducing crime and it was asked what support was being provided in this area. The cabinet member commented whilst recognising the importance of youth work it was hard to quantify the extent of that contribution to reducing crime. She was ambitious to get a co-ordinated approach to prevention work and a clear understanding of what help was on offer to help provide the support to young people from which they would benefit.
- A member requested that the graphs at page 79 of the agenda papers be rescaled. Information was also requested on the picture of reoffending in the period of crossover between youth offending and the early years of adulthood. The cabinet member agreed to seek to provide this information.
- A member highlighted that following the loss of council provided youth services Leominster Town Council had mapped all such activities in the Town and was working with organisations and the police to engage with young people and the police with a view to reducing offending. It was suggested that others might find this approach helpful.

RESOLVED: That the Youth Justice Plan 2018/19 as set out at ‘appendix a’ to the report be approved.

29. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Council was invited to consider recommendations arising from Community Governance Reviews.

The Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee introduced the report. He highlighted amendments to the recommendations as set out in the published supplement and thanked officers for their work on the reviews.

RESOLVED:

a) Orders be made to give effect to the following with changes taking effect from 1st April 2019 (‘the effective date’):

- I. That the parish boundary between the Bishopstone group parish and the Stretton Sugwas parish be moved between Stoney Street and Credenhill ward to enable the following properties (Bradworthy; Pear Tree Cottage; Elandwin; the Boundary; Longhope; Old Weir Cottage; Sugwas Pool Cottage; Miramar; Anchorage; Heathmere, and St. Margaret's) to be moved from the Bishopstone district group parish to Stretton Sugwas parish, and that this proposal does not require other changes to the existing governance arrangements for the parishes affected;
 - II. That consequent upon this change being made that the council recommend to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) that the boundaries of the Stoney Street and Credenhill ward be changed to ensure coterminosity with the new parish boundary;
 - III. The number of seats on Brockhampton group parish be reduced from 15 to 10 to better reflect the number of electors; the ratio of parish council seats will be 5 for the Linton Parish group member (a reduction of 1 seat); 4 for the Norton parish group member (a reduction of 2 seats) and 1 for the Brockhampton parish group member (a reduction of 2 seats), and that the electoral arrangements will remain unchanged in all other respects.
 - IV. The existing parish councils of Kilpeck, Kenderchurch, St. Devereux, Treville and Wormbridge that make up the existing Kilpeck group parish council shall all be dissolved; the existing parishes of Kilpeck, Kenderchurch, St. Devereux, Treville and Wormbridge that make up the existing Kilpeck group parish council shall all be abolished; and to form a new parish as shown on the map in appendix C and that the new parish shall be represented by a Parish Council); the name of that new parish council shall be 'Kilpeck Parish Council, and that the electoral arrangements will remain unchanged in all other respects
 - V. The number of seats on Peterchurch parish council be increased from 8 to 9 to accommodate current and future population growth, and that the electoral arrangements will remain unchanged in all other respects
 - VI. That the ward and parish boundary in the Moreton on Lugg parish and the parish of Wellington be moved between Queenswood and Sutton Walls to enable two properties, namely Aylus Cottages, to move from the parish of Moreton on Lugg into the parish of Wellington (Marked A on the map contained in Appendix E and G) and that this proposal does not require other changes to the existing governance arrangements for the parishes affected;
 - VII. That consequent upon this change being made that the Council recommend to the LGBCE that the boundaries of the Queenswood and Sutton Walls ward be changed to ensure coterminosity with the new parish boundary;
 - VIII. The parish boundary between Wellington and Hope Under Dinmore is adjusted to enable three properties, namely the Old Fruit Farm, Bathfield and Queens Wood House to move from their current parish, Wellington, into the parish of Hope Under Dinmore (Marked B on the map contained in Appendix G); and that this proposal does not require other changes to the existing governance arrangements for the parishes affected;
- b) No changes be made to the Bredenbury district group parish council;
 - c) No changes be made to Longtown group parish council; and
 - d) The solicitor to the council be authorised to make the orders as drafted at appendices H to O and referrals to the LGBCE to implement the above recommendations.

30. REQUEST BY CRADLEY PARISH COUNCIL TO CHANGE NAME TO CRADLEY AND STORRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Council was invited to approve the making and publication of a Notice under Section 75 of the Local Government Act 1972 to change the name of Cradley Parish Council to Cradley and StorrIDGE Parish Council.

The solicitor to the council introduced the report.

RESOLVED: That the name of Cradley Parish Council be changed to Cradley and StorrIDGE Parish Council with effect from 12 October 2018.

31. LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

Council received an update on the work of the Cabinet since Council's previous meeting on 13 July 2018.

The Leader introduced the report, highlighting the launch of and desire to promote the care heroes website; a council tax reduction for care leavers; success of the community brokers team; schools performance results; the recognition of the need to do more to improve educational outcomes for looked after children; the visit from members of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy; and the launch of the quarterly council publication 'Herefordshire Now'.

The following issues were raised in discussion:

- A member welcomed the introduction of a bike share scheme in Hereford city, the council's support for cycling and highlighted the opportunity to bid for national funding for a closed cycling track that could be at the heart of encouraging cycling. He also urged that old railway lines across the county be developed for cycling which would amongst other things contribute to the income from tourism.
- Referring to the sale of land and buildings within the Enterprise zone at Rotherwas an assurance was sought that disposals would not limit the potential for a route of an eastern bypass for the City. *The Leader noted that this matter had been previously been discussed by council. The focus of economic development was linked to the western bypass.*
- *In response to a question about representation of small and medium enterprises at the visit from the House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy the Leader agreed to provide detail to members.*
- A member expressed dissatisfaction that elected members had not been invited to the Select Committee's visit and about communication with him both about the event and generally as local ward member. *The Leader replied that the event had not been arranged by the council. He had sent the councillor information about the event in advance of it. He recognised the importance of there being engagement with local ward members.*
- It was noted that, as referred to at paragraph 11 of the report, Council had resolved in July to ask the Leader to consider an additional objective for the chief executive to "champion high standards of conduct and a strong commitment to public service throughout the council." As the report said, the Leader had decided not to include such an additional objective as it restated what was a general requirement of all managerial posts.

Several members questioned the decision not to include the proposed additional objective. It was suggested that the decision was contrary to council's wishes, in itself unwelcome, and did not set a good example. The objective's inclusion would have demonstrated public facing leadership on these issues in accordance with the recommendation of the Committee on Standards of Public Life in its report in 2013, "A review of best practice in promoting good behaviour in public life", that chief

executives of all organisations delivering public services should take personal responsibility for ethical standards in their organisations. The Leader's decision was to the detriment of the council's reputation. The assertion that the provision was implicit within the current objectives did not preclude it being made explicit.

The Leader commented that he had decided, as set out in paragraph 11 of the report, that the inclusion of the additional objective proposed would have been superfluous.

In response to the concerns expressed about the treatment of council's recommendation the Chairman read council's resolution in July 2018 to the meeting, confirming that it had been a matter for the Leader to consider the issue and decide upon it. The matter could be reviewed at the next annual review of the chief executive's objectives.

- The Leader confirmed the recruitment process for a further Independent Person to support the council in delivering its responsibilities in relation to standards in public life was underway and a report would be made to the Audit and Governance Committee in November.
- Several members referred to the new council publication "Herefordshire Now". Clarification was sought on its circulation and total cost. It was also observed that the Government had some years ago criticised some council publications, with the then Secretary of State describing them as propaganda at the taxpayers' expense.

It was also asserted that it was essential that information the publication contained was accurate. The statement that the proposed western bypass would reduce congestion in the city was contrary to the various studies that had been produced.

The Leader replied that 5,000 copies had been printed at a cost of £499. These would be distributed in various public buildings across the county. The publication was also on line. He had no costing in terms of officer time but the information was being produced by officers all the time. Collating the material was therefore not a significant task. It was important that the public was aware of what the council was doing. This was not propaganda but the council communicating with its residents and engaging the community in debate about the direction of council services. The importance of such communication had been recognised in the recent corporate peer challenge.

Removing traffic that did not need to be in the city from the city had to be of benefit and ease congestion.

- *The Leader clarified the respective roles of the Marches Enterprise Joint Executive Committee (MEJEC) and the Marches LEP Board, the relevant legal requirements relating to meetings of the MEJEC and action taken to seek to minimise costs of attendance by holding meetings on the same day as Board meetings. It was noted that the minutes of both bodies were available on line.*
- *The Leader acknowledged that, as referred to at paragraph 10 of the report, the Secretary of State for Justice's response to the request that he reconsider the move of remand cases from Hereford to Kidderminster had been disappointing. He accepted a member's suggestion that the matter should be raised with the county's MPs.*
- *With reference to additional legal spend on the disposal of the smallholdings estate the cabinet member contracts and assets agreed to supply a written answer on the legal costs incurred to date on the disposal programme, noting that some disposals were ongoing. The Leader added that the receipts from sales had proved to be higher than the sum predicted.*
- In relation to the recent Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services and the invitation to all members to support the continued improvement journey, it was observed that one of the principal failings continued to relate to the management of the council's own staff, was therefore within the council's control and should be

readily capable of being addressed. It was questioned when this matter would finally be remedied. *The Leader commented that Cabinet was due to consider the improvement plan in response to the inspection on 18 October. He welcomed all members' views upon it. He looked forward to the plan delivering the required results.*

- Whilst the first parish council summit was welcome, the timing was questioned having regard to the fact that the development of parish council budgets would be well advanced reducing the scope to discuss taking on additional roles in service delivery if these were proposed by Herefordshire Council. It was also suggested that such summits should be held on quarterly or 4 monthly basis. *The Leader emphasised his support for the role and value of parish councils. The summit was about greater engagement and dialogue about the issues. It was not intended to be a meeting focussing on additional budget commitments. He explained how the October date was the earliest convenient date to seek to achieve maximum attendance. He wanted regular summits to take place. He confirmed that a team of officers would continue to provide support to liaison with parish councils.*
- It was asked if officers could deliver services within budget having regard to the financial pressures facing the council and the importance of maintaining adequate reserves. *The cabinet member – finance and corporate services commented that officers had to demonstrate the need for any changes requested in budgets. Some events, for example an increase in the number of looked after children, could not be foreseen leading to unexpected costs requiring budgets to be adjusted. Any concerns about the level of reserves should be raised with the S151 officer. As cabinet member he had sought confirmation from that Officer at the last council meeting that the reserves were appropriate. The release of reserves was targeted on opportunities to change the mode of future service delivery mindful of expected levels of government funding in 2020 and beyond. The picture was uncertain and he supported the retention of a prudent level of reserves having regard to the advice of the S151 officer.*
- It was asked why the budget consultation had not included much on capital expenditure, when such consultation would take place, why member suggestions in the budget consultation meeting had not been taken up, how many responses had been received to the budget consultation and whether the leader would commit to improving the process of public consultation and consider the possibility of establishing a cross-party working group on that subject. *The leader commented that some 40 people had attended the budget consultation. He would like to see improved engagement and would welcome any suggestions.*
- *The cabinet member – finance and corporate services undertook to provide a written answer on the budget consultation response. The budget for 2019/20 was in line with the medium term financial strategy. He noted that the scrutiny committees would have the opportunity to comment upon it. It had to be born in mind that every £10m of capital funding required £0.5m of revenue expenditure year on year to finance it. This meant that the room for manoeuvre was more limited than it might appear.*
- *In response to a question the leader reiterated his pride in the decision to reduce council tax for care leavers noting that this was one of many actions being taken with partners and the community to achieve the best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.*
- A question was asked about the financial health of Hoople Ltd and whether it was generating the income to the council that had been expected on its establishment. *The cabinet member – finance and corporate services commented that Hoople's accounts could be inspected.*
- It was asked whether some of the funds from the disposal of land at the former Holme Lacy primary school would be allocated to Mordiford Primary School as it was having to accommodate pupils from the Holme Lacy catchment. *The Leader undertook to inform the local ward member of the consideration of the allocation of that capital receipt.*

- It was asked whether Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) would be able to deliver their responsibilities to maintain the council's open spaces and verges given that it was understood that they had sold the equipment they owned required for these tasks and would therefore be reliant on third party contractors. It was requested that members be informed of the sum raised by the sale of the equipment, noting a forthcoming decision proposing to relaunch the existing Herefordshire Public Green Spaces Community Grant scheme apparently relied on funding raised by the sale of that equipment. *The cabinet member contracts and assets confirmed that BBLP remained contracted to deliver this work. The Chairman suggested that the detailed point should be pursued outside the meeting.*

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

32. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS

Council was invited to consider a motion on the Worcestershire Local Pension Board.

Councillor Marsh, proposer of the motion, confirmed that, in accordance with Standing Order 4.1.111, with the consent of the seconder, Councillor Harvey, she wished to alter the published motion to a version now to be seconded by Councillor Phillips. The Chairman read the following altered motion to the meeting:

"We welcome the reduction in fossil fuel investments held by Worcestershire pension fund in recent years and call on our Herefordshire Council representatives on the Worcestershire Local Government Pension Fund board and committee to work with Worcestershire Fund to update their responsible investment strategy and seek alternatives to investments in fossil fuels.

In particular we urge them to advise the Fund to:

- *provide regular information on the results of the Fund's policy of engagement with its fossil fuel and other carbon intense holdings; and*
- *review their Statement of Investment principles and Responsible Investment principles in the next year, including undertaking a carbon risk audit."*

In moving the motion Councillor Marsh made the following principal points:

- The fund was administered by Worcestershire County Council and there were 22 contributing members. Herefordshire Council had some limited influence having one representative on the Pension Fund Board and, one on the Pension Fund Committee because it was the second largest member.
- Other contributing members were also looking at the issues raised in the motion, the two proposed actions of which represented first steps.
- The fund had already made some reduction in investments held in fossil fuels. This was not clear on the website and she hoped that the motion would contribute to a move to greater transparency.
- The intergovernmental panel on climate change had concluded that urgent action on climate change was needed. Measures took some years to take effect. The Council had had a carbon reduction plan in place for itself and the County for some time. The wish was to see the pension fund investments reflect the council's approach. She outlined progress on a range of measures the council had initiated to reduce carbon usage.
- There were investment opportunities in new technologies and approaches and the Government had stated that pension funds could take climate change into account as a financially material consideration.

Councillor Phillips seconded the motion making the following principal points:

- It was to be welcomed that the fund had already reduced investment in fossil fuels from 5% to 1.5%.
- The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) was a defined benefit scheme and if there was not a sufficient return on investment employers (effectively council taxpayers) would have to increase their contributions.
- The LGPS was the only funded public sector scheme so required a responsible investment strategy. New ministerial guidance was currently awaited.
- Local authority responsibility for public health presented another dilemma for funds in balancing their fiduciary duty. At the same time as seeking to reduce smoking the local authority pension funds held investments in tobacco companies because of the high return available. However, the investment strategy was over the long term and accordingly there was merit in reducing investment in products such as fossil fuels.

The following additional points were made:

- The council had a leadership role. Other councils and other public bodies had already changed their investment policies.
- Regard had to be had to the fiduciary duty but investment in green technologies and other technologies needed to support life in a world without fossil fuels represented investment opportunities with growth potential that would also be to the benefit of future generations.
- A member commented that the motion whilst worthy would have little practical impact and in itself be little more than a gesture, compared with other actions the council could take.
- A member clarified the council representation on Pension Fund Board the Pension Fund Committee on the respective roles of its representative on each.
- The continuing importance of oil to economies and the range of important products produced by the petro-chemical industry had to be recognised. The performance of oil company shares reflected this importance. In the face of a number of uncertainties in the world investment advice was that exposure to oil stocks was sensible having regard to risk.
- The many current important uses of oil where it could less readily be replaced by another product demonstrated the sense in reducing the use of fossil fuels simply for fuel.
- Attention was drawn to the work of Carbon Tracker, an independent financial think tank that researched the financial case for divestment for fossil fuels.
- Members were urged to continue to explore the potential for the council to take actions to reduce emissions and to address areas where investment was in conflict with its wider duties.

Councillor Marsh in summing up referenced Carbon Tracker's analysis that the 2020s would see a peak in fossil fuel demand and prudent investors should divest into other funds. She welcomed the opportunity for the council to act.

RESOLVED:

“We welcome the reduction in fossil fuel investments held by Worcestershire pension fund in recent years and call on our Herefordshire Council representatives on the Worcestershire Local Government Pension Fund board and committee to work with Worcestershire Fund to update their responsible investment strategy and seek alternatives to investments in fossil fuels.

In particular we urge them to advise the Fund to:

- *provide regular information on the results of the Fund's policy of engagement with its fossil fuel and other carbon intense holdings; and*
- *review their Statement of Investment principles and Responsible Investment principles in the next year, including undertaking a carbon risk audit."*

33. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was 15 February 2019.

The meeting ended at 12.27 pm

Chairman

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr P McKay, Leominster	The Ordnance Survey Getoutside Greenspaces Map encouraging us to be 'A More Active, Greener, Healthier Nation' does not presently show some of our Greenspaces such as Credenhill Park Wood, Bromyard Downs, Bircher Common, etc., and I ask if Herefordshire Council, as part of its role monitoring the implementation of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy, will provide Ordnance Survey with authoritative feedback requesting that all our green open spaces be shown?	Cabinet member infrastructure
<p>Response: Thank you for raising this issue. The dataset used to produce the Ordnance Survey (OS) 'Greenspace' digital mapping was created without this council's involvement. I have asked officers to write to OS raising your concerns.</p>			
PQ 2	Mr M Finning, Ross-on-Wye	There is an adolescent mental health epidemic, reported on almost daily. Sadly, in Herefordshire, hospital admissions for youngsters due to mental health issues is more than double the national average. This was in a report provided to the Council and reported in the Hereford Times. In light of this, do the members of the Council support the highly significant numbers of young people in the county who suffer from anxiety, panic attacks and poor mental health?	Cabinet member children and families
<p>Response: Yes we do, along with our partners including such groups as the No Wrong Door Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service, other community and voluntary organisations, schools, colleges as well as health services such as health visitors, school nurses and more specialised services that are funded by Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and provided by 2Gether NHS Trust. It's a really important area and something I am focused on with our partners.</p> <p>The mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people continues to be a priority for this council, Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Wye Valley NHS Trust and 2Gether NHS Trust. Through Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Partnership and our children and young people's plan that is currently being refreshed, we and our partners are committed to supporting the mental health, emotional wellbeing and other needs of children and young people through a range of universal, early help and specialist support so that they can stay safe and have a great start in life.</p> <p>I would like to provide some clarification of the local context behind nationally published figures.</p>			

Local protocols at the county hospital in Hereford result in a number of children and young people being counted as a hospital admission where in other areas they are not. This is because, when children and young people who may need support from a mental health professional arrive at the Herefordshire Accident and Emergency department, they are moved to the children's and young people's ward so that they can be provided with support in a non-stressful and highly professional environment and therefore are counted as 'admitted' even if they stay for less than a day.

When individuals admitted for less than a day are excluded from the data, the local admission rate is not significantly different from the national rate. Consequently, published figures reflect differences between routes to support rather than represent true differences in the underlying prevalence of need. The local strategic analysis reports have been updated to consider the context of local practice on nationally reported figures.

Supplementary question

Will the council show support for those in the community wishing to meet with their school to help to improve mental health issues?

Response to supplementary question

Schools had an important role to play. It would be expected that there would be discussions between the school and parents and carers with pupils at the school. The council did not have authority over schools. If there was a specific issue it was important that this was raised with the relevant school.

PQ 3	Mr S Betts, Ledbury	Is Herefordshire Council aware of the 'Plantlife' initiative to improve the wildlife carrying capacity of the Nation's road verges and of one specific neighbouring local authority example of up-take of this initiative; namely, Gloucestershire County Council's recent unanimous decision to adopt a pro-wildflower/wildlife policy of road verge management?	Cabinet member transport and regulatory services
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Response:

Yes, we are aware of the Plantlife initiative. Our [Highway Maintenance Plan](#) sets out our approach to verge maintenance. Rural carriageways are cut with a single 1m swathe width, increasing in width to incorporate appropriately sized visibility splays at junctions, bends and in front of signs. Verges wider than 1m and the vegetation beyond this point remain largely untouched, so allowing nature to run its course. Our current policy is that highway verges are cut twice a year. The first cut is expected to be completed before the late May bank holiday; the second cut before the August bank holiday. The number and timing of cuts for verges is subject to ongoing monitoring and will be considered in our current review of the Highway Maintenance Plan. We are open to a reduction in the number of cuts, and/or adjustments in the timing of our cuts, in locations were this approach is supported by the community and we are satisfied that this will not present undue risk to road users.

A number of parish councils in the county operate Lengthsman schemes which may include verge maintenance and we will ensure they are aware of the Plantlife initiative.

Supplementary question

Would he accept ongoing input from the public and other bodies to improve the management of roadside verges for wildlife purposes?

Response to supplementary question

There had been ongoing discussions with Balfour Beatty Living Places about managing the verges and maintaining diversity of plantlife. The council was looking at a way of involving parish councils to bring local knowledge to bear on what actions may be appropriate. It was hoped there would be improvement.

PQ 4

Ms M Steel,
Hereford

Currently only 1 out of 8 members of the council cabinet is female, and overall less than a third of councillors (16 out of 53) are female. What steps is the Council taking to address the stark gender imbalance?

The Women's Equality Group in Herefordshire is holding a meeting during Local Democracy Week on Wednesday 17th October (7.30pm at the Kindle Centre) to look at the issue of under representation of women in local democracy and the group looks forward to sharing the council's response at that meeting.

Cabinet member,
finance and
corporate services**Response:**

Ultimately council representation is made up by those councillors who are elected by the public. The prerequisite before we see a change in the gender balance is to see more women standing in elections to give the electorate a real choice in who they want to represent them.

Herefordshire Council is taking active steps to encourage a more diverse group of candidates to stand for election. Building on the Local Government Association's '[Be a Councillor](#)' campaign, we will be running a local campaign designed to encourage a wider range of people to consider standing for election either as a Herefordshire councillor or as a parish councillor in the county. This will include elements targeted at encouraging more women, younger people and ethnic minority groups to consider standing for election. As well as existing councillors describing their motivations and work as locally elected representatives, we will be publishing on the council's web-site details of the support that councillors elected to Herefordshire Council can expect to receive in terms of training, allowances, computer equipment and supporting policies, such as child or dependent carer support, maternity leave, and reasonable adjustment for disabled people.

I am pleased to note that some of my colleague female councillors from Herefordshire Council are attending the Women's Equality Group meeting to mark [European Democracy Week](#) on 17 October, and welcome the support of the Women's Equality Group in raising the profile of this important issue.

Supplementary question

What is the justification for the gender balance on the cabinet? If suitable candidates could not be found from the Conservative Group why could female councillors from other groups not be appointed?

Response to supplementary question

It would be unusual for an administration to involve members of other parties in their decision making body.

Agenda item no. 6 - Questions from members of the council

Appendix 2

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Councillor Matthews, Credenhill	<p>Sargeants Bus Company based at Kington, run a 7am daily service into Hereford bus station transporting the public and several pupils who attend Hereford Colleges.</p> <p>Over recent times, they have experienced long delays in accessing and leaving the city centre, resulting in up to seventy school pupils whom they transport from Credenhill to Weobley High School on their return trip, arriving up to twenty minutes late for registration. Sargeants cannot adjust their timetables because of fixed arrangements in place with other bus companies.</p> <p>Can you look into this matter, to ascertain if there is any action that can be taken to help resolve this worrying and unacceptable situation?</p>	Cabinet member, transport and regulatory services
<p>Response:</p> <p>Thank you for raising the matter which I am pleased to advise has already been resolved.</p> <p>Sargeants Brothers bus company and other stakeholders contacted the council from 20 September to raise concerns about the changes in traffic conditions in Hereford central area. Our investigation found that there had been a temporary disruption to the system (SCOOT) which coordinates traffic signal operations in the central area. That issue affecting SCOOT has now been resolved, and traffic movements have returned to normal such that bus operators including Sargeants are able to fulfil their published bus timetables. Sargeants have confirmed that their services have been able to return to normal operations.</p> <p>Whilst the council will strive to ensure that traffic movements remain free flowing, Hereford's transport network lacks resilience and can be severely disrupted by relatively minor incidents such as signal failures, temporary road works and vehicle breakdowns. The council's longer term strategy, which includes new highway infrastructure including a by-pass alongside complementary transport measures will help improve resilience and reduce the impacts of such incidents in the future.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>It was asked if ward members could be kept informed of such issues to enable them to inform the public.</p>			
<p>Response to supplementary question</p>			

The request was noted and would be considered.			
MQ 2	Councillor Chappell, Hinton and Hunderton	How many contracts have been given by the council to private 'Home Care' companies in the last 12 months, and what is the total value of these contracts?	Cabinet member, health and wellbeing
<p>Response: Care at home within Herefordshire operates via an open framework of providers. The framework was commissioned in 2018.</p> <p>There are now 60 providers approved on the framework with 35 currently actively delivering care in Herefordshire. The total home care budget spent with providers is forecasted at £9.8m this financial year. Services are currently supporting 814 people within Herefordshire. While home care services are a vital part of the overall care and support offer, the implementation of our new pathway to care model is already having an impact delivering the following improvements, as I reported at Cabinet last month:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued improvements of responsiveness at the first point of contact resulting in fewer phone calls and a greater proportion of calls being responded to upon the first request • An increase in the proportion of cases being signposted to other universal services at the initial point of contact • A reduction in the average cost of care packages compared to pre-strength based practice • An increasing number of cases identified with a military background, meaning we are able to refer them to other avenues of support 			
Supplementary question			
Could I be assured that contracts are regularly audited and action taken when found wanting?			
<p>Response to supplementary question Care providers were required to operate within the council's safeguarding procedures and required to report any change in circumstances that would affect the commissioned care. Quality assurance for home care rested with families in the first instance. However, there was confidence that providers took pride in their service and had a sense of responsibility. The council's whole system strength based approach to assessing and meeting outcomes for residents had been recognised as a best practice model. Providers were expected to demonstrate an understanding of and adhere to the model. The care heroes website had been established to aid recruitment of care workers.</p>			
MQ 3	Councillor Lloyd-Hayes, Aylestone Hill	Could you please clarify that if the population of Herefordshire does not reach 225,000 residents by 2020 we will lose our unitary authority status, is this true or false?	Cabinet member, corporate strategy and budget

Response:			
<p>I have no information to suggest this to be the case.</p> <p>In answer to a parliamentary question regarding unitary council minimum sizes in April the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government provided the following response: "It is the statutory guidance, issued by the Secretary of State on 27 March 2018 under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which states that a proposal for unitary local government should seek to achieve unitary authorities with populations as a minimum substantially in excess of 300,000.</p> <p>The Secretary of State has issued this guidance, including on population size, having regard to past reorganisations, the Northamptonshire County Council Best Value Inspection Report of March 2018, and research, including that from the County Councils Network in 2016 into lessons from previous unitarisation which found that the scale of a unitary council was key, with larger authorities able to deliver economies of scale while smaller unitary councils were more likely to be less resilient, putting key services at potential risk."</p> <p>This guidance relates to proposals for new unitary authorities and does not have retrospective application.</p> <p>Although the Northamptonshire best value inspection report and County Council Network research may have indicated that smaller unitary councils are more likely to be less resilient, Herefordshire Council has through a prolonged period of robust financial planning, investment in service change, and proactive partnership working, combined with taking some difficult decisions, ensured that we are in a sound position to face the challenges of the future. This was evidenced recently by the findings of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge team who noted in their report that: "financial statements indicated that the council should be financially sustainable over the medium term; this view has also been supported by the external auditor" and in comments made following an independent assessment of the council's balance sheets by Link Asset Services that noted: "this is probably the best positioned authority's accounts I've seen in terms of year on year performance for some while."</p>			
Supplementary question			
<p>Councillor Lloyd-Hayes indicated that she, rather than Councillor Michael as listed in the published supplement, had submitted the question. In Councillor Michael's absence the Chairperson permitted her to ask a supplementary question. She asked if there was a danger of Herefordshire experiencing the difficulties it was considered smaller unitary authorities could face?</p>			
Response to supplementary question			
<p>The financial difficulties experienced by some authorities reinforced the importance of ensuring the council was financially sustainable and this could only be achieved by good investment and growing the economy. The council had a good track record in making savings and</p>			

addressing many of the challenges faced by rural authorities. Decisions had also been taken to grow the economy to ensure continued sustainability.			
MQ 4	Councillor Jinman, Golden Valley South	Given the recent adoption of the Community Infrastructure Levy by councils neighbouring Herefordshire and given that one of the main reasons for undertaking the considerable amount of work by parish councils to develop and adopt Neighbourhood Development Plans was the opportunity to have access to 25% of the CIL funds for use within their parish areas, when will Herefordshire Council be given the opportunity to reconsider the adoption of the CIL currently delayed by decision of cabinet?	Cabinet member, infrastructure
<p>Response: Our decision to pause implementation of the community infrastructure levy (CIL) was taken in 2016 following the government's announcement of an independent review of CIL. That review recommended significant changes to the operation of CIL but government has not yet fully responded; some potential draft changes to the operation of CIL were published at the beginning of 2018 but have not yet been confirmed and therefore it may still be considered premature to undertake what may be abortive work on a CIL at this time. We will of course keep this matter under review.</p> <p>Herefordshire's parish councils and communities should feel immensely proud of their achievements in this area – as you say there is a significant amount of work involved and the county remains at the forefront of this work. To date, a total of 110 neighbourhood areas have been designated, over 80% of all Herefordshire's 133 parishes are within a designated neighbourhood area and, with 40 plans adopted to date (and a further 22 at a stage of development to carry material weight) Herefordshire has both the highest number of designated neighbourhood areas and adopted plans of all the counties in England.</p> <p>To focus on the potential income parishes may derive from any CIL associated with the development of ten or more houses in their area as being one of the main drivers for undertaking the work would, in my view, be mistaken. Producing a neighbourhood development plan gives local people the opportunity to decide the future of the places where they live and work. It allows the community to set out the vision for their area and the planning policies for the use and development of land, which can include choosing where the community wants new homes, shops, leisure facilities or employment opportunities to be built and what these buildings should look like. It is also worth noting that s106 planning obligation funding remains available where appropriate.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>It was questioned whether CIL was based on the development of ten or more houses in an area as stated in the answer noting that this would mean that many parishes would not be able to benefit from it. It was also asked what S106 money had been raised to date, how that</p>			

had been spent, and how much had been spent within the Golden Valley South Ward and whether this information could be provided to all councillors?

Response to supplementary question

It was believed the original assumption had been that CIL would be based on each house and it was acknowledged that many Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) had been prepared based on that assumption. However, the NDPs carried with them more benefits than the CIL money alone. The cabinet member said he would circulate a report to all members on the position regarding CIL. He would also supply a written answer on S106 monies.

