

Agenda

Cabinet

Date: Thursday 28 October 2021

Time: 2.30 pm

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

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

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Agenda for the meeting of Cabinet

Membership

Chairperson	Councillor David Hitchiner, Leader of the Council
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor Liz Harvey, Deputy Leader of the Council
	Councillor Ellie Chowns
	Councillor Pauline Crockett
	Councillor Gemma Davies
	Councillor John Harrington
	Councillor Diana Toynbee
	Councillor Ange Tyler

Agenda

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any apologies for absence.	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive declarations of interests in respect of Schedule 1, Schedule 2 or Other Interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.	
3. MINUTES To approve and sign the minutes of the meetings held on 23 September and 30 September 2021.	11 - 18
HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS <i>The deadline for submission of questions for this meeting is:</i> <i>9:30am on Monday 25 October 2021.</i> <i>Questions must be submitted to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk. Questions sent to any other address may not be accepted.</i> <i>Accepted questions and the response to them will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting. Further information and guidance is available at https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved</i>	
4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC To receive questions from members of the public.	
5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS To receive questions from councillors.	
6. IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES To endorse the draft Strategic Improvement Plan and draft Operational Plan.	19 - 86
7. APPROVE A PREFERRED OPTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW CARE FACILITY IN HEREFORDSHIRE FOR MEETING FUTURE DEMAND AND SERVICE DELIVERY To approve the preferred option to invest in and develop the council's own care facility in Herefordshire to meet future demand.	87 - 122

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- Inspect minutes of the Council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members for up to six years following a meeting.
- 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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<http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/hereford-city-bus-map-local-services>

Guide to Cabinet

The Executive or Cabinet of the Herefordshire Council consists of a Leader and Deputy Leader and six other Cabinet Members each with their own individual programme area responsibilities. The current Cabinet membership is:

Cllr David Hitchiner (Leader) (Independents for Herefordshire)	Corporate Strategy and Budget
Cllr Liz Harvey (Deputy Leader) (Independents for Herefordshire)	Finance, Corporate Services and Planning
Cllr Diana Toynbee (The Green Party)	Children's and Family Services, and Young People's Attainment
Cllr Gemma Davies (Independents for Herefordshire)	Commissioning, Procurement and assets
Cllr Ellie Chowns (The Green Party)	Environment and Economy
Cllr Pauline Crockett (Independents for Herefordshire)	Health and Adult Wellbeing
Cllr Ange Tyler (Independents for Herefordshire)	Housing, regulatory services, and community safety
Cllr John Harrington (Independents for Herefordshire)	Infrastructure and Transport

The Cabinet's roles are:

- To consider the overall management and direction of the Council. Directed by the Leader of the Council, it will work with senior managers to ensure the policies of Herefordshire are clear and carried through effectively;
- To propose to Council a strategic policy framework and individual strategic policies;
- To identify priorities and recommend them to Council;
- To propose to Council the Council's budget and levels of Council Tax;
- To give guidance in relation to: policy co-ordination; implementation of policy; management of the Council; senior employees in relation to day to day implementation issues;
- To receive reports from Cabinet Members on significant matters requiring consideration and proposals for new or amended policies and initiatives;
- To consider and determine policy issues within the policy framework covering more than one programme area and issues relating to the implementation of the outcomes of monitoring reviews.

Who attends cabinet meetings?

	Members of the cabinet, including the leader of the council and deputy leader – these are the decision makers, only members of the cabinet can vote on recommendations put to the meeting.
	Officers of the council – attend to present reports and give technical advice to cabinet members
	Chairpersons of scrutiny committees – attend to present the views of their committee if it has considered the item under discussion
	Political group leaders attend to present the views of their political group on the item under discussion. Other councillors may also attend as observers but are not entitled to take part in the discussion.

The Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Herefordshire Council

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Three Counties Hotel, Belmont Road, Belmont, Hereford, HR2 7BP on Thursday 23 September 2021 at 2.30 pm

Present: Councillor David Hitchiner, Leader of the Council (Chairperson)
Councillor Liz Harvey, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson)
Councillors Felicity Norman, Ellie Chowns and John Harrington

Cabinet support
members in attendance

Councillors Jenny Bartlett and John Hardwick

Group leaders in
attendance

Councillors Jonathan Lester, Bob Matthews, Toni Fagan and William Wilding

Scrutiny chairpersons in
attendance

Councillors Elissa Swinglehurst

Officers in attendance:

Interim director of children and families, Acting deputy chief executive - solicitor to the council, Acting deputy chief executive - chief finance officer, Acting Director for Adults and Communities, Interim director of economy and place, Head of economic development and Senior planning officer

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Councillors Gemma Davies, Diana Toynbee and Ange Tyler.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

44. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

45. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

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

46. APPROVAL FOR SUBMISSION OF MINERALS AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN (MWLP)

Cabinet member, finance, corporate services and planning introduced the item, details of which can be found in the agenda pack.

It was noted that the list of modifications (appendix 2) had been updated since publication of agenda. An updated appendix 2 would be attached to the report to Council on 8 October.

It was noted that advice had been sought with regard to requesting more than nutrient neutrality. The advice had been to request nutrient neutrality as this would mean that developers had to meet this and may also include a buffer as well. Applicants could only mitigate against their own developments and not historic applications.

Group leaders were supportive of the minerals and waste plan and they considered that the plan should go forward to the council meeting on 8 October.

Resolved that:

- (a) the draft MWLP development plan document (see background papers) and the schedule of suggested main modifications and minor changes (Appendix A) be recommended for approval by Council for submission to the Secretary of State for examination in public;**
- (b) to agree that the Planning Inspector be invited to recommend any main modifications necessary to the MWLP in order to find it legally compliant and sound; and**
- (c) delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director for Regulatory, Environment and Waste and to the Lead Development Manager to agree, with the Planning Inspector, any additional modifications to the MWLP, if it is appropriate and necessary to do so, in order to facilitate efficient progress of the Plan through the examination process. Subsequently, such modifications will be subject to public consultation.**

47. LEOMINSTER HERITAGE ACTION ZONE

Cabinet member, economy and environment introduced the item, full details of which are set out in the agenda pack.

It was confirmed that there were additional resources in place to deliver this project. It was also requested that there be co ordination between this project and any public realm activities which may be taking place at the same time.

The group leaders were supportive of the project.

Resolved that

- (a) The Director for economy and place, following consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Cabinet member for environment and economy and the Cabinet member for infrastructure and transport, be authorised to approve expenditure required to deliver the public realm projects which will be procured in line with the council's contracts procedures rules;**
- (b) The Director for economy and place, following consultation with Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet member for environment and economy and Cabinet member for infrastructure and transport, be authorised take all operational decisions necessary to deliver the balance of the programme, including grant schemes and information and engagement projects within the total project budget of £3.6m; and**
- (c) The Section 151 Officer be authorised to reduce the grant element of the overall budget to up to £1.8m from the £2m originally estimated and approved at Council so that the overall capital programme budget for this project is £3.6m.**

The meeting ended at 3.13 pm

Chairperson

Appendix 1

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 23 SEPTEMBER 2021**Question 1****From: Councillor Nigel Shaw, Bringsty and Bromyard Ward****To: Cabinet member, infrastructure and highways**

I am informed by BBLP that there is no budget for cat's eyes; road marking or anti-skid replacement in the County of Herefordshire. Given that I have a number of fast roads in my ward, where the Council insists on maintaining the national speed limit against the wishes of the local population, can the council at least undertake to maintain these items that help to protect the lives of those in my community, and take immediate action now that foggy, darker mornings are about to return? Brockhampton Group Parish Council have requested that I raise the matter of missing cat's eyes on the B4203 and A44 as a matter of particular public concern

Response

Thank you Cllr Shaw for your question. I can assure you that there is budget available for road marking, anti-skid and cat's eye replacement within the Annual and Forward Plan maintenance budgets.

Within the Annual Plan there is a budget of £100k for lining (this also covers studs) and £100k for loss of control sites. Last year we had additional £300k which was programmed and delivered to help deal with the demand.

Each year the highways asset is maintained in line with the council's Highways Maintenance Plan (HMP). A risk based approach is adopted to maintain the network based on inspections and surveys within the constraints of available funding. If there is an identified need following the safety inspection the works will be identified, categorised and delivered in line with the HMP within available budgets.

In short, we will never compromise on safety and if more money is needed to cover safety features it will be taken out of the annual plan to the detriment of any other planned standard works.

I have asked highway officers to liaise with BBLP (our road network managers and inspectors) ASAP and report back the issues highlighted by the parish council regards missing cats eyes on the B4203 and A44 and will come back to you with a written reply.

Supplementary question

I thank the Cabinet member for his assurance and look forward to the written reply by a highways officers. If they could detail how much this administration has spent on such replacement of cat's eyes (studs) since May 2019, excluding resurfacing installations, that would also be additionally reassuring

Answer

I thank Councillor Shaw for the question and I am sure we will do that. I would also like to ask Councillor Shaw a question, anything we struggle to do is not because of a lack of will but primarily is a lack of funding. I appreciate it if he could write to his MP to ask for some of the return of the revenue grant which has been lost over the last 10 years which is about approx. £60m per year which impacts us enormously.

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 30 September 2021 at 2.30 pm

Present: Councillor David Hitchiner, Leader of the Council (Chairperson)

Councillors Felicity Norman, Ellie Chowns, John Harrington and Diana Toynbee

Group leaders and representatives in attendance

Councillors Terry James, Jonathan Lester, Bob Matthews, Toni Fagan and William Wilding

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance

Councillors Elissa Swinglehurst, Jonathan Lester and Phillip Howells

Other councillors in attendance:

Councillors Gemma Davies and Liz Harvey

Officers in attendance:

Acting deputy chief executive - chief finance officer, Interim Head of Legal Services and Interim director of economy and place

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Ange Tyler.

Councillors Gemma Davies and Liz Harvey attended the meeting remotely and did not vote on the decisions taken.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

50. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

51. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions at this meeting.

52. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions at this meeting.

53. REVISION OF CAPITAL PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR PRIORITY FLOOD WORKS

The cabinet member infrastructure and transport introduced the item. He summarised the background to the report and highlighted the recommendations made by the general scrutiny committee at its recent meeting.

Cabinet members discussed the scrutiny recommendations and the proposed response to them. It was noted that it was important to keep the option open to use capital monies as well as revenue to fund detailed design processes. It was clarified that additional information would be included in the report to Council but that a detailed breakdown of the outturn would not be available at that meeting. It was suggested that a report be made back to the scrutiny committee on the detailed costs rather than to Council.

The chairman of the general scrutiny committee commented on the discussion that had taken place in the scrutiny meeting and the need to understand the costs of projects. A scrutiny committee member had queried who would quality control the work and it was suggested that someone within the council should ensure that works were done to its satisfaction separate from the contractor, BBLP.

Group leaders and representatives offered the views and queries of their group. There was general support for the recommendations in the report and for learning lessons for the future.

Reflecting on the points raised, cabinet members noted that a contract was in place with BBLP for inspections and that they would bear consequences for any failures. In future the council was looking to move to a different way of monitoring and bringing more technical staff in house to be able to offer greater assurance.

It was resolved that:

- (a) the executive response to the recommendations of the general scrutiny committee at appendix 1 be approved, with an amendment that in the response to recommendation (a) the report will be provided to the general scrutiny committee rather than to Council;**
- (b) having regard to the recommendations of general scrutiny committee, cabinet recommend to council in year adjustments to the capital programme set out in paragraph 11 below to allow realignment of capital spend to flood repair projects that require the allocation of budget within the programme budget of £4.027m as follows:**

Fownhope Landslip Budget reduced from £1.565m to £0.510m

Fownhope Retaining Wall Collapse budget increased from £1m to £1.15m

Unallocated budget of £905k from combined Fownhope budgets remains as contingency for remaining flood works; and

- (c) The Cabinet member for infrastructure and transport is delegated authority (in consultation with the Section 151 officer) to realign the Whitney on Wye and/or the Various Damage site budgets as costs for these works are confirmed.**

54. UPDATE ON THE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME WITHIN THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DIRECTORATE FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT JULY 2021

The cabinet member children and families introduced the report and highlighted the key points. She noted that all of Ofsted's findings were things the council had already identified itself. An action plan was being put together and reports would be made regularly to the improvement board.

The interim assistant director MASH, Assessment, CP Court & CIN explained that while there had been no surprises in Ofsted's findings, they had also recognised strengths and good work that was being done.

Cabinet members recognised that this had been a difficult period for council staff and commended the positive way they had responded.

The interim assistant director explained that the leadership team were working closely with the workforce to develop a recruitment and retention strategy which would be completed by November. Staff had access to the senior leadership and while the improvement process did have an impact on staff there had also been positive feedback. Changes made had allowed staff to spend more time working directly with children and a participation officer was to be recruited to lead on engaging children to make their voice heard.

The chair of the children and young people scrutiny committee commented that the report was a useful guide to what the committee should be scrutinising and that additional meetings of the committee were being held to focus specifically on the improvement process. The scrutiny committee would be working with the centre for governance and scrutiny and the LGA on support, training and mentoring for committee members to improve scrutiny of the service.

Group leaders gave the views of their group. There was concern at the findings of the inspection, the length of time that the service had been underperforming and how the situation had been handled. It was hoped that improvements would be secured this time.

Cabinet members agreed that the challenges were longstanding but a lot of diagnostic work had now been done. It was stressed that any councillors with concerns could raise these with the leader, cabinet member, chair of the scrutiny committee or the chief executive.

It was noted that the recruitment process for a permanent director for children and families was underway and the employment panel was expected to be convened in early November to make an appointment.

It was resolved that:

- a) Cabinet note the outcome of the Ofsted focussed visit on the 7 – 8 July; and**
- b) Cabinet note the progress to date against the service priorities identified by Ofsted and other independent reviews undertaken.**

55. Q1 BUDGET & PERFORMANCE REPORT

The acting deputy chief executive – chief finance officer introduced the report and explained that projections at the end of the first quarter showed a small overspend for 2021/22. The council had received a large number of grants to deal with costs arising from covid and these had been well spent to manage pressures.

Cabinet members discussed the report and noted that grant money would help to cover some of the shortfall on car parking income and that work was underway to understand the longer term patterns. They also heard that officers were working through systematically with teams to update the performance measures and that the number of 'grey' items would reduce in the next quarterly report.

Group leaders gave the views and queries from their groups. It was noted that:

- As expected more households were struggling to pay their council tax and the impact of the end of the furlough system and increasing inflation would be monitored, however the arrangements put in place in the budget in February 2021 were helping and anyone struggling to pay was urged to make contact with the council at the earliest opportunity;
- Data was available on the number of people still on furlough in the county and this would be shared;
- The number of people shopping in the city centre appeared to be improving so the reduction in car parking income might reflect more people using active travel measures;

- A significant backlog in planning cases had arisen during covid and it was planned to employ consultants to provide additional resource to clear this bulge;
- The planning service was overdue for transformational change work, learning from examples in other councils, and it was hoped that some additional resource could be provided to improve the work of the service in the future.

It was resolved that:

- a) Cabinet review the performance and financial forecast for year 2021/22, as set out in appendices A – F, and identifies any additional actions to be considered to achieve future improvements.**

56. ANNUAL REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVES

The cabinet member finance, corporate services and planning introduced the report and explained that she had requested officers rationalise some of the small pots of money and amend the way the reserves were presented.

The acting deputy chief executive – chief finance officer explained that the council had been holding covid grants, which showed as a bulge at the end of March, but that all of this money would be used during this year.

Group leaders noted the content of the report and in response to a query it was confirmed that the council was continuing to distribute covid grants as quickly as possible and based on the guidelines provided by central government.

It was resolved:

- (a) The reserves position, detailed in appendix A, be noted.**

The meeting ended at 4.16 pm

Chairperson



Title of report: Strategic Improvement Plan for Children and Families

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 28 October 2021

Report by: Interim Director for Children and Families

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To endorse the draft Strategic Improvement Plan at Appendix 1 and draft Operational Plan at Appendix 2.

The Strategic Improvement Plan forms part of the council's response to the non-statutory improvement notice issued by the Department for Education on 18 May 2021.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **Cabinet note the activity undertaken to inform and develop our Strategic and Operational Plans.**

- b) Cabinet endorse the Strategic Plan accepted by the independently chaired Improvement Board on 11 October 2021 in order that it can be presented to the Department for Education, in compliance with the non-statutory improvement notice.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options.
2. The council is under duty to implement an Improvement Plan, in accordance with the measures stipulated in the non-statutory improvement notice issued by the Department for Education on 18 May 2021.

Key considerations

3. His Honour Justice Keehan published a judgement (26 March 2021) that identified serious failings in Herefordshire Council's children's services.
4. Full council unanimously supported on 27 April 2021 the establishment of an improvement board as part of the assurance and improvement strategy following the High Court judgement.
5. On 18 May 2021 the Department for Education (DfE) issued the council with a non-statutory improvement notice.
6. To comply with the notice the council is required to undertake the following actions by the end of April 2022 or sooner where appropriate;
 1. To work with the appointed Improvement Advisor, Gladys Rhodes White;
 2. To establish an Improvement Board chaired by Gladys Rhodes White;
 3. To agree and submit to the DfE an improvement plan;
 4. To demonstrate appropriate and sustainable improvement in accordance with the plan.
7. To ensure there is clear evidence of progression the notice is clear that;
 - the content of the improvement plan and a record of progress against it must be kept up to date;
 - the improvement board will oversee implementation and progress against the objectives in the plan, to a timetable agreed with the Department;
 - reports to the improvement board should include data, analysis and recommendations supported by evidence of the impact of improvements on the quality of practice and experience of children and families;
 - the council should highlight those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened; and

- the views of frontline staff and of children and young people will be taken into consideration in the development of practice and standards The section should also outline the facts of the proposal and will inform the debate in order to assist members in coming to a decision.
8. The DfE will undertake reviews of progress against the improvement plan at least every six months and more regularly as appropriate. These reviews will cover culture, performance, leadership, management and governance, workforce management oversight, early help and multi-agency arrangements.
 9. The strategic plan has been developed to incorporate our vision and future ambition for children's services and the council as a whole together with high-level detail for the five pillars or work-streams of activity. It also includes cross-cutting activities that span all five work streams and outlines the mechanism by which we shall know that we are making a difference. It will be presented to the Improvement Board on 11 October for sign-off but will be a live and evolving document subject to revision and update as required. For example, the performance measures and dashboard are currently in development, collaborating with partners and stakeholders, and are expected to be presented to the Board for consideration in November.
 10. Any amendments made by the Improvement Board at the meeting on 11 October will be incorporated in a revised version of the draft Improvement Plan and circulated to Cabinet with Cabinet papers ahead of the meeting on 28 October 2021.
 11. The operational plan has been developed by the Directorate Leadership Team and is owned by the interim Director of Children and Families. It sits beneath the strategic plan and contains the detail of the actions to be taken by the service, by whom, by when, and the measures by which we shall know that we have made a difference. The Director of Children's Services will report on progress and impact to the Improvement Board, and the Management Board as well as to the Children and families Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. The operational plan also contains the measures to be taken to address priority actions and recommendations made by Ofsted following their recent focused visit and the final version of the operational plan will be submitted to Ofsted and the DfE in November, following sign-off by the Management Board.

Community impact

12. The notice requiring improvement will have a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
13. The county plan 2020 – 2024 includes the ambition to 'strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together'. Specifically, the council aims to:
 - a. Ensure all children are healthy, safe, and inspired to achieve;
 - b. Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices; and
 - c. Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people.

Environmental Impact

14. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report. The work of the committee will be undertaken with consideration to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

15. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:
16. A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
17. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.
18. As our projects and service delivery progresses, and changes are designed, equality impact assessment will be undertaken where necessary.

Resource implications

19. There are significant revenue resource implications for the improvement work required. There are no expected capital resource implications.
20. The resource implications are not included in the base budget. The current additional resource allocation of £5.2m across all services; including direct children services and corporate support services is expected to increase.

Current allocation

Revenue cost of project	2021/22	2022/23	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>Improvement Board</i>	130	130	-	260
<i>Support for families</i>	100	100	-	200
<i>Legal</i>	551	551	-	1102
<i>External legal fees</i>	525	325	-	850
<i>Human resources support</i>	364	289	-	653
<i>Assurance and transformation</i>	292	85	-	377
<i>Interim staffing</i>	890	890	-	1780
TOTAL	2,852	2,370		5,222

Funding streams (indicate whether base budget / external / grant / capital borrowing)	2020/21	2021/22	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>Ear marked reserves</i>	2,852	2,370		
<i>DfE grant</i>	214			
TOTAL	3,066	2,370		

Revenue budget implications	2020/21	2021/22	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>note any impact on revenue budget, good or bad</i>				
TOTAL				

21. A further bid of approximately £1.6m has been made to the Department for Education for additional grant funding.

Legal implications

22. The Council has been issued with a non-statutory improvement notice by the Department for Education on 18 May 2021. To comply with this notice the Council must comply with a number of measures and to summarise these include:-
23. Secretary of State appointment of an Improvement Advisor. The council will work with the adviser for a minimum of 12 months, and until such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied this is no longer required.
24. Implementation of an Improvement plan
25. Establishment of an Improvement Board with an independent chair (to be set up and chaired by the DfE Improvement Adviser).
26. Officials or advisers from the Department of Education will undertake reviews of progress against the improvement plan at least every six months and more regularly where appropriate.
27. The Department will offer dedicated improvement support through its Partners in Practice arrangements and may consider additional requests for support as part of the review process.
28. The Improvement Adviser will provide to the Department, 6 weekly reports of progress or concern against the areas set out in this notice; and progress against the improvement plan; and any other such information relevant to the improvement journey.
29. The notice sets out that the council should aim for actions included in the improvement plan to be delivered by the end of April 2022 or sooner, where appropriate.
30. If there is a failure to comply with this notice, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children's services (potentially resulting in the establishment of a trust).

Risk management

31. The improvement notice is clear that should the council be unwilling or unable to comply with this improvement notice, or should ministers not be satisfied with the council's progress at any stage, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children's services.
32. Statutory improvement notices could be issued and more critical or enduring underperformance may necessitate the use of Statutory Directions compelling the council to take certain actions. In extreme cases the DfE can direct partial or complete outsourcing of children services to a third party or the establishment of a children's trust.

33. The Directorate and the Improvement Board will maintain and monitor Risk Registers to ensure that risk is identified and mitigations put in place.

Consultees

34. There has been no public consultation on the Strategic Improvement Plan.
35. Elected Members, the Management Board, the Improvement Board, the Directorate Leadership Team and workforce representatives have contributed to the development of the plan through a range of meetings and workshop activities.
36. The content of the plan was further informed by a workshop attended by the council-wide Leadership Group on 21 September 2021 to establish a cross-council understanding of the activity and shared responsibilities.
37. As action plans and service redesigns are developed, consultation with children, young people, their families and carers will be a key part of our improvement journey.

Appendices

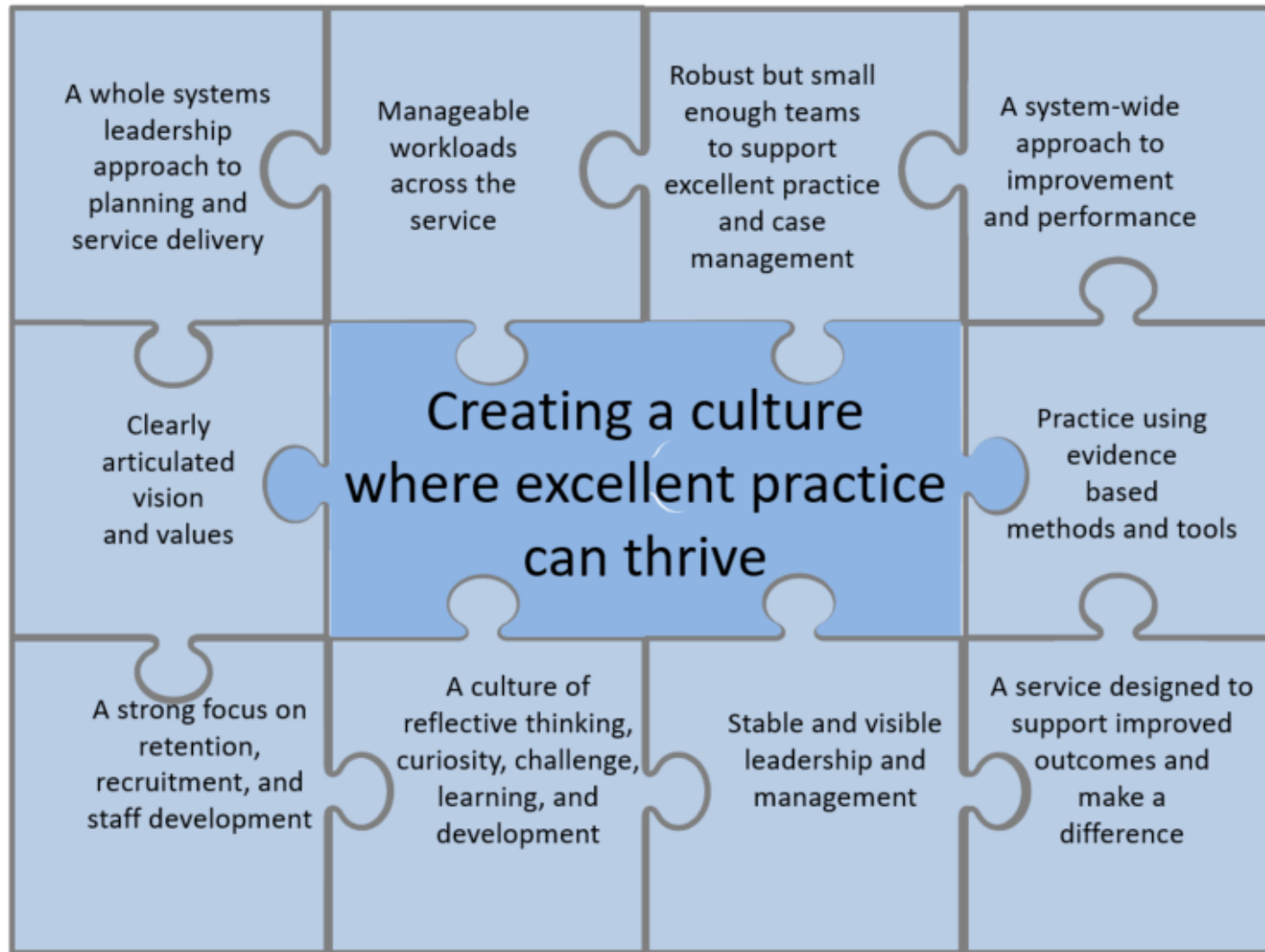
Appendix 1 – Draft Improvement Plan v0.11
Appendix 2 – Draft Operational Plan v0.3

Background papers

None identified.

Children and Families Strategic Improvement Plan October 2021

Creating a culture where excellent practice can thrive



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Foreword

Our top priority as a Council must be to protect and improve the lives of our most vulnerable children and young people, and knowing that we have let them down weighs heavily on us both personally and professionally.

We wholeheartedly accept that the recent findings do not reflect the quality of service that our children, young people and their families expect or deserve, and we must do better. As difficult as it was to read the High Court Judgement, the recent Ofsted inspection and to hear directly from staff and local residents, the message they gave us was helpfully clear. We know where we must focus our attention, and this Improvement Plan sets out the practical steps we are taking.

We are keen to get on with making progress, and also understand that, on this journey of 'getting to good', all changes made must be measurable and sustainable. This is essential for rebuilding trust, and ensuring that we provide compassionate and effective children's services that last into the future.

Delivering this plan will be the collective priority for everyone with a responsibility for supporting children and families - elected members, council employees across every service, and the partners who work with children every day.

We all have a part to play, and central to this plan is our commitment to make 'working together' a reality not just an aspiration. This means better engagement with parents to ensure that we get the right support available at the right time.

Our children's social care staff remain dedicated and conscientious, often in very difficult circumstances, and we will ensure that they receive the support and development they need to do their jobs with confidence, empathy and professionalism.

We promise to get to the bottom of the issues identified, keep listening, and go on improving until our services are thriving, and of the high standard that our children and families deserve.

Councillor David Hitchiner
Leader of the Council

Councillor Diana Toynbee
Cabinet Member

Paul Walker
Chief Executive

Context

Between 2018 and 2021 a series of critical external events occurred that raised justifiable questions as to the effectiveness of Herefordshire Council's Children's Services. This culminated in a critical judgement in April 2021 from His Honour Justice Keehan, this latest Judgement was not the first in which His Honour Justice Keehan had raised concerns regarding Herefordshire Children's Services and consequently the council received a non-statutory improvement notice May 2021.

The council, through the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet members, fully accepted accountability for His Honour Justice Keehan's findings and committed to delivering sustained improvement of children's services and good outcomes for the children and young people of Herefordshire.

There have been notable changes in the senior leadership team at Herefordshire Council including the appointment of an interim Director of Children's Services, the appointment of Paul Walker as Chief Executive and a new lead member for Children and Families (Cllr. Diana Toynbee).

A Department of Education (DfE) approved independent improvement advisor (Ms. Gladys Rhodes White) has been appointed to support the improvement journey and is the Chair of the newly established Improvement Board. Herefordshire Council has also reached out for external advice and support through the DfE, Ofsted and the Local Government Association (LGA) and has recently been successful in obtaining grant funding from the DfE (£215k) to provide additional expertise and capacity to support practice improvement.

This improvement plan aims to bring together the findings of the recent judgement, Ofsted reviews (since 2018) and the recent external diagnostic reviews to identify the key themes and priority areas to form the five work streams of the plan. The feedback and recommendations from these reviews/inspections have been collated thematically and shaped our improvement plan work streams.

Our vision; our ambition; and our practice priorities

Our vision: **All children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved, and valued, and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.**

Our ambition: **Creating a child-centred county where children and young people are at the heart of everything we do.**

Our practice priorities:

Priorities and enablers	Practice priorities		Partnership priorities		Enablers	
	Good quality child-focused assessment and planning		Embedding learning from reviews and multi-agency audits		Developing a skilled and stable workforce	
	Effective interventions and direct work with children, young people and families		Proactive effective interventions with a practice focus		<div>Systems and support services:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commissioning• Business Support• Finance• Case management system• Digital	
	Supervision and management oversight		Effective, responsive, and reflective partnership arrangements			
Cross cutting activity	<div>Service transformation and development</div>					
Measures of success	What children and their families tell us	What our staff tell us	What our partners tell us	Quantity measures	Quality measures	Outcomes

What would we want for children in our own family?

- Stability, positive emotional wellbeing. To be safe.
- Resilience, ambition, good health.
- Good education, good role models, encouragement and praise.
- The best opportunities.
- The best possible outcomes.
- Permanence (knowing where you belong and who you are connected to).
- Preparation for adulthood.

**“Strong roots, space to
grow, choices to
explore.”**

*Improvement Board
member*

Our improvement journey

Our [County Plan \(2020-2024\)](#)¹ sets out the desired outcomes for children and the council's commitment to the children and young people of Herefordshire. This plan is for a whole system transformation that puts all children and young people at the heart of all that we do. We recognise that to deliver our ambition and commitment we need to work together with our partners, staff, elected members, communities and children, young people and families. There are, however, some immediate priorities that we must address and, therefore, our improvement journey will be delivered in a phased approach over the next 3 years to ensure we focus our efforts and resources effectively and get the right building blocks in place.

Phase 1 - Back to Basics (June 2021 - April 2022)

Key areas of focus:

- Social work quality of practice
- Voice of the child
- Supervision and monitoring
- Workforce Capacity

Phase 2 - Right Help, Right Time (April 2022 - April 2023)

Key areas of focus:

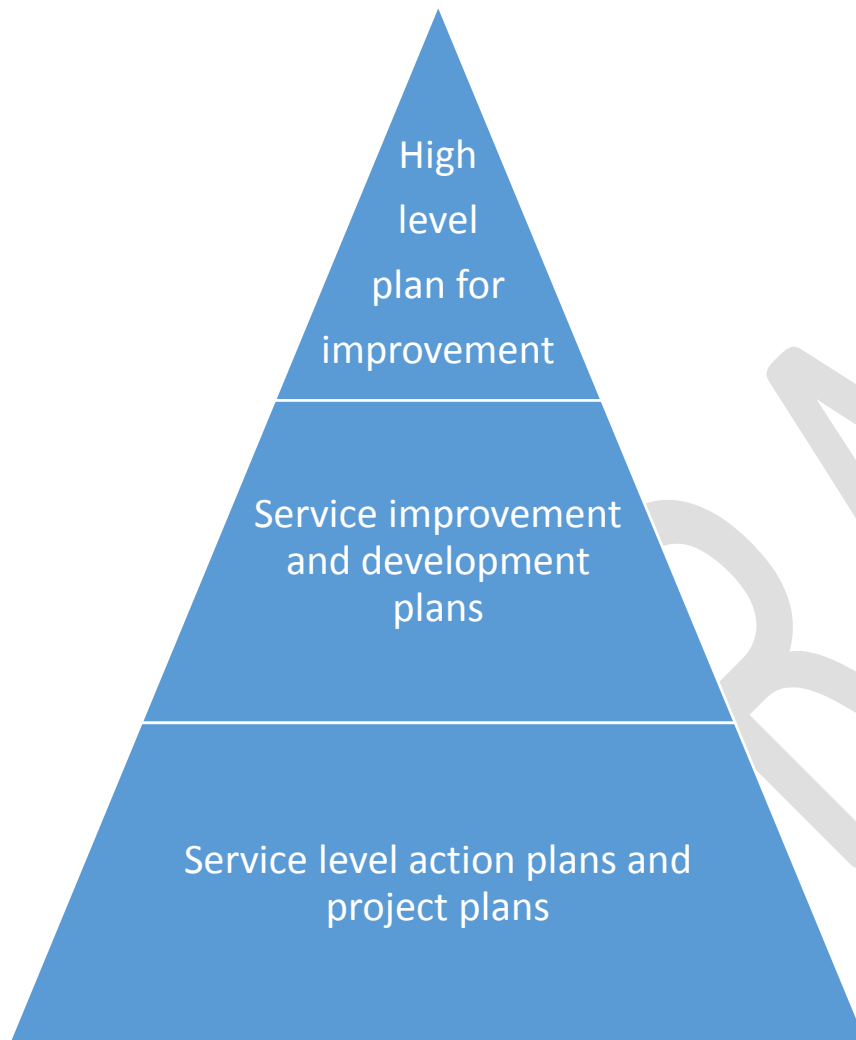
- Early help
- Talk Community
- Commissioning
- Strengths based practice

Phase 3 - Embedding the Change (April 2023 - April 2024)

Key areas of focus:

- Continuous improvement (beyond 2024)
- Getting to Good
- A Child-centred county

¹ [Herefordshire Council County Plan 2020-2024](#)



This is the first iteration of our improvement plan, in response to the High Court judgement earlier this year and recent Ofsted reports.

This strategic plan is high level, underpinned by and referring back to a series of service improvement and development plans owned by members of the corporate Management Board and by Children's Services leaders and managers. These plans detail clear actions, owners and timescales against which progress is monitored by the Corporate Director and the Improvement Board.

Underneath these are more granular action and project plans which will be overseen by the Operational Board.

This high level plan and the priorities for phase 1 within it are set out in the [plan on a page](#). It should be noted that this plan does not describe ongoing service transformation activity (for example to establish or commission new or different teams and services) as these changes are set out in the service improvement and development plans.

The plan will be a dynamic and a working document, responding and flexing to change and events so that it remains relevant and focused.

Our plan on a page – Children’s Improvement Programme (2021-2024)

The following table summarises the vision and our ambition; the five primary work streams of the improvement plan and their priority areas of focus; the cross cutting activity; and our measures of success. High-level activity beneath each work stream can be seen in [Appendix 1](#)

Our Vision	All children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved, and valued, and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.					
Our ambition	Creating a child-centred county where children and young people are at the heart of everything we do					
Work streams	Leadership and Governance (LG)	Workforce (W)	Quality and Performance (QP)		Right Help, Right Time (RH)	Partnerships (P)
Priority areas of focus:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Permanent leadership• Effective governance, accountability and scrutiny• Corporate Parenting• Improvement progress reporting• Service delivery models• Operational Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workforce capacity and development• Employee engagement• Retention and recruitment• Career pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality and pace of decision making• Quality assurance and performance frameworks• Quality supervision• Practice tools, standards, and policies• Educational attainment• Transitions		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prevention and Early help• Talk Community – Children and Families• Commissioning services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contextual safeguarding• Children’s Safeguarding Partnership• Multi agency training and development• Multi-agency dataset• Pathways to other services
Cross cutting activity	Valuing difference and culture					
	Delivering Service Transformation – Creating an environment where excellent practice can thrive.					
	Communication and engagement - Participation strategy; Workforce strategy; and Communication and Engagement strategy.					
	Enabling infrastructure – Finance, HR, Digital and IT, Business Support, Systems, and Data.					
Our success measures	What children and families tell us	What our staff tell us	What our partners tell us	Quantity indicators (performance data)	Quality indicators (audits, reviews)	Outcomes for children

Our ambition: A Child-Centred County

We recognise that the protection and safeguarding of children sits within a much wider public sector and societal system where many contributory factors impact on the daily lives of children and families.

Our vision and plan has been shaped as a collaboration with partners to ensure the commitment across the system and recognition of the key role partners play in shifting the culture across the workforce to embed a strengths based model that focusses on early help and prevention within the principles of Right Help, Right Time support. This will be the focus of Phases 2 and 3 of our plan.

Herefordshire has a strong partnership approach with our communities (known locally as Talk Community²). This approach and connectivity of individuals to their communities has been extremely effective in driving improved outcomes for adults as part of the implementation of a strengths based model of practice. Our intention is to build on this now well-established network and approach to develop increased options for practitioners, to include communities, into support plans for children and families.

As Herefordshire transforms its city centre and market towns it will be ever important to ensure the design of place and space is considered with children and young people at the heart – creating a county that’s “child-centred” where they can live and play safely and be valued as a key members of our communities.

There is a strong partnership element within the improvement plan that recognises the need to develop in several key areas including support for practitioners around referrals and level of needs thresholds, the quality and use of performance information across the system and increased access to key services such as emotional health and well-being. There will also be an emphasis on the role of partnership boards and what they are doing to improve outcomes for Herefordshire children.

There is a collective ambition by partners to reduce the duplication across the system and identify more clearly where the leadership and accountability best sits in order to drive system change. This improvement programme will aim to add greater clarity about the priorities of partnership boards and their constituent organisations in the delivery of change and in holding each other to account.

² [Home - Talk Community Directory](#)

Transformation of services

This is a three-year programme to 2024 aimed at:

- Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- Making working in Herefordshire an attractive and rewarding career choice.
- Embedding systemic partnership approaches and exploring alternative models of delivery.
- Making the service financially viable for the future across a range of services the Council delivers.
- All underpinned and driven by improvement across the system of practice, management and leadership.

Approach to delivery

This Improvement Plan aims to bring together the various strands of project work and service improvement into a single change programme to deliver the required improvements and outcomes set out within the County Plan (2020-24) and the commitments contained within this plan.

There is a strong corporate commitment and ownership by the council for improvement and this plan has been developed through a collaborative approach with elected members, staff, partners, and children and families. The Chief Executive will personally sponsor the programme and have a clear line of sight on progress of the plan alongside regular oversight and reports on progress to the Improvement Board and the council's public facing committees.

The programme will need to respond to changes if things are not working or circumstances change so this plan should be seen as a proposed outline of the planned high level activity which will be underpinned by detailed action plans and project plans set out as part of each phase. The Improvement Plan will be refreshed at least annually to reflect any amendments and provide a report on how the transformation is progressing against the outcomes and commitments set out in this plan.

Our improvement programme will follow a structured programme and project management approach under the guidance of a dedicated Improvement Lead working alongside the services responsible for supporting children and families.

Phased approach:

Phase 1 – Back to Basics - Immediate Priorities (June 21 – April 22)

Phase 1 will focus on the immediate priorities that have been set out as part of the non-statutory improvement notice and recent Ofsted visits. There are clear expectations that, by May 2022, there will be significant improvements in the quality of social work practice and in the leadership and management oversight of the service.

There will be a heavy focus on staff engagement during the initial period as the impact of the intense scrutiny and changes are felt.

For the transformation to be successful, our workforce will need to buy in to the vision and see a clear roadmap that creates a better working environment which enables good quality social work practice to flourish.

Staff will need to be supported to make the changes and additional agency resource will be utilised in the early part of the programme to provide additional capacity and experience into the teams. This will also provide additional capacity to allow managers and front line practitioners time out of practice for training, coaching and mentoring.

Phase 2 – Right Help, Right Time - Investment in prevention, early intervention and communities (April 22 – April 23)

Phase 2 will focus on the medium and longer term transformation that moves the culture and practice to prevention and early intervention. This may include the realignment of resources as part of this shift, so planning and scoping will start in the coming months to do the in depth analysis of demand and understand some fundamental questions around why children are entering into the safeguarding system e.g. Herefordshire hotspots or pinch points. Phase 2 will also see the work to develop with our partners and stakeholders our ambition for a child-centred county for the future.

Phase 3 – Embedding and Consolidating - Delivering excellence as the norm (April 23 – April 24)

Phase 3 will ensure the transformation and improvements are well embedded and are sustainable. A shift to 'business as usual' will ensure services for children, young people and families are compliant, high quality and delivering good outcomes, within the agreed resources.

Our engagement approach

Workforce - The development of the programme will be supported through a newly formed staff reference group to support the design and embedding of changes to systems, processes and practice. There will also be regular staff feedback surveys to test the effectiveness of the change.

Children and families - The Children in Care Council will be reinvigorated to support the improvement programme and provide valuable input into the design and delivery of services. There will also be parent representatives on the operational delivery board to support the monitoring of progress set out in the operational plans.

Partners - Partners will play a critical role in the delivery of the improvement programme. Many of the challenges by the council are experienced across the system, for example, recruitment – this is a countywide issue for many statutory partners so a strategic approach will be necessary.

Elected members - All elected members will have the opportunity to shape and input the improvement plan as part of a series of workshops in the early development phase of the programme and explore their roles as corporate parents. There will also be specific workshops for those with additional responsibilities on public bodies such as Scrutiny Committees, Partnership Boards and Cabinet.

Resources

In order to deliver the required transformation, additional resources will be required. An initial allocation of corporate funding of £5.2m has already been made available to the improvement programme. Approval and monitoring of spend for this funding is via the Resources Board (chaired by the Section151 Officer). This funding is in addition to the DfE funding (£215k) and resources being made available through the LGA. Our resource plan will be reported to the Improvement Board.

Measures that matter (performance and management information – what difference have we made?)

We are developing a suite of management information and performance reports that will be used by the service to drive improvement and service delivery. These will be built around a number of 'measures that matter' currently being developed and that will be outlined to the Improvement Board in November 2021. See [Appendix 3](#) for more details of our Measures that Matter (when published).

Evidencing Impact.

In order to evaluate the impact of improvement activity the Board will apply 3 levels of assurance.

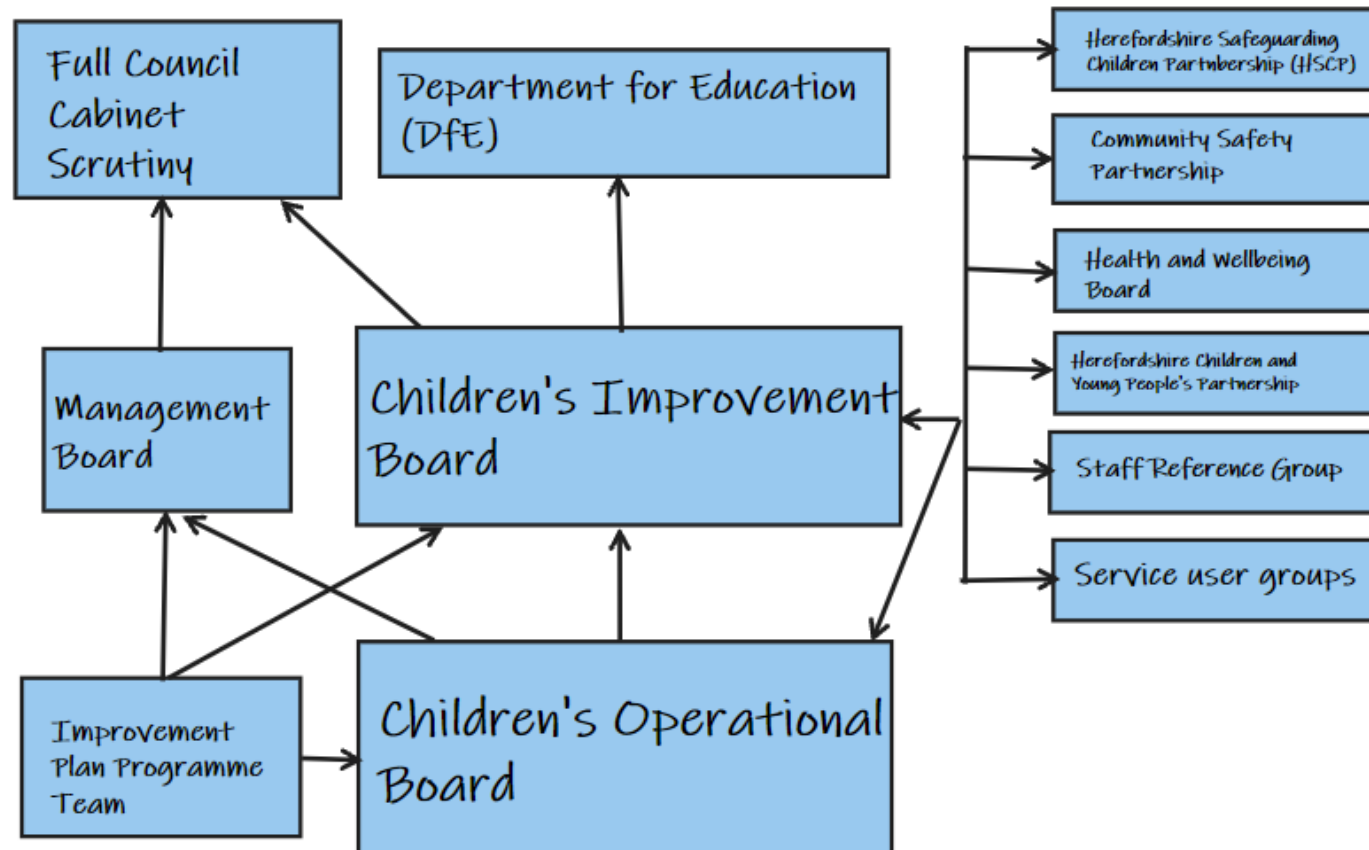
Level 1:	The first level will be to track progress against the tasks identified within the Improvement Plan, which will provide a level of assurance that activity is happening, and progress is being made. This will be through a Highlight Report to the Board.
Level 2	The second test of assurance will be the monitoring of a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that will be reviewed at the Children Improvement Board and provide a level of assurance in terms of progress. This will be through the Performance Dashboard .
Level 3:	The third level test will be the monitoring of risks and issues that have the potential to derail delivery of activity and performance. This will be reviewed by the Children's Improvement Board via the Risk Register and a high level heat map (to be developed).
Level 4:	The final test of assurance is impact. Where a task has been completed the related areas of work will be evaluated; the type of evaluation will depend on the related area. This final level of assurance will be governed and monitored by the board and linked to future Ofsted activity.

The RAG ratings will be updated on a 4 weekly basis in preparation for the board.

Key: RAG ratings	Blue - Complete	Red - Off track	Amber - Behind	Green – On track	Grey – Not started

Governance and Oversight

This diagram illustrates how the principle partners in our improvement journey will relate to each other, ensuring strong and robust oversight and governance.



Appendix 1 - Improvement activity – high level plan (phase 1)

Leadership and Governance					
Ref	Priority area	SRO	Key activity	What good looks like (outcome)	Target date
LG1	Permanent Senior Leadership Team	Chief Executive Director Children and Families	a) Recruitment of Director of Children and Families b) Recruitment of Service Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent stable senior leadership team to drive improvement agenda and transformational change 	Phase 1 - End April 2022
LG2	Effective governance, accountability and scrutiny	Solicitor to the council	a) Establish mechanism and system for enabling line of sight from service to the Chief Executive / Leader b) Establish systems and processes to have management oversight of notable /complex cases by service, legal and communications teams c) Establish a critical case log d) Ensure legal services are fit for purpose e) Ensure the Council's Scrutiny function is operating effectively f) Undertake a review of local authority boards to ensure that Partnership Boards are operating effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues are escalated quickly and appropriately actioned Open, transparent and safe decision making is evident Members and partners understand their role and accountability as part of the membership of committees and boards 	Phase 1 - End March 2022
LG3	Corporate Parenting	Assistant Director Corporate Parenting	a) Review and redesign of corporate parenting function to develop strategy and awareness of Corporate Parenting role and commitments; Including a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The corporate parenting principle is clearly understood and applied in decision making for children in care and care leavers 	Phase 1 - End March 2022

			<p>training programme for all members and staff</p> <p>b) Review and re-issue Foster Carer's Handbook, and negotiate roles and responsibilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's needs will be considered across Council, directorate and partnership activity and this will be transparent in decision making The role and ethos of corporate parenting is embedded across the council 	
LG4	Improvement progress reporting	Chief Executive	<p>a) Establish Improvement Board</p> <p>b) Appoint DfE advisor and Board Chair</p> <p>c) Development of a performance dashboard to monitor improvement progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement journey can be monitored effectively and adjustments made where necessary Evidence based support for the changes 	Phase 1 - End Dec 2021
LG5	Development of an Operational Plan	Director – Children and Families	<p>a) Develop and publish an Operational Plan</p> <p>b) Establish an effective Operational Board</p> <p>c) Establish a project management approach to reporting progress and impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The operational plan is understood by key stakeholders who are engaged in the operational board and all relevant activity The board is supported by the Project Management Team Evidence of improvement and impact is demonstrable 	Phase 1 – End March 2022
LG6	Future delivery models	Director – Children and Families	<p>a) Review current delivery model</p> <p>b) Develop proposals for required changes to delivery model (children's services organisation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce is involved in development of proposal. Proposals are scrutinised by Improvement Board and appropriate council forum. 	Phase 1 – End March 2022

Workforce					
Ref	Priority area	SRO	Key activity	Outcome	Target date
W1	Workforce capacity and development	Director Children and Families	a) Ensure there is adequate staffing at all levels in order to deliver safe and effective services b) Skills and competencies c) Training and development d) Career pathways e) Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are able to deliver safe and effective services that deliver good outcomes for children and families 	Phase 1 – End Mar 2022
W2	Employee engagement	Assistant Director, People	a) Undertake analysis of current engagement and morale of the staff as baseline for improvements b) Develop an employee wellbeing programme with staff reference groups c) Staff surveys d) Health check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are engaged in the improvement programme and turnover and sickness are reduced 	Phase 1 – End Dec 2021
W3	Recruitment	Director Children and Families	a) Develop recruitment strategy to achieve a sustainable permanent workforce b) Marketing c) Grow you own d) Roadshows e) Podcast f) Web site g) Recruitment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stability of the workforce will be increased, handovers between key workers of children's cases will be significantly reduced Children will have fewer key workers through their case progression and therefore will develop stronger relationships 	Phase 1 - End March 2022

Quality and Performance					
Ref	Priority area	SRO	Key Activity	Outcome	Target date
QP1	Quality and pace of decision making	Director Children and Families	a) Ensure robust management oversight and scrutiny of planning and decision making to avoid drift and delay for children b) Frequency and quality of Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's interventions are appropriately managed and actions to move between services is closely monitored and quality assured 	Phase 1 - End March 2022
QP2	Quality assurance and performance	Assistant Director Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	a) Reviews/audits b) Plans and planning c) Quality assurance framework d) Establish a Performance and Management Information framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are a learning organisation with the ability to review, monitor, change our practice, and continue to develop 	Phase 1 – End Dec 2021
QP3	Practice development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	a) Practice model and tools b) Signs of Safety c) Standards d) Policies and procedures e) Learning reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating an environment where good practice thrives and enables effective services to be delivered to children and families 	Phase 1 – End March 2022
QP4	Educational attainment	Assistant Director, Education	a) Develop a strategy to improve the educational attainment of children and young people and narrow the gap in performance with disadvantaged young people b) Increase the take up of our apprenticeships offer c) Improve school readiness (1,000 1 days) d) Increase the take up of 2yr funding for nurseries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children have better life opportunities post formal schooling More children have the opportunity to move into higher education or a suitable apprenticeship offer 	Phase 1 – End March 2022

			e) Increase the take up of 3yr funding f) Implement the wider strategy for improving SEND and CWD educational offer (inclusion)		
QP5	Pathway to adulthood (transitions)	Director Adults and Communities	a) Introduce new transitions pathway for learning disability. b) Establish a Transitions project group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people experience a smooth transition into adulthood and do not experience a “cliff edge” Adult teams are fully sighted of young people moving into the adult’s system at the earliest possibility 	Phase 1 – End March 2022

Right Help, Right Time					
Ref	Priority area	SRO	Key Activity	Outcome	Target date
RH1	Prevention and early intervention	Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Family Support	a) Review existing early help and prevention strategy b) Review service delivery and structure of internal Early Help services c) Map the child’s journey through universal and prevention services d) Early Help practice framework developed e) Develop our approach to support the delivery of a prevention and early help offer based on evidence and good practice. f)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and families receive right help at the right time with a focus on identifying and addressing issues at the earliest possibility Practitioners across the system practice in a strengths based model of care and support 	Phase 1 – End Mar 2022 (a), (b), (c) and (d) Phase 2 – End of Mar (e)
RH2	Talk Community	Assistant Director, Talk Community	a) Review the community assets and support available across the county for children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and community support come together to meet the needs of local 	Phase 1 – End of Mar 202 (a) and (b)

			b) Develop a RHRT engagement plan to shape and lead the community model c) Develop and implement a universal and community offer for children and families, building on existing assets and services d) Develop and utilise Talk Community Hubs to coordinate early intervention activity closer to home – to support self-help and maximise use of community sector	children, young people and families creating early intervention to support families	Phase 2 – End of Mar 2023 (c) and (d)
RH3	Commissioning	Assistant Director, All Ages Commissioning	a) Develop an All Ages commissioning strategy to support a corporate approach which includes prevention and early help, service specific commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Age approach to commissioning implemented to improve outcomes for children, young people and families Sufficiency Strategy updated aimed at providing increased choice and secure, safe and appropriate accommodation 	Phase 1 – End Mar 2022

Partnerships					
Ref	Priority area	SRO	Key Activity	Outcome	Target date
P1	Contextual safeguarding	Accountable officers across the statutory bodies (police, NHS, LA)	a) Agree and implement contextual safeguarding model (as an alternative to child protection) for adolescents facing risks outside the home (includes Peer on Peer abuse, missing children and contextual safeguarding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joined up seamless pathways and provision of service for all children and young people at risk of exploitation All partners will be aware of those at greatest risk, there will be easy and transparent access to support/advice and 	Phase 1 – End Mar 2022

				fast track pathways for children at highest risk	
P2	Children's Safeguarding Partnership	Assistant Director - Quality, Performance and Partnerships	a) Review capacity and effectiveness of Safeguarding Partnership business unit b) Review of Safeguarding partnership functions c) Thresholds/levels of need d) Safeguarding Partnership review and quality assurance of Multi agency referral form (MARF) e) Embed the Herefordshire Early Help Offer to support partners to hold lower level risk and make referrals to the Early Help Hub where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business unit operates effectively and efficiently to support the achievement of the Board's objectives A consistent framework for referral based on assessed risk – referrals will have appropriate information reducing need for families to re-tell stories and delays over lack of consent Improved consistency of quality of MARF and decision of making in MASH will ensure that children and young people received services in a timely way and proportionate to need 	Phase 1 – End Mar 2022
P3	Multi agency training and development	Assistant Director - Quality, Performance and Partnerships	a) Develop mechanisms to ensure consistency across partnerships working to agreed level of need b) Creation of multi-agency group to identify programme of training and continuous professional development across the partnership including monitoring of attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All partners working within multi-agency setting or identified within plans will be following the same practice standards and guidance in order that the response to children and young people is consistent to those practice frameworks in place avoiding conflicting messages and or interventions 	Phase 1 – End Mar 2022
P4	Multi agency dataset	Assistant Director - Quality,	a) Develop use of a Partnership scorecard / dashboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All partners are able to identify areas of challenge and respond quickly to ensure 	Phase 1 – End Mar 2022

		Performance and Partnerships	b) Private fostering to ensure robust programme of reporting	<p>that children receive services in a timely manner and at appropriate level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners will be aware of challenges and changing patterns of need and children will be able to see resources reallocated to meet their needs Effective monitoring of the overall system Partnership understanding of impact of interventions and outcomes for children 	
P5	Pathways to other services	Director of Public Health	<p>a) Ensure adequate access to mental health services / Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)</p> <p>b) Access to public health provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people get the support they need at the right time 	Phase 1 – End Dec 2021
P6	A resilient and effective Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	Director of Children's and Families	<p>a) Ensure robust and multi-agency systems and processes are in place.</p> <p>b) Develop and introduce a quality assurance framework for MASH processes and decision-making.</p> <p>c) Develop the use of a partnership score-card measuring performance and impact.</p> <p>d) Develop a road-map for co-location of partners and the future development of the MASH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people get the support they need at the right time. Effective monitoring of the overall system 	Phase 1 – End of Dec 2021

Appendix 2 – Improvement Board Membership

Gladys Rhodes White OBE	Independent Chair, Department for Education (DfE) Adviser
Councillor David Hitchiner	Leader of the Council, Herefordshire Council
Councillor Diana Toynbee	Cabinet Member, Herefordshire Council
Paul Walker	Chief Executive, Herefordshire Council
Darryl Freeman	Interim Director of Children's Services, Herefordshire Council
Liz Murphy	Independent scrutineer and chair, Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP)
Claire Ward	Solicitor to the Council, Herefordshire Council
Rachel Newton	Department for Education (DfE)
Ceri Morgan	Assistant Director - Education, Development, and Skills
Claire Burgess	Local Government Association (LGA)
Mari Gay	Clinical Commissioning Group
Edd Williams	West Mercia Police
Salwa Farid	Principal Social Worker
Emma Shearer	Primary School representative
Sue Gaston	Secondary School representative
Nicki Gilbert	Special School representative
To be confirmed	Staff Reference Group representative
To be confirmed	Mental Health provider services

Appendix 3 - Measures that matter (high-level performance indicators)

[To follow – November 2021]

RED	Process: Tasks not been completed or timescales slipped and need attention. Impact should start to be seen and measured, but are not met.	BLUE	Completed and impact evidenced, target achieved and this is likely to be sustained.
AMBER	Process: Tasks are not fully on track but plans are in place to ensure progress by identifiable timescale. Impact can start to be measured but are yet to be demonstrable.	GREY	Process: Not started - action not scheduled to start in this period. Impact not yet expected to be realised (i.e. actions in progress/not started).
GREEN	Process: Tasks are progressing as expected and deemed to be on target. Impact of outcomes can be demonstrably measured.		

Appendix 4 – Key sources of information to secure a whole system approach

Key sources of information to secure a whole system approach to quality assurance and performance management to be presented and scrutinised will include:

Case audits	Practice Observations
Learning from complaints and compliments	Feedback from partner agencies
Voice of the children, young people and their families	Feedback from frontline practitioners
Self-evaluation and peer challenge	Learning from Serious Cases
Performance and data reports	Appreciative inquiry

DRAFT

Children and Families Services

Draft Operational Improvement Plan

Phase One June 2021 – April 2022



Version 0.3 October 2021

Introduction and background

External scrutiny over the past three years has raised justifiable questions as to the effectiveness of Herefordshire Council's Children's Services. These include the Ofsted inspection of children's social care services (2018), subsequent Ofsted focussed and monitoring visits up to July 2021 and the critical judgement from His Hon. Justice Keehan (April 2021) resulting in the Council receiving a non-statutory Improvement Notice in May 2021. The Council, through the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet members, fully accepted accountability for His Hon. Justice Keehan's findings and is committed to delivering sustained improvement of children's services and good outcomes for the children and young people of Herefordshire. Additional external reviews and resource has been commissioned to ensure improvements are made apace.

The Department of Education (DfE) has appointed an independent improvement advisor to support the improvement journey and chair an Improvement Board. There have been notable changes in the Spring/Summer of 2021 in the senior leadership team at Herefordshire Council including the appointment of an interim Director of Children's Services with extensive experience of Children's Services, including improvement work, the appointment a new Chief Executive, and a new lead member for Children and Families.

This operational improvement plan should be read alongside the Strategic Improvement Plan (Plan on a Page). The operational improvement plan focusses on three key priority areas, which have been identified as crucial drivers to deliver the change that is required to ensure that children are effectively supported and safeguarded in Herefordshire. Each priority clearly identifies what outcomes we want to achieve and how we will evidence progress and successful outcomes, within a context of system wide transformation. Our key priority areas of focus:

1. Leadership & Governance (LG)
2. Workforce (W)
3. Quality and Performance (QP)
4. Right Help Right Time (RH)
5. Partnerships (P)

Actions relating to key evidence such as the Improvement Notice and latest Ofsted focused visit are identified (e.g. (OfstedFV21)). Continuous improvement based on success in achieving outcomes and early identification of new areas for improvement means that the plan will be dynamic and have regular reviews to:

- Ensure that all activity and children are the heart of all areas for improvement
- reflect clear links across the system, including other key strategies and plans for citizens of Herefordshire.
- adapt according to new external and internal drivers, such as new legislation, local changes and from internal performance monitoring and review. This enables us to ensure we are tenacious in focusing on the right things in a timely manner.
- Review impact of changes to ensure that the actions are achieving the identified outcomes

Our Priorities

Why these are a priority for us:

- Serious concerns in respect of the council's children's services, following failings outlined in the High Court Judgement published in April 2021; in addition to other court cases coming up, where it is expected that further practice failings will be identified. (*Improvement Notice*)
- Failures in the leadership and management of children's services have been identified, along with evidence of poor decision making, and drift and delay in some historic cases. (*Improvement Notice*)
- Insufficient improvement has been made since Ofsted last inspected in 2018 and two visits. (*Improvement Notice*)
- Governance, accountability, and scrutiny by strategic leaders have been ineffective.
- Leaders and managers have not created the conditions needed to support the development of effective social work practice.
- Recruitment and retention of social work staff continues to be a challenge, with a high proportion of inexperienced and newly qualified social workers. Some social workers find their caseloads unmanageable.
- There is insufficient social care management capacity to operate the service effectively. This includes team managers in post, resulting in lack of oversight and grip in progressing children's plans.
- The frequency and effectiveness of supervision for social workers is limited.
- There are longstanding issues of inconsistent and variable social work practice (*Improvement Notice*). Little progress has been made in improving the quality of practice for children and young people's plans since the Ofsted inspection in June 2018.
- Assessments are too variable in quality, are not holistic and view the impact of separate incidents in isolation.
- Graded care profiles are not completed within the child's timescales and actions identified through the tool are not acted upon quickly enough. This means that children's needs are not fully understood and they remain too long in neglectful situations.
- Plans and intervention focus predominantly on parental needs, with little understanding of children's experiences and the impact these have had upon them. This means that children's needs are not always met and risks not fully understood, and children can be subject of a plan for too long.
- Where direct work with children is undertaken, it is rarely recorded on children's records and does not inform ongoing assessments or plans. The voice of the child in case records and planning needs to be stronger.
- Plans are ineffective at demonstrating what needs to happen to reduce and minimise the risk of harm to children, or to improve outcomes for them.
- For some children, there is evidence of drift and delay in the progression of their plans and in the PLO process, too many changes in their SW and 'start again social work'.
- The current quality assurance framework does not provide an accurate reflection of social work practice and is not effective in improving social work practice and experiences of children.
- The quality of case audits is not good enough. They are overly optimistic in their evaluations of practice and many opportunities are missed to draw out learning or shape social work practice development.
- Routine or effective mechanisms are needed for ensuring that poor practice does not continue.
- Performance monitoring of social work practice through dashboards and performance reports at all levels of the organisation from the Improvement Board to Team Managers needs to be improved.

Outcomes to be achieved:

We will lead well, inspiring and supporting staff to be the best that we can be in an organisation where it's encouraged to try new things and where learning is shared, valued, and put into practice. We will have a skilled, trusted, and empowered workforce who are accountable and focused on consistently delivering good outcomes for the children and families of Herefordshire.

- There is a clear and well communicated shared ambition. Everyone understands their role in delivering it individually and collectively as part of the membership of committees and boards.
- The improvement plan and its delivery plans reflect what needs to change, are based on up-to-date evidence and areas of poor performance. They are monitored and addressed effectively and at pace. Issues are escalated quickly and appropriately actioned.
- The Council can discharge its statutory duties effectively and deliver good outcomes for children through an effective organisational structure, recruitment, retention, workforce development and capacity planning within Children's Services,
- There is increased and appropriate scrutiny and challenge at all levels of leadership in children's services. Success is also celebrated to shape a learning and improvement culture.
- Open, transparent, and safe decision making based on children's needs is evident.
- The corporate parenting principle and role is embedded across the Council and its partners, and clearly understood and applied in decision making for children in care and care leavers.
- Policies, standards, and tools are in place which support practice with children and families, resulting in a clear, accurate and earlier understanding of the child's needs, lived experiences, views and wishes. This leads to better assessment, planning, reduction in risk and achieving desired outcomes.
- Commissioning strategies and activities are effective in providing the right help at the right time and at the right cost in meeting needs and improving outcomes for children and young people. Examples of this are placement sufficiency and children's mental health.
- There is a clear strengths-based model of practice which supports working with children and families to increase engagement, reduce drift and delay, and achieve required outcomes.
- Assessments accurately capture history, lived experiences, risks, needs and are child centred.
- All plans effectively identify accurately the need, outcome, plan, and plans are implemented, monitored and ended within appropriate timescales to achieve required outcomes
- Case recording is timely, child-focussed and of good quality.
- Services and community support come together to meet the needs of local children, young people and families creating early intervention to support families
- A strong performance management governance and culture across all services from team to strategic level,
- Timely and accurate recording, analysis and reporting of information, to provide effective business intelligence, self-evaluation and scrutiny.
- Our quality assurance framework and activity drives practice improvements, linked to workforce development, policies and standards.
- The views of frontline staff and of children and young people will be taken into consideration in the development of services, practice and standards.

All children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved and valued and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.

Leadership and Governance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
LG1	Permanent Senior Leadership Team	Chief Executive	Create and sustain a permanent leadership team: Recruit Director of Children and Families (DCS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent leadership team in place. <i>(data)</i> Accountability system to Leader and Chief Exec, Improvement Board, and DfE adviser in place. They report positively that the systems are working and are achieving the required change. <i>(Voice, reports to IB)</i> The council highlights those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened <i>(reports to IB)</i> Evidence through external review and IB that they are driving the improvement agenda and provide effective leadership. <i>(Review)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes of effective challenge and scrutiny at Member, Director and IB levels. <i>(Audit)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes and action log of effective management oversight of notable/complex cases. Working protocols and service level agreement (Legal services) reviewed, revised, and understood by each relevant part of the council. Effective monitoring systems in place to oversee effectiveness and impact of working protocols. 	1 Sept 2021	28 Feb 2022
LG1	Permanent Senior Leadership Team	Director of Children and Families	Recruit Service Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent leadership team in place. <i>(data)</i> Accountability system to Leader and Chief Exec, Improvement Board, and DfE adviser in place. They report positively that the systems are working and are achieving the required change. <i>(Voice, reports to IB)</i> 	31 Oct 2021	31 March 2022

All children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved and valued and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.

Leadership and Governance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The council highlights those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened <i>(reports to IB)</i> Evidence through external review and IB that they are driving the improvement agenda and provide effective leadership. <i>(Review)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes of effective challenge and scrutiny at Member, Director and IB levels. <i>(Audit)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes and action log of effective management oversight of notable/complex cases. Working protocols and service level agreement (Legal services) reviewed, revised, and understood by each relevant part of the council. Effective monitoring systems in place to oversee effectiveness and impact of working protocols 		
LG2	Effective governance, accountability and scrutiny	Solicitor to the council	Implement an accountability structure including leader, lead member, CEX and DCS, to include line of sight system from service to the CX/Leader and ensure the scrutiny function is operating effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent leadership team in place. <i>(data)</i> Accountability system to Leader and Chief Exec, Improvement Board, and DfE adviser in place. They report positively that the systems are working and are achieving the required change. <i>(Voice, reports to IB)</i> The council highlights those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened <i>(reports to IB)</i> Evidence through external review and IB that they are driving the improvement agenda and provide effective leadership. <i>(Review)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes of effective challenge and scrutiny at Member, Director and IB levels. <i>(Audit)</i> 	1 June 2021	30 June 2021

Leadership and Governance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is evidence through meeting minutes and action log of effective management oversight of notable/complex cases. Working protocols and service level agreement (Legal services) reviewed, revised, and understood by each relevant part of the council. Effective monitoring systems in place to oversee effectiveness and impact of working protocols 		
LG2	Effective governance, accountability and scrutiny	Solicitor to the council	Establish systems and processes to have management oversight of notable/complex cases by service, legal and communications, including establishment of a critical case log	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent leadership team in place. <i>(data)</i> Accountability system to Leader and Chief Exec, Improvement Board, and DfE adviser in place. They report positively that the systems are working and are achieving the required change. <i>(Voice, reports to IB)</i> The council highlights those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened <i>(reports to IB)</i> Evidence through external review and IB that they are driving the improvement agenda and provide effective leadership. <i>(Review)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes of effective challenge and scrutiny at Member, Director and IB levels. <i>(Audit)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes and action log of effective management oversight of notable/complex cases. Working protocols and service level agreement (Legal services) reviewed, revised, and understood by each relevant part of the council. Effective monitoring systems in place to oversee effectiveness and impact of working protocols 	1 June 2021	Completed

Leadership and Governance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
LG2	Effective governance, accountability and scrutiny	Solicitor to the council	Ensure legal services provide consistent and clear legal advice to the directorate through the provision of a clear joint working protocol and service level agreement that defines the client advisor relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent leadership team in place. <i>(data)</i> Accountability system to Leader and Chief Exec, Improvement Board, and DfE adviser in place. They report positively that the systems are working and are achieving the required change. <i>(Voice, reports to IB)</i> The council highlights those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened <i>(reports to IB)</i> Evidence through external review and IB that they are driving the improvement agenda and provide effective leadership. <i>(Review)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes of effective challenge and scrutiny at Member, Director and IB levels. <i>(Audit)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes and action log of effective management oversight of notable/complex cases. Working protocols and service level agreement (Legal services) reviewed, revised, and understood by each relevant part of the council. Effective monitoring systems in place to oversee effectiveness and impact of working protocols 	1 July 2021	30 Nov 2021
LG2	Effective governance, accountability and scrutiny	Solicitor to the council	Undertake a review of constitution to ensure that the partnership boards are reflected correctly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent leadership team in place. <i>(data)</i> Accountability system to Leader and Chief Exec, Improvement Board, and DfE adviser in place. They report positively that the systems are working and are achieving the required change. <i>(Voice, reports to IB)</i> The council highlights those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened <i>(reports to IB)</i> 	1 July 2021	30 Nov 2021

Leadership and Governance

Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence through external review and IB that they are driving the improvement agenda and provide effective leadership. <i>(Review)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes of effective challenge and scrutiny at Member, Director and IB levels. <i>(Audit)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes and action log of effective management oversight of notable/complex cases. Working protocols and service level agreement (Legal services) reviewed, revised, and understood by each relevant part of the council. Effective monitoring systems in place to oversee effectiveness and impact of working protocols 		
23 LG3	Corporate Parenting	Assistant Director Corporate Parenting	Corporate Parenting: Review and redesign the corporate parenting function to include a new strategy and awareness of Corporate Parenting role and commitments and a training programme for all Members and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A robust, up to date corporate parenting strategy is in operation. <i>(review)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes of effective discussion, decision making, challenge and scrutiny in meetings. <i>(Audit)</i> Members and staff are able to talk about their roles as corporate parents. <i>Children & young people report that they are listened to and action is taken to improve their lived experience. (Voice)</i> 	1 Sept 2021	31 Oct 2021
LG4	Improvement progress and reporting	Chief Executive	Effective governance, accountability, and scrutiny at Council level Establish an Improvement Board, appoint DfE advisor and Board Chair <i>(Improvement Notice)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent leadership team in place. <i>(data)</i> Accountability system to Leader and Chief Exec, Improvement Board, and DfE adviser in place. They report positively that the systems are working and are achieving the required change. <i>(Voice, reports to IB)</i> The council highlights those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened <i>(reports to IB)</i> 	14 June 2021	30 June 2021

Leadership and Governance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence through external review and IB that they are driving the improvement agenda and provide effective leadership. <i>(Review)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes of effective challenge and scrutiny at Member, Director and IB levels. <i>(Audit)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes and action log of effective management oversight of notable/complex cases. Working protocols and service level agreement (Legal services) reviewed, revised, and understood by each relevant part of the council. Effective monitoring systems in place to oversee effectiveness and impact of working protocols 		
LG5	Development of an operational plan	Director of Children and Families	Effective governance, accountability, and scrutiny at Council level Maintain an up-to-date record of progress against the improvement plan and reports to the improvement board include data, analysis and recommendations supported by evidence of the impact of improvements on the quality of practice and experience of children and families <i>(Improvement Notice)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent leadership team in place. <i>(data)</i> Accountability system to Leader and Chief Exec, Improvement Board, and DfE adviser in place. They report positively that the systems are working and are achieving the required change. <i>(Voice, reports to IB)</i> The council highlights those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened <i>(reports to IB)</i> Evidence through external review and IB that they are driving the improvement agenda and provide effective leadership. <i>(Review)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes of effective challenge and scrutiny at Member, Director and IB levels. <i>(Audit)</i> There is evidence through meeting minutes and action log of effective management oversight of notable/complex cases. Working protocols and service level agreement (Legal services) reviewed, revised, 	14 June 2021	Review monthly

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Leadership and Governance

Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<p>and understood by each relevant part of the council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective monitoring systems in place to oversee effectiveness and impact of working protocols 		

Workforce

Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
W1	Workforce capacity and development	Director of children and families	<p>Children's Services organisational structure and effectiveness:</p> <p>Review and implement a new interim transitional service structure, to include feedback from staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A revised structure is in place which delivers adequate staffing at all levels to deliver safe and effective services (<i>review</i>) A revised workforce strategy (including recruitment and retention) is in place with a 'strategy into action' plan alongside it. A revised recruitment and retention strategy and plan is in place Caseloads are within agreed parameters (<i>data, voice</i>) Children have fewer changes of social worker (<i>data</i>) The organisational structure operates effectively to support practice (<i>IB, review, voice of staff</i>) Job descriptions have been reviewed and a job family outline developed to support career pathways Staff report they have a clear career pathway that allows them to stay and progress their career in Herefordshire (<i>voice</i>) We are more informed about why staff are thinking of leaving us or do leave; this can inform improvements 	1 June 2021	31 July 2021

Workforce						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
W1	Workforce capacity and development	Director of children and families	Review and take necessary remedial action to address identified shortfalls in case-holding capacity for social workers, including NQSWs, to allow them to respond effectively to children in need of help and protection. <i>(OfstedFV21) (Priority Action)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A revised structure is in place which delivers adequate staffing at all levels to deliver safe and effective services <i>(review)</i> A revised workforce strategy (including recruitment and retention) is in place with a 'strategy into action' plan alongside it. A revised recruitment and retention strategy and plan is in place Caseloads are within agreed parameters <i>(data, voice)</i> Children have fewer changes of social worker <i>(data)</i> The organisational structure operates effectively to support practice <i>(IB, review, voice of staff)</i> Job descriptions have been reviewed and a job family outline developed to support career pathways Staff report they have a clear career pathway that allows them to stay and progress their career in Herefordshire <i>(voice)</i> We are more informed about why staff are thinking of leaving us or do leave; this can inform improvements 	1 August 2021	31 October 2021
W1	Workforce capacity and development	Director of children and families	Coordinate and publicise career progression pathways for all staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A revised structure is in place which delivers adequate staffing at all levels to deliver safe and effective services <i>(review)</i> A revised workforce strategy (including recruitment and retention) is in place with a 'strategy into action' plan alongside it. A revised recruitment and retention strategy and plan is in place Caseloads are within agreed parameters <i>(data, voice)</i> Children have fewer changes of social worker <i>(data)</i> The organisational structure operates effectively to support practice <i>(IB, review, voice of staff)</i> 	1 Sept 2021	31 Dec 2021

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Workforce						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job descriptions have been reviewed and a job family outline developed to support career pathways Staff report they have a clear career pathway that allows them to stay and progress their career in Herefordshire (<i>voice</i>) We are more informed about why staff are thinking of leaving us or do leave; this can inform improvements 		
W1	Workforce capacity and development	Director of children and families	Strengthen the Social Work Academy and support for NQSWs and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff report that they feel well supported by the Social Work Academy and data evidences uptake of provision. 	30 Sept 2021	30 Nov 2021
W1	Workforce capacity and development	Director of children and families	Skills and competencies: Undertake an analysis of current skill levels and role function of staff and team managers to inform workforce training and development plan and delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis undertaken and recommendations inform workforce development strategy Workforce development strategy in place Workforce development programme in place, with good attendance and evaluation evidence increased skills and competencies of staff. (Review, voice of staff) Staff have the technical knowledge and skills required to effectively perform their roles – they can make clear assessment, plans and drive through change in families to impact on outcomes positively (audit, review) All learning reflects the Council's values Managers lead the improvement in their teams 	31 July 2021	30 Sept 2021
W1	Workforce capacity and development	Director of children and families	Develop workforce and training development plan based on findings of above, and other learning from reviews, audits, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis undertaken and recommendations inform workforce development strategy Workforce development strategy in place Workforce development programme in place, with good attendance and evaluation evidence increased skills and competencies of staff. (Review, voice of staff) Staff have the technical knowledge and skills required to effectively perform their roles – 	30 Sept 2021	30 Nov 2021

All children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved and valued and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.

Workforce						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<p>they can make clear assessment, plans and drive through change in families to impact on outcomes positively (audit, review)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All learning reflects the Council's values Managers lead the improvement in their teams 		
W1	Workforce capacity and development	Director of children and families	Through the Academy, deliver systemic practice learning and development offer including bespoke core skills training for all staff. Generic training will be delivered outside of the Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis undertaken and recommendations inform workforce development strategy Workforce development strategy in place Workforce development programme in place, with good attendance and evaluation evidence increased skills and competencies of staff. (Review, voice of staff) Staff have the technical knowledge and skills required to effectively perform their roles – they can make clear assessment, plans and drive through change in families to impact on outcomes positively (audit, review) All learning reflects the Council's values Managers lead the improvement in their teams 	1 Oct 2021	Ongoing
W1	Workforce capacity and development	Director of children and families	Team managers are being supported /trained /understand requirements in having oversight and grip of progression of children's plans – including effective supervision. Manager training <i>OfstedFV21 (Priority Action)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis undertaken and recommendations inform workforce development strategy Workforce development strategy in place Workforce development programme in place, with good attendance and evaluation evidence increased skills and competencies of staff. (Review, voice of staff) Staff have the technical knowledge and skills required to effectively perform their roles – they can make clear assessment, plans and drive through change in families to impact on outcomes positively (audit, review) All learning reflects the Council's values Managers lead the improvement in their teams 	1 Oct 2021	Ongoing

Workforce						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
W1	Workforce capacity and development	Director Children and Families	Develop quality assurance role for Independent Reviewing Officer and Child Protection Chairs. Improve role of IRO/CP chair in oversight and challenge of plans, using dispute resolution appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality assurance role is understood and IRO and CP Chairs footprint is evident, consistent, and drives children's plan 	1 Aug 2021	31 Jan 2022
W2	Employee Engagement	Assistant Director People	Employee wellbeing: Undertake analysis of current engagement and morale of the staff as baseline for improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We understand our level of staff engagement to be able to measure improvement Staff drop-in sessions and other communication channels are used positively by staff to engage with the improvement journey Staff surveys tell us that they are informed and engaged appropriately. <i>(Voice)</i> Turnover and sickness rates are reduced. <i>(data)</i> In the annual staff survey, X% of staff state that they are content <i>(data, voice)</i> 40% + of registered social workers complete the annual Health Check An employee experience strategy is in place and accessible for all staff 	1 Sept 2021	31 Oct 2021
W2	Employee Engagement	Assistant Director People	Develop an employee wellbeing programme with staff reference groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We understand our level of staff engagement to be able to measure improvement Staff drop-in sessions and other communication channels are used positively by staff to engage with the improvement journey Staff surveys tell us that they are informed and engaged appropriately. <i>(Voice)</i> Turnover and sickness rates are reduced. <i>(data)</i> In the annual staff survey, X% of staff state that they are content <i>(data, voice)</i> 40% + of registered social workers complete the annual Health Check 	1 Sept 2021	31 Oct 2021

Workforce						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An employee experience strategy is in place and accessible for all staff 		
W2	Employee Engagement	Assistant Director People	Undertake the social worker annual health check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We understand our level of staff engagement to be able to measure improvement Staff drop-in sessions and other communication channels are used positively by staff to engage with the improvement journey Staff surveys tell us that they are informed and engaged appropriately. <i>(Voice)</i> Turnover and sickness rates are reduced. <i>(data)</i> In the annual staff survey, X% of staff state that they are content <i>(data, voice)</i> 40% + of registered social workers complete the annual Health Check An employee experience strategy is in place and accessible for all staff 	1 Sept 2021	1 Dec 2021
W3	Recruitment	Director of children and families	Design and implement a revised workforce strategy to support our vision and values, new ways of working, structures that are fit for purpose and manageable caseloads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A revised structure is in place which delivers adequate staffing at all levels to deliver safe and effective services <i>(review)</i> A revised workforce strategy (including recruitment and retention) is in place with a 'strategy into action' plan alongside it. A revised recruitment and retention strategy and plan is in place Caseloads are within agreed parameters <i>(data, voice)</i> Children have fewer changes of social worker <i>(data)</i> The organisational structure operates effectively to support practice <i>(IB, review, voice of staff)</i> Job descriptions have been reviewed and a job family outline developed to support career pathways 	1 July 2021	31 Dec 2021

Workforce						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff report they have a clear career pathway that allows them to stay and progress their career in Herefordshire (<i>voice</i>) We are more informed about why staff are thinking of leaving us or do leave; this can inform improvements 		
W3	Recruitment	Director of children and families	Create and sustain a permanent workforce: Develop and implement a recruitment and retention strategy, ensuring a specific focus on Team Managers and appropriate staff capacity and skill mix (<i>OfstedFV21</i>) (<i>Priority Action</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A revised structure is in place which delivers adequate staffing at all levels to deliver safe and effective services (<i>review</i>) A revised workforce strategy (including recruitment and retention) is in place with a 'strategy into action' plan alongside it. A revised recruitment and retention strategy and plan is in place Caseloads are within agreed parameters (<i>data, voice</i>) Children have fewer changes of social worker (<i>data</i>) The organisational structure operates effectively to support practice (<i>IB, review, voice of staff</i>) Job descriptions have been reviewed and a job family outline developed to support career pathways Staff report they have a clear career pathway that allows them to stay and progress their career in Herefordshire (<i>voice</i>) We are more informed about why staff are thinking of leaving us or do leave; this can inform improvements 	1 Sept 2021	31 Dec 2021

Quality and Performance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
QP1	Quality and pace of decision making	Director Children and Families	Supervision: Review, revise and implement an interim amended supervision policy that is relevant for specific functions, including leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised supervision policy in place. All staff across the directorate receive monthly supervision that is reflective and impactful. <i>(data, audit, external scrutiny tells us we are getting it right)</i>To include a performance supervision data target Quality of supervision and recording improves leading to children's cases progressing in a timely manner and delay being reduced QA, <i>audit, external scrutiny (reviews, inspections, monitoring visits etc.)</i> <i>((OfstedFV21) (Priority Action))</i> 	1 June 2021	31 July 2021
QP1	Quality and pace of decision making	Director Children and Families	Develop a new supervision policy and toolkit to support managers delivering effective and reflective supervision <i>(OfstedFV21) (Priority Action)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised supervision policy in place. All staff across the directorate receive monthly supervision that is reflective and impactful. <i>(data, audit, external scrutiny tells us we are getting it right)</i>To include a performance supervision data target Quality of supervision and recording improves leading to children's cases progressing in a timely manner and delay being reduced QA, <i>audit, external scrutiny (reviews, inspections, monitoring visits etc.)</i> <i>((OfstedFV21) (Priority Action))</i> 	1 Aug 2021	31 Oct 2021
QP1	Quality and pace of decision making	Director Children and Families	Set recording of supervision on personnel and child's files <i>(OfstedFV21)</i>	<p>a) Revised supervision policy in place.</p> <p>b) All staff across the directorate receive monthly supervision that is reflective and impactful. <i>(data, audit, external scrutiny tells us we are getting it right)</i>To include a performance supervision data target</p> <p>Quality of supervision and recording improves leading to children's cases progressing in a timely manner and delay being reduced QA, <i>audit, external scrutiny (reviews, inspections, monitoring visits etc.)</i> <i>((OfstedFV21) (Priority Action))</i></p>	1 Aug 2021	31 Oct 2021

Quality and Performance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
QP1	Quality and pace of decision making	Director Children and Families	Monitor frequency and effectiveness of case supervision <i>(OfstedFV21)</i> <i>(Priority Action)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data and quality assurance activity demonstrate increased frequency and effectiveness of supervision. 	1 Aug 2021	ongoing
QP1	Quality and pace of decision making	Director Children and Families	Quality and pace of decision making: Ensure robust management oversight/ supervision and scrutiny of planning and decision making to avoid drift and delay for children within case work. <i>(OfstedFV21)</i> <i>(Priority Action)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans are focussed on the right areas to drive progress for CYP, risks are minimised and their circumstances improve as a result of robust intervention. <i>(audit, external scrutiny)</i> Children's interventions are appropriately managed and actions to move between services is closely monitored and quality assured <i>(audit)</i> 	May 2021	31 July 2021
QP1	Quality and pace of decision making	Director Children and Families	Implement a Quality Assurance, Performance & Engagement Board within Children's Services. (Operational Board) The Board will complement operational management action to address inconsistent and variable social work practice. <i>(OfstedFV21)</i> <i>(Priority Action)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board in place. Evidence in meeting minutes and action log of grasp of existing and emerging performance issues, and monitoring of improvement plan.<i>(review)</i> 	22 Sept 2021	30 Nov 2021
QP1	Quality and pace of decision making	Director Children and Families	Implement monitoring system to improve oversight and challenge of child protection plans. <i>(OfstedFV21)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans are effective in improving safety and generating improvements for children Children do not remain subject of plans for longer than they need to 	12 July 2021	31 Jan 2022
QP2	Quality assurance and performance	Assistant Director Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Review pre-proceedings process and documentation (including letters) and implement identified improvements to achieve consistency. <i>(OfstedFV21)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proceedings are considered at the right time, and regular planning meetings continue to set out actions to be taken, which are recorded and monitored 	12 July 2021	30 Sept 2021
QP2	Quality assurance and performance	Assistant Director Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Audit of current practice and cases: Undertake an end-to-end diagnostic review of the quality of practice of children's social care services and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance that children are appropriately safeguarded, and any learning is fed into practice All cases will have been audited and actions identified will have been completed with a 	May 2021	31 Oct 2021

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Quality and Performance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
			Early Help to provide insight into current practice and what changes are required to strengthen the service.	clear closing the loop mechanism to ensure actions are followed up. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The services will be aware of the needs of all children and have clear plans to progress positive outcomes 		
QP2	Quality assurance and performance	Assistant Director Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Review and quality assure all open cases at 11 June 2021 and take whatever action is required to strengthen casework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance that children are appropriately safeguarded, and any learning is fed into practice All cases will have been audited and actions identified will have been completed with a clear closing the loop mechanism to ensure actions are followed up. The services will be aware of the needs of all children and have clear plans to progress positive outcomes 	11 June 2021	31 Dec 2021
QP2	Quality assurance and performance	Assistant Director Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Develop and embed a new Quality Assurance framework, including audit tools that set out best practice and consistent view of practice and generate learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesign of system based on the lived experience of the child Managers know what good looks like. Audit grades consistently show at least 80% of work is Requires Improvement or Good. Audit activity provides a clear line of oversight on the quality of SW practice and understand what actions to take to drive continual SW practice improvement 	11 June 2021	31 March 2022
QP2	Quality assurance and performance	Assistant Director Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Develop a high-level Improvement Board / Management Board outcomes framework, dashboard and forward plan based on Improvement Plan measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence base of progress in place and used to monitor impact of improvement activity. 	1 Oct 2021	30 Nov 2021
QP2	Quality assurance and performance	Assistant Director Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Develop operational dynamic performance dashboards, performance clinics and training for managers to provide effective oversight of performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance dashboards & performance clinics in place 	2 Aug 2021	31 Oct 2021

Quality and Performance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
QP2	Quality assurance and performance	Assistant Director Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Monitor the management of complaints in respect of resolving the issue and contributing to organisational learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce complaints by learning what needs to change. New complaints system implemented. 	13 Sept 2021	31 Dec 2021
QP2	Quality assurance and performance	Assistant Director Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Secure resources to increase capacity for independent advocacy provision for C&YP and families, subject access requests and complaints including training to inform practice for those who need it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals presented to management board for a decision. If implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social care SARs completed in line with statutory timescales Increased number of young people supported by the children's rights and advocacy service Reduced number of children's complaints progressing to stage 2 and stage 3 	13 Sept 2021	31 Oct 2021
QP3	Practice Development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Practice tools, standards, and policies: Refresh and further develop tools to facilitate practice improvement in collaboration with children, families and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice standards and a suite of tools are in place and in use by staff, who report they support practice with children and families (<i>voice, audit, external scrutiny</i>) The views of frontline staff and of children and young people will be taken into consideration in the development of practice and standards. (<i>Improvement Notice</i>) Assessments and plans meet or exceed required standards, children's needs are (<i>QA, audit & external scrutiny</i>) Fewer re-referrals, second or subsequent child protection plans or children returning to care as children will get the right response first time (<i>data, performance, audit, external scrutiny</i>) 	1 Jan 2021	31 March 2022
QP3	Practice Development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Review and relaunch practice standards and recording protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice standards and a suite of tools are in place and in use by staff, who report they support practice with children and families (<i>voice, audit, external scrutiny</i>) 	1 Sep 2021	31 Oct 2021

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Quality and Performance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The views of frontline staff and of children and young people will be taken into consideration in the development of practice and standards. <i>(Improvement Notice)</i> Assessments and plans meet or exceed required standards, children's needs are <i>(QA, audit & external scrutiny)</i> Fewer re-referrals, second or subsequent child protection plans or children returning to care as children will get the right response first time <i>(data, performance, audit, external scrutiny)</i> 		
QP3	Practice Development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Develop and embed a dispute and escalation policy across the whole service including Early Help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice standards and a suite of tools are in place and in use by staff, who report they support practice with children and families <i>(voice, audit, external scrutiny)</i> The views of frontline staff and of children and young people will be taken into consideration in the development of practice and standards. <i>(Improvement Notice)</i> Assessments and plans meet or exceed required standards, children's needs are <i>(QA, audit & external scrutiny)</i> Fewer re-referrals, second or subsequent child protection plans or children returning to care as children will get the right response first time <i>(data, performance, audit, external scrutiny)</i> 	1 April 2021	30 June 2021
QP3	Practice Development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Review and update all policies and procedures where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All policies and procedures reviewed as appropriate 	1 Sept 2021W!	30 Nov 2021
QP3	Practice development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance,	Foster Carers: Review and re-issue Foster Carer's Handbook, and negotiate roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased choice of placements to meet the needs of children in our care <i>(data, audit)</i> 	1 Sept 2021	30 Nov 2021

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Quality and Performance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
		Safeguarding and Partnerships		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in number of in-house foster carers and carers who have the skills to care for children with complex needs (<i>data</i>) Matching of placements will be available to ensure needs are met and reduction in short term placements (<i>data</i>) Permanency will be achieved more effectively 		
QP3	Practice development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Model of Practice: Embed a strength based, child focused approach to practice through embedding "Signs of Safety" model of practice into practice, to include in induction of new staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff have received training and fully understand how to utilise 'signs of safety' in their work. (<i>data, voice, audit, external scrutiny</i>) Practitioners across all services practice in a strengths-based model of care and support Better outcomes for children and families are achieved (<i>audit</i>) 	2 Jan 2020 (document launch Jan 2021)	31 March 2022
QP3	Practice development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Assessments, plans and planning: Develop the quality and consistency of assessments to ensure they identify needs and risks, are clear about what needs to happen (including by partners and parents) to inform robust plans that achieve identified outcomes for children and young people. (<i>OfstedFV21</i>) (<i>Priority Action</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments and plans are SMART, consistently of a good quality and child centred. (<i>audit</i>) Children state that they feel involved in their assessments and plans. (<i>voice, audit</i>) Risk is identified and understood, and plans will effectively engage families to safely manage risk and support them to make required changes. (<i>audit</i>) 	12 July 2021	30 Nov 2021
QP3	Practice development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Ensure all children and young people actively participate in their assessments and plans, through purposeful and creative direct work, especially life story work. Ensure assessments and plans are child focused and reflect their lived experiences and the impact of these. These should include children with disabilities. (<i>OfstedFV21</i>) (<i>Priority Action</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments and plans are SMART, consistently of a good quality and child centred. (<i>audit</i>) Children state that they feel involved in their assessments and plans. (<i>voice, audit</i>) Risk is identified and understood, and plans will effectively engage families to safely manage risk and support them to make required changes. (<i>audit</i>) 	12 July 2021	30 Nov 2021

Quality and Performance						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
QP3	Practice development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Review and develop a participation delivery model that ensures children's engagement and participation (<i>Ofsted FV21</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are effectively engaged and there is an effective children in care and care leaver council/associate committees to help inform recruitment, retention and overall children's services delivery Children are consulted and their views inform service plans and decision making 	12 July 2021	31 Dec 2021
QP3	Practice development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Review and develop a participation delivery model for parents, carers and foster carers that ensures adults' engagement and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent and carers are consulted and their views inform service plans and decision making There is an effective parent and carers' association/committee that engages senior leaders in support services for children 	12 July 2021	31 March 2022
QP3	Practice development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Develop and refresh a range of tools (inc. Signs of Safety) to capture the voice of the child in case records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are effectively engaged and their views are evident in plans Children are consulted and their views inform service plans and decision making 	12 July 2021	31 March 2022
QP3	Practice development	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships	Reinforce with staff good practice regarding working with neglect and use of the Graded Care Profile, and work with the HSCP to implement the Neglect strategy and action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neglect is appropriately identified, assessed and addressed. (audit) Children are prevented from, or do not spend too long in neglectful situations 	1 August 2021	31 March 2022
QP4	Educational attainment	Assistant Director, Education	Develop and implement strategy to improve educational attainment of children in care and children on a child protection plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in care have better life chances More children in care move into higher education % children in care achieving expected grades (<i>data</i>) 	1 Sept 2021	31 October 2021
QP5	Pathway to adulthood (transitions)	Director Adults and Communities	Transitions: In conjunction with partners, review and improve transition to adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people experience a smooth transition into adulthood and do not experience a "cliff edge" Adult teams are fully sighted of young people moving into the adults system at the earliest possibility 	1 July 2021	30 Nov 2021

Right help, Right Time						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
RH1	Prevention and early intervention	Assistant Director, safeguarding and family support	Early Help: Review existing early help and prevention strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A revised Early Help service strategy, services structure and practice framework are in place. Feedback from children, families and professionals report an improvement in Early Help services. (<i>Voice, audit</i>) (<i>measure</i>) Children and families receive the right help at the right time with a focus on identifying and addressing issues at the earliest possibility (<i>audit, data</i>) 	1 Sept 2021	1 Oct 2021
RH1	Prevention and early intervention	Assistant Director, safeguarding and family support	Review and implement multi-agency service delivery model and structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-agency delivery model agreed [<i>Impact measures in development</i>] 	1 Sept 2021	31 Oct 2021
RH1	Prevention and early intervention	Assistant Director, safeguarding and family support	Develop a multi-agency practice framework for Early Help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice framework agreed Practice framework understood by partners [<i>Impact measures in development</i>] 	1 Sept 2021	31 Dec 2021
RH2	Talk Community	Assistant Director, Talk Community	Talk Community: Develop and utilise Talk Community Hubs to coordinate provision of information, advice and guidance and early intervention activity closer to home – to support self-help and maximise use of community sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [<i>Actions and impact measures in development</i>] 		
RH3	Commissioning	Assistant Director, All Ages Commissioning	Commissioning: a) Placements: Review and update Sufficiency Strategy and commissioning arrangements to ensure options and availability for care placements, prevention services and housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased choice of placements to meet the needs of children in our care (<i>data, audit</i>) Increase in number of in-house foster carers and carers who have the skills to care for children with complex needs (<i>data</i>) Matching of placements will be available to ensure needs are met and reduction in short term placements (<i>data</i>) Permanency will be achieved more effectively 	1 June 2021	31 March 2021

Partnerships						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
P1	Contextual safeguarding	Accountable officers across the statutory bodies (police, NHS, LA)	Contextual safeguarding: Agree and implement contextual safeguarding model (as an alternative to child protection) for adolescents facing risks outside the home (includes Peer on Peer abuse, Missing children and contextual safeguarding).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joined up seamless pathways and provision of service for all children and young people at risk of exploitation All partners will be aware of those at greatest risk, there will be easy and transparent access to support/advice and fast track pathways for children at highest risk 	1 July 2021	30 Nov 2021
P2	Children's Safeguarding Partnership	Assistant Director - Quality, Performance and Partnerships	Contribute to the Safeguarding Children Partnership development plan: To include a review of capacity and effectiveness of Safeguarding Partnership business unit and subsequent actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role as statutory partner in SCP is undertaken and effective (<i>reports to IB</i>) Developments in partnership working are at pace and aligned to the LA's Children's Services improvement programme. (<i>Review</i>) Performance data evidence improvements (<i>Data, Audit, HSCP quality effectiveness reports</i>) All partners working within multi-agency settings or identified within plans follow the same practice standards so that the response to children is consistent. (<i>Audit</i>) 	1 April 2021	30 Nov 2021
P2	Children's Safeguarding Partnership	Assistant Director - Quality, Performance and Partnerships	Contribute to Safeguarding Partnership review and quality assurance of Multi agency referral form (MARF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consistent framework for referral based on assessed risk – referrals will have appropriate information reducing need for families to re-tell stories and delays over lack of consent (<i>audit</i>) Improved consistency of quality of MARF and decision of making in MASH will ensure that children and young people received services in a timely way and proportionate to need (<i>audit</i>) Reduction in re-referrals (<i>data</i>) 	1 Sept 2021	31 Jan 2022
P2	Children's Safeguarding Partnership	Assistant Director - Quality, Performance and Partnerships	Embed the Herefordshire Early Help Offer to support partners to identify, assess and hold low level risk cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consistent framework for referral based on assessed risk – referrals will have appropriate information reducing need for families to re- 	1 Sept 2021	31 Jan 2022

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Partnerships						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				tell stories and delays over lack of consent (<i>audit</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved consistency of quality of MARF and decision of making in MASH will ensure that children and young people received services in a timely way and proportionate to need (<i>audit</i>) Reduction in re-referrals (<i>data</i>) 		
P2	Children's Safeguarding Partnership	Assistant Director - Quality, Performance and Partnerships	Provide information, advice, guidance and support via the Early Help Hub where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consistent framework for referral based on assessed risk – referrals will have appropriate information reducing need for families to re-tell stories and delays over lack of consent (<i>audit</i>) Improved consistency of quality of MARF and decision of making in MASH will ensure that children and young people received services in a timely way and proportionate to need (<i>audit</i>) Reduction in re-referrals (<i>data</i>) 	1 Sept 2021	31 Jan 2022
P3	Multi agency training and development	Assistant Director - Quality, Performance and Partnerships	partnership training and development; shared understanding, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role as statutory partner in SCP is undertaken and effective (<i>reports to IB</i>) Developments in partnership working are at pace and aligned to the LA's Children's Services improvement programme. (<i>Review</i>) Performance data evidence improvements (<i>Data, Audit, HSCP quality effectiveness reports</i>) All partners working within multi-agency settings or identified within plans follow the same practice standards so that the response to children is consistent. (<i>Audit</i>) 	1 April 2021	30 Nov 2021
P3	Multi agency training and development	Assistant Director - Quality, Performance and Partnerships	standards of assessments, plans and direct work with children and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role as statutory partner in SCP is undertaken and effective (<i>reports to IB</i>) Developments in partnership working are at pace and aligned to the LA's Children's Services improvement programme. (<i>Review</i>) 	1 April 2021	30 Nov 2021

All children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved and valued and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.

Partnerships						
Ref	Priority Area	SRO	Key Activity	What good looks like	Start Date	Due Date
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance data evidence improvements (<i>Data, Audit, HSCP quality effectiveness reports</i>) All partners working within multi-agency settings or identified within plans follow the same practice standards so that the response to children is consistent. (<i>Audit</i>) 		
P4	Multi agency dataset	Assistant Director - Quality, Performance and Partnerships	Ensure robust programme of reporting in relation to private fostering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting in relation to private fostering is in place Service leaders using information to drive practice 	1 June 2021	31 Oct 2021
P5	Pathways to other services	Director of Public Health	b) Mental Health services: Work in partnership with the CCG to ensure appropriate access to mental health services / Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)	[<i>Actions and impact measures in development</i>]		

Appendix 1 – Glossary and Key

1.1 Current post holders

Job Title	Organisation	Current Postholder
Chief Executive	Herefordshire Council	Paul Walker
Lead member	Herefordshire Council	Councillor Diana Toynbee
Director of Children's Services	Herefordshire Council	Catherine Knowles
independent improvement advisor	Department for Education	Gladys Rhodes White
Chair - HSCP	Independent	Liz Murphy
Assistant Director Safeguarding & Family Support	Herefordshire Council	Sharmain Lawrence
Assistant Director Corporate Parenting	Herefordshire Council	Andrews Osei
Assistant Director Quality Assurance & Partnerships	Herefordshire Council	Matthew Sampson
Assistant Director Education, Development & Skills	Herefordshire Council	Ceri Morgan
Assistant Director All Ages Commissioning	Herefordshire Council	Ewen Archibald
Assistant Director Talk Community	Herefordshire Council	Amy Pitt
Assistant Director Corporate Support	Herefordshire Council	Natalia Silver
Principle Social Worker	Herefordshire Council	Salwa Farid
HR Business Partner	Herefordshire Council	Lorna Simpson
Children's Improvement Director	Herefordshire Council	Darryl Freeman
Leader of the Council	Herefordshire Council	Councillor David Hitchiner
Solicitor to the Council	Herefordshire Council	Claire Ward

1.2 Example of BRAG rating to be used in monitoring

RED	Process: Tasks not been completed or timescales slipped and need attention Impact should start to be seen and measured, but are not met.	BLUE	Completed and impact evidenced, target achieved and this is likely to be sustained.
AMBER	Process: Tasks are not fully on track but plans are in place to ensure progress by identifiable timescale Impact can start to be measured but are yet to be demonstrable	GREY	Process: Not started - action not scheduled to start in this period. Impact not yet expected to be realised (i.e. actions in progress/not started).
GREEN	Process: Tasks are progressing as expected and deemed to be on target Impact of outcomes can be demonstrably measured		

Appendix 2 – plan on a page

Our plan on a page – Children’s Improvement Programme (2021-2024)

The following table summarises the vision and our ambition; the five primary work streams of the improvement plan and their priority areas of focus; the cross cutting activity; and our measures of success.

Our Vision	All children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved, and valued, and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.					
Our ambition	Creating a child-centred county where children and young people are at the heart of everything we do					
Work streams	Leadership and Governance (LG)	Workforce (W)	Quality and Performance (QP)	Right Help, Right Time (RH)	Partnerships (P)	
Priority areas of focus:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Permanent leadershipEffective governance, accountability and scrutinyCorporate ParentingImprovement progress reportingService delivery modelsOperational Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workforce capacity and developmentEmployee engagementRetention and recruitmentCareer pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Quality and pace of decision makingQuality assurance and performance frameworksQuality supervisionPractice tools, standards, and policiesEducational attainmentTransitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Prevention and Early helpTalk Community – Children and FamiliesCommissioning servicesSufficiency Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Contextual safeguardingChildren's Safeguarding PartnershipMulti agency training and developmentMulti-agency datasetPathways to other services	
Cross cutting activity	Valuing difference and culture					
	Delivering Service Transformation – Creating an environment where excellent practice can thrive.					
	Communication and engagement - Participation strategy; Workforce strategy; and Communication and Engagement strategy.					
	Enabling infrastructure – Finance, HR, Digital and IT, Business Support, Systems, and Data.					
Our success measures	What children and families tell us	What our staff tell us	What our partners tell us	Quantity indicators (performance data)	Quality indicators (audits, reviews)	Outcomes for children

All children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved and valued and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.



Approve a preferred option for the development of a new care facility in Herefordshire for meeting future demand and service delivery

Decision maker:

Cabinet

Decision date: Thursday 28 October 2021

Report by: Cabinet Member, Health and Adults Wellbeing

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To approve the preferred option to invest in and develop the council's own care facility in Herefordshire to meet future demand.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
 Ewen Archibald, Tel: 01432 261970, email: Ewen.Archibald@herefordshire.gov.uk
 Ewen Archibald, Phillip Hamer, Jas Kakkar, Tel: 01432 261970, Tel: 01432 383367, email:
Jas.Kakkar@herefordshire.gov.uk

The Council has identified that demographic changes and the development of the local care home market will bring pressure on existing capacity through increasing numbers of older and disabled people with complex needs. Additional care home bed capacity will be required to meet needs in such a way that the council can ensure access to care when it is needed and that the care is of high quality. There is also an opportunity to create new care facilities, which are high specification and fit for the future, for the delivery of care and support. Some of the options for consideration would see those facilities address the council's environmental priorities, ensuring they are built to Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard.

The options appraisal at Appendix 1 explores how the council can achieve 80 additional high quality care home beds under its control and sets out different options for doing so:

1. Do nothing;
2. Enter into long-term block contractual arrangement with existing providers in the local market;
3. Purchase buildings on the open market, redevelop and refit, to operate directly;
4. Invest and develop the council's own, large scale care home facility;
5. Work with an investment and/or delivery partner to develop a new large-scale care home facility.

The appraisal identifies a recommended option for Cabinet to consider adopting as the council's preferred approach, which would then be taken forward in greater detail for further consideration.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) The options appraisal for further development of additional care home facilities in Herefordshire is considered and the preferred option approved.**
- b) Authority is delegated to the Interim Director for Adults and Communities to take all appropriate steps to develop the preferred option in detail, for further consideration of cabinet.**
- c) A similar options appraisal for new care home or other accommodation for children is prepared for cabinet's consideration.**

Alternative options

1. Do nothing and not consider or adopt a preferred model for achieving an increase in high quality care home capacity. This option is not recommended, as it would prevent progress in planning services to meet future need. It would also prevent exploitation of potential opportunities in local markets and effective deployment of capital and other resources.

Key considerations

2. The options set out in the options appraisal at Appendix 1 offer different approaches to achieving an increase in care home beds. In considering the options, the council is fulfilling a requirement in the Care Act 2014 for local authorities to help develop a market that delivers a wide range of sustainable high-quality care and support services, available to their communities. The Care Act 2014 also requires that local authorities assess need and ensure future services meet those needs.
3. The council is clear that where the market cannot meet these challenges and meet the needs of individuals it will consider its role within the market and has already started to in-source some services, and is currently exploring these options to ensure choice, quality and cost effective delivery. This is set against a demand for nursing beds per month, which can fluctuate.

4. Capacity to meet demand for complex care in nursing environments in Herefordshire is limited. The council often has difficulty in both finding placements for people with high needs and controlling the cost of these placements. This can lead to placements out of county. Currently the council is reliant on spot purchasing care at significant cost from dozens of homes run as commercial business and with varying levels of quality and reliability. As the numbers of people aged 85 and older and those with complex needs grow, so do the challenges in finding the right care at an appropriate quality and price. This is especially so for people with complex needs arising from frailty and dementia.
5. The total need for care home placements for people over 65 years is projected to increase from around 1,550 in 2018 to around 2,000 people in 2028 (an increase of 450 over this 10 year period); and to around 2,650 people by 2,038 (an increase of 1,150 over this 20 year period).
6. The proposal is for the council to develop additional and affordable nursing home capacity of around 80 beds. This may be in the form of a care home or homes targeted to those areas of the county where supply is weakest and the rise in costs of new placements most. The potential benefits of investing in additional care home capacity include:
 - Reduced delays in hospital;
 - Increased capacity within the market and flexibility to manage admissions and future developments;
 - Improved local services to meet the needs of residents who have complex needs;
 - Reduced and consistent placement costs;
 - Potential option of income from placements, including self-funders.
7. The development of new care home capacity provides an opportunity to connect care and support services more effectively with their communities. Care homes should be seen as a 'part of the community and as a 'hub' of activity, rather than operating in isolation from the surrounding population. A new high specification care home could be co-located with various community facilities, such as gym, café, early years support, cultural and community support. The new service can also contribute to the Talk Community approach by providing resources to benefit the community including hot food provision, volunteering opportunities, inter-generational learning and activities or meeting facilities. The service could benefit from Talk Community through engagement, recruitment, safe activities for residents in the community and many other ways.
8. In common with many local authorities, Herefordshire divested itself of its directly owned and operated care homes almost 20 years ago. This recognised a wide variety of factors including the growth of the independent care home sector and challenges for the council around workforce and the availability of capital resources to invest in ageing buildings. In the last few years, councils have been considering acquisition or building of their own care facilities, as they weigh up the relative availability of capital investment and the limitations of their provider markets.
9. The options explored in the options appraisal in this report are:

Option One, 'Doing nothing', this is not considered a viable option, as it does not address the council's priorities and challenges nor contributes to planning services to meet future need.

Option Two, 'Enter block contract arrangements' this would require the council to negotiate multiple long-term contracts with existing providers of nursing homes in Herefordshire, totalling 80 beds.

The potential benefits from this option are:

- No capital investment required;
- Potentially immediate access to beds;
- Support the local market rather than compete within it;
- Some flexibility over bed numbers over time.

The potential disadvantages include:

- The limitations of block contracts as a commissioning method;
- It is unclear whether providers would accept block contracts or at what price;
- The price of these contracts would not necessarily offer value for money;
- The contracts would not increase overall capacity or quality locally.

Option Three, 'Acquiring properties from the open market'.

The potential benefits of this option are:

- It may be quicker than a large new build development, dependent on multiple factors;
- Capital costs are not likely to exceed those of a new build development;
- It makes use of existing buildings and sites.

The potential drawbacks of this option are:

- It requires multiple acquisitions in a fast moving commercial market;
- More difficult or impossible to deliver to more difficult to develop the same level of 'bespoke' placements, technical opportunities, for example to Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard;
- Multiple sites are more expensive and difficult on which to operate services.

Option Four, 'Invest in and develop the council's own care facility'.

The potential benefits from this option are:

- Can design a bespoke, high specification new care home that is fit for purpose and flexible;
- Meets design principles and achieve Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard;
- Potential to become a leading vanguard site regionally or nationally;
- The use of the services and their quality are entirely within the council's control.

The potential disadvantages of this option are:

- Few suitable sites are available within the council's ownership or wider public estate;
- It requires large-scale project management and governance at each stage of development;
- Potential for reputational harm to council from risk of budgets, recruitment, managing the facility and timescales not being met.

Option Five 'Work with an investment and/or delivery partner'. The council would devise and implement a process to identify a partner organisation with which to invest in and develop a new large-scale care facility.

The potential benefits from this option are:

- Expertise of a commercial partner with the experience to develop large-scale schemes;
- Lower initial capital investment from the council;
- Potential to become a leading vanguard site regionally or nationally
- Meets design principles and achieve Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard;
- Design a bespoke high specification care home, fit for purpose.

The potential disadvantages are:

- A partner's investment will be secured through the asset and guaranteed income;
- Risks to the council's finances, reputation and autonomy are significant;
- A development partner may not be the most appropriate provider of care services;
- A long term partnership may not facilitate changes of policy, priority and practice.

10. To meet the future challenges and deliver services within new bed facilities, it is envisaged that the care facility will be aligned to Hoople Care, part of Hoople Ltd. The operation of Hoople Care is developing rapidly to encompass a range of adult social care services including reablement and residential provision. The operation of an 80-bed care facility for people with

complex needs would represent a significant growth in Hoople Care staffing and activity. In due course therefore, it will be appropriate to review the role, structure and resourcing of Hoople Care within Hoople Ltd more widely.

11. Once cabinet confirms the preferred option, the next steps in taking this work forward will include developing a detailed business case, exploring potential sites and engaging with key stakeholders.
12. Many of the considerations explored in the options appraisal will arise also in plans for increasing accommodation or bed based capacity for other user groups and service areas. As part of the council's Children's Improvement Plan, a need has been identified for facilities to support more local accommodation of children in need. This may include small residential care homes. It is proposed that the potential for acquiring or building such new capacity is the focus of a further options appraisal, for the consideration of cabinet.

Community Impact

13. The development of a care home facility supports Herefordshire council's commitments to the County Plan 2020 - 2024 to sustainability and community, and theme of connectivity. It will also assist priorities in the corporate delivery plan in complementing the Talk Community programme and deliver specialist care home facilities and accommodation for vulnerable adults. The building of new large-scale care facilities offers abundant opportunities for co-location of activities and for community participation, engagement and shared use of resources.
14. The options explored in the options appraisal contribute to the following County Plan Themes:

Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people	✓
Build understanding and support for sustainable living	✓
Use technology to support home care and extend independent living	✓
Use the council's land to create economic opportunities and bring higher paid roles to the county.	✓
Invest in low carbon projects	✓

15. The health and safety implications associated with all the options require a suitable building site or sites to be identified. The council will take steps to promote appropriate health and safety practice in the delivering a large-scale care home facility.
16. There are no specific implications in the options for the corporate parenting responsibilities of the council and its partners.

Environmental Impact

17. The council provides a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors, there is a shared strong commitment to improving the environmental sustainability and achieving carbon neutrality in Herefordshire. This commitment would be advanced by sustainable methods and approaches adopted in delivering care in the new facilities proposed in this report.
18. In delivering the preferred option, the council will endeavour to align to the following success measures outlined in the County Plan:
 - I. Increase flood resilience and reduce levels of phosphate pollution in the county's river
 - II. Reduce the council's carbon emissions
 - III. Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions

- IV. Improve the air quality within Herefordshire
- V. Improve residents' access to green space in Herefordshire
- VI. Improve energy efficiency of homes and build standards for new housing
- VII. Increase the number of short distance trips being done by sustainable modes of travel - walking, cycling, and public transport.

The proposals explored in the preferred option may enable many of these success measures to be achieved or advanced. The options, which involve building new care facilities on a local site, offer an opportunity for the council to use environmental building methods and materials to create a high specification care home, built to Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard. This might not only address the council's environmental priorities but also serve as an exemplar regionally and nationally.

Equality Duty

- 19. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.
- 20. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 21. The proposed development of additional high quality care facilities will provide significant benefits for vulnerable people sharing protected characteristics. In particular older people with complex health and social care needs will get improved access to high quality care in their local area. There will also be similar benefits for disabled people, including those with mental health needs. Three of the options for increased care home capacity will generate a significant local employment opportunity, for a diverse workforce including people sharing protected characteristics. An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out to ascertain the impact of the preferred option.
 - 22. There are not anticipated to be any risks or adverse changes arising from this proposal, as it involves development of new high quality public services. The Equality Assessment will identify a set of actions aimed at mitigating risks to citizens in the protected characteristic groups.

Resource Implications

- 23. There are no immediate financial implications for the council from this proposal, as it is concerned with options, which will still require significant exploration prior to their final approval and implementation. The initial next steps will include a business case, stakeholder engagement and review of sites. These can be accomplished within existing staffing resources. Further steps would include feasibility a study, which would incur costs in utilising external expertise. However, much of the work involved in a feasibility study has already been completed for one site, at Station Approach.

24. Adult social care gross revenue budgets for care home placements in the current financial year 2021/22 are circa £37.9m. The council operates a 'usual price' for placements of older people (currently £524.12 weekly for residential care and £597.87 for nursing care, which excludes Funded Nursing Care FNC £187.60). A significant proportion of placements are above this rate.
25. Options four and five in the appraisal would potentially involve a very significant capital investment by the council, likely to be in the range £13m to £16m. The council's corporate capital programme includes a provisional allocation of £14m for the development of a new 80-bed care facility.
26. Whilst the ambition is to build a care facility to Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard, it should be noted that considering options four and five might require significant longer-term investment to maintain the efficient use of the buildings.
27. Option two; entering into a long-term block contractual arrangement with the existing market would not require any capital investment. However, it would involve a long-term commitment to paying for care at not insignificant rates. The potential value of block beds can fluctuate significantly over a period of time, which illustrates some risks of the approach, as it can involve long-term commitment to short-term prices.
28. The costs for option three, to purchase buildings on the open market refurbish and expand are unknown in advance of identifying specific sites. However, these would include acquisition and environmental costs and potentially conversion, extension and/or refurbishment. Over three separate sites costs could potentially reach or exceed £10m.
29. The funding to support option four, the development by the council of a care home facility on a single site has been identified through capital investment. There is a provisional allocation of £14m within the capital programme. The table below sets out the financial implications to investing in our own care home facility:

Estimated Build & Fit Out Cost		
	Non Herefordshire Future Homes Standard	Herefordshire Future Homes Standard
Number of Beds	80	80
Build Cost per Bed	£160,000	£192,000
Total Build Cost	£12,800,000	£15,360,000
Fit-out Cost per bed	£8,000	£8,000
Total Fit-out Cost	£640,000	£640,000
Total Build & Fit Out Cost	£13,440,000	£16,000,000

Sources of Funding		
Capital Receipts	£6,081,000	£6,081,000
Grant Funding	£451,000	£451,000
Prudential Borrowing	£6,908,000	£9,468,000
Total Funding	£13,440,000	£16,000,000

30. Under option five, the costs of developing the care facility are likely to be very similar to option four, as there is the same vision for the build, configuration and general use of the building. However, this option would have a very different profile of income sources, as it is presumed

that a partner organisation would make a significant capital investment, so reducing the council's own capital contribution. The different capital profile would have a significant impact in increasing the council's revenue costs and wider financial risk. This is because the partner would expect to secure its investment partly through guaranteed income from the council, over an extended term, potentially 30 years. The council would be asked to commit to paying them, regardless of any delivery or quality considerations or any changes in policy, priorities, legislation or local needs. It is noted that there could be some commercial opportunities for the council arising from long-term arrangements.

Legal Implications

31. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report as it is seeking approval of the preferred option to be subsequently developed. However, in considering the recommendations regard should be had to the council's duties under the Care Act 2014.

Risk Management

32. Below are the key risks which could have impact on the options:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
<p>Not taking action to meet demand. This would prevent preparation to meet increasing need for care among people with complex needs. In turn this is likely to lead to an insufficiency of care home beds and poor outcomes for people with complex needs, along with escalating costs. There is a risk with larger suppliers moving in to the county as they recognise the business opportunity associated with our demography, giving us limited control to provision, quality, and costs.</p>	<p>The risks of taking no action as in option one could be mitigated by adopting one of the other options set out in the appraisal.</p>
<p>Adopting option two would risk not actually increasing capacity and having little influence over increasing quality of provision for people with complex needs. It would also not reduce costs.</p>	<p>This could be mitigated by adopting another preferred option.</p>
<p>Adopting option three involves risk of not identifying sufficient suitable sites for acquisition or being unable to acquire them owing to commercial factors and the council's governance processes.</p>	<p>Opportunities will arise in the market and the council regularly monitors those which may be suitable for acquisition or conversion</p>
<p>Option three would involve a substantial risk of not being able to achieve Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard in creating additional capacity. Conversion of older buildings also would bring to the council significant financial risk around the maintenance and repair.</p>	<p>Amongst the three sites potentially required for option three, the council may identify one or more where there is opportunity to build new facilities to complement existing buildings.</p>
<p>Options three, four and five all involve the risks associated with any major capital project including budget overspend, delay and reputational harm.</p>	<p>Capital investment of £14m has been provisionally confirmed through the Capital Programme to develop option four, investing in a new care home facility. The council has significantly expanded programme management resources and expertise to support its capital programme.</p>
<p>Challenges in securing a suitable site or for an 80 bedded care home facility under options four or five, leading to significant delay.</p>	<p>A suitable site is identified at Station Approach, and a review of other site options is advised.</p>
<p>Working with external partners to develop option five bring significant financial, legal operational and reputational risks. These arise from a partner's need to secure their investment in a way which ties the council to substantial and very long term spending which no exit options. Risks also arise around the quality and reliability of services provided by or via the partner organisation, again over an extended period.</p>	<p>Opting to prefer one of the other options would mitigate this risk.</p> <p>Ensure experienced developer/s are included within the project.</p>

Consultees

33. Council commissioners engage continually and intensively with the local care home market, both among independent providers and associations, working closely with NHS agencies. This has provided significant clarity on the priorities, challenges and outlook of the care home market.
34. Engagement on the proposals has also taken place over a period with NHS agencies through the emerging Integrated Care System. They have been broadly supportive of the options to develop new services on this scale.
35. Members of the council have been consulted via political groups. One member expressed concern that working with an investment or delivery partner would compromise the council's control of access and quality and be expensive and contractually restrictive.
36. The views of stakeholders is critical in the delivery of the chosen option. The following key stakeholders will be consulted to help design and develop the option:
 - Herefordshire residents
 - Unpaid and family carers
 - Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG
 - Wye Valley NHS Trust
 - Independent care home providers and associations
 - Commercial/consultants

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Options Appraisal for additional care facilities in Herefordshire
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers

None

**APPROVE A PREFERRED OPTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW
CARE FACILITY IN HEREFORDSHIRE FOR MEETING FUTURE DEMAND
AND SERVICE DELIVERY**

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Date: September 2021

Key Details

Senior Responsible Officer: Paul Smith

Project Manager: Michael Griffin

Service Lead: Ewen Archibald

Version Control

Version	Date	Summary of Change	
0.1	August 2021	First Issue	
0.2	September 2021	Second Issue	

1. Overview

Introduction

- 1.1 This options appraisal will examine different approaches to meeting future demand among a growing population of older people with complex needs. The document reviews the demographic and strategic context for needing 80 additional care home beds under the direction of the council. It then provides comparative analysis of the options for achieving that provision.
- 1.2 In common with many councils, Herefordshire has outsourced and commissioned almost all of its once directly delivered residential homes. In Herefordshire's case, it divested the last of its homes almost 20 year ago, through the contract with Shaw Healthcare. That decision was against a background of a growing independent care home market and limited access to capital resources. In recognition of a changing and sometimes challenging care home market many councils are considering developing their own care facilities again and bringing services in-house, to address gaps in capacity and quality.
- 1.3 In response to the Covid pandemic and the closure of a privately run care home due to flood damage the Council developed and launched the Hillside Care Centre in 2020. It is now contemplating a need to exercise more control of quality and availability of nursing care for older people with higher levels of frailty and dementia related need. Currently the Council is reliant on spot purchasing care at significant cost (average £'s) from multiple homes run as commercial businesses and with varying levels of quality and reliability. As the numbers of people aged 85 and older and those with complex needs grow, so do the challenges in finding the right care at an appropriate quality and price.

Aim

- 1.4 It is intended that the options appraisal will enable the Council to adopt a preferred approach to delivering 80 new care home beds to provide high quality local care to meet gaps in future need. It is then proposed that the preferred approach would be developed more fully, so that it could then be implemented.

Objectives:

- Increased bed capacity in the market, including provision to meet complex needs
- The Council controls access to the care home beds
- Sustained provision of high quality care
- Reduction in out of county placements
- Forecastable and manageable unit costs and improved value for money for placements
- A reasonable return on capital investment over an appropriate timeframe
- Established as an exemplar for the use of innovative technology
- Environmentally friendly to Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard
- Make good use of proven and available models of design and delivery
- Residents are connected to local communities routinely through the new facilities

Process

1.5 The options under consideration are:

1. Do nothing;
2. Enter into long-term block contractual arrangement with existing providers in the local market;
3. Purchase buildings on the open market, redevelop and refit, to operate directly;
4. Invest and develop the council's own, large scale care home facility;
5. Work with an investment and/or delivery partner to develop a new large-scale care home facility.

1.6 This options appraisal sets out the:

- Background for the need to consider alternative models of delivery
- Strategic direction and priorities
- Context
- Patterns of demography and demand
- Elements of good practice in the field

At the conclusion of the options appraisal, Cabinet is asked to consider a recommendation for the preferred option. If a preferred option were selected, this would then be explored in greater detail, with next steps: including;

1. A full business case
2. Potential site review
3. Implementation plan and timeline for delivery

2. Background and Rationale

2.1 The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to help develop a market, which delivers a wide range of sustainable high-quality care and support services that will be available to their communities. The Care Act also requires that local authorities assess need and ensure services arranged can meet those needs. Capacity to meet demand for complex care in Herefordshire is already limited. The Council often has difficulty in both finding placements for people with high needs and controlling the cost of these placements.

2.2 Changes in the age structure alone suggests that the proportion of nursing home placements will need to increase slightly in future and will overtake the total number of residential placements. Over the last 5 years, there is some evidence of a downward trend in council funded long-term placements. However, there has been a significant increase in short /fixed term and Discharge to Assess (D2A) placements.

2.3 The proposal is for the Council to develop additional and affordable nursing home capacity of around 80 beds. The vision is for a site or sites to offer a high-quality care environment, maximising the use of advances in technology to support the needs of residents. The council's commissioning intentions include increasing and improving services that support complex and challenging behaviours, including dementia, acquired brain injury or autism.

3. Demography and demand

3.1 Herefordshire's Market Position Statement 2020-2025

https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50084582/07a_Appendix_Herefordshire%20Market%20Position%20Statement%202020-2025.pdf sets out clear direction for providers on the council's ambitions for the support and care market. The document summarises the supply and demand of care and support needs across Herefordshire. It signals potential business opportunities within the care and support market.

3.2 The total need for care home placements for people over 65 years is projected to increase from around 1,550 in 2018 to around 2,000 people in 2028 (an increase of 450 over this 10 year period); and to around 2,650 people by 2,038 (an increase of 1,150 over this 20 year period).

3.3 Current market context:

- By 2039, it is estimated that the number of local people aged 85 and older will grow by 140%. There suggests that the wider care system, particularly for older people is nearing a 'tipping point' and that demographic changes will take Herefordshire well beyond it.
- Currently there are 85 care homes are in Herefordshire registered with the CQC; of these 21 are Medium/Major regional providers. The majority are small to medium locally run care homes with independent providers. The council currently supports 850 older people to meet their assessed eligible social care needs in a care home: 60% are in a residential home and 40% in a nursing home.
- Getting people into a care home at a reasonable cost can be extremely difficult and takes much professional time to negotiate placements. This can result in delays from hospital; residents being placed out of county and inevitable fee disputes with care homes.
- High numbers of self-funding puts additional pressure on social care purchasing. Self-funders paying much higher rates, so driving up prices for everyone. The council has started to insource some services where the market cannot respond to need delivering cost effective, good quality solutions.
- The Health and Care Bill 2021-22 endorses the need to deliver joined up care for its local population. Clinicians, carers and public health experts will be empowered to operate collaboratively across health and care system through the introduction of the Integrated Care System (ICS).
- The care home sector for adults in Herefordshire has been reasonably stable for some time with very few home closures in recent years. However, with fluctuating demand, smaller homes in particular may reconsider their business role, marketing and pricing. The Council has very recently managed a care home provider failure which has reduced our capacity by a further 33 beds.
- The CQC rates 15.5% of Herefordshire residential and nursing homes as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. This is in comparison to a West Midlands figure of 20% and a national figure of 18%. 70% of nursing and residential homes in Herefordshire are good and 6% are outstanding.

Key Projections in demographic change affecting care home provision

- Predicted 140% increase of those aged 85 and above over the next 20 years
- Proportion of people living with dementia is predicted to increase from 77 to 79% by 2036
- Increasing number of out of county placements
- Greater restrictions on the market's capability to support individuals with complex needs
- Higher number of self-funders in the market
- Continued pressures through the health service creating risk of delayed transfers of care (DTC)

4. Strategic Direction

- 4.1 The Council has a duty to ensure it meets eligible needs and develop the market to enable it to be a strong and resilient providing choice and quality under the Care Act 2014.
- 4.2 Herefordshire has a high number of self-funders within the market, which can create a challenge to purchase placements or find suitable accommodation in county for reasonable rates. In practice, the rates themselves and the challenges in making placements will vary considerably over a period. Self-funders will sometimes pay a higher rate for care and therefore will have more choice; this enables providers to choose whom they accept within their homes, and at what rate.
- 4.3 Adult social care gross revenue spend for care home placements was in the region of £37.9m in 2020/21. The council operates a 'usual price' for Older Persons placements (currently £524.12 for residential care and £597.87 for nursing care home, which excludes Funded Nursing Care FNC £187.60). A proportion (50%) of placements are above this rate and sometimes people are placed out of county to meet need. Increasingly, other local authorities are at different stages in developing their own provision and taking services back in house in various ways. This recognises that the market is sometimes not meeting the needs of its most vulnerable clients and in particular, those who need adult social care funded placements. The council is clear that where the market cannot meet needs, it will consider its role within the market and has already insourced as mentioned already, some of its services where value for money can also be demonstrated.
- 4.4 The overall design principles in creating additional care home beds include relationship with the community:
- Care homes should be seen as a "part of the community" and as a "hub" of activity, rather than operating in isolation from the surrounding population.
 - Promoting resident participation in the community and enabling families and friends to be engaged in the life of the care home.
 - The catchment area of a home is a vital consideration, reflecting response to local need and dictating how far relatives and friends may have to come to visit residents.
 - Public transport links are important, for relatives, staff and visitors.
 - The Covid pandemic has highlighted that old buildings and designs are not fit for purpose with many care homes struggling to manage safely; for example, where there are shared rooms or facilities.

5 Good Practice

- 5.1 “Sustainability means more than merely lasting or surviving; it means designing and delivering health care that uses resources in ways that don’t prejudice future health and wellbeing”.¹
- 5.2 In 2012, the first Passivhaus (PH) care home was developed by CastleOak for Barchester Healthcare, Juniper House in Brackley, Northamptonshire and funded by Bridges Sustainable Property Fund, which invests in projects that can demonstrate environmental leadership. The 60-bedded home was designed to produce half the CO2 emissions and reduce energy costs by 40%, when compared with a typical 60-bedded, timber-frame home.²
- 5.3 The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) states that, ‘communities create the right conditions for improvements in physical health, mental health and general wellbeing by being connected, sustainable and resilient to changing times and climates.’³
- 5.4 Bristol City Council introduced new strategies and policies around environmental sustainability in social care, saving £100k or 20% of spending between 2005 and 2009.⁴ Exeter City Council developed 53 Passivhaus standard Extra Care Housing apartments at a cost of around £10m to meet local needs, including residents with dementia.⁵
- 5.5 Complex care provider Cornerstone Healthcare Group announced the development of a £10m, 74-bed care centre in Somerset. Cornerstone also received planning consent to build an 80-bed service in Bristol, having won complex care provider of the year in 2020.⁶
- 5.6 In the Midlands Speller Metcalfe were appointed to build a 90-bed extra care housing scheme in Rowley Regis for Sandwell Council at a cost of £15m⁷. They also built an environmentally friendly with ground source heating and solar roof tiles dementia care home for Solihull Council⁸.

6. Financial Position

- 6.1 The Council has provisionally allocated capital of £14m to the potential development and completion of a new 80 bedded care facility. This was based upon proposals to develop on a wider city centre sight owned by the council.

¹ <https://www.carehomeexpo.co.uk/news/sustainability-in-the-care-sector>

² <https://passivhaustrust.org.uk/news/detail/?nld=120>

³ <https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/atagance/atagance23.asp>

⁴ <https://www.scie.org.uk/adults/sustainable-social-care/bristol.asp>

⁵ <https://passivhaustrust.org.uk/news/detail/?nld=621>

⁶ <https://www.laingbuissonnews.com/care-markets-content/property-care-markets/cornerstone-healthcare-to-build-13m-green-care-home/>

⁷ <https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/westmidlands/news/2031664-building-contractor-to-construct-15m-black-country-care-home>

⁸ <https://solihullobserver.co.uk/news/new-dementia-care-home-opens-in-solihull/>

7. Options Appraisal

7.1 Options Overview

- **Option one**, 'do nothing'.

This would mean taking no action to increase capacity in the care home market and rely on market forces to provide the increased beds and quality of care required by demographic and social policy changes.

- **Option two**, 'Enter block contract arrangements'.

The council would negotiate multiple long-term contracts with existing providers of nursing homes in Herefordshire, totalling 80 beds.

- **Option three**, 'Acquiring properties from the open market'

This would involve the council identifying and making commercial offers to purchase sites that are possibly derelict, repossessed or need refurbishing and then once acquired, developing these sites.

- **Option four**, 'Invest and develop the council's own care facility'.

This is likely to involve identifying a single site in the council's ownership and building a new 80-bed care facility, possibly as part of a wider development. That wider development may include affordable or social housing and community facilities. Available sites on such a scale are few but one such site at Station Approach, Hereford, has already been the subject of significant preparatory work.

- **Option five** 'Work with an investment and/or delivery partner'

The council devise and implement a process to identify a partner organisation with which to invest in and develop a new large-scale care facility. The partner would provide its own capital investment, so reducing the scale of the council's contribution and it would secure that investment at least in part through the value of the new capital asset. The partner would be involved in running the development and building project. It might also be involved in delivering and managing care services in the building once it was operational.

Table One Pros and Cons of each option

Option	Pros Summary	Cons Summary
Option One: Do Nothing	<p>Note - This option has been included as a baseline comparator. 'Doing nothing' is not considered a viable option, as it does not address the council's priorities and challenges nor contributes to planning services to meet future need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ The market does not always respond positively to placements and HC has to fund placements out of county due to a lack of suitable provision locally. ✗ Some of the existing care home stock is no longer fit for purpose due to age or design/layout. ✗ Demand is predicted to grow as the county's ageing population increases and those specifically 85 years and above increases substantially. ✗ The high self-funding market puts additional pressure on social care, forcing up costs as self-funders are paying much higher rates.
Option Two: Enter into long-term block contractual arrangement with the existing market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No capital investment required ✓ Potentially immediate access to beds ✓ Support the local market rather than compete within it. ✓ Some flexibility over bed numbers over time ✓ Could sell block beds to private self-funders if appropriate to manage fluctuating demand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Adds no additional capacity into the market, which is needed ✗ Reliant on the market responding and this will depend on the current demand, capacity and outlook across the market, which does not always align to the council's priorities and pressures. May not be possible to negotiate 80 beds. ✗ Expensive at current rates. ✗ Providers may still refuse to take the most challenging individuals so needs are still not met, and external placements continue ✗ Adds no fit for purpose accommodation and facilities in the market, which is required ✗ No apparent potential for innovation and flexibility ✗ Significant revenue budget required to ensure capacity and constant management of contracts to limit the number of voids

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Depending on cost and market at the time, more cost effective placements could be sourced outside the block contracts ✗ Quality concerns/COVID etc could stop placements into the home beyond the council's control.
Option Three: Purchase buildings on the open market, refurbish and expand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ May be quicker than a large new build development, although dependent on multiple factors ✓ Capital costs not likely to exceed those of a new build development ✓ Makes use of existing buildings and sites ✓ Theoretical Potential to take over going concern businesses, including TUPE transfer of staff. Potentially lower profile with media and public, but dependent on specific sites and circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Dependent upon the right size buildings and properties/land becoming available ✗ Likely to require three separate sites to deliver 80 bed capacity, increasing capital costs and project complexity. ✗ Would not necessarily add capacity to the market if properties currently or recently providing care homes. ✗ Availability of buildings/sites may not correspond geographically to local demand ✗ Many of the properties coming to or potentially on the market are in poor condition or have restrictions relating to planning, listed status or environmental factor and therefore would require significant capital investment to ensure they are fit for purpose. ✗ Converted or extended older buildings bring significant burden of repairs and maintenance. ✗ Developing sites in this way may not achieve Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard. Operating care home services across multiple sites would be more expensive in revenue costs and operationally complex, providing ongoing challenges.
Option Four: Invest and develop our own care facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Can design a bespoke, high specification new care home that is fit for purpose and flexible ✓ Designed to meet future demand. ✓ Meets design principles and achieve Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Relies upon the right location being available owned by the council or in the public estate ✗ Large scale capital investment required ✗ Reputational risk arising from managing large scale capital projects

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Potential to become a leading vanguard site regionally or nationally ✓ Designed to accommodate complex and challenging individuals to meet need in county ✓ Linked to the wider community – hub and spoke model, consistent with Talk Community ✓ Linked to the wider community – shared community assets coffee shop, multi-purpose rooms, promoting participation. ✓ Flexibility to model and respond to changes (Hillside used to support recent COVID challenges) ✓ Control over placements and costs ✓ Strong message to the wider market that the council is a provider and is modelling high quality care and accommodation. ✓ Potential for innovation and leading by example ✓ Training venue for the care workforce ✓ Swift discharge from hospital supporting the wider health agenda and management of emergencies etc. ✓ Income generation through private funders if required ✓ Creation of up 100 new jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Length of time to complete the build and operationalise services. ✗ Council would have to ensure best use of asset and manage operational and demand risks
Option Five: Enter into a relationship with a Provider to invest, develop and contract for the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Shared risk ✓ Expertise of a commercial partner with the skills and experience to develop large scale schemes ✓ Lower initial capital investment from the council (potentially) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Entering into a long-term relationship with a partner/provider; tying the council in to arrangements for 30 years, whilst demand and delivery models evolve over five to eight years typically. (Shaw healthcare contracts) ✗ Capital borrowing will cost more for a development partner than the council and that cost will be borne in

<p>services and work with a partner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Potential to become a leading vanguard site regionally or nationally ✓ Designed to accommodate complex and challenging individuals to meet need in county ✓ Linked to the wider community – hub and spoke model, consistent with Talk Community ✓ Linked to the wider community – shared community assets coffee shop, multi-purpose rooms, promoting participation ✓ Can design a bespoke, high specification new care home that is fit for purpose and flexible ✓ Designed to meet future demand. Meets design principles and achieve Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard. 	<p>ultimately by the council through the partnership contracts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Exchanging short-term capital savings for long-term financial liability (capital and/or revenue) as in the case of the Shaw Healthcare contracts. ✗ Willing capital development partners may not be the best or most appropriate delivery partner for providing high quality nursing or residential care home. ✗ Potential delays to project implementation through selecting and negotiating with a partner. ✗ Reputational risk to the council through alliance with independent provider and dependent on its performance elsewhere. ✗ Reputational risk from delays to capital development or rising costs. ✗ The council would have only partial or conditional control over management of the new asset and future placements ✗ Partner contract likely to involve third party commercial interests, leading to little or no potential to change the contract to reflect changes to legislation, demand or delivery models
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Table Two: Assessing the options in relation to key criteria

	Quality	Capacity	Value for Money (VfM)	Flexibility	Environmental Impact
Option One: Do Nothing	No	No	Yes	No	No
Option Two: Enter into a long-term block contractual arrangement with the existing market.	As of May 2020, 70% of nursing and residential homes in Herefordshire Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection rating are good and 6% are outstanding . 15.5% of Herefordshire residential and nursing homes as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' . This is in comparison to a West Midlands figure of 20% and a national figure of 18%.	Demand and seasonal pressures could affect capacity levels. This would not increase overall care capacity in Herefordshire.	The potential value of block beds can fluctuate significantly over a period of time.	This would secure some capacity, however these types of arrangements frequently lack flexibility or incentives for the provider to maximise the resource.	The current buildings are old buildings and designs are not fit for purpose with multiple care homes struggling to manage. This limits the options for placements within the market.
Option Three: Purchase buildings on the open market, refurbish and expand.	It would exert some control in the market and ensure some increase in high quality provision.	This would make use of potential sites that would otherwise see beds potentially lost in the market. It may make only incremental increases in overall capacity.	The costs are unknown in advance of identifying specific sites but include acquisition and environmental costs and potentially conversion, extension and/or refurbishment. Over three sites costs are may exceed £10M. Care homes that are up for sale are very	Sites potentially available are limited in size and restricted in relation to planning, listed status or environmental factors. Converted or refurbished buildings tend to offer limited design flexibility.	Buildings would not be meet Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard. The council would need to purchase multiple sites (to achieve 80 beds); this would be more difficult to manage.

			commercially sensitive so it is difficult to know what is for sale.		
Option Four: Invest and develop our own care facility	Opportunity to ensure good quality provision to residents.	Designed to meet future demand. Entirely new and additional beds in the market. Swift discharge from hospital supporting the wider health agenda Capacity to respond to emergencies	The council has provisionally allocated a £14M capital fund to build a care facility. Engie has estimated (high level) costs in the region of just over £13M and with additional contingencies and project management costs, flood mitigation and to achieve the Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard the build it could go up to £15M. The council would carry all the revenue costs of the services, but these would be minimised by operating the services on a single site.	Can design a bespoke, high specification new care home, which is fit for purpose and offers modular flexibility to adapt to changing requirements	Opportunity to work with a potential Future Homes Standard developer to build a purpose built care facility. A single site would offer environmental benefits of co-location with housing and community facilities. Operation on a single site would reduce environmental impact.
Option Five: Enter into a relationship with a Provider to invest, develop and contract for the services and work with a partner	There is a reputational risk to the council of working with external partners without reputations for high standards of care and delivery	Would deliver 80 new and additional units of capacity. The council still would not have full control over development and future placements.	The costs at this stage are still unknown. The council could borrow money or secure loans more cost effectively than Providers	The council can design a bespoke, high specification new care home that is fit for purpose and flexible Whilst service specifications and contracts can build in flexibility and some	The partner may or may not share the council's commitment to environmental impact and to achieving Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard.

	<p>Cannot change the contract easily to reflect local change and need.</p> <p>Entering into a long-term relationship with a partner/provider; tying the council in to arrangements for 30 years, whilst demand and delivery models evolve over five to eight years typically</p>		<p>The partner organisation will secure all its investment and risk and that of any commercial third party lenders against the asset and future funding from the council.</p>	<p>control for the council, this will be reduced by involvement of a partner.</p>	
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8. Conclusion and Recommendation

8.1 **Option One:** Do nothing. This is not recommended

8.2 **Option Two:** Enter into a long-term block contractual arrangement with the existing market.

Block contracts can be difficult to manage and resource intensive, most councils have moved away from this commissioning model for care home provision. It is unclear whether providers would accept block contracts or at what price. **This option is not recommended as it will not provide the additional capacity required within the market or guarantee placements, and still without decisive control for the council over placements**

8.3 **Option Three:** Purchase buildings on the open market, refurbish and expand.

This option is not recommended as it involves capital projects and costs on a similar scale to options four and five, but with greater complexity and risk arising from working on three separate sites. It also relies on the vagaries of the property market and the council's ability to move quickly in making acquisitions. There is no obvious opportunity to achieve Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard. This option is also more costly and complicated for the operation of services.

8.4 **Option Four:** Invest and develop the council's own care facility

This option delivers all the key benefits required in increasing the availability of high quality care home beds within the council's control. It does involve a significant and high cost project for the council to deliver and relies on the availability of a single large appropriately located site. **This is the preferred option; further work on potential sites needs to be reviewed.**

8.5 **Option Five:** Enter into a relationship with a Provider to invest, develop and contract for the services and work with a partner.

In principle, this option would deliver most of the key developments, as in option four. However, it introduces significant complications and commercial liabilities to the undertaking, whilst not necessarily bringing decisive benefits to the council. Herefordshire council has experience of similar long-term contractual relationships, where it has allowed a commercial partner to invest in its buildings, in return for guaranteed income and fixed models of delivery. **This option is not recommended, as the risks to the council's finances, reputation and autonomy are significant and likely to outweigh the benefits in creating additional high quality care facilities.**

8.6 It is recommended that **Option four** is the preferred option for further exploration and development. This would be subject to identification of potential locations and exploring co-dependencies, including development of housing and community facilities.

Next steps in exploring a preferred option include developing the business case, consulting with key stakeholders and confirming potential sites to deliver an 80-bedded care home facility in Herefordshire.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

Please read EIA guidelines when completing this form

1. Name of Service Area/Directorate

Name of Head of Service for area being assessed: Jas Kakkar -Care Consultant

Directorate: Adults and Communities Directorate

Individual(s) completing this assessment:

- Phil Hamer - Senior Commissioning Officer
- Jas Kakkar - Care Consultant

Date assessment completed October 2021

2. What is being assessed

Activity being assessed (e.g. policy, procedure, document, service redesign, strategy etc.)

Approve a preferred option for the development of a new care facility in Herefordshire for meeting future demand and service delivery.

What is the aim, purpose and/or intended outcomes of this activity?

The Council has identified that demographic changes and the development of local care home market will bring pressure on existing capacity through increasing numbers of older and disabled people with complex needs. Additional care home bed capacity will be required to meet needs in such a way that the council can ensure access to care when it is needed and that the care is of high quality. There is also an opportunity to create new care facilities, which are high specification and fit for the future, for the delivery of care and support. Some of the options for consideration would see those facilities address the council's environmental priorities, ensuring they are built to Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard.

The options appraisal explores how the council can achieve 80 additional high quality care home beds under its control and sets out different options for doing so:

1. Do nothing;
2. Enter into long-term block contractual arrangement with existing providers in the local market;
3. Purchase buildings on the open market, redevelop and refit, to operate directly;
4. Invest and develop the council's own, large scale care home facility;
5. Work with an investment and/or delivery partner to develop a new large-scale care home facility.

The options set out in the options appraisal offer different approaches to achieving an increase in care home beds. In considering the options, the council is fulfilling a requirement in the Care Act 2014 for local authorities to help develop a market that delivers a wide range of sustainable high-quality care and support services, available to their communities. The Care Act also requires that local authorities assess need and ensure future services meet those needs.

Name of lead for activity

Ewen Archibald - Acting Assistant Director – All Ages Commissioning

Who will be affected by the development and implementation of this activity?

- ☒ Service users
- ☒ Patients
- ☒ Carers
- ☒ Visitors
- ☒ Staff
- ☒ Communities
- ☐ Other:

Is this:

- ☐ Review of an existing activity/policy
- ☒ New activity/policy
- ☐ Planning to withdraw or reduce a service, activity or presence?

What information and evidence have you reviewed to help inform this assessment? (Name your sources, e.g. demographic information for services/staff groups affected, complaints etc.)

The development of a care home facility supports Herefordshire council's commitments to the County Plan to sustainability and community, and theme of connectivity. It will also assist priorities in the corporate delivery plan in complementing the Talk Community programme and deliver specialist care home facilities and accommodation for vulnerable adults.

It also supports the position in the Herefordshire's Market Position Statement (MPS) 2020-2025. The MPS summarises the supply and demand of care and support needs across Herefordshire.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) states that, 'communities create the right conditions for improvements in physical health, mental health and general wellbeing by being connected, sustainable and resilient to changing times and climates.

Capacity to meet demand for complex care in nursing environments in Herefordshire is limited. The council often has difficulty in both finding placements for people with high needs and controlling the cost of these placements. This can lead to placements out of county. Currently the council is reliant on spot purchasing care at significant cost from dozens of homes run as commercial business and with varying levels of quality and reliability. As the numbers of people aged 85 and older and those with complex needs grow, so do the challenges in finding the right care at an appropriate quality and price. This is especially so for people with complex needs arising from frailty and dementia.

Summary of engagement or consultation undertaken (e.g. who and how have you engaged with, or why do you believe this is not required)

Cllr Norman to sign off Political Group Consultation	Sept 15
Circulate Political Group Consultation (10 working days)	Sept 16
Commence officer circulation on mod.gov	Sept 24
Core DLT sign off options appraisal & report	Sept 29
Cabinet member briefing Cllr Norman	Sept 27
Political Group Consultation Closes	Sept 27
Papers for Management Board	Sept 30
Officer circulation complete by	Oct 4
Management Board	Oct 5
Papers for Cabinet Briefing	Oct 8
(Cllr Norman) Cabinet Member Briefing (sign off decision report)	Oct 11
Cabinet Briefing (Cabinet Feeder)	Oct 14
Governance Publish Report (start of 5 days)	Oct 21
Cabinet	Oct 28
Call in Period over (4 Days) - can implement decision if not called in.	Nov 3

Members of the council have been consulted via political groups. One member expressed concern that working with an investment or delivery partner would compromise the council's control of access and quality and be expensive and contractually restrictive.

Council commissioners engage continually and intensively with the local care home market, both among independent providers and associations, working closely with NHS agencies. This has provided significant clarity on the priorities, challenges and outlook of the care home market.

Engagement on the proposals has also taken place over a period with NHS agencies through the emerging Integrated Care System. They have been broadly supportive of the options to develop new services on this scale.

The views of stakeholders is critical in the delivery of the chosen option. The following key stakeholders will be consulted to help design and develop the option:

- Herefordshire residents
- Unpaid and family carers
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG
- Wye Valley NHS Trust
- Independent care home providers and associations

- Commercial/consultants

Summary of relevant findings

In considering the options, the council is fulfilling a requirement in the Care Act 2014 for local authorities to help develop a market that delivers a wide range of sustainable high-quality care and support services, available to their communities. The building of new large-scale care facilities offers abundant opportunities for co-location of activities and for community participation, engagement and shared use of resources.

In delivering a preferred option, the council will endeavour to align to the following success measures outlined in the County Plan:

- Increase flood resilience and reduce levels of phosphate pollution in the county's river
- Reduce the council's carbon emissions
- Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions
- Improve the air quality within Herefordshire
- Improve residents' access to green space in Herefordshire
- Improve energy efficiency of homes and build standards for new housing
- Increase the number of short distance trips being done by sustainable modes of travel - walking, cycling, and public transport.

The proposals explored the preferred option may enable many of these success measures to be achieved or advanced. The options, which involve building new care facilities on a local site, offer an opportunity for the council to use environmental building methods and materials to create a high specification care home, built to the Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard. This would not only address the council's environmental priorities but also serve as an exemplar regionally and nationally.

3. The impact of this activity

Please consider the potential impact of this activity (during development and implementation) on each of the equality groups outlined below. **Please tick one or more impact box below for each Equality Group and explain your rationale.**

Please note it is possible for the potential impact to be both positive and negative within the same equality group and this should be recorded. Remember to consider the impact on staff, public, patients, carers, partner organisations, etc. in these equality groups.

Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Please explain your reasons for any potential positive, neutral or negative impact identified
Age		✓		
Disability		✓		
Gender Reassignment		✓		
Marriage & Civil Partnerships		✓		

Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Please explain your reasons for any potential positive, neutral or negative impact identified
Pregnancy & Maternity		✓		
Race (including Travelling Communities and people of other nationalities)		✓		
Religion & Belief		✓		
Sex (including issues of safety and sexual violence)		✓		
Sexual Orientation		✓		
Other Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Groups (e.g. carers, care leavers, homeless, social/ economic deprivation, etc)		✓		
Health Inequalities (any preventable, unfair & unjust differences in health status between groups, populations or individuals that arise from the unequal distribution of social, environmental & economic conditions within societies)		✓		

What actions will you take to mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Negative Impacts / opportunity	Mitigation
<p>Not taking action to meet demand. This would prevent preparation to meet increasing need for care among people with complex needs. In turn this is likely to lead to an insufficiency of care home beds and poor outcomes for people with complex needs, along with escalating costs.</p> <p>There is a risk with larger suppliers moving in to the county as they recognise the business opportunity associated with our demography, giving us limited control to provision, quality, and costs.</p> <p>Adopting option two would risk not actually increasing capacity and having little influence over increasing quality of provision for people with complex needs. It would also not reduce costs.</p> <p>Adopting option three involves risk of not identifying sufficient suitable sites for acquisition or being unable to acquire them owing to commercial factors and the council's governance processes.</p> <p>Option three would involve a substantial risk of not being able to achieve Herefordshire's Future Homes Standard in creating additional capacity. Conversion of older buildings also would bring to the council significant financial risk around the maintenance and repair.</p> <p>Options three, four and five all involve the risks associated with any major capital project including budget overspend, delay and reputational harm</p> <p>Challenges in securing a suitable site or for an 80 bedded care home facility.under options four or five, leading to significant delay.</p>	<p>The risks of taking no action as in option one could be mitigated by adopting one of the other options set out in the appraisal.</p> <p>This could be mitigated by adopting another preferred option.</p> <p>Opportunities will arise in the market and the council regularly monitors those which may be suitable for acquisition or conversion</p> <p>Amongst the three sites potentially required for option three, the council may identify one or more where there is opportunity to build new facilities to complement existing buildings.</p> <p>Capital investment of £14m has been provisionally confirmed through the Capital Programme to develop option four, investing in a new care home facility. The council has significantly expanded programme management resources and expertise to support its capital programme.</p> <p>A suitable site is identified at Station Approach, and a review of other site options is advised.</p> <p>Opting to prefer one of the other options would mitigate this risk.</p>

Working with external partners to develop option five bring significant financial, legal operational and reputational risks. These arise from a partner's need to secure their investment in a way which ties the council to substantial and very long term spending which no exit options. Risks also arise around the quality and reliability of services provided by or via the partner organisation, again over an extended period.

Ensure experienced developer/s are included within the project.

Where an impact on any of the Equality Groups is realised after the implementation of the project/service/policy, Commissioners and/or providers of the project/service/policy will seek to minimise the impact and carry out a full review of this EIA.

A detailed Equality Impact Assessment will be completed once Cabinet approves the preferred approach. The Equality Impact Assessment will identify a set of actions aimed at mitigating risks to citizens in the protected characteristic groups.

Monitoring and review

How will you monitor these actions?

This is currently at the options appraisal stage and the EIA will be kept under review throughout the design, planning and implementation stage.

When will you review this EIA? (e.g. in a service redesign, this EIA should be revisited regularly throughout the design & implementation)

This is currently at the options appraisal stage and the EIA will be kept under review throughout the design, planning and implementation stage.

4. Equality Statement

- All public bodies have a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to set out arrangements to assess and consult on how their policies and functions impact on the 9 protected characteristics.
- Herefordshire Council will challenge discrimination, promote equality, respect human rights, and design and implement services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of our service, and population, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others.
- All staff are expected to deliver services and provide services and care in a manner which respects the individuality of service users, patients, carers etc, and as such treat them and members of the workforce respectfully, paying due regard to the 9 protected characteristics.

Signature of person completing EIA

Date signed