



Corporate Support Centre
Paul Walker - Chief Executive

To: All members of the Council

our ref: Council - 24 May 2024
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16 May 2024

Dear Councillor,

You are hereby summoned to attend the meeting of the Herefordshire Council to be held on **Friday 24 May 2024** at the Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE at **10.30 am** at which the business set out in the attached agenda is proposed to be transacted.

Yours sincerely
Claire Porter



Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

Council

Date: **Friday 24 May 2024**

Time: **10.30 am**

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

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

For any further information please contact:

Matthew Evans, Democratic Services

Tel: 01432 383690

Email: matthew.evans@herefordshire.gov.uk

If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call Matthew Evans, Democratic Services on 01432 383690 or e-mail matthew.evans@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the Meeting of the Council

Membership

Chairman
Vice-Chair

Councillor Roger Phillips
Councillor Stef Simmons

Councillor Polly Andrews
Councillor Jenny Bartlett
Councillor Graham Biggs
Councillor Harry Bramer
Councillor Ellie Chowns
Councillor Frank Cornthwaite
Councillor Clare Davies
Councillor Barry Durkin
Councillor Matthew Engel
Councillor Elizabeth Foxton
Councillor Catherine Gennard
Councillor Liz Harvey
Councillor Robert Highfield
Councillor Dan Hurcomb
Councillor Jim Kenyon
Councillor Nick Mason
Councillor Ed O'Driscoll
Councillor Rob Owens
Councillor Daniel Powell
Councillor Philip Price
Councillor Adam Spencer
Councillor Pete Stoddart
Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst
Councillor Kevin Tillett
Councillor Allan Williams
Councillor Mark Woodall

Councillor Bruce Baker
Councillor Chris Bartrum
Councillor Dave Boulter
Councillor Jacqui Carwardine
Councillor Simeon Cole
Councillor Pauline Crockett
Councillor Dave Davies
Councillor Mark Dykes
Councillor Toni Fagan
Councillor Carole Gandy
Councillor Peter Hamblin
Councillor Helen Heathfield
Councillor David Hitchiner
Councillor Terry James
Councillor Jonathan Lester
Councillor Bob Matthews
Councillor Aubrey Oliver
Councillor Justine Peberdy
Councillor Ivan Powell
Councillor Ben Proctor
Councillor Louis Stark
Councillor John Stone
Councillor Richard Thomas
Councillor Diana Toynbee
Councillor Rob Williams

Agenda

	Pages
NOLAN PRINCIPLES	9 - 10
1. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON To elect the Chairperson of the Council.	
2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON To appoint the Vice-Chairperson of the Council.	
3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive apologies for absence.	
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest by Members in respect of items on the Agenda.	
5. MINUTES To approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2024.	11 - 30
6. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS To receive the Chairman and Chief Executive's announcements.	31 - 36
7. ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL To elect the Leader of the Council.	
8. APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES To make appointments to the committees of the Council and outside bodies in line with the rules of political proportionality.	37 - 50
9. HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PLAN 2024-2028 To agree the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028.	51 - 102

YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO: -

- Attend all Council, Cabinet, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose 'confidential' or 'exempt' information.
- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting.
- 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.
- Access to a public register stating the names, addresses and wards of all Councillors with details of the membership of Cabinet and of all Committees and Sub-Committees.
- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the Council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title.
- Copy any of the documents mentioned above to which you have a right of access, subject to a reasonable charge (20p per sheet subject to a maximum of £5.00 per agenda plus a nominal fee of £1.50 for postage).
- Access to this summary of your rights as members of the public to attend meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees and Sub-Committees and to inspect and copy documents.

Recording of meetings

Please note that filming, photography and recording of this meeting is permitted provided that it does not disrupt the business of the meeting.

Members of the public are advised that if you do not wish to be filmed or photographed you should let the governance services team know before the meeting starts so that anyone who intends filming or photographing the meeting can be made aware.

The reporting of meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those doing the reporting to ensure that they comply.

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Public transport links

The Herefordshire Council office at Plough Lane is located off Whitecross Road in Hereford, approximately 1 kilometre from the City Bus Station. The location of the office and details of city bus services can be viewed at:

<http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/hereford-city-bus-map-local-services>,

**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 and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Friday 8 March 2024 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor Roger Phillips (chairperson)
Councillor Stef Simmons (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Polly Andrews, Bruce Baker, Jenny Bartlett, Chris Bartrum, Graham Biggs, Dave Boulter, Harry Bramer, Jacqui Carwardine, Ellie Chowns, Simeon Cole, Frank Cornthwaite, Pauline Crockett, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Barry Durkin, Mark Dykes, Matthew Engel, Toni Fagan, Carole Gandy, Catherine Gennard, Peter Hamblin, Liz Harvey, Helen Heathfield, Robert Highfield, David Hitchiner, Dan Hurcomb, Terry James, Jim Kenyon, Jonathan Lester, Nick Mason, Bob Matthews, Ed O'Driscoll, Aubrey Oliver, Rob Owens, Justine Peberdy, Dan Powell, Ivan Powell, Philip Price, Ben Proctor, Adam Spencer, Louis Stark, Pete Stoddart, John Stone, Elissa Swinglehurst, Richard Thomas, Kevin Tillet, Diana Toynbee, Allan Williams, Rob Williams and Mark Woodall

Officers: Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Director of Governance and Law, Corporate Director - Economy and Environment*, Corporate Director - Children and Young People*, Corporate Director - Community Wellbeing* and Democratic Services Manager.

*denotes virtual attendance

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Elizabeth Foxton.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this stage of the meeting, please see paragraph 56 below.

50. MINUTES

A matter of accuracy was raised concerning the minutes of the last meeting. In order to ensure an accurate record of the budget meeting on 9 February 2024, it was proposed that resolution (j) under paragraph 46 be amended to the wording below:

*j) To allocate to Children's Services £2.303m (£0.959m to Children's High Cost Placements, £0.338m to Social Worker Establishment, £1.006m to Agency Social Workers) from Care Market Costs Earmarked Reserve (£- 0.959m) and Financial Resilience Earmarked Reserve (£-1.344m) as a one off charge ~~which might be repaid in-year~~. **These reserves are then to be repaid in-year with any of the originally proposed savings in the Children and Young People directorate which do get delivered during 2024-25.***

RESOLVED: That, subject to the change set out above, the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council noted the Chairman's and Chief Executive's announcements as printed in the agenda papers.

52. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 9 - 20)

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

53. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

There were no questions from members of the Council.

54. 2024/25 COUNCIL TAX SETTING REPORT

Council considered a report from the Leader of the Council to set the council tax precepts for 2024/25.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services proposed the recommendations and introduced the report.

The Leader of the Council seconded the recommendations.

The council tax precepts for 2024/25 were put to the recorded vote and carried unanimously.

FOR (52): Councillors Andrews, Baker, Bartlett, Bartrum, Biggs, Boulter, Bramer, Carwardine, Chowns, Cole, Cornthwaite, Crockett, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Durkin, Dykes, Engel, Fagan, Gandy, Gennard, Hamblin, Harvey, Heathfield, Highfield, Hitchiner, Hurcomb, James, Kenyon, Lester, Mason, Matthews, O'Driscoll, Oliver, Owens, Peberdy, Phillips, Dan Powell, Ivan Powell, Price, Proctor, Simmons, Spencer, Stark, Stoddart, Stone, Swinglehurst, Thomas, Tillet, Toynee, Allan Williams, Robert Williams and Woodall.

Against (0)

Abstentions (0)

RESOLVED – That:

- a) **The precepting authority details included at appendices 1 to 5, relating to town and parishes, West Mercia Police and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority be approved in accordance with sections 30(2), 34(3), 36(1) and section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) and that the following amounts be approved for the year 2024/25 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011); and**
 - a. **£405,690,305 being the estimated aggregate expenditure of the council in accordance with section 31A (2) of the act, including all precepts issued to it by parish councils;**
 - b. **£264,946,000 being the estimated aggregate income of the council for the items set out in section 31A (3) of the act (including revenue support grant)**

- c. £140,744,305 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) calculated by the council in accordance with section 31A(4) of the act, as its council tax requirement for the year (including parish precepts); [Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act]
 - d. £1,954.79 being the amount at (c) above divided by the amount of the council tax base calculated by the council, in accordance with section 31B of the act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including parish precepts);
 - e. £5,690,305 being the aggregate amount of all special items (parish precepts) referred to in section 34(1) of the act;
 - f. £1,875.76 being the amount at (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (e) above by the amount of the council tax base calculated by the council, in accordance with section 34(2) of the act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no parish precept relates (Herefordshire Council band D council tax, excluding parishes); and.
- b) It is agreed that the net tax base of 71,999.97 band D equivalent properties (being the gross tax base adjusted for an assumed collection rate) used for setting the budget requirement for 2024/25;
- a. is allocated to band D equivalent dwellings per precept area as shown in appendix 1; and
 - b. the individual council tax allocations per valuation band of dwelling by parish (including fire and police precepts) as set out in appendix 5.

55. ADOPTION OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE MINERALS & WASTE LOCAL PLAN

Council considered a report by the Cabinet Member Environment to approve the adoption of the Herefordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP).

The Cabinet Member Environment proposed the recommendations and introduced the report.

The Leader of the Council seconded the recommendations in the report.

Council debated the report and welcomed the adoption of the Herefordshire MWLP, a development plan document.

The adoption of the Herefordshire MWLP was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) The Herefordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Inspectors' Report (at appendix 1) be noted;
- b) The [Herefordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan](#), incorporating the main modifications (at appendix 2), is adopted; and
- c) The Head of Planning and Building Control be delegated the authority to make any minor technical changes (e.g. typographical) to ensure that this development plan document is up to date at the time of adoption.

56. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

Council considered a report by the Chairperson of the Audit and Governance Committee to propose amendments to the constitution.

The Chairperson of the Audit and Governance Committee proposed the recommendations and introduced the report. He outlined a change to the wording in appendix 3 of the report to clarify the provision concerning co-optees to the children and young people scrutiny committee. The proposed constitutional changes to the arrangements for co-optees of the children and young people scrutiny committee, as set out below, were proposed for approval:

The committee with responsibility for education shall include the following co-opted statutory education representatives, as appointed by Council:

- *one representative as nominated by the diocese of Hereford*
- *one representative as nominated by the archdiocese of Cardiff*
- *~~one three parent governors as elected from the primary school sector~~*
- *~~one parent governor as elected by the secondary school sector~~*
- *~~one parent governor as elected by the special school sector and~~*

Additionally, the committee may make up to:

- *~~One two further appointments with such skills and experience as are determined beneficial by the committee representatives from the teaching sector~~*
- *~~One representative from a family who are or have been supported by social workers~~*

The Vice Chairperson of the Audit and Governance Committee seconded the recommendations in the report as amended by the change to appendix 3 as outlined above.

Council discussed the proposed changes and expressed support for the proposals.

The proposed changes to the constitution, including the change outlined to the wording in appendix 3, was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED – That Council approves changes in the Constitution:

a) in Appendix 1 to enable:

- (i) a change to the Standards Panel and process used to better enable concurrent oversight of the Code of Conduct standards arrangements; and**
- (ii) a change to the Code of Conduct, in relation to Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests, to reflect case law on this issue;**

b) in Appendix 2 to enable oversight by Audit and Governance Committee of the council's arrangements for Complaints, Companies and RIPA.

c) in Appendix 3 (incorporating the change to the wording as outlined above) to enable amendment to the co-opted membership of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

57. LEADER'S REPORT

Council received and noted the Leader's Report which provided an update on the activities of Cabinet since the previous ordinary meeting of Council on 8 December 2023.

Council questioned the Leader and the following actions were raised:

- To consider how the distinction between savings and reduction in costs pressures is presented in reports. In response to a question regarding the treatment of reduction in costs and whether they could be considered savings achieved by the Children's Directorate.
- In response to a question regarding the length of the all member OFSTED briefing on 27 March, to confirm the timings for the session; there was concern that the 1 hour programmed session was too brief.
- To arrange a meeting between the Cabinet Member Environment and Natural England to understand what the impact of Natural England's downgrading of the river to *failing* would have upon planning applications.
- To arrange for a progress report to Cabinet on the work of the phosphate commission after March 2024.
- To arrange for an update on the progress of projects in the capital programme including the Museum, Shirehall/Library, Transport Hub, Sales of land on the Enterprise Zone and St Owen's Street repairs. To include updates in the Leader's Report in future.
- To provide detail of the strategy to address 'not spots' of broadband coverage in the county.
- To provide to all councillors, guidance from the Department of Transport relating to the £100m Local Transport Fund when available.
- To consult with councillors from Ross-on-Wye to consider the composition of the Model Farm management board.
- To consider and confirm that adequate resource is in place to deliver the report to Cabinet in June 2024 as agreed in the Affordable Housing motion to full Council on 8 December 2023.
- To respond to a request for a list of how many residents in Bromyard are coming under the heading of platform or sanctuary (if data protection allows).
- To arrange for a briefing regarding the use of household waste collection vehicles to scan Herefordshire highways to detect road defects and necessary repairs.
- To check with officers that there are no blockages to the distribution of the Household Support Fund to ensure the funding is disbursed to the necessary outlets and distributors as soon as possible, particularly where there are ongoing programmes.

58. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS

Council debated the motions contained in the report by the Director of Law and Governance.

Motion – Gaza

Councillor O'Driscoll proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor James seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion. There was support across the chamber for the recommendations contained in the motion.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: -

This Council expresses deep sympathy for all those affected by the conflict in Israel and Palestine. For those in Herefordshire who have been affected by this conflict we offer our support at this difficult time.

This Council calls for an immediate release of all hostages and a sustainable bilateral ceasefire with unfettered access to humanitarian aid across Gaza in order to strengthen the possibility of a permanent peaceful resolution.

This Council believes that people of all faiths and none should feel safe both in Herefordshire and throughout the world, and utterly condemn the increase in anti-Semitic and Islamophobic abuse and violence. Herefordshire Council thanks community leaders for the role they are playing in reducing tensions at this sensitive and difficult time.

This Council resolves to write to the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, and Herefordshire's two Members of Parliament stating that the Council supports a sustainable and lasting bilateral ceasefire requesting they do all in their power to work towards a viable two state-solution.

We also ask they recognise with additional funding the key role local authorities play in promoting cohesion and understanding throughout their communities by supporting the many voluntary organisations and faith groups who work together to help those affected by this and other conflicts.

Motion – Household Support Fund

Councillor Chowns proposed and introduced the motion. An alteration to the motion was raised to change the date specified to 30th September and change the tense from *has been* to *is to be* preceding the word *axed* in recommendation (a). The seconder and Council indicated agreement to the alteration.

Councillor Crockett seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion. There was support across the chamber for the recommendations contained in the motion.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED – that:

The government proposes to end the Household Support Fund on 30th September this year.

This fund has been providing vital support to help vulnerable households cope with the rising cost of living.

Many local community groups and charities across Herefordshire do amazing work to help ensure this funding gets to those who need it most.

Since the cost of living is still rising, and very many families are still struggling, this council believes it is not right for the government to axe the Household Support Fund.

This council therefore asks the Leader and Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to:

- a) express this council's deep concern that the Household Support Fund is to be axed, and ask that the decision be reversed;
- b) urge the government to establish improved funding settlements (multi-year, with greater levels of funding) for local councils, in order to support our essential services for all Herefordshire residents.

59. FULL COUNCIL MEETING DATES 2024/25

Council considered and agreed the following meeting dates of Council in the 2024/25 municipal year:

- 26 July 2024
- 11 October 2024
- 6 December 2024
- 7 February 2025
- 7 March 2025
- 23 May 2025

The meeting ended at 12:32 p.m.

Chairperson

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Ms Borley, Monkhide	<p>Herefordshire Council has been made aware of the condition of Elmhurst on Venns Lane which it had operated as a nursing home until 2008. It was subsequently disposed of to Lynhales Care Homes Ltd (now Rotherwood Healthcare Ltd) and has lain unused and unoccupied for 15 years in spite of a now lapsed scheme for refurbishment approved in 2015.</p> <p>Given that protection of our heritage and culture is a key commitment of the Herefordshire County Plan 2020-24, is it not time the Council used its powers to ensure that this important listed building in the Aylestone Hill Conservation Area deteriorates no further?</p>	Cabinet member environment
<p>Response: Protection of our heritage remains a key commitment of the council, and this is an important local asset. However, there are restrictions as to when and how the council can intervene. A member of the planning enforcement and Conservation teams visited the property on 25th July 2023. There was no current evidence of any breach of planning regulations, though the building is clearly in need of some repair/maintenance. Planning enforcement and heritage conservation officers will continue to monitor the building on a regular basis and assess whether planning and/ or other breaches have occurred, utilising our relevant statutory powers to take appropriate action where required.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question: At the meeting in July '23 I understand repair works were agreed with the owner's representative. I believe these works to be extensive, both internally and externally. Why was a Repairs Notice not issued? <i>Section 48 of The Town & Country Planning Act enables local authorities to serve a Repairs Notice on the owner of a listed building specifying those works which it considers reasonably necessary for the proper preservation of a building. If two months pass and no reasonable steps have been taken, the local authority can begin CPO proceedings under Section 47.</i> I understand that there are many buildings such as Belmont House, The Royal Oak in Leominster and the Hop Pole in Bromyard deteriorating and I now ask you to use your notice powers under the Town & Country Planning Acts to protect Elmhurst. I now have The Victorian Society, SAVE Britain's Heritage and Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club asking questions about this important building. We need to stop further deterioration or the temptation of thieves/vandals to further destroy this fine example of architecture.</p>			
<p>Response to supplementary question from cabinet member environment: Thank you for the question and for highlighting these long standing issues. Initially council officers will work with owners of heritage buildings to understand plans and support repair work. The council will utilise its powers if works are not forthcoming within reasonable timeframes. Senior officers</p>			

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have been asked to meet with these owners of these heritage buildings and if no repairs are forthcoming enforcement action will be taken. We are determined to reassess all such cases and will do all we can to ensure the preservation of the historic environment. This may well include use of our statutory powers where appropriate.

PQ 2	Mr Symonds, Ross-on-Wye	Residents and businesses in Ross-on-Wye have suffered months of disruption while Welsh Water carry out work on the A40 at Hildersley, currently repeating work that was done weeks ago. What action has the Council taken to address the significant overrun on these permitted highway works?	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services
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Response:
 Works are being undertaken by a private developer to facilitate a housing site, which involves various utility connections.

Works started in February 2023 and were originally expected to last 22 weeks, but were extended for various technical and unforeseen reasons.

The final duration of the works is expected to be around 43 weeks with work currently scheduled to finish by Friday 8th March.

The Council has been monitoring the works and liaising with the developer as appropriate. Whilst an extension of time has been granted for some of the overrun, we will be issuing a fixed penalty notice once the works are complete.

PQ3	Mr Banks, Hereford	Has the Council granted planning permissions for 5G telecom masts to entities not listed on OFCOM's register or based on invalid safety compliance certificates from 'Three UK Limited', a dissolved company unrelated to telecoms? If so, could these actions render the permissions invalid and potentially result in financial liabilities for the Council and Councillors? The Planning department has evidence of invalid certificates from Three UK Limited. Could the Council confirm if any 5G mast permissions might be affected? Will it conduct a thorough review of the relevant records to identify and revoke any potentially invalid permissions, as allowed by Section 97 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990?	Cabinet member environment
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Response:
 The Council is aware of a small number of mast applications for prior approval where the applicants name and the safety compliance certificates were incorrect and the named organisations were not recorded on the latest OFCOM register of code operators. In all cases where approval for the siting and appearance was given, the operator has been contacted and invited to submit applications with corrected certificates. In response to these requests the operators have instead submitted corrected compliance certificates. This approach has been accepted by the Planning Inspectorate in relation to a number of subsequent appeals and the Council considers that the correction of the certificates is a proportionate response to the health and safety concerns. The Council cannot revoke a prior approval determination as the legislation states that such installations are permitted development and in effect grants a deemed approval subject to the Council's consideration of the siting and appearance of the mast, nor would it be a

proportionate response. Accordingly the Council does not propose to take any further action but has reviewed its internal processes, an instruction has been issued to all Planning Service officers and administration staff to ensure that this situation is not repeated and an extensive briefing note sent to all Councillors.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for providing the Council's response. While some corrected compliance certificates have been submitted by the operators, could you please clarify the potential financial liabilities for the Council and Councillors arising from granting permissions to entities not listed on OFCOM's register or based on invalid safety compliance certificates?

Additionally, could the Council elaborate on the specific steps or measures it plans to take to mitigate these potential liabilities and ensure compliance with regulations in future mast applications?

Furthermore, to ensure transparency and public accountability, would the Council be willing to make the briefing note sent to all Councillors publicly available? This would allow residents to have a comprehensive understanding of the issue and the advice provided to Councillors regarding potentially invalid planning permissions for 5G masts.

Response to supplementary question from cabinet member environment:

With respect to financial liabilities if these were to arise they would be considered on a case by case basis subject to the nature and basis of any claim.

With respect to steps taking, the business support and development management teams have been briefed by their respective service managers as to the checklist and registration requirements and the Planning Service will publish its 5G Mast Telecoms Briefing Note on the Council's website.

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PQ 4	Mr Wood, Hereford	<p>When I met with yourself and the Leader in July last year we discussed what your predecessor had done to ensure that there were dropped curbs installed on roads in Hereford that didn't have any already. I would like to know why nothing has been done to lower the curbs that haven't been already on Barrie Road and Westfaling Street in Hereford despite bringing it to the attention of officers on the 6th of October 2022.</p> <p>I would also be interested to know why Herefordshire Council has failed to respond to a letter from the Department for Transport dated the 20th of March, 2023, have you seen the letter that I am referring too and how do you plan on responding to the Department for Transport?</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response:

Thank you for your question.

Whilst we are sorry that schemes on Barrie Road and Westfaling Street have yet to be delivered, since 2022/23, the Council has invested £250k into matters such as this, with 9 schemes having been delivered across the county. Further money is being invested during 2024/25 that will help deliver some of the 90 further, similar requests that have been received.

With regard to Barrie Road and Westfaling Street, requests have been recorded for further dropped kerbs on both roads. Officers are currently reviewing and ranking all requests from across the county to determine the programme of works for 2024/25. At this stage it is not possible to state whether Barrie Road and Westfaling Street will form part of the programme, but I have asked that Officers contact Mr Wood directly in due course with the outcome.

In terms of the letter that was received in March 2023 from the Minister for Roads and Local Transport, we have noted its content and we can confirm that we are aware of our duties as a highway authority. As I am sure you can appreciate, like other highway authorities, we have many competing demands that we must balance across our highway network in Herefordshire each year. The recent announcement by central government, following the changes to HS2, that a further £106 million will be invested over the next 10 years into local roads, alongside the £14 million that we receive from government each year to maintain our road network, is welcomed and, when coupled with our own investment in highway infrastructure across the county, will greatly assist us. I have asked officers to look at how this investment could be used to provide an accelerated programme of accessibility improvements to deliver more schemes in 2024/25, such as those requested by yourself on behalf of others.

PQ 5	Ms Banks, Hereford	<p>The Council has an anti slavery policy</p> <p>“There is the need to identify and support victims, safeguard individuals, bring perpetrators to justice, develop information and data flows, increase awareness and create long-term, sustainable changes to behaviours, practice, skills and expertise”.</p> <p>How does the Council ensure there is no breach of this policy in its day to day purchasing and within its own policies?</p>	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
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Response:
As part of the procurement process, bidders are required to agree a statement relating to modern slavery based on suppliers and contractors understanding their obligations under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The council contracts and framework agreements include clauses which require suppliers to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring that slavery and human trafficking are not taking place in their own business, sub-contractors and supply chains. The council can terminate the contract where the provider breaches their obligations under the contract. Contract breaches are monitored as part of contract management arrangements.

Supplementary Question:
Cobalt is required for re-chargeable batteries and solar panels, 70% of cobalt is mined using children as young as 4. Eco-mines present awful conditions for children and academic opinion is ‘there is no clean cobalt’. Are you aware of the use of children and labour camps to mine cobalt for EV batteries and solar panels?

Response to supplementary question from cabinet member finance and corporate services:
I am aware and it is wrong and through our policies we do not use those types of organisations in our contracts.

PQ 6	Ms Price, Hereford	The excess LED Lighting throughout the county including rural areas is unwarranted No taxpayer has asked for these installations. Their ugly appearance is a minor issue in relation to the un-researched health effect on us all but especially for our children. Can the council explain the reason behind this planning and assure everyone of their safety with their research?	Cabinet member environment / adults, health and wellbeing
<p>Response: Thank you for your question.</p> <p>Street lighting provides a number of important benefits. It can be used to promote security and to increase the quality of life by artificially extending the hours in which it is light so that activity can take place. Street lighting also improves safety for drivers, riders, and pedestrians. Where additional street lighting is proposed, then we have an established highway design guide in place, which seeks for street lighting to be of minimal impact in rural areas.</p> <p>With regard to your question around impact on health, I can confirm that all of the lights installed on the Herefordshire network comply with the various standards that are applied to them, from actual light output to the electromagnetic emissions that all electrical appliances are expected to conform with. As such we are not aware of any health disbenefits associated with the adoption of LED street lights.</p>			
PQ 7	Mr Papadakis, Hereford	<p>The council reports its emissions in terms of tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent shown as tCO₂e.</p> <p>Please provide the methodology and data used to calculate how many petrol and diesel cars would need to be off the road to make a noticeable difference to tCO₂e in Hereford and how you arrive at this figure?</p>	Cabinet member environment
<p>Response: 4610 tonnes of CO₂e or roughly 45% of Herefordshire Council's emissions come from transport. Transport covers a range of vehicles including contractors' fleets, school transport, business mileage and staff commuting, etc. meaning that the emissions will need to be reduced across all modes of transport. In addition to any reductions in emissions made, sequestration will be taken into account as net zero recognises that emissions are unlikely to reduce to absolute zero across all sectors.</p> <p>We are therefore not looking to specifically remove cars from the roads to reach net zero but rather we have produced an overall plan as to how we will reduce our emissions in their totality before finally offsetting any residual emissions to achieve net zero. Our carbon management plan which sets out this approach as well as our annual reporting (including methodology) can be found here: https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/climate-2/climate-change/2</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question: Has it been independently verified?</p>			

Response to supplementary question from cabinet member environment:

Whilst the information is not independently verified, the Council does follow a recognised protocol to measure its impact. The protocol we follow has been defined by DEFRA and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2023>

PQ 8	Mrs McGeown, Dilwyn	<p>Herefordshire Council borrows a lot of money with interest payments swallowing significant amounts of annual council tax.</p> <p>Some of the current borrowing burden is through the much questioned LOBO Loans (http://lada.debtresistance.uk/what-is-a-lobo/)</p> <p>These appear to require a high % interest rate to service and if I understand correctly the terms of loan repayment can be changed by the lender.</p> <p>Most of the current borrowing burden is through the long standing and much respected PWLB, Public Works Loan Board. An independent and unpaid statutory body: (https://www.dmo.gov.uk/responsibilities/local-authority-lending/history-of-public-works-loans/).</p> <p>These appear to require a much more modest % interest rate to service and have clear terms.</p> <p>Why were LOBO Loans taken out, as opposed to PWLB, and have potential changes to LOBO loan terms been allowed for in the 2024 budgeting? Is there any other council borrowing from other sources?</p>	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
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Response:

Total borrowing at 31 March 2023 of £123.9m comprises Lender Option Borrower Option (LOBO) loans of £12.5m and £111.4m of Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The council does not have any other borrowing from other sources.

LOBO loans of £12.5m were taken out in 2004, in line with the approved Treasury Management Strategy and following recommendation from external Treasury Management Advisors. Interest payments are included in the 2024/25 approved budget with estimates informed by historical transactions and advice from external Treasury Management Advisors.

Supplementary Question:

Council loan repayments are influenced by bank base rate, currently 5 1/4%.

Your external Treasury Management Advisors, I presume these are the Link Group, forecast an optimistic base rate of 3% in March 2026.

But we have recently experienced a massive increase in UK money supply, Government Money Printing

Now basic schoolroom economics and history lessons teach that:

When governments print money, interest rates rise.

So what contingency plans are in place to cope with the base rate rising to say, a very realistic 6 or 7%?

What strategic reserve of funds can the council call upon if their Treasury Management Advisors have got the forecast wrong?

Their forecast from 2022 was over 5X wrong!

Response to supplementary question from cabinet member finance and corporate services:

All loans are on fixed rates and the council is protected from rate rises.

PQ 9

Mr Parkinson,
Leintwardine

On the agenda is amendments to the constitution. I am disappointed that councillors will be voting on abolishing the families' representative co-optee. As councillors say that they want to listen to families, please justify this gagging of the voice of families.
We need more communication.

Chairperson
children and
young people
scrutiny
committee

Response:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has recommended changes to the constitution to ensure that its committee's co-opted member positions were open to as wide a pool of expertise as possible, rather than limiting one position to families who had been supported by social workers and another to teachers. This change continues to enable anyone who has been supported by Herefordshire Council social workers to apply for the co-opted member positions when positions become available.

Being a co-opted member is not the only way that a member of the public can be involved with scrutiny, and it is important that this committee considers how to hear from and work with families as it carries out its work. In addition, the committee has a role to play to ensure that these voices are heard throughout the council. I believe that there is more work to be done to in this regard, and this committee will continue in its work to ensure that Herefordshire Council continues to improve how it works with and supports families.

Supplementary Question:

I hope councillors will vote against the proposed abolition of the families' representative co-optee of the children's scrutiny committee. The families' representative co-optee would give a unique perspective to help to improve inadequate children's services.

The proposed change to the constitution is quote 'Two further appointments with such skills and experience as determined by the committee', unquote. So the committee could determine skills and experience which could exclude those who could have been appointed as a families' representative co-optee.

Also councillors should communicate more about children's services. How can they have more voice about the top priority of the council?

Response to supplementary question from chairperson children and young people scrutiny committee:

Councillors are directly elected to represent the people and therefore have to consider not just the interests of their ward, but those throughout the whole county. Your councillors are responsible for making sure that the services that the council provides meet the needs of residents and those who work in Herefordshire. All members are corporate parents. The corporate parenting strategy sets out our commitment to work together to improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people, and care experienced adults for whom we all have a special responsibility.

PQ 10	Mr Milln, Hereford	<p>On 4th March 2022 Council passed a motion for setting up an award scheme to encourage and recognise exemplary work in the areas of design, conservation and sustainability for the built environment. The NoM set out the parameters of the scheme and in the debate members contributed usefully of their experience and of examples across the County. It was supported because it chimes with the objectives of the County Plan 2020-24 and because it was seen as being very low cost.</p> <p>It is disappointing that there has since been no executive response to this, still less updates on progress. Can we please now have a progress report?</p>	Cabinet member environment
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Response:
 We welcomed this motion as we firmly believe that such an initiative can only have a positive impact on the Built and Natural Environment of Herefordshire, driving a culture of innovative and high quality development across the county.

With this in mind the Built and Natural Environment Service has drafted a proposal to set out the detail of this award scheme and we are proposing to engage with local partners to seek their views to enable us to finalise this document.

Supplementary Question:
 My question asked for a report of progress on the Award Scheme for design, conservation and sustainability for the built environment since Council gave unanimous approval to the initiative two years ago. The response references a document setting out the detail for engaging with local partners without providing any actual detail. I ask again for a report of progress please which should at minimum include a timetable for consultation and implementation.

Response to supplementary question from cabinet member environment:
 The proposal for the Design Awards Scheme has been drafted by the Building Conservation Team for comment. We anticipate this will be shared with all interested parties shortly and we propose to put an initial meeting in the diary in mid April, subject to diary commitments, to collate feedback and set out a timescale for implementation of the scheme.

PQ 11	Ms Currie, Hereford	The Leader's Report states:	Cabinet member
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		<p><i>'A central underpinning to our budget is ensuring local children, young people and their families in receipt of our services experience improved outcomes with those services. This remains a top priority. At their most recent meeting (31 January) the Improvement Board met to consider the required quickening of pace in a number of areas of improvement identified by Ofsted.'</i></p> <p>One such area of improvement per the <i>Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan</i> (updated 22-11-2023) is:</p> <p><i>'Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the Public Law Outline (PLO), permanence planning ...'</i></p> <p>However, there is anecdotal evidence that even after a judge decides that a child should be returned to their family, sometimes they are still not reunited months after the judge's timescale. To what extent is this true?</p>	children and young people
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Response:

There has been significant progress in ensuring drift is minimised as much as possible for children, young people and their families. The table below provides some examples of areas where such improvements have been made although it is accepted that we need to continue to improve and some areas

Area of Improvement	Performance April 2022	Current Performance
Completion of child and family assessment within timescales (45 working days)	55%	83%
% Strategy Meetings taken place within 2 working days	54%	96%
Initial Child Protection Conferences convened within timescales (15 working days from strategy meeting)	62%	96%
Proportion of Children in Need seen by their social worker within the last 6 weeks	52%	76%
Proportion of children subject to a Child Protection Plan seen by their social worker within the last 4 weeks	83%	97%
Rate (per 10,000 children) of children leaving care	28	32

We are working in a restorative way with parents and children subject to PLO pre-proceedings, helping parents to appreciate the concerns whilst supporting them to make changes in a timely manner so the child(ren) remain safe and can remain living with the family where possible. We have improved our systems and management oversight for families subject to PLO pre-proceedings to minimise drift whilst working alongside families. By ensuring effective engagement we have seen a reduction in the issuing of care proceedings subject to PLO pre-proceedings from 60% in April 2023 to 17% in January 2024.

In respect of the anecdotal evidence noted in the question, it would be inappropriate for us to comment on individual cases or circumstances. However, should the respective parent(s) wish for us to respond to their individual case in private we are of course more than happy to do so.

The rehabilitation of children to the care of their parent(s) often happens in a phased manner to ensure that sufficient support is in place and to ensure that both children and families can adjust. A balance is needed to ensure that the arrangements to rehabilitate the child back to the care of parent(s) is successful as a breakdown at this point can result in the child staying in care rather than the parent(s) being able to care for the child. Due to the individuality of the families involved it is not possible to provide a typical timescale for such reunification to be completed as these vary widely from family to family but timescales will generally be agreed with and monitored by the Courts.

There are commonly two legal basis on which a child can be looked after; through section 20 and through a care order being granted by the Courts.

Where a child is subject to Section 20, a parent can revoke this at any time and the child would return to the care of parent(s) as there is no legal basis for the child to remain in care.

Where a care order is in place the Courts broadly have two options:

- The Court can revoke the care order which effectively removes the legal mechanism for the child to remain in care and child would return to the care of the parent(s).
- The Court can continue the care order which effectively continues the child being a looked after child. Typically this happens where assessments or a support package such as a parenting course remain outstanding. In these cases a phased return home over a period of time is common. The court continues to exercise oversight, parents continue to be legally represented and children continue to have access to an independent Guardian and an Independent Reviewing Officer. Any potential drift will be scrutinised by the Courts.

Supplementary Question:

With respect I have to disagree with the response given. There is anecdotal evidence that even after a judge decides that a child should be returned to their family, sometimes they are still not reunited months after the judge's timescale.

Other families report a similar disregard for judges clear instructions when they go against the LA position and arguments in court. This is the sort of toxic, overreaching behaviour the council has been accused of during the past decade.

When will you take action and what action will you take against the staff that clearly defy court instructions when they conflict with Children's Service's Aims?

Response to supplementary question from cabinet member children and young people:

Thank you for your follow-up question

Performance against court timescales and directions are monitored weekly and regular performance meetings with the children and family court advisory service and local family justice board. In your question you refer to anecdotal evidence and behaviour displayed in the past. It would be inappropriate to discuss specific cases in this forum but if you would like to provide me details, I shall certainly look at this.

PQ 12	Mr McGeown, Dilwyn	<p>Herefordshire Council has a strategy that prioritises active travel measures, better known as walking.</p> <p>(https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/38323/html/)</p> <p>Great things are made of this in the draft masterplan that's soon to be consulted on.</p> <p>Now I live in the parish of Dilwyn and my nearest shop, library etc is in the village of Weobley.</p> <p>A footpath (PROW) DW20 links the two Parishes and I would love to actively travel to Weobley to buy bread and milk.</p> <p>But the footbridge, over 7meters long, spanning the brook, requires repair and the path has been officially closed by Herefordshire Council for over two years.</p> <p>How long should a reasonable person allow before concluding that the fine words "prioritise active travel" have no substance and Herefordshire Council no ability to deliver?</p> <p>When are you going to fix our bridge?</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response:
 Thank you for your question. The path in question is Public Right of Way DW20 and is closed due to a need to replace an existing 10m bridge. Bridges of this size do need to be installed by competent and capable contractors and so are not suitable to local delivery.

In line with all our work for maintaining assets on the network we do operate a prioritisation process, with the structure on DW20 currently ranking 42 on our list. That said, it is our intention is to make significant progress in terms of the replacements that currently sit on our programme, and have allocated funding to deliver this.

This council does recognise the importance of the Rights of Way network, both in terms of active travel and the impact that the network has on the visitor economy. We have therefore allocated some £450k of additional funding for works this year and aim to focus this spend on the reopening of closed parts of the network. We will work with local groups to empower them to undertake work as well as the more formal supply chain for large bridge replacements and the like. By adopting this approach, we will be able to ensure that the funding is spent to best effect.

I have asked that every effort is made to reopen DW20 as soon as possible for the benefit of all.

Supplementary Question:

If I understand correctly.

A long time ago the parish council was prepared to repair the bridge using there own resources.

The Parish Lengthesman, assisted by Dilwyn Craftsmen, undertaking the work.

This was prohibited by the County Council.

Dilwyn's Craftsman are not only competent and capable, they also posses infinite resource and sagacity.

They would have delivered a 10 meter bridge that would have lasted into the next century.

All the County Council would have needed to do, was inspect the work and tick it off as job done.

I welcome the offer to reopen DW20 as soon as possible for the benefit of all.

So

Will I be able to lead Leominster Rambling Club over it on their summer solstice walk?

Please do say yes, then I can put it down on the walking program today.

Response to supplementary question from cabinet member transport and infrastructure:

I would like to say yes but currently the council is putting in place a framework agreement for suppliers to undertake such works from April. Competent suppliers should seek inclusion on the framework, including suppliers who can provide 10 foot bridges. There is a backlog of repairs and we have funding for the work but a lack of suppliers to carry it out. I suspect that the work is unlikely to be done in time for this year.

Chairman of Council report – Council Meeting **24 May 2024**

Since the last council meeting I have attended the declaration of the new High Sheriff Patricia Churchward, presentation of British Empire medals, the annual meetings of the Armed Forces Covenant, SSAFA , and held a meeting and tour of our Heritage Archive and Resources Centre (HARC) for our Mayors.

I was particularly pleased to see the Lord Lieutenant presented the King`s award for voluntary service to the South Wye Development Trust at their home base of the Kindle Centre. The work going on at this Centre for many years to support the local community and refugees in our City is exemplary and worthy of this high national award – equivalent to a MBE. I would encourage elected members to look in their own communities to similar organisations who make significant contributions to the wellbeing of residents and our environment.

Together with the Vice Chair I attended the seminar of the Herefordshire Tourism BID who have recently been awarded the Local Visitor Economic Partnership status which means it collaborates with Visit England on innovations and campaigns in the sector, and is doing great work to promote our local tourism.

I attended civic receptions and services in the County and in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, several productions at the Courtyard witnessing the talent of our community including an impressive evening by the Herefordshire youth orchestra

The Bishop, Mayor, Chairman of the Guild of Showmen and myself took part in the historic ceremony of the opening of the St Ethelbert`s May Fair in Hereford witnessing the payment of twelve and half bushels of wheat. We were joined by most of the market town mayors and many others from south Wales. The tradition of this event was enhanced by the Bishop wearing a wig worn by one of his predecessors over 200 years ago at the same event.



This month marks the changeover of our City and Market town mayors and I would like to thank Cllr Jacqui Carwardine, Cllr Allan Williams, Cllr Louis Stark, Cllr Helen L`Anson, Cllr Dee Dunne-Thomas, and Cllr Elizabeth Banks for their commitment and support to their local communities and their comradery throughout the year.

Chief Executive's report to full Council 24 May 2024

As the Council's number one priority we're progressing on our children's services improvement journey to ensure that we provide children and their families with the best possible services. We're grateful for the continued advice and guidance of children's commissioner Eleanor Brazil, and Deborah Mcmillan who is our newly appointed Department for Education (DfE) improvement advisor, as well as Kevin Crompton, Independent Scrutineer. All-member briefings have been held for the past two months to give greater awareness and understanding of key issues, and these have been well received and will continue in June and July.

After two and a half years as corporate director for children and young people services, Darryl Freeman left the council in March. Darryl joined us at a time when children's services were found to be needing improvement, and diligently provided day-to-day leadership while steering significant service transformation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Darryl for his efforts and professionalism during what was an extremely challenging time.

Following Darryl's departure, I'm pleased to confirm that we've appointed Tina Russell as corporate director for children and young people. Tina brings a wealth of experience as a director of children's services and a strong track record of leading improvement. Tina will join the council on 1 July 2024 until the end of March 2025. In the meantime Interim management arrangements have been put in place.

In March, Ofsted published the findings from their fourth monitoring visit, which focused on young people in care aged 16 and 17 and care leavers aged 18 to 25. It was encouraging that the report recognised developments in the service, however it reinforced that there is still much to do. It's clear we must work at increased pace to improve the quality of services and improve outcomes for our children and young people.

Earlier this month the DfE announced that our bid for a new special school for children and young people with SEND was successful. This support means that a new school will be built that is expected to cater for up to 80 pupils, aged 2-16 years with complex autism and severe learning difficulties. We're obviously delighted by this positive news and recognise the significant impact the new school will have on pupils and their families. Further information about the plans for the new school will be announced in the future.

Following a thorough procurement process, in March we announced the award of the Recyclables and Waste Collection Contract to FCC Environment. The new contract which starts in September, will provide continuity of service for residents, while including a number of innovations. This includes two fully electric collection vehicles in the fleet primarily to serve Hereford City Centre, which is a step towards the Council and FCC's Net Zero goals.

In April, Cabinet took the decision to bring the council's Public Realm Services contract with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) to an end in 2026. This is because the current contract does not allow the council to deliver its longer term requirements and aspirations. A new contract will commence on 1 June 2026, which gives a two year period for a redesign, procurement and planned mobilisation of the new service. This work is now underway. We will continue to work closely with BBLP to ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements.

Our Marches Forward partnership arrangement with neighbouring councils in Shropshire, Monmouthshire and Powys continues to strengthen. We recently held a successful stakeholder event that brought together partner organisations from across the region to discuss key priorities that affect us all - Nature, energy and climate; Housing, health and skills; Transport and digital connectivity; Food, development and visitor economy – and how we can broaden collaboration. The all-members session was well attended and received positive feedback. We will now be working to bring together the data and information we each hold, and we will be sharing our Marches Manifesto with the English and Welsh governments.

As a rural county, our transport infrastructure is vital to support the connectivity needs of local people, communities and businesses. In June we're hosting a Transport Summit in collaboration with Midlands Connect, which will bring together MPs and Cabinet members to hear about our vision for transport in Herefordshire and discuss opportunities for development. The summit will also hear from local business leaders about why connectivity is key for businesses in the county and regionally.

We confirmed a new agreement with Hereford Football Club in April that will see the club remain at the Edgar Street ground until 2070. The long term lease provides welcome security as the club seeks to continue its development on and off the field. The council is working closely with Hereford FC to explore options for the Blackfriars End of the stadium. Feasibility work is now underway around a new stand and accommodation.

The council is also working with partners to develop options for student accommodation to be built on the College Road campus in Hereford. The county has a strong and growing offering for people looking to further their education and develop their skills. It's important to the county's economy as a whole to encourage young people to study, live and develop their careers here. New accommodation will enhance the ability to attract students to our county.

Work has started in Leominster to improve streets and pavements in the historic town centre to enhance the town for visitors and retailers. The improvements will see improved paving, wider pavements, resurfaced roads and raised tables at the major junctions to make them safer and more accessible for pedestrians. The improvements are part of the Leominster High Street Heritage Action Zone funded work – a multi-million pound regeneration supported by Historic England, delivered through Herefordshire Council and Leominster Town Council. This major investment has already transformed buildings with improvements to structure and facades to reflect the original detail restoring local historic character and heritage features. This final stage of the improvement work is being funded by Herefordshire Council.

Twelve local charities and community groups have received funding from the new Herefordshire Together Fund to support initiatives which reach families in need, improve emotional wellbeing and community cohesion. The £136,000 fund has made possible by our Public Health service and is part of our community paradigm shift where the focus is on funding community-led prevention projects. The Herefordshire Together grants range from £1,000 to £20,000, and are distributed by Herefordshire Community Foundation and supported by Healthwatch Herefordshire.

We were delighted to receive a £750,000 boost from Arts Council England recently towards the major refurbishment and extension of Hereford's museum and art gallery. Once complete, the

redeveloped museum and art gallery in Broad St, Hereford will significantly enhance the county's cultural offer, support community engagement and attract new visitors to the area.

Our library services were also pleased to receive £57,087 from the government's Libraries Improvement Fund to enhance resident access to the internet. Thanks to this plus additional funding contributions from the Friends of Leominster Library, Ross Library Development Group and Ledbury Library Development Group, 50 tablets are being introduced in Hereford, Leominster, Ross, Ledbury, Colwall and Kington libraries from later this year.

Our new public art trail in Hereford is already proving to be extremely popular with residents and visitors to the city. The two mile walking tour takes in eight eye-catching wall murals and eight contemporary sculptures as well as the established city art works. The new sculptures and wall mural elements have been made possible through the Hereford City Centre Improvement Project, funded jointly by the council and Marches Local Enterprise Partnership. The wall murals were commissioned by Studio Response and produced by leading street artists working nationally and internationally. The sculptures have been created by talented artists from Hereford College of Arts (HCA) and established artists linked to Hereford. There is such a wealth of creative talent in our county and it is great that we can showcase it and celebrate it in this way.

Thank you for your support.

Paul Walker
Chief Executive
Herefordshire Council

Title of report: Appointments to Council Committees and Outside Bodies

Meeting: Council

Meeting date: Friday 24 May 2024

Report by: Solicitor to the Council

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To exercise those powers reserved to Council at its annual meeting:

- (a) To confirm its committees and the number of seats on each, including terms of reference and functions of those committees;
- (b) To review the representation and determine the allocation of seats on committees and relevant outside bodies to political groups for the coming year;
- (c) To make appointments to the positions of chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of committees; and
- (d) To make arrangements for such appointments to committees and other bodies as may be necessary, including co-optees.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) the list of ordinary committees listed at paragraph 10 be confirmed with their terms of reference as set out in the Council's constitution;**
- b) the number of seats on each committee as set out at paragraph 10, and the allocation of those seats to political groups as set out at paragraph 11 be approved;**
- c) the allocation of seats on outside bodies to political groups as set out at paragraph 13 be approved;**
- d) the appointment of five co-opted members of children and young people scrutiny committee be approved as follows:**
 - one representative as nominated by the diocese of Hereford**
 - one representative as nominated by the archdiocese of Cardiff**
 - three parent governors as elected from the school sector**
- e) the suspension of the rules of proportionality in respect of the standards panel, the River Lugg Drainage Board and the Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee be approved;**
- f) the appointment of committee chairpersons and vice chairpersons be approved (as set out in paragraph 16) ; and**
- g) the size and the allocation of seats on the scrutiny management board in Appendix 2 be agreed.**

Alternative options

1. To draw up a different set of committees of a different size and composition with different terms of reference.
2. Council could decide to not suspend the rules of proportionality with respect to the outside bodies; the River Lugg Drainage Board and the Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee. This may result in those members with a local interest in the work of these bodies being unable to contribute to their discussions and decision-making. If the rules of proportionality were not suspended for the standards panel then only members of the largest political groupings would be eligible to sit on the panel or the size of the panel would need to increase to ensure that political proportionality could be achieved where currently Audit & Governance can appoint such members as appropriate.
3. Council could decide to suspend the rules of proportionality for all committees and establish its own criteria for appointing members to its committees. This would require a vote to do so in respect of each committee to which these rules apply and without any member of the council voting against each proposal. However, such a blanket approach is inconsistent with the spirit of political proportionality within the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and would additionally require Council to approve which councillor would take each individual seat on the relevant committees and outside bodies.

Key considerations

4. Council is required to review its political composition and how this is applied to appointments to committees and sub-committees of the council at each annual meeting of Council. Similarly, the constitution requires Council to review its ordinary committees at the annual meeting and make appointments to them.
5. The membership of the respective political groups at the council is shown in the table below:

Political Group	Membership
Conservative Group	21
Independents for Herefordshire	6
Liberal Democrats	12
The Green Party	9
True Independents	3
Total members in a Group	51
Labour	1*
Not aligned	1
<i>Total Members not in a group</i>	2
<i>Total</i>	53

* Under the rules concerning political groups in the constitution (section 2.2.23) a political group must have two or more members. Councillor Adam Spencer identifies as a Labour councillor but for the purposes of the political proportionality calculations is not aligned to any political group.

6. Council is under a duty to ensure membership of those committees and outside bodies covered by the relevant rules reflects the political composition of the council, as far as practicable, by allocating seats on the committees to political groups in proportion to their numerical strength on the council, whilst also maintaining a similar proportional balance of overall seat numbers. Once Council has approved the allocation of seats to political groups, it is a matter for the relevant political group leaders to confirm which of their members will take up any seats allocated to their group. Detail of the latest committee memberships together with current chairpersons and vice chairpersons are contained in Appendix 1. Cabinet (as the executive), the licensing sub committee (a statutory committee) and the health and wellbeing board (with a membership set out by statute) are exempt from the requirements of political proportionality.
7. Any member who is not aligned to a group is not entitled to an allocation of seats within these rules. It is only where the proportionality calculations have been made and if any seats remain unallocated that Council may determine to appoint a member that is not a member of one of the political groups on the Council.
8. These rules of political proportionality should also be applied when allocating seats on outside bodies to which the council makes three or more appointments.
9. It is open to Council to suspend the rules of political proportionality in relation to allocation of seats on any particular body. To do so requires approval by Council with no member voting against the proposal; this is known as a *nem con* vote. Abstentions do not invalidate such a vote.
10. Council has agreed to establish committees of Council as listed in the table below. The terms of

reference for these committees are set out within the functions scheme of the constitution currently published on the Council's website (link below): <http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=332&MId=6384&Ver=4&Info=1>

Committee	Seats
Audit and governance	7
Children and young people scrutiny	7
Connected communities scrutiny	7
Employment panel	6
Environment and sustainability scrutiny	7
Health, care and wellbeing scrutiny	7
Planning and regulatory	15
Scrutiny management board	TBD
<i>Total seats</i>	<i>TBD</i>

11. The table below details the allocation of seats on the existing committees based on the political composition of the Council set out in paragraph 5 above. The political composition of the Council has not changed since the previous calculation of proportionality on 19 May 2023. The table includes the allocation of one seat to the not aligned members of the council, on the children and young people scrutiny committee, as agreed at the above meeting.

Committee	Con	IfH	Lib Dem	Green	T Ind	NA	Total
Audit and Governance	3	1	2	1	0	0	7
Children and Young People Scrutiny	2	1	1	1	1	1	7
Connected Communities Scrutiny	3	1	2	1	0	0	7
Employment Panel	2	1	1	1	1	0	6
Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny	3	0	2	2	0	0	7
Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny	3	1	2	1	0	0	7
Planning and Regulatory	6	2	3	3	1	0	15
<i>Total</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>56</i>

12. The scrutiny management board has been established to oversee the co-ordination and work programming of the four other scrutiny committees. The composition of the scrutiny management board is outlined under paragraph 2.6.4 of the constitution; its membership consists of the four scrutiny committee chairpersons and other elected members as required to ensure the committee is

politically balanced. Recommendation (f) in this report will determine the appointment of the four scrutiny committee chairpersons and the chairperson and vice chairperson of the scrutiny management board. Following the appointment of chairpersons and vice chairpersons a calculation of the necessary size of the board can be undertaken and the allocation of seats to ensure that it is politically proportionate. This calculation will be tabled at the annual meeting and Council will be asked to consider recommendation (g); to agree the size of the board and the allocation of seats on the board to ensure political balance. Appendix 2 provides the blank table of the size and allocation of seats on the scrutiny management board to be completed and tabled for approval following the agreement of recommendation (f).

13. Those outside bodies to which three or more appointments are currently made on a politically proportionate basis are detailed in the table below, with the allocation of seats based on the political composition of the council as set out in paragraph 5 above. The political composition of the Council has not changed since the previous calculation of proportionality on 19 May 2023. The table includes the allocation of one seat to the not aligned members of the council, on the Fire Authority, as agreed at the above meeting.

Outside Body	Con	IfH	Lib Dem	Green	T Ind	NA	Total
Fire Authority	2	1	1	1	0	1	6
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>9</i>

14. The council is required to appoint certain education representatives onto the scrutiny committee at which educational matters are considered; in the council's case this is the children and young people scrutiny committee. Specifically the council must co-opt representatives from parent governors and relevant diocesan representatives (Church of England and Roman Catholic). There is a statutory election process by which the parent governor representatives are selected. Following the constitutional changes agreed at the ordinary meeting on Council on 8 March 2024 three parent governors are sought from the school sector. Each relevant diocese is asked to nominate a diocesan representative. All appointments of co-optees follows the council's appointment process set out in the co-optee protocol. Additionally, the children and young people scrutiny committee can make up to two further appointments with such skills and experience as are determined beneficial by the committee in accordance with paragraph 4.5.7 of the constitution and without a further decision required of the full Council. Recommendation (d) proposes the appointment of statutory co-optees, with voting rights on educational matters, to the children and young people scrutiny committee.
15. In line with previous practice, it is proposed to suspend the rules of political proportionality in relation to a small number of specified bodies. These are detailed in the table below together with the reason for seeking the suspension. Recommendation (e) proposes the suspension of proportionality for those bodies listed below; a *nem con* vote is required to suspend proportionality i.e. no votes against the proposition.

Body	Seats	Reason for suspension
Standards panel	Up to 3 seats	This panel is formed on an as required basis; its elected membership is drawn from the membership of the audit and governance committee which is itself politically proportionate.

River Lugg Internal Drainage Board	7	This is a geographically focused body therefore it is appropriate to nominate members from relevant wards.
Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee	4	This is a geographically focused body therefore it is appropriate to nominate members from relevant wards.

16. Council is required to appoint the chairpersons and vice chairpersons of committees listed at paragraph 10 above. The Leader of the Council has delegated authority to appoint the Chairperson of the Health and Wellbeing Board. Existing committee chairpersons and vice chairpersons are contained in Appendix 1 to this report which provides the membership of each committee. In the event that any of the existing chairpersons and vice chairpersons are contested, the Council Chairperson will call for nominations to that post and a vote will be held in accordance with council procedure rules.

Community impact

17. In accordance with the council's adopted code of corporate governance, the council is accountable for how it uses the resources under its stewardship, including accountability for outputs and outcomes achieved. In addition the council has an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies.

Environmental Impact

18. Whilst this is a decision on back office functions and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to how it is in line with the council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

19. 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.
20. 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. As this is a decision on the administrative functions of the Council, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty however the council will seek to ensure that all appointments are made fairly (i.e. no discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics) and that committee meetings are physically accessible to all.

Resource implications

21. Budgets are in place to cover allowances for any appointments made. In the event that Council decides on the establishment of additional committees a budget will need to be identified to meet the cost of any special responsibility allowance associated with the new committee. If Council agrees additional committees, appointments to the position of chairperson and vice chairperson will be agreed, if appropriate, during consideration of this report. All members appointed to positions of special responsibility and to committees are provided with training to enable them to fulfil their duties.

Legal implications

22. The council is required to ensure that the allocation of seats to committees is compliant with relevant rules contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and regulations made under that act.
23. In summary these regulations require that in determining the allocation of seats the council must apply the following four principles as far as reasonably practicable:
- a. that not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;
 - b. that the majority of the seats on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership;
 - c. subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of a relevant authority which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority; and
 - d. subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of the seats on the body which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.
24. The proposals in this report comply with these requirements. Once the proportionate allocation of seats has been made in accordance with the above principles, if any seats remain unallocated Council may determine to appoint a not aligned grouped member to fill the seat.
25. Alternative arrangements not complying with these requirements as set out in paragraph 9 may be made so long as no member of the council votes against it.

Risk management

26.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Failure to appoint to committees and outside bodies could render them iniquorate or unlawful	The recommendations in this report mitigate these risks
Failure to obey the rules of political proportionality could similarly render a committee or body unlawful	The recommendations in this report mitigate these risks

Consultees

27. No consultees.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Committee memberships and existing chairpersons and vice chairpersons

Appendix 2: Paper to table – scrutiny management board – size and allocation of seats

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published

Governance	John Coleman	Date 10/05/2024
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 14/05/2024
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 09/05/2024
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 13/05/2024
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 10/05/2024
Procurement	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Risk	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.

Approved by Claire Porter Date 15/05/2024

Appointments to Committees – May 2024
(excluding co-optees and non-voting members)

Scrutiny Committees

Name	No. of members	Members
Children and young people scrutiny committee	7	Cllr Toni Fagan (Chairperson) Cllr Liz Harvey (Vice-Chairperson) Cllr Clare Davies Cllr Robert Highfield Cllr Jim Kenyon Cllr Ben Proctor Cllr Rob Williams
Connected communities scrutiny committee	7	Cllr Ellie Chowns (Chairperson) Cllr Ed O'Driscoll (Vice-chairperson) Cllr Bruce Baker Cllr Frank Cornthwaite Cllr David Hitchiner Cllr Roger Phillips Cllr Ben Proctor
Environment and sustainability scrutiny committee	7	Cllr Louis Stark (Chairperson) Cllr Helen Heathfield (Vice-Chairperson) Cllr Dave Davies Cllr Robert Highfield Cllr Rob Owens Cllr Justine Peberdy Cllr Richard Thomas
Health, care and wellbeing scrutiny committee	7	Cllr Pauline Crockett (Chairperson) Cllr Kevin Tillet (Vice-chairperson) Cllr Jenny Bartlett Cllr Simeon Cole Cllr Dave Davies Cllr Mark Dykes Cllr Richard Thomas

Scrutiny management board	15	Cllr Liz Harvey (Chairperson) Cllr Jenny Bartlett (Vice-Chairperson) Cllr Bruce Baker Cllr Ellie Chowns (Chair of CC SC) Cllr Simeon Cole Cllr Frank Cornthwaite Cllr Pauline Crockett (Chair of HCW SC) Cllr Toni Fagan (Chair of CYP SC) Cllr Peter Hamblin Cllr Terry James Cllr Bob Matthews Cllr Rob Owens Cllr Louis Stark (Chair of ES SC) Cllr Richard Thomas Cllr Rob Williams
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Non-executive committees

Name	No. of members	Members
Audit and Governance	7	Cllr David Hitchiner (Chairperson) Cllr Aubrey Oliver (Vice-Chairperson) Cllr Chris Bartrum Cllr Frank Cornthwaite Cllr Peter Hamblin Cllr Robert Highfield Cllr Mark Woodall
Employment Panel	6	Cllr Jonathan Lester (Chairperson) Cllr Chowns (Vice-Chairperson) Cllr Liz Harvey Cllr Terry James Cllr Bob Matthews Cllr Pete Stoddart

<p>Planning and Regulatory</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>Cllr Terry James (Chairperson) Cllr Clare Davies (Vice Chairperson) Cllr Polly Andrews Cllr Bruce Baker Cllr Dave Boulter Cllr Jacqui Carwardine Cllr Simeon Cole Cllr Dave Davis Cllr Elizabeth Foxton Cllr Catherine Gennard Cllr Peter Hamblin Cllr Stef Simmons Cllr John Stone Cllr Richard Thomas Cllr Diana Toynbee</p>
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Appendix 2: Paper to table – scrutiny management board – size and allocation of seats

	Con	IfH	Lib Dem	Green	T Ind	NA*	Total
Scrutiny Management Board							



Title of report: Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028

Meeting: Council

Meeting date: Friday 24 May 2024

Report by: Leader, Corporate Strategy and Budget

Classification

Open

Decision type

Budget and policy framework

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To agree proposals for the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028 following recommendation by Cabinet. The council's constitution requires Cabinet to make recommendations to Council in respect of budget and policy framework items; the Herefordshire Council Plan forms part of this framework.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028, as set out at appendix A be approved; and
- (b) Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to make minor grammatical, formatting, and design amendments necessary to finalise and present the Herefordshire Council Plan for publication.

Key considerations

1. The Herefordshire Council Plan has been developed to set the vision for the council following public consultation and engagement with cabinet members and staff. Nearly 1000 people have

been engaged through a range of events, targeted workshops throughout the county and an online survey.

2. The plan provides the strategic framework for the council that outlines the vision, priorities and objectives over the next four years, and informs how our resources and budgets are prioritised.
3. Through the development of the Herefordshire Council Plan, four corporate priorities have been identified. These are:
 - I. People – We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities who support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.
 - II. Place – We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place, we will support access to green spaces and we will do everything we can to recover the health of our rivers.
 - III. Growth – We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county; attracting inward investment, building business confidence, creating jobs, enabling housing development along with providing the right infrastructure.
 - IV. Transformation – We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.
4. Recognising that these priorities do not exist in isolation we will work in collaboration with residents and communities, businesses and partners, to build on the strengths of the county and on the strong partnerships that we have developed to deliver the vision and objectives for Herefordshire. Partnership approach underpins the priorities and objectives set out in the plan and will guide future service design, planning and policy making.
5. The Herefordshire Council Plan, alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy, provides the overarching policy framework within which decisions will be taken and resources allocated by Herefordshire Council over the next 4 years.
6. This plan has been developed and informed through a process of engagement with the public and key stakeholders. Details of the consultees can be found in Consultees section of this report.
7. The purpose of the consultation was to gather feedback on the objectives which encapsulate the plan's priorities for the next four years, including what people felt were missing from the ambitions' objectives. There were 600 people who engaged in the events and 390 responses from the online survey, the top 5 objective statements which participants felt should be responded to most urgently were:
 - I. Ensure people feel safe and respected in their communities.
 - II. Ensure that residents are enabled to live healthy lives within their communities.
 - III. Protect the county's biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards.
 - IV. Tackle inequality by focusing on early intervention and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives.
 - V. Expand the transport and infrastructure network to improve access across the county.

8. A report summarising the findings of the public engagement and consultation can be found at appendix B. Feedback resulting from the engagement process has been included in the shaping and developing of the plan, vision, ambition and priorities.
9. A key consideration in developing the plan are the strategic documents for the council that will enable the plan to be delivered. There are a number of key strategic documents that align to the priorities of the plan and which will support delivery. The plan provides a diagram that articulates these documents set against these priorities. Some of these strategic documents are:
 - I. Big Economic Plan, The Local Plan, Integrated Waste Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Children's Improvement Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Strategy, Carbon Management Plan, Hereford City Masterplan.

Community impact

10. The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028 has taken into account the key characteristics of Herefordshire, as outlined on Understanding Herefordshire (the council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment). Factors such as rurality, the aging population and social mobility for our young people are key drivers at the heart of the vision, priorities and objectives.
11. Within the community ambition, the approach is focussed on strengthening communities with the aim of connecting people to their local communities; this will be developed over the duration of the plan.

Environmental Impact

12. The Herefordshire Council Plan continues the focus and responsibility to deliver the council's [environmental policy commitments](#) and the following success measures have been included within the plan:
 - I. Value nature and uphold environmental standards.
 - II. Minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity.
 - III. Reduce waste, increase reuse and increase recycling.
 - IV. Work towards reducing county and council carbon emissions, aiming for net zero carbon by 2030 and work with partners and communities to make the county more resilient to the effects of climate change.
13. Climate change is the greatest challenge of modern times. Herefordshire Council declared the climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and has been working over the long term to reduce the county's and council's carbon footprint. The plan provides an overview of how we will endeavour to meet our commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030/31 and work collaboratively to support county wide reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.
14. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors

we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

15. The development of this project has sought to minimise any adverse environmental impact and will actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance.

Equality duty

16. 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.
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. Improving equality of opportunity and access, and reducing inequality underpins the plan. Individual elements of activity and delivery with the plan will complete equality impact assessments as a fundamental element to planning, decision making and implementation of the change.

Resource implications

19. The recommendations of this report have no direct financial implications, however the priorities within the plan set the strategic direction for the council. Proposals from the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028 will be delivered within the budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy as agreed at Council in February.

Legal implications

20. There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report. The legal implications of any decisions to be taken by the executive in implementing the Herefordshire Council Plan will be set out within the relevant decision report.

Risk management

21. The Herefordshire Council Plan has integral elements of the council's performance and risk management framework. Risks associated with objectives and projects are entered onto the relevant project, service or directorate risk register and escalated as appropriate. The corporate risk register is a living document and reviewed regularly by Management Board, Cabinet and Audit and Governance Committee.
22. The financial challenge and capacity to deliver the corporate priorities, whilst delivering the necessary savings, remains a significant risk; this will be mitigated by ensuring that there is regular oversight and monitoring as detailed in the performance and risk framework.

Consultees

23. The Herefordshire Council Plan has been developed and informed through engagement with partners, stakeholders and residents across the county. Both in person and online events have been held, along with a survey on the council's website.
24. The purpose of the consultation was to gather feedback on the objectives which encapsulate the plan's priorities for the next four years, including what people felt were missing from the ambitions and objectives.
25. The events commenced in December 2023 and were completed at the end of February 2024 and covered over twenty events throughout the county including targeted events for:
 - I. Young people
 - II. People with disabilities
 - III. Environmental groups
 - IV. Low-income families
26. Events for business representatives, the community sector, ward members, parish/town councils and other key stakeholders were also held. These events were delivered in workshop style to explore the top 5 objectives and identify gaps.
27. Participants were also asked to describe the Herefordshire they would like to see in 2028 in three words. Safe, happy and healthy were the words most commonly used by respondents. These are reflected in the objectives above and the vision for the plan.
28. The development of the plan has been reviewed by Scrutiny Management Board Working Group this will be reviewed by Scutiny Management Board.
29. An all member briefing was held in December 2023 and March 2024, the session in March gave the opportunity to review and feedback on the draft plan.
30. The Herefordshire Council Plan was taken to Cabinet in May 2024 and recommendations considered and incorporated.

Appendices

Appendix A Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028

Appendix B Summary of key findings from formal consultation

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 26/04/2024
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 23/04/2024
Legal	Georgina Coley	Date 25/04/2024
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 26/03/2024
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 25/04/2024
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 27/03/2024
Risk	Lee Washbrook	Date 25/03/2024
Approved by	Paul Walker	Date 16/05/2024

The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028

www.herefordshire.gov.uk



Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028

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- Monitoring the delivery of the plan
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Vision

***Delivering the best for Herefordshire
in everything we do.***

Leader's foreword



This plan sets out how the council will make its contribution to achieving a better and more successful Herefordshire and is the beginning of a much longer ambition that is centred on the drive for improvement.

We are fortunate in Herefordshire to live in such a beautiful county which is defined by its people and places.

We want to deliver the best for Herefordshire in everything we do. We want children to have the best start in life. We will work to increase prosperity for all, protect the environment and provide those services that people need.

We want to develop a council that engages with the communities it serves, and we are committed to working with partner organisations to make people's lives better.

Our priorities are focused on: People, Place, Growth and Transformation.

People - We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and benefit from communities that help people to feel safe and supported.

Place - We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire remains a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.

Growth - We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county. We want to attract inward investment, create more jobs, enable housing development and provide the right infrastructure to keep Herefordshire moving forward.

Transformation - We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.

Herefordshire is a wonderful county. It is blessed with beautiful rural areas and rivers, unique market towns and villages, and a historic cathedral city. It is a great place to live. Our communities are friendly and full of innovation. Life expectancy is higher than the national average. Herefordshire is a hub for farming, business activity and tourism, and we are a county with true entrepreneurial spirit. We have a strong educational offer and this is a great place to raise a family.

We have a focus on working with our partners and are determined to ensure that Herefordshire achieves its ambitions. We will be an organisation that is efficient and able to address the challenges we face.

We must move forward in ways that embrace change. We will work hand in hand with our partners to improve the way we do things. Our residents, businesses, and the voluntary, community and public sectors, all have a vital role to play in Herefordshire's success. I am confident that we can all thrive together.

Councillor Jonathan Lester
Leader Herefordshire Council

Herefordshire Council

Introduction to the council's role

We are responsible for a wide range of services including:

- economic development
- education
- environmental health and animal welfare
- highways
- housing
- leisure and culture
- local tax collection
- passenger transport
- planning
- public health
- social care (adults and children)
- strategic planning
- trading standards
- transport planning
- waste collection and disposal

We are responsible for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the county. The council is the 'corporate parent' to children and young people in its care.

Many of the services we provide are statutory, meaning we must provide the service in line with the policies of central government. Some services are discretionary, meaning we have a degree of choice over the type and level of service to provide.

Structure of Herefordshire Council

We operate a leader and cabinet model of governance. We have 53 councillors who are elected every four years and meet together as a full council to set the policy framework, agree the budget and spending plans, set the Council Tax, elect the leader of the council and make constitutional decisions. It is also a forum for debate on major issues affecting the council and the county.

The leader of the council appoints and chairs the cabinet. Each cabinet member has a specific area of responsibility, called a portfolio.

The portfolio areas are:

- Adults, health and wellbeing
- Children and young people
- Community services and assets
- Corporate strategy and budget
- Economy and growth
- Environment
- Finance and corporate services
- Roads and regulatory services
- Transport and infrastructure

We employ over 1,000 staff who are responsible for delivering the council's policies and for the day-to-day operation of the organisation. We also work in partnership with and commission organisations to deliver our services.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/council/herefordshire-council>

[https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/8993/how_the_council_works#:~:text=As%20a%20unitary%20authority%20Herefordshire,care%20\(adults%20and%20children\)%2C](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/8993/how_the_council_works#:~:text=As%20a%20unitary%20authority%20Herefordshire,care%20(adults%20and%20children)%2C)

Overview of Herefordshire

Herefordshire is big hearted, welcoming and friendly. We have strong and independent communities and idyllic countryside, situated in the South West Midlands and bordering Wales. The county sits between Worcestershire and the Malvern Hills to the east, and Bannau Brycheiniog (the Brecon Beacons) in Wales to the west. Historically Herefordshire has been the gateway to the Marches.

We embrace partnership working. We are a member of the Marches Forward Partnership, which is a cross border collaboration between Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Powys and Shropshire who are collectively working to secure funding to invest in the region.

The quality of Herefordshire's natural environment is recognised through a number of sites being classified as 'National Landscapes' (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Special Areas of Conservation. Such recognition speaks to the heritage, cultural features,

biodiversity and landscape quality of the sites which are considered to be of national and international significance.

The River Wye has been voted the nation's favourite river, and it's easy to see why. The river and tributaries across the county provide vital habitat to a wide array of species.

Hereford is a walled medieval cathedral city surrounded by five distinctive market towns: Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-On-Wye. The county is a popular tourist destination.

Herefordshire is a famously rural county. With a population of 188,700 it has the fourth lowest population density in England and there is a strong sense of pride, community and belonging. It is a great place to live, work and visit.

Source:
<https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/>
<https://www.talkcommunitydirectory.org/talk-community-directory-news/herefordshire-community-wellbeing-survey/>
www.herefordshire.gov.uk



STRENGTHS

Herefordshire has many strengths. We will work with residents, communities, businesses and partners to build on them.

- The county's landscape and natural environment is a huge benefit for our residents. Living and working in such beautiful surroundings supports residents to live healthy lives both emotionally and physically.
- Herefordshire is known to be a great place to live, raise a family and grow older.
- Employment rates are high across the county and a high proportion of people are employed locally.
- The number of businesses in Herefordshire is steadily increasing with a greater number per head of population than the West Midlands.
- Entrepreneurial talent is flourishing with 90% of businesses being small and a higher than average number self-employed than the West Midlands.
- Levels of employment in agriculture and manufacturing are higher than nationally.
- Herefordshire is amongst the safest counties in the UK, and has strong, close communities.
- Overall Herefordshire has low levels of deprivation, although there are pockets of deprived areas.
- Herefordshire has highly effective schools. Most pupils attend a good or better Ofsted rated setting.
- Herefordshire has an excellent higher, vocational and further educational offer, with a range of specialist faculties.
- Life expectancy for both males and females is higher, and mortality rates are lower, than the national average.
- We have a vibrant community and voluntary sector with over 2,300 organisations.
- Herefordshire is a wonderful and growing tourism destination with a strong, renowned cultural and heritage offer.

CHALLENGES

Herefordshire faces a number of challenges. We will work with residents, communities, businesses and partners to address them.

- Housing affordability is an issue. High house prices together with low average earnings make it difficult for people to get on the property ladder.
- Average earnings in the county are significantly below the national and regional averages.
- The rural nature of the county makes it difficult to deliver cost-efficient services.
- Poor transport connectivity impacts on inward investment, travel and economic growth.
- The condition of the road infrastructure across Herefordshire has significantly deteriorated.
- The decline in the condition of both the River Wye and River Lugg has led to a halt to house building in the Lugg catchment.
- Young people leaving the county creates a skills gap in the workforce.
- Flooding across the county causes significant disruption.
- Herefordshire has an ageing population. Providing the right care, to the right people, at the right time and at the right place, is key.
- Health inequalities are felt across the county. Improvements are needed in areas such as dental health, mental wellbeing, diet and inactivity.
- Around 19.2% (c.16,300) of households in Herefordshire were in fuel poverty in 2021: a higher proportion than in England (13.1%) and the West Midlands (18.5%).
- In 2019 32% of homes in Herefordshire were poorly insulated and in need of retrofitting to improve their energy efficiency.
- Unprecedented growth in demand for social care and the challenging national economic environment continue to impact on the council's financial position and resilience.

What you told us

The council's plan has been developed with residents, partners and stakeholders across the county.

We consulted widely to gather feedback on our priorities for the next four years. We held in-person and online events, along with a survey on the council's website.

Nearly 1,000 people took part in the consultation over 20 direct engagement events including voluntary and community groups, parish and town councils, the sixth form college and a wider range of groups.

Top five objectives

The top five objectives that participants felt should be responded to most urgently were:

1. Support people to feel safe and respected in their communities.
2. Ensure that residents can live healthy lives within their communities.
3. Value nature and uphold environmental standards.
4. Tackle inequality and facilitate social mobility by focusing on early intervention and prevention activities that enable people to live independent and fulfilling lives.
5. Expand and maintain the transport infrastructure network in a sustainable way to improve connectivity across the county.

What Herefordshire will look like in 2028

We asked people to describe the Herefordshire they would like to see in 2028 in three words. Safe, happy and healthy were the words most commonly used by respondents.



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People - Helping the most vulnerable is important - help those who need it

Place - Tackling pollution of the River Wye, making the built environment more attractive

Growth - Road infrastructure needs to happen before employment land is developed to enable growth in a sustainable way

Transformation - Departments working better together, for the customer

Our priorities

Our priorities for the next four years are described in this plan.

They are arranged into four interdependent areas - People, Place, Growth and Transformation:

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PEOPLE



We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities that support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.

PLACE



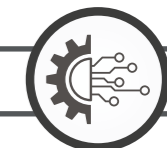
We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.

GROWTH



We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county; attracting inward investment, building business confidence, creating jobs, enabling housing development and provide the right infrastructure.

TRANSFORMATION



We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.

UNDERPINNING THEME - PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Partnership working is central to Herefordshire Council's success and to delivering the best results for our residents. We are stronger together and the council will always work to build strong, effective partnerships to ensure our county is much more than the sum of its parts.

PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

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PEOPLE

We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities who support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.





We want the best for all people in Herefordshire.

We will be focused on how best to respond to their needs and do so in a way that is appropriate and proportionate.

We want to support children and young people to thrive, be safe, and for families to be supported. We believe that children and young people are best supported in their family networks and within highly effective schools and flourishing communities. Our children are the future.

Sometimes children and families need our help. We are committed to improving children's services and providing support to families who need it.

We will work to help residents stay healthy, and encourage them to be economically, physically and culturally active.

The evidence is clear that there is a strong link between income, health and wellbeing. We will tackle inequalities and make the most of opportunities so everyone has the chance to fulfil their potential and live their best life.

We are fortunate to have a range of great voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. There are over 2,300 community organisations reaching over 100,000 residents.

We will work with the voluntary and community sector to help residents stay independent for longer, improve their wellbeing and reduce inequalities.

PEOPLE Objectives

We will:

- Support all children to have the best start in life.
- Support all residents to live healthy lives within their communities.
- Tackle inequality and improve social mobility through timely intervention and prevention activities which allow residents to live independent and fulfilling lives.
- Enable people to support themselves and each other by providing the right help at the right time.
- Work with residents and partners to build connected and resilient communities.
- Support people to feel safe and respected in their communities.



PLACE

We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.





Herefordshire has a rich cultural heritage and boasts a varied environment. Who we are, our sense of place, and our landscape, villages, high streets, town centres and rural areas are all deeply intertwined.

Hereford provides regionally important employment, retail, leisure, healthcare and learning opportunities. We will work with others to create the transport network that the county needs.

We want to provide more homes, reduce congestion and increase employment opportunities. We will work with others to create the transport network that the county needs. This will include active travel, rail connectivity and improved road infrastructure.

Herefordshire has a remarkable and rich range of cultural, arts and heritage activities, buildings, organisations, and natural assets. Our plans for an innovative museum, art gallery and library will put learning and culture at the heart of the county.

Herefordshire Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019. We will endeavour to meet our commitment to reach net zero by 2030/31. Mitigation and adaptation measures will be central to how we become more sustainable. We will work with others to support county-wide reductions in greenhouse gas emissions

and support communities to become more resilient.

We will continue to work with partners to support communities to adapt to climate change, and further investment will be made to improve drainage and infrastructure, including nature based solutions (natural flood management).

The health of our rivers is of great importance. We will continue to do all within our powers to support their recovery and improve river health. We will work with governments, all neighbouring local authorities and the River Wye Nutrient Management Board and other partner organisations to achieve this aim.

Herefordshire Council has pioneered a nature based solution to the housing moratorium which also provides improved water quality to the river.

The council will be working with partners to maximise the potential benefits of biodiversity net gain.

These measures will ensure that we are able to deliver the housing and growth that Herefordshire needs.

PLACE Objectives

We will:

- Develop Herefordshire as a place for growth, prosperity and communities to thrive
- Expand and maintain the transport infrastructure in a sustainable way and improve connectivity across the county.
- Value nature and uphold environmental standards to minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity.
- Reduce waste, increase reuse and increase recycling.
- Work towards reducing county and council carbon emissions, aiming for net zero by 2030/31 and work with partners and communities to make the county more resilient to the effects of climate change.
- Support our local culture and heritage and make Herefordshire a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit.



GROWTH

We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county; attracting inward investment, building business confidence, creating jobs, enabling housing development along with providing the right infrastructure.





Entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Herefordshire. Rates of self-employment are higher than the regional and national averages. The county is home to roughly ten thousand enterprises, of which 90% are micro enterprises. It's encouraging to see independent and Herefordshire-based businesses line our high streets.

To support market towns to be vibrant hubs we will work collaboratively with businesses, local organisations and residents. We are committed to working alongside partner organisations to grow the tourism economy.

We want Herefordshire to be a connected county. This means enabling residents to move around the county as efficiently as possible with the expansion of the transport infrastructure. New infrastructure will facilitate growth through increasing opportunities for housing, inward investment and unlocking employment land.

We will accelerate work to further improve superfast broadband coverage to improve the digital experience for residents and help attract more businesses to the county.

To address the need for affordable housing across the county we will work with housing partners to meet the target of 16,100 homes being built by 2041. We will be building on the growth of the Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ) and Shell Store by continuing to increase the enterprise opportunities and infrastructure across the county, with prospects for an additional 1,000 jobs resulting from the growth plans of HEZ businesses.

Agriculture makes up a much larger proportion of the economy in Herefordshire than nationally. 77% of Herefordshire is farmed. The renowned Hereford cattle and cider industries have a world-wide reputation.

To ensure residents have the skills needed for the workplace, we will work with stakeholders to provide training opportunities. Herefordshire has a strong further education offer across a number of establishments.

GROWTH Objectives

We will:

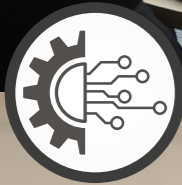
- Develop employment land to unlock new business opportunities and generate local jobs.
- Support market towns and Hereford city to be vibrant hubs through working with residents, local organisations and businesses.
- Support residents to access skills development, training and employment opportunities.
- Work with partners to provide high quality and affordable housing to meet all needs.
- Enhance the rollout of improved broadband across the county towards a fully digital Herefordshire.
- Work with our partners and businesses to facilitate growth across the county.



TRANSFORMATION

We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.





We want to deliver the best possible services for our residents, businesses and communities. To do this we need to have better systems and ways of working.

We will work with those who use our services to improve their experience and increase satisfaction.

We believe partnership working is key to achieving the best results. We will work with our residents and partners so that communities can come together to help themselves and each other. We will provide resources to manage the need for services, while protecting services for those who need them.

We are on a transformation journey to be a sustainable, modern and fit for the future council. We have already started this work and we need to continue delivering with pace, energy and enthusiasm in the coming months and years.

We will invest in our staff who work so hard on behalf of our residents, communities and businesses. We want them to stay with us, have a strong sense of pride in the organisation and build careers in the county.

We will modernise how we interact with our customers and improve our channels of contact to add more value to the customer experience.

We will embrace new technologies, test ideas and develop a culture of innovation to improve services and deliver value for money.

We will provide our staff with the digital tools to enable them to be connected, informed, supported, and engaged in an effective and proactive way which empowers them to conduct business and obtain information when and how they need it.

To support the transformation we will rethink our approach from strategies and delivery models through to data and performance management, to become an intelligence-led organisation.

We want to be a council which thrives, is resilient and excels when meeting the challenges we face.

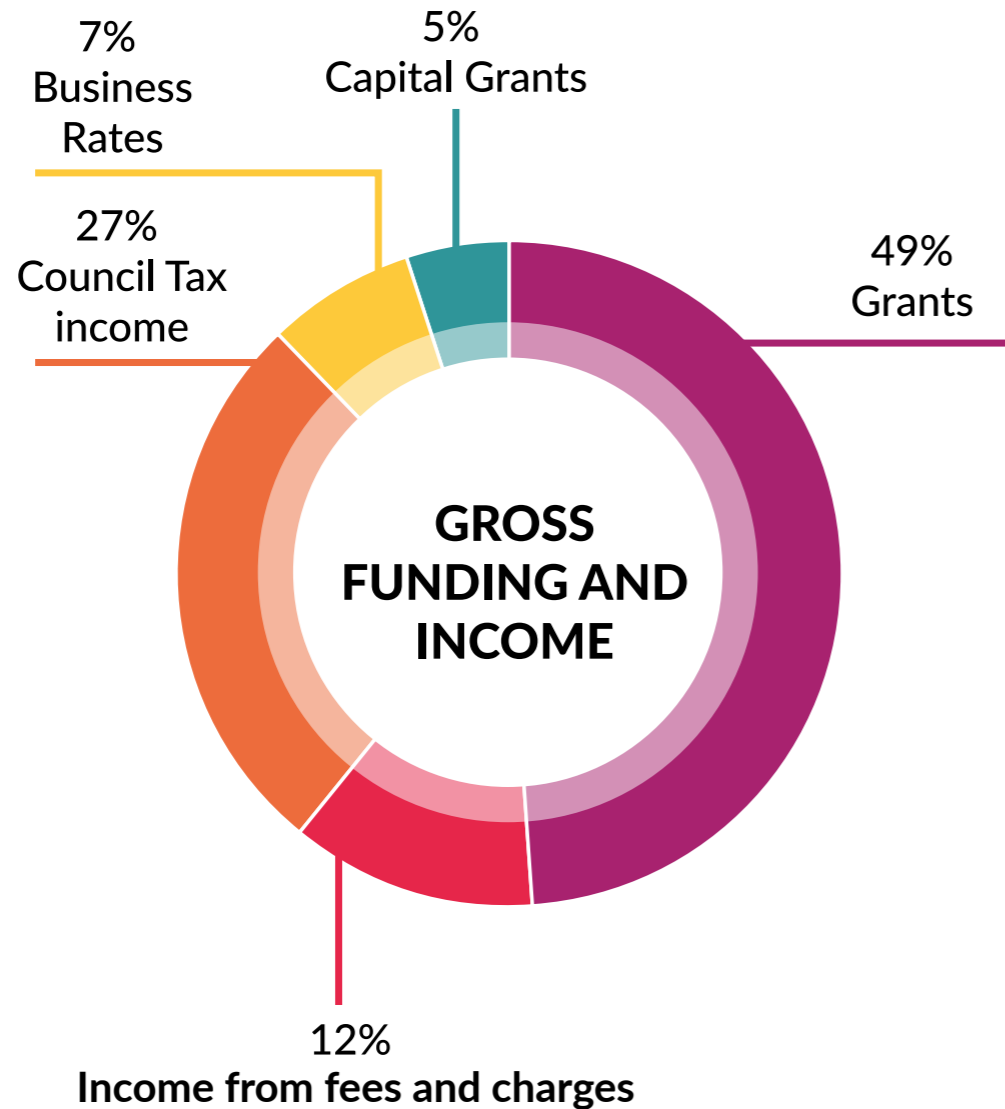
We are looking forward with confidence, ready to do our best for the people and places of Herefordshire.

Transformation

We will:

- Change and transform the organisation to be fit for the future and work efficiently.
- Attract and retain an excellent workforce through effective approaches to recruitment and retention.
- Work collaboratively with our residents, communities and businesses to achieve the best results together.
- Improve the way we use technology across our services.
- Strengthen the council's strategy ensuring alignment and delivering the future vision.
- Build a data and intelligence led culture to inform decisions, improve efficiency and manage demand.

Where our money comes from



The council has an annual budget of £210m and receives funding from five main sources. The chart shows the funding that will be received in 2024/25.

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...and how we spend it



Charges per month (average Band D property)
2024/25 monthly Council Tax receipt

** Local government running costs **	
* IT, Council Tax and Benefits admin, invoices and payments	9,79
* Insurance and property maintenance	3,48
* Election, governance and legal services	3,49
* Organisational administration	3,36
* Capital financing	11,05
** Daily life **	
* Schools and education	128,07
* Waste, Cleansing	12,62
* Public, School and community transport	5,62
* Roads and bridges	4,37
* Environmental Health and public spaces	3,24
* Libraries, records and customer services	1,63
** Looking after Adults **	
* Vulnerable adults	64,63
* Health improvement (Public Health nursing, health checks, smoking cessation)	5,25
* Lifestyles services (substance abuse, sexual health)	1,91
* Housing	1,06
** Looking after children **	
* Children in care	29,8
* Child protection	11
* Children with special needs	6,69
** Economic growth **	
* Economic development and regeneration	1,36
* Broadband - rural rollout	0,12
* Planning	0,14
	308,68

VOUCHER	
** Other income to supplement council tax **	
* Public Health Grant	-7,57
* National education funding (schools)	-127,56
* Other Income	-17,24

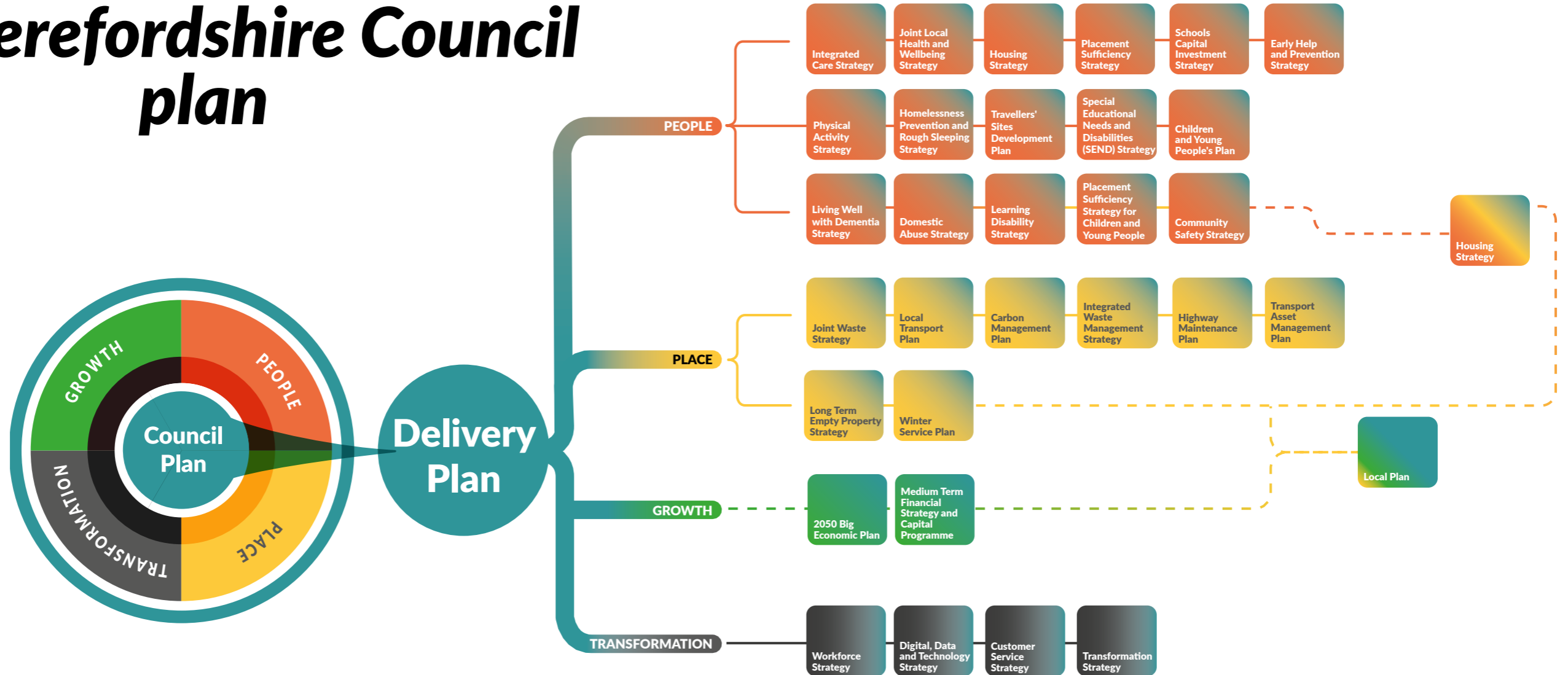
TOTAL TO PAY (per month)	156,31

The plans that will deliver the Herefordshire Council plan

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Due to the cross-cutting nature of the plan there are a number of council strategies and plans that will support in delivering the priorities. The diagram shows these key documents.

Please click on these to find out further information.



Delivering the plan

Progress in delivering this plan across all areas of the council will be monitored through:

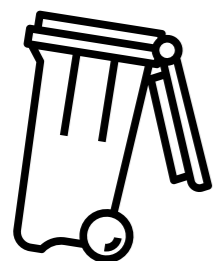
- Quarterly reporting into Cabinet.
- Routine financial monitoring against the approved revenue budget and capital programme, reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.
- Monthly progress reporting to the corporate leadership team.
- Annual Service Plans outlining service area priorities and key areas of focus to achieve the objectives.
- Annual individual performance and development plans.

There will be scrutiny of performance at organisation and service levels as well as from elected members on a regular basis.

What the council achieved in 2020-24

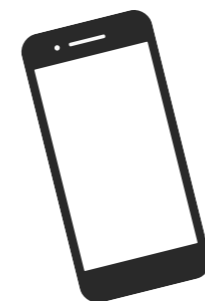
In the previous County Plan (2020-2024) key priorities in the areas of environment, community and economy were outlined. As the new Herefordshire Council Plan (2024-2028) commences we reflect on what has already been achieved so that we can celebrate progress and refocus efforts moving forward.

Environment



- Produced a new Waste Strategy and procured a new waste strategy collection contract.
- 4 repair cafes started with grant funding and 6 operating across the county.
- Vouchers for reusable nappies provided to 350 families potentially reducing nappy waste by 270 tonnes.
- Introduced 100 ebikes and 125 extra pedal bikes as part of the Beryl Bike scheme.
- Free and impartial home energy advice delivered to 1,000 households through the Keep Warm service.
- The council has saved 2,786 Tonnes CO₂ equivalent in the timeframe 2020-2023.
- A Wetlands scheme is now fully operational at Luston with two additional sites securing planning permission. The Wetlands have unlocked 1,000 new and nutrient neutral homes.
- The electric vehicle charging infrastructure has been developed.
- Shift to using 100% renewable electricity across the council estate.

Community



- £109m total investment in the maintenance of Herefordshire's highway network.
- The Children's Help & Advice telephone line (CHAT) launched and is operational.
- The council achieved the Bronze award for the Sustainable Food Place and is now working towards the next standard.
- Almost 2,500 people used telecare to live safely and independently at home.
- 75 Talk Community Hubs opened across Herefordshire with 25,000 visits each year.
- Over 25,000 holiday activity fund (HAF) places booked supporting on average 1,500 children per programme.
- £2m Covid recovery grants provided to support the community to bounce back from Covid.
- The council facilitated £22.4m Stronger Towns funding to deliver 15 trailblazing projects transforming Hereford. Three projects are council led:
 - Hereford museum and art gallery redesign
 - New Hereford library and learning centre development
 - Greening the City



Economy

- Over 59,000 households signed up to the pre-paid card scheme delivered through a covid recovery grant seeing almost £1m spent in the local economy.
- Refurbishment of The Shell Store into a business centre.
- Herefordshire Council's adult and community learning service was awarded a 'good' rating by OfSTED in April 2023 and supported over 400 learners.
- Spirit of Herefordshire microsite created to attract skilled workers to the council.
- More than 95% of Herefordshire now has access to superfast broadband
- The Herefordshire County Business Improvement District secured £153,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to promote tourism in the county in 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- Provided accommodation for 178 students at Station Approach.

How to contact us

Our switchboard phone line is open:
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm
(Closed weekends and bank holidays)
Telephone: 01432 260000

Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane,
Hereford HR4 0LE

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please email: communications@herefordshire.gov.uk

Interim County Plan Consultation

1. Introduction

The County Plan is the key strategic document for the council that provides the current strategic oversight and vision for the county and outlines the Council's ambitions and objectives over the next four years. The plan highlights how those ambitions will be delivered and is used to inform how resources and budgets are prioritised. The plan brings together the Council's objectives across key areas such as the economy, planning, community services, transport, infrastructure, social care and skills. Due to the cross-cutting nature of the County Plan it has strong links and interdependencies with the other key strategic documents that provide direction for specific aspects of the Council's work. These documents include; Big Economic Plan, The Local Plan, Integrated Waste Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Children's Improvement Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Strategy, Carbon Management Plan, Hereford City Masterplan.

Through a series of internal workshops The Cabinet developed a suite of 12 ambition statements that encapsulated the priorities for the next four-year plan. These ambition statements are grouped under three themes:

- **People** - Enable resilient and connected communities to ensure that everyone lives well and has the best start in life
- **Place** - Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live
- **Growth** - Support growth across the county which builds on the county's strengths and resources

The Council were keen to consult with its residents and businesses about the agreed ambitions. It commissioned a series of 23 face-to-face and online consultation events alongside an online survey to encourage broad engagement with the development of the plan. Details of the consultation process are set out in section 3.

A full list of the ambition statements consulted on is provided below.

2. Purpose of the report

This report presents the feedback from the County Plan consultation undertaken with residents, businesses and hard to reach groups. It highlights;

- Areas of consensus and divergence in relation to the ambition statements.
- The relative urgency they attached to each of the ambition statements. Including how the online consultation results compare.
- What consultees felt was missing from the ambitions.

- What consultees thought would have the greatest impact in terms of achieving the ambitions.
- General commentary on the ambitions.
- What residents and businesses would like the County to feel like by the end of the plan's lifespan.
- Reflections on the engagement process.

3. Methodology

To inform the development of the plan, consultation was undertaken with a wide range of businesses and targeted groups within the community, including those considered hard to reach. The purpose of these events was to gather feedback that would help refine and shape the plan.

Consultation started on Friday 8th December 2023 and finished on 21st February 2024. The online survey closed on 18th February. During this period 23 consultation events were undertaken engaging 597 people. 390 responses to the online survey were received resulting in a total engagement figure of 987 people. A full list of all the consultation events is contained as Appendix A.

Through the consultation process the following groups were engaged:

- Low-income families
- Young people (14 – 18)
- Environmental groups
- Parish & Town Councils
- Community & voluntary groups
- Older people
- Businesses
- People with disabilities¹

4. Format of the consultation session

The online and face to face sessions followed a similar pattern and used the same questions. The primary difference was that face-to-face sessions did not have an introduction from a Council representative and discussions were undertaken on a one-to-one basis rather than as a group.

The online session started with an introduction from a Council representative about the County Plan, its purpose and how it links to other Council strategies. Then a series of polls were used to gather votes on when people felt the ambitions should be addressed Now (first 12 months of the plan), Soon (Years 2-3) or Later (Year 4 - final year). Each theme was taken in turn and discussed. Consultees were asked when casting their votes to considering the ambition statements as a set of 14 rather than just within the themes of People, Place and Growth and to think about the interdependencies of the statements.

After the results of the polls for each theme were shared and discussed consultees were asked two additional questions,

¹ This was done via the Making It Real Board

- Is there anything missing that you were expecting to see?
- What do you think would have the biggest impact in achieving this theme?

Prior to closing the session people were asked what three words they would use to describe what they would want Herefordshire to feel like as a resident / business by the end of the plan in 2028.

Adaptations to the workshop format were made based on the time available, the size and nature of the group. The ‘We will...’ statements were produced in an easy read format, large print and a plain English format.

5. We will.... statements

The following table contains the ‘We will’ statements that were the focus of the consultation.

People - Encourage and enable all residents, especially children, young people and families to thrive.
Ensure that residents are enabled to live healthy lives within their communities.
Tackle inequality by focusing on early intervention and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives.
Enable people to support themselves and each other by providing the right support at the right time.
Work closely with partners and communities to build connected and resilient communities.
Ensure people feel safe and respected in their communities.
Place - Protect our environment through innovation and best practice and promote initiatives that address the environmental challenges we face.
Increase recycling rates more and make improvements to the local environment.
Protect the county's biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards.
Champion agricultural practices which minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity.
Support our local culture and heritage and make Herefordshire a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit.
Growth - Invest in the economy and support economic growth.
Expand the transport and infrastructure network to improve access across the county.

Develop employment land to unlock new business opportunities for the county and generate local jobs.
Support market towns to be vibrant hubs through working with residents, grassroots organisations and businesses.
Support residents to access skills development and training opportunities.
Work with partners to provide high quality housing to meet all needs.

6. Key messages about the ‘We will’ statements

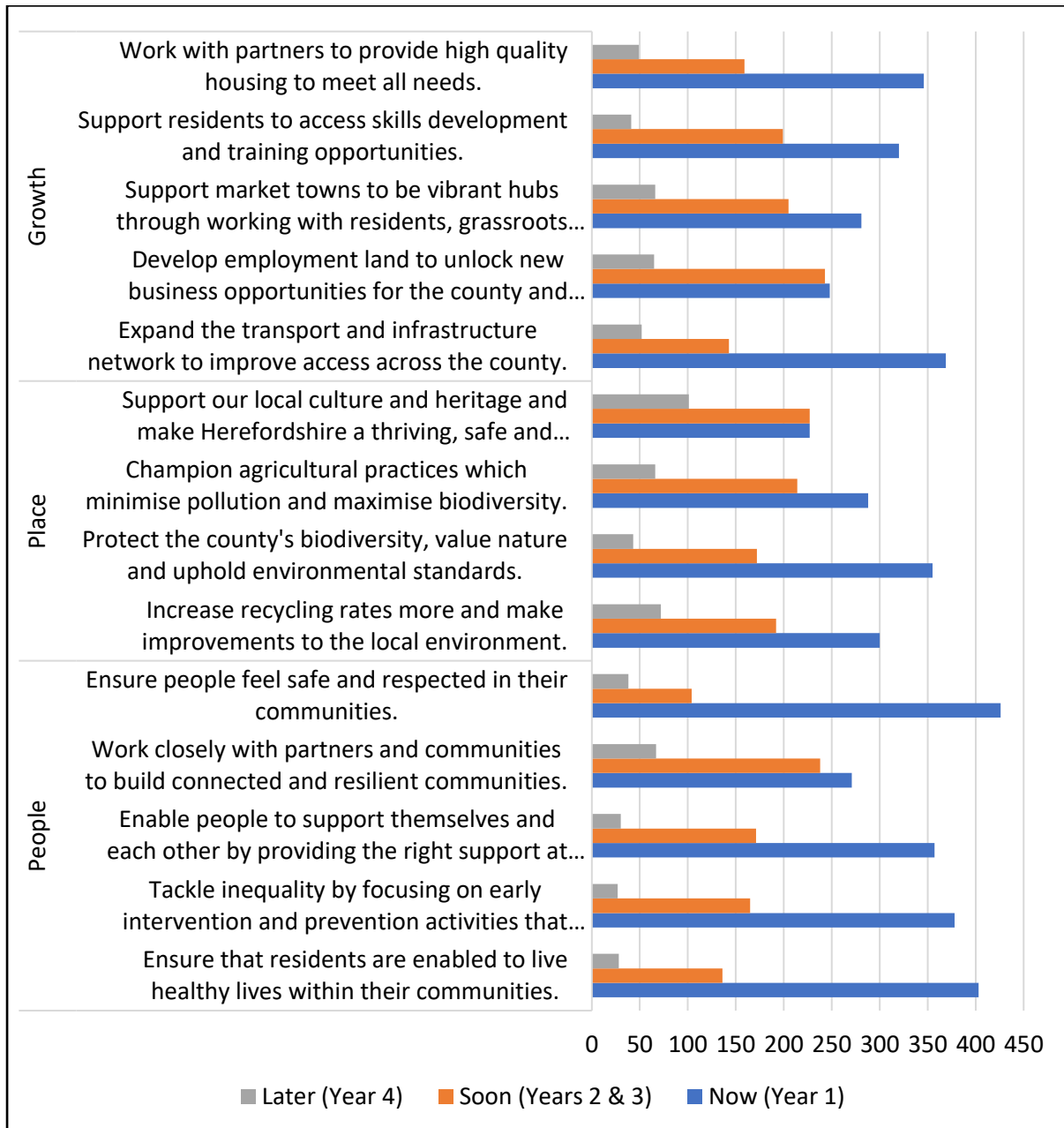
The following key messages are those that were raised consistently throughout the consultation process in relation to the ambition statements.

- There was broad agreement that all the ambitions have merit with many people saying that it is difficult to disagree that they are all important given their fundamental nature.
- There was a strong view that these ambition statements were too generic and broad and that they did not feel specific enough to Herefordshire.
- Many people said that they would like to have been consulted earlier in the development of the statements to enable them to shape and influence them.
- Many people felt the statements were not aspirational enough and that the Council should be striving higher, identifying what it is good at and is doing already and building on this.
- It was felt that there needed to be a much stronger focus on the rurality² of the county throughout the statements.
- There was a feeling amongst many consultees that the language used in many of the statements was not positive enough.
- There is a strong appetite for understanding how the statements will be delivered - e.g. consultation on the deliverables.
- The plan needs to make it clear how these ambitions will be realised given the financial constraints the Council is currently facing.
- People want re-assurance and further clarification about how the County Plan fits with existing strategies and plans that are already in place.
- There is recognition that many of the statements cannot be achieved within the 4-year period but are longer term ambitions for the County.
- Some people felt the period of the plan should be 10 years to have a chance of achieving the ambitions.
- There was a common view that the plan should the plan focus only on the areas that the Council can control / influence and that the Council needs to be clear about its role in some of these ambitions.
- The plan needs to make it clear that some of these ‘ambitions’ are already underway. Statements need to reflect this by using words such as continue, build on and enhance.
- Some of the ambition statements are a mixture of ‘what’ and ‘how’ which is confusing.

² As part of the consultation comments were received from the NFU these are attached as Appendix C.

7. Poll results – All themes

Chart of All responses (987 from face-to-face interactions and online survey) in order of timescale (Now – Year 1)



Top 5 ambition statements

The top 5 ambition statements which received the highest number of Now votes were;

1. Ensure people feel safe and respected in their communities.

2. Ensure that residents are enabled to live healthy lives within their communities.
3. Protect the county's biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards.
4. Tackle inequality by focusing on early intervention and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives.
5. Expand the transport and infrastructure network to improve access across the county.

Bottom 5 ambition statements

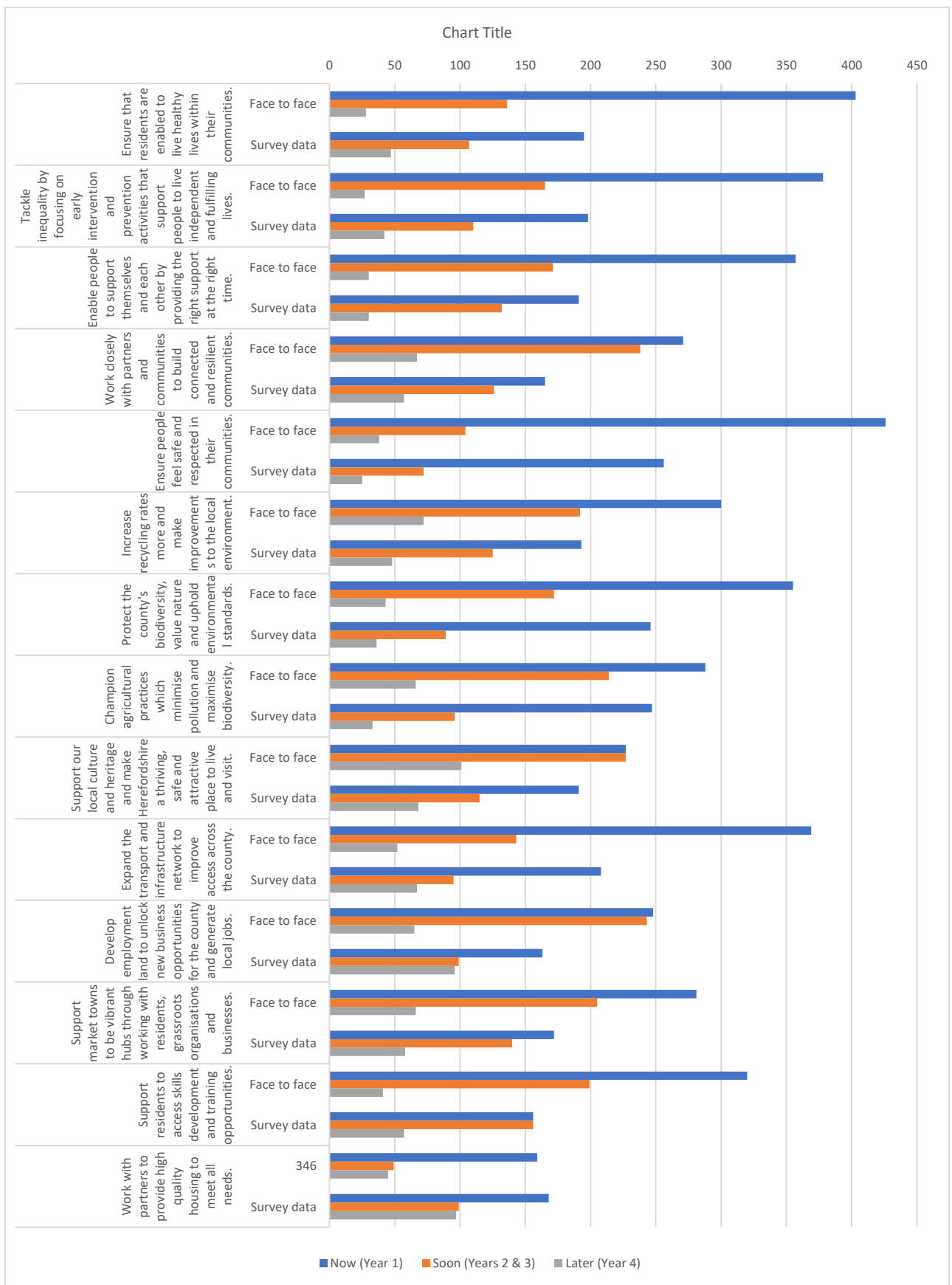
The bottom 5 ambition statements which received the lowest number of Now votes were;

1. Support residents to access skills development and training opportunities.
2. Support market towns to be vibrant hubs through working with residents, grassroots organisations and businesses.
3. Work closely with partners and communities to build connected and resilient communities.
4. Support our local culture and heritage and make Herefordshire a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit.
5. Develop employment land to unlock new business opportunities for the county and generate local jobs.

Other points to note:

- Three of the top 5 and the two most significant priorities are under the People theme.
- All the ambitions received more Now votes than Soon or Later although the comparative degree that they were prioritised varies across the ambitions.
- The ambitions where there appears to be greatest divergence of opinion are support our local culture and heritage and make Herefordshire a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit and develop employment land to unlock new business opportunities for the county and generate local jobs.

6. Comparison with online results



Overall the results of the face-to-face consultation mirrored the results of the online survey with the following notable exceptions.

- Stronger support for culture and heritage being done now in the online survey compared to face-to-face.

- Stronger support for employment land being done now in the online survey compared to face-to-face which had equal amounts of now and soon.
- Stronger support for access to skills and training being done now from the face-to-face groups compared to equal votes for now and soon from the online survey, however this may reflect that the online survey users are obviously skilled enough to complete online surveys.
- Stronger support for championing agricultural practices being done now from the online survey compared to face-to-face groups.
- Being safe and respected received the most votes for being done now from both the online survey and face-to-face groups.

7. Feedback by Theme

People - Key messages

- People raised why children, young people and families were specified in the People objective statement many people felt this should be 'all residents'.
- The ambitions under the People theme were often referred to being 'givens' or 'essentials' rather than ambitions, particularly ambitions 1 and 5.
- People felt these statements were the vaguest and raised concerns about how success in achieving these ambitions would be measured.

People – What's missing?

- Many people were surprised that there was not a stronger focus on vulnerable people.
- Some people felt there should be a stronger focus on young people given that they are the future of the county.
- People frequently highlighted the current state of Children's Services in relation to this theme and the need to acknowledge the improvements needed.

Place - Key messages

- The emphasis should be to improve and enhance what we already have – it was felt this would make this aspect of the plan feel more achievable within the timescales.
- Some people were confused by the use of the word 'rates' in the recycling statement and misinterpreted this as 'charges'.
- Reference to increasing recycling rates was seen to be an anomaly amongst the statements as it is the only specific action included in the statements.
- People wanted to see the environmental and biodiversity statements strengthened replacing the word 'protect' with 'enhance'.
- The most polarised comments received were in relation to the culture and heritage ambition. Whilst many people felt there needed to be a much stronger focus on supporting and encouraging tourism to boost the local economy in the ambitions statements others felt that when considered alongside the other ambitions it was not considered to be such a priority.
- There were mixed views about the statement around championing agricultural practices. Whilst many people felt this was important there was concern over how much influence Herefordshire Council could have over this.

Place – What’s missing?

- Strong feelings that specific reference needs to be made about addressing the pollution of the River Wye.
- Stronger emphasis needs to be placed on the link between culture and heritage and making Hereford a visitor destination of choice.
- A stronger focus on the natural beauty of the county and how this makes Herefordshire an attractive place to live.

Growth - Key messages

- Many people saw the growth ambitions as key enablers to many of the other of ambitions.
- The need to strengthen the theme of sustainability and resilience has been consistently mentioned.
- The need to reference addressing the congestion issues in Hereford town centre e.g. improvement of public transport infrastructure, by-pass (these issues were particularly, but not exclusively, mentioned by businesses).
- Potholes, and the poor condition of Herefordshire’s roads were universally raised across all groups.
- The need to improve the infrastructure before building more housing.
- The Zipper bus was mentioned by numerous people as a good example of more connected public transport however it was felt that the route was limited and would benefit from extension.

Growth – What’s missing?

- The importance of digital connectivity has been frequently mentioned as something that needs to be specifically referenced within the infrastructure ambition.
- Specific reference should be made to increasing wage levels – this was felt to be key to addressing inequalities that exist within the county and predicated some of the other ambitions.
- The need to specifically reference affordable housing and focus on housing needs as opposed to demand.
- Specific reference to investment in the counties roads was seen as an omission.

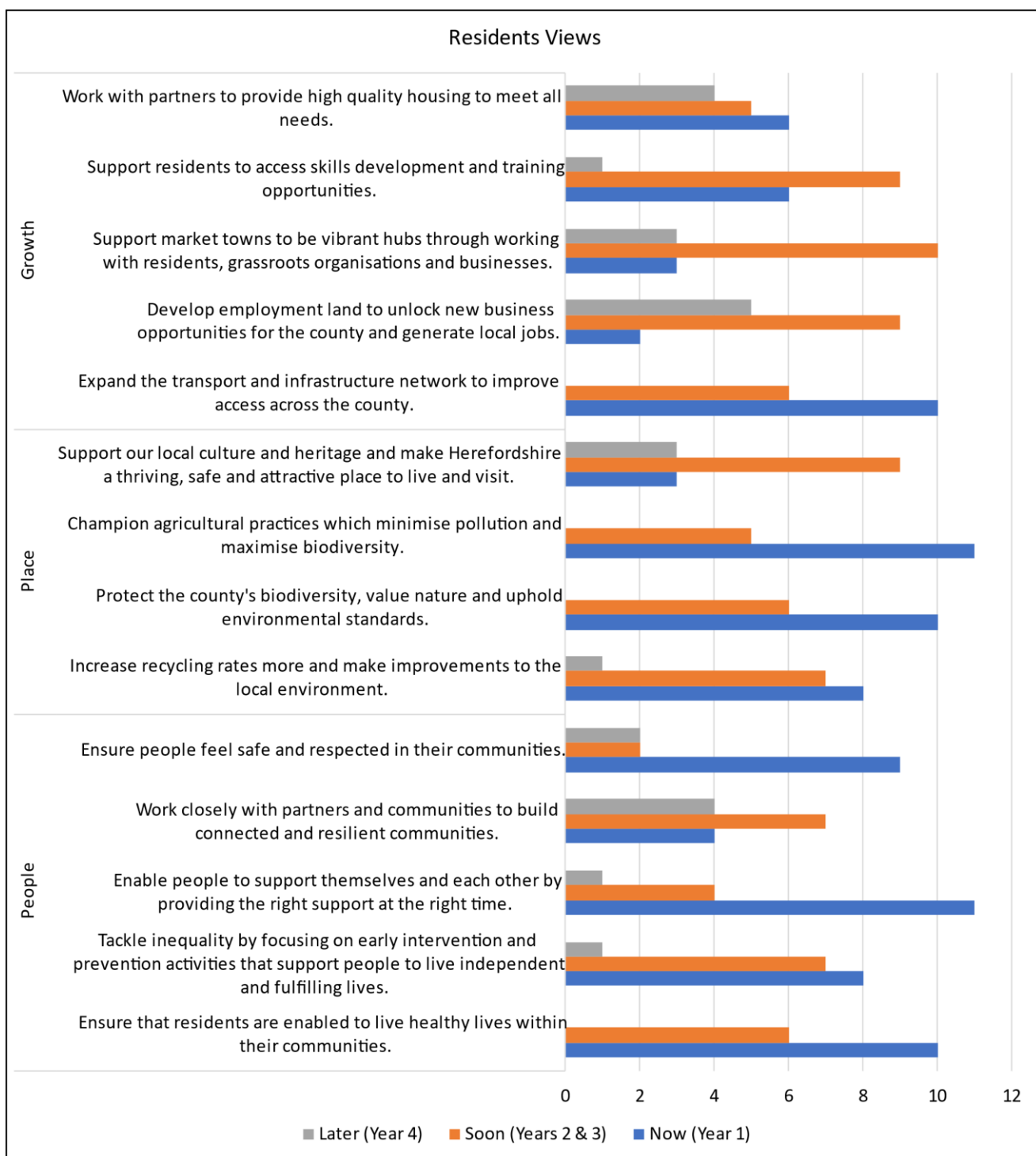
8. What will have the greatest impact in achieving the ambitions?

- Organisations working better together and taking a more joined up approach – there is a perception that many of these ambitions cannot be achieved with the Council working in isolation.
- Investment in the infrastructure i.e. roads, housing, schools, community buildings.
- Building trust between residents, businesses and the Council – more regular engagement, communication and open dialogue with residents.

- Managing expectations about what the Council can achieve given its financial constraints and the limited discretionary funds it has.
- Clarity on the Council's role in achieving these ambitions – is it a provider, a facilitator or an enabler?
- Strengthening the statements and making them more specific.
- Focusing on less but doing it well.
- Making sure success can be clearly measured and evidenced to be able to demonstrate the impact.

9. Overview of key messages from each group.

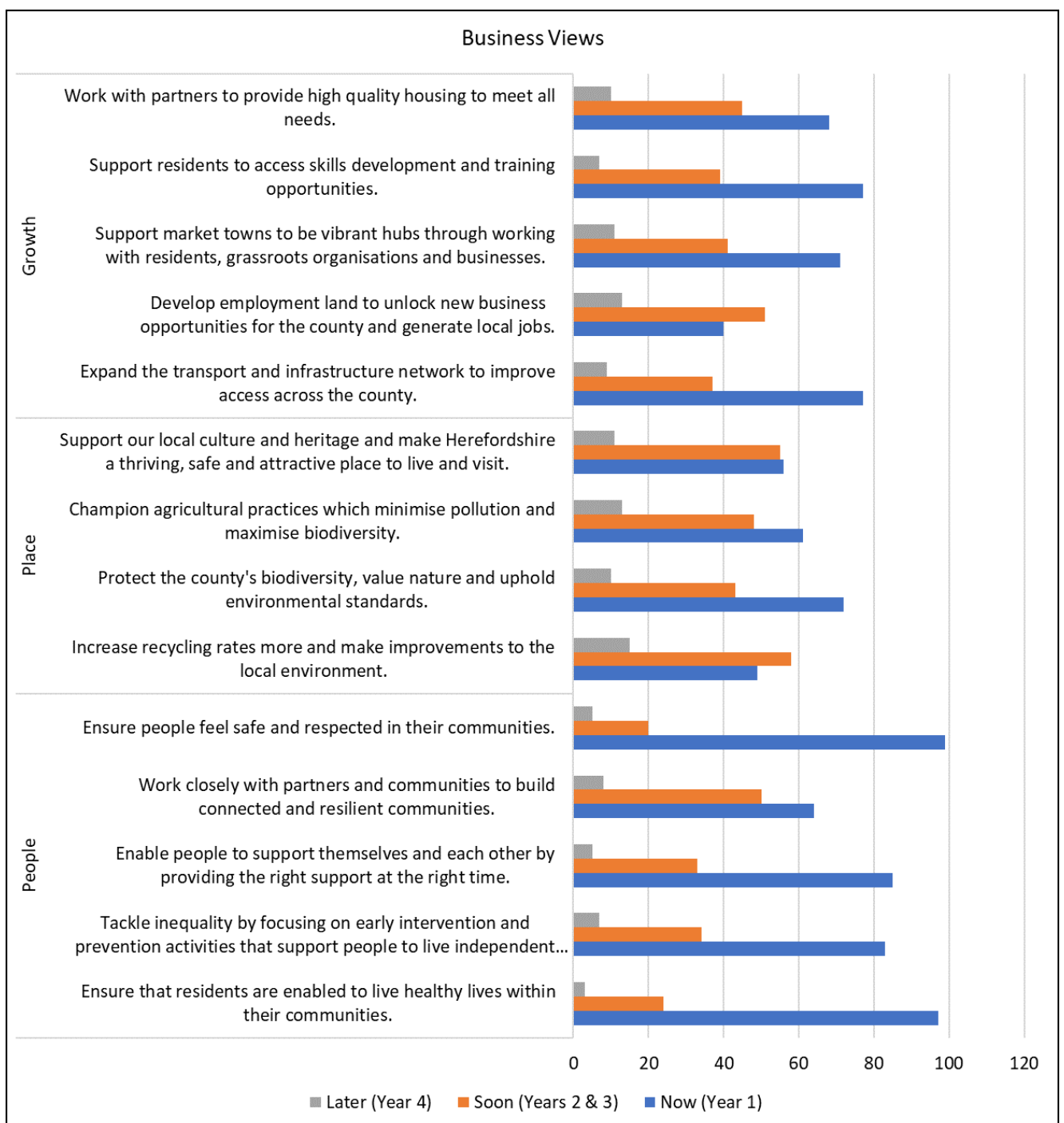
General residents (35)



Noticeable differences in the poll results:

- A more significant focus on championing agricultural practices and people supporting themselves with the right help at the right time.
- Less prioritisation on the growth theme statements apart from the one relating to transport. A stronger leaning towards Soon and Later for the statements relating to employment land, market towns, skills and housing.
- Less support for building resilient communities and culture and heritage statements.

Businesses (127)



Noticeable differences in the poll results:

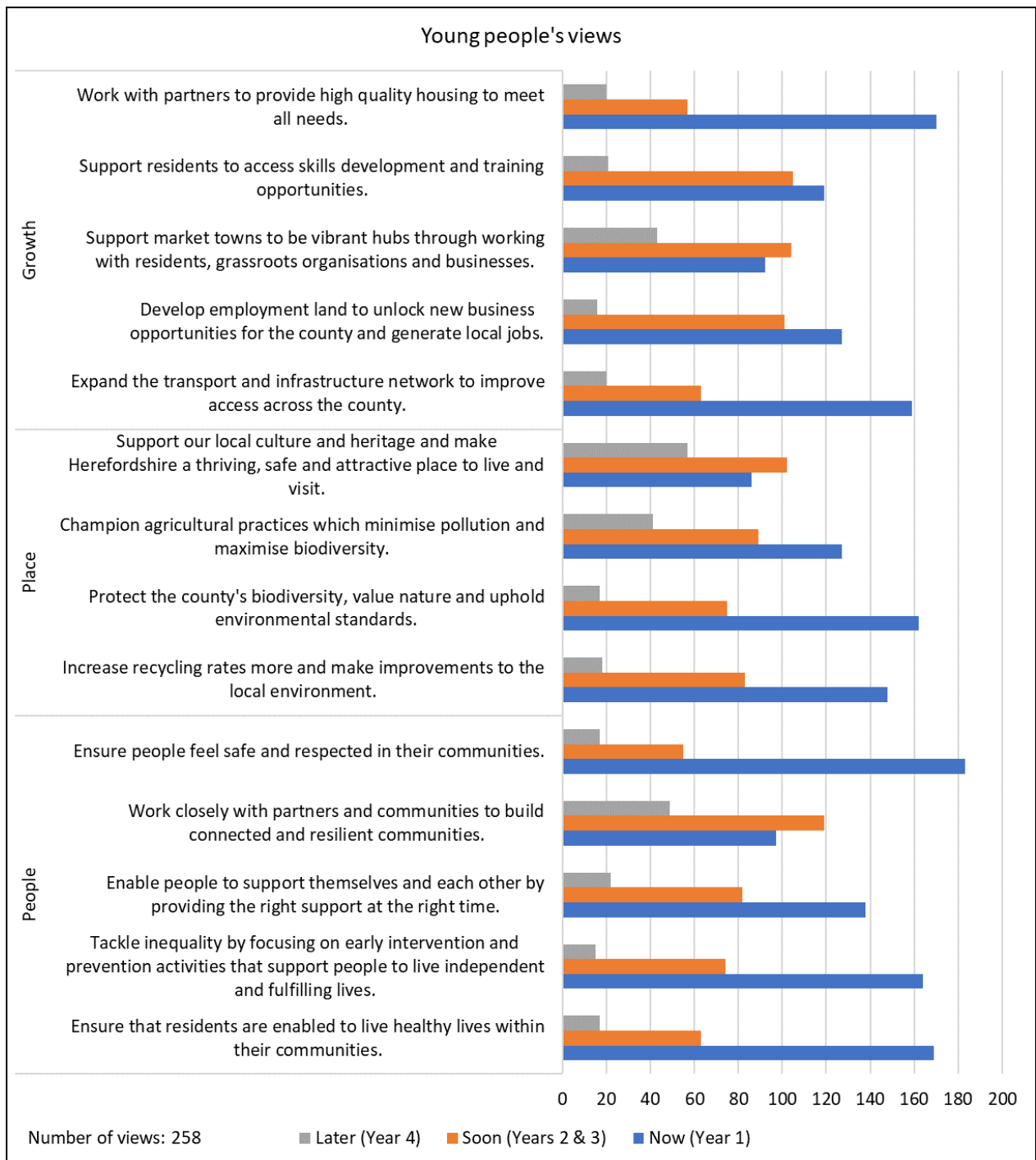
- The most important statements for businesses were residents living healthy lives and people feeling safe and respected.
- Both the developing employment land and increasing recycling rates statements received more votes for Soon than Now.

Businesses were more likely to raise the following points:

- A stronger emphasis on the need to improve the transport infrastructure and address traffic and congestion issues within the city.
- Potholes, and the poor condition of Herefordshire's roads were specifically mentioned in relation to improving transport infrastructure.
- To position the Growth ambitions as key enablers for the other ambitions.
- The need to make specific reference to increasing wage levels.

- Car parking charges were seen as a deterrent to building vibrant city and towns.
- Reference to culture and heritage was specifically linked to the need to invest in the tourism industry.

Young People (258)



Noticeable differences in the poll results:

- Young people were more likely to prioritise transport such as buses, feeling safe, housing, environment and healthy lives.
- The areas that young people saw as less of an urgent priority, were working closely with partners to build resilient communities, supporting local culture

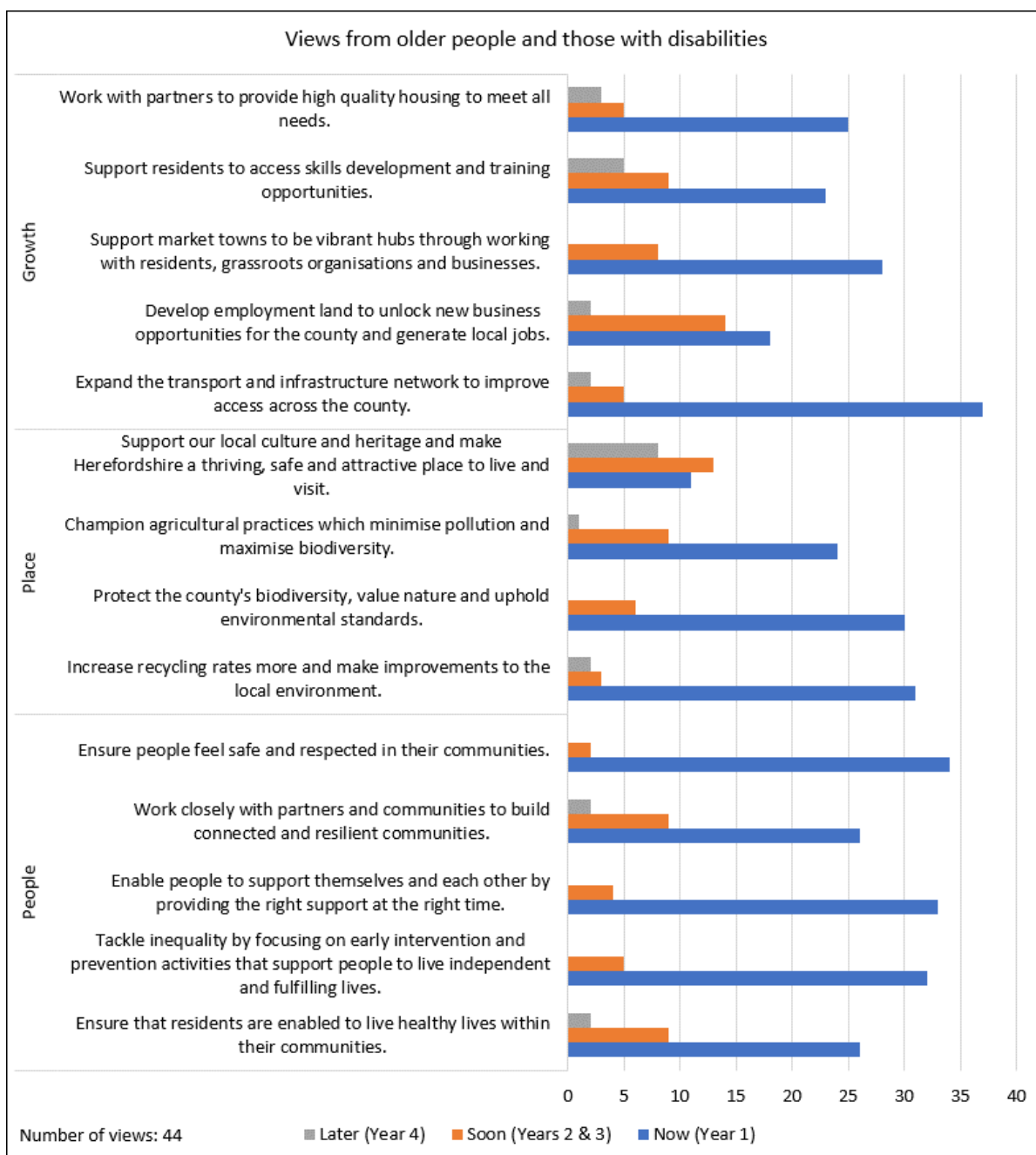
and heritage (things to do and see in Herefordshire) and supporting market towns.

Young people³ were more likely to raise the following points:

- Access to public transport specifically timetabling of buses/trains to ensure they can get to college, work etc and the need for lighting at rural bus stops.
- The importance of feeling safe.
- Access to recreational areas and the cycling infrastructure
- Access to information about what support is available and where to find help.
- Pollution in the River Wye.
- The need to address the traffic congestion in Hereford City.

Older people and those with disabilities (44)

³ This is based on discussions held with Sixth Form College students that were involved in a group discussion.



Noticeable differences in the poll results:

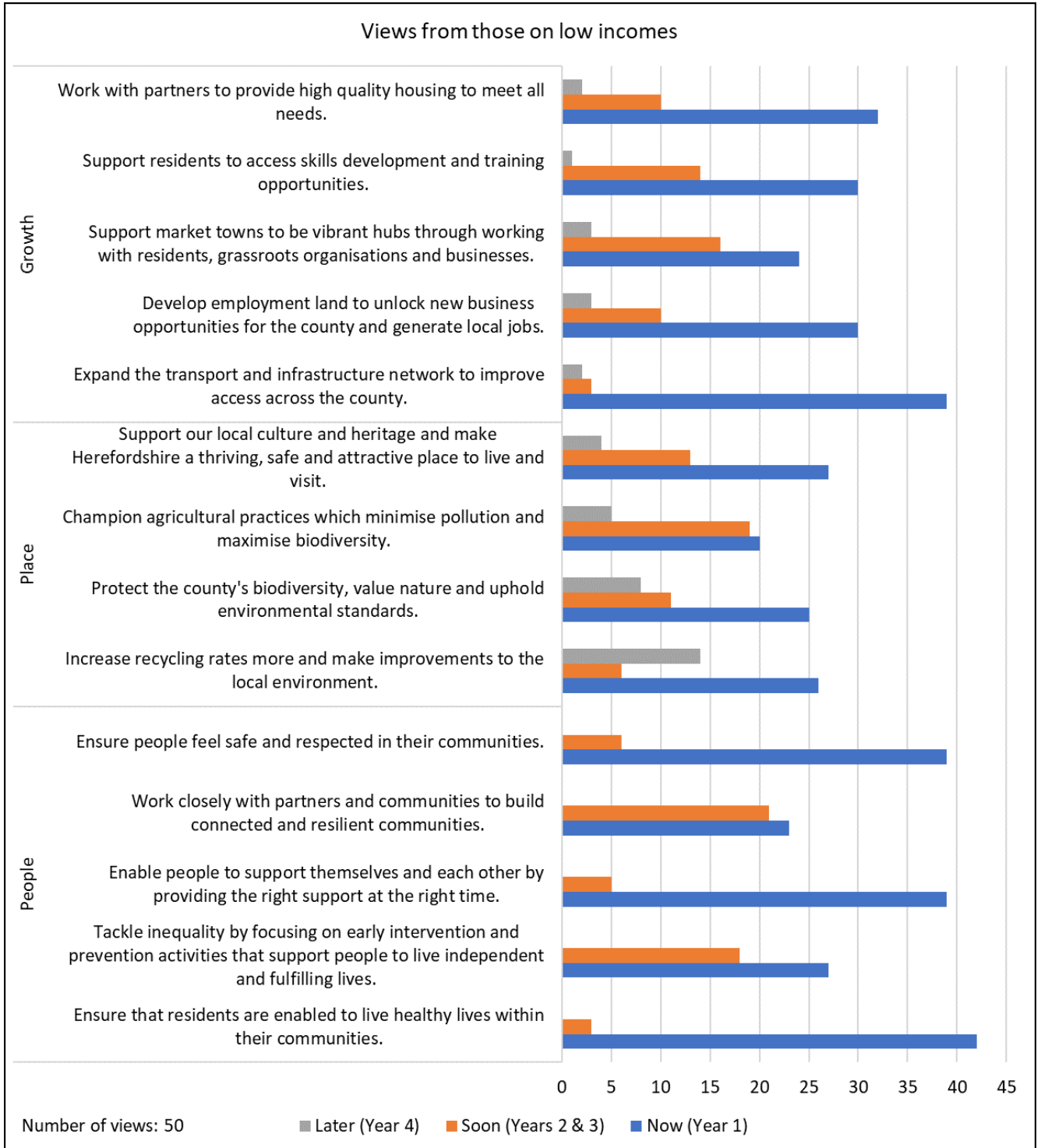
- Older people and those with disabilities were more likely to prioritise transport such as buses, support for market towns, recycling and environmental improvements, and building connected communities.
- The areas that older people and those with disabilities saw as less of an urgent priority, were living healthy lives, supporting local culture and heritage (things to do and see in Herefordshire) and providing high quality housing.

Older people and those with disabilities were more likely to raise the following points:

- Nothing was highlighted to happen later as they were more likely to feel they may not be here to benefit from these changes. (Specific to older people)
- The need for a stronger emphasis on supporting the most vulnerable, those who most need help, e.g. those on very low incomes, refugees etc.

- The need to revitalise the market towns within the county (specifically Bromyard).
- The need to improve the transport network generally with specific reference to transport around Hereford City e.g. the lack of links between the city centre and the out-of-town retail parks, the lack of public transport in the North of the county and the importance of free car parking.

Low Incomes (50)



Noticeable differences in the poll results:

- None of the statements within the People theme received any votes for later, highlighting the important nature of this theme amongst this group.

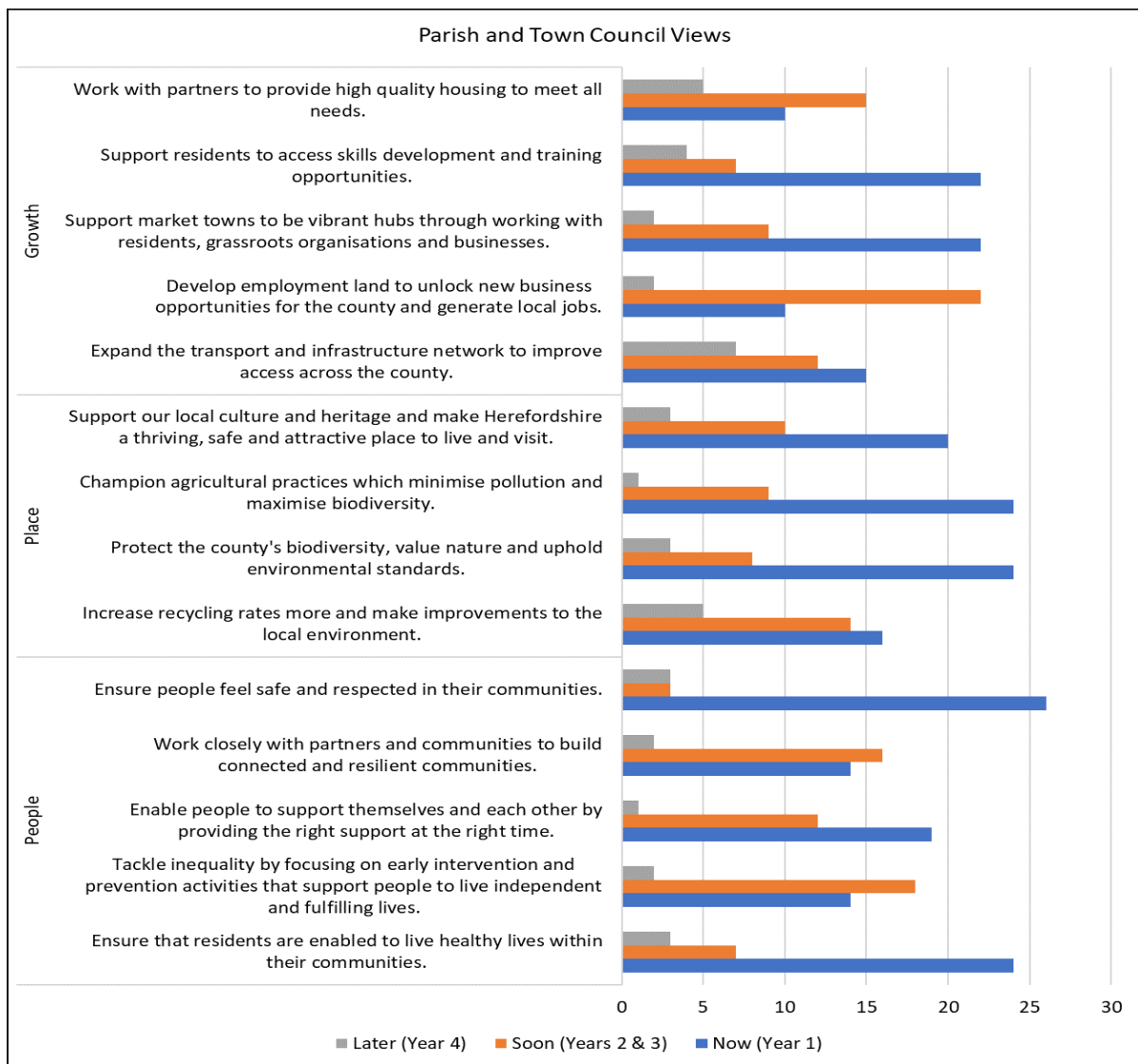
- There was a large amount of support for ensuring residents are healthy, providing the right support at the right time, ensuring people feel safe and respected and improving the transport and infrastructure in the county. These statements were all seen as fundamental.
- The areas where there was less support were around working closely with partners and communities to build connected and resilient communities and champion agricultural practices which minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity.

People on low incomes were more likely to raise the following points:

- The need to take a bottom-up approach with priorities and solutions being driven by communities.
- Traffic congestion and the bypass, specifically the need to reduce air pollution in the city and make it easier to get through Hereford⁴.
- The decline of retail within Hereford and that many people are traveling out of the county to shop which means that money is going out of the county.
- Improve access to fresh healthy food and the need to support community growing initiatives.
- There needs to be a stronger more explicit emphasis on supporting vulnerable people throughout the plan, particularly those with learning disabilities, younger and older people.

Parish and Town Councils (35)

⁴ Both events were attended primarily from those living in South Wye.



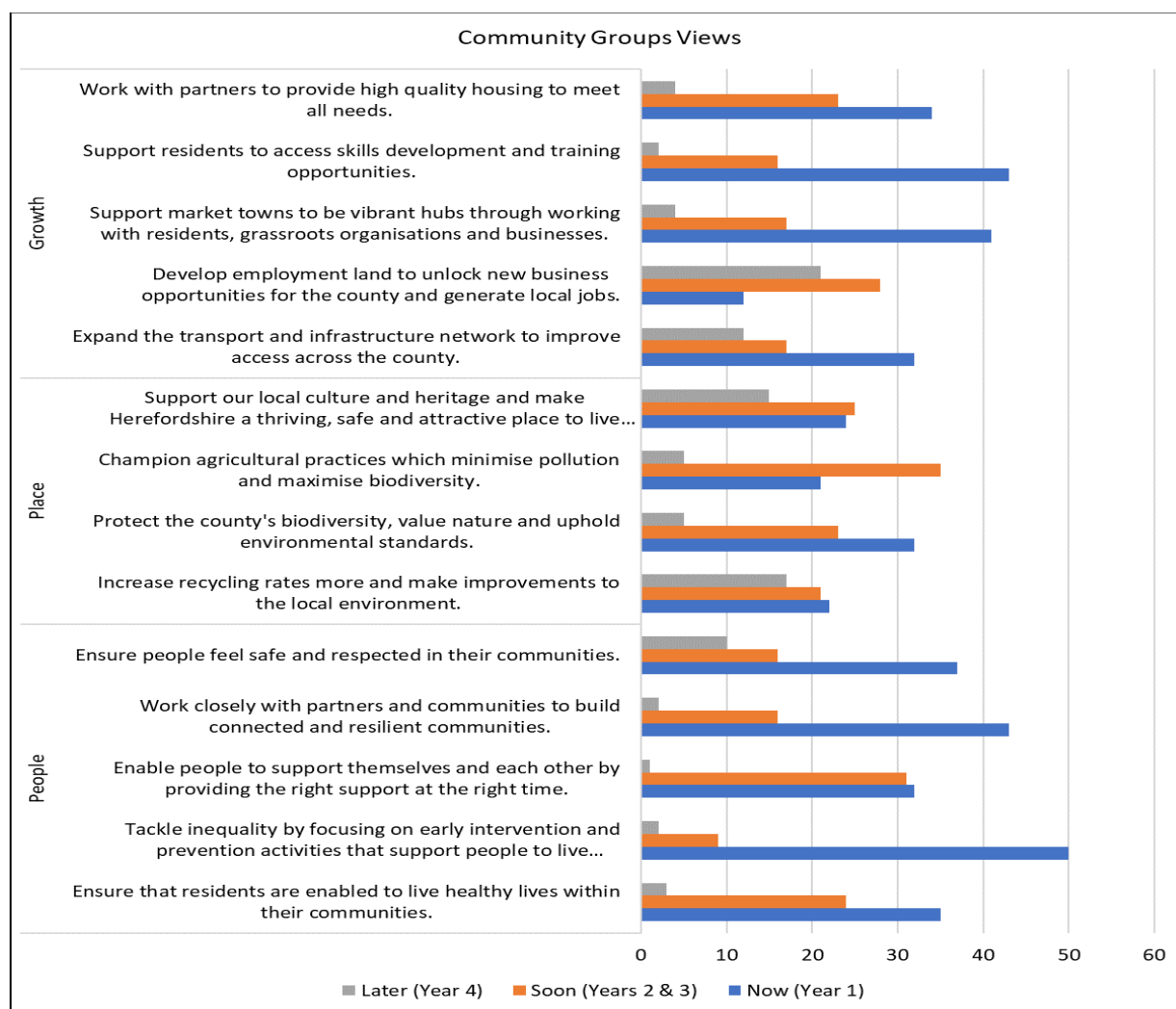
Noticeable differences in the poll results:

- Parish Council's put less focus on employment land, housing, early intervention and resilient communities.
- Feeling safe was a clear priority for this group.

P&TCs were more likely to raise the following points:

- The need for better communication with Herefordshire Council including sharing best practice and looking at what other authorities are doing well.
- The need to have a stronger emphasis on education.
- The need for a more specific statement about supporting the most vulnerable e.g. supporting elderly people to be independent or improving access to mental health support for young people.
- Environmental priorities were felt to be very important.
- Queries over what 'high quality housing' meant and whether there should be a stronger emphasis on affordable sustainable homes.
- Concern around how much of the plan could be achieved within the 4-year period.
- The need to make it clearer that much of what is included in the plan is underway in one form or another.
- The need to specifically reference access to broadband within the statements.

Community Partnership and community groups



Noticeable differences in the poll results:

- They were not as focused on championing agricultural practices and developing employment land.
- They had mixed views about supporting culture and heritage and increasing recycling and making improvements to the local environment.
- They strongly supported immediate action on tackling inequalities through early interventions and building resilient communities.

At the Community Partnership session each table was asked to feedback 3 key messages from their discussions. Below is a summary of those key messages.

- Ambitions are too broad and simplistic.
- There is currently no reference to system change or education.
- The ambitions do not recognise the existing skills and strengths within the county.
- To be achieved the plan needs coordination and joined up thinking.
- Manage expectations not going to be able to achieve all these things in period of the plan.
- Preparation of the younger generation

- Housing ambition should reference affordable housing and needs to be supported by adequate and appropriate infrastructure.
- Stronger focus on employment & skills development
- Greater transparency and openness from the Council
- Requires grassroots engagement
- Needs longer term planning (10 years not 4) and on-going engagement.
- Plans are being recycled needs a new approach and greater innovation
- Stronger emphasis on investment in prevention.
- Requires better partnership working and leadership.
- Statements need connecting not being considered in isolation.
- Need more consistent messaging
- Draw more on lived experience
- Aspirations are vague
- Infrastructure needs to be a priority for everything else to happen.

10. What 3 words...?

At every consultation event people were asked ‘What 3 words would you use to describe what is should feel like to be resident / business in Herefordshire in 2028?’

In terms of the 3 words people would use to describe how is should feel to be a resident in Herefordshire in 2028, **‘Safe’** has been consistently raised by all groups. **‘Healthy’** was the next most commonly used word. These top 2 words mirror the top 2 ambition statements reemphasising the importance that people place on living in a place that feels secure and where they can live healthy lives. **‘Happy’** was the next most used word. This reflects many of the conversations had during the consultation about the need to prioritise activities and services that promote good mental health and wellbeing.

‘Access’ was a popular choice of word this highlights the issues of the lack of physical access that many people raised during the consultation due to the challenges of moving around the county either due to the lack of public transport or congestion in the city. Words such as **‘Connected’**, **‘Communal’** and **‘Valued’** were also commonly chosen reflecting people’s desire to live in a place that values individuals and community, in its broadest sense, and where people feel a sense of belonging. **‘Thriving’**, **‘Hope’** and **‘Lucky’** were also common choices, evidence that people want to live somewhere that feels full of life and opportunity, has a strong mixed economy and where there is a sense of optimism about the future. Given the strong emphasis throughout the consultation and the value that people place on the natural beauty and rurality of the county it is unsurprising to see the words **‘Green’** and **‘Rural’** prominently used.

2. To consider how the Council may engage people in shaping the deliverables in the County Plan if there is scope for them to influence this.
3. To consider how the plan can reflect that these ambitions are long term and are not realisable within the current 4-year period of the plan.
4. To consider extending the timeframe of the plan so it becomes a much longer term (10 year) plan.
5. To put a much stronger emphasis on partnership working and a more joined up approach throughout the plan.
6. To make it clear how these ambitions will be realised given the financial constraints the Council is currently facing.

Appendix B - Simplified wording used at Skills Show and Big Eat.

People - Encourage and enable all residents, especially children, young people and families to thrive.
People living in Herefordshire can live a healthy life.
Supporting people as soon as they need help, so they have equal opportunities and can be independent and happy.
Help people to support themselves and each other by giving them support when it is needed.
Everyone working together to make people feel part of their community.
Make people feel safe and respected in their communities.
Place - Protect our environment through innovation and best practice and promote initiatives that address the environmental challenges we face.
Encourage people to recycle and improve the local environment.
Look after nature and make sure we are not harming the environment.
Support and learn from farmers that are improving our environment and nature.
Make sure there are interesting things to see and do for people living in and visiting Herefordshire.
Growth - Invest in the economy and support economic growth.
Improve public transport and roads to make it easier to get around the county.
Create more jobs for people in Herefordshire.
Help market towns to become thriving and lively places where people want to live, work and visit.
Make getting skills and training easier for people.
Work together to provide a good home for everyone that needs it.

Appendix C – Comments received from the National Farmers Union (NFU)

The following comments were received from the Herefordshire County Adviser on behalf of the NFU.

- Herefordshire Council are supportive of farming projects which deliver technological and/or environmental improvements to our thriving sector in Herefordshire, helping farm businesses to build profitable and environmentally responsible business which are then supported so that they remain in the county. As discussed with the Farming Minister Mark Spencer yesterday, we would like to see more direct collaboration between Herefordshire Council and Defra on the phosphate issue and agricultural planning so that government initiatives which are designed to generate on-farm improvements are backed by the Council
- We would ask the Council to encourage investment in rural communities rather than just focusing on local towns. While we understand your 2023 commitments, the rural areas are a huge part of the county and its economy which need to be included in funding and not forgotten
- Development of a plan to get Herefordshire Council's planning department back on-track so that applications are dealt with in a timely manner. Many applications are taking significantly longer than the eight – thirteen-week timescale stated by the Council, which is having a detrimental impact on businesses and livelihoods. We would also like to see applications which are outside of neighbourhood settlement boundaries fairly assessed
- Development of a plan to improve rural connectivity across Herefordshire
- Collaborative working with other stakeholders to improve grid capacity so that more renewable energy can be utilised. This will be absolutely fundamental if Herefordshire is to achieve its ambitions Net Zero by 2030 target