

Agenda

Cabinet

Date: **Thursday 21 December 2023**

Time: **2.30 pm**

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:

Samantha Walmsley, Democratic Services Officer

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Samantha Walmsley, Democratic Services Officer on (01432) 260176 or e-mail samantha.walmsley2@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the meeting of Cabinet

Membership

Chairperson Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council
Vice-Chairperson Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Graham Biggs
Councillor Harry Bramer
Councillor Barry Durkin
Councillor Carole Gandy
Councillor Ivan Powell
Councillor Philip Price
Councillor Pete Stoddart

Agenda

	Pages
<p>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
<p>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>To receive declarations of interests in respect of Table A, Table B or any Other Interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.</p>	
<p>3. MINUTES</p> <p>To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023.</p> <p>Minutes are to follow.</p>	
<p>HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS</p> <p><i>The deadline for submission of questions for this meeting is:</i></p> <p><i>9:30am on Monday 18 December 2023.</i></p> <p><i>Questions must be submitted to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk. Questions sent to any other address may not be accepted.</i></p> <p><i>Accepted questions and the response to them will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting. Further information and guidance is available at https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved</i></p>	
<p>4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</p> <p>To receive questions from members of the public.</p>	
<p>5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS</p> <p>To receive questions from councillors.</p>	
<p>6. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES</p> <p>To receive reports from the Council's scrutiny committees on any recommendations to the Cabinet arising from recent scrutiny committee meetings.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">(a) Report from Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee: Implementing the Environment Act 2021</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">(b) Report from Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee: Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Action Plan</p>	11 - 22
<p>7. APPOINTMENTS TO SHAREHOLDER COMMITTEE</p> <p>To appoint four members of Cabinet to the Shareholder Committee.</p>	23 - 26
<p>8. PROGRESS REPORT TO THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ON CHILDREN SERVICES IN HEREFORDSHIRE</p>	27 - 52

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

To update Cabinet on the content of the most recent progress report of the Children's Commissioner to the Minister of State.

9. ANNUAL REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVES

53 - 58

To note and review the earmarked reserves held by the council.

10. Q2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

59 - 88

To review the performance for Quarter 2 2023/24 and to report the performance position across all Directorates for this period.

The Public's Rights to Information and Attendance at Meetings

Please take time to read the latest guidance on the council website by following the link at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings and support us in promoting a safe environment for everyone. If you have any queries please contact the Governance Support Team on 01432 261699 or at governancesupportteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

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. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings
- 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. Information about councillors is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/councillors
- 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. Information about councillors is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/councillors
- 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

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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->

Guide to Cabinet

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

Cllr Jonathan Lester (Leader)	Corporate Strategy and Budget
Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst (Deputy Leader)	Environment
Cllr Ivan Powell	Children and Young People
Cllr Harry Bramer	Community Services and Assets
Cllr Pete Stoddart	Finance and Corporate Services
Cllr Carole Gandy	Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Cllr Graham Biggs	Economy and Growth
Cllr Barry Durkin	Roads and Regulatory Services
Cllr Philip Price	Transport and Infrastructure

The Cabinet's roles are:

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

Who attends cabinet meetings?

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

**The Seven Principles of Public Life
(Nolan Principles)**

1. Selflessness

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

2. Integrity

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

3. Objectivity

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

4. Accountability

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

5. Openness

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

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.



Title of report: Scrutiny Recommendations - Implementing the Environment Act 2021

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 21 December 2023

Report by: Democratic Services

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to notify Cabinet of the recommendations from the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee recent work to scrutinise how the council is implementing the Environment Act 2021 - as recorded at its meeting on 27 November 2023 - and to request an executive response.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) That the recommendations on Implementing the Environment Act 2021, (set out in Appendix 1) made by the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 27 November 2023 be noted; and
- b) That an executive response to the scrutiny recommendations be prepared for consideration by Cabinet within two months.

Alternative options

1. None proposed; it is a statutory requirement for Cabinet to be notified and consider reports and recommendations made by a scrutiny committee.

Key considerations

2. Scrutiny committees have statutory powers to make recommendations to the executive, and the executive (Cabinet) has a statutory duty to respond. They may also make reports and recommendations to external decision making bodies.
3. Scrutiny recommendations are addressed to the Cabinet, as the main executive decision making body of the council (or, where appropriate, an external agency).
4. Cabinet is being asked to note the scrutiny report and recommendations and that an executive response to the scrutiny recommendations be prepared for consideration by Cabinet within two months.
5. The scrutiny committee will be notified of the executive response made in respect to the scrutiny recommendations and may track the implementation of Cabinet decisions and any actions agreed. This enables the scrutiny committee to track whether their recommendations have been agreed, what actually was agreed (if different) and review any outcomes arising.

Community impact

6. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, the council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review. Topics selected for scrutiny should have regard to what matters to residents.

Environmental Impact

7. As a committee report there are no direct environmental impacts connected with this report or the outcomes it seeks to deliver.

Equality duty

8. 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.
9. 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

10. As a committee report this will not have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

11. This report provides notification to Cabinet on the scrutiny report and recommendations, which have been referred to the executive (Cabinet) for an executive response.
12. Cabinet is requested to provide an executive response within two months, at which stage, in considering its response, a full assessment of resource implications should be undertaken.

Legal implications

16. Section 9F (2) (b) of the Local Government Act 2000 provides that a scrutiny committee can make reports and recommendation to the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive. This is reflected in part 4.5.41 to 4.5.51 of the Constitution.
17. Section 9F (2) (e) of the Local Government Act 2000 provides that a scrutiny committee can make reports or recommendations to the executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.
18. The scrutiny report provides the scrutiny recommendations of the committee to be made to the executive (Cabinet).
19. The Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendations and provide an response within two months. The Cabinet is not bound to action or adopt the recommendations but must provide a response to scrutiny.
20. If Cabinet considers that recommendations are contrary or not in accordance with the budget or policy framework, then Cabinet may report the matter to Council (para 4.5.45).
21. Currently, the recommendations are (in part) at too early a formative stage to give a full assessment of legal implications.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity

There is a reputational risk to the council if the scrutiny function does not operate effectively.

Mitigation

The arrangements for the notification of recommendations from the scrutiny committees and agreement of an Executive Response should help mitigate this risk.

22. Cabinet is requested to provide an executive response within two months, at which stage, in considering its response, a full assessment of risk implications should be undertaken.

23. The executive will then need to assess the risks arising from any executive decisions made in respect of the scrutiny committee's recommendations.

Consultees

The Cabinet Member for Environment

The Chairperson of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Environment Act 2021
Recommendations for Cabinet 21 December

Background papers

[Report - Implementing the Environment Act 2021](#)

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published		
Governance	Danial Webb	Date 12/12/2023
Finance	Judith Tranmer	Date 11/12/2023
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 11/12/2023
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 11/12/2023
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 11/12/2023
Risk	Kevin Lloyd	Date 10/12/2023
Approved by	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Appendix 1 – Implementing the Environment Act 2021 Update - Recommendations to Cabinet from the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee 27 November 2023

Background:

At its meeting on 27 November 2023, in regards to the Environment Act 2021 Implications and Progress update it received, the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee voted unanimously to make the following recommendations to the executive:

Recommendations

That

- i) the executive commissions a piece of work to evaluate, in broad terms, the costs of implementing the requirements of the Environment Act 2021;
- ii) the executive appoints a single interface with the Office for Environmental Protection;
- iii) the executive works with Farm Herefordshire and the Rural Hub to engage with young farmers about biodiversity and river water quality;
- iv) the executive works with partners and land owners to promote good hedgerow management and develop a hedgerow policy for the council. This should be triangulated with the Defra consultation on protecting hedgerows;
- v) the executive works with the Wildlife Trust and Rivers Trust to look at the membership of the steering committee for local nature recovery; and
- vi) the executive notes that the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee supports the retention on the 2 Air Quality Management Stations (AQMSs).

Title of report: Scrutiny Recommendations - Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Action Plan

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 21 December 2023

Report by: Democratic Services

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to notify Cabinet of the recommendation from the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee following its recent scrutiny of the council's SEND action plan update - as recorded at its meeting on 14 November 2023 and to request an executive response.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) That the recommendation on the SEND Action Plan, (set out in Appendix 1) made by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 14 November 2023 be noted; and
- b) That an executive response to the scrutiny recommendation be prepared for consideration by Cabinet within two months.

Alternative options

1. None proposed; it is a statutory requirement for Cabinet to be notified and consider reports and recommendations made by a scrutiny committee.

Key considerations

2. Scrutiny committees have statutory powers to make recommendations to the executive, and the executive (Cabinet) has a statutory duty to respond. They may also make reports and recommendations to external decision making bodies.
3. Scrutiny recommendations are addressed to Cabinet, as the main executive decision making body of the council (or, where appropriate, an external agency).
4. Cabinet is being asked to note the scrutiny report / recommendations and that an executive response to the scrutiny recommendations be prepared for consideration by the Cabinet within two months.
5. The scrutiny committee will be notified of the executive response made in respect to the scrutiny recommendations and may track the implementation of Cabinet's decisions and any actions agreed. This enables the scrutiny committee to track whether their recommendations have been agreed, what actually was agreed (if different) and review any outcomes arising.

Community impact

6. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, the council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review. Topics selected for scrutiny should have regard to what matters to residents.

Environmental Impact

7. As a committee report there are no direct environmental impacts connected with this report or the outcomes it seeks to deliver.

Equality duty

8. 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.
9. 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

10. As a committee report this will not have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

- 11. This report provides notification to Cabinet on the scrutiny report and recommendations, which have been referred to the executive (Cabinet) for an executive Response.
- 12. The Cabinet is requested to provide an executive response within two months, at which stage, in considering its response, a full assessment of resource implications should be undertaken.

Legal implications

- 13. Section 9F (2) (b) of the Local Government Act 2000 provides that a scrutiny committee can make reports and recommendation to the Executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive. This is reflected in part 4.5.41 to 4.5.51 of the Constitution.
- 14. Section 9F (2) (e) of the Local Government Act 2000 provides that a scrutiny committee can make reports or recommendations to the Executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.
- 15. The scrutiny report provides the scrutiny recommendations of the committee to be made to the executive (Cabinet).
- 16. Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendations and provide an response within two months. Cabinet is not bound to action or adopt the recommendations but must provide a response to scrutiny.
- 17. If Cabinet considers that recommendations are contrary or not in accordance with the budget or policy framework, then Cabinet may report the matter to Council (para 4.5.45).
- 18. Currently, the recommendations are (in part) at too early a formative stage to give a full assessment of legal implications.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity

There is a reputational risk to the council if the scrutiny function does not operate effectively.

Mitigation

The arrangements for the notification of recommendations from the scrutiny committees and agreement of an Executive Response should help mitigate this risk.

- 19. Cabinet is requested to provide an executive response within two months, at which stage, in considering its response, a full assessment of risk implications should be undertaken.

20. The executive will then need to assess the risks arising from any executive decisions made in respect of the scrutiny committee's recommendations.

Consultees

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
The Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Appendices

Appendix 1 - SEND Action Plan Recommendation for Cabinet 21 December

Background papers

[Special Educational Needs and/or Disability \(SEND\) Action Plan](#)

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published		
Governance	Danial Webb	Date 12/12/2023
Finance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Legal	Pooja Nahar	Date 13/12/2023
Communications	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 11/12/2023
Risk	Chris Tindell-jones	Date 12/12/2023
Approved by	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

SEND - Special Educational Needs and/or Disability

Appendix 1 – SEND Action Plan - Recommendations to Cabinet from the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 14 November 2023

Background

At its meeting on 14 November 2023, in regards to the SEND Action Plan update it received, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee voted by majority to make the following recommendation to the executive:

Recommendations:

That

- a) The executive ensure that early intervention in schools is funded adequately in Herefordshire Council's 2024-2025 budget.

Title of report: Appointments to Shareholder Committee

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday 21 December 2023
Cabinet member:	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
Report by:	Director of Governance and Law
Report Author:	Head of Legal Services

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To appoint four members of Cabinet to the Shareholder Committee.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **Four named members of Cabinet are appointed to the Shareholder Committee; and**
- b) **That the terms of reference of the Shareholder Committee is changed so that future appointments are made by the Leader.**

Alternative options

1. Not to make appointments to the Shareholder Committee – this is not recommended as the responsibilities and requirements as a shareholder of companies must be performed within the Council. Further, the Council has awarded contracts to its owned companies (whether wholly or jointly owned) without a full tender but relying on Regulation 12 exemption in the Public Contract

Regulations 2015. This exemption remains but the Council must demonstrate that it continues to exercise decisive influence over the strategic objectives and significant decisions of the company. The Shareholder Committee plays an important part in this influence.

Key considerations

Appointments to Shareholder Committee ('Committee')

2. The Council exercises control and influence over its local authority trading companies in a number of ways:
 - a. It appoints directors to the Board who (subject to their own duties to the company) can ensure that matters of relevance to the Council are achieved;
 - b. The Council is a shareholder in the companies and has powers and rights under Companies Act 2006 similar to any shareholder. Where the company is jointly owned, an agreement has been entered into with the other shareholders on matters such as sharing of information, strategic direction, business planning and reporting; and
 - c. The Council purchases services from the Company under contract and the terms of the contract set out precisely what and how services are delivered to the Council. This can include additional reporting and other requirements above what is strictly necessary for a contract for services.

It is through the combination of these governance functions that the necessary influence is maintained.

3. The Committee undertakes the functions set out in paragraph 2.b. The [Terms of Reference](#) were agreed by Cabinet on 12 January 2023. The Committee [appointed new directors](#) to the Board of Hoople Ltd and Cyber Quarter Limited on 18 April 2023 and these appointments have now completed and the appointees have started to undertake the Directorship duties.
4. The Committee will shortly need to receive reports from the Directors in relation to matters such as company performance, budgets and delivery to the business plan. This reporting is part of the governance function that maintains the necessary influence over the companies.
5. As the administration of the Council has changed, new appointments will need to be made to the Committee.
6. The recommendation is that Cabinet appoint four members of Cabinet to the Committee.

Terms of Reference and Appointments

7. Appointments to the Committee is considered to be a simple administrative matter. It currently is reserved to full Cabinet. It is considered that delegating appointments to the Leader as an individual Cabinet member decision would improve the appointments process and make it more flexible and efficient.

Community impact

8. There is no direct community impact by the appointment of Cabinet members to the Committee.

Environmental Impact

9. There is no direct environmental impact by the appointment of Cabinet members to the Committee.

Equality duty

10. The public sector equality duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is 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 internal decision making within the Council, we do not believe that it will have an impact on the Council's equality duty.

Resource implications

11. The Committee duties will be performed as part of the members existing roles and portfolios and there will not be any additional resource costs. Any time used for Committee duties will need to be a factor in relation to the Cabinet Members delivering to their existing roles and portfolios.

Legal implications

12. The Council must demonstrate influence over the companies for the Council to rely on the exemption in Regulation 12 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The role of the Committee actively demonstrates the application of this influence.
13. If the necessary influence cannot be demonstrated, then any contract award to a local authority owned company (or the continuation of an existing contract) would need to follow a fully compliant tender process under the Regulations.

Risk management

14. The risks have been identified as follows:

<u>Risk / opportunity</u>	<u>Mitigation</u>
The Council does not demonstrate the necessary influence	Legal advice is that the Council is operating a governance framework that is recognised as being as thorough as possible within the local authority context.
Cabinet does not appoint a Committee	The necessary influence is weakened but some control is maintained through Directors appointments to the Board and the contract.
The members of the Committee or the Directors of the Board do not understand their roles	A guidance document has been prepared that sets out what is required by Committee and how the Directors should deliver that. The same document pulls together all the various decision making so there is a single point of reference. The meetings of the Committee will be supported by Head of Legal Services. Directors have access to Head of Legal Services for guidance.

Consultees

None

Appendices

None

Background papers

None

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Finance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 08/12/2023
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 23/10/2023
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 24/10/2023
Risk	Kevin Lloyd	Date 24/10/2023

Approved by	Claire Porter	Date 08/12/2023
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Title of report: Progress Report to the Minister of State for Children and Families on Children Services in Herefordshire Children's Services

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: 21 December 2023

Report by: Cabinet member children and young people

Report by: Corporate Director children and young people

Report author: Corporate Director children and young people

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To update Cabinet on the content of the most recent progress report of the Children's Commissioner to the Minister of State.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **Cabinet receive this report and note the feedback from the Commissioner.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options. Herefordshire council children's services are judged as inadequate by Ofsted and are the subject of a Statutory Direction issued by the Secretary of State.

Key considerations

2. Children's Services were judged to be inadequate during the Ofsted inspection conducted in July 2022. The inspection report was published on 21 September 2022 on the Ofsted [website](#).
3. Following the Ofsted judgement a [Statutory Direction](#) was issued to Herefordshire Council on 21 September 2022 in relation to children's services.
4. The Statutory Direction was the mechanism for the appointment of a Commissioner for Children's Services in Herefordshire (Eleanor Brazil) and set out the Terms of Reference to the direction.
5. The Commissioner undertook a review of the Council's capacity and capability to improve services within a reasonable timeframe and her report to the Minister was published on 1 March 2023 on the Department for Education [website](#).
6. The report made five recommendations, one of which was to review progress after six months and that if the level and trajectory of progress that is required is not achieved within that timescale, consideration should be given to whether an alternative delivery model is required.
7. The Minister accepted the recommendations and a [revised Statutory Direction](#) was issued.
8. A meeting to review progress was held on 6 November 2023, following which the Commissioner submitted a progress report to the Minister of State (Appendix 1). This has been published on the 13 December 2023- [Progress report of the children's services commissioner in Herefordshire](#)
9. In her progress report the Commissioner notes a number of key developments in the last 6 months:
 - a. Formal agreement to 18 months programme of support with Leeds
 - b. Commission to listen to Families held and report published
 - c. Change in political administration
 - d. First 3 Monitoring Visits conducted by Ofsted
 - e. Planned support from other Local Authorities negotiated and partly delivered
 - f. Improvements in SEND and quality of support for disabled children
 - g. Progress in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
 - h. Limited progress in other parts of children's social care.

10. Progress and improvement is observed and reported in a number of areas of performance and service delivery. Progress has been made against each of the recommendations for practice improvement made in the original report, published earlier this year.
11. The report concludes that whilst progress has been slower than we would want (and that the pace of change is too slow) there have been positive developments and that there should not be any further consideration of an alternative delivery model as it remains the view of the Commissioner that supporting the council and its partners to deliver quicker and better improvements is the best way forward.
12. Progress will be reviewed again, six months after publication of the Commissioner's report published by the Department of Education. The Commissioner is working with officers and the council's partners to determine the specific areas against which progress will be measured and improvements will be made.

Community impact

13. The Ofsted inspection judgement of 'Inadequate' has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
14. The County Plan 2020–2024 includes the ambition to 'strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together' and more specifically, the council aims to:
 - a. Ensure all children are healthy, safe, and inspired to achieve;
 - b. Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices.

Environmental Impact

15. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.
16. Ongoing transformation activity will be undertaken with consideration to minimise waste and resource in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

17. 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.

18. In particular, the council must have due regard to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.
19. As our projects and service delivery progresses, and changes are designed, equality impact assessment will be undertaken where necessary.

Resource implications

20. There are no new or additional resource implications arising from this monitoring visit and report.

Legal implications

21. The Council was issued with a non-statutory improvement notice by the Department for Education on 18 May 2021. To comply with this notice, the Council was required to adhere to a number of measures, which included:-
 - a) Secretary of State appointment of an Improvement Advisor (Gladys Rose-White).
 - b) This was also the statutory mechanism for the appointment of the Children's Commissioner (Eleanor Brazil). The Council has worked with the Commissioner for over the minimum 12 months period and will continue to work with her until such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied this is no longer required.
 - c) An Improvement Plan has been implemented.
 - d) Establishment of an Improvement Board with an independent Chair (Chaired by the Improvement Advisor).
 - e) The Commissioner has undertaken reviews of progress against the Improvement Plan.
 - f) The DfE has provided dedicated improvement support through its Partners in Practice arrangements
 - g) The Improvement Advisor has provided, to the DfE, reports of progress or concern against the areas set out in the notice; and progress against the improvement plan
22. The Commissioner undertook a review of the Council's capacity and capability to improve services within a reasonable timeframe and her report to the Minister was published on 1 March 2023 on the Department for Education [website](#).
23. As set out above this report made recommendations, one of which was to review progress after six months and that if the level and trajectory of progress that is required is not achieved within

that timescale, consideration should be given to whether an alternative delivery model is required.

24. The Minister accepted the recommendations and a [revised Statutory Direction](#) was issued.
25. A meeting to review progress was held on 6 November 2023, following which the Commissioner submitted a progress report to the Minister of State (Appendix 1).
26. Progress and improvement is observed and reported in a number of areas of performance and service delivery. Progress has been made against each of the recommendations for practice improvement made in the original report, published in March this year.
27. The report concludes that whilst the pace of progress has been slower than hoped, there have been positive developments and that there should not be any further consideration of an alternative delivery model (therefore not invoking statutory powers of intervention pursuant to s497A Education Act 1996) as it remains the view of the Commissioner that supporting the Council and its partners to deliver quicker and better improvements is the best way forward.
28. Progress will be reviewed again, six months after publication of the progress report by the Department of Education and the Commissioner is working alongside officers and the council's partners to determine what progress should look like at that point in time.

Risk management

29. There are no new or additional risks arising from this visit. Risks associated with the wider improvement plan are monitored by the Improvement Board.

Consultees

30. None.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Progress Report to the Minister of State for Children and Families on Children Services in Herefordshire Children's Services

Background papers

None identified.

Progress Report to the Minister of State for Children and Families on Children Services in Herefordshire Children's Services

This report updates the Minister 6 months post publication of the report of the Children's Commissioner.

1. Introduction

Herefordshire Council children's services were inspected by Ofsted in July 2022 and found to be inadequate in each aspect of the inspection framework. The inspection report was published on 21 September. A Statutory Notice was issued by the Department for Education and I was appointed as Children's Commissioner to review the Council's capacity and capability to improve services within a reasonable timeframe. My report was published on 1st March 2023.

It was clear from my review that the concerns about the quality of children's services are longstanding and widespread. There were many contributing factors which included poor leadership and a failure to act on continued issues around performance. Ofsted inspections and other reviews during the previous ten years pointed to the same issues: poor decision making, lack of focus on the needs of children, drift and delay, lack of management oversight, high level of vacancies and turnover amongst staff and managers.

Herefordshire has been very publicly criticised in recent years, by a High Court judge, Judge Keehan, in 2018 relating to the inappropriate use of Section 20 for children in long term care in Herefordshire, and in March 2021 relating to very poor practice regarding a sibling group of four. More recently, in May 2022, the BBC broadcast a Panorama programme, which covered the negative experience of five families who had been receiving social work intervention in Herefordshire.

The DfE issued an Improvement Notice and appointed an Improvement Advisor, Gladys Rhodes White, in April 2021 and a multi-agency Improvement Board was set up to over-see and drive the delivery of an Improvement Plan. However, the Ofsted inspection in July 22 showed that little had changed. Following the inspection, there has been more focus and drive to tackle priority areas of concern, in particular the response in MASH, recruitment and retention and improving quality assurance.

In the conclusion of my review, I said that I felt on balance that operational control of the service should remain with the Council. I wrote that *'I believe it makes sense to build on the work that is already underway, albeit with a strong requirement to see evidence of progress in key areas within a period of three to six months. This report has provided detail on the many aspects of practice, leadership and management that need to change and improve. In my recommendations at the end of this report, I have outlined the areas where I will expect to see evidence of significant improvement by the end of this period. Ofsted will undertake its first Monitoring Visit around March next year, and this will be an important milestone in reviewing progress since the inspection.'*

Recommendations

The Minister for Children and Families approved the recommendations and a second Statutory Direction was issued on 1st March. The recommendations were:

1. Children's services remain under the operational control of Herefordshire Council. The Council will:

- a) Strengthen the leadership of children's services to ensure that the pace of improvement increases rapidly in line with the agreed Improvement Plan.
- b) Ensure that within the next 3 months there will be evidence of progress in:
 - i) Reducing the number of agency social workers and increasing the numbers of permanent social workers
 - ii) Increasing the number of permanent front line Team Managers
 - iii) Increasing the number of child protection case conferences and reviews held face to face.
 - iv) Reducing the proportion of assessments that conclude no further action
 - v) Children experiencing fewer changes in social worker
 - vi) Improving the quality of practice seen in audits
 - vii) Finalising the SEND strategy, and acting on agreed immediate priorities
- c) Resolve, as far as is possible, all outstanding historic complaints
- d) Agree, with its partners, through a range of Strategic forums, a number of actions which will demonstrate collectively their commitment to raising ambition and aspiration for children and young people, and responding to their views.
- e) Work with the LGA to develop the knowledge and impact of members in key roles, including the leader, lead member and scrutiny members.

2. The role of Commissioner is retained to oversee the securing of short-term external support, and to continue to drive improvement, including working with the Council and its partners to increase the effectiveness of the Improvement Board.

The Commissioner should explore options for a long-term partnership with a good or outstanding local authority to deliver sustained improvement

3. The Commissioner will conduct a review within 6 months

4. If the level and trajectory of progress that is required is not achieved within 6 months, consideration should be given to whether an alternative delivery model is required

2. Key developments in the last 6 months

- a) Formal agreement to 18 months programme of support with Leeds
- b) Commission to listen to Families held and report published
- c) Change in political administration
- d) First 3 Monitoring Visits conducted by Ofsted
- e) Planned support from other Local Authorities negotiated and partly delivered
- f) Improvements in SEND and quality of support for disabled children
- g) Progress in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
- h) Limited progress in other parts of children's social care

3. Review of progress after 3 months

On 8th June we conducted an interim review of progress against the March recommendations with the Council political and officer leaders, DfE officials, the

Improvement Advisor and myself. It was agreed that a fuller assessment of progress and recommendations on next steps would follow a further review in September, 6 months after the original published commissioner review as required. However, it was decided to slightly defer the '6 month' review till after the 3rd Monitoring Visit by Ofsted which took place at the end of September.

Prior to the meeting in June, there were 2 major issues impacting on children's services. The first was in respect to changes in leadership and the second was the conclusion of an initiative to listen to families with long standing concerns about children's services in Herefordshire.

4. Leadership

Political leadership

Local elections were held on May 4th. This resulted in significant change in the administration. The previous Council administration, a coalition of Independents for Herefordshire (the largest group) and the Green Party, had been in place since May 2019. Almost all the then Cabinet were recent and inexperienced councillors, elected in 2019, including the Leader. The Lead member who was from the Green Party, took up the role in 2021.

In May the Conservatives became the largest group with 21 Councillors, forming a minority administration. The Leader of the group, Jonathan Lester, was elected at the subsequent Council meeting as Leader of the Council. He has been a Councillor since 2011, and has previously been the cabinet lead member for children's services. His new cabinet is made up of Conservative Councillors except the lead member for children's services who is a newly elected Councillor, Ivan Powell, representing the True Independents group. Councillor Powell has a background in the police and recent and current involvement in chairing both adult and children safeguarding boards. Both Councillors are bringing strong commitment and knowledge to improving children's services.

A new chair and deputy chair of scrutiny committee were also appointed and agreement has been reached with the LGA that they will continue to support the new councillors as needed. Recent scrutiny meetings have been more focussed and purposeful, providing more of the constructive challenge that is needed.

Officer leadership

In January the Chief Executive, Paul Walker appointed an interim assistant Chief Executive, an experienced ex DCS, to provide additional capacity and capability to strengthen leadership in children's services. She undertook the role for just over 4 months, providing additional focus on recruitment and retention, understanding the financial pressures, preparing for the first Monitoring Visit and supporting the DCS and his team. An interim Service Director started in March to provide support on safeguarding, replaced in June by a new permanent Service Director, who now leads on Quality Assurance, partnerships and early help.

The Directorate leadership team is now fully staffed with 3 permanent Service Directors and the Improvement Director. They are beginning to work better together but need to develop as a more cohesive team supporting each other and collaborating more on the improvements and changes needed. A key element of the programme of support agreed with Leeds is intended to support and develop the leadership team.

5. The Commission to consider families' experience of children's services in Herefordshire

Whilst I was undertaking my review from September to December last year, I was aware that there were a number of families with longstanding concerns about their experience of children's services in Herefordshire, some from some years ago and some much more recent. Many had complained and also raised questions at public Council meetings. They continued to feel that their views were not listened to or responded to. It felt important to me to find a way to hear about their experiences. I established, with the agreement and support of the Council and the Safeguarding Partnership, a Commission to do this which consisted of an independent panel who were able to hear directly from families.

The agreed purpose was:

- To give parents and families an opportunity to tell their story to an independent panel.
- To identify any steps that the Council and partners can and should take as a result of hearing families' testimonies, either in relation to individual cases or in respect of general issues.
- To learn from their experiences and to ensure that this knowledge is used to inform improvements to Children's Services.
- To ensure that, as far as possible, families feel that their concerns have been heard and addressed, and that this is as much as can be done to resolve matters

The Panel comprised three appropriately qualified and experienced individuals, independent of Herefordshire, who were appointed directly by myself. The commission carried out its work in March and April 2023, during which time ten day-long sessions were held and 20 individuals came to speak to the panel. The independent scrutineer of the Safeguarding Children Partnership, and I attended all the sessions as observers.

The people who attended the panel had a range of experiences of Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, police, health and mental health services for both children and adults, and specialised independent services, some of which were outside Herefordshire. They varied in age, circumstances, and in their position within their family. Some described many years of contact with statutory services, some had more recent involvement. The majority of cases were either still open or had been open in the last few years. Most had been impacted by the effect of the Covid 19 pandemic on how services were delivered.

What every person expressed was the desire to ensure that their painful personal experiences should be used to improve services for everyone and ensure that 'nobody

else should ever have to go through what I have gone through.’ We heard difficult stories of poor practice, failures to respond to appropriately to requests for help, complaints not responded to and children and their parents let down by professionals who should have done more to help them. The panel’s report goes into considerable detail, written from the perspective of families and using many quotes from them to illustrate the points made. Whilst families found it distressing to tell their story many said that they felt listened to and valued the work of the panel.

The [report](#) entitled ‘the Commission to consider families’ experience of children’s services in Herefordshire’ was published on 6th June on the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children website. The report outlines 9 areas for the Council and the Safeguarding Partnership to consider:

Summary of Questions for Consideration

11.1 How will the Council and its partners provide a meaningful and responsive early help service which is accessible to families, regardless of which agency they contact first for help?

11.2 How will the Council support its social workers to practise in ways that demonstrate empathy, perseverance, authority, professional confidence and capability; working with people to enable full participation in discussions and decision making?

11.3 How will the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership ensure that professionals are working together in the best interests of children and their families, to the highest standards of professional practice, informed by good quality research and evidence?

11.4 What actions will the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership take to satisfy itself that there is good understanding across all ‘frontline’ agencies of domestic violence and abuse and its impact on individuals and families?

11.5 How will Herefordshire Children’s Services support social workers to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of parents and families and enable their participation in planning to keep their children safe and promote their wellbeing?

11.6 What will the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership do to promote a ‘Think Family approach across the partnership?

11.7 What will the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership do to ensure that the complaints procedures in every agency across the partnership are accessible to families, work well, and findings are recorded and acted on?

Both the Independent Scrutineer and I in our different roles are monitoring and supporting the Council and its partners to address these questions as part of the ongoing improvement journey.

The Council was initially slow to respond to issues raised by the Chair of the Panel on behalf of individuals who had attended. This resulted in further delay in resolving some of the longstanding concerns. Subsequent to the initial delays, the Improvement Director was tasked with managing this. The newly appointed Leader and Lead Member both took a personal interest in these matters being followed up, and with the Improvement Director, they both met with a small number of the families which was appreciated by them. For some families it has not been possible to find a resolution for them but where possible, issues are now being addressed.

With regard to the more general issues summarised in the questions for consideration, the Council and its safeguarding partners are working on a number of those. There are developments in early help which are outlined later in this report which are

responding to the first question. The partnership with Leeds, which is also discussed later in the report, is intended to support the Council on improving practice and addressing the negative attitudes and behaviours that had been heard by the Commission.

6. The Improvement Board and Improvement Plan

The Improvement Board continues to be chaired by Gladys Rhodes White, DfE Improvement Advisor. It now meets every 6 weeks and generally is well attended by partners including representatives from health, the Police and schools. The Board oversees delivery of a comprehensive improvement plan which has brought together 10 Priority improvement areas (9 from Ofsted ILACS plus 10th from LGA SEND peer review held a year ago) and includes 66 priority improvement actions overall. It has proved challenging for the Council and its partners to deliver on all the areas of activity required.

There are 7 Improvement work streams focusing on key themes within the Plan. These are: Practice and Service Delivery, Workforce, Commissioning & Resources, Corporate Parenting Safeguarding Children’s Partnership, Children & Young People’s Partnership and SEND.

Much of the reporting to the Board tends to focus on process activity (as can be seen from the table below) and in many parts of the service it is harder to determine the impact on improving outcomes for children and their families. There has also been delays in progressing some aspects of the plan. Concerns around pace have been commented on by Ofsted in the feedback from the 3 Monitoring Visits that have taken place.

Herefordshire Council Programme	August 2023 Highlights
Practice and Service Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed well-attended and engaged launch events in July for children’s social care with the Leeds Improvement Partnership The first phase of the Restorative and Relational Practice Programme commences September 2023
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workforce establishment project is now complete Agreed increase to welcome payments and new retention payments with associated workforce communications Finalising other initiatives, such as 9 day fortnight, increased annual leave and CPD leave are underway
Commissioning and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures for unregulated placements have been completed. The Children's Sufficiency Strategy has been finalised
SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SEND strategy has been coproduced, published and is informing the SEND action plan. The SEND Assurance Board is now established and meeting monthly with good attendance from the

	<p>health, care and education senior leadership with support from our Parent-Carer Voice Forum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationally, the EHCP timeliness standard (20 weeks) has dropped from 59.9% (2021-2) to 50.7% (2022-3). Despite rising requests in Herefordshire, EHC plans continue to be issued within 20 weeks at a significantly higher rate than that seen nationally.
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7. Performance

There has been an improvement in the quality of the data and performance reports which are brought to the Improvement Board. The data is now accompanied by more useful analysis. The majority of key performance indicators have improved over the past six months, including a gradual reduction in the rate of referrals and a small reduction in the re-referral rate; increased timeliness of assessments (although the quality of these remains a concern), improved timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs); a reduction in the numbers of children subject of a child protection plan; and a reduction in the rate per 10,000 of children coming into our care, though a rise in the number of unaccompanied young people.

Although slowly reducing, overall numbers of children in receipt of statutory intervention remain high compared with statistical neighbours suggesting that there continues to be a risk averse approach within the wider partnership, with not enough positive interventions with families at an earlier stage, which was the experience of families who attended the Commission to listen to families.

Key points reported to the September meeting of the Improved Board illustrate this:

- There has been increased focus on the quality of assessments which has had an impact on the timely completion. Too many cases are passed from the MASH to the assessment teams, with over 70% not resulting in any further support for families following assessment.
- Section 47 enquiries continue to be significantly higher than the England average (180 per 10,000 children) and that of our Statistical Neighbours (158 per 10,000 children). Additional management oversight is being undertaken to ensure S.47 enquiries are proportionate and this has resulted in a steady decrease in the number of Section 47 enquiries from a rate of 520 (per 10,000 children) in March 2023, to a rate of 260 in July 2023.
- Significant work has been undertaken to stabilise the workforce within the Children in Care teams and as a result of this the proportion of Children in Care who have had the same Social Worker for the previous 12 months has increased from 11.8% in January to 19% in July 2023.
- Over the last couple of months, the rate of Children in Care has remained mostly static at 112 per 10,000 children. This continues to be high when compared with the England average (70 children in care per 10,000) or our statistical neighbours (64 children in care per 10,000). The total number of children in care in July there was 405, of which 29 were UASC.

- We are in touch with the majority of Care Leavers (94% of those aged 17 – 18 and 100% for those aged 19-21) although the proportion of young people seen within the last 8 weeks is too low. Most Care Leavers live in suitable accommodation (91% of 17/18 years old and 92% of 19-21 year olds as of the end of July). Thirteen (13%) of our care leavers aged 19-21 continue to live with their fostering family under “staying put” arrangements; this is better than the England average (9%) or our Statistical Neighbours (8%). The timeliness of visits to care leavers and the proportion of pathway plans that are up-to-date needs significant improvement. The November Improvement Board will include an item focussing on Care Leavers.

The letter following the second Ofsted Monitoring Visit reports: *‘A strengthened approach to understanding the quality of services for children through an enhanced audit process is becoming more embedded.’* Outcomes of auditing are reported to the Improvement Board. Whilst the numbers of cases being audited is lower than is needed and expected, there is some small improvement in the number being judged requires improvement or good. The use of storyboards and the presence of front line staff to present their work to some meetings of the Improvement Board has proved helpful in identifying some examples of good practice. At the moment, these are isolated examples but they do demonstrate that there is practice that is resulting in positive outcomes for some children.

In my review I commented that the Council had been slow to return to face to face working. One of my recommendations was to increase the number of child protection conferences and children in care reviews that were being held in person and not remotely. The project to develop a dedicated space for Conferencing at Plough Lane took a long time and was completed in August 2023. This provides a Conference suite, a comfortable children and family room and also an office / meeting area for IRO’s and Conference Chairs to meet with other professionals. The Leominster meeting room at Plough Lane is also currently used Monday to Thursday for Conferences. The service has also begun to hold Conferences at other Council Multi-Agency Offices venues in Herefordshire, specifically Leominster and Bromyard.

Many children in care reviews are still mainly being held remotely which makes it difficult for children and families.

The service distributed Questionnaires to families and to professionals evaluating their experience of Conferencing between June and August. 20 questionnaires have been completed (8 by families and 12 from professionals) and analysed. 18 of the 20 respondents indicate that they prefer Face to Face Conferences with only 1 definitely preferring Teams. One comment from a family being *“I feel more comfortable being in a room with people. I am happy for others to join via TEAMS”*. Families and professionals also gave positive feedback about the skills and values of the Chairs and all respondents stated that they were treated with respect.

For the three months of August – October 2023, 157 Conferences took place of which 125 were Face to Face (80%), some hybrid. For Child in Care Reviews during August

– October, 213 meetings took place of which 138 were Face to Face (65%) with in person attendance and some attendees on TEAMS

In June Ofsted found that *‘Core group and child-in-need meetings are held regularly. However, the effectiveness of these meetings for some families is undermined by them not being face to face.’*

8. Feedback from Ofsted Monitoring Visits

Three Monitoring Visits have taken place since the ILACS inspection in July 2022. The inspectors have in general found some progress but have commented that the pace of improvement, particularly for children in care has been too slow. Many of the previous longstanding issues around quality of practice, and staffing remain concerns, although more improvement was seen in parts of the service than in others and the challenge for leaders is to replicate this across the whole.

The first Monitoring Visit (MV) which took place on 29th and 30th March focussed on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and assessments. The feedback was mixed but did show evidence of real improvement in the MASH where considerable time and resource had gone into making changes. The Council had done a lot of preparatory work and it was positive that evident signs of real progress were seen. However, there were still significant practice issues in the quality of assessments, the other area that was looked at. The inspectors also commented on the pace of improvement being too protracted.

The second MV took place on 28th and 29th June, with the outcome letter of the visit published on 2nd August. The focus was on children in need and children subject to a Child Protection plan. The inspectors noted some progress but identified concerns relating to the quality of care planning, children continuing to experience too many changes in social workers, the response to unaccompanied asylum seeking children and housing needs not being addressed.

The letter states: *‘practice is starting to improve and positive progress is being made with some families. However, the quality and effectiveness of practice with children in need and those subject to a protection plan remain variable. The achievement of more consistently effective practice is hampered by several issues. These include continued high turnover of social workers, a legacy of some families with chronic long-term needs who have experienced poor practice over several years, closure of children’s cases to social care before sustained change has been achieved, leading to increased re-referrals, and management support which is not yet consistently effective. When housing is a need, it takes too long to resolve and is not sufficiently prioritised by housing partners.’*

Some positives were seen, including family support workers providing helpful practical support to parents, combined with enhancing parenting skills through parenting programmes, which makes a tangible difference for some vulnerable families. Other support services were noted to have a positive impact on children’s lives, such as the ECHO (edge of care) service which provides more intensive support.

They also noted that supervision records lack critical evaluation and actions and tend to focus on routine process-based tasks rather than timely actions tailored to the needs and progress of individual children.

The third MV took place in September and focussed on Children in care and achieving permanence. Overall, the inspectors found that: *'Since the last inspection, when the experiences and progress of children in care were judged inadequate, leaders have achieved only modest progress for children in care. Leaders and senior managers have not given sufficient strategic focus to children in care. While there has been some limited progress, the pace of improvement and progress has been too slow.'* The letter which was published on 31st October is very critical of the continued lack of focus on children in care despite concerns having been known for several years.

They found that the pace and impact of improvement are too slow. Significant objectives in the improvement plan have been delayed or are not on track. The quality of practice for children in care remains inconsistent and children experience too many changes of social worker. The approach to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is not equitable or inclusive. *'All unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are routinely placed out of area and do not benefit from living in Herefordshire. There is an assumption that their needs cannot currently be met in Herefordshire and that they are better placed in inner city areas. The care and support of these children is very much left to the carers.'*

Care plans address children's basic needs, but many lack depth in setting out their day-to-day care, social and leisure needs. Over three-quarters of children in care have experienced changes of social worker in the last year. Direct work is underdeveloped and children's views do not influence their plans in a meaningful way. This remains the part of the service with the most interim staff, despite considerable efforts to recruit permanent team members.

Some more positive practice was seen, in particular the work of the Disabled Children's team and recent viability assessments for kinship care, which were thorough and completed to inform the preliminary decision to place with a friend or relative. However, very few special guardianship order (SGO) applications have been made. The potential for special guardianship is not considered for children sufficiently well when this would enable them to achieve a stronger sense of family identity and belonging. As a consequence, some children continue to be looked after subject to a statutory order unnecessarily or for too long.

9. Partnership with Leeds Relational Practice Centre and feedback from their initial involvement.

One of the main recommendations from my initial review was the need for Herefordshire to have a long-term partnership with a good or outstanding authority to ensure there was additional capacity and capability to achieve the necessary improvements within a reasonable timescale. Leeds has an excellent reputation as an outstanding authority and is experienced in providing this kind of support through their relational practice centre. It is very positive that agreement was reached in June for them to be the long-term partner. A plan for delivery over 18 months was agreed,

funded by the DfE. The agreed overall aim of the joint work is to promote more restorative, relational and family-focused ways of working in order to improve outcomes and practice.

Leeds began their involvement in Herefordshire, with some case auditing and focus groups. This has been followed by sessions with the senior leadership team, and then with groups of staff and partners focussing on introducing restorative practice. They are now engaged in more specific training sessions with individual service areas, informed by their analysis and early work.

In October they completed a report covering their initial impressions and identifying key areas where they consider focussed improvements are needed. Key points from their report are summarised below and are consistent with Ofsted findings, reports to the Improvement Board, feedback from families to the Commission and via complaints and my own understanding of the current position.

1. Families in Herefordshire have experienced practice that has been intrusive and over-reliant on process, leading to unnecessary use of formal mechanisms to engage families and a disproportionate use of intervention in family life and too many children being looked after when there could have been opportunities to safely keep them with parents or the wider family
2. There are positive signs of change - the sharp rises in children being drawn into the child welfare system have been moderated or even reversed – less children are becoming looked after, more are returning home and despite the increase in activity the hard work of local services has meant that there has been a steady improvement in data relating to compliance with national standards.
3. Re-referral rates are more of concern – they have averaged 28% in the last six months, well above benchmarks (around 20%). The proportion of children assessed is higher than seen in similar areas of the country. What is most striking in this area is the high proportion of assessments that are closed to social work on completion – 66% This is much higher than the national rate and suggests that there may be issues with decision-making at the Front Door – generally that decisions there are risk averse and do not consider alternatives such as single agency or Early Help support for families.
4. 248 children in Herefordshire have a child protection plan (CPP). This equates to a rate of 69 per ten thousand – which is well above the rates seen nationally or in similar areas. In the last six months 189 children started having a CPP, and 169 children had their plan closed.
5. 399 Children Looked After in Herefordshire – a rate of 111 per ten thousand. This is much higher than the rate seen either nationally or in similar ‘Statistical Neighbour’ local authorities. In the last six months 42 children became looked after and 51 ceased to be looked after.
6. Around one in five (19%) of children looked after are in residential settings, which is well above the national rate and is likely to be less than ideal for some of those children as well as punishingly expensive for the Local Authority.
7. Whilst previously Herefordshire was around the rates seen elsewhere, since 2021/22 there has been a very large fall in the proportion of all care leavers in education or work. (Fall from 83% to 31% for 17-18, from 48% to 16% for 19-21 yo).
8. Local partners need to answer this Commission’s question about early help and work together to ‘rebalance the system. This will require a collaborative multi-agency

approach and the need to work with some families that are currently being referred into and receiving services from social work teams.

9. Children in need - overall, whilst there was some effective work with families there was a need to be more family led, creative and challenging. There was no evidence in majority of cases of engaging families in the context of escalating concerns. Sometimes it seemed that escalation to Child Protection was used as a response to get compliance because engagement had failed
10. Child Protection: Analysis and reflection was relatively weak – there was not prompting for challenge and reflection. Few cases looked at - Overall there was a need for a sharper focus on *significant* harm rather than wider worries and danger.
11. . Staff concerns included the recent history of changes in staffing in leadership, and ongoing problems with working across a large county, so were interested in the possibilities of more focused locality or 'patch' working
12. The latest national data shows that around 13% of children looked after in Herefordshire are with kinship carers. This is below the regional average and well below nearby LAs such as Shropshire.

10. Other External support

Following the publication of my review and with DfE funding and support, short term immediate support from Worcestershire and Telford and Wrekin was brokered and agreed. Their input was intended to add capacity to address key challenges, pending the identification and appointment of a long-term improvement partner. Worcestershire's support was intended to focus on key partnership issues given the number of shared partners, including the work to improve the MASH and Safeguarding Partnership performance information. This did not progress as quickly or as well as we hoped, with Herefordshire struggling to engage with the support on offer. In June we reflected on how their support could help with the significant challenges in relation to children in care and agreed an additional programme of work over the subsequent months to assist with re-unification and discharge of Care Orders.

Unfortunately, as has previously been the case in Herefordshire, this offer of support was not responded to with any urgency and it is only very recently that any work has commenced. Whilst there has been some progress in the discharge of Care Orders of children placed at home with around 9 discharges achieved in recent months, potentially far greater progress could have been made in respect of the nearly 40 children who have been identified as children for whom this outcome would be in their best interests.

DfE funded SLIP support from Telford and Wrekin was also slow to get going, primarily due to changes in personnel. They did finally complete some useful work to assess the impact of early help which should help with the development of early help arrangements. However due to the time taken more than half the allocated days of support were not used and have now been withdrawn.

More positively, we have seen a lot of progress in relation to SEND with the active involvement of LGA and DfE helping and SLIP support from Bedford assisting. There seems to be better partner engagement on the SEND activity than there is on social care, and work has progressed to agree a new SEND strategy, re-vitalised Strategic

Partnership Board and Operational group now in place, improvements in timescales for Education Health and Care Plans and work underway to develop the Local Offer.

11. Finance

Like most local authorities, Herefordshire is experiencing financial pressures and has required savings across all directorates, including children's. At the same time children's services is projecting a considerable overspend, despite investment in the service, reflects the unprecedented increase in demand and national cost pressures as recently reported by the County Councils Network (CCN) ¹ and also includes pressures from the cost of agency staff, placements and SEN transport, in addition to a savings target of £4m. This is a difficult situation to manage and until recently there was insufficient regular and detailed financial information to enable the directorate to properly monitor and manage spend.

It has taken too long to actively explore safe options for reducing spend, such as the level of family support workers' time spent on supervising contact for children in care, where there may no longer be a need for contact to be supervised, although in other areas, such as reducing the overall headcount and associated costs, there has been more progress. The Council has recently brought in an experienced interim finance officer to support the directorate with firming up a much needed 3 year financial strategy aimed at reducing costs and achieving a balanced budget by the end of the 3 years.

Currently the Council is working on its budget for 2024/25 and seeking to close the current potential gap of £20m, with around half of that related to children's services. It is hoped that reduction in numbers of children in care and in costly residential placements will contribute to savings and that increased recruitment and lower number of cases will reduce the numbers and cost of agency staff. The Leader has signalled a likely review of overall council budgets but remains committed to giving children's services appropriate priority.

12. Staffing

In each of the three Ofsted monitoring visits staff spoken to by inspectors reported that they like working for Herefordshire and are positive about the changes implemented by senior managers and can see the benefits in terms of capacity, improved staff stability, workload and process (Ofsted, May 2023).

Staffing remains a significant challenge though, with nearly 50% of all social work staff agency staff. The Council needs to improve reporting on turnover, and detail on the different service areas so that we can better understand the pressures and the impact of the work that is detailed in the box below. From January to April, the interim assistant chief executive did help drive greater focus on recruitment and retention and this has shown some limited results. The support from H.R. has improved and the

¹ [Councils warn they are 'running out of road' to prevent financial insolvency, as in-year overspends top £600m - County Councils Network](#)

directorate's leadership team are working more closely now with the Director of HR to ensure that their efforts are better co-ordinated, and support the service as needed.

Over the past 6 months, as a result of recent efforts, there has been some reduction in the churn amongst permanent social workers and improved communications, marketing and processes put in place for recruitment. Earlier in the year two locum social work project teams were withdrawn from the overall number of teams working in the service.

Recruitment of permanent social workers is proving difficult but recently 2 permanent team managers and one service manager have been appointed. 13 of 19 team managers are now permanent. After the inspection it was proving difficult even to recruit agency social workers, however all social worker vacancies are now filled, although as stated above, too many with agency staff. This situation has improved and the service is starting to reduce the overall number of agency staff by holding more vacancies as positive action

The council is considering working with an external recruitment partner and has recently significantly improved the financial offer for permanent social workers and team managers to include welcome and retention bonus payments, which appears to be having the desired effect with increased applications in recent weeks.

Agreement has been reached to increase the number of NQSWs employed within this financial year and putting in place increased support for social work apprenticeships (including backfill arrangements). Retention and recruitment is included in the proposed programme of work with Leeds Improvement Partner as they had considerable success over time in this area (albeit in a less challenging recruitment market at that time).

Learning and development opportunities were neglected during previous years but this has now improved and includes a core foundation programme focusing on practice principles that all social workers have attended. There is also a 6 month programme of development for permanent team managers underway which commenced in May. The Social Worker Career Progression Panel is now operational and induction sessions for new starters, covering additional days for MOSAIC (the case management system) training as well as service orientation for new practitioners and managers, have also been introduced to build on the existing corporate induction day.

Earlier in the year the Improvement Advisor and I met with front-line staff and managers to seek their views on the improvement journey and current situation. The discussions were interesting and helpful. As might be expected there was more focus on the concerns than on what was working better. Issues raised included:

- Anxious about more change if agency managers replaced by permanent
- Concern that some agency staff often not available in Hereford when needed to visit a child e.g. saying 'I'm not in Hereford this week, needs to wait till next week'
- Lack of focus on policy and procedures and bringing them up to date – not accessible or easy to understand

- Pressure of longstanding complaints falling on TMs
- Lack of planning to deliver face to face conferences

Among the more positive comments were the following:

- Things have improved after disastrous period with previous senior managers
- More collaboration now on Mosaic developments
- 1st training in 4 years for Team Managers happening now

At that time staff told us that they appreciated the regular weekly updates from the DCS and Service Director and the remote staff monthly briefings, but we felt much more was needed to improve communication. Suggestions from staff included: More face to face all staff meetings, suggestion boxes (actual and virtual), team meetings (regular with agenda and minutes) staff notice boards in all areas (along with signage about which team is in situ), video blogs from senior leaders, more “you said we did communications”, regular floor walking and talking to staff by senior leaders. The work being undertaken with Leeds is helping to improve communication as several workshops focussing on restorative practice have taken place, and work within service areas has now commenced.

In November, while writing this report, I met with the group of 6 Team Managers who have benefitted from the development programme. They told me that the programme had been very useful, particularly the inclusion of individual mentoring. There are still some concerns amongst this group about how significant changes are planned and implemented, and how their views are taken into account. Going forward there is an opportunity to build on this programme to ensure the Team Managers develop a strong forum that can contribute to and influence positive change.

13. Partnership

Steps have been taken to improve strategic planning and partnership working across all areas of children’s services but this has developed from a very low base, and is not yet showing significant impact. Whilst demonstrating a willingness to work together to support children’s services in its improvement, the partnership is not yet making sufficient progress to reduce the pressures on the MASH and to bring down the levels of referral to a rate that should be expected in a local authority of this size.

The Children and Young people’s partnership is now meeting, chaired by Councillor Powell and supported by the Director of Public Health. The focus to date has been on establishing its priorities, on developing early help and the Best Start in life programme. As a Board it is not yet driving change sufficiently or looking at a broader range of issues beyond those that might broadly be contained within a public health agenda such as provision for youth in the county and broader consideration of the impact of rurality and social isolation.

The SEND Strategic Board is now meeting regularly, and is proving much more effective. Work is underway to improve the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Board, now chaired by the lead member, but as the findings of the most recent Monitoring Visit and the initial Leeds analysis show, much more needs to be done to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

Kevin Crompton, the Independent Scrutineer, currently chairs the Safeguarding Children Partnership and is actively engaging with partners in health and the police to improve the effectiveness of the Partnership. Progress on joint issues such as agreeing a multi-agency data set and the partnership response to the challenges posed by the Commission to listen to families has been very slow.

Relationships with head teachers and schools have strengthened. Following publication of my report, the Service Director for Education has supported the establishment of a number of head teacher and other forums which are now ensuring much greater engagement between schools and the Council. This has resulted in better joint planning to support vulnerable children locally, such as establishing a number of local nurture groups based in schools.

14. Early Help

The Service Director, with responsibility for safeguarding, early help and partnerships who started in June, is now taking forward working with the Council, partners and the voluntary and community organisations on what needs to change to deliver better early help arrangements.

The Council's own early help service is an area of strength, with recent evaluations by Ofsted, Leeds and Telford and Wrekin commenting positively about the effectiveness of their child centred approach with families. I commented in my review on the lack of a co-ordinated multi-agency early help response that means that too many families struggle to access support when they are beginning to experience difficulties. The Council's own service currently has a waiting time for families of around 8-12 weeks. Given the rural nature of Herefordshire, focussing early help arrangements round schools potentially gives the opportunity to develop locally based timely help. The Council has spent a long time consulting with its partners in the statutory and voluntary sector but has been slow to spearhead any identifiable change.

Earlier in the year, the Police and Crime Commission committed £500k over 2 years to fund youth provision to reduce offending and the Council committed to match fund this. It has taken some considerable time for the Council and its partners to agree how to best use this money. This is now being taken forward with a published invitation for voluntary and community groups and schools to bid for grants to develop local provision. This is a positive initiative and should form the basis for developing creative local early help solutions.

I have encouraged the Council to bid to the DfE for additional funding to support the delivery of better early help arrangements. If successful the funding would enable co-ordination of activity and the opportunity to pump prime new arrangements in a number of identified locations across the County. The intention is to engage with interested schools who already have experience of extended services e.g. developing nurture groups and with voluntary organisations. This would support building new arrangements which potentially would include the Council's own early help service, the Council Talk Community initiative which currently focusses on adult support, alongside other professional services such as health visitors.

This would be the beginning of a different way of working which would benefit families, and should lead to a reduction in the need for social work intervention. The key will be to work creatively, proactively and quickly to secure ways of responding to families that are timely, co-ordinated, meet need and deliver measurable positive outcomes. The strategic oversight for this work lies with Children and Young People's Partnership who need to ensure the programme is driven forward, whether or not the bid to the DFE is successful.

15. Pace of improvement

The Improvement Advisor and I agree with the comments made by the Ofsted inspectors at the conclusion of the Monitoring Visits, that whilst there is evidence of some improvement and areas of much better practice, the pace of change is too slow. I commented in my initial review on the need for a much more robust and purposeful approach. Whilst there is greater direction now from the DCS and his leadership team there are still too many areas in the Improvement Plan which have not been addressed quickly enough and the timescales have shifted. The Improvement Director has recently listed the areas of priority (with the link to the Improvement Plan (IP) where agreed timescales have not been met:

- a) **Recruitment & retention** - for social workers and foster carers (IP 2.1 & 2.4)
- b) **Supervision and Management Oversight** (IP 8.2 & 8.3)
- c) **Participation & Engagement** (encompassing Direct work, Life Story Work and Consultation with children in need of support, protection and care and their parents/carers) (IP 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 & 7.3)
- d) **Child Protection - Safety planning & risk management** (IP 5.5)
- e) **Children in Care achieving Permanence** (IP 6.5 & 6.6)
- f) **Implementation of Care Leaver's Offer** (IP 1.5)
- g) **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children** (IP 5.9)
- h) **Performance, Systems and QA** (IP 2.4, 9.1, 9.2 & 9.3)

I have mentioned some of areas that have been slow to progress including the use of external support, return to face to face conferences and reviews, reviewing family contact time, developing early help arrangements and discharging care orders. In addition to those we have been concerned about delays in agreeing a housing protocol for 16 and 17 year olds, setting up family group conferencing, and developing locality working.

The improvements in SEND have demonstrated that the Council can make effective use of external support and deliver change in a timely way. The political and officer leadership need to be clearer about the barriers to moving more quickly in other key areas, and how this can be speedily addressed.

16. Conclusions and next steps

To conclude I will reflect on each of the recommendations in my original review:

The Council will:

- a) Strengthen the leadership of children's services to ensure that the pace of improvement increases rapidly in line with the agreed Improvement Plan. *The leadership has been strengthened, pace has increased only slightly with delays in agreed timescales*
- b) Ensure that within the next 3 months there will be evidence of progress in:
 - i) Reducing the number of agency social workers and increasing the numbers of permanent social workers *Progress made*
 - ii) Increasing the number of permanent front line Team Managers *Achieved*
 - iii) Increasing the number of child protection case conferences and reviews held face to face. *Progress made*
 - iv) Reducing the proportion of assessments that conclude no further action *Progress made*
 - v) Children experiencing fewer changes in social worker *Progress made*
 - vi) Improving the quality of practice seen in audits *Progress made*
 - vii) Finalising the SEND strategy, and acting on agreed immediate priorities *Achieved*
- c) Resolve, as far as is possible, all outstanding historic complaints *Progress made*
- d) Agree, with its partners, through a range of Strategic forums, a number of actions which will demonstrate collectively their commitment to raising ambition and aspiration for children and young people, and responding to their views. *Progressing*
- e) Work with the LGA to develop the knowledge and impact of members in key roles, including the leader, lead member and scrutiny members. *Progressing*

I have remained as Commissioner to oversee the securing of short-term external support, and to continue to drive improvement, including working with the Council and its partners to increase the effectiveness of the Improvement Board, and to put in place a long-term partnership with an outstanding local authority (Leeds) to deliver sustained improvement

In this review of progress 8 months on from my report being published, we need to return to the question of whether the level and trajectory of progress that is required has been sufficiently achieved to confirm that children's services should remain under the operational control of the Council, with no further consideration of the need for an alternative delivery model. Whilst progress has been slower than we would want, there has been positive developments that hopefully can form the basis for quicker and more sustained improvement. I do not think any further consideration of an alternative delivery model is required as it remains my view that supporting the Council and its partners to deliver quicker and better improvements is the best way forward.

There has been a lot of activity since my report was published. There are some signs of improvement which is encouraging but it is also very clear the longstanding and deep-rooted issues remain a challenge for the council and its partners. This is crystallised in the Commission's report outlining the poor experiences some families have had. We know many of those issues are still current, particularly for children in care, and need to be tackled.

The short-term support has to date had limited impact. It is hoped that the partnership with Leeds will help bring about the fundamental changes needed, but this will also require ongoing commitment and drive from the Council leaders and partners. Herefordshire need to demonstrate that they can deliver change at pace which will make a difference to children and their families. The Commission's report contained

some hard-hitting messages about the poor response some families received, not just in the past but also currently due to limited early help and poor practice. The evaluations by Ofsted and Leeds have identified some strengths which must be built on if the Council and its partners are going to respond in a way that will begin to restore confidence to families and to achieve many more tangible moves forward. The partnership with Leeds will support children's services to address the cultural, leadership and practice issues but this will take time to have real impact across the whole service.

For those of us working to support and challenge Herefordshire, there has been a level of frustration experienced when even with our involvement issues have not progressed with pace or been concluded. Often progress is only achieved through our continued focus, such as the work of the Improvement Advisor on early help and myself taking the lead on the Commission to listen to families. The work with Leeds is being well received and is an important addition to the DfE intervention, which is critical and necessary. We hope that with this additional help the Council will start to deliver the changes needed in a more timely way.

Progress should be reviewed in 6 months' time.

Eleanor Brazil

6.11.2023



Title of report: Annual review of earmarked reserves

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 21 December 2023

Report by: Cabinet member finance and corporate services

Report by: Director of Resources and Assurance

Report author: Head of Strategic Finance

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To note and review the earmarked reserves held by the council.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The earmarked reserves and balances held by the council at 31 March 2023 are reviewed and confirmed as prudent to meet future financial commitments and risks.**

Alternative options

1. There is no alternative option to undertaking a review of earmarked reserves and balances, it is considered to be best practice.
2. Alternative use of earmarked reserves could be proposed, this is open for Cabinet to determine. Not all earmarked reserves may be redirected, for example, the funds may be subject to conditions on spending.

Key considerations

3. Earmarked reserves are set aside from the general fund for future expenditure to support specific corporate priorities. They generally arise where funding exceeds expenditure, usually due to the timing of receipts being ahead of incurred expenditure. Earmarked reserves are one-off income streams and therefore cannot be utilised for ongoing budget expenditure commitments.
4. It is considered good practice to undertake an annual review of earmarked reserves to establish the continued need for each specific reserve and to ensure a prudent level of reserves to meet future anticipated commitments and financial risks. Appendix 1 details the significant balances within earmarked reserves totalling £81.8 million and the general fund balance of £9.6 million as at 31 March 2023.
5. The general fund is held as a strategic reserve to cover emergency unforeseen events. The council's policy is to maintain the general fund balance at a minimum level of between 3% and 5% of the net revenue budget. At £9.6 million, this is 5.5% of the 2022/23 net revenue budget.
6. In 2021, the councils' external auditors, Grant Thornton, published a document; Lessons from Public Interest Reports. This issued sector guidance on the minimum level of reserves advisable for Local Authorities, being "general fund reserves (including earmarked general fund reserves) should be a minimum of 5% of net spending and arguably should be somewhere between 5 and 10%". At £91.4 million, the council has reserve balances of 52% of the net revenue budget.
7. Earmarked reserves were last reviewed by Cabinet in September 2022, where the general fund balance was reported to be £9.6 million and earmarked reserves £96.5 million as at 31 March 2022. Since then, the general fund balance has remained the same, and earmarked reserves have decreased by £14.7 million, movements are detailed in Appendix 1.
8. Earmarked reserve balances at 31 March 2023 include £17.6 million grant funding carried forward to 2023/24. This represents amounts of grant funding received, with no outstanding grant conditions attached, which have not yet been applied to relevant expenditure. In accordance with the principles of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and relevant accounting standards, these amounts are treated as earmarked reserves to be carried forward for application in future accounting periods.
9. The budget setting process for 2024/25 and refresh of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) will include consideration of use of these reserves to provide spend to save initiatives, address corporate risks or one-off spend on corporate priorities.

Community impact

10. The use of reserves demonstrates how the council is using its financial resources to best deliver the priorities within the agreed corporate plan, health and safety obligations and corporate parenting responsibilities.

Environmental Impact

9. 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.

10. Whilst this is a factual summary and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration will be made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

11. 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.
12. 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 report is a factual summary, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

13. The use of reserves will mean permanent depletion of those reserves unless budget is set aside to replenish those reserves or additional grant funding is received. The actual incurring of expenditure against earmarked reserves will be subject to approval following the usual governance processes which will detail the resource implication of each proposal.

Legal implications

14. The review of earmarked reserves does not have in itself any legal implications, using reserves to manage risks is a prudent approach.

Risk management

15. Maintaining reserves for risk mitigation and an annual review of reserve balances is recommended by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) as best practice.

Consultees

16. None.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Earmarked reserves and general fund balances

Background papers

None identified.



EARMARKED RESERVES AND GENERAL FUND BALANCE

Reserve	1 April 2022 £m	Transfers out £m	Transfers in £m	31 March 2023 £m	Purpose of reserve
Business rates risk	(11.0)	-	(2.1)	(13.1)	To manage the impact of changes in business rates retention, collection and funding
Waste disposal	(7.9)	0.8	(2.3)	(9.4)	To support increased future costs on waste disposal and collection services
Schools' balances	(9.3)	1.2	(1.2)	(9.3)	Balances held for individual maintained schools
Fastershire clawback	-	-	(5.1)	(5.1)	Balances held for the Fastershire project
Additional pension costs	(4.8)	0.7	-	(4.1)	To manage the impact of changes in the pension liability, e.g. in relation to the McCloud judgement
Settlement monies	(3.3)	-	-	(3.3)	Balances held in relation to historic settlement claims awarded to the council
Care market costs	(3.0)	-	-	(3.0)	To manage expenditure within adult social care
Adult social care integration	(2.3)	0.5	-	(1.8)	To fund the "Discharge to Assess" costs jointly with Health
Whitecross school PFI	(1.7)	-	(0.1)	(1.8)	To manage the impact of future budgetary pressures on the Whitecross school PFI contract
Technology enabled communities	(0.4)	-	(1.4)	(1.8)	To fund the transformation of digital technology
Financial resilience	(17.4)	17.4	(1.2)	(1.2)	Amounts set aside to support financial risk
Severe weather fund	(1.1)	0.1	-	(1.0)	To fund costs associated with adverse weather conditions
Unused grants carried forward	(23.1)	14.5	(9.0)	(17.6)	Unspent grant monies earmarked for future expenditure
Other reserves individually under £1 million	(11.2)	5.1	(3.2)	(9.3)	
Total earmarked reserves	(96.5)	40.3	(25.6)	(81.8)	
General fund balance	(9.6)	-	-	(9.6)	Revenue resources available to meet future commitments
Total earmarked reserves and general fund	(106.1)	40.3	(25.6)	(91.4)	



Title of report: Q2 Performance Report

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 21 December 2023

Report by: Cabinet member finance and corporate services

Report by: Director of Strategy and Transformation

Report author: Director of Strategy and Transformation

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To review the performance for Quarter 2 2023/24 and to report the performance position across all Directorates for this period.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) To review the performance for Quarter 2 year 2023/24, and identify any additional actions to achieve future performance measures.

Alternative options

1. Cabinet may choose to review delivery and operational performance more or less frequently; or request alternative actions to address any identified areas of under-performance, including referral to the relevant scrutiny committee.

Key considerations

Performance: Economy

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Amy Pitt, Tel: 01432 383758, email: Amy.Pitt@herefordshire.gov.uk

2. All the projects are being captured in detail on a delivery dashboard and progress monitored. Of the 22 activities of the delivery plan, 4 are complete (blue), 11 are on track (green), 5 are at risk (amber) and 2 are paused (violet).
3. Where targets have been set, 63 percent of performance measures within the theme have met, or exceeded targets – there remains some work within the directorates to ensure all measures have targets established.
4. Local Plan Review – a number of informative workshops have been held with cabinet over the last couple of months to clarify direction on a number of key issues. The draft plan is now being revised to reflect cabinet priorities, working towards REG 18 consultation in the spring 2024.
5. There has been a high take up of UK Shared Prosperity and Rural Prosperity Grants, with capital applications fully allocated to projects in 2023/24. For example, there was very high levels of applications for the Festivals and Events Grants which have supported existing and new activities over the summer.
6. A Planning Improvement Board has been established including the Leader, Cllr Swinglehurst and Cllr James (Chair of the Planning Committee) to oversee the implementation of the planning improvement plan. Improvements will enhance the service to planning and applicants, whilst making systems and processes more efficient. A capital programme bid has been submitted for the critical replacement of the very dated and extremely limited Civica IT system.
7. Herefordshire Council Building Control has been selected as a regional winner of the Local Authority Building Control Awards for the Eign Gate residential event and is a shortlisted finalist for the Grand Finals 2023.
8. The Environmental Health Team have again operated an out of hours service over July and August, investigating a high number of complaints related to outside night time events at a wide range of pubs and entertainment venues.
9. As part of the Planning Improvement Plan/ Directorate Transformation Programme, a review of systems and processes is underway, and planning pre-app services are due to be re-launched from January 2024. Although we continue to face high levels of turnover in the team. We are currently recruiting Head of Planning and Building Control, Strategic Planning and Neighbourhood Planning Manager, and 2 Senior Planner posts. However, high levels of vacancies are having an impact on planning performance.
10. A regulatory services transformation programme is also underway, reviewing the future requirements to deliver the service and seeking to reduce the large number of disparate teams. The Environmental Health team continue to face critical vacancies (8) and are unable to recruit to key posts.

Performance: Environment

11. Of the 26 activities (Projects) of the delivery plan, 2 are complete (blue); 22 are on track (green); and 2 are at risk (amber).
12. Where targets have been set, 80 percent of performance measures within the theme have met, or exceeded targets – there remains some work within the directorates to ensure all measures have targets established.
13. Work continues on the Public Realm Future Operating Model programme. We are actively engaged in discussions with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) to agree the services that would be transferred back to the council and which will continue to be delivered by them. A final report is due to be presented to Cabinet in March 2024. At the same time, we have commenced a detailed discussion with BBLP with regard to the need to better manage our

existing plant and fleet. This will require a fundamental review of the existing fleet, and will identify those elements that need replacing and when, and will also provide the Service with options to reshape services as a result. Once the full fleet picture is developed, the funding arrangements to deliver this will need to be decided upon.

14. Keep Herefordshire Warm advice service is delivering as expected against target for this time of year and we have had a successful transition to a new provider – YES, after an open procurement exercise. The KPI is red due to the target doubling compared to last year (2,000 instead of 1,000 enquiries).
15. Carbon County Reduction – the first panel meeting for the Marches Energy Grant was held in September, 4 grants were awarded, totalling £43,164.93.
16. Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) 2 - the original procurement for this scheme has been abandoned based on the concerns and issues with Surefires ability to deliver the contract. The decision was taken following a briefing at Directorate Leadership Team.

The new Invitation to Tender went live on 10 October with a closing date of the 24 October and will be appointing two contractors in this round to reduce any further risk to the project. Residents who have applied for the scheme have been notified of the delay and this is being managed by Herefordshire Council and Severn Wye Energy Agency as our customer journey support; our first batch has been approved for 2 Park Homes and installs are in progress.
17. The pipeline to pass over to the new installers is 73 properties and promotional work is ongoing; we have re-forecast the number of properties for this financial year from 152 homes to 100.

Performance: Community

18. All performance measures in Community Wellbeing are currently on track to achieve target this quarter. Recruitment across the care sector remains a major challenge.
19. Of the 47 activities of the delivery plan, 16 are complete (blue); 21 are on track (green); 6 are at risk (amber); 2 are compromised (red); and 2 are paused (violet).
20. Social care operations and commissioning continues to work with partners to transform the discharge to assess offer for patients. The initial high level operational plan has been signed off and work is now underway on processes, standard operational procedures and resources behind all the pathways. While this work continues, there was a decline in people accessing a permanent residential setting in September following introducing new ways of working within the integrated discharge team.
21. Numbers into substance misuse treatment have increased and Herefordshire is on track to reach the ambitions set out in the drug strategy – From Harm to Hope. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) is pleased with the outcomes being achieved in Herefordshire. In addition, treatment outcomes and representations into the service following treatment continue to show good outcomes. The number of people accessing treatment following leaving prison are low and need improvement. This is down to a number of reasons including recruitment and effectiveness of pathways. It may also be down to data flow. The next steps are to review the pathway with Turning Point, the substance misuse service, and probation using the national self-assessment framework to inform this. Turning Point are also in the process of recruiting new criminal justice workers to support the pathway.
22. Turning Point, has produced a number of short, but very powerful films to support recovery month. September is 'Recovery Month' and as part of this there is an organisation called Recovery Street Film Festival who gather short films about people's journey to recovery and then tour the country showing the ones that are shortlisted. The films below have been submitted from Herefordshire and we are hopeful they will be shortlisted:

- a. Matt's Story – Happy Days: <https://youtu.be/xUzfaHWCOfw>
 - b. Adam's Story – Brutal Honesty: https://youtu.be/DUo4P_mXF0I
 - c. Jimi's Story – Up Up and Away: [Up Up and Away - YouTube](#)
 - d. Caia's Story – Just want a normal life: https://youtu.be/rLTvZ_tQty4
 - e. Maria's Story – Spaghetti of Wool: [Spaghetti of Wool - YouTube](#)
23. The Local Government Association, in partnership with Partners in Care and Health, is offering a programme of free support to local authorities to enhance their commissioning functions. Herefordshire Council has taken up the offer and secured support for an independent review of the All Age Commissioning structure. The review will consider the overall effectiveness of the current structure, the limitations of the structure, the effectiveness of processes and function and make recommendations for improving the commissioning function, including structural changes. The review will take place between September 2023 and November 2023.
 24. As part of the Hereford Museum & Art Gallery Redevelopment, the Museum Service has finished removing collections from the building including the 1600 year old Roman-era floor mosaics which were successfully removed from the stair hall. Two public open days saw 200 people visit the building to see the mosaic be taken down.
 25. The temporary library is operating from the education room in the Museum Resource & Learning Centre. Hoard open mornings and family days have been well attended. A range of collections-based activity has been continuing in the stores, linked to the relocation of the collections from the Museum & Art Gallery.
 26. Following the first Monitoring Visit in March 2023, Ofsted carried out their second and third Monitoring Visits in June and September respectively. The second Monitoring Visit focussed on Children in Need or those subject to a Child Protection Plan. Ofsted observed that Social Work practice has started to improve and positive progress is being made with some families although the quality and effectiveness of practice remains variable.
 27. The third Monitoring Visit considered children in care and achieving permanence. There was positive feedback in respect of practice for our disabled children but the approach to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was not deemed as equitable or inclusive. In both Monitoring Visits Ofsted recognised that some parts of the service are much improved and no formal safeguarding concerns were raised during the three Monitoring Visits. Evidence of progress was noted but the pace and impact of improvement needs to be improved upon.
 28. Work with our Improvement Partner, Leeds has started and following the launch events Restorative Practice training is being rolled out across the service and there has been positive feedback from staff. Leeds is also supporting the leadership team and initial sessions have been held. We have commissioned training in respect of Supervision focussing on front-line Managers.
 29. As part of the statutory notice, a Children's Commissioner was appointed to review the Council's capacity and capability to improve services within a reasonable timeframe. The Commissioner's initial report was published on 1 March 2023 and included several recommendations for the Council to resolve. A 6 months review of progress meeting took place to assist the Children's Commissioner in preparation with her next report and recommendations. The report by the Children's Commissioner is due to be published in December and will be shared with Cabinet in due course.

Performance: Corporate

30. A set of measures of corporate performance, which have been selected as an indication of the overall health of the organisation, are included in Appendix A. Where targets have been set, 79 percent of performance measures within the theme have met, or exceeded target.

31. The proportion of invoices paid on time continued to be better than target throughout Quarter 2 and better than the corresponding period last year; this despite the increase in invoices being processed from 51,844 to 54,867 over comparative periods.
32. Council tax collection rates remain on a par with last year; business rate collection rates are currently lower than last year, although the gap is closing significantly compared to last year. As there has been a re-valuation in business rates for 2023, it should be noted the overall charge of Business rates last year will differ to this year but expected collection remains within the scope of last year.
33. The processing of housing benefit new claims and change of circumstances continues to remain steady and within target.
34. Responding to FOIs and EIRs remains better than target (95%). 469 of the 479 requests (98.61%) received during the first six months have been responded to within timescale.
35. Despite being behind target there has been significant improvement in the response times to complaints across directorates. Historically responses to complaints have been late, inconsistent or non-existent. There has, however, been significant improvement in the response times across directorates. Internal workshops are offered to C&YP on a weekly basis and LGSCO Complaints Handling training is offered to all directorates. A 'best practice' has been written to share with staff to ensure we are following the statutory guidance when handling a complaint.
36. Through the past year the annualised sickness absence rate has increased from 8.72 days at the end of September 2022 to 8.99 days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at the end of September 2023, however, this has decreased after identifying peaks during the winter months of 2022. Levels of absence attributed to Covid-19 did begin to stabilise, although the figures have fluctuated in the past 3 months, decreasing from 5.19% in August to 4.99% in September. The winter flu vaccination programme for 2023 for Council employees has commenced and should help to reduce the impact of influenza over the coming months.
37. The service is proactively managing absence and greater focus is being given to supporting our employees to be healthy in order to improve attendance. Work is in progress to focus on different ways to support employees to stay at work or return to work as soon as possible. These activities include: improving and refreshing manager skills on having difficult conversations to promote good relationships where employees feel supported; rolling out mental health awareness training to ensure we can support those who are struggling and intervene before the situation reaches crisis point; promoting increased physical activity.
38. Workforce stability is good and improving, with turnover decreasing from a little over 13% in August 2023 to 11.83% in October 2023. Of note is the turnover within Children and Young People that is now at 11.42% having been above 20% a year ago; and Adults and Communities seeing a 11.42% annualised turnover compared to 19.02% twelve months ago. It is anticipated that the Local Government Pay Award, may aid recruitment, particularly at the lower end of our pay bands, although many of our recruitment challenges remain. The council approach to reward and recognition continues to be reviewed to ensure that the overall employment offer is competitive, and Herefordshire Council is seen as an employer of choice, continuing to capitalise on the very positive results of last year's staff survey.
39. A continued positive shift in the proportion of parking transactions being made by card or phone has been maintained. 587,459 / 968,116 transactions have been made by card or phone in the first six months.
40. Improvement in recovery rate of penalty charge notices (PCN) has continued, meaning the average amount collected per PCN is just above the target.

Community impact

41. In accordance with the accepted code of corporate governance, the council must ensure that it has an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. To support effective accountability the council is committed to reporting on actions completed and outcomes achieved, and ensuring stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the council plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner.
42. Regularly reviewing performance with a view to identifying actions which will further drive improvement in outcomes or efficiencies helps ensure the council achieves its County Plan priorities.

Environmental Impact

43. This report details how progress is being made in achieving the Delivery Plan which details how the council is working to deliver the environmental ambitions set out in the County Plan. Individual projects and deliverables included within the Delivery Plan will all be subject to their own governance arrangements and assessment of environmental and ecological.

Equality duty

44. 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.
45. 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 back office functions, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

46. These recommendations have no direct financial implications, however cabinet may wish to consider how money is utilised in order to meet the council's objectives.

Legal implications

47. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Risk management

48. The risks associated with the council's business are recorded on the relevant service risk register and escalated in accordance with the council's Performance Management Framework and Risk Management Plan. The highest risks, i.e. those scoring greater than 16 after controls, are escalated to the council's Corporate Risk Register.

Consultees

49. None in relation to this report.

Appendices

Appendix A Delivery plan dashboards

Background papers

None identified.

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 01/12/2023
Finance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 30/11/2023
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 30/11/2023
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 30/11/2023
Risk	Kevin Lloyd	Date 01/12/2023
Approved by	Amy Pitt	Date 13/12/2023

Delivery

Ambition	Action	Lead Officer	Progress	RAG	
				Q1	Q2
EC1 - Develop environmentally sound infrastructure that attracts investment	Work with stakeholders to consult, draft and publish a new economic strategy and UK Shared Prosperity Investment Plan to support the continued recovery of the county, leading to longer term accelerated growth and higher value jobs for local people	Service Director, Economy and Growth	UKSPF Project Board 09.10.23 to update. Grants are all open and applications either pending or completed (Rural fund closed).	GREEN	GREEN
	Deliver the detailed business case for Greening the City	Service Director, Economy and Growth	Bus shelters and greening grants are either completed or on track. Active Travel Measures are delayed due to firstly aligning with LUF works and now due to awaiting the minor works framework. It is anticipated that framework will be completed by end November and then the ATM's on GWW can be implemented.	AMBER	AMBER
EC2 - Use council land to create economic opportunities and bring higher paid jobs to the county	Work with partners to implement the £22.4m Town Investment funded through the Stronger Towns Fund	Head of Chief Executive's Office	HC providing PM support for Wyeseid and South Wye projects to assist the groups running them. Wyeseid requires footpath diversion, PROW are understaffed and have indicated there could be a delay to the diversion - this could potentially delay the project.	AMBER	AMBER
	Produce and submit detailed proposals for investment in the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery, Maylord Orchard Library and the Learning Resource Centre	Service Director, Economy and Growth	Agreement from CLT to progress HMAG through RIBA4 through design team/construction partner. Feasibility assessment from Morgan Sindall due 11.10.23. Shirehall Library FBC finalised and report written for Cabinet 26.10.23. Full Council to decide £3m extra for Shirehall redevelopment works 13.10.23. Following Cabinet decision on 26th, STB will be approached for consent to amend project with papers due 27.10.23.	AMBER	AMBER
	Commence implementation of the Market Town Investment Plans, allocating the £20.6m investment to bring forward employment Land and to create incubation space for businesses	Service Director, Economy and Growth	A new proposal is being considered by cabinet and full council through the autumn to allocate new capital funding to this project under the umbrella of 'Employment Land in Herefordshire'. The main focus of this would be Model Farm site in Ross, with a smaller amount allocated to bring forward sites in the other market towns.	VIOLET	VIOLET
	Pursue potential sites for new commercial employment land uses in market towns.	Service Director, Economy and Growth	A new proposal is being considered by cabinet and full council through the autumn to allocate new capital funding to this project under the umbrella of 'Employment Land in Herefordshire'. The main focus of this would be Model Farm site in Ross, with a smaller amount allocated to bring forward sites in the other market towns.	VIOLET	VIOLET
	Increase engagement with the private sector through a Talk Business programme of communications, networking and events including quarterly business briefings and six monthly meetings in the market towns	Service Director, Economy and Growth	Business summits in the market towns continue alongside day-to-day engagement with county businesses.	GREEN	GREEN

	Increase the level of engagement and quality of support provided through the Marches Growth Hub, with a specific focus on supporting businesses to respond to climate change and reduce their carbon impact	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	Engagement with Herefordshire businesses continues successfully through the Marches Energy Grant which has replaced BEEP and provides end-to-end support from initial advice to business audit to installation and realisation. Funding is part LEP and part UKSPF. Good levels of engagement mean that the scheme is over-subscribed and has a reserve list. This engagement feeds into activity under the separate Citizen's Assembly programme of work.	GREEN	GREEN
	Continue sales of council owned land resulting in business growth, private sector investment and creating more and better paid jobs	Service Director, Economy and Growth	1 plot sale has already been completed with a further 5 currently going through the legal and other council processes.	GREEN	GREEN
	Complete North Magazine Civil Works with first plots sold for development	Service Director, Economy and Growth	Project board recently made decision to spend final phase 5 funds on additional plot improvement works which will further increase capital receipts, increase saleability and create additional job outputs. This will ensure final spend takes place in 23/24 thus also meeting LEP match funding requirements.	GREEN	GREEN
	Complete NMITE's Skylon Park campus including the Centre for Advanced Timber Technology and Centre for Automated Manufacturing	Service Director, Economy and Growth	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
EC3 - Invest in education and the skills needed by employers	Review the skills and supply chain required to meet the needs of the county, aligned to the Economic Big Plan	Service Director, Economy and Growth	UKSPF Project Board to update 09.10.23.	GREEN	GREEN
	Implement a new recruitment platform for council employees, to attract skilled workers to the county	Director of HR and OD	This is now a BAU process and is now closed	BLUE	BLUE
	Run a joint marketing campaign with Higher Education providers to attract students to study in the county, including those from the local population	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning		GREEN	GREEN
	Provide more apprenticeship, supported internship and work experience opportunities, including through the council's direct contracts	Director of HR and OD	This is now a BAU process and is now closed	BLUE	BLUE
	Engage with 300 young people via Youth Employment Hub to support 16 to 24 year olds into education, employment and/or training	Service Director, Improvement	The SAV unit has been installed at the hub and a handover of the building is due in the coming weeks. Engagement activities with young people are being organised to support development of the Youth Employment Hub's branding which will be used on the physical hub, website and any other promotional materials. The DWP (Department for Work & Pensions) application has been submitted and currently waiting for approval to secure funding to recruit a Coordinator for the hub and service.	AMBER	AMBER
	Agree a new strategic plan and future delivery model for the council's adult and community learning education service	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning		GREEN	GREEN
EC4 - Enhance digital connectivity for communities and business	Secure at least 15 businesses taking up the new business grant, provide new household grants to eligible residents, and at least 100 residents improving their digital skills	Head of Operations (Broadband)	No further applications have been received for this grant and we are in the process of closing this down.	GREEN	GREEN
	Commission Age Concern to deliver support older people to improve their digital skills. Including 288 places for 6 week computer café course, 60 attending 1-2-1 course and 50 tablet loans	Head of Operations (Broadband)	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE

	Increase superfast and full fibre broadband coverage in the county, and move to new stage of gigabit capable speeds.	Head of Operations (Broadband)		GREEN	GREEN
EC5 - Protect and promote our heritage, culture and natural beauty to enhance quality of life and support tourism	Progress the Leominster Heritage Action Zone Project; including completion of public realm improvements	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	<p>The main focus during this period has been to finalise the design for public realm improvements in Leominster, balancing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordability, severely impacted by inflation (the budget was set in 2020). Timescale - what can be delivered within the Historic England grant timescale. Statutory highways requirements - particularly the issues around pedestrians and traffic sharing the same spaces. Views and priorities of stakeholders, including Leominster Town Council, Historic England, local businesses and members of the public, disability groups and others. The ongoing Traffic Regulation Order process, and whether the spaces will in future be prioritised to traffic, pedestrians or a mixture of the two (i.e. pedestrianised for certain hours of the day). <p>The resultant scheme would transform High Street and Corn Square with new and repaired surfaces along with improved accessibility and speed management via strategically placed 'raised tables' in the roadway. At the same time however, it can accommodate both traffic and pedestrians so will work no matter what the outcome of the TRO, and based on cost estimates prior to procurement is expected to be deliverable within the available budget. The scheme does stop short of the fully level pedestrianised 'town plaza' space originally mooted for Corn Square. However this would be reliant on the conclusion of the TRO (uncertain outcome and will not conclude within the grant timeframe) and would require a budget greater than is currently available.</p> <p>A tender for the work is due out during October leading to mobilisation in January (also addressing concerns of local business about roadworks during the busy pre-Christmas period) and completion during the summer of 2024. Negotiation is ongoing with Historic England around timescales for the spend of match funding.</p> <p>Other smaller projects within the HAZ programme continue, including conservation area appraisal/management plans, shop-front improvement grants (being delivered in partnership with LTC), 'Light-Up-Leominster' and other conservation-area linked</p>	AMBER	AMBER
	Support the growth of the tourism industry across Herefordshire, working closely with private sector partners and building on strengths and new opportunities in areas such as accessible and green tourism, creative industries, promotion of the cultural sector, and improving our Public Rights of Way	Service Director, Economy and Growth		GREEN	GREEN

■ complete
 ■ on target
 ■ at risk
 ■ compromised
 ■ Paused

Performance Measures

Measure	Lead Officer	Q2	Improve-ment?	Target Met?
Number of businesses locating to the Enterprise Zone (cumulative)	Service Director, Economy and Growth	13		
Area of land sold (acres) Enterprise Zone (cumulative)	Service Director, Economy and Growth	1.14		

Area of workspace developed / committed to construction (sqm) Enterprise Zone (cumulative)	Service Director, Economy and Growth	8,870		
Job opportunities identified in investment commitments made on site (cumulative) (Enterprise Zone)	Service Director, Economy and Growth	25		
Herefordshire Growth Hub: No of Business events	Service Director, Economy and Growth	4	n/a	
Herefordshire Growth Hub: Undertake business diagnostics	Service Director, Economy and Growth	48	n/a	
The number of business engaged and supported	Service Director, Economy and Growth	296	n/a	
The value of grants paid to businesses to support viability, or enable growth (MBIG,SEG)	Service Director, Economy and Growth	£67,596 <i>(scheme now ended)</i>	n/a	
The value of grants paid to businesses to support viability, or enable growth - Shared and Rural Prosperity Fund: Issue £1.25m grants	Service Director, Economy and Growth	0	n/a	
The value of grants paid to businesses to support viability, or enable growth - Shared and Rural Prosperity Fund: Attract a minimum of £1.25m private sector investment	Service Director, Economy and Growth	0	n/a	
Number of businesses supported to start up	Service Director, Economy and Growth	0	n/a	
Shared Prosperity Fund: No of jobs created	Service Director, Economy and Growth	0	n/a	
Shared Prosperity Fund: No of Jobs safeguarded	Service Director, Economy and Growth	0	n/a	
Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund: Attract businesses receiving grants	Service Director, Economy and Growth	0	n/a	

■ on target/improvement
 ■ within 10% of target/small decline
 ■ missed target by more than 10% /significant decline
 ■ Not Available

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Corporate Risks						
Risk		Impact				
		1 Insignificant	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Significant
CRR.63 Hereford City Centre Transport Package	Likelihood					
CRR.69 Hereford City Centre Improvement Programme		5 Certain			CRR.83	
CRR.70 HCCI - delivery within LEP timescale		4 Likely			CRR.63; CRR.69; CRR.70; CRR.71; CRR.80;	CRR.82
CRR.71 HCCI - decision making and VfM		3 Possible				
CRR.80 Supply chain capacity		2 Unlikely				
CRR.82 Contractual payments		1 Rare				
CRR.83 Contract fleet lease expiry						

Delivery

Ambition	Action	Lead Officer	Progress	RAG	
				Q1	Q2
EN0 - Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live	Complete 3 key consultations to progress production of the updated Core Strategy	Corporate Director, Economy and Environment		GREEN	GREEN
	Deliver full draft of the Core Strategy Update ready for pre-examination public consultation (Regulation 19)	Corporate Director, Economy and Environment		GREEN	GREEN
	Implement the new Supplementary Planning Documents for Agriculture and Planning and Environmental Building Standards	Corporate Director, Economy and Environment		GREEN	GREEN
	Progress the Minerals and Waste policy through to examination and adoption.	Corporate Director, Economy and Environment		GREEN	GREEN
EN1 - Minimise waste and increase reuse, repair and recycling	Implement a new waste strategy in preparation for collection changes in 2024.	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	Cabinet report 5th October accepted with recommendations an update on the procurement of the new service. Budget pressures were highlighted with regard to the new service beginning on the 1st September The corporate Waste Strategy which was ratified by Council in 2021 continues to be an aim & objective; and will be a phased approach . Will deliver in full the strategy when able to afford it (when central government provides the appropriate funding);the new contract will begin with a “Standard” Service” on the 1st September 2024. The extension to the current contract has been signed and will cover the period November 2023 to the end of August 2024.	GREEN	GREEN
	Promote changes to the new collection system for refuse and recycling throughout the year	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	Comms and engagement is at the very core of the waste service in BAU and also with the roll out of the new service. This will be a key part of the mobilisation of the new contract. There will be some changes and comms and engagement will be key to the successful roll out. There will be a specific work stream with regard to comms and engagement within the mobilisation plan. BAU work with regard to improving the circular economy continues.	GREEN	GREEN
	Run pilot schemes for reusable nappies with 75 families and trial for recycling storage options with people living in flats	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	There are 5 repair cafes that are now established within the County and three more that are looking for start – up in the county before the end of quarter 4 ; we are working closely with a number of groups. Activity with the nappy and flat projects will gain momentum over quarter 3 and 4. A resident survey is proposed at the HRC sites to increase reuse as well as working with the third and voluntary sector over improved co-ordination. A workshop to discuss further with all stakeholders will take place on the 1st November. 2 visits have taken out of county as to exploring the principle of reuse shops.	GREEN	GREEN

EN2 - Improve and extend active travel options throughout the county	Produce the Hereford City Masterplan to support long term planning for transport	Service Director, Environment and Highways	A series of five workshops have been scheduled with cabinet for October/November 2023 to review each element of the draft masterplan. Once revised priorities have been agreed, the masterplan can commence to the public consultation stage.	GREEN	GREEN
	Deliver active travel programmes to encourage more walking and cycling along with measures to improve air quality and travel plans with businesses	Service Director, Environment and Highways	St Owen St snagging programmed for October.	GREEN	GREEN
	Install new cycle routes for St Owen's Street and on Aylestone Hill in Hereford	Service Director, Environment and Highways	St Owen St snagging programmed for October.	GREEN	GREEN
	Complete feasibility study of route options for Eastern river crossing.	Service Director, Environment and Highways	The Strategic Outline Business Case (SOC) for Eastern River Crossing is due for completion by the end of the calendar year. This will include an analysis of alternative options including potential for a southern link road.	GREEN	GREEN
	Introduce an additional 70 eBikes as part of the Beryl Bike scheme	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	Delivery Complete	BLUE	BLUE
	Consult on design options for the city Transport Hub	Service Director, Environment and Highways	The planning application has now been submitted and statutory consultation for land transfer set to commence imminently. The construction phase is set to commence March 2024 following land transfer delays.	GREEN	GREEN
	Complete design for Holme Lacy Road improvements	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Detailed designs are now set for completion by the end of the calendar year. This will be followed by an open tender and construction in 2024.	GREEN	GREEN
	Commence construction of Hereford Enterprise Zone Quiet Route	Service Director, Environment and Highways	The project remains on track to commence construction phase by end of March 2024.	GREEN	GREEN
	Expand the county's electric vehicle charging point network (100 new points planned by 2025).	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	Phase 1 installations are programmed for Nov 23 (4 sites). Phase 2 is planned for spring 2024 and will bring in another 10 sites. Venns Lane has been removed from scope as National Grid have confirmed the local supply lacks the capacity without an upgrade (grid capacity is a risk across this project).	GREEN	GREEN
EN3 - Build understanding and support for sustainable living	Run a Greener Footprints campaign to raise awareness of the actions households can take to address climate change	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services		GREEN	GREEN
	Provide free and impartial home energy advice to 1,000 residents through the Keep Herefordshire Warm service.	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	Delivery Plan target complete. Keep Herefordshire Warm continues on a business-as-usual basis.	GREEN	GREEN

EN4 - Invest in low carbon projects	Seek resources for a countywide domestic energy retrofit programme, and deliver a domestic energy efficiency and renewable heating retrofit programme to support 150 homes	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	Permission has been sought from MNZH to add further properties to the now concluded LAD3 scheme, and these will continue into October. These were properties which originally missed the application deadline but are not eligible for the next HUG2 phase. HUG2 procurement has concluded in the last period and a contractor provisionally appointed. However it has become clear during mobilisation that the contractor does not have the capacity promised within their tender to deliver on commitments necessary to meet demanding grant targets. This has caused a delay to the first batch of installations and to limit further damage a decision has been taken to re-procure. However the project team continues to build a healthy pipeline of properties ready to go once a suitable installer is in place.	GREEN	GREEN
EN5 - Identify climate change action in all aspects of council operation	Install new energy efficiency measures at 4 council buildings supported by the Sustainable Energy in Public Building projects.	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	LED lighting at the Ryefield Centre completed within the grant timeframe. The SEPUBU grant scheme has now concluded.	RED	BLUE
	Develop a new 3 year schools decarbonisation programme, including delivery of energy audits at 20 schools and installation of solar PV systems at 2 schools.	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	A further phase of solar PV was successfully completed during the summer holidays at Fairfield, Marlbrook and John Masefield schools. This brings the total number of schools to 6, exceeding this delivery plan target.	GREEN	GREEN
	Improve the environmental and energy efficiency standards of council buildings through the introduction of new minimum standards for energy efficiency, a plan for investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy measures for existing buildings, and a plan for achieving net zero carbon for all new-build council buildings	Delivery Director, Strategic Assets		GREEN	GREEN

<p>EN6 - Seek strong stewardship of the county's natural resources</p>	<p>Respond to the citizens' climate assembly recommendations and agree a funded programme working with partner organisations</p>	<p>Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services</p>	<p>20 sub-projects have been actively progressing during Q2: (1) Active Travel - Walking: 1a Walk to School, Get Walking and Led Walks Contract in delivery phase. Looking to extend all of these past original end date. (2) Home Energy Efficiency Audits: 68 site visits and reports completed. BCL being worked on for 2nd phase of the project to present to project board on 24 Oct 23. (3) Decarbonisation plan for corporate buildings - All site visits and reports completed. Two buildings taken forward to Phase 2 and one building to progress with help from MNZH. May access other funding streams to complete phase 2, waiting on A Lovegrove/Legal on if this is eligible. (4) Feasibility decarbonising the school transport fleet: Research is being collated in-house on feasibility of electrifying school transport fleets. AB/RV had a meeting with service lead to discuss project going forward. AB to feed back on the results for project board on 24 Oct. Project potentially withdrawn to allow allocated funding to be used on other projects. (6) Business Energy/Climate Conference 2023 - Next one planned for Jan/Feb 24. Outline agenda being considered by board. (7) Climate Website- In Delivery. (8) PAS 2035 retrofit training support- Procurement likely to commence Autumn 23 through framework order. Retrofit academy will be a joint partnership between all of the Marches areas. 1 years funding secured from the LEP. Buy in from all other local authorities. (9) School Travel Plan support: Successful recruitment. Candidate starting post imminently. (10) Taxi/Private Hire decarbonisation support: Survey monkey carried out with taxi drivers. 13 responded. MB has spoken with Craig Lewis,. MB's paper was shared with board and change request approved. PCR approved and project shelved for 12 months. Take to project board to release the funds for other projects.</p>	<p>GREEN</p>	<p>GREEN</p>
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(11) Farm Carbon Audits: Delivery commenced in February and business engagement has started. Case studies to be produced on first farm that receives an audit. Stakeholder forum planned for July 23. Around 33 reports completed and 7 audits remaining. 20th Sept- Farm carbon audit meeting to present the findings was very successful and well attended. Project proposals will be coming forward in the new year for phase 2 of the project. (12) Renewable Energy survey – Contract awarded and delivery has commenced. End of Dec 23 completion. (13) Business Energy Audits: Delivery has commenced. 60 audits available in total. 42 site visits completed so far. 28 reports completed. 7 closed and not proceeding. Contract extension until end of Jan 24. (14) Update to Local Climate Impacts Profile: Three update sessions planned on the draft strategy: Community webinar (via Talk communities w/c 4th Sept); In person Cllr workshop 3rd October; HCNP Board 17th October. The draft strategy will be circulated in-house and to external partners. All details TBC and in liaison with SCC and Steve Hodges. (15) Greener Footprints/Climate & Nature comms support: Delivery has commenced. JBP Contract will be extended until Nov 24 with a more streamlined approach on expectations of contractors. JW to provide copy of extension letter once received and signed. (16) Nature Recovery Strategy: May be completed in-house by senior ecologist. Will be completed once NRN mapping undertaken. (17) NRN Mapping: The biological record centre will undertake the baseline mapping for this project and are providing a price for this piece of work. It is proposed that Glos Wildlife Trust will undertake the opportunities mapping and we are awaiting a fee proposal for this piece of work. We anticipate we will be able to demonstrate VFM as the records centre already hold the records we require and are in house and the GWT have already completed the first tranche of the mapping on behalf of the Hfds Wildlife Trust so simply need to amend their work. A joint project with HWT to review and update Local Wildlife Sites with the record centre has already commenced and this will feed into the baseline mapping.

(18) HC Tree Management Plan; The management plan and guidance exists in draft form and needs reviewing and updating, I am currently speaking with procurement and HR to seek their agreement that we can undertake this piece of work by paying a team member to complete it outside of their agreed role. I am just completing our discussions and estimating the number of hours and therefore the cost. So this will be commissioned shortly. (19) Herefordshire Tree Strategy- This will need to be commissioned externally with a consultant, once the management plan is underway we will draft the specification for the strategy. (20) Tree Establishment Scheme- This project is to be developed after the other projects are in place as the mapping will identify where opportunities for tree planting exist and this will link with the tree strategy which will also be consistent with the nature strategy. Once sites are identified we will commission contractors to undertake the planting on our behalf. (21) Cycling Activities: Business case produced and in approval. This is not a project that is going forward.

EN7 - Protect and enhance the county's biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards	Construct our first integrated wetland to reduce levels of phosphate pollution entering the Special Area of Conservation.	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	The first wetland (forming this delivery plan target) is complete and operational in Luston, and phosphate offset credits continue to be allocated to planning applications previously on hold due to phosphates. A government announcement on the intention to bring forward legislation to scrap nutrient neutrality rules caused some uncertainty in the last period, though this did not signal the end of phosphate mitigation schemes, more a change in how they are delivered and funded to remove the burden from developers. However the bill was voted down in the Lords and is not expected to return in the short term. Planning consent is now in place for the next priority Tarrington wetland and negotiations largely concluded for the acquisition of a further site, all on hold subject to a review of the council's wider phosphate strategy to ensure that wetlands remain the most effective measure.	AMBER	AMBER
	Adopt a new nature strategy for the county	Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services	Consultation and feedback on the draft strategy continues	GREEN	GREEN
	Deliver the highway biodiversity net gain project	Service Director, Environment and Highways	The delivery of the final Luston Wetland element has been delayed although is expected to be commissioned within the next month. This will see completion of the biodiversity element. The PO has been raised for the gritter, awaiting delivery.	AMBER	AMBER

■ complete
■ on target
■ at risk
■ compromised
■ paused

Performance Measures

Measure	Lead Officer	Q2 (Jul - Sep)	Improve-ment?	Target Met?
No more than 1% of municipal waste to be sent to landfill from 2025 (12m rolling average) AKA - (Reduce) the percentage of waste sent to landfill (12m rolling average)	Service Director, Highways and Environment	0.87%		
% waste sent for recycling	Service Director, Highways and Environment	40.44%		
Reduce residual household waste arisings to less than 330kg /hhld/year by 2035 (Integrated Waste Management Strategy)	Service Director, Highways and Environment	238.37kg%		
Active Travel - Hereford City Bike Share (km travelled) - CUMULATIVE	Service Director, Highways and Environment	143,498 km	n/a	n/a
LAD 3 - Sustainable Warmth: Completed household installs within the quarter- as reported to funder	Service Director, Highways and Environment	217		
Keep Herefordshire Warm - No. of households calling KHW advice line	Service Director, Highways and Environment	392		
Carbon County Reduction - Marches Energy Grant - kWp install	Service Director, Highways and Environment	0	Available in Q3	
Carbon County Reduction - Marches Energy Grant - No of measures installed	Service Director, Highways and Environment	0	Available in Q3	
Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) 2 - No of measures installed	Service Director, Highways and Environment	2	Available in Q3	
Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) 2 - Grant Defrayed	Service Director, Highways and Environment	50,613	Available in Q3	
Reducing HC carbon emissions	Service Director, Highways and Environment	60.30%		
Reducing countywide CO2 emissions	Service Director, Highways and Environment	1,472.98		
(Increase) the £ and percentage of investment that contributes significantly to climate and nature goals	Service Director, Highways and Environment		Reported annually	

Phosphate reduction as a result of the introduction of new wetlands	Service Director, Highways and Environment	Reported annually
Tree canopy coverage	Service Director, Highways and Environment	Reported annually
Delivery of EV infrastructure - No. of charge point sockets	Service Director, Highways and Environment	Reported annually
(Increase the) percentage of road verges managed for wildlife	Service Director, Highways and Environment	Reported annually
(Increase) the total kilometres of cycle route within the county	Service Director, Highways and Environment	Reported annually
Kilometres of new quiet route cycle route within the county (Annual)	Service Director, Highways and Environment	Reported annually
Kilometres of new segregated cycle route within the county (Annual)	Service Director, Highways and Environment	Reported annually

■ on target/improvement
 ■ within 10% of target/small decline
 ■ missed target by more than 10% /significant decline
 ■ Not Available

Corporate Risks						
Risk		Impact				
		1 Insignificant	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Significant
CRR.67 Ash Dieback (Chalara) CRR.68 Waste Collection Vehicles - lead time for supply of new vehicles	5 Certain					CRR.67
	4 Likely					CRR.68
	3 Possible					
	2 Unlikely					
	1 Rare					

Delivery

Ambition	Action	Lead Officer	Progress	RAG	
				Q1	Q2
CO0 - Strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together	Publish and implement plan to improve the Public Rights of Way Service by working in partnership with volunteers, communities and parishes.	Service Director, Environment and Highways		GREEN	GREEN
	Develop 20mph speed limit policies and programme for the county to cover significant villages and market towns.	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Consultation has now taken place with new administration and priorities agreed. Draft ITT has been prepared to appoint strategy development work via open tender.	AMBER	AMBER
	Install 20mph limits in Presteigne and Cusop, as part of the 1st year of 5 year 20mph speed limit programme.	Service Director, Environment and Highways	As above - 20mph strategy to be developed prior to any works being carried out.	GREEN	GREEN
	Enhance the Cathedral and River Wye quarters of the city	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Detailed designs for CRWQ are in progress and due for completion March 2023. Discussions with Cabinet Member and Cathedral have revised plans slightly.	GREEN	GREEN
	Make Improvements to the city street scene in Widemarsh Street and High Town in Hereford	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Widemarsh St works are completed.	GREEN	BLUE
	Roll out and embed hybrid operational working model for employees, creating effective flexible working arrangements.	PMO Delivery Director		GREEN	GREEN
	Develop and implement updated Digital Strategy for improved customer experience, communication and connectivity.	Head of Chief Executive's Office		GREEN	GREEN
	Establish a "spirit of Herefordshire" approach to attracting and retaining workforce through celebrating the positives of the county	Director of HR & OD	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
	Produce asset management plans for each council owned property based on up to date knowledge of conditions	Strategic Assets Delivery Director	Project complete and compliance checks in place as Business as Usual.	GREEN	BLUE
	Plan capital works for the Shirehall to bring back into council and community use	Strategic Assets Delivery Director	Remedial works to Court Rooms completed. An initial phase of the Shirehall refurbishment is currently under consideration at Cabinet and Full Council linked to a proposal to relocate the library to the Shirehall.	VIOLET	VIOLET
CO1 - Ensure all children are healthy, safe and inspired to achieve	Use the Improvement Plan to work more closely with partners, and agree a common understanding of a Child Friendly County	Service Director, Improvement		GREEN	GREEN
	Strengthen the role of children's centres and early years in prevention, with more families are aware of the services and benefits they are entitled to and be connected to their opportunities within their community	Service Director, Improvement		GREEN	GREEN

	Training programmes for 200 staff on oral health.	Senior Commissioning Officer	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
	Deliver a training programme of road safety including pedestrian training for school pupils	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
	Tender construction of new school building at Peterchurch Primary School	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning	Professional Services tender completed with preferred bidder identified. Contract to commence in mid-October 2023.	GREEN	GREEN
	Tender refurbishment and expansion of The Brookfield School	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning	Following the construction tender review, the Department for Education (DFE) are requesting additional funding from Ministers for their 70% contribution to the project. This has resulted in delays to appointing the main contractor and the Academy	AMBER	RED
	Plan and agree first phase of school expansions to deliver additional school places across the county	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning	Project completed in 2022/23.	BLUE	BLUE
	Seek approval for the rebuild of Westfield School and move to design stage	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning	Further communication received from the Department for Education (DFE) advising that Westfields School is not in the initial programme of rebuilds. It is anticipated that the project will be included in the 2026/27 DFE programme.	BLUE	BLUE
	Conduct feasibility work to inform increase capacity across Hereford Pupil Referral Service and Blackmarston School	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning	Cabinet approval received in September 2023 to proceed with an extension to the Language & Communication Centre at Hampton Dene Primary School. Tender documents are being prepared for the appointment of design consultants to progress the project.	GREEN	GREEN
	Ensure all schools have better informed pupil's mental health and wellbeing support via a training and development package	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
	Develop a range of traded services to support increase in number of schools who operate as a academies	Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning	Project remains on hold pending further Government guidance following the pausing of the White Paper.	VIOLET	VIOLET
	Improve the educational outcomes for those pupils with Education and Health Care plans	Service Director, Improvement		GREEN	GREEN
	Put in place effective 'Voice of the Child' engagement so children are involved in designing services in a meaningful way	Service Director, Improvement		GREEN	GREEN
	Integrate a "Right Help – Right time" approach within the Talk Community programme, so families are supported within communities	Service Director, Improvement		GREEN	GREEN
	Provide more support for the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service	Service Director, Improvement	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
	Increase the number of social workers with new retention and recruitment approach	Service Director, Improvement		AMBER	AMBER
CO2 - Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and	Increase the number of foster carers by 25	Service Director, Improvement		RED	RED
	Improve the range of level of support for care leavers.	Service Director, Improvement		GREEN	GREEN

make good life choices	Progress plans to build a children's residential home.	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	Cabinet report moved to November 2023 meeting due to comments received requesting clarity on the report.	GREEN	GREEN
CO3 - Build publicly owned sustainable and affordable houses and bring empty properties back in to use	Progress the delivery of new affordable, net zero housing on council owned land	Strategic Housing Manager	Project paused as new strategy being developed.	AMBER	AMBER
	Submit planning applications for 2 housing sites on council land	Housing Delivery Manager	Project on hold as new strategy being developed	AMBER	AMBER
	Support at least 230 additional affordable properties in the county		Working with developers, the pipeline of 230 affordable properties is on track to be delivered in the county by March 2024	AMBER	AMBER
CO4 - Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people	Progress the building of the council's own care home with site identified, design outlined and planning application developed	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	Business case for a new care facility being developed for consideration by Cabinet in April 2024	VIOLET	VIOLET
	Develop and agree a Food Charter for the county.	Health Improvement Practitioner	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
	Submit application for the Sustainable Food Place Bronze award	Health Improvement Practitioner		GREEN	GREEN
	Produce a Physical Activity Strategy that outlines plans and programmes to aid health through fitness	Health Improvement Practitioner	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
	Offer maximum council tax reduction scheme for eligible pensioners and people of working age	Service Director, Economy and Growth	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
	Work with partner organisations to produce a plan to tackle health inequalities and lead health equity audit process for commissioned services		Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
	Work with NHS and Public Health partners to implement the Integrated Care system approach agreed for Herefordshire & Worcestershire		Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
	Establish Hoople Care to delivery care services for the council	Service Director, All Age Commissioning	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE
CO5 - Use technology to support home care and extend independent living	Complete site works complete on the Hillside Independent living and demonstration centre.	Service Director, Social Care Delivery	Phase 2 Demo Centre works have commenced on site and will be completed for December 2023.	GREEN	GREEN
	Create 50 bespoke wellness packages using a technology enabled 'proactive and preventative' care model	Service Director, All Age Commissioning	The Homecare providers demo event took place on Monday 18th September to identify volunteers for the test and learn pilots. The ARC mobilisation work is continuing.	GREEN	GREEN
	Move the existing Telecare Service to a digital delivery model	Service Director, All Age Commissioning	Phase 2 of the switchover continues to be on target and completed within the 12 month period.	GREEN	GREEN
	Create a digital tool and website that shows how technology can support people's independence and aid assessments	Service Director, All Age Commissioning	All tender evaluations have taken place for the Talk Community website re-procurement. The self assessment portal has been re-timed until Q3 as resources have continued to focus on the bespoke wellness packages.	GREEN	GREEN
	Develop and deliver a training programme to support at least 50 staff on the use of technology to support residents.	Service Director, All Age Commissioning	Work on the first e-learning module was put on hold to allow for resources to be focussed on the bespoke wellness packages. The remaining approved modules have been timed.	GREEN	GREEN
CO6 - Support communities to help	Increase the number of Talk Community hubs to 75	Service Director, Communities	Complete.	BLUE	BLUE

each other through a network of community hubs	Deliver 2 integrated service hubs using existing community facilities that includes working with the whole family	Service Director, Communities	Following the review of the Council Capital Investment Plan, it has been agreed that this funding will be reallocated and this project will close. Communications have been sent to all applicants who submitted an expression of interest.	GREEN	GREEN
	Make investment and improvements to libraries and museums	Service Director, Economy and Growth	Agreement from CLT to progress HMAG through RIBA4 through design team/construction partner. Feasibility assessment from Morgan Sindall due 11.10.23. Shirehall Library FBC finalised and report written for Cabinet 26.10.23. Full Council to decide £3m extra for Shirehall redevelopment works and following Cabinet decision, Sronger Towns Board will be approached for consent to amend project location.	AMBER	AMBER

■ complete
 ■ on target
 ■ at risk
 ■ compromised
 ■ paused

Performance Measures

Measure	Lead Officer	Q2	Improve- ment?	Target Met?
Category 1 defects (O1) completed within timescale	Service Director, Environment and Highways	100%		
Category 2a defects completed within timescale	Service Director, Environment and Highways	92.01%		
Minimise the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions in Herefordshire	Service Director, Environment and Highways	51 (to August)		
Road Condition Indicator for Principal Roads: Roads in need of maintenance / Roads in good condition (Annual)	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Reported annually		
(Increase) the percentage of overall condition of footways rated as good	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Reported annually		
NHT results: Overall satisfaction with transport and highways services	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Reported annually		
Improve average journey time for multiple routes across the urban area in the morning weekday peak period	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Reported annually		
Increased levels of cycling (Hereford only)	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Reported annually		
Local congestion - Bus punctuality	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Reported annually		
Reduction in traffic flows in Hereford	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Reported annually		
Reduction in traffic flows countywide (exc. Hereford)	Service Director, Environment and Highways	Reported annually		
The number of affordable houses delivered	Strategic Housing Manager	82		
The number of empty properties brought back in to use	Strategic Housing Manager	23		
(Increase the) number of people engaging with the Healthy Lifestyle Trainer Service	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	416		
(Increase the) number of new tenancies developed for independent living	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	10		
(Reduce the) local count of Herefordshire homelessness	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	19 (to June)		
(Increase the) number of cases where homelessness has been (a) prevented and (b) relieved	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	41		
	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	42		
(Reduce the) rate of admissions to care homes for clients aged under 65	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	9.5		
(Reduce the) rate of admissions to care homes for clients aged 65+	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	292.6		
(Increase) the volunteer capacity in Herefordshire	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	23%		
(Increase) the number of Talk Community hubs	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	75		
(Increase) the number of hits on the Talk Community Directory	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing	12,801		
Number and % of care experienced young people aged 19-21 in education, employment and training	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	16/91 18%		
Number and % of Early Help assessments completed by services other than the Herefordshire Council Early Help Team	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	37/52 71%		
% of the established workforce that is permanent	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	61%		
Average social worker allocation (excluding Newly Qualified Social Workers)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	14.10		
Number of social workers with more than 24 children allocated	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	6		
Number of in-house foster care households	Corporate Director, Children and Young People			
Number of in-house foster care placements offered	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	184/186 (to July)		
% of available in-house fostering capacity utilised	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	99% (to July)		
Number and % of child and family assessments completed within timescales	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	112/133 84%		

Number and % of strategy meetings created and completed in timescale	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	120/128 94%		
Number and % of Initial Child Protection Conferences convened within 15 days (of the strategy discussion at which the need for child protection enquiries was agreed)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	26/29 90%		
Number and % of return interviews which took place within 72 hours of the missing episode ending (excluding declined)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	2/12 17%		
Number of Audits completed	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	12		
Number and % of audit grades at inadequate (post moderation)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	4 33%		
Number and % of audit grades at requires improvement (post moderation)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	6 50%		
Number and % of audit grades at good (post moderation)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	2 17%		
Number and % of audit grades at outstanding (post moderation)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	0 0%		
Number of Family Group Conferences (FGC) (when established)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	8		
Number and % of children for whom PLO pre-proceedings were completed within 16 weeks (Rolling Year)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	0 0%		
Number of children in unregistered provision (with Corporate Director's oversight and decision is recorded on the child's record)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	1		
Number of children subject to Deprivation of Liberty (DoL), including the % of these children where DoL has been in place for 6 months or more	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	2 100%		
Number of children in care with an up-to-date initial health assessment	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	47/54 87%		
Number and % of children in care with an up-to-date dental check	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	273/380 72%		
Number and % of children in care for 6 months or longer who have a life-story book	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	120/348 34% (to April)		
Number and % of care leavers aged 19-21 who live in suitable accommodation	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	83/90 92%		
Number and % of allocated children who have an up-to-date (within the past month) supervision completed on their record	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	504/931 54%		
Number and % of concerns raised and were resolved at stage one of the Dispute Resolution Protocol	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	4/4 100%		
Number of unallocated cases in the service without SW allocation	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	6		
Number and % of children's file audits completed by Managers, Child Protection Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	12/12 100%		
Number and % of completed children's file audits moderated by senior leaders (DLT members)	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	0 0%		
Number of outstanding priority actions on the audit tracker following an inadequate audit outcome where concerns were escalated	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	0		
% of EHC Plans issued within the period that were deemed to meet the required standards following audit	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	48% (to April)		
% of Final EHCPs issued by the LA within 20 weeks as a proportion of all EHCPs issued in the year	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	104/122 85%		

% of Draft EHCPs issued by the LA within 16 weeks as a proportion of all EHCPs issued in the year	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	111/132 84%		
% of children with an EHCP in Yr6 who had their annual review completed and EHCP issued in time for primary Admission round allocations	Corporate Director, Children and Young People			
% of children with an EHCP in Yr11 who had their annual review completed and EHCP issued within timescale for secondary	Corporate Director, Children and Young People			
% of newly issued EHC Plans where Health Care advice was received within deadline	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	6/23 23%		
% of newly issued EHC Plans where Social Care advice was received within deadline	Corporate Director, Children and Young People	23/26 88%		

■ on target/improvement
 ■ within 10% of target/small decline
 ■ missed target by more than 10% /significant decline
 ■ Not Available

Corporate Risks							
Risk			Impact				
			1 Insignificant	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Significant
CRR.60 Development of Sufficiency Strategy to support best value model	Likelihood	5 Certain				CRR.74	
CRR.61 Market workforce economy		4 Likely				CRR.61; CRR.72; CRR.75; CRR.77; CRR.80; CRR.81	CRR.60; CRR.64
CRR.64 Inability to recruit and retain social care staff and other key roles within the service		3 Possible					
CRR.72 Adult Social Care Reform		2 Unlikely					
CRR.74 School Assets		1 Rare					
CRR.75 SEND inspection - risk of adverse inspection							
CRR.77 Increase in out of county educational placements							
CRR.80 Supply chain capacity							
CRR.81 Reviews - capacity, timeliness and statutory duty of care							

Performance Measures

Measure	Lead Officer	Q2	Improvement?	Target Met?
Percentage of invoices paid on time	Director of Resources and Assurance	90.23%		
Percentage of Council Tax rates collected	Director of Resources and Assurance	58.18%		
Percentage of Business rates collected	Director of Resources and Assurance	60.64%		
Time taken to deal with housing benefit change of circumstances (No. of days)	Director of Resources and Assurance	11.01		
Time taken to deal with housing benefit new claims (No of days)	Director of Resources and Assurance	17.25		
The social value attributable to council procurement	Director of Resources and Assurance	£430,595.70 Actual Q2 £522,543.99 YTD	n/a	n/a
The percentage of the council procurement budget spent locally	Director of Resources and Assurance	40.00%		
Percentage of FOIs & EIRs responded to within timescales	Director of Governance and Law	97.91%		
Compliance with service standard deadline for answering formal complaints	Director of Governance and Law	84.00%		
Compliance with service standard deadline for answering formal complaints within the children's representations and complaints procedures	Director of Governance and Law	45.00%	n/a	
The number of apprentices within Herefordshire Council	Director of HR and OD	83	n/a	n/a
Average days sickness per FTE (12 month rolling average)	Director of HR and OD	8.99		n/a
Percentage of workforce completing mandatory training within timescale:	Information Governance	Director of HR and OD	97.89% (to August)	
	Information Security	Director of HR and OD	97.64% (to August)	
	Code of Conduct	Director of HR and OD	95.85% (to August)	
Number of RIDDOR reportable incidents	Director of HR and OD	1		
Monthly turnover (annualised based on headcount)	Director of HR and OD	12.41%	n/a	n/a
Employee engagement index	Director of HR and OD	3.56 (2022/23)	Reported annually	
Gender pay gap	Director of HR and OD	13.9% (2022/23)	Reported annually	
Percentage of major planning applications dealt with within 13 weeks/16 weeks or with an extension of time	Head of Planning and Building Control	91.67%	n/a	
Percentage of non-major (minor and other) applications dealt with within 8 weeks or with an extension of time	Head of Planning and Building Control	79.37%	n/a	
The value of investment delivered by the council to mitigate the impact of development sites	Head of Planning and Building Control		Reported annually	

The proportion of major planning applications overturned at appeal after determination (24 month average)	Head of Planning and Building Control	1.8% (June - in arrears)		
The proportion of non-major planning applications overturned at appeal after determination (24 month average)	Head of Planning and Building Control	0.5% (June - In arrears)		
Increase volume of parking transactions made by card or phone compared to coin	Service Director, Highways and Environment	60.70%	n/a	
Improve compliance of parking restrictions – average amount of income recovered per PCN	Service Director, Highways and Environment	£30.23	n/a	

■ on target/improvement
 ■ within 10% of target/small decline
 ■ missed target by more than 10% /significant decline
 ■ Not Available

Corporate Risks						
Risk	Impact					
		1 Insignificant	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Significant
	5 Certain					
	4 Likely					
	3 Possible					
	2 Unlikely					
	1 Rare					

