

**Corporate Support Centre**  
Paul Walker - Chief Executive

**To: All members of the Council**

our ref: Council - 23 May 2025  
contact: Matthew Evans, Democratic Services  
telephone: 01432 383690  
email: [matthew.evans@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.evans@herefordshire.gov.uk)

15 May 2025

Dear Councillor,

**You are hereby summoned** to attend the meeting of the Herefordshire Council to be held on **Friday 23 May 2025** at the Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE at **10.30 am** at which the business set out in the attached agenda is proposed to be transacted.

Yours sincerely  
**Claire Porter**



**Monitoring Officer**



# AGENDA

## Council

Date: **Friday 23 May 2025**

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Time: **10.30 am**

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Place: **Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane  
Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

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

For any further information please contact:

**Matthew Evans, Democratic Services**

Tel: 01432 383690

Email: [matthew.evans@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.evans@herefordshire.gov.uk)

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

# Agenda for the Meeting of the Council

## Membership

**Chairman**  
**Vice-Chair**

**Councillor Roger Phillips**  
**Councillor Stef Simmons**

Councillor Polly Andrews  
Councillor Jenny Bartlett  
Councillor Graham Biggs  
Councillor Harry Bramer  
Councillor Simeon Cole  
Councillor Pauline Crockett  
Councillor Dave Davies  
Councillor Mark Dykes  
Councillor Toni Fagan  
Councillor Carole Gandy  
Councillor Peter Hamblin  
Councillor Helen Heathfield  
Councillor David Hitchiner  
Councillor Terry James  
Councillor Jonathan Lester  
Councillor Ed O'Driscoll  
Councillor Rob Owens  
Councillor Daniel Powell  
Councillor Philip Price  
Councillor Adam Spencer  
Councillor Pete Stoddart  
Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst  
Councillor Richard Thomas  
Councillor Diana Toynbee  
Councillor Allan Williams  
Councillor Mark Woodall

Councillor Bruce Baker  
Councillor Chris Bartrum  
Councillor Dave Boulter  
Councillor Jacqui Carwardine  
Councillor Frank Cornthwaite  
Councillor Clare Davies  
Councillor Barry Durkin  
Councillor Matthew Engel  
Councillor Elizabeth Foxton  
Councillor Catherine Gennard  
Councillor Liz Harvey  
Councillor Robert Highfield  
Councillor Dan Hurcomb  
Councillor Jim Kenyon  
Councillor Nick Mason  
Councillor Aubrey Oliver  
Councillor Justine Peberdy  
Councillor Ivan Powell  
Councillor Ben Proctor  
Councillor Louis Stark  
Councillor John Stone  
Councillor Charlotte Taylor  
Councillor Kevin Tillett  
Councillor Rebecca Tully  
Councillor Rob Williams

## Agenda

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<b>NOLAN PRINCIPLES</b>	9 - 10
<b>1. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON</b> To elect the Chairperson of the Council.	
<b>2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRPERSON</b> To appoint the Vice Chairperson of the Council	
<b>3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> To receive apologies for absence.	
<b>4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> To receive any declarations of interest by Members in respect of items on the Agenda.	
<b>5. MINUTES</b> To approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2025.	11 - 32
<b>6. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b> To receive the Chairman and Chief Executive's announcements.	33 - 38
<b>7. ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b> To elect the leader of the Council.	
<b>8. ANNUAL REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS - SCRUTINY REVIEW</b> To consider the content of the Annual Review of Effectiveness - Scrutiny Review.	39 - 62
<b>9. APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES</b> To make appointments to the committees of the Council and outside bodies in line with the rules of political proportionality.	63 - 76



# **The Public's Rights to Information and Attendance at Meetings**

## **YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO: -**

- Attend all Council, Cabinet, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose 'confidential' or 'exempt' information.
- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting.
- Inspect minutes of the Council and all Committees and Sub-Committees and written statements of decisions taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
- Access to a public register stating the names, addresses and wards of all Councillors with details of the membership of Cabinet and of all Committees and Sub-Committees.
- Have a reasonable number of copies of agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) made available to the public attending meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees and Sub-Committees.
- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the Council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title.
- Copy any of the documents mentioned above to which you have a right of access, subject to a reasonable charge (20p per sheet subject to a maximum of £5.00 per agenda plus a nominal fee of £1.50 for postage).
- Access to this summary of your rights as members of the public to attend meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees and Sub-Committees and to inspect and copy documents.

## **Public Transport Links**

- The Shire Hall is a few minutes walking distance from both bus stations located in the town centre of Hereford.

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- Anyone filming a meeting is asked to focus only on those actively participating.
- If, as a member of the public, you do not wish to be filmed please make a member of the governance team aware.

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You should vacate the building in an orderly manner through the nearest available fire exit and make your way to the Fire Assembly Point in the Shire Hall car park.

Please do not allow any items of clothing, etc. to obstruct any of the exits.

Do not delay your vacation of the building by stopping or returning to collect coats or other personal belongings.

The Chairman or an attendee at the meeting must take the signing in sheet so it can be checked when everyone is at the assembly point.



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

### **1. Selflessness**

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

### **2. Integrity**

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

### **3. Objectivity**

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

### **4. Accountability**

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

### **5. Openness**

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

### **6. Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

### **7. Leadership**

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



**Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Friday 7 March 2025 at 10.00 am**

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

**Councillors:** Polly Andrews, Bruce Baker, Jenny Bartlett, Chris Bartrum, Graham Biggs, Dave Boulter, Harry Bramer, Jacqui Carwardine, Simeon Cole, Pauline Crockett, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Barry Durkin, Mark Dykes, Matthew Engel, Toni Fagan, Elizabeth Foxton, Carole Gandy, Catherine Gennard, Peter Hamblin, Helen Heathfield, Robert Highfield, David Hitchiner, Dan Hurcomb, Terry James, Jim Kenyon, Jonathan Lester, Nick Mason, Ed O'Driscoll, Aubrey Oliver, Rob Owens, Justine Peberdy, Dan Powell, Philip Price, Ben Proctor, Louis Stark, Pete Stoddart, Elissa Swinglehurst, Charlotte Taylor, Richard Thomas, Kevin Tillett, Diana Toynbee, Rebecca Tully, Allan Williams and Rob Williams

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

\*denotes virtual attendance

**53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cornthwaite, Harvey, Ivan Powell, Spencer, Stone and Woodall.

**54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

*The monitoring officer had granted a dispensation to all Councillors allowing them to take part in the debate and vote on the motion relating to Agricultural Property Relief under s33(2)(c) of the Localism Act 2011 (Constitution – Part 3 Section 1 paragraph 3.1.1A).*

There were no declarations of interest.

**55. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**56. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

**57. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (PAGES 7 - 20)**

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

**58. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (PAGES 21 - 22)**

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

**59. 2025/26 COUNCIL TAX SETTING REPORT**

Council considered a report from the Leader of the Council to set the council tax precepts for 2025/26.

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

The Leader of the Council seconded the recommendations.

The council tax precepts for 2025/26 were put to the recorded vote and carried unanimously.

FOR (46): Councillors Andrews, Baker, Bartlett, Bartrum, Biggs, Boulter, Bramer, Carwardine, Cole, Crockett, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Durkin, Dykes, Engel, Fagan, Foxton, Gandy, Hamblin, Heathfield, Highfield, Hitchiner, Hurcomb, James, Kenyon, Lester, Mason, O'Driscoll, Oliver, Owens, Peberdy, Phillips, Dan Powell, Price, Proctor, Simmons, Stark, Stoddart, Swinglehurst, Taylor, Thomas, Tillett, Toynbee, Tully, Allan Williams and Robert Williams.

Against (0)

Abstentions (1): Gennard

**RESOLVED:**

**That:**

- a) The precepting authority details included at appendices 1 to 5, relating to town and parishes, West Mercia Police and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority be approved in accordance with sections 30(2), 34(3), 36(1) and section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) and that the following amounts be approved for the year 2025/26 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011); and
  - a. £506,268,582 being the estimated aggregate expenditure of the council in accordance with section 31A (2) of the act, including all precepts issued to it by parish councils;
  - b. £356,597,000 being the estimated aggregate income of the council for the items set out in section 31A (3) of the act (including revenue support grant);
  - c. £149,671,582 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) calculated by the council in accordance with section 31A(4) of the act, as its council tax requirement for the year (including parish precepts); [Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act];
  - d. £2,055.45 being the amount at (c) above divided by the amount of the council tax base calculated by the council, in accordance with

- section 31B of the act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including parish precepts);
- e. £6,268,582 being the aggregate amount of all special items (parish precepts) referred to in section 34(1) of the act;
- f. £1,969.36 being the amount at (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (e) above by the amount of the council tax base calculated by the council, in accordance with section 34(2) of the act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no parish precept relates (Herefordshire Council band D council tax, excluding parishes); and
- b) It is agreed that the net tax base of 72,816.74 band D equivalent properties (being the gross tax base adjusted for an assumed collection rate) used for setting the budget requirement for 2025/26;
  - a. is allocated to band D equivalent dwellings per precept area as shown in appendix 1; and
  - b. the individual council tax allocations per valuation band of dwelling by parish (including fire and police precepts) as set out in appendix 5.

## **60. CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2025-2027**

Council considered a report by the Cabinet member children and young people to endorse the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 – 2027.

The Leader proposed the recommendation and introduced the report.

Councillor Barry Durkin seconded the recommendation in the report.

Council debated the report. Support was expressed for the Corporate Parenting Strategy and members reaffirmed their commitment to acting as corporate parents to children in the care of the council.

The endorsement of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 – 2027 was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That Council a) Endorses the corporate parenting strategy 2025-2027 as approved by the Corporate Parenting Board (appendix 1)**

## **61. LEADER'S REPORT**

Council received and noted the Leader's Report which provided an update on the activities of Cabinet since the previous ordinary meeting of Council on 6 December 2024.

Council questioned the Leader and the following actions were raised:

- In response to questions regarding Public Rights of Way officers would be asked to work with the Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure to undertake a review of the provision of public rights of way services and how work is undertaken with colleagues (such as the Local Access Forum) and communities. A report to be provided to Council (within the Leader's Report) with detail as to how the council: is undertaking enforcement where required; opening new paths; and taking action to protect the amenity of path users.

- To provide a response to a question regarding the pause of the Leominster Town Centre improvements scheme with detail of when the public consultation will commence.
- To provide a response to a question regarding how the council: assesses the quality of the user experience when it tenders for digital services; scores user experience in procurement; and what weight should user experience have compared to cost in procurement?
- In response to a question regarding the use of smoke free generation funding to address the prevalence of vaping and the potential to lead young people onto tobacco use, the Cabinet Member adults, Health and Wellbeing to raise the issue with the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- In response to a question regarding the recommendation arising from the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee to immediately lift the moratorium on house building in the north of the county. To arrange for a response to the recommendation to be provided to the Scrutiny Committee.
- In response to a question regarding the mapping exercise currently underway to inform the local nature recovery strategy and the importance of raising the awareness of all ward members, to include an update on the strategy in the next version of the Leader's Report.

## **62. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS**

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

### **Motion – Minor Injury Units**

Councillor O'Driscoll proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Proctor seconded the motion.

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

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

### **RESOLVED: -**

**Hereford County Hospital continues to experience unacceptable A&E waiting times, with NHS England data showing that between 25th November 2024 and 16th February 2025, 25% of ambulances waited over an hour before being able to hand over their patients to the Emergency Department.**

**All services at the County Hospital are under immense pressure, as are many primary care services across Herefordshire.**

**Historically, community hospitals in Herefordshire's market towns successfully operated Minor Injuries Units (MIUs), providing accessible and efficient urgent care to local residents. These units reduced strain on the County Hospital, ensured faster treatment for minor injuries, and allowed patients to receive care closer to home.**

**Minor Injury Units (MIUs) are still successfully operating in Gloucestershire, Powys, Shropshire, and Worcestershire, demonstrating their effectiveness in delivering timely and appropriate care outside of major hospitals.**

**When the MIUs in Herefordshire were closed, a petition in Ross-on-Wye alone gathered over 1,500 signatures, reflecting strong public demand for the service. There is significant community support for reinstating these services across the county.**

**Motion:**

**This Council:**

- **Supports the reinstatement of Minor Injury Units in Herefordshire as soon as possible to alleviate pressure on A&E services and improve access to urgent care for residents across the county**
- **Calls upon the Executive to work with NHS partners and other stakeholders to facilitate the reopening of Minor Injury Units in Herefordshire**

**Motion – Agricultural Property Relief**

Councillor Mason, as the proposer, withdrew the motion from debate.

The meeting ended at 12.51 pm

**Chairperson**





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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Marsden, Kington	Which if any Councillors authorised junior officers in the highways department to engage in an Expensive, <u>SECRET</u> , Statutory Consultation on a mass closure of byways, ignored the DUTY to Consult the Herefordshire LAF, is contrary to Government Advice, without the knowledge or approval of the Head of Highways, following 'the <i>constructive neglect</i> ', AND failing to comply with the Council's own policy in HAMP (for annual inspection of unsurfaced routes), or the mandatory current HC ROWIP?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>The Council's Traffic Management Team have started a consultation process to seek views on whether access by motor vehicles should be prohibited at seven locations on the network. The Council does not intend to close or stop up these routes, which would remain accessible for walkers, cyclists, and equestrians and with the Council remaining responsible for the ongoing management of the route and ensuring it is kept open for lawful use.</p> <p>These measures are primarily proposed for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The sections of highway are too narrow for motorised vehicles to use safely and are only suitable for pedestrians and horse riders. The restrictions aim to increase safety for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders using these sections of highway.</li> </ul> <p>The measures are also proposed for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For avoiding danger to persons or other traffic using the highway or any other highway or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising.</li> <li>For preserving or improving the amenity of the area through which the highway runs.</li> <li>For preserving the character of the highway where it is especially suitable for use by persons on horseback or on foot.</li> <li>To prevent accelerated damage to vegetation, surrounding biodiversity, and the highway.</li> </ul> <p>We are currently at the very first step of the process, which involves statutory consultation with emergency services, highway authorities, and other relevant bodies.</p> <p>If the proposals are deemed suitable to proceed then they will enter the formal public consultation stage. At this stage public notices will be placed in the local press and on-site at affected locations. Over a 21 day period, the public will then be asked to submit representations, all of which will be duly</p>			

considered before any final decision is made. Any other interested parties, including the Local Access Forum (LAF), will have a full opportunity to raise their views during this stage of the process.

**Supplementary question:**

Maintaining all public highways is a duty, the highways in question have not been maintained. To remove any obstruction is a duty, they have not been. Obstructions and surface defects on all of these proposed TRO were very well known to the highways department. They are a very low cost to deal with. Users have and want to assist with practical work. Therefore it appears the council is putting a power ahead of a duty. The courts have ruled authorities must place duties before powers so isn't that ultra vires and malfeasance? The head of highways was unaware of the consultation, were the junior operatives incurring this very substantial cost on a frolic of their own?

**Response to supplementary question:**

Officers had started a process to determine if 4x4s should be allowed to use these byways. When a decision was due to be made it would be part of an ongoing consultation and full details would be made available to the public. The byways were not being closed.

PQ 2	Mr Hutton, Hereford	Why are the Council closing obstructed byways rather than their DUTY to serve Highways Act Obstructionists Notices, as none have been properly served in Herefordshire?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**

Thank you for your question.

The Council's Traffic Management Team have started a consultation process to seek views on whether access by motor vehicles should be prohibited at seven locations on the network. The Council does not intend to close or stop up these routes, which would remain accessible for walkers, cyclists, and equestrians and with the Council remaining responsible for the ongoing management of the route and ensuring it is kept open for lawful use.

These measures are primarily proposed for the following reasons:

- The sections of highway are too narrow for motorised vehicles to use safely and are only suitable for pedestrians and horse riders. The restrictions aim to increase safety for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders using these sections of highway.

The measures are also proposed for the following reasons:

- For avoiding danger to persons or other traffic using the highway or any other highway or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising.
- For preserving or improving the amenity of the area through which the highway runs.
- For preserving the character of the highway where it is especially suitable for use by persons on horseback or on foot.
- To prevent accelerated damage to vegetation, surrounding biodiversity, and the highway.

We are currently at the very first step of the process, which involves statutory consultation with emergency services, highway authorities, and other relevant bodies.

If the proposals are deemed suitable to proceed then they will enter the formal public consultation stage. At this stage public notices will be placed in the local press and on-site at affected locations. Over a 21 day period, the public will then be asked to submit representations, all of which will be duly considered before any final decision is made. Any other interested parties, including the LAF, will have a full opportunity to raise their views during this stage of the process.

PQ3	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	<p>The Council Leaders report Appendix 3 says “Given the significant changes to National Planning Policy Framework, the Local Transport Plan has been paused until the impact the location of housing and employment growth is known.”</p> <p>Yet less than 2 months ago this Council announced that the Western Bypass would deliver the Western Growth corridor, ignoring the fact that such proposals risk the loss of 3,000 jobs directly in Hereford and many more in the supply chain to 2 of the county’s largest employers &amp; increased flooding of Hereford City.</p> <p>As the cabinet member was unable to provide information within 4 weeks of being asked how much has been spent to date on the Western Bypass, why has work on this £400million road project likewise not been paused until the location of housing and employment growth is known?</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**

The council is not aware that the building of a road will risk job losses. The council will undertake comprehensive environmental and economic assessments as part of the development of a full business case and will seek to implement mitigation measures from any risks identified through that process to provide assurance to those concerned about the impacts.

The unprecedented level of new housing targets that the council has been set requires new infrastructure to enable it to be delivered sustainably. The proposed western bypass will inevitably form part of this new infrastructure and is co-dependent with the new housing. Both the bypass and the Local Transport Plan had previously been considered and informed by the previous housing proposals to deliver 16,100 new homes, therefore, as part of the council's development of its new Local Plan setting out the proposed allocation of additional housing sites it is sensible that the final route of the bypass be considered at the same time to ensure that all proposals best enable the optimum outcomes to be delivered and therefore it is important that work continue to progress on the bypass to both inform and be informed by the wider Local Plan.

**Supplementary question:**

I am surprised Herefordshire Council are unaware of the risk of the loss of significant jobs from two of the County's largest employers in Hereford. I

highlighted the risk in a public question to the January 2025 cabinet meeting. Councillor Swinglehurst kindly responded saying the council has not yet agreed to this scale of the development to the west of the city. In addition evidence on this matter was given to the core strategy examination in public and in 2016 solicitors for Sun Valley and Heineken objected to the three elms planning application warning of the risk to 3,000 jobs in Hereford should development proceed. These written objections are on the council's planning portal. If the bypass is codependent on new housing which as yet is unallocated would Councillor Price explain why the Western Bypass makes new housing sustainable, protects employment and what evidence supports his explanation?

**Response to supplementary question:**

It was unknown whether there was a risk that two major employers would leave the County. The ongoing review of the bypass and the new local plan would provide every opportunity to participate and allow businesses and local residents to provide their views.

PQ 4	Mr McKay, Leominster	Will you please consider arranging for the flags (location markers) on the public right of way and road defect progress webpage maps to automatically go red if not resolved within say 2 years of being logged to highlight any that have been overlooked or are long-term defect problems, and to provide our Local Access Forum with regular report on progress resolving long-term defect problems, as raised at last weeks Local Access Forum but only partly answered as out of time?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**

Thank you for your question.

As part of a wider review by Officers and following feedback from the Local Access Forum, we have been making improvements to both our online public rights of way and road defect progress maps to provide better information to the public and we will take on board your suggestion regarding long term defects.

As you may be aware, we provide updates to the Local Access Forum on a quarterly basis on the work that is undertaken on the network, including numbers of enquiries, defects and jobs. As reported at the last Local Access Forum, a particular focus of recent times has been to reopen routes that have been closed due to the need to replace bridges, using funding made available by the Council. I'm sure my colleagues will be pleased to know that progress is being made on the ground as we speak, with works being completed and paths being reopened. We value the input and consultation with the Local Access Forum.

**Supplementary question:**

Could a long-term defect progress report take the form of a spreadsheet listing long-term defects and proposed remedies, viewable online, that is updated prior to each Local Access Forum meeting?

**Response to supplementary question:**

The Public Rights of Way team provide information for each Local Access Forum regarding the reasons for long term defects or closures of paths, e.g. due to bridges.

We will take on board your suggestion and explore how the data can be easily and efficiently displayed in other formats.

PQ 5	Mr Morfett, Hereford	Please can the Councillor for Infrastructure, explain the need to design and build safe cycling and walking networks for schools, separate from cars in Hereford, (using the guidance of Active Travel England), explaining the logic of reducing car dependence to reduce city congestion by increasing alternative transport options for City residents.	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**

Having consulted with officers I am unclear on what is being asked?

Active Travel England is part funding schemes across Hereford including a number of School Street schemes. We are delivering solutions within the terms of that funding.

Regarding schools, Active Travel England publish guidance on setting up a school streets scheme:

[School Streets: how to set up and manage a scheme](#)

On the wider active travel measure the Council is currently developing works on Holme Lacy Road, Aylestone Hill and the Transport Hub funded by Active Travel England, Levelling Up Fund and Council capital funding. These measures are designed to aid modal shift and improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians as a requirement of Active Travel England.

**Supplementary question:**

I asked the Cllr for infrastructure to explain the need to design and build safe cycling and walking networks for schools, separate from cars, (using the guidance of ATE), explaining the logic of reducing car dependence to reduce city congestion by increasing alternative transport options for City residents.

**He replied that he did not understand the question, so I asked ChatGPT and it gave a concise answer with a detailed summary of ATE's guidance for National Policy.**

Who can explain to him and the public in this meeting why designing and building safe cycling and walking networks for schools, separate from car traffic, is a critical aspect of creating more sustainable, liveable cities?

How does road building first, align with the principles set out by ATE, guiding a significant shift towards walking and cycling as primary modes of transportation?

**Response to supplementary question:**

The importance of delivering sustainable infrastructure is well understood by this Council which is why we are delivering active travel schemes including the Transport Hub, Holme Lacy Road and Aylestone Hill improvements. These schemes are all focused on improving active travel and encouraging modal shift. Modal shift on its own will not deliver the improvements required to reduce traffic in the City centre which is why this Council has a strategy to both deliver on its promises to deliver a bypass as well as improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The guidance for the delivery of active travel schemes is clearly available to all on the internet and I won't repeat it here in my response. As previously stated, the Council is delivering active travel measure works that are fully compliant with the active travel guidance.

PQ 6	Ms Laan, Hereford	Could the councillors explain if the Western Bypass is a bypass or a road that allows more housing developments?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**

It is both. The Government has set mandatory housing targets for councils, these targets are no longer advisory, and this level of growth must be accommodated. This figure remains high for Herefordshire at 27,260 homes, an increase of 11,160 homes compared to the 16,100 homes that the Regulation 18 Local Plan makes provision for over a twenty-year plan period. The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that all growth should be accommodated in sustainable locations. Given that Hereford is a sustainable location, it is reasonable to expect that a large proportion of this growth will be accommodated in this location. Subject to the future public consultation on the new Local Plan, it is possible that up to 14,000 new homes and 300 acres of new employment land, could be developed within the Western Growth Corridor. Where growth across the county takes place there will be a need to ensure that this is accompanied by necessary infrastructure which will also relieve congestion in the city centre.

The bypass will also facilitate the diversion of through traffic on the current A49 away from the city centre. National Highways have identified this section of the A49 as being a key pinch point on the Strategic Road Network, and as such the council is working closely with them to ensure a solution that delivers both outcomes.

The Worcester Bypass is a good example of a road that both serves to bypass traffic out of the city centre but also has key junctions that distribute traffic to housing and employment sites.

PQ 7	Ms Martin, Hereford	<p>In their 2014 review, consultants JMP reported that, assuming completion of the western bypass by 2027, annual average daily flows on the Greyfriars bridge would return to 2012 levels by 2032 and that, taking account of future development, "... a nil detriment scenario is unlikely to be possible."</p> <p>WSP subsequently reported that only 7% of trips within Hereford comprise through traffic with 40% having origin and destination within the city and 40,000 trips per day beginning and ending within the same quadrant.</p> <p>Given the DfT requirement that all non road congestion solutions should be explored before resorting to road building, why were these reports ignored and why has the administration</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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		progressed these roads in the face of evidence from its own consultants that peri-urban road building is not a solution to congestion within networks operating at or near capacity?	
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The dynamics of traffic and the requirements for a new road have evolved significantly since the study undertaken in 2014 and the outcomes of that report are no longer considered relevant in forming a business case for the current proposals. The requirement for the council to deliver an additional 27,260 new houses means that many of these will need to be sited around the county's current urban areas to be delivered sustainably, with a significant proportion of these around Hereford. The new road, alongside other active travel measures, is therefore considered essential to the council's future local transport plans to ensure that additional traffic generated from these developments does not significantly impact upon movement within the City Centre.</p> <p>The council has invested in an updated and more comprehensive transport model in recent years which will provide more accurate modelling of new developments and infrastructure and this will be used to model the new growth corridor prior to any final decisions being taken.</p> <p>National Highways have also identified the section of the A49 running through Hereford as a key pinch point within their Strategic Road Network in the region and as a result the council are working closely with National Highways to ensure that new infrastructure best addresses all requirements.</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary question:</b></p> <p>JMP's report of 2014 significantly pre-dates the housing requirements referred to in the answer to the principal question. The Cabinet member for Transport and Infrastructure has not answered the question of why the report was not acted upon at the time but if JMP's advice in 2014 was that the bypass would not reduce congestion in the city, without the additional housing and other development now envisaged, how could it reduce congestion in 2025 with this additional development?</p>			
<p><b>Response to supplementary question:</b> A new study based on the contemporary transport model built last year, will be undertaken to identify the benefits and impacts of the whole by-pass in the context of the proposed housing and employment growth, which will be used to inform future decisions. I am not aware or can comment on the reasons for decisions taken more than 10 years go.</p>			
PQ 8	Ms Hunt, Hereford	<p>We are from Herefordshire Mencap, working with learning disabled people. We use buses to get around Herefordshire. Between Mondays and Fridays we cannot use them before 9.30am unless we pay the bus fare. Bus fares are expensive when you are living on benefits and we don't have the same choices to get to places as many people.</p> <p>We want to work, get a job, become an active citizen, go to college, go to day opportunities and we need to attend doctors and hospital appointments.</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure

		<p>We have written to Cllr Price who told us that it is 'almost impossible' to change the timing because the limits are directed by national policy.</p> <p>The government minister for transport has informed us that local authorities can offer concessions.</p> <p>Can Cllr Price reconsider his previous response and review allowing discretionary concessions please?</p>	
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Given the importance to Herefordshire Council of supporting all residents of Herefordshire, including those with learning disabilities, we will take this request forward to the Enhanced Partnership who decide the funding allocations for the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)+ money. We will ensure this is discussed at the next EP meeting to gather the appetite for this across the board; we would need to consider the scale of the costings to date.</p> <p>The BSIP spend is agreed by the Enhanced Partnership; which is a statutory agreement between the Local Transport Authority and all the Bus operating companies. It is designed to improve frequency and reliability of routes, along with some infrastructure measures, and the spend needs to be agreed by all members of the partnership. The Enhanced Partnership must prioritise the limited BSIP spending available in Herefordshire to meet agreed priorities.</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary question:</b></p> <p>When will the Enhanced Partnership next meet and who will inform us of any decision made relating to our question?</p>			
<p><b>Response to supplementary question:</b></p> <p>The next meeting was on 20 March and the cabinet member explained that he would ensure that the request formed part of the agenda for that meeting and a response provided immediately.</p>			
PQ 9	Mr Martin, Hereford	<p>I would like to know why no proposals for any roads other than the SLR and the Western Bypass have not been looked at or even discussed to help alleviate traffic?</p> <p>It seems the SLR and Western Bypass are the only options this council want and I would like to know why that is? If it is solely to allow permission to build 10,000 new homes then the taxpayer should be told this unequivocally.</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The requirements for new infrastructure are considered within the council's core strategies, such as the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan, in order to meet the future needs of Herefordshire. The western bypass has been seen as essential in enabling both the economic and housing growth required</p>			



within the county. The council has recently had increased housing targets confirmed by government, and as such the council is reviewing where these housing sites and employment land may be located and any additional infrastructure which may be required as part of an updated Local Plan process.

The Western bypass will also enable through and cross city traffic to be removed from the city centre to enable a more attractive environment to allow the city centre to thrive and improve journey times on the strategic road network and therefore serves a broader purpose than just the delivery of new homes.

The council is undertaking a review of all previous work and business cases associated with the previous iteration of the bypass to ensure that proposals meet the future needs of the county and deliver value for money as part of a new strategic business case.

**Supplementary question:**

The SLR and Western Bypass will change the face of Herefordshire forever, will you allow the taxpayer and residents of this beautiful county decide on this via a county referendum as surely it is for them to decide on what is the most important decision for a lifetime?

**Response to supplementary question:** The Council will not be calling an expensive referendum on the bypass. The Western Bypass is not a decision that can be taken in isolation but an essential element of the council's strategy to improve the City by reducing traffic and provide resilience to the Hereford road network, as well as the potential to deliver some of the housing and employment growth targets the county have been set by government. The council will be consulting on its Local Plan and Local Transport Plan and residents will have an opportunity to feed into these documents before they are finalised.

PQ 10	Mr Milln, Hereford	With updates on just three of the NoM resolutions in today's agenda including, controversially, turning the bus station in my ward into a multi-storey car park, it is regrettable that many have been omitted. For example the Conservation Area motion of 8 <sup>th</sup> October 2021 has not been updated in over two years, yet the Cabinet member had approved funding to progress this and it is a legislative requirement that our Conservation Areas have appraisals. Also not updated in two years is the Built Environment Award scheme motion of 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2022. In answer to a question about this at Council exactly a year ago, we were told this would be progressed through a meeting last April. It wasn't. Can we please have a comprehensive update on actions to discharge these and other unfulfilled resolutions arising from members' Notices of Motion?	The Chairman of the Council
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**Response:**

Thank you for your question.

I can confirm that work has been undertaken on the Belmont Conservation Area and Award scheme for the built environment motions since they were carried by Council in October 2021 and March 2022 respectively. Please find below updates which summarise the work undertaken on the motions:

#### Belmont

- The council has undertaken a review of resource required to complete an appraisal of Belmont. A formal process is required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas ) Regulations 1990 which includes an appraisal followed by a public consultation. This needs to be undertaken in conjunction with a review of all 64 existing designations and requests to appraise further historic settlements for consideration.
- Consideration of the timescales and funding required has also been undertaken, led by the building conservation team.
- The first phase of the project has been initiated with works commenced on the evaluation of the Belmont area to prepare a conservation area appraisal, with site visits, archive research and assessing the Historic Environment Record.

#### Awards scheme

- The council conservation team has undertaken the drafting of the detail of the scheme; categories for awards, resource required, assessment of awards and key stakeholders in the scheme.
- An assessment of the financial implications has been undertaken.
- Draft categories for the awards have been circulated to Civic Societies.
- There has been liaison with the Hereford Civic Society to discuss a potential launch of the Award Scheme.

The notices of motions report does not serve to provide updates to motions indefinitely, where significant work has been undertaken or motions fulfilled they will be removed from the list of outstanding resolutions.

I understand that whilst you were a member of this Council you acted as proposer or seconder for each of the motions you reference. I have therefore asked officers to contact you to provide more detail on the latest position.

#### **Supplementary question:**

I'd asked for a update on the status of undischarged resolutions arising from past motions, just three being updated in today's agenda. Of the 27 resolutions of the 2019-23 administration period 16 are discharged or substantially so, while 11 are not or only partly. All will be at least 2 years old. Five years have elapsed since Council approved Felicity Norman's motion to address urban speeding and road safety and on which, like the Belmont and Award scheme motions, what little was done was long ago.

On a brighter note, we may soon see a County Tree Strategy, albeit also some five years after members endorsed Christy Bolderson's resolution for it, so an update for that would be useful.

While it is accepted that one or two, such as Cllr Fagan's phosphates, have an open-ended quality, can I please ask that a audit is provided for all undischarged resolutions of the past five years or so, with a clear timeline for delivery?

#### **Response to supplementary question:**

A written response would be provided.

PQ 11	Mr Williams, Hereford	How important to Herefordshire's economy, and the Council's budget, do the Council feel agricultures contribution is?	Cabinet member economy and growth
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**Response:**

Agriculture has always been and continues to be a key sector to the Herefordshire economy, in terms of the direct employment, the economic contribution farming makes to the county, as well as a critical part of the supply chain into other sectors such food and drink manufacturing businesses and tourism. Agriculture does not make a direct contribution to Herefordshire council's budget; however, it is critical to a thriving rural economy which benefits and supports the whole of Herefordshire and the wider council tax base.

**Supplementary question:**

With the impending motion on the agenda is the Council fully availed of the facts of the principles of the proposals in the budget of October 24 in regard to agricultural property relief. It is very important that you are before you come to that motion. £520 million is supposed to be gained from that proposal. The NFU have put forward proposals that will endeavour to reach more money than that, it will gain more money than that for the government and put paid to this ridiculous tax proposal. Are the council aware of the numbers involved?

**Response to supplementary question:**

This is a significant issue for the people of Hereford and Councillors within their wards; therefore I trust that that they will have made themselves aware of the details.

PQ 12	Mr Craddock, Leominster	Please ask the following question regarding the proposed TRO of 7 Roads / Green Lanes  There has never previously been this amount of new TROs in the County before, many of these routes have had defects and obstruction reports sent to the council (over considerable time) which have been ignored. Many are severely overgrown through lack of use and repair work, so why do 7 suddenly need closing in one go? Please explain.....	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**

Thank you for your question.

The Council's Traffic Management Team have started a consultation process to seek views on whether access by motor vehicles should be prohibited at seven locations on the network. The Council does not intend to close or stop up these routes, which would remain accessible for walkers, cyclists, and equestrians and with the Council remaining responsible for the ongoing management of the route and ensuring it is kept open for lawful use.

These measures are primarily proposed for the following reasons:

- The sections of highway are too narrow for motorised vehicles to use safely and are only suitable for pedestrians and horse riders. The restrictions aim to increase safety for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders using these sections of highway.

The measures are also proposed for the following reasons:

- For avoiding danger to persons or other traffic using the highway or any other highway or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising.
- For preserving or improving the amenity of the area through which the highway runs.
- For preserving the character of the highway where it is especially suitable for use by persons on horseback or on foot.
- To prevent accelerated damage to vegetation, surrounding biodiversity, and the highway.

We are currently at the very first step of the process, which involves statutory consultation with emergency services, highway authorities, and other relevant bodies.

If the proposals are deemed suitable to proceed then they will enter the formal public consultation stage. At this stage public notices will be placed in the local press and on-site at affected locations. Over a 21 day period, the public will then be asked to submit representations, all of which will be duly considered before any final decision is made. Any other interested parties, including the LAF, will have a full opportunity to raise their views during this stage of the process.

PQ 13	Mr Bertenshaw, Ross-on-Wye	<p>I am disappointed to find that there is a Statutory Consultation about imposing a number of TRO's in Herefordshire on various byways and UCR's. The lack of enforcement of obstructions all over our county has been poor, but I know the council employ somebody to manage our rights of way, are the full council aware of the cost of trying to impose TRO's and LIMIT PUBLIC ACCESS to these rights of way, when a TRO really should be a last resort.</p> <p>TRO's may be costly and in these cases do not benefit the public.</p> <p>My Question: Have the PROW team considered that in the case of all of the proposed TRO's it would be cheaper to deal with the obstructions as per their legal mandate?</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**

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## Agenda item no. 6 - Question from members of the Council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Cllr Ben Proctor, College	In the period from October last year to January this year (the only period for which figures are available) only 13% of calls to the Housing Triage line were answered. How will the executive improve this performance, to what level and by when?	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Thank you for the question. I acknowledge that there have been issues with the performance on answering telephone calls to the housing triage line. It is clear that, despite a number of different approaches to managing the phone lines, demand continues to outstrip the available capacity. In simple terms, the Triage team has dealt with 1,338 customers who presented as homeless since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, these were telephone calls and in person. Completing a homelessness assessment takes up to 15 minutes and even longer if the customer on the line is distressed or does not speak English as their first language. An increase in the number of people presenting in person at Blueschool House has taken capacity away from answering the telephone.</p> <p>This situation has been exacerbated in recent months by the Home Point waiting list being closed whilst the new IT system was implemented and customers could not bid for a period of time. As a result, there was a substantial increase in telephone calls to the HomePoint team with a consequent knock-on impact on the triage line.</p> <p>In order to address the increased demand, a further three Triage Officers are being employed to be the first point of contact. I anticipate that this will significantly improve performance within the next two months. We will continue to keep this under review and will bring in further resource if required. I would be happy to meet with you on a regular basis to keep you informed of progress.</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary question:</b></p> <p>I first raised a question about the performance of this phone line in April last year when I heard from many of my residents in need of housing support that despite calling repeatedly their calls were not answered. In June I raised the issue again and I was told that a system to measure call volumes would be in place by the end of July at the latest and if there was further delay I would be updated. There clearly was further delay but I'm afraid I wasn't updated and the figures I based my question on had to come from an FOI request. I'm pleased to hear that a year after I first raised the issue more resource is finally going to be committed to this service but given the experience of the past 12 months how can the executive assure members of this Council that housing support is receiving the political attention it badly needs?</p>			
<p><b>Response to supplementary question:</b></p> <p>I am sorry that you feel that you were not given a satisfactory answer. Due to the review and the demand that has been identified we are now monitoring the telephone answering system. Weekly monitoring is undertaken by the corporate director and fortnightly report to me as Cabinet Member.</p>			

The demand is unprecedented and is likely to increase which is a concern. A full review of the staffing model is underway which will report in April. We are aware of the distress to those facing homelessness and conscious of the impact on staff dealing with the increased demand. The review is important to staff and local residents. Detail regarding demand and the service review is contained in the answer that was originally provided to you.



**Chairman of Council report – Council Meeting**  
**23 May 2025**

**This month has seen the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ending of the Second World War in Europe and there were many events held throughout the county to mark the occasion. It was a time to reflect on the huge sacrifice and ordeal that our predecessors had gone through and for us to be grateful for the 80 years of peace and freedom we have enjoyed.**

**There was a huge attendance at Hereford Cathedral for the memorial service of our former Lord Lieutenant Sir Thomas Dunne. Attendees including HM The Queen, representatives of other members of the Royal Family and organisations Sir Thomas had been involved with; tributes reflected his modesty, capabilities and great love of Herefordshire.**

**Can I thank those of you who attended my reception at Plough Lane for our local voluntary sector at the end of March with over 150 attendees. Can I remind you to confirm if you are able to attend the visit to St Michael's Hospice on Monday 2nd June.**

**This time of year sees the changing of many civic roles and I want to thank the outgoing Mayors of our City and Market Towns for their stewardship and hope they enjoyed their role during the last twelve months. I look forward to welcoming the new Mayors and working with them. Since our last meeting we have seen a handover of the role of High Sheriff from Patricia Churchwood to Helen Bowden, which historically oversees the County judiciary and latterly has a role on the promotion of local volunteer organisations and public services. Helen is Herefordshire born and with her husband owns Orphans Press in Leominster and its digital company eighteen73. A leading Netball coach in the county for many decades she received the national Rose Award for outstanding contribution to Netball.**



**In August we will be commemorating the end of the WW2 in Far East and I was reminded of the long standing Sakura Cherry tree project between the UK and Japan. This friendship project which commemorated 400 years of trading between the two nations offers communities the opportunity to plant trees which are free including delivery.**

**The ambition is to plant 10,000 trees over a 10 year period with over 8,000 planted in England with most Counties having over a hundred – in Herefordshire we have only 15. (Worcestershire has over 150)**

**Can I ask that you work with your communities in identifying any appropriate locations where they can be publicly accessed, maintained and celebrated.**

**All the trees are grown in the UK by F P Mathews in Tenbury Wells following proper procurement process. Trees need to be ordered in advanced to ensure supply. More details on [SAKURA CHERRY TREE PROJECT | Celebrating a new era of UK-Japan friendship and cooperation.](#)**



Pictured outside the fitting room in Hereford HQ are Wendy Tarplee-Morris (founder) and Phil Brace (Chief Executive).

### **The Little Princess Trust - Hereford**

**The Little Princess Trust, which has its headquarters in Hereford city centre, helps around 2,000 children and young people in the UK with hair loss, usually due to cancer, every year by providing them with a free, real hair wig.**

**The Little Princess Trust pays for the making, fitting, and styling of every wig so the entire wig service is completely free. The charity also works with wig stylists across the UK and Ireland to ensure that each child or young person does not have to travel far to receive their wig.**

**Members of the public send their hair cleaned and combed to their offices in Hereford where it is graded on colour and then each hair is individually sewn onto a base cap. The hair will have different patterns to reflect normal hair growth and is of exceptional quality. The longest hair received was over six foot in length and famous donors include the Princess of Wales and Harry Styles.**

**The trust was founded by Wendy whose own young daughter died of cancer and has expanded over the last 20 years employing staff and supported by volunteers. Partnerships have been established in countries such as Portugal,**

**Bulgaria, Sweden, and Slovenia to provide wigs to young people up to the age of 24.**

**The charity is the second largest funder of childhood cancer research in the UK and has given more than £30 million to scientists, hospital research units in the UK and links to other world centre of excellence, searching for kinder and more effective treatments for all childhood cancers.**

**The Little Princess Trust can only carry out its work to provide wigs and fund research thanks to the phenomenal support received from the public. I visited them recently and was a very proud Herefordian that such a charity exists in our county and wanted to ensure we were all aware of their existence and work. More details [www.littleprincesses.org.uk](http://www.littleprincesses.org.uk)**

**My vice Chair and I have carried out many engagements during the last two months and I look forward to attending the Three County Show next month in Herefordshire's year and the 297<sup>th</sup> Three Choirs festival in July at Hereford Cathedral.**

**Cllr Roger Phillips JP**





## Chief Executive's report to Full Council – May 2025

I was sorry to hear of the death of former councillor Phil Cutter on Monday 28 April. Former Cllr Cutter represented residents in Ross for many years, as well as working on a number of council committees. He was well liked, well-respected and highly regarded by those who knew him and worked with him.

Following notification earlier this month, the Local Government Boundary Commission has started an electoral review of Herefordshire Council. The electoral review is to consider the number of councillors elected to the council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward. It will take around 18 months to complete. The final recommendations will be laid in Parliament, with the new ward boundaries implemented for elections in May 2027.

There has been a change of administration in a number of counties in our region following the local elections this month. We are making arrangements to meet with our closest neighbours to discuss key strategic issues that affect us jointly, including understanding their position on devolution. It's important we share with them what's important to our county and contribute to the discussion, to ensure we secure the best outcome for Herefordshire.

The new Herefordshire Councils Charter, which sets out how we will work more closely together with local town and parish councils on key areas to benefit residents, is being finalised ready for publication. The aim of the Charter is to develop stronger partnership working between councils and enable community action. A new Charter Reference Group (CRG) will act as developers and guardians of the Charter, which we expect to evolve over time.

I am pleased to confirm that following a rigorous recruitment process, Rachael Sanders was appointed as the council's new Director of Finance in April. Rachael has been successfully fulfilling this role since June 2024, and I'm delighted she's taken the position on a permanent basis.

We are expecting to receive more detail of the outcome of central government's multi-year spending review, and our three-year funding allocation, in the next few weeks. We're pleased and proud of our financial performance last year, which has allowed us to manage the £7 million rural services grant cut without major cuts in service, however this is not sustainable in the longer term. We are continuing to engage with government to ensure that the council receives a fair allocation of funding which reflects the cost of providing services across a rural county.

Good progress is being made in our work to make improvements in our children's services. This month we launched the Herefordshire Families First Partnership Programme, which is part of a national programme led by the Department for Education (DfE). Families First puts children and their families at the centre of all we do and brings all key partners together with children's services (schools, health, police, voluntary, faith and community sectors) to lead on local transformation. As part of this programme our children's services staff are moving towards locality-based working which will enhance our ability to work closer with our residents and our multi-agency partners within our communities, so we can be more responsive to the needs of our children and families.

We are expecting our seventh Ofsted monitoring visit during June, following which independent children's commissioner Debbie McMillan will publish her annual review of progress against our phase 2 improvement plan. With the most recent reports indicating that improvements are being made and sustained, we are confident that these reviews will provide continued assurance of positive progress.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has started its assessment of our adult social care services. The assessment is a new requirement as part of the Health and Care Act 2022 which places a duty on the CQC to measure how well the council is performing against its statutory duties under the Care Act 2014. The assessment framework comprises four themes: working with people; providing support; ensuring safety; and leadership. We have completed the first part of the assessment which is an 'information return'. The second part is a site visit, which will take place in the next six months, where they will talk to staff, managers and partners and where we can demonstrate the great work we are doing. We have a positive story to tell.

We have recently launched a new recruitment drive for local Shared Lives carers, as we look for more individuals or couples to share their life, home and interests with an adult who needs support to live a safe, healthy and independent life. There's a fantastic new video on our website that outlines what's involved at [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/shared-lives-herefordshire](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/shared-lives-herefordshire) . If you know of someone who may be suitable to be a shared lives carer, please direct them to our website for further information.

We received the fantastic news in April that we've been successful in our bid for £1.075million from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, for the Museum and Art Gallery redevelopment. The funding is provided by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to reduce direct carbon emissions from public sector buildings. The award is a major step forward in helping the redeveloped museum become one of the most energy-efficient heritage buildings in the UK, improving the warmth and efficiency with a new low carbon heating system, ventilation and insulation.

A consultation is currently underway on the proposed transport priorities for the county in our draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2025-2041. We're asking residents, partner organisations, transport providers, user groups and neighbouring councils to provide their feedback to help shape the final plan and ensure it reflects the needs and priorities of communities across Herefordshire. The consultation can be found on the council website [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/consultations)

We were delighted to see the first cohort of students graduate from NMITE earlier this month. This is a major achievement not just for the students and staff of NMITE but for the whole of Herefordshire. Offering a new way for aspiring engineers to link their academic knowledge with practical skills and experience with local companies is good for further education, local jobs and economic growth in our county. Many congratulations to all of the new graduates.

We held our first employee awards for many years in mid-May. The afternoon event was a great way to recognise and thank individual members of staff and teams for their efforts and achievements. It is important that we value the skills and experience of our workforce, as they work to deliver the best possible services for people in Herefordshire.

We are currently preparing for our upcoming Corporate Peer Challenge, which is taking place in June. Delivered by the Local Government Association, the Corporate Peer Challenge team will be looking at five core areas: local priorities and outcomes; organisational and place leadership; governance and culture; financial planning and management and capacity for improvement. In addition, we have asked them to also look at risk management, use of data and intelligence and service transformation. The peer team, which is made up of a total of five serving elected members and officers from other councils, will meet with elected members, staff, partners and voluntary and community representatives. Their outcome report, which will be published, will detail strengths, areas for improvement and recommendations.





# Title of report: Annual review of effectiveness - Scrutiny Review

**Meeting:** Annual Council

**Meeting date:** Friday 23 May 2025

**Report by:** The Statutory Scrutiny Officer

## Classification

Open

## Decision type

This is not an executive decision

## Wards affected

(All Wards);

## Purpose

That Council agrees the content set out in the Scrutiny Review and authorises the Monitoring Officer to make any requisite changes and amendments to the council's constitution.

## Recommendation(s)

### That Council:

- a. Agrees with the contents of the Scrutiny Review (in appendix 1) and the Statutory Scrutiny Officer's recommendations;
- b. Agrees that the number of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees should remain as current (as set out in 9 J, below); and
- c. Authority is given to the Monitoring Officer to make any requisite changes and amendments to the council's constitution as a result of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer's recommendations (as set out in 9 M-O, below).

## Alternative options

1. To propose alternative recommendations to those set out in this report. This is not recommended. The council is committed to conducting evidence led effectiveness reviews to ensure its scrutiny arrangements remain constitutionally 'fit for purpose'. The recommendations set out in this report have been proposed in order to either:
  - a. Improve clarity, practice and accountability, and
  - b. Improve the effectiveness and outcomes delivered by the council's scrutiny function
2. To not make the requisite changes to the constitution as a result of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer's recommendations. This is not recommended. The Scrutiny Review has evaluated and triangulated a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence. The review has also had oversight from the cross-party scrutiny review working group. The proposed changes to the constitution have been formed by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer by drawing the evidence together.

## Key considerations

3. At their 4 March 2022 meeting, full Council agreed to review constitutional arrangements on an annual basis in the form of annual effectiveness reviews.
4. In line with this commitment, in late 2024 to April 2025, a Scrutiny Review was undertaken by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer. It considered the council's scrutiny functions focussing – principally – on culture and effectiveness of scrutiny at Herefordshire Council.
5. The review was asked to consider:
  - a. Current scrutiny arrangements, against the backdrop of the priorities in the Herefordshire Council Plan.
  - b. The purpose of scrutiny within the council's governance framework.
  - c. The current structure of scrutiny, and
  - d. The operation of scrutiny, including training and governance processes, to enhance and strengthen its functions.
6. The evidence gathered for the review included an online survey of elected members and officers involved in scrutiny. This generated 63 responses, 29 from elected members and 34 from officers of the council. Face to face interviews were conducted with eleven senior officers of the council, all five scrutiny committee chairs, the Leader of Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services. Focus groups were held with Cabinet members and with the leaders of the council's political groups.
7. Desktop research was undertaken to review Herefordshire Council's current constitutional and committee structure arrangements. These were compared and contrasted with committee structures in other unitary authorities.
8. This research also considered the public question provisions at other local authorities and an analysis of the recommendations made by Herefordshire Council scrutiny committees and scrutiny committees from our neighbouring local authorities.
9. The scrutiny review's principal recommendations (which can be found in full at Appendix 1), are grouped into the following categories:



**A Shared Purpose for Scrutiny**

- a. Herefordshire Council elected members to agree a common purpose for scrutiny in Herefordshire.
- b. Scrutiny committee chairs and vice chairs meet their Cabinet counterparts and corporate directors at least quarterly to identify priorities and shape topics for scrutiny.
- c. Scrutiny to produce and deliver a rolling programme of training on the role of scrutiny, to both elected members and Herefordshire Council officers.

**Using evidence well and making good recommendations**

- d. Scrutiny to collaborate with the Democratic Services Manager to produce a programme of elected member briefings, aligned to scrutiny work programme and forward plan of key decisions.
- e. Herefordshire Council provide a funded training programme for members of scrutiny committees.
- f. Scrutiny to provide a report on training offered and taken up in its annual review of effectiveness.
- g. Herefordshire Council review its report template for scrutiny, removing superfluous sections suited to decision-making committees
- h. To draft a programme of training on scrutiny skills, to include:
  - i. Effective scrutiny chairing
  - ii. Critical thinking
  - iii. Asking questions
  - iv. Drafting recommendations, and
- i. Scrutiny committees take a pause during their committee meetings in order to draft their recommendations.

**The right structure for scrutiny**

- j. Herefordshire Council to retain its current structure of committees
- k. Scrutiny committees to provide, as part of their work programme planning, the rationale for the approach chosen for each scrutiny investigation.
- l. Scrutiny committees to demonstrate in their work programming that they are using the right forum to carry out their work (such as formal committee meeting, working group or task and finish group).

**Public Questions**

- m. Herefordshire Council restricts public questions to scrutiny committee matters that can be answered directly by the committee chair or statutory scrutiny officer.
- n. Herefordshire Council subjects supplementary questions to the same rules as initial public questions.
- o. Herefordshire Council re-introduces the six-month rule, whereby the same, or very similar question, cannot be asked within a six-month period of the answer being given, for scrutiny committees

10. Group Leaders were offered the opportunity to review the Scrutiny Review in April. There was general agreement with many of the recommendations. However, Group Leaders were unable to agree on recommendation 9J. The Independents for Herefordshire and the Green groups favouring a reduction in committees to four. The Conservative, Liberal Democrats and True Independents favouring the statutory scrutiny officers recommended course of action to retain the existing five committee structure.

11. In regard to public questions, there was general agreement with all of the proposed recommendations 9 M-O, with one exception. In relation to recommendation 9M, group leaders were of the view that if a question didn't relate to an item on the agenda, it would be referred to the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to put forward as a future work programme item. In this regard, group leaders felt that reintroducing the six-month rule would not be necessary and were not in favour of this recommendation.

### **Community impact**

12. The Council Plan is committed to *Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do*. Periodic reviews of the models of governance employed, processes and cultures adopted by the council are valuable ways in which we can demonstrate how we do this.
13. This review fulfils the Council's agreement to review constitutional arrangements through, although not limited to, annual effectiveness reviews.

### **Environmental Impact**

14. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
15. Whilst this is a decision on back office functions and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

### **Equality duty**

16. 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.
17. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist will be completed on all Council decisions and where required, full Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken. The impact of this decision is low, meaning that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

### **Resource implications**

18. There are no resource implications with this decision. However, if Council were to propose and agree alternative recommendations, for example, reducing the number of scrutiny committees there would be financial implications. Notably, a reduction in special responsibility allowances associated with chairing a scrutiny committee.

### **Legal implications**

19. The council is required to have a constitution. The proposed recommendations, if agreed, will provide the basis for changes that can, or not as the case may be, be adopted at, and then implemented after, the annual council meeting.

### **Risk management**

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
<b>Risk:</b> Not making structural changes to scrutiny does not deliver the improvements needed to strengthen the scrutiny function at the council.	The refreshed emphasis and focus on strengthening and diversifying the ways in which scrutiny operates, including additional training and development will ensure best practices can be adopted and applied in all scrutiny settings.
<b>Opportunity:</b> Not making changes to the current committee structures allows for continuing improvements to the scrutiny culture. Introducing focus on additional ways of working/scrutiny practice allows continuing development to be sustained.	Scrutiny functions and practice at Herefordshire Council are continually reviewed on an annual basis.

These risks/opportunities will be monitored at an operational level, scrutiny's performance will be reported to Council.

### Consultees

20. The scrutiny review was produced with oversight from a cross-party working group. The role of this group was to offer feedback, comment and advice on the preparation of the review. The statutory scrutiny officer has taken account of those views in the preparation of the review.
21. Group leaders were apprised and consulted of the scrutiny review on 24 April.

### Appendices

- **Appendix 1 – The Statutory Scrutiny Officer's Scrutiny Review Report**

### Background papers

None identified





# Introduction

This review has come about as a result of a commitment made by the council to review the revised scrutiny structures following their creation in May 2022. Council agreed to review these scrutiny arrangements after a two-year period.

This review focuses on the council's scrutiny function and explores the underlying culture and effectiveness of scrutiny at Herefordshire Council. It also looks at how committee members use evidence to scrutinise a topic and make good recommendations for change. The review is based on the following objectives:

- Review current arrangements, against the backdrop of the priorities in the new Herefordshire Council Plan.
- Understand current thinking on the purpose of scrutiny within the council's governance framework.
- Make recommendations on improvements to the structure of scrutiny, including training and governance processes.
- Make further recommendations on effective and proven cultural change regarding scrutiny reflecting elected members, officers and partners.
- To create a set of actions to create any agreed changes to structure, operation and support of the scrutiny function.

## Methodology

In carrying out this review, the following research was carried out:

- An online survey of elected members and officers involved in scrutiny. This generated 63 responses, 29 from elected members and 34 from officers of the council.
- Face to face interviews with:
  - eleven senior officers of the council
  - all five scrutiny committee chairs
  - Leader of Council and
  - Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services.
- Focus groups with Cabinet members and with the leaders of the council's political groups<sup>1</sup>.
- Desktop research analysing:
  - Herefordshire Council's constitution
  - Committee structures in other unitary local authorities
  - Public questions asked at Herefordshire Council committee meetings
  - Public question provision at other unitary local authorities.
  - Recommendations made by Herefordshire Council scrutiny committees, and scrutiny committees at neighbouring local authorities.

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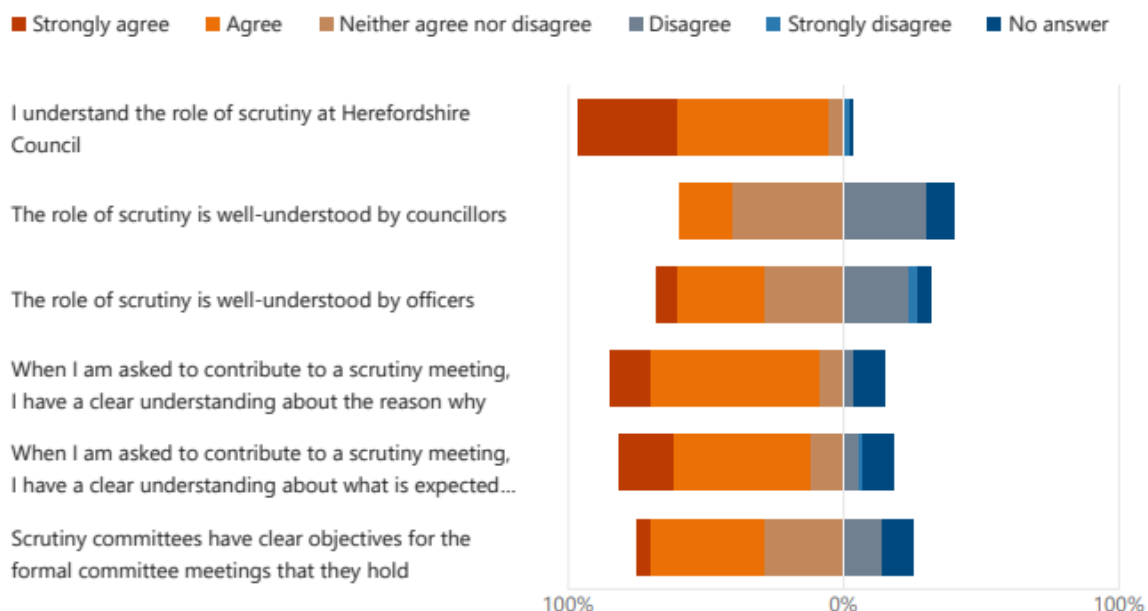
<sup>1</sup> The Leader of Council, who is also the leader of the Conservative group, did not attend the focus group as he was interviewed separately.

# A shared purpose for scrutiny

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny states that a foundational requirement of good scrutiny is a shared vision of what scrutiny is for, and a shared purpose for the work it undertakes to meet that vision.

Nearly everyone completing the survey, elected members and officers, told the review that they agreed they understood scrutiny's purpose. 94% of respondents said that they strongly agreed (42%) or agreed (52%) that they "understand the role of scrutiny at Herefordshire Council".

Respondents were less certain about their colleagues. Only 21% agreed, strongly or otherwise, that councillors understood scrutiny's purpose with more (42%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing or (33%) disagreeing. Responses indicated slightly more confidence in officers' understanding than they were of the understanding of elected members.



The interviews and focus groups provided considerable insight into these seemingly contradictory results. Although those who were interviewed all gave overviews of scrutiny's purpose, those overviews differed in their focus. There is no one right way to go about scrutiny, but what is crucial is that there is an agreed approach when undertaking it. Much of the tension within scrutiny at Herefordshire Council – a tension noted by both officers and elected members interviewed for this review– stems from this lack of shared approach.

A minority view of those interviewed indicated that scrutiny is primarily, if not entirely about holding the administration to account for the outcome of decision making. It looks backwards, making recommendations to strengthen already agreed courses of action. For others, scrutiny had an additional role to play in developing and strengthening policy and projects before they are agreed by Cabinet and Council.

Many of the people interviewed for this review, particularly cabinet members and scrutiny chairs, noted the at-times tension between the current administration and scrutiny arising from this shared lack of understanding, a tension common to scrutiny in other local authorities, which

hampered the ability of scrutiny to add value to the decision-making progress, thus depriving Cabinet of the critical friend role that scrutiny should provide.

The current committee structure, and the expectations for the function, originate in part from scrutiny being seen by some members as ‘the next best thing’ to the committee system<sup>2</sup> of governance, and its distribution of decision-making powers. Some members referred to scrutiny as being seen as “a quasi-committee system”. This confusion over scrutiny’s also contributes to the tensions observed between scrutiny and the administration

A solution which is supported by the [Centre for Governance and Scrutiny](#) may be to create a protocol that sets out an agreed role for scrutiny. This could be used to set scrutiny’s role/purpose aligned to Herefordshire Council’s constitution and to provide the framework on which to base closer working between scrutiny committees and Cabinet.

Another recommendation, albeit one that will take longer to bear fruit, is to inculcate closer working between scrutiny, Cabinet, officers of the council and its partners. Since 2023, there has been more rigorous approach to scrutiny at Herefordshire Council. This is engendering a far more collaborative approach to work, with committee members, cabinet members, officers and the council’s partners now having more confidence about the meeting’s purpose. Regular strategy meetings between chairs and the council’s corporate to discuss the ‘lines of enquiry’ prior to scrutiny meetings being described by those interviewed as helping to entrench a shared purpose for scrutiny. This practice should be considered in a manner that will help to support the development of a protocol.

Having decided on scrutiny’s role, Herefordshire Council should do more to inculcate these values among councillors, officers and the council’s partners. A rolling training programme, including a session on scrutiny’s purpose and how that manifests at Herefordshire Council, would bolster the day-to-day work required to entrench these values. This training should be offered on a regular basis, to take into account the number of officers and councillors who start at and leave the council each year.

### **Suggested recommendations**

- Herefordshire Council elected members to agree a common purpose for scrutiny in Herefordshire.
- Scrutiny committee chairs and vice chairs meet their Cabinet counterparts and corporate directors at least quarterly to identify priorities and shape topics for scrutiny.
- Scrutiny to produce and deliver a rolling programme of training on the role of scrutiny, to both elected members and Herefordshire Council officers.

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<sup>2</sup> A committee system is where a council establishes a number of committees, each with a specific area of responsibility and decision-making powers. The political groups appoint elected members to those committees. It means that more councillors are actively involved in decision-making.

# Using evidence well and making good recommendations

## Presenting evidence well

A common theme when speaking with officers about scrutiny was the time and effort required to produce reports for scrutiny. In particular, officers felt that the current report format for decision-making committee did not serve scrutiny well. There were a number of issues identified:

- Confusion over the purpose of the 'recommendations section in the report cover. As those writing the report were not recommending decisions, this section was felt to be superfluous and at times caused confusion about the report's information-providing purpose.
- Multiple sections of the report format asking officers to assess the implications of recommended decisions, despite making no recommendations.
- Whether a formal report was necessarily the best way to provide evidence to the committee.

A written report serves two purposes. It provides information for the committee to carry out their work, but also provides public assurance on the council's work and performance. A report format that requires officers to provide large amounts of writing that is superfluous to this purpose, is an ineffective use of everyone's time. This report therefore recommends that Herefordshire Council review its report format for scrutiny, removing superfluous sections suited to decision-making committees.

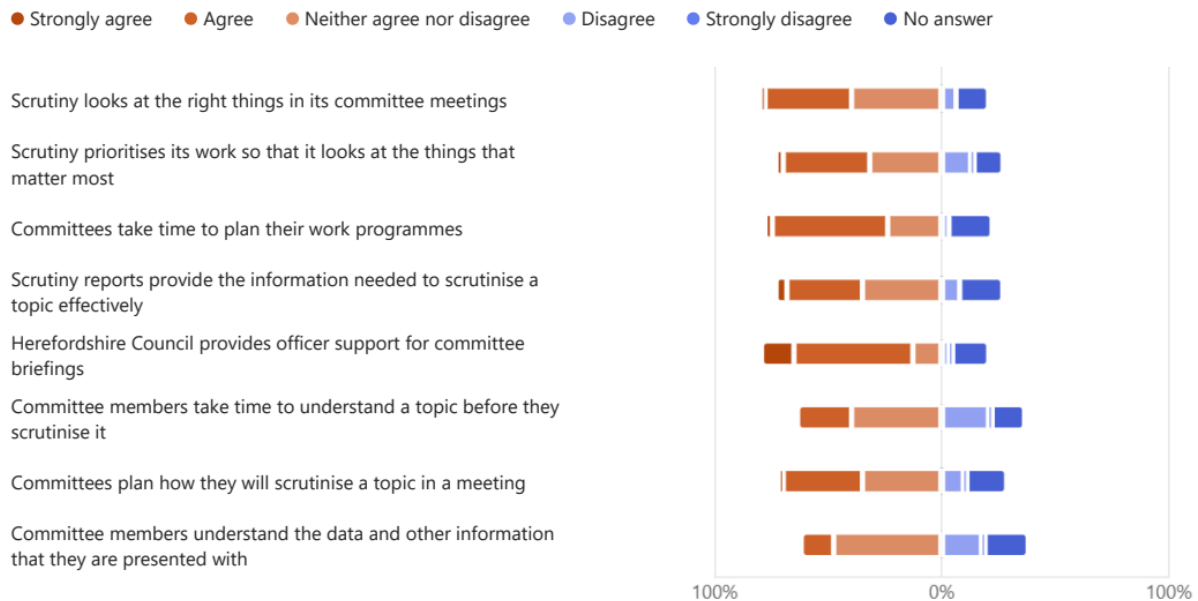
## Using evidence

During the course of this review, both elected members and officers spoke at length about the evidence that members receive, and how they use it to scrutinise officers and members of the council in order to make good recommendations. Of greater concern, only 18% of people responding to the survey believed that committee members understood the information presented to them, and fewer than a quarter believed that committees took time to understand the topic they were scrutinising. These views were held by officers and elected members almost equally.

Using the interviews to explore these results in greater detail, two narratives emerged. Committee members and chairs spoke of their occasional frustration at receiving inadequate evidence to carry out their work, either because of reports with inadequate information, or information received too soon before the meeting, or presented at the meeting itself through 'verbal updates' or long, information-rich presentations. This was a long-standing concern of committee members and some officers, who reflected that as a result some scrutiny meetings had been little more than elected member briefings. A committee chair noted that *"if [a report] is tabled on the day or the night before and you're expected to swot up the night before when you've got a meeting the next day, it doesn't make for good scrutiny."* Committee chairs noted that this could fuel a belief that the administration was not being entirely transparent.

Correspondingly, officers noted that they found that questions in formal committee meetings appeared to often focus on further information seeking rather than testing the evidence presented at the meeting. This could result in poor use of time in formal committee meetings, and frustration from Cabinet members and officers who were prepared and willing to have their work scrutinised.





The new scrutiny process, whereby presenting officers and committee chairs meet a couple of months before a meeting to plan their work, has helped to set expectations and improve the quality of questioning. Officers found the written briefs produced after these meetings to be useful, but these were only produced sporadically. Nonetheless, these meetings helped officers to produce the right information for the committee, as well as giving officers sufficient time to produce reports. As a result, it was noted that the quality and timeliness of reports have risen in recent months.

Similarly, committees now held regular pre-meetings to plan their lines of enquiry in the meeting. Some officers interviewed for this review were positive about this development, noting that committees appeared to be both more structured in their work and purposeful in what they sought from the meeting.

This report concludes that more that can be done to improve the quality of scrutiny in meeting. Both officers and elected members agree that more training and development for committee members was crucial. Ideas for this included:

- a programme of briefings on topics relevant to the committee
- more pre-committee briefings on topics due to be considered by the committee
- background information on a topic supplied to the committee
- a training programme of skills relevant to a committee

This work already happens to some extent, with member briefings already part of the scrutiny topic planning process. This could be bolstered with greater collaboration with the Democratic Services Manager, who organises a rolling programme of elected member briefings. This review therefore recommends that the Statutory Scrutiny Officer produce a programme of briefings for all committee members, not just scrutiny committees, in collaboration with the Democratic Services Manager. The take-up of training opportunities should also be presented to Council annually in scrutiny's annual review of effectiveness.

Although there is a lot that scrutiny and its members could do to develop their skills, some committee members felt strongly that scrutiny members, particularly chairs, would benefit considerably from professional training in skills such as leading reviews, chairing meetings and

understanding data and other evidence. This training should however be restricted to scrutiny chairs but extended to all elected members seeking to develop their skills. At present there is no dedicated budget for elected member development. This review therefore recommends that scrutiny receive a dedicated training budget to develop the skills of elected members.

More fundamentally, changing the way that scrutiny is carried out in Herefordshire could make better use of the skills of elected members. A formal committee system requires elected members who understand a topic well and have the skills to scrutinise it effectively. As a result, the council is expecting elected members to understand up to 18 related topics a year, and to meaningfully scrutinise professionals for whom the topic in hand is a full-time job. This is not to lose sight of the value elected members provide in their insights as community representatives to the decision-making process. Exploring different ways of working, to include more informal working through task and finish groups, may make better use of the committee's time and skills.

### **Making recommendations**

In interviews with scrutiny chairs, there was a common understanding that making recommendations was how their committees demonstrated impact.

A focus on producing recommendations to demonstrate impact should be seen in a positive light. Throughout the review, members interviewed made it clear that they were keen to make a difference, wanted to focus on adding value to decision-making through their work, and wished to contribute to development of existing and proposed policy and practice.

For some of Herefordshire Council's scrutiny committees, recommendations also appeared to serve in part to structure a meeting and to give it a purpose. The Local Government Association's guide to good scrutiny suggests this as a useful way to go about committee work, particularly when a committee and attending Cabinet members and officers are in broad agreement on an issue and potential courses of action. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny recommends considering potential recommendations as an integral part of the scrutiny planning process, and for Herefordshire Council scrutiny committee meetings where recommendation planning has happened, there is evidently a resulting structure to the committee's work.

However, the current process and underlying culture around making recommendations presents some challenges. Compared to other local authorities, Herefordshire Council scrutiny committees make a lot of recommendations to Cabinet and to Cabinet portfolio holders. For example, in 2024 Shropshire Council scrutiny committees made 23 recommendations. Worcestershire County Council did not appear to make any. By comparison, Herefordshire Council's five scrutiny committees made 175 recommendations. This has created a considerable workload for officers of Herefordshire Council, who have had to consider, draft, and seek agreement on responses to these recommendations

Cabinet members, directors and other officers interviewed for the review felt that committee produced too many recommendations, many of which they felt were of low quality. They stated that at times, recommendations were made without any supporting evidence and sometimes were even entirely divorced from the scrutiny that had taken place.

There was also a belief among some officers that some committees could be placing too much emphasis on creating change through recommendations, at the expense of the core business of a formal scrutiny, the holding to account of the executive and its health partners for their decisions

and proposed courses of action. At other times, they felt that a focus on testing pre-planned recommendations appeared to crowd out a more holistic scrutiny of the topic in question.

For committee members and chairs, there was some concern at a lack of responses to recommendations. As table 1 below shows, scrutiny committees have received responses to just 47% of the recommendations that they made in 2024, despite considerable efforts by some chairs to ensure prompt responses. Chairs believed that a lack of urgency in replying to recommendations undermined the work their committees carried out.

Both elected members and officers criticised heavily the current process for formulating scrutiny recommendations. At present, recommendations are typically discussed in the meeting once the topic under scrutiny has been discussed. Committee members generally submit ideas for recommendations during the meeting to the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, who collates and writes them up to be displayed and agreed upon. However, many people felt that this was resulting in recommendations that were too numerous, rushed and ill-considered. As one director pointed out “the committee doesn’t have to make its recommendations on the spot.”

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Recommendations Made</b>	<b>Responses received</b>	<b>Response rate</b>
Children and Young People	39	27	69%
Connected Communities	22	12	55%
Environment and Sustainability	35	10	29%
Health, Care and Wellbeing	16	16	100%
Scrutiny Management Board	63	17	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>47%</b>

*Table 1: Total recommendations and responses received by scrutiny committee, 2024*

There are some relatively easy changes that will ameliorate some of the challenges caused by the scrutiny committees’ emphasis on making recommendations. Committees could take more time to produce their recommendations. Some of those interviewed noted that there is no requirement for them to agree their recommendations in the meeting in question. Instead, much like their minutes, they could be drafted between meetings and agreed at a future meeting. Others felt instead that committees should take a break in the meeting to provide time to draft recommendations. The suggestion of requiring a break was popular with those it was suggested to. As well as having a lower administrative burden, they noted that this had the advantage of allowing scrutiny to continue to make recommendations following time-critical pre-decision scrutiny (such as with the annual budget). The review therefore recommends scrutiny adopt this approach in committee meetings.

### **Suggested recommendations**

- Scrutiny to collaborate with the Democratic Services Manager to produce a programme of elected member briefings, aligned to scrutiny work programme and forward plan of key decisions.
- Herefordshire Council provide a funded training programme for members of scrutiny committees.
- Scrutiny to provide a report on training offered and taken up in its annual review of effectiveness.

- Herefordshire Council review its report template for scrutiny, removing superfluous sections suited to decision-making committees
- To draft a programme of training on scrutiny skills, to include:
  - Effective scrutiny chairing
  - Critical thinking
  - Asking questions
  - Drafting recommendations
- Scrutiny committees take a pause during their committee meetings in order to draft their recommendations.

# The right structure for scrutiny

## The committee structure at Herefordshire Council

Herefordshire Council's scrutiny function is currently divided into five main committees, each focused on specific areas of council and partner organisation operations.

- Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
- Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee
- Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
- Health, Care, and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
- Scrutiny Management Board (SMB)

Committees tend to meet formally six times a year, in January, March, May, July, September and November. Committee meetings are underpinned by:

- A *topic planning session* for each major agenda item. This brings together the chair and vice-chair with the officers who are leading on the item, to agree a more detailed scope and objectives for each topic, and to plan the information to be shared with the committee in advance. These typically happen around two months before the committee meeting.
- A lines of enquiry meeting of the committee, to plan questioning on the topics to be scrutinised. These typically take place a week or two before the committee meeting.
- A member briefing or training session. These do not happen as a matter of course, but they are becoming increasingly common. Although these are primarily intended to support a particular topic at a scrutiny committee meeting, recordings are often shared with all elected members when they are of wider interest.

## Other ways of working

Herefordshire Council's constitution allows for other ways of working, these are:

- A specific committee meeting known as "spotlight" review
- task and finish review – properly focused to ensure members can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations back to the scrutiny committee.
- standing panel – when a complex topic requires significant detail, which may take a longer period of time to investigate.

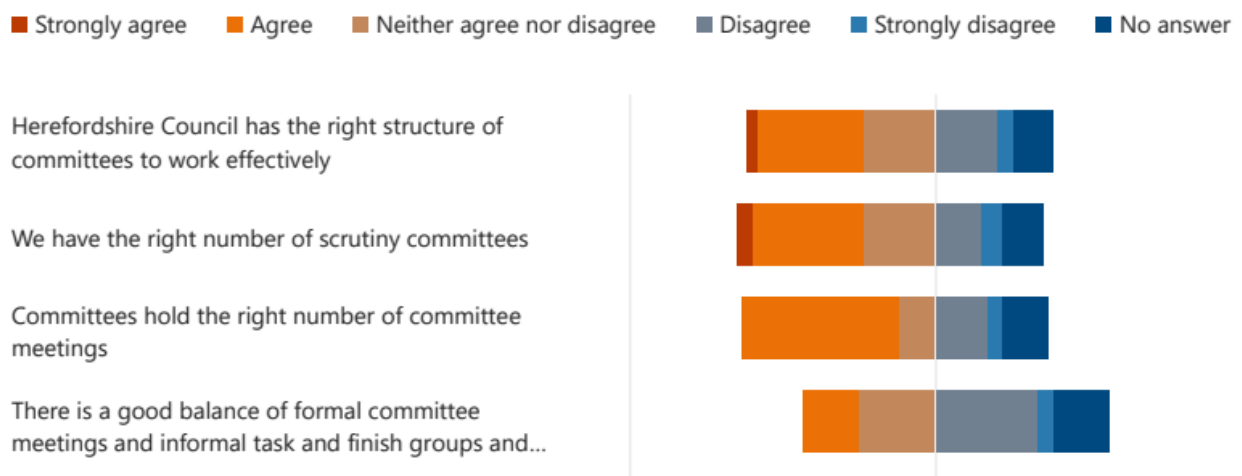
In practice, scrutiny does not use these formal mechanisms often to carry out its work. However, many scrutiny committee meetings are effectively 'spotlight' reviews, because they usually contain a single substantive topic for reporting formally back to a committee to ensure transparency of its work. These working group meetings however are generally focussed on a particular topic relevant to the committee, rather than the sort of overarching question a task and finish group might seek to answer. There is no evidence that in the last ten years scrutiny has set up any standing panels.

## The impact of the current scrutiny structure on its effectiveness

The survey of officers and members of the council asked members whether they agreed or not that the current scrutiny committee structure was right for Herefordshire Council. It also provided respondents with open ended questions on the committee structure to gather more nuanced opinion. These opinions were then reflected on in interviews.

Opinion from the survey suggests that although on balance, people are content with the current structure, they are far from enthusiastic about it. Although more people felt that the committee structure was right for Herefordshire Council (38.3%) than didn't (25%), this was still a minority opinion. Similarly, the survey found that more people agreed that we had the right number of committees (41.7%) than did not (21.7%), but, again, those in agreement were again in a minority. However, more people felt that there was the wrong balance of formal, committee-based work and informal task and finish group work (38.3%) than thought it to be the right balance (18.3%).

This suggests that respondents are less concerned about the committee structure, than what each committee does with its time. This was echoed in the survey commentary and the interviews that took place as part of this review.



Both the survey's open questions and the interviews raised numerous concerns with the impact of the scrutiny current committee system on scrutiny's effectiveness. Elected members told the review that they felt that they were stretched too thinly across committees. Some elected members sat on more than one committee, with several members serving on three. The council's political groups had at times struggled to fill all their allocated seats on a given scrutiny committee. Both councillors and officers occasionally noted that in their opinion most committees contained at least one elected member who was either unwilling or unable to contribute to the committee's work.

A typical committee meeting involves more than attendance at the meeting, occasionally requiring attendance at both a pre-meeting topic briefing and usually at a further pre-meeting to plan questioning at the formal meeting. This could mean attendance at up to 18 planning and formal committee meeting per year, per committee, as well as more general planning meetings and time-limited working or task and finish groups.

Both officers and councillors felt that because of this, there was at times a lack of capacity to undertake the reading and other preparation required to understand the topic that they were scrutinising. One councillor told the review: "Sometimes I lack confidence to contribute because I feel I should have better knowledge of the subject under scrutiny, but I also don't have the time to do any background reading beyond the briefing papers."

Council officers also felt that they were at times stretched across too many scrutiny committees. A corporate director expressed concern with the amount of time officers needed to prepare for a meeting, in particular responding to data requests in advance of a committee meeting.

Some of the officers and members interviewed also felt that too often they were asked to bring a topic to scrutiny without a clear purpose for the meeting. When they worked with committees to plan an item for scrutiny, the purpose for bringing the topic to scrutiny would sometimes change during the planning process, creating additional work. The strengthened planning process for committee items, however, was generally regarded as bringing greater rigour and purpose to scrutiny meetings, recognising that changing objectives was a natural part of the planning process.

Many of the people interviewed told us that even when members took the time to carry out the work required to prepare for a meeting, the committee system often hindered their work. A five-committee scrutiny structure requires narrower remits for each committee, resulting in some major aspects of the council's work split across two committees. For example, the council's Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee has a remit to consider highways matters, with the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee responsible for transport. Similarly housing development is a matter for Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee, whereas supported housing is within the remit of the Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. As a result, it is not always clear which committee should scrutinise high-level planning and strategic documents such as the Local Plan or the Local Transport. Herefordshire Council identified this issue when it expanded the number of scrutiny committees, by creating the Scrutiny Management Board. This committee, on which the chairs of the other four committees sit, has a remit to co-ordinate scrutiny's work. In practice, it has only exercised this remit informally.

### **What would be an optimal committee structure for Herefordshire Council?**

This question has been a salient issue throughout this review. To help answer this question, the review asked both officers and members for their thoughts on the right committee structure for Herefordshire. It also looked at how other local authorities structure their committees.

#### **Officer/councillor opinion**

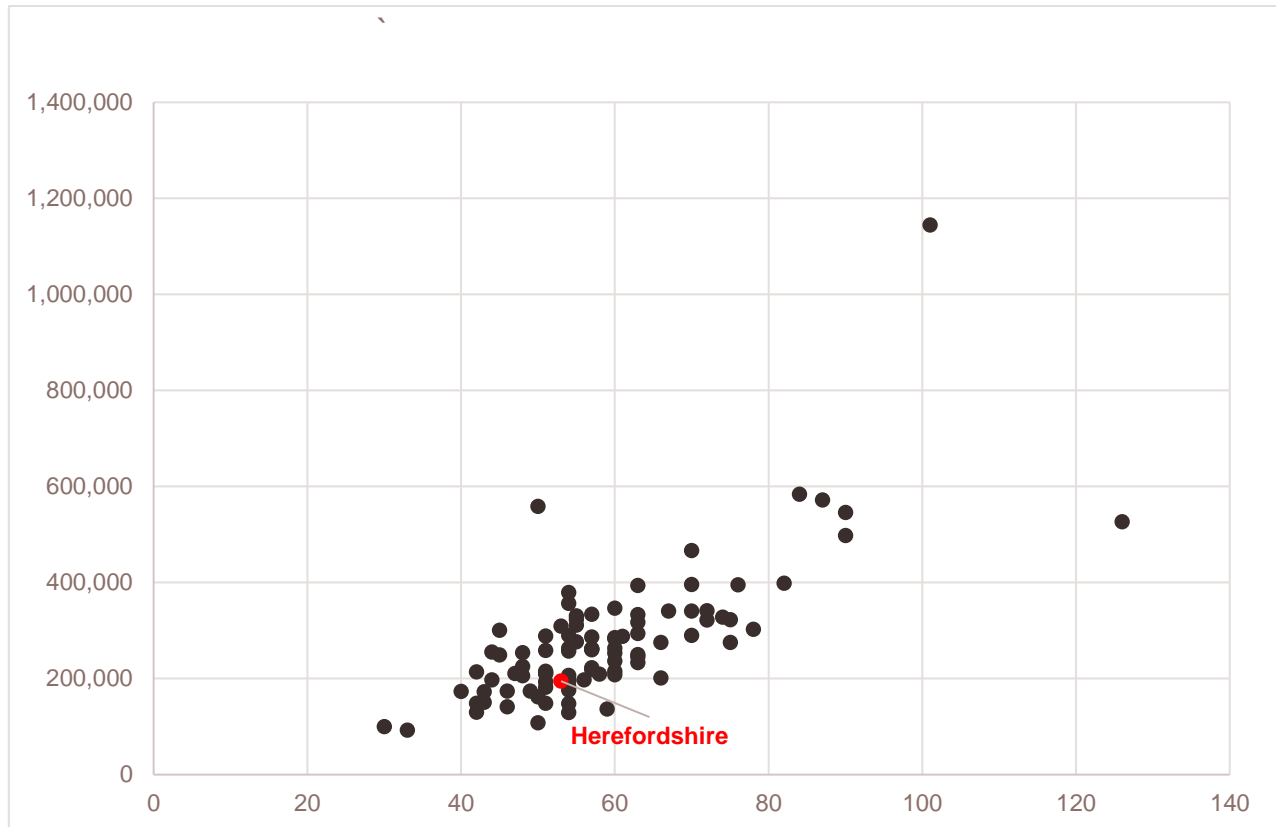
Among officers and members of Herefordshire Council, opinions varied considerably between keeping the current system and reducing the number of committees dramatically. There was no call to increase the number of committees. Ideas for different structures included:

- A four-committee system, based on the council's corporate themes of people, place, growth and transformation. This in practice would likely mean combining the remits of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee and Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.
- A three-committee system, based roughly on people, places and corporate matters such as the budget. This would mean additionally combining the remits of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.
- Abolition of the overarching oversight role of Scrutiny Management Board. The board would then focus on corporate matters such as budget and financial strategy, council workforce and transformation.
- Restructuring the committees' work programmes rather than the committees themselves, with less focus on formal committee meetings, and greater focus on task and finish groups.



### How is scrutiny structured at other local authorities?

The scrutiny team undertook a review of 102 other unitary local authorities with scrutiny committees. Although Herefordshire is one of England's larger counties, compared to other local authorities, it has a relatively small population. The count of 194,700 makes it the 21<sup>st</sup> smallest local authority in this sample of 103 unitary councils. Unsurprisingly therefore, Herefordshire Council also has a relatively small cohort of 53 councillors.



Herefordshire Council currently operates five scrutiny committees, as outlined earlier in this report. A council operating five scrutiny committees, according to scrutiny's research, has an average of 73 members serving a residential population of around 500,000. Of this cohort, Herefordshire is the smallest in terms of number of councillors, and by far the smallest in terms of population served. For a council of Herefordshire's Council's size and Council membership, three committees is more usual. In our research, a typical council with three scrutiny committees, some 36 councils in our research, has 53 members serving a population of 208,000 residents.

However, Herefordshire Council has a significant programme of business in several key areas. Substantial new infrastructure proposals (in roads, active travel and rail) and housing development in the county is being progressed. Continuing improvements being required to children's services. There remains significant environmental concern around the health of our local rivers and water ways. Ongoing budgetary pressures which require careful management and continued oversight within a climate of 'real terms' government funding. All of which sit within a vision of 'Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do'.

While the county as whole, on the face of it, could be viewed in demographic terms as potentially lacking the economy of scale to sustain the current scrutiny committee structure; it is a county that requires a healthy and broad reaching scrutiny remit to assist with the breadth of the council's priority work areas and programmes of transformation and change.



When exploring the reasons through interviews and focus groups why people were suggesting the number of committees be reduced, their concerns were less around the structure than they were about how scrutiny went about its work, with an undue focus on formal committee-based scrutiny. Compared to those same authorities, Herefordshire also carries out little informal work through task and finish groups. Instead of changing the committee structure therefore, it might be more effective to use the now-established chairs to deliver the changes that almost everyone agrees are needed. Instead of creating work programmes based on committee meetings, they should create them based on the best way to answer the questions they want to prioritise.

The statutory guidance on the operation of scrutiny notes that there is no single structure that in itself will deliver better scrutiny. Other factors, such as information provided, the skills of the committee members, and a culture of high challenge and high support will all have a greater impact.

### **The role of task and finish groups**

Almost everyone who was interviewed for this review felt that scrutiny committees could and should carry out more task and finish work. Task and finish groups differ considerably in how they go about their work compared to a formal committee meeting. To begin with, they do not usually carry out their work within a formal committee meeting, meaning that they are not limited to a few hours of questioning within a single meeting. Because the work happens outside formal meetings, the participants are usually willing to talk more informally, which can lead to more frank and nuanced discussion than might happen in a meeting in public. It also allows for radically different ways of working, for example a site visit to a primary school or mystery shopping of a particular service or function. It also provides more opportunity for committee members to meet with residents, community groups and front-line officers, providing a very different perspective to formal scrutiny of senior officers and Cabinet members.

The Local Government Association notes that this allows groups to explore topics that might cut across several council or public sector services, or to answer questions that require co-operation across functions or partner organisations. For example, a task and finish group might look at how Herefordshire Council and its partners work together to tackle obesity. To properly examine this topic, making meaningful recommendations for change, would require a task and finish group to speak with more than the council's public health service, and might wish to speak with highways and transport officers, with planning, with police community safety teams and with partners in the NHS and third sector organisations. It might also look at how other local authorities approach this work to see what has worked in other areas. None of this work could be carried out easily within a formal committee meeting.

### **A way forward for Herefordshire Council scrutiny**

The review has captured some disquiet at how scrutiny currently operates. However, the concerns raised by officers and members relate more to how committees work, rather than the committee structure itself. If Herefordshire Council were to decide to restructure its scrutiny committees, many of the challenges highlighted in this review would remain, such as the work required to bring a topic to scrutiny, the pressure of time on committee members, and the focus on committee-based work rather than on scrutiny through task and finish groups. A move to more task and finish group based working would still require an elected member to chair each review, and removing a committee chair might reduce the number of councillors willing to undertake such a role.

A less disruptive solution to the issues raised in this review might be for the existing scrutiny committees to review their work programmes in the light of the findings of this report and in relation to their considerations of the Council Plan and the executive's forward plan of forthcoming decisions. Rather than automatically booking in a schedule of committee meetings and then seeking topics to fill those meeting, the committees could instead identify priorities for their committees and then decide how best to carry out that work. If a committee decides to focus on one or two large, cross-cutting topics, then it may choose to only hold formal committee meetings to agree terms of references and final reports as part of that work. Similarly, a committee may decide to focus instead entirely on the holding to account element of scrutiny through the formal committee structure. Organisationally, Scrutiny Management Board would have a critical role in planning this work. As it already has a constitutional remit to oversee the work of the other committees, it is ideally placed to lead on such work planning.

On balance, this review concludes that keeping the current structure would provide the stability and capacity to put into place the changes needed to deliver more effective scrutiny. However there is a clear view held by many officers and councillors that the number of committees must be reduced, for the reasons explained earlier in this section. The elected member reference group convened to support this review also largely agreed that there ought to be a reduction in the number of committees, though there was no consensus in determining what sort of committee structure might replace the existing one.

If Herefordshire Council decides that it should close down one or more of its scrutiny committees, then there is no clear consensus from the review about what shape the structure might take. The most commonly suggested structure was a four-committee structure, based on the council's four directorates of Community Wellbeing, Children and Young People, Economy and Environment and Corporate Services. To mirror this structure, providing a single-committee focus on each of these directorates, would suggest Herefordshire Council merging the remits of its Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee and Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Regardless of which choice it makes, there are two changes that scrutiny could make to maximise the pool of people participating in scrutiny. First, Hereford Council's Remuneration Panel could be reconvened to reconsider whether there is merit in paying the chairs of task and finish groups. Task and finish groups, if done properly, are considerable pieces of work that require time and effort from the group chair for them to be effective. Properly remunerating task and finish group chairs for this work, perhaps using the budget saved from merging two committees, would help in recruiting councillors willing to undertake them.

Secondly, scrutiny could consider more actively seeking co-opted members to participate in task-and-finish based work. This needn't just be people who are experts in a topic, undoubtedly useful as they would be. Instead, scrutiny could look to recruit interested members of the public who would have the time and focus to carry out work that an elected member, juggling numerous civic roles, might lack. The constitution allows scrutiny committees to recruit up to two co-opted members – scrutiny could be more proactive in filling these roles and adding to its capacity.

#### **The suggested recommendations from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer are:**

- Herefordshire Council to retain its current structure of committees

- Scrutiny committees to provide, as part of their work programme planning, the rationale for the approach chosen for each scrutiny investigation.
- Scrutiny committees to demonstrate in their work programming that they are using the right forum to carry out their work (such as formal committee meeting, working group or task and finish group).

# Public questions

Although the survey did not ask participants their thoughts on public questions at scrutiny committee meetings, this was a topic that featured heavily in interviews with both officers and councillors.

During the course of the review surveyed or interviewed nearly everyone surveyed or interviewed wanted to speak about how the current rules allowing public questions at scrutiny meetings was often a source of conflict or tension between elected members and officers. Committee chairs did not see why questions that could only be answered by the relevant portfolio holder or director were being asked at scrutiny meetings. However elected members also recognised the importance of allowing members of the public to ask questions of those making decisions on how public services are run.

The review considered the number of questions that had been asked in Herefordshire Council scrutiny committee meetings by members of the public since late summer 2022. For the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, as the sole remaining committee following the change in the committee structure in May 2022, we looked further back to October 2021. The team also carried out a review of 83 unitary local authorities in England and Wales to determine which allowed public questions.

Since October 2021, members of the public have received answers to 60 submitted questions. Of these 60 questions, nearly two-thirds of these questions were asked at the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. By comparison, in over two years the Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee received only one question from a member of the public. Even if we discount questions asked at Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee before July 2022, this committee remains the principal destination for questions to scrutiny.

The questions were received from 27 members of the public, including a city councillor. Three members of the public asked more than six questions, with the most prolific questioner asking 12 questions to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Management Board.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	37
Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee	7
Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee	8
Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	1
Scrutiny Management Board	7
	<b>60</b>

*Table 2: number of questions asked at Herefordshire Council scrutiny committees since October 2021.*

From this, we noticed a couple of concerning issues, where it appeared that public questions were either being used for party political purposes, or as a means to induce engagement by members of the public with longstanding grievances. Of the 60 questions asked, a total of 30 came from four members of the public, all of whom had been involved extensively in complaints to the council with regards to children's services. Another eight questions formed two groups of four questions asked by people who had appeared to coordinate their questions. In one case these were members of a political party – albeit not one at the time represented on Herefordshire Council – who used their questions to promote a conference that their party had recently held.

Officers and councillors also expressed concern at the ability of the public to ask supplementary questions. The constitution allows for the public to ask a supplementary question, having received the answer to their initial question, in person and without notice. Members and officers alike recounted incidents where members of the public had disclosed confidential information, or where those attending to ask a supplementary question had been disruptive to the meeting. This was a particular concern now that committee meetings were broadcast. One chair felt that supplementary questions ought to be scrapped entirely.

Of the sixty questions, over fifty were answered by the attending Cabinet member, corporate director or other senior officer attending the meeting. Only eight could be answered either by the chair or the statutory scrutiny officer. This in effect relegates scrutiny committees to messenger services between members of the public and the people who can answer their questions.

Herefordshire is among a significant minority of local authorities that allow the public to ask questions at scrutiny committees. Of the 83 unitary local authorities in England and Wales, only 33 allow public questions. Of these three only allow them at the absolute discretion of the chair.

Despite the challenges raised by public questions at scrutiny committee meetings, it does not seem appropriate to stop them entirely. The majority of people asking questions do so in good faith and it is recognised by officers and elected members, that public questions are an important aspect of public participation in the democratic process.

It is also striking that public questioners also have the opportunity to ask questions of Cabinet and Council and other non-executive committees. This seems a more appropriate place to answer these questions, as those likely to answer the question asked are usually in attendance at the meeting. Equally those questions that can be answered directly in a committee meeting, should be responded to in the meeting. Accordingly, this report recommends restricting the scope of questions that can be asked at scrutiny meetings to those that can be answered by the committee chair or the statutory scrutiny officer. In practice, this would mean restricting questions to any task and finish group terms of reference or final report, or to the management of scrutiny's work programme or its recommendations.

Similarly, the ability to ask supplementary questions appears to not be subject to the same rules around initial questions. A written supplementary question, for example, does not appear to be subject to the same rules around suitability as the initial question, a loophole that ought to be closed.

Finally, it was noted that the most prolific askers of questions to scrutiny were usually focused on a single topic, asking different variations of the same question at each meeting of the committee. As with supplementary questions, it is not clear how doing this adds value to the scrutiny process. The constitution ought therefore to be amended to restrict public and member questions on a particular topic to one question every six months.

### **Suggested recommendations**

- Herefordshire Council restricts public questions to scrutiny committee matters that can be answered directly by the committee chair or statutory scrutiny officer.

- Herefordshire Council subjects supplementary questions to the same rules as initial public questions.
- Herefordshire Council re-introduces the six-month rule, whereby the same, or very similar question, cannot be asked within a six-month period of the answer being given, for scrutiny committee



# Title of report: Appointments to Council Committees and Outside Bodies

**Meeting: Council**

**Meeting date: Friday 23 May 2025**

**Report by: Director of Governance and Law**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

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

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

## Recommendation(s)

That:

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

## Alternative options

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

## Key considerations

4. Council is required to review its political composition and how this is applied to appointments to committees and sub-committees of the council at each annual meeting of Council. Similarly, the



constitution requires Council to review its ordinary committees at the annual meeting and make appointments to them.

5. The membership of the respective political groups at the council is shown in the table below:

Political Group	Membership
Conservative Group	20
Independents for Herefordshire	7
Liberal Democrats	12
The Green Party	9
True Independents	2
Total members in a Group	50
Labour	1*
Not aligned	2
<i>Total Members not in a group</i>	3
<i>Total</i>	53

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

6. Council is under a duty to ensure membership of those committees and outside bodies covered by the relevant rules reflects the political composition of the council, as far as practicable, by allocating seats on the committees to political groups in proportion to their numerical strength on the council, whilst also maintaining a similar proportional balance of overall seat numbers. Once Council has approved the allocation of seats to political groups, it is a matter for the relevant political group leaders to confirm which of their members will take up any seats allocated to their group. Detail of the latest committee memberships together with current chairpersons and vice chairpersons is contained in Appendix 1. Cabinet (as the executive), the licensing sub committee (a statutory committee) and the health and wellbeing board (with a membership set out by statute) are exempt from the requirements of political proportionality.
7. Any member who is not aligned to a group is not entitled to an allocation of seats within these rules. It is only where the proportionality calculations have been made and if any seats remain unallocated that Council may determine to appoint a member that is not a member of one of the political groups on the Council.
8. These rules of political proportionality should also be applied when allocating seats on outside bodies to which the council makes three or more appointments.
9. It is open to Council to suspend the rules of political proportionality in relation to allocation of seats on any particular body. To do so requires approval by Council with no member voting against the proposal; this is known as a *nem con* vote. Abstentions do not invalidate such a vote.
10. Council has agreed to establish committees of Council as listed in the table below. The terms of reference for these committees are set out within the functions scheme (Part 3) of the constitution currently published on the Council's website (link below): [Agenda for Constitution on Friday 20 May 2022 - Herefordshire Council](#)

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

11. The table below details the allocation of seats on the existing committees based on the political composition of the Council set out in paragraph 5 above. The political composition of the Council has changed since the previous calculation of proportionality on 6 December 2024; The Conservative Group has reduced in number by one to 20.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Con</b>	<b>IfH</b>	<b>Lib Dem</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>T Ind</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Total</b>
Audit and Governance	3	1	2	1	0	0	7
Children and Young People Scrutiny	3	1	1	1	1	0	7
Connected Communities Scrutiny	3	1	2	1	0	0	7
Employment Panel	2	1	1	1	1	0	6
Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny	3	0	2	2	0	0	7
Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny	3	1	2	1	0	0	7
Planning and Regulatory	6	2	3	3	1	0	15
<i>Total</i>	<i>23*</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>56</i>

\*Conservative total seats to be reduced by one (1 seat) following consultation with group leaders. An update will follow ahead of the annual meeting to confirm the allocation of this seat to another political group or to the not aligned members.

12. The scrutiny management board has been established to oversee the co-ordination and work programming of the four other scrutiny committees. The composition of the scrutiny management board is outlined under paragraph 2.6.4 of the constitution; its membership consists of the four scrutiny committee chairpersons and other elected members as required to ensure the committee is politically balanced. Recommendation (f) in this report will determine the appointment of the four scrutiny committee chairpersons and the chairperson and vice chairperson of the scrutiny management board. Following the appointment of chairpersons and vice chairpersons a calculation of the necessary size of the board can be undertaken and the allocation of seats to ensure that it is politically proportionate. This calculation will be tabled at the annual meeting and Council will be

asked to consider recommendation (g); to agree the size of the board and the allocation of seats on the board to ensure political balance. Appendix 2 provides the blank table of the size and allocation of seats on the scrutiny management board to be completed and tabled for approval following the agreement of recommendation (f).

13. Those outside bodies to which three or more appointments are currently made on a politically proportionate basis are detailed in the table below, with the allocation of seats based on the political composition of the council as set out in paragraph 5 above. The political composition of the Council has changed since the previous calculation of proportionality on 6 December 2024; the Conservative Group has reduced in number by 1 to 20; this does not have an impact upon the allocation of seats on the outside bodies in the table below. The table includes the allocation of one seat to the not aligned members of the council, on the Fire Authority, as agreed at the meeting on 19 May 2023.

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

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

Body	Seats	Reason for suspension
Standards panel	Up to 3 seats	This panel is formed on an as required basis; its elected membership is drawn from and by the membership of the audit and governance committee which is itself politically proportionate.
River Lugg Internal Drainage Board	7	This is a geographically focused body therefore it is appropriate to nominate members from relevant wards.
Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee	4	This is a geographically focused body therefore it is appropriate to nominate members from relevant wards.

16. Council is required to appoint the chairpersons and vice chairpersons of committees listed at paragraph 10 above. The Leader of the Council has delegated authority to appoint the Chairperson of the Health and Wellbeing Board. Existing committee chairpersons and vice chairpersons are

contained in Appendix 1 to this report which provides the membership of each committee. In the event that any of the existing chairpersons and vice chairpersons are contested, the Council Chairperson will call for nominations to that post and a vote will be held in accordance with council procedure rules.

## **Community impact**

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

## **Environmental Impact**

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

## **Equality duty**

19. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

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

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
20. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this is a decision on the administrative functions of the Council, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty however the council will seek to ensure that all appointments are made fairly (i.e. no discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics) and that committee meetings are physically accessible to all.

## **Resource implications**

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

## Legal implications

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

## Risk management

26.

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

## Consultees

27. No consultees.

## Appendices

Appendix 1: Current committee memberships and existing chairpersons and vice chairpersons

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

**Background papers** – none identified.

### **Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:**

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

Governance	John Coleman	Date 10/05/2024
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 13/05/2025
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 09/05/2025
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 09/05/2025
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 09/05/2025
Procurement	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Risk	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_ Date Click or tap to enter a date.

**Appendix 2 - Appointments to Committees – May 2025**  
(excluding co-optees and non-voting members)

**Scrutiny Committees**

Name	No. of members	Members
Children and young people scrutiny committee	7	<b>Cllr Toni Fagan (Chairperson)</b> <b>Cllr Liz Harvey (Vice-Chairperson)</b> Cllr Frank Cornthwaite Cllr Clare Davies Cllr Dave Davies Cllr Robert Highfield Cllr Ben Proctor
Connected communities scrutiny committee	7	<b>Cllr Ed O’Driscoll (Chairperson)</b> <b>Cllr Frank Cornthwaite (Vice-Chairperson)</b> Cllr Bruce Baker Cllr Elizabeth Foxton Cllr Rob Owens Cllr Roger Phillips Cllr Diana Toynbee
Environment and sustainability scrutiny committee	7	<b>Cllr Louis Stark (Chairperson)</b> <b>Cllr Justine Peberdy (Vice-Chairperson)</b> Cllr Dave Davies Cllr Helen Heathfield Cllr Robert Highfield Cllr Rob Owens Cllr Richard Thomas
Health, care and wellbeing scrutiny committee	7	<b>Cllr Pauline Crockett (Chairperson)</b> <b>Cllr Polly Andrews (Vice-Chairperson)</b> Cllr Jenny Bartlett Cllr Simeon Cole Cllr Dave Davies Cllr Mark Dykes Cllr Richard Thomas

Scrutiny management board	12	<b>Cllr Ben Proctor (Chairperson)</b> <b>Cllr Louis Stark (Vice-Chairperson &amp; Chair of ES SC)</b> Cllr Jenny Bartlett Cllr Simeon Cole Cllr Frank Cornthwaite Cllr Pauline Crockett (Chair of HCW SC) Cllr Dave Davies Cllr Toni Fagan (Chair of CYP SC) Cllr Liz Harvey Cllr Ed O'Driscoll (Chair of CC SC) Cllr Richard Thomas Cllr Rob Williams
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#### Non-executive committees

Name	No. of members	Members
Audit and Governance	7	<b>Cllr David Hitchiner (Chairperson)</b> <b>Cllr Mark Woodall (Vice-Chairperson)</b> Cllr Chris Bartrum Cllr Frank Cornthwaite Cllr Peter Hamblin Cllr Robert Highfield Cllr Aubrey Oliver
Employment Panel	6	<b>Cllr Jonathan Lester (Chairperson)</b> <b>Cllr Diana Toynbee (Vice-Chairperson)</b> Cllr Clare Davies Cllr Liz Harvey Cllr Terry James Cllr Pete Stoddart



Planning and Regulatory	15	<b>Cllr Terry James (Chairperson)</b> <b>Cllr Clare Davies (Vice Chairperson)</b> Cllr Polly Andrews Cllr Bruce Baker Cllr Jacqui Carwardine Cllr Simeon Cole Cllr Dave Davies Cllr Matthew Engel Cllr Catherine Gennard Cllr Peter Hamblin Cllr Stef Simmons Cllr John Stone Cllr Charlotte Taylor Cllr Richard Thomas Cllr Mark Woodall
Licensing Sub-Committee	Composed of 3 members (including Chairperson) of the Planning and Regulatory Committee on an ad hoc basis.	<b>Cllr Polly Andrews (Chairperson)</b>



Appendix 3: Paper to table – scrutiny management board – size and allocation of seats

	<b>Con</b>	<b>IfH</b>	<b>Lib Dem</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>T Ind</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Total</b>
Scrutiny Management Board							

