

Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Friday 5 December 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, Jacqui Carwardine, Simeon Cole, Frank Cornthwaite, Pauline Crockett, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Barry Durkin, 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, Ivan Powell, Philip Price, Ben Proctor, Louis Stark, Pete Stoddart, John Stone, Elissa Swinglehurst, Charlotte Taylor, Richard Thomas, Kevin Tillett, Diana Toynbee, Rebecca Tully, Allan Williams, Rob Williams and Mark Woodall

Officers: Chief Executive, Corporate Director Economy and Environment*, Director of Governance and Law, Director of Finance and Democratic Services Manager

*denotes virtual attendance

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bramer, Dykes, Harvey and Spencer.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor David Hitchiner declared an interest and outlined the dispensation granted in relation to agenda item no. 8, Local Transport Plan 5, as a local resident to the proposed Hereford bypass.

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

32. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (PAGES 5 - 12)

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.

33. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (PAGES 13 - 20)

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.

34. APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Council considered a report by the solicitor to the Council relating to appointments to committees of the Council in line with the rules of political proportionality. The Chairman outlined the supplement, published on 5 December which provided appendix a to the report and the recommended allocation of seats to political groups and committees of the Council.

The Chairman moved and Councillor Durkin seconded a motion that the allocation of seats on committees of the Council as set out in appendix a (supplement published – 5 December) be agreed.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried by a simple majority.

RESOLVED – the allocation of those seats to political groups as set out at appendix 1 (supplement – 5 December) be approved.

35. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 5

Council considered a report by the Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure to seek approval for the Local Transport Plan 2025-2041.

The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure introduced the report and moved the recommendation that the Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP 5) 2025-2041 for Herefordshire is adopted.

The Leader seconded the recommendation.

Council debated the adoption of the Local Transport Plan 5 2025-2041.

The recommendation that the Local Transport Plan 5 2025-2041 be adopted was put to the recorded vote and was carried by a simple majority.

FOR (36): Councillors Andrews, Baker, Bartrum, Biggs, Boulter, Carwardine, Cole, Cornthwaite, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Durkin, Foxton, Gandy, Hamblin, Highfield, Hurcomb, James, Kenyon, Lester, Mason, O'Driscoll, Oliver, Owens, Phillips, Dan Powell, Ivan Powell, Price, Proctor, Stark, Stoddart, Stone, Swinglehurst, Thomas, Tillett, Allan Williams and Rob Williams.

AGAINST (13): Councillors Bartlett, Crockett, Engel, Fagan, Gennard, Heathfield, Hitchiner, Peberdy, Simmons, Taylor, Toynbee, Tully and Woodall.

ABSTENTIONS (0)

RESOLVED – That the Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) 2025 – 2041 for Herefordshire is adopted.

There was an adjournment at 11:19 a.m.; the meeting reconvened at 11:34 a.m.

Councillors Biggs and Rob Williams left the meeting at 11:19 a.m.

36. LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader presented his report on the activities of Cabinet since the meeting of Council on 11 October 2025.

Council questioned the Leader and the following actions were raised:

- In response to a question regarding concessionary bus travel to undertake an assessment of the impact of the recent changes to concessionary bus travel times on young people and students accessing schools and colleges;
- In response to a question regarding a safer school streets initiative to investigate the information provided to local residents regarding the new permit requirements in the local area;
- In response to a question regarding the government data service (GDS) to investigate the commitment of council staff and Hoople time to interaction with the local GDS ahead of the procurement of new data systems.

Councillor Jim Kenyon left the meeting at 12:29 p.m.

37. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS

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

Motion – Charter for the River Wye

Councillor Swinglehurst proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Stark seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried by a simple majority.

RESOLVED – that:

This Notice of Motion calls on the executive to support the following charter for the River Wye and tributaries:

The Right to Flow and Perform Natural Functions

To maintain its natural course and seasonal rhythms without obstructions or extractions that detrimentally affect ecological function of any part of the river system.

The Right to Biodiversity

To good biological health through the existence of balanced, diverse, and viable, populations of native species and habitats specific to the Wye and its tributaries.

The Right to Be Free from Pollution

To exist in a state of ecological health and not be subject to detrimental levels of known and emerging pollutants that adversely affect the life of the river.

The Right to be Supported by a Healthy Catchment

To flow through environments which support the river as a balanced, sustainable, and resilient aquatic ecosystem.

The Right to Regenerate

To recover to full ecological function through natural processes and for this to be supported by intervention, where necessary, to halt the decline in biodiversity and abundance and to increase both over time.

The Right to Representation

To be represented and have these intrinsic rights recognised in the determination of matters that directly affect the river's health now and in the future.

The meeting ended at 12.53 pm

Chairperson

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Banks, Hereford	<p>Under the Council's Planning Code, Rule 5.6.28 requires late representations received after the noon deadline to be either published in the Schedule of Updates or discounted, while Rule 5.6.60 permits deferral of an item if new material evidence changes circumstances immediately prior to a meeting.</p> <p>Can the Chair clarify whether the Council interprets these rules as permitting material received after the noon deadline to be presented to Committee without prior publication in the Schedule of Updates, provided it is referenced verbally in the officer's presentation?</p> <p>Does the Council accept that if late material is not published in advance, objectors are denied the opportunity to respond, thereby undermining natural justice and procedural fairness?</p> <p>Will the Council commit to publishing all late material or deferring items in accordance with these rules going forward?</p>	Cabinet member environment

Response:

The Council always suggests that, in line with the Council's Planning Code (referenced) late representations are received before 12pm on the day before the committee meeting. This allows the officers time to add representations to the Updates sheet for publication. Planning code rule 5.6.28 provides that "papers received after that time will normally be discounted, since time will not be available to check their accuracy or to give consideration to their implications".

There are times where representations are sent directly to the Members of the Planning Committee after this time. This is not uncommon and members are asked to send this to the officers (if they have not already been copied in) so that officers can review this and make a decision as to whether the information raises matters that would require the deferral of the application for further consideration. Officers will refer to this correspondence in their verbal updates.

It should also be noted that verbal representations received on the day by members can also be taken into account. These do, on occasion also raise matters not previously received in writing.

If members, having reviewed the late representation, require further information or clarity from officers, then they can resolve to defer the item.

Officers will, where possible, continue to review late submissions and provide a verbal update. They will also consult with the Chair of the Committee, in accordance with rule 5.6.60, if it is considered that new, material evidence changes circumstances and it is appropriate to defer the item to avoid procedural unfairness.

Supplementary question:

Thank you. The written response states that when late material is sent directly to Members after the noon deadline, officers “refer to this in their verbal updates.”

However, Rule 5.6.28 provides only two options for late representations: publication in the Schedule of Updates or discounting them entirely.

Could the Chair therefore confirm whether the Council now interprets Rule 5.6.28 as allowing a third option—namely, the verbal presentation of material that has not been published—and, if so, how this approach complies with the transparency and fairness requirements of the Planning Code and the Localism Act 2011?

Response from Cabinet Member:

Rule 5.6.28 does not prevent the introduction of a verbal update to committee where information is received after the stated deadline of noon on the day before the committee hearing. It states that “Papers received after that time will **normally** [my emphasis] be discounted, since time will not be available to check their accuracy or to give consideration to their implications. If officers are able to review and give consideration to the representations then they will be presented by way of verbal update.

Officers will advise committee and the committee, as the decision maker, will determine whether the representation introduces evidence of significant weight which may impact upon the assessment undertaken on the application and the ability of committee to continue with a decision.

Where late material has significant weight and may affect the assessments undertaken on an application a decision can be reached by the committee to defer the application. The representation can then be considered by all interested parties prior to presentation at a further meeting of the planning committee.

Where late representations do not introduce new and relevant material matters the committee can continue to decide an application as such matters have already been considered in assessments of the application and neither natural justice nor procedural fairness is undermined.

PQ 2	Ms Mathias, Hereford	Herefordshire Council's taxi licensing policy emphasises public safety, including safeguarding against child sexual abuse and exploitation. But the safety of women and children cannot be secured without enforcement of the policy. Taxi driver identification is paramount for passenger safety, accountability and maintaining public trust. The fact that individuals may be operating licensed taxis without matching identification is concerning and may suggest potential misuse of taxi licences. What precautions does Herefordshire Council take to make sure their strict licensing regulations are adhered to?	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services
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Response:

As part of the Winter of Action 2025/26, and through Operation Radiate, we are planning joint patrols and targeted licensing activity to strengthen visibility and assurance. Passenger safety is reinforced through the conditions attached to every licence, including the requirement for CCTV in licensed vehicles. This work is supported by close partnership arrangements with West Mercia Police, Children's Services, the Community Safety Partnership and safeguarding boards to identify and address risks quickly.

Public safety is central to Herefordshire Council's taxi licensing responsibilities, and we take robust steps to ensure that only safe vehicles and fit and proper drivers operate within the county. Before a licence is granted, applicants undergo enhanced DBS checks with barred-list information, right-to-work verification, medical and driving-standards assessments, and mandatory safeguarding and child-exploitation training. A licence is only issued once all requirements have been fully met.

All licensed drivers must wear their council-issued photo identification badge, and every licensed vehicle must display the correct licence plate. These identifiers are tightly controlled and traceable, and any report that a driver or vehicle may be using incorrect or mismatched identification is treated as a safeguarding concern and investigated immediately. In practice, such incidents are extremely rare, and the close-knit nature of Herefordshire's taxi community means potential issues are brought to our attention very quickly.

Through this combination of stringent licensing checks, intelligence-led enforcement and strong partnership working, the Council ensures that taxi licensing regulations are adhered to and that the public can have confidence in the safety of licensed taxis in Herefordshire.

Supplementary question: A significant amount of Herefordshire women remain feeling unsafe. Please confirm the exact times that a physical in-person check is undertaken of licensed taxi drivers in Herefordshire Council. For clarification, during the three years of the personal taxi driver license, when is an in-person check of ID and the physical presentation of a taxi driver undertaken?

Response from Cabinet Member:

A written response would be provided.

Written response provided on 19 December:

In relation to identity spot checks, joint patrols with West Mercia Police were undertaken on 13 December 2025 between 9pm and 1am, and previously during late-night hours on 30 August 2025. These patrols included direct engagement with drivers and verification of licensing compliance. No concerns were identified during these checks, including in respect of driver identity or safeguarding. These were targeted operations rather than blanket checks, consistent with our intelligence-led enforcement model.

Identity verification is not limited to scheduled patrols. Licensing officers routinely confirm driver identity in response to intelligence received from the public, the trade and partner agencies, and through proactive out-of-hours activity. Where concerns are raised, officers verify that the person driving is the licensed holder, that the correct badge and vehicle plate are in use, and that licence conditions are being complied with. Incidents involving individuals attempting to drive a Herefordshire-licensed vehicle without holding the appropriate licence are extremely rare, but any such report is treated as a safeguarding concern and followed up promptly.

Further targeted activity is planned under the Winter of Action 2025/26 and Operation Radiate, including joint patrols with West Mercia Police and on-street identity checks during peak periods. These operations are intended to increase visibility and reassurance and to complement, rather than replace, ongoing intelligence-led enforcement.

In relation to education and responsibility, the Council is clear that responsibility for compliance rests with the licensing authority and licensed drivers. We do not expect vulnerable passengers to act as enforcers, and public challenge is not a substitute for regulatory oversight. However, visible identification is a key safeguarding control, and drivers should be accustomed to being asked to confirm their identity in a calm and professional manner.

The Council is currently updating its mandatory safeguarding training for licensed drivers, which is being developed jointly with Herefordshire Council's safeguarding team. This refresh will reinforce expectations around professional conduct, appropriate responses when challenged, the importance of clearly displayed identification, and respectful engagement with passengers seeking reassurance. This sits alongside existing safeguarding, disability awareness and customer-care training and is intended to strengthen protections for vulnerable users rather than shift responsibility onto them.

PQ3	Mr Morfett, Hereford	<p>The Herefordshire Biodiversity Action Plan is not a credible plan to tackle climate change while protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment.</p> <p>In the Local Transport Plan the Biodiversity Net Gain Policy TN13 states: "We will support local groups and volunteers to keep the Herefordshire Biodiversity Action Plan updated."</p> <p>This statement by Herefordshire Council lacks any commitment to actually protect and enhance the environment through its transport policies by environmental impact analysis, net biodiversity loss assessment, mitigation and full offset of the inevitable environmental impacts. It only commits to update the plan.</p> <p>How could policy TN13 possibly deliver on the Council's strategic objective of "Tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment" ?</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response:

Policy TN14 in the Local Transport Plan is regarding biodiversity and TN13 is regarding carbon; as your question refers to biodiversity I have answered the question based on biodiversity which is why there will be difference between the policy numbers in the question and this answer. TN14 reflects our commitment to ensuring transport planning supports biodiversity and environmental objectives. We recognise that tackling climate change and protecting the natural and built environment requires a joined-up approach. The transport planning team will work closely with the Council's Natural Environment Team and other partners to integrate biodiversity considerations into the design and delivery of transport schemes.

TN14 is not just about keeping the Biodiversity Action Plan updated—it is about using that plan as a key reference point when developing transport projects. This means assessing environmental impacts, identifying opportunities for biodiversity net gain, and incorporating mitigation measures wherever possible. By aligning transport policies with sustainability priorities, we can ensure that infrastructure improvements contribute positively to Herefordshire's unique environment.

As detailed in the LTP the council have invested £250,000 in supporting highways biodiversity net gain plus we detail a case study where through FCC Environment grant we awarded up to £35,00 for community projects to improve biodiversity.

Alongside TN14, the LTP includes wider commitments such as reducing carbon emissions, promoting active travel, and embedding environmental appraisal into scheme development. Together, these measures help deliver the Council's strategic objective of tackling the climate and ecological emergency and protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment.

Supplementary question:

Thank you for your answer on the LTP BNG biodiversity net gain policy TN14.

How much of the Council's £40 million budget for infrastructure, in Phase 1, is allocated to survey, analyse and pay for BNG, the loss of priority habitat for biodiversity?

Will these BNG funds be made available for local organisations including Parish Councils, Local Charities and Trusts, impacted by the infrastructure?

Response from Cabinet Member:

Thank you for your supplementary question. The Council recognises the importance of biodiversity net gain (BNG) and the need to address potential impacts on priority habitats as part of infrastructure delivery. At this stage, the £40 million Phase 1 infrastructure budget is primarily allocated to the design and construction of transport schemes. However, environmental appraisal, including biodiversity surveys and mitigation measures, is an integral part of scheme development and is funded within project costs.

Currently there has been no decision on allocation of the budget to local organisations.

PQ 4	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	Investing in safe, active travel measures and 20mph in urban and residential areas is shown to reduce car use for short journeys and cut car insurance costs, in Wales by £50 per household. Reducing car use and lower traffic speeds, creates higher disposable incomes for residents and thus strengthens the local economy whilst also improving the health, access and productivity of residents. This view is supported by both Active Travel England and the Dept for Transport. Why then does the Herefordshire LTP Transport Network Strategy “Supporting a Thriving & Prosperous Economy” omit any mention of improving active travel networks?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response: The Local Transport Plan (LTP) fully recognises the importance of active travel and speed management in delivering economic, health, and environmental benefits. While the Transport Network Strategy focuses on the overall connectivity needed to support economic growth, active travel is a core element of the LTP and is addressed in detail within the plan and supporting Council policies.

The detailed active travel measures you mention are covered in the dedicated Active Travel Strategy; the Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Plan (LCWWIP). The LCWWIP will provide the detailed list of schemes and investment priorities for walking and cycling improvements across Herefordshire. This ensures that active travel receives the focus and resources it deserves, complementing the wider transport network strategy.

Together, these strategies work to deliver the Council's objectives of tackling climate change, improving health, and supporting a thriving and prosperous economy.

Supplementary question:

The 2016-31 LTP has two pages of sound policies for active travel but nothing of equivalent value, essential as an integral part of the Transport Network, in the proposed LTP before members today. Your response fails to explain or amend this omission.

The LCWWIP document does not yet exist so reference to it is meaningless. The overdue LCWWIP needs to sit within a sound strategic LTP policy framework so that when eventually it is adopted, it carries real weight in decision-making & funding requests.

Active travel & connected public transport links are what attract employers, students & young people. How will the Cabinet member ensure that the necessary policies for active travel are embedded within the LTP when there is no LCWWIP & no timetable for it?

Response from Cabinet Member:

You are correct that the LCWWIP is still in development, and I acknowledge the importance of embedding strong active travel policies within the Local Transport Plan itself. The proposed LTP sets out the overarching framework for all transport modes in Herefordshire, and while the Transport Network Strategy focuses on connectivity for economic growth, active travel is not omitted—it is recognised as a key principle within the plan's objectives and delivery themes.

To ensure active travel has real weight in decision-making and funding, the LTP includes a commitment to integrate the LCWWIP as soon as it is adopted. In the meantime, the LTP provides policy support for active travel by prioritising sustainable modes, reducing car dependency, and improving

accessibility. These principles will guide investment decisions even before the LCWWIP is finalised. The LTP is the overarching plan that sets the objectives, methodology and actions for the council and all its policies while the LCWWIP is the supplementary document which will hold all the detail and delivery plan for the active travel.

Furthermore, the Cabinet is actively working to accelerate the LCWWIP timetable so that it can sit within the LTP framework and strengthen our case for external funding. Active travel and public transport connectivity are central to attracting employers, students, and young people, and this remains a priority for the Council's economic and climate objectives.

PQ 5	Mr Milln, Hereford	Cabinet on 20th November agreed to make amendments consequential of the errors and omissions pointed out in the draft LTP before bringing it to Council today. This was confirmed in the response to Ms Martin's question regarding Active Travel England. Mine regarding the City Car Club based at Bartonsham & St James, about which the Cabinet member confessed ignorance, is another example. Yet these amendments have not been made in the so-called final version brought to Council today. How will the Cabinet Member ensure he delivers on his promise to make good the errors and omissions in the Local Transport Plan which have been pointed out to him so that members are not in a position where they must either refuse or defer its approval?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response: Thank you for raising this concern. Cabinet agreed on 20th November that any factual errors or omissions identified would be addressed where they materially affect the content of the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The reference to car clubs in the LTP states that the Council will explore opportunities to expand car club provision, which remains valid even though some schemes already exist. Therefore, no change to the LTP is required on this point.

The LTP is a strategic framework, not an exhaustive record of all current initiatives. Its purpose is to set direction and priorities, and the Implementation Plan that follows adoption will provide more detail on how existing schemes, such as car clubs, can be supported and expanded.

Adopting the LTP today ensures we maintain momentum on delivering transport improvements while allowing flexibility to reflect operational details in future implementation stages.

Supplementary question:

My substantive question invited the Cabinet Member to make good various errors and omissions in the Local Transport Plan so it is disappointing the response to my question wheedles out of this, especially as he had previously promised in his response to Ms Martin at Cabinet on 20th Nov to make good the omission of Active Travel England in the list of stakeholders and to correct the reference to car clubs as we already have these in Hereford though the Plan is ignorant of them.

Another relates to parking on the pavement accepted in the Network Strategy on page 76 but which is contrary to rule 244 of the Highway Code which says 'drivers should not park on the pavement unless signs permit it'. Clearly the LTP needs to be revised to reflect this.

I ask again how will the Cabinet Member go about making good the errors and omissions in the Plan so that it can be approved?

Response from Cabinet Member:

A written response would be provided.

Written response provided on 19 December:

Thank you for your supplementary question and as previously advised any factual errors or missions identified would be addressed where they materially affect the content of the Local Transport Plan (LTP).

Appendix 2 - Questions from members of the Council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Cllr O'Driscoll, Ross East	Council agreed in July, on an overwhelming cross-party basis, to send a formal representation to Ministers and to publish a Herefordshire Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Prospectus. We now know the letter wasn't sent until I informed officers the decision had already been made, and we'd missed out. Additionally, the prospectus still remains unfinished while neighbouring counties have secured places on the Government's new munitions and energetics programme. This inaction means Herefordshire was not even considered for this substantial investment and the vital jobs it could have brought. Can you explain why your administration failed to carry out the clear instructions of Council, and do you understand why councillors and local people feel let down again by your administration's dithering and delay?	Leader
<p>Response: Firstly, Herefordshire has not missed out on any opportunities, the government announced an intention to select locations for future munitions factories and identified some <u>potential</u> locations as part of that announcement. I also note that whilst there was strong support for the overall motion in the council meeting in July, a number of Cllrs expressed significant concerns over the munitions factory element. At the council meeting Cllr Simmons said that she had spoken to businesses in the lead up to the council meeting and questioned why there is a focus on munitions and would be 'astonished' if we attracted one of the factories. Cllr Harvey said its disappointing that motion misses the target and said that a munitions factory should not be where this council puts its energy, stating 'is a munitions factory the best we can come up with, I hope not'. Cllr Tully questioned 'how a munitions factory will support a safe and prosperous community. Cllr Bartlett said we have a lot of expertise in the county, but questioned the inclusion of the munitions factory and if businesses has been consulted, saying 'it's a flaw in the motion to include it'.</p> <p>At the time of the council meeting the cabinet were happy to support the overall principles of the motion, and remain fully committed to supporting the growth of the defence and security sector, building on our local strengths to boost our economy and create more better paid jobs for local people. However, specific to the munitions factory element, in hearing the concerns raised by Cllrs, and the feedback from leading local businesses as to where our strengths and opportunities are, there has been a deliberate effort to take the time to ensure the we (the Cabinet) got the prospectus and the letter to government right. In this regard – this is not a missed opportunity.</p> <p>As was summarised in email correspondence in October, from the Chief Executive, since the council meeting at the end of July, we have;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held a meeting of leading defence and security businesses in the county in early September to understand opportunities and barriers to growth. • We have drafted and now finalised the Defence and Security Prospectus, which was circulated to these businesses for comment. 			

- We have sent a letter to the Secretary of State for Defence, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Ministry for Business and Trade highlighting local opportunities.
- We have supported the development of the new West Midlands Regional Defence and Security Cluster (being co-ordinated by the West Midlands Combined Authority and the MoD), ensuring Herefordshire businesses were invited and attended the foundation meeting in early October.
- The Economy and Place Board have commissioned a refresh of the Economic Plan, which again will have a key focus on Defence and Security opportunities.
- We have written to both local MPs and received positive follow-up from Jesse Norman

Looking forward,

- the county's first inward investment website, with a focus on defence and security, is due to launch in January 2026.
- We are planning a major presence with partners such as NMITE and local businesses at the SDSC-UK defence trade conference in February.
- We continue to be in discussions with leading defence and security businesses across the county as to how we can support their growth, including the potential for drone and communication technology test beds (raised as a need by local businesses)
- We are in discussions with international defence and security businesses interested in locating on the Hereford Enterprise Zone.

I trust this demonstrates our resolve and commitment to progressing this important work – it is a priority and we continue to take steps to unlock the opportunities it presents before us.

Supplementary question:

I was quite frankly flabbergasted by the response if I'm honest. Firstly, saying we didn't miss out is an obvious misdirection. If we didn't miss out, why did other counties secure consideration while Hereford didn't? Secondly, since when do minority statements in debate nullify the will of the majority, including just about every member of his own party? And thirdly, saying the letter was sent is deliberately misleading. It wasn't sent until I notified officers the announcement had been made and we'd missed the boat. There was then a mad scramble to get the letter out and it was sent within a couple of hours. I've got the email chain. If the letter was ready to go and it was deemed acceptable to send it when I raised the alarm, why wasn't it sent sooner?

Response to supplementary question:

In relation to the motion itself, it was really great that you raised the fact that there was we need to raise the profile of our defence priorities and focus especially in the enterprise zone. So, it's great that we're talking about this. Absolutely. The government has identified potential locations for consideration. So nothing has been agreed, nothing has been allocated, nothing has been confirmed. So I don't think it's right to say that missed the boat there. But on the issue of raising a motion to full Council, it is asking respectfully, it's asking the council to consider it. And when we consider that motion, we have to consider a strategic response to that motion. And over the passage of time since the motion was raised, we've had lots of

opportunity as the answer sets out, we've had lots of opportunity to reflect on what was said at the meeting to engage with those businesses in the local enterprise zone and to reflect on the proper strategic strengths of that area and really have a lot of thought about what is good for the development in that area. The letter was sent out. It should have been sent out sooner. That's true, but it wasn't so much of a delay. It was the fact that they were trying to get a strategic approach, get the prospectus ready, get the fact that they'd consulted with businesses there. And so it was an approach that was I would suggest is strategic. But in terms of the fundamental issue about what is right for the enterprise zone, we have excellent businesses there that are already doing defence related industries and we need to strengthen those and it is right to get government help to make sure that we do that so that we can really develop those high paid jobs that we need.

MQ 2	Cllr Taylor, Credenhill	Highways England say they support a bypass for Hereford if the new road will alleviate congestion on the motorway network by increasing road capacity by taking increased through traffic on the A49 with vehicle speeds in line with the national speed limit of 60mph. How will this be achieved if the Local Plan is proposing over 10,000 new homes to the west of Hereford though which the bypass is planned to be built?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response:

National Highways (formerly Highways England) supports our calls for a Hereford Western Bypass, and they have written a letter of support to us during the LTP consultation confirming this. National Highways have placed no constraints on the design speed of the road other than they would seek journey times to be less than the current A49 were they to adopt the road. Modelling undertaken to date shows that the new road would offer an improvement in travel times - they agreed in principle to a 40mph limit to be used for the modelling, but it is likely that sections of it may be at national speed limit. Modelling confirms that the bypass reduces long-distance and freight delays on the A49. The additional river crossing provides improved resilience to National Highways Strategic Road Network (SRN) which they very much support.

The bypass is designed to keep through-traffic separated, while local roads can be made safer (e.g., 20–30 mph zones, cycle lanes dependent upon local need and agreed policies). The long term vision for the bypass would see a road which works similar to the Worcester bypass, with just a few key junctions so that it provides a better alternative than traveling through the City centre. The key junctions would then contain distributor slip roads that provide the key link to new housing and employment sites.

Supplementary question:

The LTP report under risk management six racket 16.2 claims that without adopting the LTP5, including the Hereford bypass, congestion will continue to worsen and air quality remain a concern, negatively affecting the daily lives of all 190,000 plus residents who rely on the local transport network. If the emerging local plan is proposing 10,000 new homes to the west of Hereford, then to achieve the claimed improved air quality and reduce noise pollution for new and existing residents, surely the Hereford bypass should be located well away from any major housing developments to remove the noise and pollution and enable traffic speeds to achieve 60 miles per hour and the de-trunking of the current A49 through Hereford.

Response to supplementary question:

I believe that the Hereford bypass is necessary and it becomes more necessary as and when the local plan says that we've got to deal with this mandated extra 27,000 houses of which there could be up to 14,000 in and around north and west of Hereford. The LTP is a strategic document that makes it possible to have the discussion going forward as these plans mature and we don't know for sure what is going to happen with the housing where it's going to be and as such we can only ensure that we make the right decision when we have the right expectation of the way to move forward. It's a question that you could sit down and have a discussion for hours. So I hope I can have a conversation with you at some point to address the innuendos of your suggestions. At this moment in time the LTP is the strategic document that gives us the opportunity to further develop schemes on the local knowledge that we acquire especially as the local plan is developed as well. So, it's not really an answer, but it's trying to follow on your train of thought.

MQ 3	Cllr Fagan, Birch	The 33 bus (7.33am) service from Ross on Wye to Hereford has left students stranded since the beginning of November. According to parents this bus arrives in Ross on Wye from Gloucester already full. The second bus that eased the situation at the beginning of the academic year in September was axed after half term leaving fee paying students watching as a full bus drives past them - causing untold stress, disruption to studies - and adding to city congestion. How many bus passes were sold to students using this route, at what fee? How was consultation undertaken with students and parents before axing the second bus and how was the failure to provide transport communicated to paid-up users? When will the situation be rectified and is the Transport team aware of our commitment to Child Friendly Herefordshire?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response:

Please be assured that, I as Cabinet Member am working closely with the Public Transport Team and we are actively engaged in addressing this issue. We are actively looking for solutions around the specific issues you have identified and we will continue to work with partners to find this. Please also be assured that we remain committed and recognise the imperative to support all young people's access to education.

Supplementary question:

So are we waiting (it's been five weeks now) for our students to give up and make alternative arrangements. So we lose another generation in terms of behaviour change with absolutely no communication, apology or action for students and their hardworking families for the stress and disruption to their education and reputational damage to Hereford Council. I will repeat the question and ask please for a written response. How many bus passes were sold to students using the 33 bus route and at what fee? How was consultation undertaken with students and parents before axing the second bus? And how was the failure to provide transport communicated to paid up users? When will the situation be rectified? And how is the transport team planning to acknowledge our commitment to a child-friendly Hereford?

Response to supplementary question:

A written response would be provided.

Written response provided on 19 December:

We understand there are ongoing challenges with the Service 33 bus between Ross-on-Wye and Hereford. We fully understand the disruption this has caused for students and families and would like to provide some clarity on the current position and next steps.

Stagecoach's 33 Service is a commercially registered public service route, and the council have no authority to dictate that they increase capacity. Our Public Transport Team has been in close contact with Stagecoach to explore all possible solutions. Unfortunately, Stagecoach has confirmed that they are currently unable to provide an additional bus or driver to increase capacity on this route as they have reached their maximum number of weeks to provide duplicate journeys, as set out in their policy. Any duplication of route would not commence until January 2026.

The council has funded a duplicate bus over many years to ensure there's enough capacity on the service, despite college transport being a non-statutory obligation. This still relies on the operator accepting the request of utilising larger buses or even a duplicate journey.

In context, 55 students have purchased passes on a bus that has a capacity of 88 passengers. It is important to note that purchasing a pass does not guarantee a seat, as these passes apply to public services rather than dedicated school transport. Standing is allowed up to a maximum of 15 people on this bus.

For those affected at Kingsthorpe, we have worked with Newport coaches to allow those students to use the 66 service with their current bus pass. The team have requested patronage data from Newport Transport, to determine whether we can move these students on to this bus. There are six paying customers that could be moved within this area. Due to the commercial nature, we cannot guarantee how many members of the public will use the service, nor any other students who pay Stagecoach direct.

Additional revenue funds for buses in the form of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) are allocated to improve or support our own subsidised services or assist commercial services that are at risk of cancellation. The duplicate bus that operated at the beginning of term was funded from our core public transport budget

Please be assured that the Public Transport Team are actively engaged in addressing this issue and remain committed to supporting young people's access to education.

MQ 4	Cllr Hitchiner, Stoney Street	The WSP Strategic Environmental Assessment contains at 5.1.1 some next steps including a requirement that the Report will be presented for public consultation alongside the Draft LTP5 and for the representations received to be documented and considered in reviewing the proposals for the LTP5. What steps were taken to consult with the public? How have the representations been documented?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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<p>Response: The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) prepared by WSP was published for consultation alongside the Draft Local Transport Plan (LTP5) during the formal consultation period, which ran from 1st May to the end of June 2025. This ensured that the public could review both documents and provide feedback on the environmental implications of the proposed transport strategy as detailed in 5.1.1.</p> <p>The consultation process included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online publication of the Draft LTP5 and SEA on the Council's website with dedicated response forms. • Public engagement events • Promotion through press releases, social media, and stakeholder networks to encourage participation. <p>All representations received were documented in a Consultation Summary Report, which sets out the number of responses, key themes, and how these informed revisions to LTP5. Any feedback relating to the SEA was considered alongside transport policy responses to ensure environmental objectives were integrated into the final draft.</p> <p>The Consultation Summary Report is available as part of the supporting documents for the LTP and will be published alongside the adopted plan for transparency.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>The very last sentence of the reply says the consultation summary report is available as part of the supporting documentation of the LTP and will be published alongside the adopted plan. So what does the word availability mean? Does it mean it was published or not? Are there two steps? One it's available but no one can find it and then the second is when it's actually published. And I do note at the end of the statement it refers for transparency. So transparency would be appreciated in this question.</p>			
<p>Response to supplementary question:</p> <p>A written response would be provided.</p> <p><i>Written response provided on 19 December:</i></p> <p><i>The last section of the LTP which can be found as the first appendix had the entire unedited consultation summary attached. If there is difficulty finding this please contact officers.</i></p>			
MQ 5	Cllr Heathfield, Hope End	When is the last time that licensed taxi drivers were spot checked on the street that they were the licence holder, and how often are these checks carried out? If taxi drivers are not who they say they are, what is the point in any of the checks our hardworking taxi licensing team carries out?	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services

<p>Response:</p> <p>Licensing officers confirm the identity of taxi drivers through an intelligence-led approach that focuses on information received from the public, the trade and the police. Whenever concerns are raised, officers verify that the person driving a licensed vehicle is the authorised licence holder, that the correct badge and plate are being used, and that the vehicle meets all licensing conditions. The most recent driver-identity enquiries were undertaken in response to intelligence received in recent weeks.</p> <p>As part of the Winter of Action 2025/26, through Hotspot Policing under Operation Radiate, the Council is working with West Mercia Police to plan joint patrols and targeted licensing checks that will include on-street driver-identity verification. These operations are designed to provide increased visibility and reassurance during peak periods.</p> <p>Incidents of individuals attempting to drive a Herefordshire-licensed taxi without holding the appropriate licence are extremely rare. The taxi community in Herefordshire is small and closely connected, and concerns about improper use of badges or vehicles are reported to the Council quickly. Identity checks are therefore an essential safeguard that ensures the extensive vetting carried out before a licence is granted is meaningfully linked to the person who is actually carrying passengers.</p> <p>This approach helps maintain high standards across the trade, reinforces driver accountability, and provides assurance to the public, particularly vulnerable passengers, that licensed taxis in Herefordshire remain a safe and well-regulated form of transport.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>I understand that intelligence led enquiries are made but from what I understand of intelligence-led response is that means that a woman or a young person or another vulnerable person will have been put at risk by getting into a taxi where the taxi driver is not who is pictured on the license. Please will you consider spot checks on street spot checks of our taxi drivers.</p>			
<p>Response to supplementary question:</p> <p>A written response would be provided.</p> <p><i>Written response provided on 19 December:</i></p>			

In relation to identity spot checks, joint patrols with West Mercia Police were undertaken on 13 December 2025 between 9pm and 1am, and previously during late-night hours on 30 August 2025. These patrols included direct engagement with drivers and verification of licensing compliance. No concerns were identified during these checks, including in respect of driver identity or safeguarding. These were targeted operations rather than blanket checks, consistent with our intelligence-led enforcement model.

Identity verification is not limited to scheduled patrols. Licensing officers routinely confirm driver identity in response to intelligence received from the public, the trade and partner agencies, and through proactive out-of-hours activity. Where concerns are raised, officers verify that the person driving is the licensed holder, that the correct badge and vehicle plate are in use, and that licence conditions are being complied with. Incidents involving individuals attempting to drive a Herefordshire-licensed vehicle without holding the appropriate licence are extremely rare, but any such report is treated as a safeguarding concern and followed up promptly.

Further targeted activity is planned under the Winter of Action 2025/26 and Operation Radiate, including joint patrols with West Mercia Police and on-street identity checks during peak periods. These operations are intended to increase visibility and reassurance and to complement, rather than replace, ongoing intelligence-led enforcement.

In relation to education and responsibility, the Council is clear that responsibility for compliance rests with the licensing authority and licensed drivers. We do not expect vulnerable passengers to act as enforcers, and public challenge is not a substitute for regulatory oversight. However, visible identification is a key safeguarding control, and drivers should be accustomed to being asked to confirm their identity in a calm and professional manner.

The Council is currently updating its mandatory safeguarding training for licensed drivers, which is being developed jointly with Herefordshire Council's safeguarding team. This refresh will reinforce expectations around professional conduct, appropriate responses when challenged, the importance of clearly displayed identification, and respectful engagement with passengers seeking reassurance. This sits alongside existing safeguarding, disability awareness and customer-care training and is intended to strengthen protections for vulnerable users rather than shift responsibility onto them.