

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 25 September 2025 at 2.30 pm

Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting:	Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairperson) Councillors Graham Biggs, Barry Durkin, Carole Gandy, Dan Hurcomb, Ivan Powell, Philip Price and Pete Stoddart
Cabinet Members in remote attendance	Councillor Harry Bramer <i>Cabinet members attending the meeting remotely, e.g. through video conferencing facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.</i>

Group leaders / representatives in attendance Councillors Toynbee (in person), Clare Davies (online)
Proctor (representative for Councillor James and in person)

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance Councillors Ben Proctor (in person), Louis Stark (online), Toni Fagan (online).

Officers in attendance: Paul Walker, Samantha Gregory, Claire Porter, Donna Thornton, Hilary Hall, Rachael Sanders, Zoe Clifford (online) Rachel Gillott

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Cllr Swinglehurst.

Other councillors: There were apologies from Councillors Terry James and Liz Harvey

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

22. MINUTES

Resolved: **That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.**

23. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 13 - 16)

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

24. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS (Pages 17 - 18)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 2 to the minutes.

25. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no reports from scrutiny committees for consideration at this meeting.

26. Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. The Delivery Plan has been slightly revised under delegation of the Chief Executive. The report covers quarter 1, April, May and June 2025. It was highlighted that 199 out of 226 milestones, or 88% have either been completed or on track to be delivered at the end of this financial year.

Successes beyond the Delivery Plan were highlighted.

The first Council Plan theme of People noted that of 87 milestones, 55 were on track, 10 were at risk, 12 had not started and 10 were completed. Continuing the focus on child friendly Herefordshire family conferences were now available for all families enabling earlier family-led decision making. A new residential children's home was opened which has increased the council's capacity with a second home on track to open in September 2025. It was noted that progress on a new build special free school as part of the Department of Education's free school progress. Regarding Adult Services, the Herefordshire Connect cross sector referral platform was ready to launch as a pilot with identified partner organisations. Work was progressing to support people in the community following discharge from hospital, and a review process and audit tools have been developed in collaboration with health and care system partners.

The second Council Plan theme of Place, it was noted that of 89 milestones, 64 were on target, 8 were at risk, 5 were completed and 10 had not started and 2 were paused. The Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy had been finalised. The review of the Herefordshire, Cultural Strategy 2019-2029 was progressing well and following successful consultation with stakeholders and partners a refreshed vision and set of priorities had been drafted. An update on the progress was shared at the Connected Community Scrutiny Panel in June 2025. As part of the Council's commitment to reducing waste, increasing reuse and boosting recycling rates plans separate food and garden waste collection service will be introduced. This is dependent on funding from central government which is awaited.

The third Council Plan theme of Growth, it was noted that of 39 milestones, 27 were on target, 5 were at risk, 5 had been completed and 2 had not started. A key step had been taken to support residents in accessing skills development training and employment opportunities, a cabinet member decision has been taken to enable delivery of the 25/26 programme. Also, modelling by transport for Wales on a fast rail service between Cardiff and Manchester is awaited and in parallel the outcome of the proposed housing allocation sites for Regulation 18 consultation will help inform that appropriate business case.

The fourth Council Plan there of Transformation, noted of the 40 milestones, 28 were on target 2 were at risk, 5 had been completed and 5 had not yet started. It was highlighted that improvements had been made to enhance the recruitment and onboarding experience. Investment continued in the council's property assets to reduce the long-term cost of reactive repairs. Good progress was being made in completing estates and schools capital programs from previous years and a number of new projects within the 25-28 program had started, and were on track to be completed within the year.

It was noted that the Office of Local Government (Oflog) was now closed. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced they were launching a new local government outcomes framework. In the meantime, the following top 10 indicators would be reported on:

1. Percentage of services users aged 65 plus, discharged from hospital with Home First and were still at home 91 days after discharge. The Q1 figure was 76%. The projection was 80%.

2. Percentage of children and young people social work assessments completed within 45 days. Q1 figure was 74.43%. The projection was 85%.
3. Percentage of children in care with an up-to-date review. Q1 figure was 99.7%. The projection was 95%.
4. Percentage of major planning applications dealt within 13 weeks or 16 weeks if subject to an environmental impact assessment or with an agreed extension. Q1 figure was 90.91%. The projection was 70%.
5. Percentage of non-major or minor and other planning applications dealt within 8 weeks. Q1 figure was 79.84%. The projection was 80%.
6. Number of kgs of waste not sent to reuse, recycling or composting. Q1 figure was 494.51kgs. The target was 480kgs.
7. Number of affordable homes delivered. Q1 figure was 133. The target was 86.
8. Number of people rough sleeping. The Q1 figure was 8. The target was 8.
9. The value of grants awarded to businesses to support viability and enable growth through the UK shared prosperity fund. The Q1 figure was zero.
10. The average day sickness per FTE. The Q1 was 8.37. The target was 9.

Regarding the value of grants awarded to businesses, it was noted that whilst no grants were awarded in Quarter 1 this reflected the planned focus on setting up the schemes, delivering guidance and inviting applications. The first grants were expected to be awarded from Quarter 2 onwards.

It was noted that Appendix A included the refreshed Delivery Plan for 2025/26.

Comments from cabinet members. In Adult Social Care it was noted that the evaluation of technology enabled pilots had been completed was feeding into the programme of supporting people in their own homes. The expression of interest for the community spaces capital grant schemes had been assessed, and the successful applicants had been invited to submit full applications and business plans. Work around the transformation program for people with learning disabilities continued in Quarter 1, this included supported accommodation and community activities.

In Children's and Young People, it was noted that family group conferences have been delivered for over a year, 127 family group conferences took place during 2024/25. It shows the council's commitment to working restoratively. Regarding, social work assessments are marked on completion. It was noted that as of 1 September, the service had no social work assessments over 45 days.

Regarding the flood risk response programme, it was confirmed a PGC was held, and the decision was made this month. Therefore, the funding was now available to be spent and parishes were being consulted. It was also noted that the Public Realm Contract was on track with a view of awarding the contract in December. The Parish council grant schemes, the drainage scheme deadline of 28th September and it appears the full funding pot will be allocated.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. No red indicators were positively noted against the four themes. Although red assessments against social work assessments and rough sleepers were disappointing. It was queried when the launch event for the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy would be, as the report referred to September.

Ongoing concerns were noted regarding reporting and actual delivery, outcomes were also requested to be linked in the report.

It was queried how the Tree Planting strategy would be incorporated into the new Public Realm contract. Regarding the workforce strategy it was suggested that a key part of enhancing and building a motivated work force was to encourage staff to attend Plough Lane.

In response to group leaders, it was noted that it was a performance report based on a Delivery Plan, measuring delivery. It was discussed whether impact of delivery could be reflected upon for Quarter 2 and it was noted that the outcomes table would hopefully be included in Quarter 2.

It was noted that the decision date for the Herefordshire, Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy was now due in October, not September. Regarding the Tree Planting Strategy this will be checked within the Public Realm Contract.

In respect of the workforce, positive feedback was received from staff surveys, and one attraction was the flexible working arrangements. However, it was also positive to have staff in the building, and it was a balancing act.

Councillor Lester proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that:

That Cabinet:

a) review performance for Q1 2025/26

27. Q1 2025/26 BUDGET REPORT

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report.

It was highlighted that the council was the first council to submit its audit accounts for second year running.

The forecast 2025/26 outturn was £4.3m overspend before management action at Quarter 1. This was expected to reduce to £1m with planned management activity. The approved net revenue budget for 2025/26 was £231.5m which included planned savings of £3.9m

Recovery actions to reduce the forecast overspend by Quarter 4 included allocation of the budget resilience reserve to mitigate the impact of cost pressures and volatility in demand led budgets, continued review of the council's contract arrangements and shareholding in Hoople Limited and action to challenge the forecast expenditure over the remainder of the financial year.

Regarding savings it was noted that a review of the delivery of the 2025/26 approved savings had been completed, which had been informed by planned activity in year to date to determine the savings targets at risk of in year delivery. The review confirmed that £1.6m of the total approved savings target for the year had been delivered at Quarter 1. A further £2.3m was assessed as on target for the year. No savings were assessed at risk.

It was noted that the revised savings plan had been developed and totalled £11.9m with £5.9m being delivered and £4.6m were forecast to be delivered in year. £1.4m remained at risk with focused activity to resolve or mitigate in year. It was emphasised that delivery of savings in full and on time was critical to ensure the 2025/26 outturn position was balanced.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) remains as an unusable reserve on the council's Balance Sheet as permitted by statutory instrument which remains in place until 31 March 2028. As of 1 April 2025, the cumulative deficit was £20m and the cumulative deficit will total £40.2m by 31 March 2026.

The 2025/26 approved capital budget of £155.3m had been revised to £175.4m. The revised capital budget included £11.7m of unspent project budgets brought forward from 2024/25, removal of a project £6m and £14.5m additional grants. The forecast spend position, at Quarter 1 was £117.9m which represented a variance of £57.5m against the capital programme budget of £175.4m. Forecast delivery of the council's capital programme for 2025/26 assumed a requirement to undertake external borrowing and provision was made in the approved 2025/26 revenue budget to support this borrowing.

The capital projects expected to deliver positive impact on revenue budgets were highlighted and included the Home to School / SEN Transport cost pressures (council school transport fleet £0.4m and High Needs Grant £2.1m), social care demand and cost pressures (children's residential homes £0.4m), Temporary accommodation demand and cost pressure (acquisition fund for housing provision £5m, empty property investment and development £0.6m) and repair and maintenance budgets (estates building improvement programme and works, highways and public realm investment works).

The key risks to the capital programme were set out.

It was highlighted that the forecast variance of £4.3m at Quarter 1 only equated to 1.9% of the net budget, before management action. Therefore, once management action was undertaken, then the revised forecast would be £1m which would equate to 0.43% of the net budget, which would be the lowest figure than in previous years.

It was noted that delivery of capital budgets was monitored, and all project budgets were monitored.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. It was raised that the low variance was due to using reserves in year. It was positive that there was control of finances within Children's and Young People and it was acknowledged there were increased complexities within the report. It was requested for cabinet to reflect on why more optimistic scenarios were raised rather than more realistic scenarios when delivering capital projects. A link reporting on capital and revenue would also be welcomed.

It was noted that the dedicated schools grant deficit was large at £40m and all councillors should understand that without the statutory instrument, the council would be unable to balance its books. The capital projects were welcomed, especially in assets and services including school transport, in county provision for short breaks and acquisition of properties to provide emergency accommodation. However, concern was raised that adult social serviced required £2.8m of the budget reserve and reassurance was sought regarding controlling the demand.

In response to group leaders, it was confirmed that adults were doing everything it could to reduce demand on its services in terms of supporting people who need domiciliary care and people who don't need domiciliary care to prevent them from needing it in the future. Noted there had been an increase in the level of improvements in technology and this will transform how people are cared for and increase their independence.

Regarding dipping into reserves in-year, it was confirmed that the previous administration did this at the end of the year, whilst this administration was being proactive rather than reactive. Regarding the DSG deficit, it was highlighted that it's a national issue for Government to address. It was recognised by Grant Thornton at the recent Audit and Governance group, that this council's projected deficit was trivial when compared to other councils who had a £200-£300m DSG deficit.

Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that:

That Cabinet:

- a) Reviews the financial forecast for 2025/26, as set out in the appendices A-D, and identifies any additional actions to be considered to achieve future improvements; and**
- b) Notes the management action identified to reduce the forecast outturn position for 2025/26; and**
- c) Agrees the continuation of management actions to reduce the forecast overspend as identified in this report**

28. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY - UPDATE TO CABINET

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. The report provided an update on the changes to the financial and economic context including key headlines from the spending review of June 2025, potential impacts of local authority funding reform and to set out the timetable and approach for the development of the 26/27 budget and MTFs for 26/27 to 29/30.

The key priorities in 25/26 were set out as delivery of services within the approved revenue budget, robust monitoring of in-year performance against the approved revenue budget, delivery of savings of £3.9m in 25/26 revenue budget and £11.9m of savings delivered recurrently in prior years, and development of the 25/26 revenue and capital investment budgets.

It was noted that the updated estimate of funding represented a potential loss to the 25/26 baseline position of £12m over a three-year period. The impact of reduction in funding through the fair funding review resulted in a revised estimated funding gap of £27.3m in 26/27 which would rise to £54.4m in 28/29.

The spending review 2025, was the first multiyear spending review since 2021. The key announcements included local government funding, settlement indication, transformation fund allocations for local government, adult social care, children's social care, pothole funding, council tax reform, education, dedicated schools grant, special educational needs and disabilities deficits.

The last full assessment of relative needs and resources was 12 years ago and the relationship between the assessment and actual allocation through the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) had weakened. It was noted that the government were considering further grants including nearly £10b of social care funding to be included in the SFA, subjecting those grants to the Fair Funding Review 2 (FFR2) process. Meaning the FFR2 would have a significant impact on local authority funding, making it difficult to predict. The full outcome of the consultation and impact of funding for Herefordshire would not be confirmed until the provisional settlement announcement in late December 2025.

It was noted that the allocation of the new SFA was made up of an assessment of relative need and assessment of the relative resource, and these were the two key determinants of the FFR2 outcome for each authority.

In 25/26 the council received £79m (base line for FFR) and this excluded council tax. The estimated loss for Herefordshire would be £12m compared with the base line for this year over the three year period to 28/29.

It was noted that reviewing the expenditure requirement in the context of the new SFA highlighted an increased potential funding gap over the medium-term period of £27.3m in

26/27, £40.6m in 27/28 and £54.4m in 28/29. The estimated revised potential gap was the result of growth in demand and cost for services increasing at a higher rate than the increase in council tax and central government funding.

Herefordshire council's share of the fixed national pot of funding was determined by Herefordshire's share of relative need. The review of Herefordshire's share of relative needs assessment in 2025 compared with the national average share of statistical neighbours, suggested that the council did not fare favourably from the assessment of relative needs and the allocation of funding. Herefordshire council was 40% lower than its statistical neighbours.

The second key determinant of the SFA was the relative resources adjustment, which was the assessment of each authority's ability to raise income from council tax. The assumed national council tax level for a band D was £2,199 per tax base unit. Whereas Herefordshire's band D average was £1,969 in 2025. Therefore, the adjustment assumed that the council raised more income from council tax than it currently does, putting the council at a further disadvantage in the allocation of funding through the FFR2.

It was highlighted that the quarterly report clearly demonstrated the commitment to transparency by highlighting the potential impact of the Fair Funding Review 2. It was confirmed that the council would continue to lobby government regarding its funding review.

Comments from cabinet members. It was highlighted that the council was the lowest funded on each metric (page 86 of the agenda pack) compared to its statistical neighbours. It was confirmed that work was underway with both MPs and to raise awareness with central government. It was also noted that Herefordshire is the third most rural county in England, and the funding review does not consider the cost of delivering services in rural areas.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. It was noted that the government's funding review was concerning and that Herefordshire was badly treated. It was positively noted that political parties and Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) would be engaged in the budget. Group Leaders were happy to work with the administration.

It was queried if cabinet were now working on an assumption of 4.99% regarding council tax.

In response to group leaders, it was noted that the original MTFS had a shortfall of £4.1m and if that financial picture had remained, the 3.99% council tax would have been reasonable. However, due to the shortfall in funding from the SFA of £27.3m, the decision to remain at 3.99% would need to be reviewed. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the Fair Funding Review expected councils to base its council tax to 4.99% as a minimum.

Lastly, it was highlighted that all member's input would be welcomed in addressing the shortfall.

Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that:

That Cabinet:

- a) Notes the key estimates assumptions which inform the financial forecast and the updated projected funding gap over the medium-term period 2026/27 to 2028/29; and**

b) Agrees the proposed approach and timetable for revenue and capital budget setting for 2026/27

29. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE QUARTER 1 2025-26

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report.

It was noted that the revised corporate risk register approved by cabinet in June 2025 included 8 corporate risks and at Quarter 1 a further risk was added to the risk register, R9 which recognised the risk of financial failure of a major supplier to the council resulting in disruption to statutory services or major projects. It was confirmed there were no changes to the risk scores for the remaining 8 corporate risks during Quarter 1.

It was confirmed that the council's 25/26 internal audit plan was reviewed to ensure it aligned with the refreshed risk strategy and the risks identified in the corporate risk register. It was also confirmed that work continued to ensure the strategy was translated to the management of risk across services and projects and that it drove decision making and service delivery.

It was highlighted that further activity was planned in Quarter 2 to further embed and strengthen risk management, and these were set out.

It was confirmed that risk management was a key part of the council's governance arrangements and the risk management strategy supported compliance with statutory requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Appendix A set out the corporate risk register, and the risks were clearly linked to the Council Plan, providing a golden thread linking it all together.

There were no comments from cabinet members.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. It was noted as reassuring that risks were being reviewed on a quarterly basis and the Quarter 2 report was awaited along with confirmation that the planned activities had been completed.

There were no responses to group leaders.

Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that:

That Cabinet:

(a) Approves the updates to the Corporate Risk Register and actions to mitigate identified risks at Quarter 1 2025/26.

(b) Notes the activity to embed the revised risk management strategy to strengthen risk management activity across the council at Corporate, Directorate and Service levels.

30. HEREFORDSHIRE SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY

The member for adults, health and wellbeing introduced the report. It highlighted that the strategy intends to interrupt someone's suicidal thoughts to try and save a life. It was noted that 34 organisations had been consulted, 64 members of the public responded to an online survey, 7 people with lived experience were interviewed and the council engaged with the youth board. It was queried at the PGC if the average age for people who took their own life was accurate at between ages 45-64 and it was confirmed that more recent figures showed that the average age was between 25-44. The reason for the difference was because of the small numbers, meaning they fluctuated each quarter.

Noted the Baton of Hope event was taking place next week, Hereford was honoured to have the chance, and was the only county in the West Midlands.

Comments from cabinet members. Full support was given, and it was highlighted there was also support for veterans, which alongside the strategy encouraged them to reach out for support. It was noted that it was always a brave thing to ask for help and it can happen for a range of reasons, the strategy should be promoted so people were aware of where they can go for support and address their concerns.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. There was support for the strategy and group leaders confirmed they would be promoting it. Caution was expressed regarding the language used and the wording around how life was worth living even on days when a person was not feeling hopeful. It was raised that whilst the strategy focused on one point in a person's life there were other contextual points and the council should be mindful of this, particularly considering the reports regarding the budget.

In response to group leaders, it was highlighted that the council always strived for the health and wellbeing of its residents, and it was crucial Herefordshire council had strategies like this in place.

Councillor Gandy proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that:

That:

- a) The Herefordshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025-2029 at appendix 1 be approved**

31. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. It was highlighted that the peer team involved senior local government councillors and officers who reviewed key finance, performance and governance information. The peer team considered five core components: local priorities and outcomes, organisation and place leadership, governance and culture, financial planning and management and capacity for improvement. In addition, the peer team considered the council's approach to risk, use of data and insight and transformation.

It was highlighted that the Corporate Peer Challenge report contained the overall message (Appendix 1) that:

"Herefordshire was a good council, it was striving hard to improve further and it benefited from a strong sense of place, a maturing political culture and a growing confidence in its leadership. The council has developed a respected identity among partners and is seen as a constructive and increasingly strategic player in the region. There is a clear recognition of the challenges ahead, particularly in relation to transformation, capacity, and financial sustainability, and the council is approaching these with determination and a willingness to learn. The peer team found a council that is self-aware, committed to improvement, and increasingly outward facing. There is a shared understanding of the importance of transformation, and while the journey is still at an early stage, the council is laying the groundwork for long-term change. The latest Ofsted monitoring visit confirms that children's services are improving at pace, and performance in most other service areas is broadly in line with statistical neighbours. The council's finances are currently in a good base position. There is a need to refresh the medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) and undertake more robust scenario planning to prepare for future uncertainties."

The Corporate Peer Challenge report noted that Herefordshire was a rural county with demographic challenges such as an aging population, the council's leadership (politically and managerially) was increasingly confident and respected, there was a level of political maturity and members working constructively across party lines and a strong emphasis on consensus building. Partnership working was noted as a strength and the phosphate credit scheme was cited as an example of innovative, place-based leadership. Also, partnerships with the voluntary and community sector were positive. It was noted that governance was generally strong with clear structures and ongoing improvements in risk management. It was also noted that audit and scrutiny had been strengthened.

However, it was raised that whilst performance management was embedded across the council, there was a need for better data integration and corporate-level insights to drive transformation.

It was highlighted that the council's financial position was stable with a positive outturn in 2024-2025 and with a healthy level of reserves. There was recognition that future years' financial settlements may be challenging, and the council was reviewing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy alongside scenario planning to test different assumptions. The team noted an ambitious capital programme with the need to keep management and capacity to deliver the programme under review.

Lastly, it was noted that the council had traditionally operated a thin-client model with many services outsourced but that this was being rebalanced with investment in in-house capacity to support change and ensure more effective oversight.

The conclusion noted that: "Herefordshire Council is a good council with a strong foundation and a clear ambition to improve. It has made significant progress in key areas, particularly children's services, and is increasingly confident in its leadership and identity. The council is self-aware and understands the scale of the transformation required. With continued focus on capacity, data, and financial planning, it is well-placed to deliver on its ambitions and improve outcomes for its communities."

The peer team identified five key recommendations, and it was proposed that the progress against these were monitored through the quarterly performance reports:

1. Transformation,
2. Data and insights,
3. Medium term financial planning,
4. Internal capacity,
5. Working with partners to deliver.

It was noted that the peer review team would follow up with a one-day review visit, provisionally agreed for week commencing 23 March 2026.

It was highlighted that the council had already addressed several of the recommendations. Regarding recommendation one transformation, it was confirmed that a Chief Data and Information Officer (CDIO) had been recruited and had started work on aspects of the council's transformation program. The same CDIO was also leading on recommendation 2, data and insights. Lastly, regarding recommendation 3, it was confirmed that a review of the MTFS had been conducted, and an updated report had been provided.

There were no comments from cabinet members.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. It was acknowledged that it was a good report, and it was confirmed that the actions would be monitored.

In response to group leaders, thanks were extended to the Local Government Association, colleagues who assisted in the Corporate Peer Challenge and participants who were interviewed. Thanks were also extended to all the staff, chief executive, cabinet, senior management team and corporate directors.

Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that:

That:

- a) Cabinet receives the report and recommendations arising from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge held 23 - 26 June 2025; and**
- b) Cabinet approves the council's action plan in response to the recommendations for publication.**

32. WEST MIDLANDS SAFE CENTRE

For this item on the agenda, the Chair proposed a vote that the meeting moved into a private session. This being due to the report containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of the council pursuant to paragraph 3 and the information being in respect of a claim to which legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings, pursuant to paragraph 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

It was resolved that:

That under section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12(A) of the Act -

(3) The item discloses information which relates to the financial or business affairs of the council and, (5) The information is in respect of a claim to which legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings

And it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The public meeting ended at 3.55 pm

Chairperson

Agenda item no. 4 - Questions from members of the public

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Peter McKay, Leominster	I commend Council for raising the online Research Guidance Information on the evidence required to make a good case for modifying the Definitive Map but it does not include any mention of CRF's and CRB's even though they are included in the Glossary of Terms Used saying were intended to be recorded as RUPP's. Being prospective upgrades would you add an explanatory paragraph about CRF's and CRB's to the Parish Submission data in the Research Guidance Information, and publish a List of CRF's and CRB's intended to be recorded as RUPP's showing present progress raising DMMOA's, so all may be made aware of the situation and raise DMMOA's as appropriate, being part of the amplification agreed in July?	Cllr Hurcomb
<p>Response:</p> <p>The Council recorded Carriage Road Footpaths (CRFs) and Carriage Road Bridleways (CRBs) on the first Definitive Map on the basis that this was their main public use. As stated in the glossary of terms, they are non-statutory descriptions, and they have all now been legally recorded as footpaths or bridleways.</p> <p>The Research Guidance was prepared as an aid to anyone potentially researching a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO). It is aimed at all types of claims and, therefore, is suitable for the purpose for which it was intended.</p> <p>If anyone believes that these paths have a higher status, then they can make a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) application accordingly and provide the necessary evidence. We do not hold lists of the paths that were noted as Carriage Road Footpaths or Carriage Road Bridleway on the Parish Submissions.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>Will you add a paragraph to the Research Guidance saying that, i.e., that Parishes providing information of CRF's and CRB's came about due to Government Guidance for Parishes providing information for raising the Definitive Map putting forward these non-statutory terms rather than the statutory RUPP (Road Used as Public Path), the Research Guidance presently making no mention of CRF's and CRB's?</p>			
<p>Supplementary response:</p>			

Thank you Mr McKay for your supplementary. The research guidance was written to assist those thinking of applying for a definitive map modification order and DMMO. It sets out the different types of evidence that are key to making a good application and this is the purpose of the document. The terms CRF (carriage road footpath), CRB (carriage road bridle way) and RUPP (road used as a public path) are clearly explained in the glossary of terms. The two documents each have their own purpose and the amendment suggested is not necessary as the information is covered in the glossary terms. It does not therefore need to be repeated in research guidance.

PQ 2.	Susie Lane Hereford	<p>If Councillor Price recently said that he would like to help deliver improvements to public transportation, active travel and greater access to the surrounding areas while enhancing the environment for commuters and visitors. He says he would like to improve air quality, improve health and wellbeing, and reduce congestion. These were comments about the new £9.8m transport hub by the Hereford station.</p> <p>How can the proposed by pass increase sustainable transport in Hereford, improve air quality with the westerly winds blowing the traffic fumes towards the city, and how can it not destroy National Heritage and natural capital of the Parish of Breinton and as a new comer to Hereford please let me know why the Western bypass was cancelled in 2019, as surely there must have been a good reason and support?</p>	Cllr Price
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Response:		
<p>The bypass has always been proposed as part of a package of measures including sustainable traffic measures (formerly part of the Hereford Transport Package and South Wye Transport Package) and the council is progressing with many of these proposals in advance of the new road including the Transport Hub, cycling and walking improvements on Holme Lacy Road and improvements to the Great Western Way.</p> <p>At present there is only one route across the river and all north south traffic is concentrated into one point resulting in significant congestion and air quality issues in the city centre. It is idling and start/stop traffic such as this that causes the greatest level of pollution with the site at the bridge. A bypass provides an alternative river crossing and removes traffic from the city centre providing a more inviting area for walking and cycling and improving public transport journey times, whilst also greatly improving air pollution within the city. Vehicle emissions cause air pollution problems when they are concentrated within an enclosed area, emissions from vehicles using a bypass would dissipate and would not create air pollution issues. Whilst of course a new road will have an impact on the area through which it passes, good planning and modern requirements of road building will mitigate this impact as far as practicable.</p>		

<p>Some of the Councillors who agreed to cancel the bypass have been against the proposal for a long time. Others who have joined the council recently were opposed to it for reasons best explained by themselves. The report that they commissioned to support the cancellation of the bypass <i>states</i>:</p> <p><i>The package which includes the western bypass (A + C + D) is forecast to provide greatest congestion relief to the city and greatest resilience for the transport network, with a new strategic link over the River Wye.</i></p> <p>Hereford Transport Strategy Review</p>			
Supplementary question:			
Supplementary response:			
PQ 3.	Paul Symonds, Ross on Wye	At the Council meeting of 23rd October 2023 the Council stated that a pedestrian crossing would be installed in the 30mph zone on the A40 at Hildersley by the 3rd quarter of 2024/25. Despite having s106 funding of over £373,000 in place for this project, we are some months past the date indicated so can you please tell me when this important road safety scheme will be implemented?	Cllr Price
Response:			
<p>Under the S106 Delivery Team the extension of the 30mph limit further to the east, to now include the new development entrance, as well as a new signalised pedestrian crossing was designed through Aecom. Both the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and the design for the crossing have now been completed. With the new Model Farm development being completed in the same location, it was requested that the completed S106 design now be passed over to the Model Farm Team, who will be leading on the crossing's construction, combined with the S278 requirements for the Model Farm development. At the moment the S106 element of the works are expected to be delivered in late Q3 / Q4 of 2026. Model Farm consultants have now taken over Principal Designer responsibility. S106 funding will still be utilised for the delivery of the crossing itself.</p>			

Supplementary question:

Supplementary response:

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from councillors

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
Q 1.	Cllr Ben Proctor	How many additional units of social housing does the Executive assess will be needed to meet the current need for social housing in Herefordshire?	Cllr Gandy
<p>Response:</p> <p>Housing need is complex and constantly shifting, as household circumstances change and people require a different type of home, such as smaller accommodation or specialist provision.</p> <p>Based on the Housing Service's current data, the estimated need today is around 900 units. This takes into account the Home Point waiting list, households in temporary accommodation, housing for resettlement and identified need from adult social care and children's services.</p> <p>In the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028, housing is explicitly positioned as a central contributor to our Place and Growth ambitions. The council commits to "support the right housing in the right place" and "work with our partners to provide high quality and affordable housing to meet all needs."</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>You assessed that 900 units of social housing are needed today to meet the current needs for social housing. According to Homes England figures last year zero units of social housing were completed in Herefordshire. The year before that, zero units of social housing were completed in Herefordshire. I am very aware that when we talk about housing units, we can just get lost in the numbers. But this is about real people's lives. Just this week, I've spoken to two separate people who are in relationship breakups and one of things that really terrifies them is, are they going to become homeless as a result of it. Because it is well known that there are not enough houses in the county for the people who live where. The response says and this is completely true that the Council Plan makes housing central to Place and Growth. What is the administration doing and how will we have to wait until the 900 units we need are delivered.</p>			
<p>Supplementary response:</p>			

Councillor Biggs, Cabinet member for Economy and Growth responded:

We now have a cross-party working group to deliver on this front. We're working on a delivery model to put a Housing Delivery Company in place.

We've already delivered on the John Haider building in the runup to the test, so that's terrific and I think its worthwhile measure. Only today we talked to City Council last night and cabinet colleagues agreed that we're going to rename the John Haider building back to the John Venn building, back to where it was and to celebrate the legacy that John Venn brought to the city. That's just one, Buttercross in Leominster is another one, so we're leaning in on this space in the right way, the right houses in the right place and at the right time, that's what our ambition is and we're working together to deliver on that.