

Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Friday 24 July 2026 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor Roger Phillips (chairperson)
Councillor Kevin Tillett (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, Mark Dykes, Matthew Engel, Toni Fagan, Elizabeth Foxton, Carole Gandy, Catherine Gennard, Peter Hamblin, Liz Harvey, Robert Highfield, David Hitchiner, Dan Hurcomb, Terry James, Jim Kenyon, Jonathan Lester, Nick Mason, Ed O'Driscoll, Aubrey Oliver, Rob Owens, Justine Peberdy, Philip Price, Ben Proctor, Stef Simmons, Adam Spencer, Louis Stark, Pete Stoddart, John Stone, Elissa Swinglehurst, Charlotte Taylor, Richard Thomas, Diana Toynbee, Rebecca Tully, Allan Williams, Rob Williams and Mark Woodall

Officers: Democratic Services Manager, Corporate Director Community Wellbeing and Director of Governance and Law

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Biggs, Bramer, Harvey, Heathfield, D Powell and I Powell.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor David Hitchiner declared an interest as a local resident to the proposed bypass. Cllr Hitchiner outlined the dispensation he had been granted to speak and take part in all meetings that discuss the matter.

Councillor Ben Proctor declared that he represented Hereford City Council on the Stronger Towns Board which was involved in the funding arrangements for the Shirehall project.

13. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

15. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (PAGES 7 - 10)

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.

16. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (PAGES 11 - 14)

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.

17. LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader presented his report on the activities of Cabinet since the meeting of Council in March 2026. Council questioned the Leader and the following actions were raised:

In response to a question concerning the Ross on Wye Enterprise Park there was a commitment to involve local ward members as the project develops.

In response to a question concerning a scheme to loan tools to volunteers to maintain public rights of way, a written update would be provided.

In response to a question concerning the unsuitable facilities at local schools to cope with hot weather (in particular portacabins) a letter would be sent to the government to raise concern with the inadequate level of funding for improvements to school infrastructure.

In response to a question regarding the 2006 policy relating to the Management of Common Land in Herefordshire, there was a commitment to undertake a review of the policy.

In response to a question regarding the management of the closure of the pedestrian walkway on Burcott Road Railway Bridge, an update would be provided to the local ward member and neighbouring members.

In response to a question regarding the diversion signage and information available to cyclists in respect of closed routes, officers would be asked to ensure proper signage was in place for cyclists during road/cycle path closures.

In response to a question concerning funding for improvements to cycling, walking and wheeling facilities a list of proposed improvements through the Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan would be circulated to members.

In response to a question, clarification would be provided as to whether a further Political Group Consultation would be undertaken on Hereford Western Bypass Phase One – Full Business Case.

In response to a question regarding projects in Hereford to address congestion an update would be provided to all members with details of those initiatives contained in the Local Transport Plan.

In response to a question regarding the biochar project to provide a written reply to points raised regarding the assessments/analysis of the initiative and the timelines.

In response to a question regarding modes of transport to school and the impact on congestion an officer update would be provided on school transport schemes.

In response to a question regarding the location of temporary accommodation for homelessness, officers would provide a response to explain the rationale behind the purchase of temporary accommodation to take account of access to infrastructure and services.

In response to a question regarding the purchase of the John Venn building an update would be provided with details of the current situation and timelines for the scheme.

18. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS

Motion – Building a Strategic Partnership between Herefordshire and Zhytomyr Oblast, Ukraine

Councillor O'Driscoll proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Simmons seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion.

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

RESOLVED – that:

Council notes that:

- 1. Herefordshire has demonstrated its solidarity with the people of Ukraine since 2022 through the generosity of residents, voluntary organisations, businesses and public bodies.**
- 2. Ross-on-Wye has signed a Friendship Agreement with the City of Ovruch in Zhytomyr Oblast, Hereford City Council has signed a Friendship Agreement with the City of Zhytomyr and several other Herefordshire communities are exploring similar partnerships.**
- 3. A growing number of English county and unitary authorities have entered into Memoranda of Understanding with Ukrainian regions to foster long-term cooperation in areas including local government, education, culture, economic development, agriculture, healthcare and post-war reconstruction.**
- 4. Zhytomyr Oblast is a natural regional partner for Herefordshire, reflecting shared strengths in rural communities, agriculture, environmental stewardship, heritage, tourism and community resilience.**
- 5. HVOSS, through the Herefordshire Community Network for Ukraine, working in partnership with Herefordshire Council and many voluntary and statutory organisations, has an established and effective county-wide network supporting Ukrainian guests and developing friendship links between communities.**

Council believes that:

- 1. Local government has an important role in fostering international friendship, democratic cooperation and mutual understanding.**
- 2. A county-level Memorandum of Understanding would complement existing town and city friendship agreements by providing a strategic framework for wider collaboration.**

3. Such a partnership should deliver mutual benefit through knowledge sharing, cultural exchange, educational links, economic cooperation and support for long-term recovery.

4. HVOSS is well placed to act as the Council's principal voluntary sector delivery partner, coordinating engagement with communities and partner organisations across Herefordshire, having well-established relationships in Ukraine through its staff team, who are themselves guests here from Ukraine and already making introductions and facilitating relationship-building.

Council resolves to request that the Executive:

1. Open discussions with the leadership of Zhytomyr Oblast with a view to developing a Memorandum of Understanding between Herefordshire Council and Zhytomyr Oblast based upon friendship, cooperation, mutual benefit and long-term partnership.

2. Recognise HVOSS, through the Herefordshire Community Network for Ukraine, as the Council's principal voluntary sector delivery partner in supporting the development of the partnership and coordinating engagement with communities, schools, businesses, cultural organisations, higher education, parish and town councils and the voluntary sector across Herefordshire.

3. Allocate sufficient officer capacity and appropriate financial resources to facilitate the development and implementation of the partnership, including stakeholder engagement, translation and interpretation, exchange visits, partnership development and the pursuit of external funding opportunities.

4. Work with Hereford City Council, Ross-on-Wye Town Council and other town and parish councils developing links with communities in Zhytomyr Oblast to create a coherent county-wide partnership that complements existing Friendship Agreements and encourages further civic, educational, cultural and economic cooperation.

5. Produce a report within six months setting out the proposed Memorandum of Understanding, implementation plan, governance arrangements, resource requirements, opportunities for external funding and recommendations for the long-term development of the Herefordshire-Zhytomyr Partnership.

Motion – Securing Food Resilience in Herefordshire

Councillor Tully proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Taylor seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion.

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

RESOLVED – that:

Herefordshire is rooted in food production. The county has shown real joined-up, cross-party, cross-sector working and sits at the forefront of agroecological change. But farmers are under massive pressure - they are disproportionately more likely to be severely depressed than in other trades and facing financial

hardship with 83,000 farming households in the UK estimated to be experiencing absolute poverty. This is still, to a great extent, hidden in our rural setting, though in our county food bank use has not diminished, with many recipients being working families. The national picture of food production is grim, with extreme weather disrupting growing conditions and the added risk of external supply chains for fuel and farm supplies being disrupted by global events. Herefordshire has the assets and the networks to respond positively to ensure a more secure food system and a county that all ages can make home.

This Council therefore resolves to request that the Executive:

1. **Support Sustainable Food and Farming:** to secure food production and access for all in Herefordshire.
2. **Deliver on the carried forward commitment made in the 25/26 delivery plan for a food resilience strategy drawing on the county's existing assets including the Rural Hub, the Food Alliance, and the Climate Adaptation Plan - and support a Food Partnership that has the institutional weight to enact that strategy.**
3. **Write to Government:** Publicly support national measures needed to support both young and old to enter - and stay in - UK farming. Including writing to the Minister for Food Security describing how the 'Basic Income for Farmers' programme would do this here in Herefordshire and proposing our county as a candidate area.

The meeting ended at 10.28 am

Chairperson

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Hassell, Ewyas Harold	We are residents of Monks Retreat in Ewyas Harold by the side of Dulas Brook. As you will be aware, Ewyas Harold was badly affected last November by the flooding caused by Storm Claudia. We understand that a raft of proposals have been drawn up by our local parish council and environmental health and we would like to know if these will be implemented before this coming Autumn?	Cabinet member Local Engagement and Community Resilience.
Response: We appreciate the concerns of residents affected by flooding and understand the desire to see improvements delivered as quickly as possible. A number of potential measures have been identified through discussions involving the Parish Council, the Environment Agency and other relevant organisations. In terms of the measures that will be in place before the autumn: - Herefordshire Council's Flood Risk Management Team has supported Ewyas Harold Parish Council in developing a Community Flood Plan, which has now been completed. - The team has been liaising with the Parish Council on the development of a community flood signage scheme to help improve local resilience. The scheme will enable trained local volunteers to legally close roads in and around Ewyas Harold during flood events. A suitable date needs to be arranged for volunteer training, after which the scheme can be formally implemented. - Herefordshire Council has been working with the Environment Agency to support the planned clearance of the blocked culvert beneath the B4347 during the summer holiday period, helping to restore its capacity to convey high flows more effectively. The following medium- to long-term flood risk management options are currently under consideration. Subject to the necessary consents, permissions and approvals being secured from relevant organisations and stakeholders, we are aiming to deliver these measures by April 2027: - Investigating the ownership of a historic ditch and liaising with the Internal Drainage Board on its reinstatement, with the aim of conveying flood water away from the highway and back into the Dulas Brook. - Undertaking a survey of the accessible sections of the historic culverted watercourse (locally referred to as the "Stinky Ditch"). The survey findings will be shared with the Internal Drainage Board, which has the relevant powers to consider and progress any necessary maintenance or clearance works.			

- Developing a drainage improvement scheme for the area opposite Smith's Garage. This aims to provide a more effective route for floodwater to drain away once river levels recede, reducing the duration of flooding and associated road closures.
- Progressing the installation of a debris catcher upstream of the bridge on the Dulas Brook in response to issues experienced previously when a tree became lodged beneath the bridge. This work also includes investigating the construction of a flood bund adjacent to the playing fields. Delivery will be subject to the completion of a Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) process and associated lead-in times.

In addition to the measures outlined above, the Environment Agency has arranged initial Lot 1 surveys for residents affected by flooding to assess which Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures may be suitable for their properties. Please note that the implementation of any recommended PFR measures will be subject to securing funding, with potential funding opportunities currently being explored.

Herefordshire Council is also investigating the feasibility of a larger-scale upstream attenuation scheme that would utilise natural flood management measures to reduce peak flows and provide temporary floodwater storage. This project is currently at an early stage of development. Separately, a further flood risk management project is being explored. As discussions on this project remain at a preliminary stage, it is not yet possible to provide further details or confirm a delivery timeline.

PQ 2	Mrs Protherough Hereford	A Transport Hub is for Changing Places. Will Herefordshire Council reconsider their decision not to site at the railway station a so named appropriate facility, with space and the right equipment, to enable disabled people to make themselves clean and comfortable, before continuing their journey?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response: A disabled toilet is being provided at the Transport Hub and we can confirm that the design of the new facility meets all building regulations and disabled access legislation requirements. Inclusion of a larger changing facility was not a requirement that was considered at the time of the design of the Hub. The development of the Transport Hub did not include any renovation of facilities at Hereford Railway Station. Placement of such a facility within the railway station would be a matter for Network Rail. Having reflected on your question, however, the council will seek to engage with Network rail and Transport for Wales to explore whether they have any plans to update their facilities.

PQ 3	Mr Milln Hereford	At Cabinet on 25th June I asked about the overdue library and museum projects and was told preconstruction agreements with contractors were being finalised. The response lacked clarity or credibility and was followed up by the Independent resulting in a Council press release on 30th June admitting it had hit the buffers. This was entirely predictable. At planning stage in 2023 and again direct to the CEO in November 2024 we advised against the rooftop terrace and restaurant scheme for Broad Street as unnecessary, costly and damaging to historic fabric . Assurances were given which we now know to have been untrustworthy. With the gross overspends on its City Link Road and Blueschool House Projects in mind what lessons for transparency and prudence has this administration learned from its management of these and other major capital projects?	Leader
Response: The council continues to lead projects in an open and transparent way in accordance with our constitution. Individual governance decisions are taken for all capital spend and Record of Officer Decisions are published to reflect all operational decisions thereafter. Performance is reported at public cabinet meetings on a quarterly basis. Through the council's project management structures, we continue to review and identify lessons learnt at each stage. In terms of the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery project, the previous administration included the proposed additional roof terrace and café in their original proposals. This would have added circa £10m to the overall project cost and, as a result of subsequent detailed cost validation, this has proven not to be affordable. To ensure that we can deliver a new long term outstanding museum and art gallery for residents of the county and visitors, and to retain £12m of external grant funding, we have taken managed and pragmatic decisions to bring the project back within the available budget. Supplementary question: Thank you for your response to my question about lessons learned of the stalled Museum and Library projects, though a little disingenuous to be pointing the finger. After more than three years in office this administration must accept responsibility. After all it promoted and passed the plans and budgets for both projects. With the prospect of further delay even basic maintenance of the old museum/library has stalled. Its cabinets, which might have been brightened with displays while they remain, left empty and covered with years of grime. Its fine ironwork gates, firmly locked trapping litter and corroded for want of a necessary lick of paint. With a facade opposite the Cathedral, it creates a poor impression for our visitors Stitch-in-time care is not costly so what are the reasons for the neglect and how to you propose to address this?			

Response to supplementary question:

Renovating a project like the museum is a huge exercise and we are working through it to deliver the best scheme we can given the constraints and the needs to address some of the key factors in the building. But I take the point about the appearance of the building whilst we're working through these essential plans and strategies to improve the building so that we've got a fantastic museum. I can confirm that all of the litter has been removed from the front by the by the railings that you suggest. Whilst I appreciate it would be great to do a lick of paint, we are close to being in a position where we can firm up what we really need to do to do a really good job. So I wouldn't want to do anything prematurely let's do it right at the right time. But as I say, the the litter that you refer to has been removed. Thank you.

Agenda item no. 6 - Questions from members of the Council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Cllr Stark, Ross West	In April 2025, Ross Town Council agreed the specification for a new more fitting barrier to replace the temporary concrete safety barrier below Wilton Road cliff face in Ross. Since then, the work has been cancelled twice, first for completion in February and then August 2026. Your administration have trumpeted that this is the year of delivery for major projects. Can you explain why this is not the case here?	Leader
Response: The planned work to Wilton rockface is a priority for the Council and forms part of a £38.6m investment in Highways and Public Realm during 2026/27. Following receipt of original tender returns from contractors, a review of the project was undertaken in February 2026 with Balfour Beatty Living Places as it was identified that it would take the supply chain three months to produce the required materials, which would result in the project not being delivered before the end of May 2026 and the end of the contract with Balfour Beatty. Leadership of the project has since passed to the Council and the same scheme has been put to our own Highways and Public Realm Schemes Framework for delivery. In order to reduce lead times associated with the project, the team have agreed to explore an option to purchase the required materials directly from the relevant supplier, which I hope will be possible. Whilst the Highways and Public Realm team are working to deliver the project as quickly as possible, I am aware that they have recently advised Ross Town Council that works cannot commence in August due to nesting birds occupying the rockface and surrounding vegetation. Due to the nesting birds, and subject to the result of bat surveys that will conclude at the end of July, the earliest that works can begin is <u>from</u> October 2026, which also avoids the peak tourist season in Ross. The Highways and Public Realm team have been clear with me that Wilton rockface remains a high-priority scheme, with funding secured for delivery in financial year 2026/27. I have asked that the project team ensure that Ross Town Council and all Ward Members for Ross is updated on a regular basis as I am aware that there have been concerns about communication previously. Supplementary question: I only found out about this further delay to this key project for Ross only through the associated road closures having disappeared from the weekly street works report. So, how can both myself and Ross Town Council have any assurance that this project will ever be delivered?			

Response to supplementary question: The highways and public realm team have been clear with me that the rock face remains a real priority for the council. I reiterate that the scheme is going through the relevant procurement process and we will appoint a contractor to undertake the works. It has been explained that there's been a delay due to the timing and the fact that works couldn't be undertaken in August. There's been the problem of the transition from one contractor to another but on the most substantive point it is not acceptable that ward councillors are not kept informed so I apologise and take responsibility for that. I will make sure that ward councillors are updated on any matter.			
MQ 2	Cllr Pauline Crockett, Queenswood Ward	Leader, one of the four corporate priorities of this Council is People, your quarterly report makes no reference to the Care Quality Commission's 'Requires Improvement' assessment of Herefordshire Council's Adult Social Care services for people, so, given the significance of that judgement, why was it omitted from your report, and how can members and residents be assured that the council is treating the findings with the transparency and urgency they deserve?	Cabinet member Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Response: Thank you for pointing this out. It should have been mentioned. However, I wish to stress that this does not mean that important issues raised are not at the forefront of my mind regarding improving certain elements of the service. At the next Cabinet meeting (30 July) we will be approving a full array of measures that will address all improvements that are needed. The improvement plan will go in to further detail as to how this will be achieved. I thank Cllr Crockett and the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny committee members for their ongoing interest and work in helping to shape and influence this important area of work. Many of the improvements identified by CQC were already underway during the assessment process, and we are continuing to deliver them at pace. Progress will be reported through established governance and scrutiny arrangements, ensuring ongoing transparency and accountability. Most importantly, we will measure not only whether actions have been completed, but whether they are making a real difference to the experiences and outcomes of people who use our services.			
Supplementary question: Will you commit to including progress against the CQC improvement plan as a standing item in future quarterly reports until the areas identified by this CQC report have been addressed?			
Response to supplementary question: I'm really pleased to note that there's already really positive things to say. We're making huge progress in lots of areas in adult social care and I'm really looking forward to cabinet meeting next week where we will be highlighting the progress that we've made with adult services, the plans that we've have already put in place to address some of the shortfalls that the CQC report highlighted and I am confident that because we're such a robust council who can really make improvements, like we have done with children's services, we will be able to improve and address all of the issues and maintain a good			

service. But in answer to your specific question, I think that's a really good idea and I will commit to updating members on the progress in my leader's report.

MQ 3	Cllr Ben Proctor, College Ward	Can the council provide an update on the work being undertaken to reduce the Section 106 backlog and confirm the current level of unspent Section 106 money?	Cabinet member Culture and Environment
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Response:

The Section 106 team is now fully staffed. A new S106 Highways Engineer joined the team in June and has had an immediate impact with a number of schemes being pushed forward for delivery this year. The team have also temporarily engaged one of the engineers that helped establish the team previously for a 4 to 6 month period to ensure a smooth handover with the new Highways Engineer. The current figure for unspent Section 106 is £5.3m for highways and transport projects, £3.7m leisure and sports projects and £5.9m on education projects. In 2025 the team delivered £2.98m of works helping to reduce the backlog and delivery is forecast at over £2m in 2026/27. The spend of section 106 monies has increased year on year with 1.39 million in 2022/23, 1.74 million in 2023/24, 2.79 million in 2024/25 and 2.98 million in 2025/26. The forecast for spend in 2026/27 is over £2m. The levels of unspent S106 money will continue to reduce as our work intensifies.

Supplementary question:

When this administration took charge, the section 106 backlog stood at 13 million pounds. Today, it stands at 14.9 million. The section 106 backlog grows at an average. The income comes in at an average of 2.7 million pounds a year. Based on the answer, the council spends at an average of 2.2 million pounds a year. I think everybody must be able to see that if the money comes in at a faster rate than it is spent, then the backlog will continue to grow. The answer signs off by saying the levels of unspent section 106 money will continue to reduce as our work intensifies. If he were to double the rate at which he is delivering section 106, it would still take 9 years to clear the backlog. But this isn't about the money. It's about the communities waiting for the things they were promised. What can he say to the communities of Herefordshire and the members of this council that would persuade any of us he has a grip on this issue?

Response to supplementary question:

We came into a backlog and officers are working really hard to clear that backlog. Sometimes it's very complicated to get projects delivered and out of the door. So certainly not for want of trying. Capacity has been an issue. We're working on that. But I take your point and we will

continue to try to deliver those projects as quickly as possible so that we actually drive down the total sum and not simply work on the trailing edge whilst more 106 comes in ahead of that. But you're right it's very important to see these infrastructure and mitigation projects delivered in a timely fashion. Thank you.