

Minutes of the meeting of Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 2 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Monday 14 September 2026 at 2.00 pm

Board members present in person, voting:

Councillor Polly Andrews
(Substitute Member)
Councillor Pauline Crockett
(Chairperson)
Councillor Dave Davies
Councillor Richard Thomas
Councillor Kevin Tillett
Councillor Rebecca Tully
(Vice-Chairperson)

Board members in attendance remotely, non-voting:

Note: Board members in attendance remotely, e.g. through video conference facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.

Others present in person:

Zoe Clifford	Director of Public Health	Herefordshire Council
Alan Dawson	Chief Strategy and Planning Officer	Wye Valley NHS Trust
Councillor Carole Gandy	Cabinet Member Adults, Health and Wellbeing	Herefordshire Council
Hilary Hall	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing	Herefordshire Council
Angharad Hawkes	Democratic Services Officer	Herefordshire Council
Danial Webb	Statutory Scrutiny Officer	Herefordshire Council

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mark Dykes.

33. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Polly Andrews was present as the named substitute for Cllr Mark Dykes.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

35. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2026 be confirmed as a correct record.

36. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions were received from members of the public.

37. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions were received from councillors.

38. RIGHT CARE, RIGHT PERSON

The committee was advised that, following publication of the agenda, consideration of the Right Care, Right Person report had been deferred to a future meeting of the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee due to the unavailability of West Mercia Police representatives to attend the meeting.

Members noted that the report would not be presented and no discussion would take place on the item at this meeting.

The Chair thanked the officers and partner organisations for their work in preparing the report and noted that the Committee looked forward to considering the matter at a future date, provisionally scheduled for the committee's next meeting on 14 December 2026.

RESOLVED:

That consideration of the Right Care, Right Person report be deferred to the next meeting of the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 14 December 2026.

Members noted that the report would not be presented and no discussion would take place on the item at this meeting.

The Chair thanked the officers and partner organisations for their work in preparing the report and noted that the Committee looked forward to considering the matter at a future meeting, provisionally scheduled for 14 December 2026.

RESOLVED:

That consideration of the Right Care, Right Person report be deferred to a future meeting of the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, tentatively planned for 14 December 2026.

39. MEETING THE DEMAND FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The committee considered the interim report and recommendations of the Adult Social Care Demand Task and Finish Group. The Chair of the task and finish group introduced the report and outlined the group's work since its establishment in December 2025. Members noted that a final report would be presented to the committee in December

2026. The committee heard that the review had examined the drivers of adult social care demand, the capacity of the council to meet that demand, and identified recommendations focused on prevention, partnership working, housing, data collection and funding.

The principal points of the subsequent discussion are summarised below:

1. The Chair highlighted the group's findings that demand for adult social care continued to increase, with expenditure increasing at a faster rate. Particular concern was raised regarding the growth in demand from working-age adults and the need to better understand the factors driving increased costs.
2. Members discussed Recommendation 1 regarding data collection and information sharing. It was noted that significant gaps remained in the council's understanding of the pathways individuals followed through adult social care and associated preventative services. Members emphasised the importance of agreeing a consistent approach to data collection across organisations in order to better understand demand, outcomes and service effectiveness.
3. The committee highlighted the importance of understanding what happened to individuals following contact with the adult social care front door. Members noted that many people were signposted to alternative support, including Community Connectors and voluntary sector services, but further evidence was required to understand outcomes and assess whether preventative interventions were reducing future demand.
4. The Director of Public Health explained that individuals presenting at the front door could be referred to Community Connectors where appropriate. It was noted that Community Connectors remained a relatively new initiative and further work would be required to evaluate outcomes and demonstrate impact.
5. Members discussed the potential value of developing performance dashboards and improved reporting arrangements. It was suggested that stronger data could help identify trends, pressures and opportunities for intervention, as well as support future commissioning decisions.
6. The committee considered Recommendation 2 concerning self-funders. Members recognised the value of engaging with residents at an earlier stage to support financial planning and improve understanding of future demand. Discussion took place regarding how earlier conversations could assist individuals and families in preparing for future care needs.
7. In response, the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing advised that the council already operated a self-funder brokerage service. It was noted that Recommendation 2 highlighted the importance of engaging with self-funders at an earlier stage and provided an opportunity to strengthen that work. Members heard that a significant proportion of care home residents funded their own care arrangements and that improved engagement could support future planning.
8. Members discussed the importance of understanding future demand arising from self-funders whose financial circumstances may change over time. It was suggested that, where individuals and families were willing to share information, this could help improve forecasting and financial planning.
9. Discussion then turned to Recommendation 3 concerning housing and adult social care. Members emphasised the importance of supporting people to remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible and agreed that housing and social care services should operate as a more integrated system.

10. Members highlighted examples of housing adaptations, assistive technology and preventative measures which enabled residents to remain safely at home and reduce the likelihood of requiring more intensive services. It was noted that early intervention often provided better outcomes for residents whilst helping manage demand on services.
11. The committee discussed the role of technology-enabled care and assistive technology in supporting independence. Members suggested that developments in technology, including opportunities presented by artificial intelligence, could play an increasing role in helping people remain safely within their own homes for longer.
12. Concerns were raised regarding digital connectivity and broadband provision in some rural areas. Members noted that reliable connectivity would be important if technology-enabled care solutions were to be adopted more widely across the county.
13. The committee considered Recommendation 4 relating to Talk Community and Community Connectors. Members welcomed the preventative approach but stressed the importance of developing robust evaluation arrangements to demonstrate effectiveness and value for money.
14. Members noted that although case studies and testimonials were valuable, a stronger evidence base would be required to demonstrate whether preventative services were reducing demand for statutory social care services and generating savings across the wider system.
15. Discussion took place regarding the role of the voluntary and community sector in supporting vulnerable residents and tackling loneliness and isolation. Members recognised the contribution made by local organisations and acknowledged that many preventative interventions took place outside formal council services.
16. The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing referred to examples of community activity across the county and highlighted the positive contribution made by local groups operating through Talk Community and related initiatives. Members noted the importance of building on existing community strengths and recognising that different communities may wish to organise support arrangements in different ways.
17. Members observed that loneliness and social isolation remained significant challenges across the county and noted that community groups frequently provided essential support which might otherwise fall to public services.
18. In considering Recommendation 6, members discussed the importance of understanding the wider landscape of organisations, partnerships and preventative services operating across Herefordshire. It was suggested that a clearer understanding of responsibilities, overlaps and gaps would assist future planning and support more effective partnership working.
19. The committee further noted that stronger evidence regarding outcomes from preventative services would help demonstrate value and support future funding decisions. Members recognised the importance of being able to demonstrate avoided costs where interventions prevented escalation to formal care services.
20. Members discussed Recommendation 7 concerning national social care reform and agreed that many of the challenges identified by the task and finish group reflected wider national issues. It was noted that Herefordshire's experience could help inform national discussions regarding social care funding and reform.

21. The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing congratulated the Chair and members of the task and finish group on the work undertaken to date and welcomed the report's focus on prevention, partnership working and long-term sustainability.
22. The committee heard that further discussions would take place with officers and partners ahead of publication of the final report in December 2026. It was anticipated that the final report would provide additional detail and refinement of the recommendations, although no substantial changes to their overall direction were expected.

The Chair thanked officers, stakeholders and members of the task and finish group for their support throughout the review.

Resolved:

That:

- a) the interim report of the Adult Social Care Demand Task and Finish Group be noted;
- b) the underlying principles of the recommendations contained within the report be approved; and
- c) a final report be presented to the committee on 14 December 2026.

40. ADULT SOCIAL CARE BUDGET OUTTURN

The committee received a verbal update on the adult social care budget outturn.

The principal points of the subsequent discussion are summarised below:

1. The Corporate Director Community Wellbeing provided an update on the adult social care budget position and advised that activity levels were currently tracking broadly in line with projections. While demand had increased slightly, no significant unexpected pressures had emerged. Members heard that work continued to respond to the findings of the Care Quality Commission inspection and to improve service performance whilst maintaining financial control.
2. The committee heard that managing demand remained a key priority for the service. The Corporate Director Community Wellbeing emphasised the importance of supporting people to live independently in their own homes wherever possible, describing this preventative approach as a central component of both service improvement and financial sustainability.
3. Members noted that savings were being generated through initiatives such as the Care in Your Home programme and through strengthening value for money across commissioned services. It was reported that these measures were placing the directorate in a stronger position to manage budget pressures.
4. The committee heard that changes implemented at the adult social care front door had resulted in more timely assessment and intervention, leading to fewer people remaining on waiting lists. Members were advised that recruitment to key positions had supported this improvement and had contributed to better demand management.
5. In response to questions regarding budget controls, the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing explained that closer collaboration had been established between finance and adult social care teams. This included strengthened oversight arrangements, more rigorous monitoring of expenditure and enhanced scrutiny of care packages and service demand.

6. Members heard that decisions regarding care packages were subject to appropriate governance and authorisation processes to ensure that support remained proportionate to assessed need whilst achieving best value.
7. The committee was advised that the directorate remained confident that projected savings targets would be achieved. Members heard that an external partner had been commissioned to support the identification of further efficiencies and future service delivery models to strengthen long-term financial sustainability.
8. It was noted that a two-year programme of work was underway to support financial stability and service improvement whilst ensuring that residents' care and support needs continued to be appropriately met.
9. Members discussed the importance of early intervention and preventative services. The committee heard that support delivered at a local level, including community-based services, could help prevent escalation of need and reduce future demand on statutory services.
10. The Chair commented that prevention was preferable to cure and welcomed the emphasis placed on early intervention and supporting independence.
11. A committee member raised the challenges facing domiciliary care providers, including workforce recruitment and retention pressures arising from increases in the National Living Wage. The committee heard that attracting and retaining skilled staff remained a significant issue across the care sector.
12. In response, the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing outlined proposals being explored through the Care in Your Home programme. Members heard that the council was considering arrangements with lead providers capable of investing in workforce development and service quality. It was suggested that a more stable provider market could support improved outcomes for residents whilst assisting with long-term financial management.
13. The committee was further advised that future models may provide opportunities for provider staff to undertake broader assessment and support functions, helping to ensure individuals received timely interventions and reducing duplication between services.

The committee noted the update.

41. WORK PROGRAMME

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer presented the committee's draft work programme. The committee considered forthcoming items and future areas of scrutiny.

The principal points of the subsequent discussion are summarised below:

1. Members discussed the potential inclusion of broadband and digital connectivity within future scrutiny work. It was noted that digital infrastructure had implications for a range of services, including technology-enabled care and community-based support. The Chair advised that discussions would take place with the Chair of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee regarding the most appropriate forum for further consideration of the issue.
2. A member sought an update regarding the deferred Right Care, Right Person item. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the item was scheduled to return to the committee's December 2026 meeting.

3. Members requested clarification regarding meeting dates and scrutiny arrangements for 2027. The committee heard that committee meetings were expected to take place during February or March 2027 prior to the local elections, and that a further discussion regarding future work programming would take place with members during October.

Resolved:

That the work programme be noted.

42. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 14 December 2026 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 3.28pm

Chairperson