

Minutes of the meeting of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Wednesday 15 April 2026 at 2.00 pm

Committee members present in person and voting: **Councillors: Bruce Baker, Frank Cornthwaite (Vice-Chairperson), Helen Heathfield, Ed O'Driscoll (Chairperson), Rob Owens, Roger Phillips and Diana Toynbee**

Others in attendance:

Councillor B Durkin	Cabinet Member Roads and Regulatory Services	Herefordshire Council
Councillor D Hitchiner		Herefordshire Council
F Horton	Transport Planning Services Manager	Herefordshire Council
D Land	Head of Transport and Access Services	Herefordshire Council
H Merricks-Murgatroyd	Democratic Services Officer	Herefordshire Council
Councillor P Price	Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure	Herefordshire Council
S Tompkins	Delivery Director - Infrastructure	Herefordshire Council
T v Vuren	Head of Digital Transport	Amey Consulting
D Webb	Statutory Scrutiny Officer	Herefordshire Council

90. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

91. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

92. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

93. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

94. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 7 - 10)

Documents containing questions received from members of the public and the responses given, plus supplementary questions and their respective responses were published as an appendix to the minutes.

95. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Pages 11 - 12)

Documents containing questions received from members of the council and the responses given, plus supplementary questions and their respective responses were published as an appendix to the minutes.

96. HEREFORDSHIRE PARKING STRATEGY 2026-2041

The committee considered a report on the Herefordshire Parking Strategy 2026-41 item.

The principal points of the subsequent discussion are summarised below:

1. The Head of Transport and Access Services and the Transport Planning Service Manager introduced the draft strategy and noted that it is intended to provide a more supportive and community-focused approach to parking policy. The draft was presented ahead of public consultation so that comments from the committee could inform revisions and the consultation questions.
2. In response to a question about how consultation will be delivered, the Transport Planning Service Manager explained that the consultation is intended to use the online consultation portal alongside social media channels, including Facebook, Nextdoor and LinkedIn, with comments received through those channels also considered.
3. The Chairperson added that the consultation materials should, where possible, use more creative and accessible formats in addition to the full document so that a wider range of residents can engage with the strategy. It was added that different materials will be prepared for younger people, businesses and people with disabilities to broaden accessibility.
4. In response to a question about whether the strategy differentiates sufficiently between the needs of Hereford city, the market towns and more rural areas with high car dependency, the Transport Planning Service Manager explained that the draft had not separated Hereford from the rest of the county because the intention was to apply consistent principles across Herefordshire.
5. The Chairperson raised concerns that the strategy did not yet clearly explain the underlying rationale for parking charges. It was acknowledged that additional explanatory text on the reasons for charging would be a useful addition to the strategy.
6. A committee member commented that the strategy would benefit from practical examples showing how its principles would apply to an individual car park or location, in order to illustrate how the strategy would operate in practice.
7. During discussion of the use of parking income, the Cabinet Member Roads and Regulatory Services noted that under section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, parking-related revenue is not simply a general income stream for the authority but is used to support the operation of the parking service and related functions.
8. It was noted in discussion that the strategy should better reflect the current pressures on town centres and market towns, including the increasing size of vehicles, changing high street patterns, supermarkets with free parking, and the need to support dwell time so that visitors stay longer and spend more in local centres.

9. The Transport Planning Service Manager noted that the strategy proposes measures such as pay-on-exit trials, the ability to extend parking virtually, and improvements to the quality of council-operated car parks, including lighting, surfacing, CCTV where possible, and larger disabled bays above minimum standards where possible.
10. A committee member welcomed the reference in the strategy to 'positive parking' and more visible, approachable civil enforcement officers, and suggested that those officers could help inform service improvements because of their direct experience of user behaviour on the ground.
11. In response to a question about 'futureproofed parking', it was explained that futureproofing includes real-time information on parking availability, better cashless options, joining the national parking platform, ensuring bay sizes remain appropriate as vehicles change, and expanding electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
12. A committee member emphasised the importance of retaining choice for residents, including the ability to pay by cash. It was confirmed that there is no current plan to remove cash payment options and that the strategy is not intended to make parking cashless.
13. In relation to residents' parking zones, it was noted that detailed procedural text had been removed from the strategy itself but that guidance would be provided separately.
14. In response to questions about behaviour change and modal shift, it was explained that the strategy is not solely focused on cars and car parking, it also looks at enforcement and what parking can provide including, for example, potential car-sharing initiatives. It was noted that key performance indicators are being developed and that there would be an annual report covering transport strategies, with frequent internal monitoring and more regular reporting where specific schemes are undertaken.
15. In response to a question about pay-on-exit, it was noted that automatic number plate recognition can be used without barriers, and that barriers may create queues and confusion.
16. In response to questions on electric vehicle charging infrastructure, it was explained that work is being undertaken to align provision with future demand and grid capacity constraints, including consideration of alternative technologies such as solar-powered charging. It was also noted that the strategy is intended to influence planning expectations for new developments so that adequate charging provision is designed in from the outset where possible.

Resolved

- 1. Include a section explaining why Herefordshire Council charges for parking.**
- 2. Engage specifically with enforcement officers as part of the strategy development.**
- 3. Engage as soon as possible with town and parish councils to shape the local approach.**

4. **Provide evidence of the modal shift arising from the strategy.**
5. **Ensure the strategy makes clear that the option to pay for parking using cash will remain for all council-provided parking.**

97. HEREFORD BYPASS PHASE 1 - METHODOLOGY

The committee considered a report on the Hereford Bypass Phase 1 – methodology item.

The principal points of the subsequent discussion are summarised below:

1. The Chairperson clarified at the outset that the purpose of the item was to consider whether the proposed assessment criteria for the full business case for phase one of the western bypass were robust, transparent and capable of supporting a sound decision by Cabinet. It was emphasised that the committee was not considering the merits of the bypass itself, the route, or whether the scheme should proceed which instead are matters for later when the full business case is brought forward.
2. The Infrastructure Delivery Director explained that Cabinet had agreed that a full business case would need to be published and reviewed before any decision to proceed to construction was made. He added that the full business case is a substantial document and that the draft assessment criteria had therefore been brought forward in advance so that members could consider what Cabinet would use when reaching that later decision.
3. It was noted that the draft assessment criteria included both requirements and assessment criteria, and that these had been grouped under five themes: technical, planning, environmental, commercial and financial.
4. The Chairperson welcomed the opportunity for scrutiny to consider the draft assessment criteria at this stage and introduced Tom van Vuren to provide independent expert support. Mr van Vuren explained that his role was to help identify criteria aligned with the Green Book and Department for Transport best practice so that Cabinet could make an informed and defensible decision when the full business case is presented.
5. In response to a question about how the assessment criteria would enable Cabinet to distinguish between a strong business case and a more marginal one, the Infrastructure Delivery Director explained that value for money, including the benefit-cost ratio, would be one key element of the assessment. He noted that the recommendation would be for at least medium value for money scheme, while also stressing that Cabinet would need to consider the full package of matters rather than rely on a single metric.
6. It was further noted that the full business case would include modelling validation and Green Book-compliant appraisal, but that Cabinet would also need assurance across a broader range of issues before a construction decision could be taken.
7. A committee member questioned whether the draft table in appendix 1 sufficiently distinguished between true assessment criteria and procedural or evidential checks. Officers acknowledged the value of providing more granular and graded information rather than relying on pass/fail wording alone.

8. During discussion on road safety, it was noted that the impact of the scheme may not be uniformly positive across all locations because a higher-speed road could reduce traffic on some residential routes while creating different risks elsewhere. It was suggested that more information should be provided on the underlying modelling, collision assumptions and distribution of impacts so that Cabinet can better understand the significance of any positive or negative safety effects.
9. A committee member raised concerns that social value appeared to be framed too narrowly around contractor activity rather than the wider benefits or disbenefits of the scheme for local communities. It was accepted that both contractor-led social value activity and the broader social impact of the infrastructure itself should be more clearly reflected in the assessment criteria.
10. A committee member suggested that absolute statutory requirements, such as planning permissions and Natural England approval, should be more clearly distinguished from evaluative criteria which indicate how good the outcome is.
11. In response, the Infrastructure Delivery Director agreed that some requirements are minimum standards, but noted that they still involve substantial work and remain essential preconditions before construction could commence. It was also noted that ranges would be helpful in areas such as cost and value for money, particularly as final construction prices and value engineering options are still being developed.
12. In response to a question about the criteria itself, Mr van Vuren explained that a robust framework should combine three elements: clear yes/no requirements, value-for-money evidence as per the Green Book and Department for Transport appraisal practice, and wider information that decision-makers may judge important even where it is not fully monetised. He suggested that the presentation to Cabinet could make risk assumptions, uncertainty and scenario testing more visible, including how benefit-cost outcomes change under different growth scenarios.
13. A committee member asked how the proposed assessment criteria compared with the approach used for national schemes. In response, the Infrastructure Delivery Director noted that the council is preparing a Green Book-compliant full business case so that it would meet Department for Transport expectations and remain suitable should future government funding become available.
14. It was clarified that the full business case and the assessment criteria are intended to assess phase one on its own merits, rather than rely on assumptions about any later phase. It was noted that wider strategic fit with adopted council policy remains relevant, but the value-for-money assessment itself is being undertaken on the basis of the phase one scheme as a standalone intervention.
15. A committee member suggested that references to mitigation should be handled carefully in relation to ancient woodland and raised concern about whether the environmental baseline was sufficiently broad. The Infrastructure Delivery Director acknowledged the point on terminology and outlined the scale of ancient woodland impact and proposed compensatory planting.
16. In response to a question about competing objectives within the Local Transport Plan, the Infrastructure Delivery Director explained that the criteria should help Cabinet understand trade-offs more explicitly. It was suggested that more granular data beneath the headline value-for-money figure would better show how benefits and disbenefits are distributed across competing objectives.

Resolved

- 1. Move from pass/fail assessments to scored or graded assessments, to ensure more granularity in traffic outcomes, safety outcomes, land acquisition, carbon reduction, woodland mitigation, biodiversity net gain, construction price, social value, affordability, and value for money.**
- 2. Widen the criteria for measuring social value to include the distribution of impacts on people in Herefordshire.**
- 3. Ensure clearer reporting of project risks, assumptions and uncertainty.**
- 4. Ensure the report to Cabinet incorporates high/medium/low growth risk scenarios.**

98. WORK PROGRAMME 2026-7

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer presented the draft work programme for the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee.

99. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 23 June 2026, 14:00 pm.

The meeting ended at 4.41 pm

Chairperson

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Osborne-Brookes, Hereford	<p>"Herefordshire Council claim for Phase 1 of the Bypass "Over the next 60 years, the total financial benefits are estimated at £54–£77 million, with around £47 million coming from people and goods saving time on their journeys."</p> <p>No information has been provided on the costs, apart from an outline budget, recently increased to £45million.</p> <p>Will the committee review the BCR calculation and whether it has included the following costs: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. mitigation of the loss of ancient woodland and venerable trees, including licenses to relocate hazel dormice living on the route; 2. the cost of the 5th arm of the roundabout on the A465 to make this part of the Western "bypass". 3. the cost of embodied carbon in the construction, increased emissions from additional vehicle movements and the loss of Carbon sequestration from destruction of soils and woodland." 	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
<p>Response: Thank you for your useful observations. The Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee will meet on 15 April to scrutinise the proposed assessment criteria and requirements that Cabinet will use to evaluate the Full Business Case and to determine if Hereford Bypass Phase 1 should go ahead. It will then scrutinise the business case itself at a meeting in July. We will consider your points when determining our lines of enquiry.</p>			

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 2	Ms Martin, Hereford	<p>“AECOM's Scheme Information Report, published in advance of the Herefordshire Strategic Transport Model (HSTM), indicates that modelling for Phase 1 Southern Link Road (SLR) includes Phase 2 of the western bypass as a "committed scheme" in its core scenario, assuming its forecast time savings. However, these were arrived at using a highway assignment model that did not factor in traffic induction for either regional or local network. WSP and Mott MacDonald have flagged the risk that this would overstate congestion benefits.</p> <p>Importing these inaccuracies into the SLR modelling risks unreliable journey time forecasts and inaccurate monetised benefits for the SLR's Full Business Case, inflating the SLR's economic case. Will the Committee recommend peer review of the HSTM and, if found to be flawed, recommend an updated assessment that accounts for Phase 2 traffic induction before the FBC is finalised. "</p>	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
<p>Response: Thank you for your question and the points made regarding the Herefordshire Strategic Transport Model. The Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee will meet on 15 April to scrutinise the proposed assessment criteria and requirements that Cabinet will use to evaluate the Full Business Case and to determine if Hereford Bypass Phase 1 should go ahead. It will then scrutinise the business case itself at a meeting in July which will include a model validation report setting out the modelling details used to undertake the assessment. The committee would not make any recommendation regarding the HSTM without full scrutiny of the model, which it currently has no plans to do.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>“AECOM's Scheme Information Report, published in advance of the Herefordshire Strategic Transport Model (HSTM), indicates that modelling for Phase 1 Southern Link Road (SLR) includes Phase 2 of the western bypass as a "committed scheme" in its core scenario, assuming its forecast time savings. However, these were arrived at using a highway assignment model that did not factor in traffic induction for either regional or local network. WSP and Mott MacDonald have flagged the risk that this would overstate congestion benefits.</p> <p>Importing these inaccuracies into the SLR modelling risks unreliable journey time forecasts and inaccurate monetised benefits for the SLR's Full Business Case, inflating the SLR's economic case. Will the Committee recommend peer review of the HSTM and, if found to be flawed, recommend an updated assessment that accounts for Phase 2 traffic induction before the FBC is finalised? If not, why not?"</p>			
<p>Supplementary response:</p>			

Thank you for the question. The purpose of today's meeting is to focus on the assessment criteria that will be used to assess the full business case. Our role is only to consider whether the assessment criteria is robust, transparent, and capable of supporting a sound decision by Cabinet. That question, in my opinion, would be better asked of either Cabinet or this committee when we come to look at the full business case. Today's discussion is purely around the assessment criteria.

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 3	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	<p>The "Back the Bypass" campaign shows the Hereford City Link Road as heavily congested and requiring an intervention in the form of the Western Bypass.</p> <p>The Hereford City Link Road (A49 to A465) promised significant journey time savings, reducing congestion up to 52% at peak times on Newmarket & Blueschool Streets, which, it was claimed, would enable them to become single carriageway, improving the public realm for pedestrians and cyclists and reducing severance between the new shopping quarter and the historic City Centre. Post scheme appraisal and real world observation reveal that the benefits claimed have not been achieved.</p> <p>As the City Link Road underperformed against the benefits claimed in the Business Case, would the Committee review the methodology ensuring that the benefits from the Herefordshire Strategic Transport Model for the Hereford Bypass Phase 1, will not be similarly overstated?</p>	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
<p>Response: Thank you for your observations regarding the Hereford City Link Road. I am happy to confirm that the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee will be scrutinising the proposed assessment criteria and requirements that Cabinet will use to evaluate the Full Business Case and determine if Hereford Bypass Phase 1 should go ahead at its meeting on 15 April 2026.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>Auditors issued a damning report on the City Link Road, which was one element of the Hereford City Centre Transport Project. Other non-road elements, including the Transport Hub, were not delivered due to a lack of funds. If lessons are to be learnt will this Scrutiny Committee recommend that the assessment criteria include: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the project delivers better Value for Money per pound, compared to alternative transport measures that could achieve the same outcomes; 2. there is sufficient budget and staff experience to manage and control this capital project; 			

3. "optimism bias" is excluded from journey times and the impact of induced demand is included;
4. all costs to deliver the claimed benefits of the scheme, eg a fully funded programme of mitigation and long term maintenance of any planting and rare wildlife relocation, are included.

Supplementary response:

Thank you for the question. I can confirm that a couple of things mentioned have been discussed as part of our lines of enquiry. I cannot pre-empt at this stage what the committee will decide to make as its recommendations that go through the democratic process. I hope over the course of this meeting the areas that you touch on may come out through the natural discussion and conversation we will have as a committee as we interrogate this assessment criteria and come up with a set of agreed recommendations.

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Cllr Hitchiner	The Scheme Information Report contains limited information on the effect of the SLR on traffic. For instance Route 11 is a 18.93 kilometre length of road from Pontrilas to the Asda roundabout with a 7 minute increase in journey time. Of more concern/interest to residents of my Ward are the much shorter distances on the Belmont Road from the proposed new roundabout to Walnut Tree Avenue and from WTA to the Asda Roundabout. There is also local concern that the Bridge Sollars Road and the B4352 will be used much more by traffic getting from the Brecon Road to Rotherwas as this is likely to become the quickest route. Does the committee agree that this information should be included in the data and if there is a negative impact this should be taken into account in the methodology?	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
<p>Response: Thank you for your question. It is unlikely that the methodology would take into specifics such as those you have raised. Instead, we would expect the methodology to include in its criteria factors such as journey time. We will therefore seek assurance in this regard when the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the proposed assessment criteria and requirements that Cabinet will use to evaluate the Full Business Case and determine if Hereford Bypass Phase 1 should go ahead.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question: The draft methodology statement under the technical assessment criterion requirements heading refers to modelling results needing to demonstrate improved journey times and no overall reduction in safety. On the journey time element in my written question, I referred to a 7 minute longer journey time on the A465. This is data from the scheme information report from AECOM. Is this to be ignored because only improved times are to be considered? Surely not. The report to this committee, at paragraph 16, is selective referring only to journey time savings from Walnut Tree Avenue, Holme Lacy Road, and part of the Belmont Road, all of which are helpful to support the case of the SLR. There is no reference to any longer journey times. I ask that the committee recommend a more balanced approach rather than one which is so obviously biased toward proving the case of the SLR. Amongst other things, the methodology should look at the effect of longer journey times on the A465, other parts of the Belmont Road within the city boundary, the A49, and also on the road from Bridge Sollars onto the B4352 and B4349 through Madley and Clehonger. They should look at the longer times which would apply to all those routes, not just the improved times.</p>			
<p>Supplementary response:</p>			

Thank you for the question. We are looking specifically at the assessment criteria, and I think that some of the detail you are looking at will come out once those assessment criteria are being applied to the full business case. Our job today is to check that the assessment criteria gives opportunity for that to come out prior to the full business case going to Cabinet for its decision. I hope from the discussions we have had around lines of enquiry and the councillors here that some of that detail will come out over the course of our discussion. However, we are not going to decide before the meeting what our recommendations are until we've had the discussion.